



The Light — U.K. edition

April 2007

The Lahore Ahmadiyya monthly magazine from U.K.

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The first Islamic Mission in the U.K., established 1913 as the Woking Muslim Mission

Darus Salaam, 15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, HA0 4JQ (U.K.)

Centre: 020 8903 2689. President: 020 8524 8212. Secretary: 01753 692654.

E-mail: aaail.uk@gmail.com ♦ websites: <http://www.aaail.org/uk> • <http://www.virtualmosque.co.uk/>

Assalamu alaikum: Our next meeting —

Date: **Sunday 1st April 2007**

Time: **3.00 p.m.**

Speaker: **Shahid Aziz**

Topic: **Let Jesus die**

Regular activities:

Darus-i Quran and Hadith:

Every Friday at 2.30 p.m.

Meetings of the Executive:

First Sunday of every month at 2.00 p.m.

Meeting of the Jama'at:

First Sunday of every month at 3.00 p.m.

Success of Virtual Mosque

Webcasts now running flawlessly

Towards the end of February the U.K. Jama'at has installed superior technology and started to use increased bandwidth capacity for its webcasts on the website www.virtualmosque.co.uk. The remarkable result of this is that both the picture and the sound of the webcasts is received on the visitors' PCs with continuity and great clarity, without any interruption as previously experienced.

Every week the Friday *khutba* and prayers are being broadcast **live**, as was the Sunday monthly meeting on 4th March, using the enhanced system.

The utility of this website does not end with live broadcasts. The *khutbas* and speeches are digitally recorded and the recordings placed on the website in the 'Audio' section. Two other sections that are in operation are 'Our News' and 'Muslim News'.

Another feature is online donations. From the Home Page, visitors to the website from anywhere in the world can make donations to the U.K. Jama'at to help with the expenses of running the webcasting system.

The next step will be to webcast some international gathering of the Jama'at through this website, if the appropriate arrangements can be made.

Determining the start of the Islamic lunar month

An alternative method

by Abdul Momin, U.S.A.

[Mr Abdul Momin is a learned member of our Jama'at with considerable knowledge of Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. His views are always carefully researched, well reasoned and supported by strong evidence, often shedding new light on long-discussed issues. Recently he submitted to us an article which is reproduced below.]

1. The Muslim calendar is based on the lunar month consisting of 29 or 30 days.

2. The first day of a lunar month starts at sunset after the 29th or 30th day of the current month, based on sighting of the New Moon crescent.

3. Sighting of the crescent depends on sky (or atmospheric) conditions, experience of observer, age of the New Moon, latitude (location above, on or below the equator) of the observer, altitude (height of the location above sea-level), and time of the year that the New Moon crescent is being viewed. Generally, lower latitudes are favored over higher latitudes for viewing the crescent.

4. If, for any reason, the moon is not sighted at sunset on the 29th day of the month because of, say, cloudy conditions or the crescent is too thin or low in the sky, that lunar month is automatically extended to 30 days. For the crescent to be viewed, moonset must occur after sunset.

5. Since the lunar month is based on visual sighting of the crescent, considerable confusion exists at the time of Muslim holy festivals over the actual sighting of the crescent as inexperienced or dishonest observers often provide reports of false sightings.

6. Some Muslim countries, e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt, use Astronomical Moon data to determine the lunar months. This practice ensures that the lunar months are determined in advance.

Issues and Concerns

1. Because of false reports of the crescent sighting, often more than one Eid is celebrated in the same parts of Pakistan (the North West Frontier Province). There are false reports of sightings in other parts of the Muslim world also, e.g., Saudi Arabia. The recurrence of these instances of false sightings year after year, leads to a situation of despair.

2. Even in the absence of false reports, the uncertainty associated with visual sighting of the crescent does not permit advance planning of Muslim festivals, something which is highly desirable in this day and age because of the precious nature of time.

3. Because of the dynamics of the motion of the moon around the earth and because of other factors like atmospheric conditions, it is perfectly normal for a lunar month to consist of 30 days in one Muslim country, e.g. Pakistan, and to consist of 29 days in another Muslim country. Thus dates for the new lunar month do not necessarily coincide in different Muslim countries; they may be offset by one day for the whole month, although in the long run the offsets cancel out because each lunar month can only consist of 29 or 30 days duration.

