



The Light — U.K. edition

March 2008

The Lahore Ahmadiyya monthly magazine from U.K.

Contents:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Charge of Heresy —
<i>Ahmadis are Muslims</i>,
by Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad 1• Mirza Masroor Ahmad's comments on the
Indonesia affair and his criticism of us —
by Zahid Aziz 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidation and Building of the <i>Jama'at</i> —
A Friday <i>Khutba</i>
by Maulana Muhammad Ali..... 6• Muslims and the <i>Shariah</i> in the U.K. —
Comments on the Archbishop of Canterbury's
controversy-arousing speech 8 |
|---|--|

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Assalamu alaikum: Our next meeting —

Date: **Sunday 2nd March 2008**

Time: **3.00 p.m.**

Speaker: **Dr Jawad Ahmad**

Topic: **Ahmadiyya Movement and the
promotion of inter-faith dialogue**

Regular activities:

Darus-i Quran and Hadith:

Every Friday at 2.30 p.m.

Meetings of the Executive:

First Sunday of every month at 2.00 p.m.

Meeting of the Jama'at:

First Sunday of every month at 3.00 p.m.

The Charge of Heresy

by Maulana Aftab-ud-Din Ahmad

[*Editor's Note:* This article first appeared as an editorial in *The Light*, 24 June 1955, and was later published as a pamphlet by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore.]

The charge of heresy has been the common lot of all reformers — people who sincerely wish to see their fellow human beings happy and prosperous. That is to say, the reward for true and abiding service to mankind is nothing but anathema and persecution. Not to speak of others, the great founders of religion were, one and all, decried by their contemporaries as irreligious and heretic. The

ordeal of Abraham, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the long-drawn social and physical persecutions of Muhammad — had all their source in the same irony of fate. This unvarying tradition is not only our consolation but a source of inspiration as well. There is a price for everything and the price of reformation and renovation of any moribund system of thought and life is the charge of heresy. In fact, the Ahmadiyya Movement could have no better credentials for its task of reformation than this charge of heresy levelled against it with all the fury of conservatism and convention-worship. For this reason we do not mind the accusation as such.

What we do mind, however, is the appalling ignorance of facts on the part of those who are

recognised as men of education and judicious thinking. We can excuse the masses for their blind hostility to our Movement but not these men of education. These at least should apply the primary rules of logic to the facts of a case before forming any opinion about it.

Now, the principal charge against the Ahmadiyya Movement is that it has installed a new prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Before going into any other enquiry on the subject, a man disturbed by this news should first go to the nearest Ahmadiyya mosque, and listen to the *Adhan*, to see who is announced there as the Prophet — whether it is the name of Muhammad so announced or that of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad supposed to have replaced the Prophet. He should next observe the Ahmadiyya people in prayer to see if their *Qibla* or their manner of praying in any way differs from that of other Muslims. After this, he should see what book these people recite from in their prayers as well as on other occasions of devout scriptural recitation, to find out if it is any book other than the Quran. If the enquirer is satisfied that the Prophet announced from the Ahmadiyya mosques is Prophet Muhammad and that the *Qibla* and the prayers of the Ahmadis are the same as those of other Muslims and the scriptural recital in prayer and other occasions is from no other book than the Quran, he should be in no doubt as to the religious identity of this much-maligned sect and as to the personality around which their highest religious emotions revolve.

But we should suggest a further test to resolve all doubts on this score. The world knows that Islam consists of the Quran and the Sunnah. The Sunnah, it is a well-known fact again, is the practice of the Prophet. A man in doubt about the Ahmadiyya Movement should apply this test as well to come to a definite decision about the religious faith of its members. He should find out what is regarded as Sunnah by the people of this sect — whether it is the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad or that of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah. This is, indeed, the most crucial test. If the acts of Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, continue to form the basis of the rules of Ahmadiyya religious life, it will be simply absurd to suspect these people of having installed another prophet in the place of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. These are obviously very simple tests within the reach of every person and they are basic as well as conclusive.

