

The Embodiment of TRUE ISLAM



KHILAFAT CENTENARY
(1908-2008)

Keynote address delivered by his Holiness, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London on 10 June 2008.



One Hundred Years of Khilafat (Spiritual Leadership) (1908-2008)

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was founded in 1889 in India by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) who claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. Following his demise in 1908, the institution of Khilafat (the system of spiritual leadership in Islam) was re-established under Divine guidance as a means of uniting and leading the community. This was an historic milestone not only in the history of the community but also in the history of Islam as this Khilafat is unique in the world today.



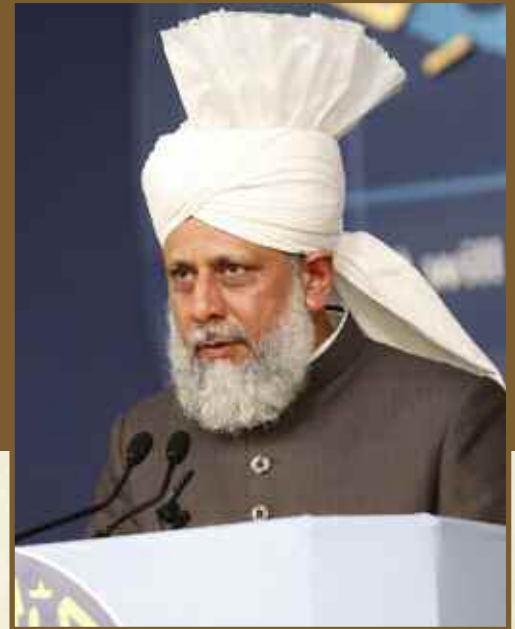
Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
(The Promised Messiah & Mahdi)

The year 2008 marks the centenary of the re-establishment of the Khilafat. On 10 June, a special reception was held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in the heart of London where an august gathering of MPs, MEPs, Ambassadors, Mayors and other key dignitaries had the opportunity to listen to the keynote address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the fifth Khalifa of the community. Presented herein is the text of his address together with speeches by other distinguished guests at this special event.

Love for All Hatred for None

The Embodiment of True Islam

Address by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad – Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



First of all I would like to thank all guests who, despite their busy schedule, accepted our invitation to come here today. There are some old acquaintances – whose friendship has developed to one of near relatives – who are aware of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and know how Ahmadis practise and preach the true teachings of Islam. However, I have been told that there are some new faces today that have a relationship with members of the community but are not familiar with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They might be thinking that a majority of Muslims have turned against Ahmadis perhaps because Ahmadis have manipulated changes to the true teachings of Islam to fit the conditions of the day and are presenting Islam [as ‘apologetics’] by removing the misconceptions about it so as to be absorbed as Muslims in the modern world.

Firstly, in this short time, I would like to say that we believe that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the only community that is following and preaching the true teachings of Islam around the world.

The Ahmadiyya Community consists of people who have firm belief that, based on the tidings received from God Almighty, the founder of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the last law bearing prophet, had prophesied the advent of the Promised Messiah and the Imam Mahdi (that is, the Guided Imam commissioned by God) in the 14th century of the Islamic calendar. We believe that this prophecy has been fulfilled in the person of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be

upon him) of Qadian. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had clarified the fact that when the Imam Mahdi comes, he will reform and restore the true teachings of Islam which had been distorted with the passage of time. Thus, the Ahmadiyya Community believes that the interpretation and explanation of the Holy Qur’an (the Holy Scripture of Islam) and Hadith (the traditions or things done and said by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)) presented by the founder of Ahmadiyya Community are based on the actual teachings mentioned in the Holy Qur’an by Allah the Almighty and represent the true and real teachings of Islam as practised by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The question that arises here is the following: what is the proof that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) is that very Messiah and Mahdi (the guided one) whose advent had been prophesied by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); who was to assemble all the Muslims and the people of the world on one hand and get them to discharge their duties to their Creator and the rights due to His creation?

