

ISLAM HALL LOVE ALL MANKIND.



The Light

September
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International Organ of the Centre for the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam

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Special Issue of The Light

This issue of The Light is dedicated to the conference held in Woking. The theme of the conference was – 'How did the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement reform Islamic thought in my country through the work of the Woking Muslim Mission.' We were unable to all the speeches in one issue but we will continue to print further contributions in the following issues.

In terms of quantity, quality, and consistency, no American Muslim organization produced anything like the publications that the Woking Mission had. – Dr Patrick Bowen

this lack of recognition of its significance in British Muslim history is due to the prevalent religious prejudices and ignorance. – Prof Hama-yun Ansari

Broadcasts (UK time)

1. **Urdu Skype:** Sunday 09:00
2. **English** www.virtualmosque.co.uk
 - **Friday Sermon** 13:00
 - **First Sunday** of month lecture 15:00.
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The Call of the Messiah

by **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**



The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

(Editor's note: Any quotations from the Holy Quran are translated from the author's explanations and are not literal translations of the verse quoted. This extract is from the book *Nuzul-ul-Masih*, taken from the Lahore Ahmadiyya publication 'Essence of Islam', p. 112 -115 where the Promised Messiah puts forward arguments and signs about his claim.)

One cannot attain true salvation unless one is favoured directly with the Word of God, which is in the form of clear and decisive words of Divine origin and authority, which are beyond any shadow of doubt. Another way to attain true salvation is by being closely connected with one who receives Divine revelation, through unbreakable ties of faith and fidelity. It is evident that the prevalence of sin in the world is due to the absence of certainty in matters relating to a life beyond the grave, as is seen in the case of those engrossed in the pleasures of this world, chasing worldly honour and wealth.

A materialistic person cannot trust in God to the same extent as he can count upon a box of precious jewels or other valuables. Nor has he the same fear of God as he has of the laws of the governments of various countries. The reason for this is without conviction, religious beliefs are quite powerless, and they cannot hold up to the certainty which people feel in worldly matters and connections. Hence the need for salvation attained by certainty in spiritual matters. It is to this that the Holy Quran testifies in the words, "And whoever is blind in this (world) will be blind in the Hereafter, and further away from the path." (The Holy Quran 17:72)

How can salvation be attained unless one is completely sure? What purpose does religion serve if it does not take one to the fountain of certainty and salvation?

The hearts of the companions of the Holy Prophet undoubtedly overflowed with such certainty, for they witnessed the heavenly signs

with their eyes and this created a living belief in the Word of God. Their lives were purified and purged of every dross. But what means of certainty remained in the hands of those who followed them, hundreds of years later. Truly, it was the Holy Quran, which is like a magnificent sword, cutting the internal evils and thus cleaning the hearts of Muslims of every impurity, and also destroying all erroneous doctrines taught by false religions.

Allah says in the Holy Quran that the Prophet of God "recites to them His signs and purifies them and imparts to them a knowledge of the Book" (2:151). Therefore, this purification of the soul, which is effected through the Holy Quran, has not been mentioned independently but as having been brought about by the Holy Prophet. This is the reason why the Word of God never comes into the world alone. The brave spiritual warrior who can wield this trusty sword and is a true judge of its worth, is the one bringing it.

Every age stands in need of a new champion to bring about a true and fresh certainty with regard to the Holy Quran, to reveal its true worth and to convince its opponents of its truth and their error. This need is the greatest in this last age, for being the time of the appearance of the Antichrist, and of the final struggle between heavenly and earthly forces, a brave vanquisher must appear in the field.

In short, when the Holy Quran says plainly that the one who remains blind in this life, who does not see the light of certainty, shall also be blind in the next (i.e. shall not attain salvation) it is to motivate every seeker after truth to seek this light of vision and seek the living religion in which the lights of the living God are manifest. Lifeless is the religion in which the chain of Divine revelation does not run unbroken. Such a religion closes the way to certainty and makes people depend upon idle tales of marvels done in the past. It makes them despair of God and throws them in utter darkness. How can a religion point the way to God and release people from the bondage of sin, when it has no means of bringing them to certainty? It is only with the shining of the sun of certainty, that a day when sin disappears, dawns anew. ([Return to contents](#))

I Shall Love All Mankind.

***Speeches at the International
Lahore Ahmadiyya Convention
16-17 August 2019***

**WHY THE LAHORE
AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT?**

***By Hazrat Ameer
Dr Abdul Karim Saeed***

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful. (The Quran, 3:103)

I have recited the 103rd verse of the 3rd chapter of the Holy Quran. In a nutshell it summarises the answer to the question: Why the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement?

There are three aspects to this question. Firstly, there is a need to answer the question in context of the turn of the twentieth century; secondly, "why was there a need to have the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement" (or LAM); thirdly, what will be its role in the present-day context.

The turn of the twentieth century which set pace for scientific advances was the most trying time for the Islamic world. On one hand it was the dawn for the developments which supported the physical needs of mankind; on the other hand the sun was setting on its moral and spiritual needs. It was an age where we had both darkness and light, hope and despair; we were attaining new heights and yet falling into the deep abyss where love for God was giving way to love and craving for this worldly life.

For the Muslims this time was the worst. They were losing their traditions, true religious teachings, spiritual convictions, moral values and also their countries. They were unable to defend the objections raised against their religion or propaganda war that was being waged against Islam and their Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

They were ignorant of the teachings of the

Holy Quran as most of them did not know Arabic, the language it was revealed in. The translation of the Holy Quran was considered heresy by the religious teachers and clergy. The Muslims were therefore ignorant and unaware of the teachings of peace and harmony in the Quran.



Hazrat Ameer addressing the conference.

In the absence of translations in the European and other languages, Islam could not be taught in its true spirit to the people who did not understand Arabic. As a result Islam was misinterpreted and misrepresented to the masses as a religion that was spread by the sword, which of course was contrary to the teachings of the Holy Quran which clearly stated in chapter 2, verse 256: "There is no compulsion in religion; the correct way is indeed clear from error."

In these times of darkness and despair the Muslims awaited a Reformer (*Mujadid*) who would come to defend and propagate Islam, as was foretold by the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. It was foretold that this person would come to remove any deviations that occurred in religion, especially those that were against its basic concepts and teachings.

As Ahmadis we believe Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Allah's mercy be upon him, was the person who He chose and gave the role to present to the world the true picture of Islam; to defend it against the onslaught of propaganda and misinterpretations and to revitalise it and spread it again as a living religion of peace and harmony. He defended Islam against being an aggressive religion spread by the sword. He stressed that Islam had to be spread by the pen and by force of its moral teachings, love and logic. He stressed that Islam was never spread or has need to be spread by force, aggression or terrorism. His declaration was met with great

opposition, as it still is, and he was declared a

heretic and against the teachings of Islam.

We advocate peace and adoption of peaceful means of spreading Islam, referring to it as 'Spread of Islam by the pen.' A late member of the LAM gave ISLAM a most appropriate acronym which stands for: **I Shall Love All Mankind.**

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said that as the attack on Islam was through literature (and media) the answer must be given with the same weapons. He advised that Islam does not need to conquer the territories of people but their hearts. We have not adopted this stance and slogan of peace and tolerance as the hall mark of our Jamaat just to please the world. It was the teaching of Hazrat Mirza Sahib from the very start. I quote what he wrote, well over a century ago, on hearing the news of a European foreigner being shot in pre-independence India:

'Is it a virtuous deed that there is a man going about in the market-place, we have no connection with him; so much so, we don't know his name, but despite this we take a shot at him intending to kill him? Is this religious behaviour?'

'Contrast this with those early holy Muslims whom Allah instructed in Makkah not to respond to violence even if they were cut to pieces. Alas! Today the religious leaders have forgotten all those events and think that to fire a gun at an innocent man constitutes Islam.'

'Is such killing taught in the Quran or Hadith? Can any Muslim answer?'

He advised his followers calling them 'his army':

'Those who join my army, I order them to give up these misconceived ideas of Jihad with the sword, and to purify their hearts, develop and nurture the feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and sufferings. They should spread peace on earth as this is how their religion will spread.'

Despite all the opposition he faced, many knowledgeable and scholarly persons joined his Movement and followed him. Among them was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din who was later to come to



(from left) Mr Azhar Ahmad, Mrs Sameera Ahmad, Mayor of Runnymede, Mr Parshotam Sohi and his wife.

UK in September 1912 and devoted many years of his life to the propagation of Islam in this country. According to the teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, he was advised by Maulana Nur-ud-Din, Allah grant him mercy, the head of Ahmadiyya Anjuman after the death of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, to preach the Unity of God and not to indulge in sectarianism or aggression against any other religion.