It has been said that in the discernment of fundamental facts of life, an unsophisticated and

uneducated layman at times exhibits a greater sense of true logic than the so-called learned. The aphorism is true. We have personal knowledge of the fact that the allegation of a new prophethood against the Ahmadiyya Movement has led the average unsophisticated Muslim to think that the people of this Movement regard the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a back number and the Quran as an abrogated scripture and that their prayer and their *Qibla* are altogether different from those of other Muslims. We have seen Muslims, men and women, without any close contact with us before, exclaiming, after they have seen us in prayer: “Oh, you say the same prayer as we do”. Some of these have actually snatched the Quran from our hands to see if it is a different book from what they know to be the Quran and have felt disappointed that it is every whit the book which they use as their scripture and the one that is devoutly recited in every Muslim home. Now, these implications in the general Muslim mind of the charge of a new prophethood in the Ahmadiyya Movement are quite natural and follow logically as a matter of course. An educated man, with greater claim to logical thinking, will discard these tests only at the peril of his logic in ascertaining the position of our movement in relation to the faith of Islam.

A Maulvi may be excused if he cannot decide what constitutes adherence to the faith of Islam and what amounts to a denial of it from the legal point of view. But for those who have spent years in schools and colleges to train their minds for scientific thinking, this should not be a difficult task at all. Spiritual, ritualistic or metaphysical questions may present some difficulty to those who are not acquainted with their terms and trappings. But the definition of a socio-religious community should present no such difficulty. Even the Hindu intelligentsia succeeded in defining their highly elusive cult of Hinduism. And it is because of this ingenious definition that the agnostic Jawahar Lal Nehru is regarded by the whole Hindu race from Nainital to Cape Comorin as much a Hindu as Madan Mohan Malaviya, a staunch believer in the caste system and untouchability. Today the whole outside world recognises this definition of a Hindu.

It will indeed be a bankruptcy of Muslim intellectual thinking not to be able to find out a simple definition of Islam understandable to everyone inside and outside the fold, independently of the quibbles of the Maulvis, whose *fatwas*, taken together, will reduce the number of Muslims in the world to nil. As a matter of fact, all existing Muslims should have to forfeit their heads, according to these *fatwas*, because, in the view of

those who issue them, an apostate cannot be allowed to live in the world, although a born unbeliever may be permitted to do so under certain conditions. As it happens, not a sect will be found against which an anathema of heresy has not been issued by some other sect. So it will be a dangerous path to follow to proceed on the basis of these *fatwas*. We have to evolve an independent and scientific method of ascertaining what constitutes membership of the faith of Islam. And we dare say, such a definition will be endorsed by the explicit words of the Quran and the Prophet. The Quran says :

“Do not say to one who greets you with *Salam*, You are not a believer.” — 4:94

The Holy Prophet Muhammad says:

“Whoever says our prayers and faces our *Qibla* (in prayer) and eats meat slaughtered by us — is a Muslim and for him is the protection of Allah and the protection of the Prophet.”

Unlike Roman Catholicism, heresy hunting is no duty of a believer in Islam. If a person says that he is a Muslim, he must be accepted as such. Experience has brought the wisdom to all religious communities that for social purposes, the religious identity of a person can be known only by what he professes. It is high time that Muslims who initiated this great principle should reap its benefits themselves and save the unique brotherhood of Islam from disintegration and disruption through a foolish insistence on excluding from it those who are anxious to remain in its fold and who, moreover, act in a way that proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that their religion is fundamentally the same as is known by the name Islam in the world, and as will be recognised as such by anyone who takes a legal view of the beliefs and institutions of this faith.

We recall a very interesting incident in this connection. A Lahore Ahmadiyya leader had gone to Aligarh, where the students of the University asked him about the charge of heresy against his community.¹ The reply of this leader was very significant. “Well,” he said, “if anyone is in doubt about our loyalty to Islam, let him come forward and make us Muslims in the way he would bring any unbeliever to the fold of Islam.” No one came forward. Well, the fact is that Islam in practice has left nothing undefined. Even the manner of

entering its fold has been prescribed and that manner is by itself eloquent enough to distinguish a Muslim from a non-Muslim. We make the new entrant to declare his faith in a certain formula and it is this formula which constitutes the essence of Islam, its most distinguishing feature. And so long as a person does not repudiate this formula, no charge of heresy can legally sustain against him whatever his differences with other Muslims.