In this connection, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has narrated a heavenly sign of the forthcoming prophet in one

of his Ahadith (traditions) that cannot be easily refuted. He observed that the two signs for our Mahdi would be of such magnificence that ever since the creation of the heaven and earth such signs had never appeared before. And the signs were a solar eclipse and a lunar eclipse occurring together in a particular month on its appointed days. The month was the holy month of Ramadhan (it should be clear that only Islamic months follow purely a lunar calendar, Ramadhan being the ninth lunar month). It was specified that the lunar eclipse would occur on the first of the nights in which the moon is eclipsed. Now, every literate person knows that the moon is always eclipsed at its brilliance on the 13th, 14th or 15th of the lunar month; in fact the tradition also carries a hint about the eclipse of a full moon. In the same manner, the solar eclipse was prophesied to occur on the second day of the days of the solar eclipse and the appointed dates of the solar eclipse are the 27th, 28th and 29th when the moon casts a shadow on the sun.

Thus, in the month of Ramadhan of 1894, in accordance with this prophecy, the moon was eclipsed on the 13th which is the first of the nights where a lunar eclipse can occur and in the same month, the sun was eclipsed on the 28th, which is the second day among the days where a total solar eclipse is possible. [The lunar eclipse occurred after sunset on March 21st, 1894 (13th Ramadhan 1311 AH of the Islamic calendar) and the solar eclipse occurred on the morning of Friday April 6th, 1894 (28th Ramadhan).]

Although other eclipses can occur during this month, it has never happened in the history of the world that such eclipses occurred in the presence of a claimant to prophethood, that is to say that it can never be proved that a claimant and this sign as prophesied ever co-existed. In other words, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) had claimed that he was the Messiah and Mahdi foretold in past prophecies and then in accordance with another prophecy, the solar eclipse and the lunar eclipse occurred in the same month of Ramadhan. These eclipses

were repeated in exactly the same manner it happened in the western hemisphere, the following year, in 1895.¹

Thus, this is sufficient evidence for us that the foretold prophet has come. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) of Qadian published his claim and founded the community in 1889. He lived for 19 years after that and carried on with his divine mission in guiding man towards the worship of his God; reminding man not to forget his Creator lest he becomes a victim of Allah's wrath; and admonishing man about his duty to other human beings. Our slogan "Love for All, Hatred for None" is in fact a summation of this teaching in which he advised the following:

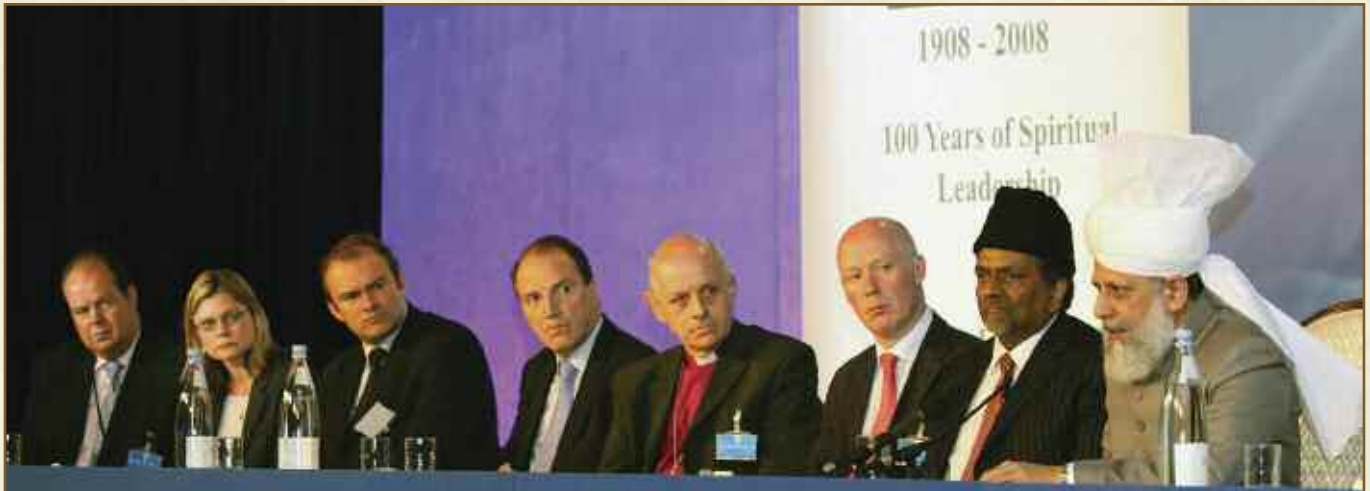
"Practise forbearance and tolerance and show patience and gentleness and do not attack anyone unduly. And suppress passions of the self. Moreover, if you indulge in a debate or in any other religious discussion, behave in a good manner using polite language and when the ignorant address you, avoid them gracefully by saying, Peace!"