After arrival in UK Khwaja sahib was planning to establish a centre in UK, when he received a letter from Maulana Nur ud Din who informed him that there was a mosque in Woking which could be used as a centre for the Muslims. On receiving this news Khwaja Sahib along with his companion travelled to Woking.

He found a dusty and dirty Mosque and cleaned a small area with his turban. He prayed asking God for help. He also found an old and torn copy of the Holy Quran and on opening it the first verse that he came across was the one that contains a promise of Allah to make Makkah the centre of propagation of the Unity of God.

He immediately fell into prostration and with tearful eyes sought Allah's help to make Woking the centre of propagation of Islam in the West. This prayer was answered. Thus, began the history of the services of our Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in Woking; a history of bringing a message of peaceful and a tolerant religion to UK. We as members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement are proud of this achievement and thank Allah for it.

He preached Islam as a Religion of Peace as guided by the teachings of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the reformer of the era; which were the same teachings that had been practiced by the companions of the Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

He constantly delivered sermons and speeches which included subjects like:

- Remember that Allah is God of all mankind and not only of Muslims.
- Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet of Allah and has been sent for all mankind.
- The Quran is the final scripture and guidance for all mankind and not a book of guidance for Muslims only.
- Islam is not only for Muslims but for the whole mankind.
- Islam has to be spread by the 'pen' and not by the 'sword'; it is religion of peace and tolerance.

It was such pristine and peaceful teachings of Islam that impressed the educated people of England including Lord Headley to accept it. Since then our members have lived as peaceful and law-abiding citizens of this lovely country.

Next, I move onto the second part of my talk, the Question: Why LAM?

After the death of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on 26th May 1908, Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din was elected as the first person to be the next leader. Under his headship there was only one Community.

At that time, some misguided people within the Movement claimed that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet and his deniers heretics. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement himself denied claims to Prophethood no less than 257 times in his books, speeches and while answering questions of opponents (collection of these is now published as a book by LAM). Even to the last few days of his life in May 1908, in his reported conversations with other Muslims while staying at Lahore, where he died, spoke of him as a *Mujaddid* and assured them that he did not regard Muslims outside his movement as *kafirs*. He expressed his firm belief that Prophet Muhammad

was the final prophet that Allah sent for the guidance of mankind. No prophet old or new would come after him and that the Prophethood was sealed with his advent forever.

He considered all who confessed Islam through recitation of the Kalima, *La illaha ill Allah, Muhammad-ur Rasulallah*, as Muslims. It was the ulama (religious scholars) who were denouncing him and his follower as being outside the fold of Islam.

The first successor, Maulana Nur-ud-Din, too strongly held faith in the finality of Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad as clearly expressed in his famous book '*Miraqat-ul-Yaqeen*'.

In May 1914, Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore, now known as Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore, continued the mission of the Founder, by disassociating itself from such erroneous beliefs and moving the headquarters of the organisation from Qadian to Lahore. Maulana Muhammad Ali declared: '... the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement with the following characteristic beliefs:

- That the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the last and final prophet, after whom no prophet whatsoever, new or old, can appear.
- That believers in the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, form a brotherhood and so long as a person claims membership of the brotherhood of Islam by declaring the words 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', he cannot be expelled from Islam or branded as a kafir by any power on earth.
- Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad never claimed to be a prophet, but was a Mujaddid in Islam, like Mujaddids that arose in Islam before him.
- Those Muslims who do not believe Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad still remain Muslims.

I end my address today by briefly mentioning that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement now enters its third role to answer the question: why LAM? It will be actively playing a role as a peaceful and tolerant movement to defend Islam in

the present-day context of Islamophobia. We will actively engage in fulfilling our duty to Islam and defend it as a religion not to be feared but appreciated as bringing peace to the world; we will explain to the world how actions of some misguided Muslims do not mean Islam is bad. Just as actions of some misguided followers of other religions have never meant that their religions were bad.

I end with a prayer that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement continues to serve Islam in a peaceful and tolerant way and by doing so spread peace and harmony not only in the UK but the entire world. Aameen. ([Return to contents](#))

The Woking Memorial

by *Azhar ud Din Ahmad*



(Note: Mr Ahmad, from a distinguished Ahmadi family from Pakistan and settled in the UK because of persecution he faced. He heads the Restoration Project of the UK branch, overseeing the restoration of the graves of people like Lord Headley, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Pickthall etc)

In the late 1980s, when deciding where to move to in England, I chose Woking due to its nearness to Shah Jahan Mosque, and later due to Brookwood cemetery.

Brookwood cemetery, built in 1854, spans over 220 acres of land and is the largest in western Europe. Here, pioneering Muslims are buried. However, little maintenance is carried out and so last year I began the restoration of these sites. Graves, covered in mud, moss and overgrown weeds littered the area and after speaking to the estates of Brookwood, they cleaned them all, restoring them for visitors and honouring them fully. This was appreciated when Brookwood hosted a Heritage Day and on the guided walking tour, the graves inscription was readable and tidy.

Many friends, family members or visitors who come from far and wide, be it journalists from Malaysia, academics from Berlin or descendants of those buried at Brookwood, appreciate the care and upkeep we maintain on the stone heads, as not everyone can afford or have

reason to do so and we are fortunate to do so.

Current projects include working with the Al Khazir Foundation in creating a dedicated Muslim trail for Brookwood, with the best route as well as information about each person. In addition, I am working with the estates at Brookwood to help build a wall around the plot where Lord Headley and other pious people are resting, with restoration of half buried headstones to be fixed. Further, we are working towards improving the inscription on the headstones which can hardly be read, to allow easier reading. And lastly, to ensure people can come independently and learn about those who are getting forgotten, a leaflet with details on all will be created, to make sure generations to come remember and honour those who fought and worked hard to ensure we can live and practice our religion freely with a place to worship. This would all not be possible without the help of our Jamaat, who kindly donated money as well as moral support in this large restoration project. Dreams are easy to make; however, we need the support of those who also believe in our cause for these dreams to be a reality, something which our Jamaat is brilliant at doing.

I have always felt like my purpose was in Woking, and Zahid Aziz also comments saying how God must have chosen Woking for me. I believe this and so, to give back, I decided to organise my first interfaith convention, in 2009, the first from our community. Four years later, alongside my community, the local borough council Woking and myself, I organised another convention, here in HG Wells, celebrating 100 years of the Woking Muslim mission.

After this, Ray Morgan and his team invited me to his office and asked if they could do anything for our community. Not wanting to miss this wonderful opportunity, I requested a memorial for those who sacrificed their lives for spreading Islam from the Woking Muslim Mission platform. My second request was a place of worship for my community. Ray and his team worked very hard to fulfil both my requests and the former is going to be completed within a few months and *Insha-Allah* we will get a place for worship one day soon with the help of Ray and his team.

This is my third International convention

I Shall Love All Mankind.

which I am organising in Woking once again with the continued support of the Woking Borough Council and my community. We all understand when you are trying to complete such a large project that involves several communities, work can be delayed which happened with our memorial. However, we are still excited to see the final memorial once it is completed. Thank you for listening to my experience of Woking and all it has to offer. ([Return to contents](#))

Woking Muslim Mission of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement

By Prof Humayun Ansari

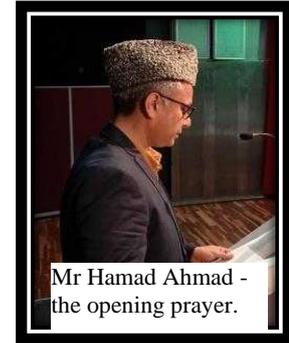


(Editor's Note: Professor Humayun Ansari, O.B.E., works at the Department of History, Royal Holloway, University of London.)

As an historian of Islam and Muslims, one of the questions that has recently intrigued me is why, at least to my knowledge, there hasn't been much reflection on the contribution that Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has made to Islamic thought in Britain. I find it puzzling because through my own work I have come to realise that this lack of recognition of its significance in British Muslim history is due to the prevalent religious prejudices and ignorance. What I want to do today is offer an appreciation of intellectual achievements of Mission in the many decades of its existence.

The immensity of it comes from the realisation that if it wasn't for Khwaja Kamaluddin, the Woking mosque might have disappeared completely. For after Leitner's death in 1899, the site fell into disuse and his heirs were on the point of disposing of it when the Khwaja, on a visit to England in the summer of 1913, by chance came upon the deserted and derelict mosque and decided to stay. When Leitner's heirs tried to have him evicted, he refused to go, had its disposal stopped, got the heirs to accept the establishment of a Trust to hold the title deeds, and proceeded to lay the foundations of the Woking Muslim Mission.