Mirza Masroor Ahmad’s comments on the Indonesia affair and his criticism of us

by Zahid Aziz

A news item in the Indonesian newspaper *The Jakarta Post*, dated Wednesday 16th January, relating to the Qadiani *Jama‘at*, began as follows:

The government said Tuesday it would not ban Ahmadiyah, defying a controversial fatwa by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) that had declared Ahmadiyah an heretical Islamic sect. The decision not to ban the group was made after Ahmadiyah leaders issued a statement saying they acknowledged Muhammad as the last prophet. The statement was an apparent reversal of its previous stance.

The item went on to report what the local Qadiani *Jama‘at* leader in Indonesia told the press:

Ahmadiyah leader Ahmad Basit said his group had the same belief as mainstream Islam. “Like other Muslims, Ahmadiyah followers also recite *shahadat* (the two sentences of faith), acknowledging Muhammad as the last prophet,” he told Antara. “Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is only our teacher,” he said. Ahmadiyah also said they would not look to convert Muslims to their beliefs, but said they would instead strengthen relations with mainstream Muslims.

We also learnt from other local sources that the Qadiani *Jama‘at* statement, presented by them to a government board, consisted of 12 points. It said that they considered Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a teacher, religious guide (*murshid*), bearer of good news and warnings from God, and founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, but said nothing about belief in him as prophet or even as

1. The reference is to Maulana Muhammad Ali, the author of the English Translation of the Quran with Commentary. (Footnote in original booklet.)

Promised Messiah and Mahdi. In the same statement, in point number 2, it is declared that their *Jama'at* has, from the beginning, believed the Holy Prophet Muhammad to be *Khatam-un-Nabiyyin*, and it is added in brackets that this means *the end of prophethood*. In point number 7 it is stated that they “have never and will never consider other Muslims outside Ahmadiyya *kafir*, either by words nor by acts”.

Even before the above news, the Qadiani *Jama'at* website www.thepersecution.org itself had quoted an earlier news item from *The Jakarta Post*, dated 4th January, relating to the visit of an anti-Ahmadiyya forum to the Attorney General's office (AGO). They delivered a letter asking that the Qadiani *Jama'at* should be declared heretical. The item went on to report:

Junior Attorney General for Intelligence Affairs Wisnu Subroto said the AGO would treat the letter from the forum as a recommendation in the body's meeting, along with the recommendation from the Indonesian Ulemas Council submitted previously.

“The government needs to hear all the information from all parties, including from Ahmadiyah members. During the last meeting with the AGO, Ahmadiyah leaders explained they did not recognize Mirza Gulam Ahmad as a prophet, but merely as a pious leader. Many groups, including the forum's members, believed the clarification was just a game being played by the Ahmadiyah leaders to escape being banned (at that time),” Wisnu told *The Jakarta Post* by phone.

In response to these news from Indonesia, the international centre of the Qadiani *Jama'at* in London issued a press release dated 21st January in which it is stated:

“... we are very disappointed by the aforementioned article printed in *The Jakarta Post*. This article suggested that our Community had, God forbid, changed its position regarding the status of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian.

To clarify, it is an inherent part of our faith and belief that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian is the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (Guided One). ...

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was the final law bearing Prophet and he brought a complete and perfect teaching. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the true Promised Messiah and

Mahdi, who came to rejuvenate the message of Islam and therefore we most certainly recognise and accept him as a true Prophet of God Almighty.

It is hoped that *The Jakarta Post* recognises and rectifies the mistakes it made in the aforementioned article.”

We had published all the above account on our blog at www.ahmadiyya.org/WordPress/, along with our comments as well as responses from some members of the Qadiani *Jama'at*. These reports appeared elsewhere on the Internet as well.