Then he observed at another place:

"The important injunctions of the Holy Qur'an are only two: the first is to declare the Oneness of, love for and obedience to your Creator, and the second is to show sympathy for your brothers and other humans."

Thus the Messiah and Mahdi whose advent took place in this age in accord with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is, according to us, the same person who founded the Ahmadiyya Community and taught us the true and real teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

What are the true teachings of Islam or the Holy Qur'an? Due to the shortage of time, let me explain some of these briefly. I shall explain these matters with reference to the present situation and behaviour of some of the Muslims.



Seated with Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad – Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community, from left to right:

Stephen Hammond MP (Shadow Minister for Transport), Justine Greening MP (Shadow Treasury Minister), Ed Davey MP (Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs), Simon Hughes MP (President of the Liberal Democrats), The Rt Rev Trevor Willmott (Bishop of Basingstoke), Jonathan Shaw MP (Minister at the Dept for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), Rafiq Hayat (AMA UK National President).

Islam and the Holy Qur'an are often accused of teaching extremism. In this regard, some newspapers, the media and certain western politicians have played with the sentiments of the Muslims and said and written provocative words about them. According to me, people who wrote and said such things either did not acknowledge the power of Allah the Almighty and could not care less about religion or they were bereft of the basic moral virtue of respecting each other's feelings. Indeed, it would appear that, in their opinion, only they have feelings and emotions, whereas others do not.

If one just wants to criticise or hurt the feelings of others or create discord and mischief, then it is not difficult to present references out of context from other religious books including the Holy Bible. But we consider such references either to apply to particular circumstances or to be interpolations. Anyway, for the moment, I will talk about the Qur'anic teachings that were given by Almighty Allah to keep peace amongst human beings.

It is our firm belief that ever since the world came into being, Allah the Exalted has been raising prophets in every people and their

mission has always been to guide mankind to its Creator and to establish good deeds. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And We did raise among every people a Messenger with the teaching, 'Worship Allah and shun the Evil One.' Then among them were some whom Allah guided and among them were some who became deserving of ruin. So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who treated the Prophets as liars! (Ch.16:V.37)

Thus, according to this verse neither can we Ahmadi Muslims deny any of the prophets nor can we ridicule them, because we are ordered to stay away from such people who talk against the prophets. Some prophets are mentioned by name in the Holy Qur'an and in the Holy Bible as well. We believe in these prophets, but according to the verse of the Holy Qur'an I have just quoted, we also believe that there were prophets among the Hindus and the Chinese and other nations as well. This is a basic point which Allah the Almighty has taught us: to be sensitive about the feelings of others and to pay proper respect to the prophets of the other nations from whom an inclination to perform good works sprouts forth and with whom

attempts can be made to establish peace. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has taught us not only to respect the very high status of the prophets but also to respect the leaders of the other nations as this is a factor, among others, that also contributes to the maintenance of peace.

These are the Islamic instructions for establishing mutual respect for each other's elders and leaders, so that peace can be established in the world. Now you can decide for yourselves whether Islam sets up the dignity and respect for others or not.