The Khwaja immediately understood that in Britain, Islam had been maligned for centuries and how this had generated intense hostility towards its perceived values and its adherents. On the political front, Turkey was increasingly at the receiving end of trenchant criticism, the blame for its miserable, backward and uncivilized state lying, it was alleged by western critics, squarely with the Islamic ideology of its rulers and its people.



Mr Hamad Ahmad -
the opening prayer.

The Mission began countering these perceptions. Its strategy was broadly assimilationist. Hence, in order to create an intellectual space for Islam in Britain it sought to establish some degree of consonance between it and Christianity, the overwhelming religion in Britain.

Another one of the Mission's objectives was to build a viable Muslim community in Britain, in part at least through conversion. But, it quickly became apparent that in order for Islam to prosper in Britain, it would have to be indigenized as it had been elsewhere; and this would not happen if it continued to be perceived as an 'alien' and 'exotic' religion practised by people who were attributed by the majority population with traits that made them inferior in their eyes.

Very early on the Mission realized that, if they were to make any headway on conversion, they would have to be creative and adopt an approach with which their audience was familiar. Consequently, the policy of the Mission was to present, as much as possible, their arguments in a form that would be least likely to produce antagonism. Contentious polemics were carefully avoided. Nothing was said that could possibly offend anybody's religious susceptibilities. Common ground was consciously sought. Audiences were encouraged to do their own thinking. In keeping with, by now, well established traditions of discussion and persuasion, they applied rational methods to explain the practice

and social positions that they believed were intrinsic to Islam. They were able to present their ideas which suggested that Islam could be relevant to their lives in the British environment, that it was not an 'alien' presence in their midst.

Much of their work was conducted with a light touch in a convivial atmosphere with due regard for the social etiquette, conventions and customs, modes of conduct and practices current at the time. British cultural forms were adopted to give as little an impression of 'strangeness' as possible. Lectures by eminent Muslims were followed by refreshments and music. For instance, on one such occasion a newly arrived Sufi, Maulavi Inayat Khan, presented a rendition of Indian Classical music on the sitar, and a number of English ladies performed on the piano and violin. Importantly, they were able to present their ideas which suggested that Islam could be relevant to their lives in the British environment, that it was not an 'alien' presence in their midst.

Throughout the inter-war period, it was modernist Islam, in contrast to the much more ritualized, albeit disparate, practices of South Asian Islam which have come more recently to dominate the British scene, that was ascendant. People associated with the Woking Muslim Mission, such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali wrote pamphlets, which tried to establish a de-politicized progressive terrain for discourse on religion. By joining such institutions as the World Faith Conference, these Muslims developed the notion not just of inter-faith dialogue but also that the religion of all reasonable people was the same.

The Mission's monthly journal, the *Islamic Review* (IR), published out of Woking, became the primary vehicle for the expression and dissemination of the organisation's views and activities. From February 1913 when the journal first appeared, it held a virtual monopoly of the British Muslim press; and it remained the principle organ of Muslim opinion in Great Britain until the 1950s. Thus, for around 40 years, the journal provided an indispensable medium and means of communication between Muslims based in Britain and wider British society, interpreting matters of Muslim interest and events

(as it understood them), though we should note that a significant portion of Muslim opinion always dissented from the position that the IR took on various religious and political issues.

In the very first issue of *Muslim India and Islamic Review* (the title was later abbreviated to *Islamic Review*), its editor set out in some detail the reasons for its inauguration. The Foreword began with a prescient critique of the press in Britain whose voice, it believed, "acts as an effective agency to mould the trend of events". Put simply, the press was misrepresenting Islam and Muslims to the wider public. It did so "by withholding information which is distasteful to it, or which conflicts with the view of affairs to which it desires to give currency – in a word, with its policy". For the *Islamic Review* the problem with several of the most influential newspapers seemed to be the fact that they did not ask: "Is this information correct?" but rather: "Will this be agreeable to or support the policy outlined by our leaders?" For the journal, the press supported "party-policy at any cost and conceal[ed] or distort[ed] and minimise[d] everything which it th[ought] had got counteracting effects." For the IR, "Muslims were the greatest sufferers of all other communities through misrepresentation in Europe", partly as a result of misinformation and partly due to ignorance. It believed that the negative attitudes of the British people would undergo radical change if it could only "[diffuse] in this country more correct ideas than those which at present prevail as to the essential features of Islam and the characteristics of those who profess that religion, and [to dispel] the many gross errors – sometimes due to malice, more often to mere ignorance – which are current in Europe as to its doctrines, ethic, and practice". Isn't it remarkable how astute and ahead of its time the IR was in identifying the Islamophobic discourse at the time?

This, in a nutshell, was the corrective that the IR proposed to offer. Through the *Islamic Review*, the Mission's leading lights elaborated their views on the position of women in Islam, polygamy, prohibition on drinking alcohol and eating pork, usury, gambling and circumcision, fasting, zakat (wealth tax) and prayer, and many

other issues which aroused controversy or seemed at variance with Christian practice. Instead of highlighting the differences between Christianity and Islam, they emphasized the commonality of the Abrahamic tradition of which the two religions, along with Judaism, they claimed, formed an important part.

It is fascinating to see how they addressed some of the fundamental issues on which they might have felt vulnerable and under attack, for example, the question of apostasy and the punishment for it; the question of purdah (veiling) and women's position in Islam; slavery; halal food; and approaches to music and art. Muslims involved with the work of the Woking Mission, therefore, were prepared to enter into rational discussions and debates whenever the occasion demanded. They accepted the intellectual traditions and conventions of British society and conveyed their ideas in that mode. In all these ways, we can observe an on-going engagement with wider society.

The entry of Turkey in the war on the side of Germany and its proclamation of jihad in November 1914 calling on Muslims all over the world to rise up against its enemies caused considerable unease and debate. These dilemmas for Muslims, not surprisingly, were discussed on the pages of the IR. While more radical Pan-Islamists, taking their cue from the Ottoman proclamation of jihad, called on Indian Muslim soldiers to refuse combat against the Turks, those writing for the IR rejected this. Their arguments drew instead on those that had been articulated by nineteenth-century Muslim modernist reformers such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the leader of the Ahmadi community, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, both of whom had categorically rejected the notion of armed insurrection against their rulers. In his booklet, *The British Government and Jihad* (1900, p.17), the latter had declared, "I have come to you with an order: jihad with the sword has ended from this time forward, but the jihad of purifying your souls must continue". Khwaja Kamaluddin was also moved to warn that "sedition and anarchical movements were strictly prohibited in Islam".

On the question of apostasy, for instance, in

contrast to the support expressed by some British Muslims from 1989 onwards for the fatwa of Ayatullah Khomeini in which he passed the death sentence on Salman Rushdie for such an offence, they categorically denied that the punishment was the death penalty. The Quran and Hadith were invoked to demonstrate the validity of their position. They declared that Islam respected individual freedom of religion and conscience. However, they also acknowledged that 'fanatics' existed in all religions who might insist on capital punishment for apostasy.

They felt unhappy about the existing Blasphemy Law which, in their view, only provided protection for 'a state religion' (this has now been repealed). In contrast to some of the recent British Muslims, who, in the 1990s, not only ignored the offer to remove the offence of blasphemy from the statute books, but also argued in favour of the preservation of the 'established' status of the national church, they called for the disestablishment of the Church of England.

Purdah in the British environment was deemed to be quite impracticable. Indeed, it was suggested that the abolition of the purdah system 'would be a blessing if done gradually, with the symbols gradually eroded and the meanings kept intact'. Unsurprisingly, British women who converted to Islam were never asked to use the veil. Public gatherings organized by the Mission and its offshoots were generally mixed affairs, as were the religious festivals and the larger congregations.

Similarly, on the question of halal meat, the *fatwa* of Muhammad Abduh (the rector of Cairo's famous Islamic seminary Al-Azhar), allowing the consumption of meat which had not been properly ritually slaughtered, was accepted (Abduh had sanctioned it in line with the Islamic principle of necessity or *darura*). Music was not thought to be 'in the bad books of Islam'; it was considered to be a fine art and outside the confines of religion it might be 'a real blessing for humanity'.

Similarly, any strictures against art, were, it

was argued, aimed at killing polytheistic propensities and not to discourage art itself (by contrast many of Britain's post-Second World War Muslims have been induced to view both music and art much more disapprovingly). Muslims involved with the work of the Woking Mission, therefore, were prepared to enter into rational discussions and debates whenever the occasion demanded. They accepted the intellectual traditions and conventions of British society and conveyed their ideas in that mode. They despatched open letters to politicians espousing views on issues of importance to British Muslims. The columns of the local and national press were used to good effect; lectures and talks were given; public meetings were addressed; non-Muslims were invited to visit the mosque and engaged in constructive dialogue; questions were answered through the rational method. The broadest possible definition of 'Muslim' was used. Converts were accepted as Muslims if they declared their belief in the prophethood of Muhammad alongside the prophethoods of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.