The Head of the Qadiani *Jama'at*, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, then referred to the matter in his Friday *khutba* of 8th February, and a press release containing his response in this *khutba* was published the next day. Regarding the articles in *The Jakarta Post* it is claimed in this press release:

“Following the aforementioned newspaper article certain non Ahmadi Muslims and members of the Lahori sect celebrated what they perceived to be a change in the beliefs of the Community. However the content of the article was immediately rejected by the *Jama'at* and to its credit the said newspaper printed a statement clarifying the issue on 23 January 2008.”

We did not “celebrate” this as we knew that the 12-point statement was either based on ignorance by their own *Jama'at* in Indonesia of their own beliefs or it was just a ploy to fool the Indonesian authorities. We would have celebrated if there was a true change of belief based on recognition of the past beliefs being wrong.

What this “clarification” by *The Jakarta Post* exactly was, we are not told. On the contrary, a subsequent item of news from the same newspaper dated 5th February, and reproduced again on ‘the persecution’ website of the Qadiani *Jama'at*, reaffirmed the original news! This is at the link:

www.thepersecution.org/world/indonesia/08/02/jp05.html

This news report, headed *Govt to monitor Ahmadiyah Sect*, states:

JAKARTA: The government has established a monitoring team to supervise the controversial Ahmadiyah sect.

“The team will gather information on to what extent Ahmadiyah has applied its ‘12 points of explanation,’ ” said Religious Affairs Minister M. Maftuh Basyuni during a hearing with the Regional Representatives Council here Monday.

Ahmadiyah was declared heretical by the influential Indonesian Ulema Council because the group recognized Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, its founder, as the last prophet, rather than Muhammad.

After a string of mob attacks on the group's properties, Ahmadiyah's leaders issued a statement containing "12 points of explanation", including their acknowledgment of Muhammad as the final prophet.

The Religious Affairs Ministry on Jan. 24 issued a decree establishing the monitoring team. It includes officials from the Religious Affairs Ministry, Attorney General's Office, Home Ministry and National Police.

"The team will report their findings to the religious affairs minister at least three months from the time the decree was issued," said Maftuh. "At the moment, we still consider Ahmadiyah as heretical."

It is quite clear from this report that the 12-point statement of the Indonesian Qadiani *Jama'at* is being treated by the government authorities as representing the claimed standpoint of the Qadiani *Jama'at* and acknowledging that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet. That statement has not been modified by any "clarification" issued by the London centre of the Qadiani *Jama'at*.

In his *khutba* of 8th February, referred to above, Mirza Masroor Ahmad then levels criticism against our Movement. We quote below from the English summary of this *khutba* from their website:

"Huzur said the context in which a newspaper published the news in Indonesia gave people a chance to raise a hue and cry that Ahmadis have changed their viewpoint and do not consider Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad a prophet but consider him a Mujaddad (a reformer). ... this gave the Lahore Movement a chance to show their inflexibility. Huzur said he would reiterate to the Lahore Movement and those who have not taken the pledge of allegiance to Ahmadiyya Khilafat to have some fear of God in terms of what our stance about the Promised Messiah is. Huzur remarked who has progressed in leaps and bounds: those who accept the Anjuman or those who consider Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Messiah and the Mahdi? Who is established in 189 countries of the world? Who has Allah's

practical testimony with them? Those who accept him as a Messiah or those who consider him a guru?"

While telling us to "have some fear of God" in our representing of the Qadiani stance, Mirza Masroor Ahmad himself misrepresents our beliefs by implying that we do not accept Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as Messiah and Mahdi. We have published heaps of literature in many languages in which his claim of being Messiah and Mahdi is presented and proved. In our written submission before the Pakistan National Assembly, dated 1st July 1974, at the time when this parliament was discussing whether Ahmadis are Muslims or not, it was stated that: "The wisdom of Allah required that the *Mujaddid* of this [14th] century ... should be sent as the Promised Messiah." (point no. 18)

Similarly, in the 1985 court case in Cape Town, South Africa, where a verdict was obtained that Ahmadis are Muslim, we presented our belief that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. The judge in his judgment of November 1985 referred to our evidence in this respect as follows: "It is in this spiritual sense that Mirza claimed to be the Messiah and Mahdi ... The claim to be Mahdi and the like of the Messiah is permitted by Islamic Shariah."