Then Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.
(Ch.5:V.9)

The instruction is to remain steadfast in order to acquire Allah's happiness and this should be the sole purpose. You will only be considered a true Muslim when this happens. This firm belief can only be achieved when a Muslim practises the teachings of Allah the Almighty setting aside all personal enmities and grudges. One must do justice. Furthermore, you should be fair to the extent that if even your opponents demand justice, you must dispense it. If they have rights, and of course they do, do not deprive them of these rights due. If this is not your conduct, then it will become clear that whatever you are doing in the name of Allah apparently, is, in reality, not in the way of Allah but is based on your personal vested interest or grudges and enmities. And a Muslim believes that Allah knows what is hidden inside the hearts. For this reason, Allah has warned those who do not practise justice that Allah is well aware of their actions and that they would be liable to punishment by Allah. Thus, the basic teaching of Islam is to establish peace and justice.

The question arises here that if Islam puts so much stress on the establishment of justice, then why were these Islamic battles fought?

If we take a look at the early history of Islam, we come to know that like other people and other prophets, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his followers were also subjected to the atrocities of the non-believers of Makkah. They were made to lie down on hot sand and hot stones were placed on their bare bodies. Their bodies were rent apart by tying their legs to two camels which were then driven in opposite directions. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his followers were detained in a valley for two and a half years and left to starve there. They were prevented from worshipping in the Ka'aba. After all these cruelties, when Muslims migrated to Madinah, the Makkans pursued them and were the first to attack them. Under these conditions, Muslims were given permission to fight and it was revealed in the Holy Qur'an:

Permission to take up arms is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah indeed, has the power to help them. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly, only because they said, Our Lord is Allah, and if Allah had not repelled some people by means of others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft remembered, would surely have been destroyed. And Allah will, surely, help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty.
(Ch.22:V.41)

This is a very clear instruction for one's defence and for establishing peace. Nowadays, wherever battles are being fought, each party claims in the beginning, rightly or wrongly, that they are fighting for the establishment of peace. Therefore, in view of this fact, I think one should have no objection as to why war had been permitted by the Holy Qur'an. Permission is granted but it is conditional: firstly, to retaliate because you are being attacked; secondly, you had been oppressed before, yet you kept silent,

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but now if you remain quiet, they will accelerate in their atrocities; thirdly, if cruelties exceed all bounds, the peace of the world will be shattered, the places of worship of every religion would surely be destroyed; and fourthly, and most importantly, that it should be fought in defence.

At another place Allah the Almighty says:

And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors. And slay these transgressors wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than slaying. And fight them not in and near the sacred mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them. Such is the requital for the disbelievers. But if they desist, then surely, Allah is the most Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the wrongdoers.
(Ch.2:Vs.191-194)

Thus it is proved that permission for battle has been granted under certain special circumstances and for defence. Moreover, if the enemy discontinues the war then the order is to not find some lame excuse to prolong it.

If we examine all these things in the light of this particular commandment that says that enmity for any nation should not stop you from doing justice, then it becomes crystal clear that there is no flaw in the teachings and that rather it is the fault of those people who present their own explanations to achieve their vested interests.

They use illiterate, innocent Muslims to achieve their objective. It is the same as when in its early history, a Christian state persecuted people in the name of Christianity but one cannot blame Christianity for that.

What was the attitude of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the battles? Despite the brutal sufferings caused by the non-believers of Makkah, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) allowed the enemy to take water from a well even though the Muslims had already taken control of it. Prisoners of war were treated with kindness. They were set free on lenient conditions. Then, under the agreement made with them, the Jews of Madinah were treated like all other citizens as long as they abided by the agreement. Decisions in respect of them were made according to the teaching of Moses (peace be upon him).

Once, a very near Companion of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to a Jew, the Holy Prophet is superior to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). He was severely reprimanded for this action by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who declared: ‘Do not express my superiority over Moses (peace be upon him) because it has broken the heart of a Jewish person.’ Despite the superior position of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the heart of the Muslims and regardless of the greatest position bestowed upon the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in the Holy Qur’an, the proclamation made by the Holy Prophet (peace

“For the last hundred years, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been serving the world under the guidance of these true teachings of Islam. The Ahmadiyya Community has been serving humanity in need – irrespective of caste, colour or creed.”

and blessings of Allah be upon him) not to call him superior to Moses (peace be upon him) was meant to prevent disturbance to the peace of the society.