In all these ways, we can observe an on-going engagement with wider society. The aim was to integrate Islam and Muslims organically into the fabric of British society.

Even more important was the emergence of the Woking mosque as a symbol of the worldwide Muslim community in Britain. Woking acquired symbolic and organizational centrality in the inter-war period for British Islam primarily because it was able to establish and build intimate connections with influential Muslims in the capital city – Khwaja Kamaluddin, Lord Headley, Maulana Sadr-ud-Din, Marmaduke Pickthall, Mushir Husain Kidwai, Syed Ameer Ali, were the leading lights of the Mission. Muslim dignitaries invariably made a point of attending at the mosque on their visits to Britain.

Implicit in the visits by prominent figures from such diverse environs and denominational backgrounds was the acceptance of the non-sectarian character of the Mission. The Begum of Bhopal, The head of the Shia Ismaili sect, the Agha Khan, for example, was welcomed with the same degree of dignity and warmth as the

Sunni Amir Faisal of Saudi Arabia or King Faruq of Egypt.

The Mission would have had little chance of success if those from the indigenous communities had got even a scent of the sectarian divisions which had come to bedevil Islam on the Indian subcontinent. The Mission remained utterly non-sectarian and ecumenical with its leading members warning on many occasions of the damage that sectarianism would wreak. Aware of the dangers inherent in allegations of any kind of doctrinal bias, Kamaluddin and the later imams consciously rotated those who led the congregations. On many occasions, members of the congregation representing a diversity of Muslim nations and followers of different schools of thought were invited to lead, demonstrating a fundamental unity and their acceptability to all those who attended. These included, among others, the Saudi Minister Hafiz Wahba, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall and the Grand Mufti of Palestine. (Return to contents)

The DNA of American Islam

The Impact of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Thought through the Woking Muslim Mission in Reforming Muslim Thought in the USA

Dr. Patrick Bowen



(Editor's Note: Dr Patrick Bowen is an academic scholar who specialises in the study of Islam and religious conversion. His Ph.D. thesis looked at the service of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in propagating Islam in the US.)

I would like to start my speech by offering my gratitude to your community, and to Mr. Shahid Aziz in particular, for bringing me here today. Not only am I grateful for the opportunity to speak about an aspect of American Muslim history for which I took great pleasure in discovering, but I have also been very much looking forward to visiting Woking and seeing with

my own eyes the city that played such an important role in the development of Islam in the West. And I have felt this way for two reasons.

First is that, when I was a young graduate student just beginning to learn about the early history of Islamic movements in the United States, the Woking Muslim Mission was actually one of the very first—if not the first—international communities that I read about. From my perspective at the time, Woking seemed to be at or near ground zero of the modern movement of Islamic conversions in the West, which burst onto the American religious landscape in the 1920s with the sudden wave of conversions of thousands of African Americans. Since it was my desire to write about this history, I immediately began including the Woking Mission in my research papers and articles. Despite—but really because of my young eagerness to join in the scholarly conversation, I did not at first notice that my American word processing programs did not recognize the word Woking and were frequently auto-“correcting” it to the word “Working.” After a series of patient but clearly irritated teachers and editors pointed this error out to me, I became so deeply embarrassed that the name, and spelling, of Woking became permanently etched in my mind. To this day, in fact, I cannot even write the word “WoRking” without double checking it. So, perhaps at a deep subconscious level, I have travelled over four thousand miles just to try to heal this old emotional trauma from my student days.

But there is another, much more serious and significant reason that I was happy to receive the invitation to this celebration. In some sense this also goes back to my early grad school days, but to a point just after the whole Woking-Working fiasco. At that time, as I continued reading about and doing new research on the development of the history of Islam in the US, Woking faded in importance for me. For the vast majority of scholars on Islam in America, the Woking Mission is at best—when it is mentioned at all—included merely as a piece of trivia and is quickly passed over, even in discussions of American Muslim converts. In my own research, where I of course started with the most cited and most easily accessible questions

and source material, I initially found very little that would go against the tendency that had been displayed by previous scholars. And as I have learned over the years, there is some justification for that tendency. Woking was certainly not as central to the American Muslim movement as I had believed in my earliest, naive days. The British links to American conversions in the interwar period were indeed significant, but they were far more complex—in fact Woking’s own relationship with Americans was much more complex, as we will see shortly—than I could have originally comprehended. Nevertheless, although it took several years and a very winding road of research, on which I chased down hundreds of other questions and resources concerning the development of American conversion to Islam, I gained a new, much more profound appreciation for the Woking Mission’s role in the history of Islam in the West. Although Woking itself was not directly responsible for many American conversions, the publications it produced played a key role in both the dissemination of the knowledge of Islam in America and in the community-building efforts of early American Muslim organizers. This role was subtle, and therefore was understandably missed by my predecessors who were not shining their intellectual flashlights in the same historical shadows as I have been. What I’ve learned, though, is that this role has left an indelible imprint on American Islamic thought. To use a different metaphor, the Woking Mission is part of the American Muslim DNA. Now, admittedly for some people this fact is not at all interesting. But for a historian, especially one whose research into the broader history of non-Christian religions in the West has demonstrated to him that such DNA-shaping phenomena are both rare and special, I am genuinely excited to visit the birthplace of this particular historical phenomenon, and to be able to share this little-known, but deeply important history with the very community that produced it.

Now, in discussing this history, I’d like to start by addressing a topic that even I failed to bring fully to light when I wrote my first two books on the history of conversion to Islam in the United States. This topic is Woking’s earliest direct connections with Americans. In January

1922, Woking's international magazine, the *Islamic Review*, published a short list of recent converts to Islam, and included in it were two Americans. A Christian reverend, one J.D.W. Ross, who had taken the Muslim name Saifur-Rahman, and one Sard-ud-Din, whose Christian name was listed as Stewart A. Broad, Jr. The latter's last name may have been a typo, for just a few months later, the *Review* published a piece by an American convert named S.A. Board, with the 'R' as the fourth letter, rather than the second. Now Mr. Board's writing, which was notably included in Woking's important 1961 compilation of conversion narratives, *Islam Our Choice*, revealed that he was an African American who had first learned about Islam in 1920, and by 1921 he was a convert who was linked to the Woking community. This is very much a noteworthy event, for it was really only in 1920 and 1921 that African Americans had started embracing Islam in any significant numbers, and this is probably one of the earliest conversion narratives of such an individual, which places the Woking Mission at the beginning of this incredibly important religious transformation in the modern West. I think it is also worth pointing out that almost thirty years later, in 1949, Mr. Board had another letter published in the *Islamic Review* in which he affirms that after all those years, and despite the prejudice he received from other African Americans who were Christian, he was still a Muslim, and still linked with the Woking community.

What is also noteworthy about Mr. Board's 1922 letter is that he indicated that his interest in Islam was first piqued when he read, not the *Islamic Review*, but a different British publication, the *African Times and Orient Review*. That magazine was published by Dusé Muhammad Ali, a prominent British Muslim of African descent, who himself was affiliated with the Woking Mission, and had a personal, if sometimes contentious relationship with Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Mr. Ali, interestingly, would soon have a more direct role in the spread of Islam among African Americans. In late 1921 he moved to the United States and by the next year he was an influential figure in the massively popular black nationalist movement led by Marcus Garvey. It was in fact largely because Garvey's influential

movement, starting after Mr. Ali had joined it, began promoting Islamic themes that Islam was able to take stable hold in the African American community. Indeed, Muslim missionaries from other groups intentionally exploited this link between Garvey and Islam. And this link, at its core, was an Ahmadi message—one that had been transmitted to Mr. Ali, Mr. Garvey, and to the tens of thousands of black Americans who heard their message: That true Islam does not permit racism and that it has no sectarian divides. Racism and religious factionalism were both issues that had greatly disturbed and harmed African Americans, and for the thousands who embraced Islam in the 1920s—a number previously unparalleled in US history—those two concepts that were promoted by the Woking Mission were central to their choice to embrace Islam. Therefore, in the examples of Woking's subtle, behind-the-scenes part in the American Islamic DNA, this is one of its most important.

In any case, as I've said, the Woking Mission's efforts among African Americans were greatly overshadowed by those of other Muslim communities. And while the later work they did do is important, its outcomes would appear in only subtle ways over the next few decades, until the 1950s, when those outcomes became much more pronounced, as we will see shortly.