As to his claim of greater progress by the Qadiani *Jama'at*, is it progress that their official representatives are unaware of their very basic belief that Hazrat Mirza sahib was a prophet?

Mirza Masroor Ahmad in this *khutba* gives an account of the events in Indonesia and tries to explain why his *Jama'at* there issued this statement. However, the English summary of the *khutba* is not very clear and we will hold full comment till the Urdu text appears in print, which will be easier to follow than the audio recording.

According to this summary, his *Jama'at* in Indonesia made "a treaty" with the government, the news of which "spread to the internet via a newspaper". He says that some of his members "admitting that they did not have the requisite knowledge", in order to curb the violent opposition against the Movement, decided that "if we had to agree to certain things we should". *On the one hand*, he is criticising them when he says "we have no business adopting flattery and take a step that would be embarrassing" and asks: "should we give up calling him Messiah and Mahdi to temporarily please others?" *On the other hand* he says: "In its communication with the government of Indonesia the Indonesian *Jama'at* did not even hint the above", namely, that they do not believe him to the

Promised Messiah, and he blames the press for publishing the news in a wrong context.

It is a very old practice of the Qadiani *khalifas* to blame everyone else, including their own followers, but not themselves. It is the *khalifas*, with their contradictory standpoints over the years, who are responsible for the confusion of the followers as to what they believe about Hazrat Mirza sahib.

Consolidation and building of the *Jama'at*

by Maulana Muhammad Ali

[*Editor's Note:* It is often overlooked that Maulana Muhammad Ali was not only anxious that the Lahore Ahmadiyya *Jama'at* should propagate the Holy Quran and Islamic literature in the world, but he also laid great stress on the task of community building and organisation of the *Jama'at*. Over a long period of several years, he presented many proposals for this purpose. As an example, we translate below his Friday *Khutba* of 3 January 1936.]

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, brought about such a revolution in a short period of twenty years that it has no parallel. A large country emerged from the lowest depths of vice, evil and immorality and reached great moral and spiritual heights. Then came, in addition, the blessings that were bestowed upon his companions. Those events assure us that those who worked in the way of Allah were undoubtedly sent His help. There is something called inner faith, and it was this through which the companions showed so many achievements. Man also gains strength by the events that have passed before. The companions had little of the past to strengthen them but we have examples of the past in great measure. To those who wish to serve the religion today there is much in the history of Islam to provide strength to their hearts.

Work for next year

After the annual gathering (in December) a new year begins for us as well, and we take in hand the work before us with renewed vigour. The work which we aim to do for the next year contains prominently the task of consolidation, building up and strengthening of the *Jama'at*. For this work, the greatest need is that the entire *Jama'at* must participate in it. Whether it is the learned ones or other people, rich or poor, junior or senior, young

or old, men or women, until they all take practical part in this work there can be no consolidation or building of the *Jama'at*. Although one year is no long period, nonetheless if for a specified period of time all members of the *Jama'at* join together to apply their strength for one object, this will clear the way for future progress. It is always difficult to start something moving, but once it is set in motion it moves forward by itself.

Need for joint effort

As I just said, all members of the *Jama'at* must take part in the task before us, and they must give up their own inclinations. If we pay particular attention to this work this year, we may succeed in laying a firm foundation. Remember it well that no building can be constructed unless full attention is devoted to building it. No work is successful if it is done half-heartedly.

Wasting your powers is a sin

There are many members who can strengthen the community but they are not doing so because of indolence and lethargy. It is a sin to waste the power to do good. A power is wasted if it is not used. It is the worst sin to waste the ability and strength that God has granted to man.

Make all members useful and active

The community is only a collection of individuals. There are many in the *Jama'at* who cannot find employment. We must make them capable of earning their living. This cannot be done in a day, and our efforts should be permanent. Everyone should strive hard for this, and take note of which members of the *Jama'at* he can provide employment for in his own circle. It would be best to keep the Centre informed of all this regularly. There should be a record here of, on the one hand, the names and addresses of people seeking work, and on the other hand, a list of vacancies.