4. It would be desirable to streamline the lunar month in such a way that it is predictable and in harmony with the solar calendar so that Muslims — not only in Muslim countries but throughout the whole world — can celebrate their festivals on the same solar date. This would also ensure that the dates of a particular lunar month in one Muslim country correspond with dates of the same month in a different country.

The Proposed Solution

1. In astronomy the New Moon occurs when the current month's moon becomes completely invisible to observers on earth. The side facing the earth is completely un-illuminated. The time at which this happens can be accurately predicted and is published in almanacs. For many hours after its birth the New Moon remains invisible until a tiny fraction of the moon's illuminated side faces the earth. But the time at which this New Moon crescent is first sighted depends on many factors and cannot be accurately predicted. The time from one New Moon to the next is not constant. The region of the earth where the crescent can first be sighted is also not the same from one month to the next and also cannot be predicted.

2. However, from the motion of the moon around the earth we do know that as the New Moon ages, the moon sets later and later in the sky, relative to the time of sunset (moonset must occur after sunset for viewing the crescent at sunset), the altitude of the moon increases in the sky and the percentage of the illuminated disk of the moon (or size the New Moon crescent) continues to increase.

3. As the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, if the New Moon crescent is sighted in an eastern land at a given latitude, and if all other

conditions like altitude, atmospheric conditions or obstructions on the horizon etc. are discounted and only the increase in size of the New Moon crescent with the passage of time is considered, it is fairly obvious that the chances of its sighting at the same latitude increase as we move from East to West. This is because the sun sets later and later in the western sky; the moonset occurs progressively later and later, while the size of the moon's illuminated disk and altitude in the sky continue to increase. In other words, if the crescent is sighted in Pakistan at a particular latitude, say 30 deg North, by the time the sun sets at a location in the United States, thousands of miles away to the west, the chances of the crescent being sighted at the same latitude (30 deg) would be even greater, setting aside all other considerations. In such an instance, the new lunar month would start on the same date (or day of the week) in Pakistan and the United States.

On the other hand, if the crescent is sighted first in the United States, by the time it is sighted at any location in Pakistan, the sunset will be on the following date and the lunar month would in that case begin on two different dates in the United States and Pakistan. (Pakistan time is ahead by 9 or 10 hours from the Eastern Standard Time of the USA). Also, the lunar month dates in the United States would be ahead those of Pakistan by one date. (I use the word 'date' to highlight the fact that the difference lies in the day of the week. For example, if the moon is sighted first in the US on Sunday, then the first day of the new month begins at sunset on Sunday in the US, but in Pakistan because of the later sighting at sunset the next day, it starts on Monday at sunset.)

4. Logically speaking, if the crescent is sighted first at a location *A* which is ahead in time (an eastern location) relative to another location *B* (a western location) then the lunar month should commence on the same date (or day of the week) at both locations. But if the sighting takes place at a western location *B* first, the sighting at the eastern location *A* can only occur at the next sunset at location *A*, which would be on the following date.

5. From the above discussion we can conclude that because the earth is a sphere, at any two locations in an East-West direction, a new lunar month can start either on the same date, or on two different dates. But there should **never** be a difference of more than one (and **only one**) date between any two locations in the world in determining the start of the lunar month.

6. Using the above logic, because a new date (or day) begins at the International Dateline in the Pacific ocean, it follows that if the New Moon

crescent is first sighted near the International dateline, say at the location Latitude 0 deg (on the equator), Longitude 180 deg East, it should be possible for the crescent to be viewed at all locations on the Equator from Longitude 180 deg East to 180 deg West **on the same date**, assuming all other factors like atmospheric conditions etc. are the same throughout the globe. In such an instance the lunar month throughout the globe should start on the same date. Otherwise as pointed out earlier, there should not be a difference of more than one date between any two locations on earth in the start of the lunar month.

7. However the atmospheric conditions, latitudes, altitudes, or human factors are not uniform for the crescent to be viewed all along the globe in a smooth manner. It is possible for the atmospheric conditions to prevent the sighting of the crescent at a location *B* situated between locations *A* and *C* in an East-West direction while the crescent was first sighted at location *A* and later at location *C*. In such an instance, while *A* and *C* start the lunar month on the same date, *B* which is located between *A* and *C* starts it on a different date.