For now, though, I would like to focus on the Woking Mission's impact on the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. It was during this period that the Mission made an enormous effort to distribute the *Islamic Review* to American individuals, schools, and libraries. If one examines the magazine's letters to the editor from that period, it will become clear that Americans rich and poor, from college professors to unemployed library dwellers, were grateful to find and receive Woking's flagship publication. Missives poured in from readers who were eager to learn about Islam at a time when hardly a word—let alone an unprejudiced word—could be found about the religion in an accessible source. The timing of all this was fortuitous, for this was a period when American culture was going through a transition. The First World War

had awoken Americans to the larger world beyond their country's borders, and the slow but steady growth of Asian-majority religions on US soil had begun eroding old ideas about the unquestioned supremacy of Christianity. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself had made small inroads in America years before, and the vestiges of those efforts were still transforming American minds, often in subtle ways, as we will come back to. But it needs to be clear that, in this period, which was before the time of portable audio recordings, Americans who were interested in Islam obtained their information largely through the written word. This was the era that saw the first widespread creation of religious—not just Christian—book clubs, wherein readers could obtain famous holy books, commentaries, and historical works from many non-Christian religions. Works dealing with Islam were still fairly limited, though, and it was largely Woking's publications that helped fill that void. Not only with its magazine, but also with its publication of Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation of the Holy Qur'an, which contains the English next to the Arabic—an incredibly useful tool for those who sought to learn the text's language. In terms of quantity, quality, and consistency, no American Muslim organization produced anything like the publications that the Woking Mission had sent out at that time. If an average American in the 1930s and 1940s wandered into a library wanting to read a publication about Islam by a Muslim, it was more likely than not that he or she would be picking up something from Woking. It was in this way that the core teachings of Woking's message, especially those that would stand out to Americans, such as those around racism and sectarianism, received wide circulation in the country.

Beyond this more diffuse intellectual impact, however, was one of the most surprising, if little-known, developments in the history of American Islam. Since no other Muslim magazine had as broad a reach and impact as the *Review*, its letters to the editor section became one of the most likely resources for American Muslims and potential converts to learn about Muslims in other parts of the country, which in turn helped bring together various American Muslim convert-focused organizations. The

earliest example of this is the case of the white converts in Los Angeles, California, who read about each other in the magazine's 1931 and 1932 issues. By the summer of the latter year, white Muslims in the region who had met each other through the journal began to organize. Then, in the following year, a small, but nationally-focused Muslim organization named the American Islamic Association, which had both immigrants and converts as leaders, used the *Islamic Review* to recruit the West Coast converts into its East Coast-based network.

The American Islamic Association had been indirectly linked to the Woking mosque since the former's founding in 1930. The group had been initially organized as an American branch of the Western Islamic Association, which itself had been established by the British convert Dr. Khalid Sheldrake, an early member of the Woking Mission. In the 1930s, the American group's members had published not just letters, but also full articles and advertisements for their writings appear in the *Islamic Review*. The magazine thus became the group's first and only reliable medium for regular communication with a geographically dispersed American audience. Importantly, some members of this audience, like the members of the American Islamic Association, had previously been exposed to a wide variety of Islamic and Sufi practices. The American group, via Sheldrake's (and thus Woking's) influence, had already committed itself to the principles of anti-racism and anti-sectarianism, but the *Review's* own emphasis on these matters helped facilitate these various Muslims' interactions and eased potential sectarian tensions. In the end, were it not for the Woking mission connecting the Americans who were scattered across the country, the American Islamic Association probably would never have become the first truly national convert-based Muslim organization in the United States.

The emergence of this American Muslim network would become linked with another important organizational development in US Muslim history. Although the links with the Woking Mission were not as direct here, the broader Lahore movement did play a more

involved part, and Woking could be said to have helped lay the foundation, so I think it is worth briefly recounting.

By the mid-1930s, the Lahore movement's headquarters not only were in communication with the leaders of the American Islamic Association—communication that presumably had been facilitated by the Woking Mission—but also had an active missionary for their community working in the United States. An African American convert, Saeed Ahmad, who had probably been involved with a number of different Islamic groups prior to aligning with Lahore, had started convincing several Muslims in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania region—which was a key hub of Islam in the African American community—to align with the Lahore movement and advocate for non-sectarianism. It is still unclear whether or not Woking's publications played a role in this project, but the results, nevertheless, were significant: The Lahore movement had established a strong foothold in one of America's largest communities of Muslim converts, and its message of non-racism and non-sectarianism began to radiate throughout that community's national network of influence. Meanwhile, although the formal American Islamic Association ceased functioning, its own network of white and immigrant Muslims stayed alive and continued to gain new members, often by way of the *Islamic Review*. The most notable of these was Nadira Osman from New York, a convert who embraced Islam after reading the works of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and learning of his connections with Alexander Russell Webb, a prominent nineteenth-century white convert who also had communicated with the Ahmadi founder. Soon, Miss Osman was publishing writings in the *Review* and by the 1940s she and former members of the American Islamic Association were connecting with each other, organizing new Islamic institutions, and interacting with Lahore-influenced African Americans in several regions of the country. During the war, some members of the that community were also involved when African Americans with Lahori connections attempted to create the first truly multiracial and national mainstream Islamic organization, the Uniting

Islamic Societies of America. Again, emphasis in this group reflected Lahore's—and Woking's—philosophy of non-racism and non-sectarianism. In fact, when certain members challenged this philosophy in the organization, the unifying Lahore view won out. Although the institution had dissolved before 1950, it solidified connections and left an important model and organizational legacies for American Muslims in the ensuing years.

In the late 1940s, the Lahore movement in America received yet another burst of energy when its Indian heads sent an official representative to America's West Coast. Mr. Bashir Ahmad Minto soon arrived in San Francisco, California where he incorporated the Moslem Society of the USA and quickly went to work, sending out hundreds of advertisements and letters to local and national periodicals, giving dozens of lectures across the state, distributing Islamic publications to all who were interested, raising money to purchase a building, and corresponding and meeting with hundreds of Muslims and potential converts. With these efforts, he had established the first robust Lahore Ahmadi mission in America, and as a result he had begun winning over to Islam a new class of Americans: college-educated whites. In previous periods, the vast majority of American converts to Islam had not attended college. In most cases, although these people tended to be interested in intellectual subjects like history and philosophy, they had not formally attended a post-secondary institution. But Mr. Minto's approach to promoting Islam was able to bring in the college-trained, and at one school, the well-respected University of Chicago, one of Mr. Minto's converts established a college Islamic association, one of the first of its kind in the country. Despite these new developments, however, the earlier Lahore connections with Americans were not forgotten, and after Mr. Minto left in the mid-1950s, a former member of the American Islamic Association, Muharrem Nadji, was appointed to be the new official representative of the Lahore movement in America.

Mr. Minto's efforts may have contributed to another broader development taking place in

American Islam in the 1950s, but this development's effects can actually be better observed in the pages of Woking's *Islamic Review*. Postwar America, which was now receiving thousands of Muslim students and immigrants, witnessed an unprecedented surge in Muslim conversion and organization-forming. And since, just as in previous periods, there was still no widely-popular American-based Islamic periodical, the *Review* became the closest alternative to that for American Muslims. Letters and occasionally articles from non-Muslim readers still had a very real presence in the magazine, but what was perhaps its most notable feature was the increase in letters from Muslims of a wide variety of ethnicities, from converts and immigrants alike. One can also observe in its pages that both prominent and small American Muslim communities from across the country were eager to communicate with Woking and with the other readers of the magazine. In addition, mention of new American converts were becoming almost frequent, and one can see in the *Review's* letters the strong belief that Islam would be an escape from the racism that had traumatized life for so many Americans.

The largest concentration of new converts seems to have come from the metropolitan area around eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, on America's East Coast. These particular individuals, notably, were not like most of the other American converts in the *Review*, who were only occasionally communicating with the Woking Mission, while maintaining stronger commitments to American groups. On the contrary, if one reads from that period the Lahore publication *The Light*, there is strong evidence in it that these East Coast converts were often directly and primarily tied to Woking. In fact, it seems that during the 1950s, the Woking Mission was one of the first Muslim groups to make significant inroads among the African American prison population, all while preaching its anti-racist and anti-sectarian message.