Unemployed young men should stay at the Centre

It is my wish that all the unemployed young men should come and stay at the Centre. We will arrange for their food. They will learn something about religion. If they have no work skills, we will make arrangement to teach them. We can try to find them work by getting information on vacancies. I would say that even if such unemployed people have to wait six months or a year at the Centre, they should not worry. As their being here will be a burden on us, so we will try our best to find employment for them.

Duty of friends outside

Our friends living outside the Centre should keep in view any places where our men can be appointed, and keep us informed. If this is done in an organised way, hundreds of people can be appointed in factories of our own members. But the problem is that those who need the workforce are unable to find skilled people. When we send them anyone, the complaint we receive is that he does not know anything. If the unemployed stay with us, we can make arrangements to teach them skills.

Everyone to think of ways and act upon them

Apart from this, each person should think of ways of extending the *Jama'at* and acting on those ways, as to how the misconceptions of the public about our Movement can be dispelled, how more sympathisers and well-wishers of the Movement can be created, and how they can be encouraged to join the Movement. This is not the work only of the Centre but the duty of every branch of the *Jama'at* and every member. What is required is that the leading members of every branch of the *Jama'at* should consider proposals according to their local circumstances and act on those. But the Centre must be kept informed in all these matters.

Even minor suggestions bring about progress

Sometimes even a small suggestion can lead to a path of progress. Take the Eid Fund. It occurred to someone that as Eid is an occasion of joy, at which every man spends something on his family, if also on this day a monetary contribution is made towards the propagation of Islam it would not feel as a burden. He put forward this idea to the Promised Messiah. Thus was laid the foundation of the Eid Fund, and till now thousands of Rupees have been collected for the propagation of Islam due to this idea.

'Savings' fund

Due to the 'Savings' fund,¹ much work is being done without the feeling of any burden. As more efforts are made, the benefits of this fund will increase. This fund could be sufficient for our two missions in Europe, provided that all members take part in this easy scheme. They should not only act on it themselves but place the fund boxes in the houses of non-Ahmadi relations and friends. Even if those people cannot reduce the expenses of one day's food budget, as we are doing, they could still put some charity money in it.

1. This was a drive in the *Jama'at* under which members cut down on their food expenditure for one day each week and donated the savings to the *Jama'at*.

All work to be done jointly by the community

Remember that good works by individuals are not as permanent and well established as good works done jointly by the community. If people donate a couple of pennies each towards a common fund, great works of the welfare of the community can be done. If we work as part of an organisation, there would be great success in it. I wish to see all our strength and all our works put together as an organised effort. There should be no individuality or scattering of effort whatsoever. We have a very great and most difficult task before us. To carry it out, we should make a combined effort. Our concentration should be united. Gather all your strength as a community in one place. Let no work and no campaign of ours be on an individual basis.

This year, all members of our *Jama'at*, all workers of the Anjuman, all missionaries, all newspapers — in order words everyone — should apply their full attention to the consolidation and building of the *Jama'at*. To our missionaries in particular I say that they must present our beliefs bravely, without fearing anyone.

My other advice to all friends is that they should refrain from needless criticism of the work and the workers of the *Jama'at*, at least for this year. When the entire community comes together to reach a decision, it is then the duty of every member to act on that decision. There is a time for discussion. At that time, by all means put forward proposals, make criticism, but after that, when a decision is made and a task is decreed, then there must not be any criticism.

Our school and Muslim hostel

If anyone considers that the school is unnecessary, and he is raising objections in this matter, this is not right. As the school has been established by a decision of the community, instead of raising objections you should try to support it. Send your children to study in it. They will be imbued with our spirit. Now even the expenses are not very much. Then there is your hostel. All students of the *Jama'at* studying in colleges in Lahore should stay in this hostel.

In brief, all your work should be done as a part of the organized work of the *Jama'at*. It should appear that all members of the *Jama'at* are working in unison in one direction, not that some are facing east and some are facing west, or that some are marching to the north and others are marching to the south. This year, take in hand the work of the building and consolidation of the *Jama'at* and expend all your energy on it, for at the present time it is the most important work.

Muslims and *Shariah* in U.K.