This is a brief description of the peaceful teachings of Islam in which the Ahmadiyya Community is rooted today and which it advocates to others. If, with the full knowledge of this teaching, anyone accuses us of being deviant, then we leave the matter with God Almighty. We have been advised by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community not to answer cruelty with cruelty because this is ignorance. The purpose of Islam was to eliminate ignorance, not to spread it.

I would like to make one thing clear here. The declaration of war under certain circumstances is permitted in Islam but this permission is not for any group or organisation. This permission is strictly limited to a Muslim government that is being victimised and this permission is only for the purposes of defence.

Allah the Almighty knew that Islam would spread and there would be many Islamic governments. That is why the Holy Qur'an enjoins that when two Muslim governments are involved in a war, then other Muslim governments should support the oppressed and when the oppressor surrenders, the loser should not thereafter be made a permanent target of brutality and cruelty because such behaviour would be unfair. When a nation is treated unjustly, the reaction it shows destroys the peace. This is such a golden principle that the governments of this age, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, need to adopt. If we look around with honesty, we will notice that the prevalent

injustices are due to the imposition of unfair conditions, sanctions and restrictions on the losing nations or countries.

After this brief description, I revert to the fundamental purpose of the establishment of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. As I have already explained by the use of Qur'anic examples, the teachings of Islam are not defective nor did the Founder of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ever commit injustice toward any nation. Of course, whenever there was transgression against the Muslims, he took up the cudgel by Divine command and his retaliation was to establish peace and justice. The Founder of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had also prophesied that a time would come when the Muslims would endorse wrong explanations and would distort the true teachings of Islam, although the Holy Qur'an would be available in its uncorrupted form. That would be the time for the advent of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) who would display the true teachings of Islam. Many signs for that time have been mentioned and I have mentioned earlier an important sign.

Therefore, today, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, according to this prophecy of the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) accepts Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian as the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). And, following Qur'anic teachings as explained by him, it is engaged in creating peace in the world and leaving no stone unturned in helping the suffering humanity.

We are using all means and resources available to us to bring man nearer to God, because if

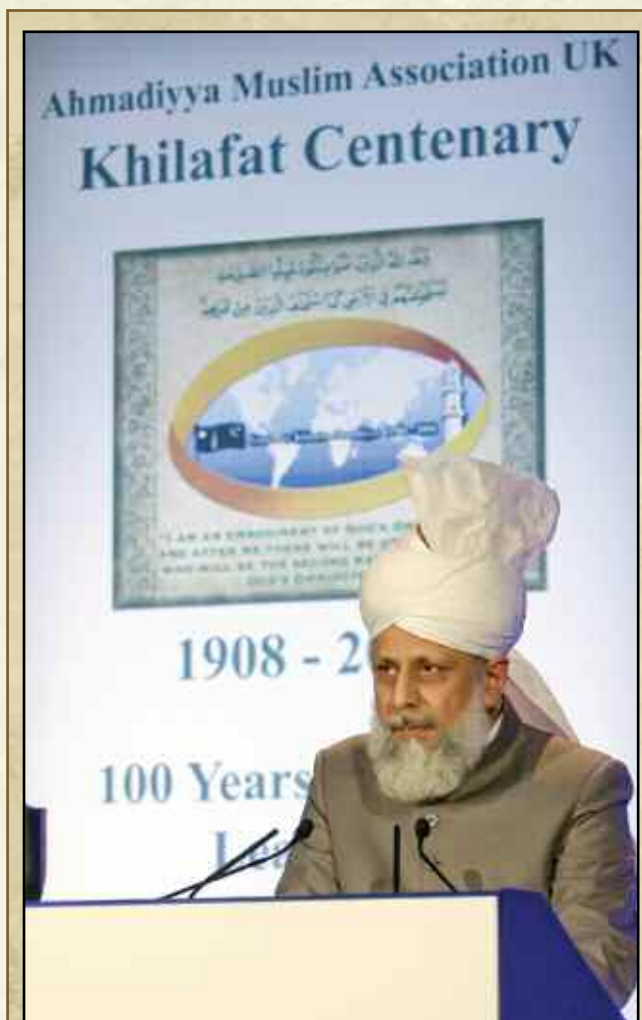
human beings can really recognise their Creator today, they will be able to fulfil their responsibilities towards their fellow beings. Today, we, and we alone, can say that the Book that was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) 1400 years ago, is still in its original condition without an iota of change. And it is the unique excellence of Islam that according to the Divine promise, Allah has bestowed Islam with the Guide inspired directly by Allah in the form of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) who has brilliantly presented to us the true teachings of Islam.