This discussion of African American Muslims brings me to the last important piece of history in this story: Woking's connection

with the non-orthodox African American group known as the Nation of Islam. In 1958, Woking's imam, Khan Ghulam Rabbani Khan, visited the United States and met with various Muslims, including members of the Nation of Islam. Impressed with the group's disciplined, business-oriented lifestyle and its condemnation of white racism, the imam wrote several paragraphs praising the group in *The Light*. This led to receiving letters of thanks from multiple Nation Muslims, including its leader, Elijah Muhammad, whose missive appeared in the *Islamic Review* in early 1959. Subsequent to this, a prominent American orthodox Muslim wrote to the *Review* to point out the Nation's many severe divergences from orthodox Islam and, as a result, Woking's imam publicly rejected any affiliation with the group. Now, while it is true that the Nation of Islam's teachings were radically unorthodox, the group did revere the Qur'an, and had used since its early days Maulvi Muhammad Ali's translation. In fact, despite the reality that orthodox Islamic knowledge never dominated the unorthodox teachings in the movement, it was precisely in the late 1950s when the Nation was more consistently encouraging its members to study Arabic, the Qur'an, and orthodox Islam generally. It may have been for this reason that the imam believed the group was functioning under a more or less orthodox philosophy.

In any case, the 1960s soon came and everything changed. The Nation of Islam quickly emerged as a mass movement, totally altering and dominating the American Muslim convert landscape, and at the same time American and Saudi Muslim institutions became the dominant forces shaping orthodox Islam in the country—and all of these communities started producing magazines and newspapers that rapidly beat out the *Islamic Review* in the American Muslim market. The Woking Mission's American efforts, for their own part, also began to fade, and even some of its most active American affiliates, such as the former members of the American Islamic Association, were now dying off.

But as I stated at the beginning of this speech, the Woking Muslim Mission is indeed part of the American Muslim DNA. To

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understand this, we must keep looking at what came next, after the era of the decline and disappearance of the direct Woking influence. First and perhaps most well-known is the transformation of the Nation of Islam and some of its leaders, to align more with orthodox Islam. As I have implied, the Woking-published Qur'an translation used by Nation members served as the foundation for the movement's increased interest in orthodoxy. When its prominent spokesman Malcolm X famously embraced orthodox Islam in 1964, it was after years of exposure. When, eleven years later, the son of the Nation of Islam's leader, Warith Deen Muhammad, took the helm and began to steer the group towards orthodoxy, as many of you know he was under the influence of a Lahore Ahmadi, Mr. Muhammad Abdullah, and again, the Maulvi Muhammad Ali Qur'an translation was a model for Qur'anic education. And, finally, when the non-orthodox teachings were later revived by Louis Farrakhan, the new Nation of Islam continued to use, and uses to this day, that same Qur'an translation.

The Woking Mission's legacy can also be seen in the organizations and philosophies of several other Muslim communities and movements that exist to this day. The rise of the Nation of Islam and new orthodox groups in the 1960s did not completely wipe away the older movements, even if it muted their influence for a time. And because those communities and individuals from the early days were able to survive and in some cases join up with the new organizations, they had considerable wisdom to share and therefore influenced new generations of Muslims. The anti-racist and anti-sectarian philosophy transmitted from Woking had thus been embedded in American Islam's DNA since its earliest surge in the 1920s, and can still be observed nearly a century later. (Return to contents)

How the Lahore-Ahmadiyya Movement reformed Islamic thinking in



I Shall Love All Mankind.

Suriname through the Woking Muslim Mission

By Robert Bipat

President AAII (SIV)

Background - The Suriname Islamic Union (SIV) was established on November 17th in 1929. This union started as a general Islamic organization to bundle all Muslims in Suriname. In 1932 in a bold action the organization purchased a plot next to the main synagogue of Suriname and built a mosque there. In 1934 the principles of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement were adapted and integrated in the constitution of the organization. Since then the organization has always aligned with the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. In the 1950's and the 1970's of the last century small groups with different views and ideology split off to establish the main Sunnat Wal Jamaat in Suriname.

Woking - The influence of the Woking Mission was then already clear. The adaptation of the LAM ideology by the SIV was under the influence of at least four scholars, who have been associated directly or indirectly with this mission. These are Moulvi Ameer Ali from Trinidad and Tobago, Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi, Maulana Sadr-ud-Din and Maulana Shaikh M. Tufail from Pakistan. It is thus clear that the Woking Mission would have a clear influence on Islamic thinking in Suriname. The next paragraphs will deal with these.

The influence - The first striking influence of the LAM in Suriname is the juxtaposition of the main Masjid to the Synagogue, a situation that has been considered worldwide as an ultimate symbol of peace. In addition, during the second world war the Imam of this Mosque called for special prayers and a wake in order to remember the Jewish victims in Germany and to condemn the atrocities performed by the German leadership. In remembrance of this, special representatives of the synagogue have recently visited the Mosque.

Second, the LAM has influenced the acquisition of gender equality in the Suriname society.

There is a significant number of Muslim women contributing the labour force of the country. The organization has always underscored the monogamous lifestyle as part of the Islamic way of life. And in addition, it has contributed significantly to the legislation supporting women rights in marriage.

The SIV has always propagated a dialogue with both local and international organizations to foster the feeling that humanity is one, regardless of race, gender or religion. This has been achieved by a good relation with all denominations through the interreligious council and foreign organizations like the UN and embassies of foreign countries like the Netherlands, France and the USA. Of Particular interest is that the SIV was one of the establishers of the interreligious council.

The organization has always taken a stance against both domestic and foreign terrorism. This has kept the balance in the Suriname society by preventing mainstream religious leaders to go to the extremes. Furthermore, the SIV extends assistance to the needy, thereby keeping them from becoming criminals as far as possible. In this regard Eid ul Adha Meat and Zakat are given to both Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

In conclusion we can clearly state that the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement has reformed the Islamic thinking in Suriname significantly. This was achieved by the work of pioneers associated directly and indirectly with the Woking Muslim Mission. Consequently, the general perception of Islam in Suriname is a moderate, humane religion that is peaceful and all inclusive, and which strives to a respectful relation with all other denominations. (Return to contents)

Milestones in the History of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Hungary

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(Editor's Note: Dr Zsolt Udvarvölgyi is a historian and sociologist, and associate professor, in Budapest, Hungary. This paper has been slightly edited to remove material not related to the work of the

Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the Woking Muslim Mission.)

Abstract

This lecture will briefly describe the history of the Ahmadiyya movement in Hungary. I will also introduce the exceptional life and career of Gyula Germanus, the Hungarian-born muslim orientalist, professor, traveller and writer, and his connection to the Ahmadiyya circles. Still living in Hungary, he approached the European representatives of the Ahmadiyya movement in the 1920s and a few years later, while staying in India, he travelled to Kashmir. He met and befriended members of the movement there. Throughout his long life and productive career Germanus published extensively in the *Islamic Review*.

Introduction

Although I was invited by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at at Islam Lahore to talk about 'The impact of the Lahore Ahmadiyya thought through the Woking Muslim Mission in reforming Muslim thought in Hungary', I believe it would be more rewarding and interesting to see how the movement could be actually connected to Hungary. I am a historian interested in the history of religion in Hungary and, as such, have been studying the presence of Islam in Hungary for 25 years.

Hajji Abdul-Karim Julius Germanus (1884-1979): a unique career

First, I will talk about the life of **Hajji Abdul-Karim Julius Germanus**, the first Hungarian ever to have discovered the Ahmadiyyas.

Germanus was Hungarian-born Muslim orientalist, professor, traveller, writer, MP and member of multiple Arabic academies of science.

After working at the University of Budapest for some time, the Bengali-Indian poet, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913) Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), one of India's greatest figures, invited Germanus in 1928

to teach as the Head of the Department of Islamic Studies of Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, Bengal. Accompanied by his first wife, Rózsa Hajnóczy (1892-1944), he stayed in India for 3 years (1929-1932), and it was there he publicized his conversion to Islam in the Great Delhi Mosque. Henceforth, he was known as Abdul-Karim. "According to his narration, he became a Muslim on 19 December 1930, on a Friday, in the Great Mosque of Delhi. After the khutba, he gave a short speech, which he began in Arabic, about having come to India as a seeker of knowledge, about the place of Islam in the history of humankind, the decline of the Muslim peoples, and their possible renaissance. In the enthusiastic audience a friend hurriedly led him out, as Germanus remembered, lest the cheering crowd squeeze him."¹ In India he met with Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Zakir Husain and other leading figures (politicians, artists, writers, poets).

Germanus' great desire to learn more about Islam and Muslims led him to meet one of the most prominent Muslim poets of the time. He enjoyed a friendship with the famous Pakistani Muslim poet, Muhammad Iqbal. They would have long conversations, delving into important issues facing Muslims. They also would discuss the scholarship of Orientalists and the activities of Christian missionaries.²

In 1935 he was the first Hungarian Muslim to perform the Hajj in Mecca. King Ibn Saud received him personally. He travelled incognito through the hidden territories of the Arabian Peninsula. It was not without danger, even though he had been living according to Quranic law. In addition, Germanus was one of the few

Europeans to ever have visited the holy sites in Mecca and Medina. He wrote a memoir of his journey to the holy sites in Hungarian called *Allah Akbar!*, which was translated into several languages.