As has been only too well publicised, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, in a speech in early February, suggested that Muslim religious bodies in the U.K., which Muslims approach in certain civil matters to give decisions according to Islamic *Shariah*, should have their religious judgments recognised in U.K. law. The kind of matters meant are, primarily, marriage and divorce. It is a regrettable fact that so hideous and misconceived an image of Islam prevails in the wider community that even otherwise reasonable people, under the influence of this false picture, are horrified by any suggestion of this kind. They oppose with great passion and vehemence what they think is Islam. In this atmosphere there is more shrieking and shouting rather than calm, rational discussion. However, we must point out that this false image of Islam persists mainly due to the self-serving actions and practices in the name of Islamic *Shariah* by certain Muslim regimes abroad, as well as by Muslim religious leaders and some of the Muslim public here in the U.K. These are the same quarters which make the demands referred to in the Archbishop's speech.

The first point we may raise is that there are many key aspects of the teachings of Islam which Muslims can freely follow in the U.K., without the incorporation of any *Shariah* into U.K. law, and if they did follow these on a large scale it would greatly enhance their esteem in the eyes of others. For example, a Muslim is required by Islam to be scrupulously truthful and honest in his dealings with others, both when taking his due from them or when giving to them what he owes them. To make false claims and misrepresent your circumstances in order to obtain some benefit from the state illegitimately, such as some financial gain or entry and residence in the country on a false basis, is entirely opposed to the basic teachings of Islam. Yet we do not see Muslims providing a shining example of truthfulness in these matters nor their religious leaders urging them to do so. In fact, the religious leaders seem to be fulfilling the description in the Quran: "Why do not the rabbis and the doctors of law prohibit them from their sinful utterances and their devouring unlawful gain?" (5:63)

It seems that financial gain and profit is placed above following the Islamic *Shariah*. There is profit to be made from selling alcohol in shops, and as a result there are Muslims in every city who have obtained, from the U.K. authorities, licences to sell alcohol in their shops. These shopkeepers

could have chosen, instead of this, to abide by the Islamic *Shariah*, which they are free to do even without *Shariah* being incorporated in U.K. law.

Turning specifically to marriage and divorce, these are exactly the areas in which what is called Islamic *Shariah*, by the very people who are demanding its recognition in British law, deviates greatly from the real teachings of the Quran and Hadith and even runs counter to them. It is, in fact, used to entrench certain cultural and social malpractices which have brought Islam into disrepute.

The most basic example is that Islam requires that the two individuals getting married must freely give their consent to the marriage. No incorporation of *Shariah* law into British law is needed in order for Muslims to abide by this teaching, or for their religious leaders to exhort them to abide by it. But both the followers and the leaders are reluctant to adopt this Islamic teaching, for the sake of preserving the existing traditions. There are not only cases of forced marriages, but in other cases also various ways are used to deny the right of consent to the two individuals, and to set aside this teaching of Islam under all kinds of pretexts. At *nikah* ceremonies, those officiating consider it unnecessary to directly ask the girl if she consents to the marriage and they accept in its place the word of the guardian. That is a sure way of confirming the misconception that in Islam the bride's view and voice have no value. In the field of divorce, they have reduced Islam to a laughing stock of the whole world by their belief that all that a man has to do is utter three times to his wife "I divorce you", and an irrevocable divorce follows. On the other hand, the wife in order to claim divorce faces insurmountable obstacles.

The greatest need of the time is for Muslims to strive hard to remove these misconceptions by both putting forward the real teachings of Islam and, more importantly, by acting on those teachings and setting their faces totally against the social evils, such as 'honour crimes', which not only reflect badly on their religion but are causing so much hardship for their own community. This cannot be done by Muslims of the U.K. alone, for the events reported from countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, in connection with how Islamic *Shariah* operates, are naturally attributed to the teachings of Islam by the wider public.

With the criticism and hostility he has faced, the Archbishop may have found himself in a position akin to a persecuted Christian of old being stoned by mobs! Muslims ought to ponder whether in a Muslim country a Muslim religious leader would risk speaking up for the rights of Christians.