What is the definition of Jihad that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community gave to us a hundred years ago? He says:

“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. I do not say this of my own accord. This is indeed the will of God. Recall the hadith in *Sahih Al-Bukhari* which honours the Promised Messiah by saying ‘He will lay down war.’ That is to say, when the Messiah comes he will put an end to religious wars. Accordingly I command all those who have joined my ranks to refrain from all such thoughts, to purify their hearts, to foster sympathy, and to be compassionate towards the suffering. They should spread peace on earth, because that will cause their faith to spread in return. They should not entertain doubts about how this will transpire. Just as God Almighty has – without the usual means of intervention – used the resources of the earth to create modern inventions, and satisfied our physical needs by making trains that outrun horses, He will in the same way – unaided by human hands – use His angels to fulfil spiritual needs. Great heavenly signs will be seen and numerous flashes of light will open many eyes.”

(British Government and Jihad: pages 17 and 18)

Therefore, if today we are busy 24 hours a day broadcasting the Divine message in various



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languages through our television channels, we are doing it because of that Man of God who received the Divine training. If we are trying to help the suffering humanity in the field of health and education, or trying to procure clean water or food for the disaster victims, we are doing it because of our true understanding of the Islamic teaching provided to us by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

As you may already know, today we are celebrating a thanks-giving for the fact that the Community established for these lofty objectives has also completed one hundred years of the Institution of Khilafat (sometimes referred to as caliphate but in essence the Islamic method of succession after the advent of a prophet.)

For the last hundred years, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been serving the world under the guidance of these true teachings of Islam. The Ahmadiyya Community has been serving humanity in need – irrespective of caste, colour or creed. We are providing health and education in the remotest parts of poor countries of Africa. We are rehabilitating wells and connecting water supplies in those places where Government institutions and aid agencies had refused to help.

I have recently come back from Africa. From one of the remote parts of Benin, a tribal Chief, openly declared that a little while ago when rain and floods had created starving conditions, they appealed everywhere for help but only one agency answered their call and that was the Ahmadiyya Community whose doctors and truck-loads of food arrived in time to save people from disease and starvation.

Similarly, we are trying to do our best in the field of education because, we feel, education is the need of the hour. If we want to give peace and security to the world, we will have to eliminate hunger, and we will have to provide education to the uneducated so that they can realise their potential.

In Nigeria, a member of the press asked what we would give them in the coming century. My reply was that we would give them education. We would work even harder to provide education so that the poor could also benefit by realising their capabilities and potentials.

It is not my purpose to explain our work because the reason we do all this is to gain the pleasure of God Almighty. My purpose is only to let you know that the Ahmadiyya Community presents the true teachings of Islam because this is what God has commanded. One who wants to gain the ultimate pleasure of God does the following:

It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding in a day of hunger an orphan near of kin, or a poor man lying in the dust. (Ch.90:Vs.14-17)

Therefore, all of you who belong to the intellectual part of society and who are influential within your own spheres, I have mentioned these few things so that you do not get influenced by objections that are raised and that you can keep in mind the beautiful aspects of the teachings of Islam. You should know that that there is one community that acts on the true teachings of Islam and that is working in the world with a high moral objective in mind.

All this is only because this Community enjoys the blessings of Khilafat. They love their Khalifa and their Khalifa loves them; and together they fulfil the rights of humanity and the rights of God because of their love for God. With the grace, mercy and benevolence of Allah, this mutual love will last forever.

In the end, I would like to thank all the honourable guests who have spared their valuable time for this event. Thank you and may Allah bless you all!

Reference

1. *The Story of Eclipses*, George F Chambers, p.33, London 1902.