Germanus wrote about Islam, Arabic culture and literature in various European publications. He wrote many books and studies including 'Allah Akbar!', 'Lights of the East', 'Uncovering the Arabian Peninsula', 'Between Intellectuals', 'The History of Arabic Literature', 'The History of the Arabs', 'Modern Movements in Islam', 'Studies in the Grammatical Structure of the Arabic Language', 'Journeys of Arabs', 'Pre-Islamic Poetry', 'Great Arabic Literature', 'Guidance From the Light of the Crescent (a personal memoir)', 'An Adventure in the Desert', 'Arab Nationalism', 'Mahmoud Teymour and Modern Arabic Literature', 'The Great Arab Poets, and The Rise of Arab Culture'. Sometimes he published in the *Islamic Review* as well.

In the spring of 1958, he revisited Indian cities to refresh his memories of Bombay, Delhi, Aligarh, Patna, Agra, Hyderabad, Calcutta, Lucknow and Santiniketan. Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister of India invited him to visit and received him as well. Here he witnessed the development and rapid change of the Hindu and Muslim societies of India.

Germanus passed away on 7 November 1979, one day after his 95th birthday, after having served the cause of Islam and Muslims for nearly 50 years.³

Germanus's connection with the Ahmadiyyas

In his popular bestseller *Allah Akbar!*, Germanus describes the Ahmadiyyas as such: 'While staying in Lahore I came into contact

¹ Mestyán, Adam: Materials for a History of Hungarian Academic Orientalism: The Case of Gyula Germanus. In: *Die Welt des Islams* 54 (2014) p. 10. in: <http://www.brill.com/die-welt-des-islams> p. 23.

² Yasser Hejazi: The Moment of Awakening A Hungarian Orientalist Finds Islam. Apr. 12, 2006 in: <https://archive.islamonline.net/?p=15108> (Accessed on 12 August 2018)

³We used the following sources for Germanus's biographical data:

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Lendvai Timár Edit (szerk.): *Germanus Gyula. A tudós és ez ember.* Érden, Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum, 2009. (Gyula Germanus: The scientist and the man. Érden. Hungarian Geographical Museum)

with the local group of the Ahmadiyyas. They deserve great credit for reviving the languishing Islam in India with their agitation. The more aggressive their assault, the more opposition and interest they managed to incite. They rendered Islam great service, fighting the missionaries and turning their weapons of propaganda on them in their own interest. They published books, translated the Quran into English, German, and disseminated sympathetic propaganda literature about Islam in Asian and European languages. (...) They built mosques in Europe (in Berlin, London, and Woking), and their preachers spread Muslim pride on the Balkans, in Egypt and India, in Malaysia and other countries. They have even sent their representatives to Hungary.

Still in Europe, I had already been aware of the books and publications of the Ahmadiyya of Lahore, and became their correspondent. I was especially interested in finding out about their conviction of Jesus' burial place being in Srinagar. (...) I could not wait to go to Kashmir and visit the grave that the Ahmadiyya believed was that of Jesus.

I was met with love and understanding at the houses of the Muslims of India. Regardless of their denomination and rites, all Muslims welcomed me with open arms."¹

Before his journey he translated, and probably aided the publication of, Maulvi Muhammad Ali's small, 24-page book called *Islam* in 1928. The introduction to the book was written by Lord Headley.²

Germanus was also mentioned in "*The Young Islam*", a fortnightly journal devoted to the cause of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Lahore:

"Dr. Julius Germanus is an intellectual and educated Muslim. He reads and writes in good Arabic style and is said to be a scholar of Turkish and Persian as well. He seems to be on good terms with Hussain Hilmi. Both these gentlemen aim at the erection of a Mosque and a school near the old tomb of the Turkish Muslim Saint, Gül Baba in Budapest. This noble task is supported by Hungarian Christians of good position. Good relations with Turkey and the Islamic countries of the near East being a progressive point of official Hungarian policy. I was given a hearty reception by the Gül Baba Committee and Hussain Hilmi, as well as by Dr. Germanus and got a good impression of the eager activities of both the gentlemen."³

Germanus's publications in the Ahmadiyya press

Germanus' most important works published abroad appeared in the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore's *Islamic Review*. The following articles were published in the journal:

'Linguistic Foundation of the Unity of the Arabic Speaking Peoples' (March, 1950), 'Sources of the Arab Nights' (September, 1951), 'Observation on the Arabic Alphabet' (November, 1951), 'Modern Saudi-Arabian Literature' (November, 1952), 'Arabic as a Language is Unique' (July, 1953), 'Muslim Geographers' (July, 1954), 'Ibn Kathir on Husain ibn Mansur al-Hallaj' (October, 1955), 'Reflections on the Spirit of the Arabic Language' (October, 1956), 'Muslims and the Western Civilization' (May, 1961).

Important for its place in media history, the *Islamic Review* represents a unique source for the study of the history and activities of British and European Muslims in the twentieth century.

¹ Gyula Germanus: *Allah Akbar!* Budapest, Szépirodalmi, 1984. pp. 65-72.

² <http://aaiil.org/hungarian/booksislamahmadiyya/muhammadali/azislamislamreligionhumanity/azislamislamreligionhumanity.pdf>
(Accessed on 7 July 2019)

³ Mohd. Mauzur Ilahi: „The Ahmadiyya Movement Day by Day” in: „The Young Islam” a fortnightly journal devoted to the cause of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Lahore. Vol. I. – No. 3. July 1, 1934. Supplement to the Young Islam. pp. 1-2.

http://aaiil.org/text/articles/youngislam/1934/youngislam_19340701.pdf
(Accessed on 7 July 2019)



Dr Taj Hargey on impact of the LAM in South Africa.

First published in 1913 as *Muslim India and the Islamic Review*, then from 1921 shortened to *Islamic Review*, the monthly publication has had several pe-

riods in its history: a shorter version from its inception until 1948, then extended from 1949 until 1971. Since 1967 the title has been changed to the *Light and Islamic Review*. Currently it is called the *Light*.

Reading these articles, we find them to be cogent and substantial and written in excellent English. Germanus proved to be first rate when it came to the interpretation of Arabic literature and its presentation to his audience in a clear language. He also published pieces on Arabic language, art, cultural and scientific history with great determination and expertise.

First formed in the 1920s, he retained his contact with the British centre of the Lahore Ahmadiyya for decades. I believe professor Germanus was not just the only "official" Muslim in interwar Hungary and, following the Second World War, the communist takeover of power. **He was also the only Hungarian who knew and respected the Lahore movement. It must have been exceptionally difficult to publish in foreign journals in English or any other language.** Just to stay in touch with the free world beyond the iron curtain was complicated. When Germanus published his articles in your journal in the 1950s terror ruled my homeland. The communist party and its secret service imprisoned hundreds of thousands. They terrorised, kept under surveillance and checked almost everyone and everything. People could be picked up by the big black car with its darkened windows just to disappear for years. They were tortured and sometimes killed by their captors.

There was a Jewish-born Muslim convert Arabist professor in Budapest among these circumstances who regularly sent his articles to you. He could not care less if his letters were opened, his telephone was bugged, and he was followed everywhere. He took a stand for many and actively helped those colleagues and students who got into trouble. I believe this was a courageous and positive gesture. Germanus was a popular teacher, many attended his lectures, and he most probably talked to his audience about the Ahmadiyya.

He published articles in your journal in 1953, the year of Stalin's death, when power struggle ensued in the highest echelons of the communist party.

When, in October 1956, a revolution broke out in Hungary against the communist dictatorship and the occupying Soviet troops, Germanus published an article in the October issue of the *Islamic Review* called 'Reflections on the Spirit of the Arabic Language'!

He again sent another piece in 1961, following the defeat of the revolution and purge that followed it, and during the consolidation of the Kadar regime.

Conclusion

The Ahmadiyya movement in Hungary looks back on a history of a hundred years. In this short lecture I have covered its main events, the Ahmadiyya connections of a Hungarian Muslim orientalist professor and the Budapest Ahmadiyya mission of 1936 to 1937.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in the UK

By Declan Henry



(Editor's note: This speech delivered at the International Lahore Ahmadiyya Conference in Woking on 17th August, has been slightly edited. Declan Henry is the author of *Voices of Modern Islam* and does research into the views of different sections of the Muslim community of the UK.)

I am delighted to be here with you today and to be able to say a few words at the end of day two of your wonderful convention.

I first became aware of the Lahore Ahmadiyya community in 2017 when I was writing my book on Islam: *Voices of Modern Islam – What it Means to be Muslim Today*. The book contains a hard-hitting foreword by Dr Taj Hargey whom you heard speak earlier today.

Indeed, it was during my research for the book that I discovered what it means to be a Lahore Ahmadiyya Muslim in today's world. Shahid, your president, kindly allowed me an interview for the book. I was fascinated to learn that men and women are not segregated from each other in your community. After having visited many Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi mosques during my research, this was a refreshing fact to learn.

Last year, I did a speech at your mosque in Wembley and here I discovered exactly how integrated everybody is in your community. I would even go as far as saying that you are, single headedly, the most liberal community of Muslims living in the UK at the current time.

However, I must apologise for not having written more about you in my book. I can only promise that the next time I write about Islam, that I will rectify this imbalance.

But the Ahmadiyya community has a vibe that is vastly distinct from all other kinds of Muslims - *You have the promised messiah*. There are few good vibes in religion today.

My next book will be published in January. It is entitled 'Forbidden Fruit' and is about the changing face of Ireland and Catholicism over the past 30 years. Ireland was once a deeply conservative and Catholic country, but this is no longer the case after the clerical sex abuse scandals of the past two decades. People have turned away from the church but the extent of how much they have turned their backs on God and Jesus remains to be seen.

I am currently writing a book about young asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. A lot of

these young people come from Muslim countries and I can tell you that many of them have turned their backs on God and the prophet Mohammed. Many have lost their way. I can also tell you that Muslim communities in the UK have failed miserably in doing anything to help these young people.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I really like your community and I am so glad to have played a small part in it here today.

Please look out for my article entitled 'Jesus and Islam' which will appear in the next edition of *The Light*.

I will be a guest speaker of yours at the Peace Conference in New Delhi in December¹ when I will be talking about Jesus and peace. I will also be doing some speeches at your convention in Lahore at the end of December. Perhaps you might be at either or both of these events.

In the meantime, please keep up the good work. Your contribution is valuable and will never be lost. And finally, may almighty God bless the Lahore Ahmadiyya community always. ([Return to contents](#))

The Woking Muslim Mission — a story of **inspiration and sacrifice** **By Zahid Aziz**



It says in the Holy Quran:

"O you who believe, be helpers (in the cause) of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples: Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah? The disciples said: We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah. So a party of the Children of Israel believed and another party disbelieved; then We aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became predominant" (61:14).

Here Muslims are told that they will be asked to be helpers in the cause of Allah in the

¹ The conference on "How Does My Religion Promote Peace?", which was to have been held in New Delhi, has been postponed because of the current tensions in the area. We hope that once the situation has normalised, we will be able to bring together all religions under the umbrella of peace.

same way as the followers of Jesus were asked by him to be his helpers in the cause of Allah. Jesus did not ask his followers to take up arms to fight the unbelievers. Being helpers in the cause of Allah meant, in the case of the followers of Jesus, that they should preach his message peacefully, with humility and gentleness, and take it far and wide while facing persecution. When Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad arose, and claimed that the so-called descent of Jesus meant the arising of a Muslim saint and reformer, and that he was that expected Messiah, he made the same call on Muslims as mentioned in the above verse.

Those who responded to his call to be his helpers in the cause of Allah, the cause of Islam, included the persons who, later in 1914, founded the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam at Lahore. One of them was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, founder of the Working Muslim Mission. He was inspired by the picture of Islam presented by Hazrat Mirza sahib. Previous speakers have already referred to those particular features of the teachings of Islam in connection with the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic propagation work in various countries including the West.

One of the basic points underlying that picture was that the world is becoming one and different nations are coming into contact and connection with each other as never before in history. Hazrat Mirza sahib has mentioned this often in his writings and observed that modern advances in transport and communications are bringing distant nations together as if the world were now one nation. At such a time, certain fundamentals of Islam have a crucial role to play in the world. Primary among these is its concept of God as "Lord of all nations" Who sent His revelations to all nations, without discrimination, and then required Muslims, followers of the last revelation, to believe in all previous revelations and believe in the persons who were sent with those revelations.



The implication of this concept of God is that there is no nation which is favoured by God because of the race or country of its people, nor even because of their religious beliefs or their ritual acts of worship. All are treated equally by God on the basis of their inner intentions and practical deeds.

When Hazrat Mirza sahib arose, Muslims were facing the darkest period in their history. They were looking inwardly for the solution of the problems besetting them and for their revival from their downfall in the world. Hazrat Mirza sahib pointed out to them that Islam is not meant for Muslims only. It is not their property nor owned by them. Other nations can benefit from Islamic values if Muslim cease to do so.

This is one aspect of that presentation of Islam — Islam being meant for all nations — which inspired Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din to bring

its message to this country of the UK in the year 1912. Another aspect was to remove and efface all traces of any notion that Islam is a violent threat, or a coercive threat, to others in the world. This involves clearing the layers upon layers of misconceptions which had settled like thick dirt on Islam relat-

ing to the whole host of the connected issues of Jihad, forced conversion to Islam, lack of freedom of thought and expression, maltreatment of non-Muslims, and apostasy from Islam. These misconceptions needed to be corrected so that Islam is seen in its purity as the religion of peaceful co-existence, tolerance, love for humanity, gentleness and forgiveness.

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, under the inspiration of his master Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, presented Islam along these lines here in this country. A Christian clergyman who was a vehement critic of Islam commented on this in a book, and wrote that what is presented from the Working Muslim Mission is "a new Muhammad drawn from a Christian paint-box" (for reference see Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's book *The Ideal Prophet*, the opening of his Introduction). He meant that the Prophet Muhammad is being portrayed in the way in which Jesus is portrayed, as a humble, forgiving, loving and forbearing teacher of

religion, the qualities associated with Jesus. Apart from the critic's description of it being a

"new" Muhammad, what he noticed was quite true. It was Hazrat Mirza sahib who declared that the phase of the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad when he was living at Makkah, and his qualities associated with that period, should be highlighted and emphasized in the present age. This was the period of his life which resembles the life of Jesus. Hazrat Mirza sahib's emphasis on these qualities was part of his mission as the Promised Messiah of the Muslims. Thus, when Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din presented this picture of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's life, a Christian critic recognized it as being drawn from a Christian paint-box and objected that this was not the real picture!

Apart from inspiration, the Woking Muslim Mission was a story of sacrifice. It started with the sacrifice of his lucrative legal practice by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din. Then in the early stages of the Mission he worked almost single handedly in running the mission, publishing the *Islamic Review*, and managing the Mosque: "I am by myself the editor, manager, article writer, clerk, deliverer of the Friday sermon, lecturer, missionary, porter. May Allah have mercy on my helplessness, destitution, inability", he wrote in a report of his work in 1913, sent to the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement in India. He used his own money to fund the Mission initially. His table was his writing desk by day and his bed by night. During his second visit to England, his eldest son Bashir died back in Lahore in the flu pandemic that engulfed much of the world in 1918/19. He was informed of this news by telegram. This was followed shortly by news of the death of Bashir's wife and infant son in the same pandemic. Yet Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din did not let such loss or any other hardship or his own illnesses deflect him from taking the message of Islam to wherever in the world he could go.

Others who came from British India to assist him, or those who came in later years, also made great sacrifices to work in a strange country and unfamiliar environment, deprived of their customary way of living, eating and socialising, cut off from family and friends. Behind



these frontline workers were their supporters in British India, later Pakistan, who raised funds for the Mission. Mostly these were members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore itself, as an organization, was for long the chief sponsor of the Woking Muslim Mission, particularly during its early years and later after the Second World War.

This is an example for us for the future also. Islam in the light in which it was presented from the Woking Muslim Mission is even more a need of the present time than in the days of the Mission. Having a command over that knowledge of Islam should inspire us, and that inspiration must be accompanied by sacrifice on our part, along with the determination to continue in our work regardless of the difficulties faced or the apparent lack of prospect of success. (Return to contents)

Friday Session



Dr IKram Jahangiri
USA



Imam Zahid
Canada



Prof Hamid Rehman
USA



Galida Badoella
Suriname



Mrs Mary Gafoer Khan
Suriname



Miss Gowsia Saleem
India



Closing meal on Friday

Saturday Session



"If you leave me out then which Islam will you propagate?" (The Promised Messiah)



Sunday session



Haroun Badloe



Robbert Mohammedamin



Imam Nasrullah



Sameera Ahmad



Sara Jahangiri



Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore (UK)

Founders of the first Islamic Mission in the UK - established 1913 as the Woking Muslim Mission.

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Donations: https://www.cafonline.org/charityprofile/aaiiluk