INTRODUCTION & GUEST SPEAKERS

Presented below are extracts from some of the other speeches made at this historic occasion.

After Prophethood, Khilafat is the most important institution in Islam. The word Khilafat means succession and the Khalifa is a successor to the Prophet of Allah whose goal is to bring to completion the unfinished task of the Prophet and to continue the reformation and spiritual training of the community.

Our present Spiritual Head, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected to the exalted office in 2003. He is the fifth Khalifa of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

He has been untiring in preaching peace and co-existence at every opportunity all over the world. Indeed, inter-religious harmony, societal peace and understanding as well as humanitarian service to deprived areas of the world are some of the issues that are very close to his heart.

I know, many friends from both Houses who are attending and who are joining you in this wonderful celebration of the centenary. I am delighted to congratulate you on the centenary and to congratulate you on the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community worldwide.

Your own work, Your Holiness, particularly in West Africa is well known. Your members in 190 countries spread all over the world are foremost in doing wonderful works.

I remember when the earthquake happened in Kashmir, you were amongst the first with your tremendous humanitarian organisation, rightly named Humanity First, in bringing succour to the victims, helping them to reconstruct their homes and their lives and to resume their occupations in that terrible stricken land, and you did the same in the tsunami in Indonesia, everywhere that mankind suffers your members have been active in bringing help and saving lives and limbs.

As the next hundred years of the Khilafat begins let us make a resolution to promote the message of peace and brotherhood which is your message to mankind that people of different religions should not quarrel and fight with each other but should accept and tolerate and live together in that spirit of brotherhood and peace which is the essence of your religion.



Thank you for inviting me here today to celebrate with you a hundred years of leadership within the Ahmadi community.

Let me also give David Cameron's good wishes, he could not be here this evening but he asked me to pass his good wishes to all of you here today. And let me also say that I am delighted to see so many of my colleagues, both Members of the House of Commons and Members of the House of Lords Conservatives who are also here celebrating with you.



As Shadow Minister for Community Cohesion and Social Action I regularly get asked, that is a huge title what does that exactly mean, and I say well community cohesion to me means how we live at ease with each other in our communities and what better motto than the one that you repeat all the time which is 'Love All, Hate None'. The humanitarian work of the Ahmadi community in health and in education and in poverty relief is really the true form of social action, working within communities of all backgrounds. The Ahmadi community's contribution to interfaith work is commendable, I felt that I needed to stand up and be counted and I know that many many of you, and indeed Your Holiness, stands up and is counted when it matters and therefore I am delighted to be here today.

May I say how delighted I am to be here to bring the good wishes of Her Majesty's Government, the apologies of the Prime Minister Gordon Brown, but to say, on I think everybody's behalf because as we have heard from Lord Avebury and Baroness Warsi, all of us whatever our political persuasions hugely admire the work of the Ahmadiyya community here in the United Kingdom as we do across the world.



I take a great interest in the issue of faith and religion, not least because in my own constituency of Blackburn, now 30% of the community are of Indian or Pakistani heritage, split evenly, and almost all of those 30% are of the Islamic faith. I've been interested about how we can better educate people and inform people about the fact that the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are as the followers of Islam say, Religions of the Book.

And one evening at dinner with some Muslim friends I had a wonderful conversation about theology, about the sharing, as we all do, of common prophets, going right back to Abraham. If you read the Holy Qur'an you can see that Jesus is revered as a prophet and going right back through the so called 'Judaic' prophets that there are prophets for us who are of the Christian faith and prophets – the same prophets with the same messages – for those of the Islamic faith. And what this tells us is yes of course these faiths are different but there is a commonality around them which is of huge importance if we are to ensure as I think Baroness Warsi was indicating that those who use the various texts and at different times in history to foment hatred and division within communities and between communities have no theological base whatever. And that the central message of all world religions, not least of Islam, of Christianity, of Judaism the monotheistic religions which revere the same prophets is that of peace and brotherhood.

And the reason Your Holiness why I am so delighted to be here is to mark on my own behalf as well as the Government's behalf the huge respect we have, we all have, for your work day-by-day in making a reality of peace and brotherhood across the communities in this country and across the world.

The past hundred years, Ahmadiyya in their thousands have done us the honour of settling in the United Kingdom. How good you have been to our community that the community that you found here. Today you reflect so many professions, so many different walks of life, you uphold all the virtues and the vigorous ethics that your faith has given you from birth. Yet you suffer incredible discrimination. Discrimination that it is hard to imagine in the peaceful society that we have here in the United Kingdom.



[In Pakistan] the first Constitutional alteration in the 1970s made it very very difficult indeed for members of your faith, a special branch of Islam, to be able to exercise your right to vote. You could just do it but the 1980s alteration to the Constitution made it impossible for you to vote unless you disdained your faith. And that to me as one of your members of the European parliament is one of the most devastating blows to a free society that can occur. Yet that is what has happened to the Ahmadiyya in the historic nation of Pakistan.

In the past hundred years you have given so much to the society in the United Kingdom and to societies everywhere globally. You are among those who give and do not only take. You give so much to so many societies that I have seen and felt and listened to and watched. I believe that in the next hundred years we all have to come together and we have to fight and fight and fight again to take discrimination off the face of the earth.

I was born a Christian, I remain a Christian, and I recall that Christ said and Christ after all is one of the great prophets of Islam, Christ said in my Father's house are many mansions. You in your part of Islam you exemplify that prophetic statement. In God's house there are many different paths, many different ways in, many different doors and many different rooms. To me you have that virtue, you have followed your spiritual leaders over generations over a hundred years and now today the success story that you are exemplifies that view and that belief we share, we the People of the Book.

Your Holiness, good evening, ladies and gentlemen it's a profound honour to be able to address you in celebration of one hundred years.

In my community in the Medway towns the Ahmadiyya community contribute hugely to interfaith forums, to the richness of our community and that is the same that is reflected across our nation.



But what I would like to pay tribute to you as well this evening, is the contribution that you make to wider society and the important charitable causes that you support, not just for your own communities but for the wider communities and that is to be acclaimed and to be applauded.

Message from the Prime Minister – the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP

“I am sorry that I cannot be with you tonight, but I want you to know how much I value the contribution that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community makes, not only to the country but also throughout the world.

I wish you a very happy and successful centenary celebration and know that you will continue with the work you do for the benefit of the whole mankind.

I send my very best wishes to the Head of your community today, and to all your people in the UK and wherever they are in the world.”



Yours sincerely,

Gordon Brown

THE PRIME MINISTER

Over 500 guests attended the historical event and they were all offered the opportunity to meet his Holiness



Cllr. Brendan Hudson
(Mayor of Sutton)



The Rt Rev Trevor Willmott
(Bishop of Basingstoke)



Simon Hughes MP
(President of the Liberal Democrats)



Dan Rogerson MP
(North Cornwall)



Patrick Hall MP
(Bedford)



Tony Colman
(Former MP for Putney)



Lord Crathorne



Superintendent Simon Phipps



Mr Inder Singh Uppal MBE



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

A Man of Peace

On 22nd April 2003, in the Fazl Mosque in London, Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. His life has been a reflection of dedication, steadfastness, prayer and success. His bond with God leads him to urge his community never to forget the Almighty and never to despair. His focus on prayer is evident for all to see and the fruits of the success of such prayer bear testament to his faith. His sympathy for mankind drives him and his community to serve humanity.

Since his election as Khalifa, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad has travelled abroad extensively and has delivered a number of inspiring speeches to audiences from all cultures and backgrounds.

“There is no religion in the world – be it Islam, or Christianity, or Hinduism or for that matter any other faith – that advocates the destruction of peace. Each person likes peace and hates disorder. Every heart is inclined towards good deeds and every good-natured person wants that peace should be established in the world.”

(From speech given at the ‘Respecting Religious Feelings’ multi-faith peace conference held at Baitul Futuh Mosque in March 2008)

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL

Tel: 020 8875 4321

Fax: 020 8874 4779

www.ahmadiyya.org.uk

www.alislam.org

Email: amauk@ahmadiyya.org.uk

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