8. Muslims living in northern latitudes in countries like Great Britain, USA and Canada cannot expect to view the New Moon crescent soon after its birth, because higher latitudes are not favorable for its viewing. They have to rely on Astronomical Moon Data to figure out the start of a lunar month. To remove the various inconsistencies in determining the start of the lunar month, **the practice of determining the start of a lunar month by visual sight should be completely dispensed with throughout the Muslim world.**

9. A uniform set of criteria should be used for determining the start of the lunar month, which is neither country specific, nor subjective but is based on science and logic.

10. To ensure that the lunar month starts on the same date and ends on the same date throughout the globe, the location 0 deg (Equator), 180 deg East should be used as a reference point or datum. (I would have preferred to refer to the intersection of the International Dateline and the Equator as the datum. But the dateline zigzags back and forth at different points to suit the requirements of local countries who want to avoid the confusion of having two different dates where the 180 degree longitudinal line crosses their respective territories.)

11. On the US Naval Observatory website an article states that the record for the earliest sighting of the crescent is 12.1 hours with a telescope and 15.5 hours with the naked eye after the birth of the

New Moon. But such early sightings are not the norm. Using these figures as a benchmark, a limit of between 18-24 hours as the age of the New Moon can be used to determine the start of a new lunar month at the reference point or datum.

12. The rule for the start of a new lunar month could read as:

“If on the first sunset at the Equator and Longitude 180 deg East (referred to as the datum), the age of the New Moon is at least (whatever figure is selected: 18 - 24) hours and moonset occurs after sunset, then a new lunar month shall be deemed to have started at that sunset. Otherwise the new lunar month shall start at the next sunset at the datum.”

In this way as we move progressively westwards from the datum, the lunar month would start at sunset at each location throughout the globe.

13. If such a rule based on science and logic is adopted, it would be possible to start and end all lunar months throughout the globe on the same calendar dates. The only exceptions would be the small regions near the dateline. If Muslims live in such areas, they will have to decide for themselves as to which side of the datum they would like to position themselves. For all other regions of the world, all the lunar months would be of uniform duration, either of 29 or 30 days. There would be no inconsistencies due to different starts to the lunar months in different countries.

Statement of the last Imam of the Woking Muslim Mission

Self-contradictory and misleading

by **Zahid Aziz**

A statement by Hafiz Bashir Ahmad Misri, the last and final Imam of the Woking Muslim Mission, entitled *The Bane of Mirzaiyat* (in some versions as *The Bane of Qadianiat*) written in March 1989, is found on anti-Ahmadiyya websites as well as being circulated on various Internet forums. The statement is in two parts. In the first part he describes his early life when he lived in Qadian in his parental household, from 1914 to about 1937, where his father was a leading religious scholar of the Qadiani Jama‘at. He recounts the events of the 1930s when his family, after challenging the *Khalifa* in connection with certain unsavoury events, was subjected to severe persecution and suffering by the

leadership of the Qadiani Jama‘at. They were forced to leave Qadian, after which his father, Shaikh Abdur Rahman Misri, joined the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. About himself B.A. Misri says that, shortly afterwards, he came into contact with a number of anti-Ahmadiyya *ulama*. Being impressed with them, he became, as he puts it, “a Muslim formally” through them in 1940.

Although B.A. Misri does not mention it, his father became a leading scholar and prolific writer of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and remained so for the rest of his life, till his death in 1979.

We are not concerned with his account in this first part of his statement. What we wish to comment upon is the second part entitled *The Imamate in Woking*. This is quoted below. We have numbered the paragraphs in order to refer to various points within his statement in our later comments.

The Imamate in Woking

“ 1. In 1964, I was appointed as the Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking, England. This appointment calls for some explanation for record. This mosque was built by an Orientalist, Dr. Leitner, in 1889 with funds from Muslims in India and, later, a Trust was formed to run it. That was the period when Mirzaiyat had not shown itself fully in its true colours and the Trust readily agreed to hand over the management of the mosque to the Lahori section of this Movement.

2. By nineteen-sixties quite a few Muslim Organizations had established themselves in the United Kingdom and the pressure started increasing for this Mosque to be reverted to its originally intended position of an Islamic Centre. I was approached by the Secretary and the Treasurer of the Trust to accept the Imamate. I made it clear to them that I was a Sunni Muslim and showed them copies of some published articles which I had written against Mirzaiyat. They told me that they were aware of my views and that they considered it as an asset. They also assured me that the High Commissioner of Pakistan, who was the ex-officio Chairman of the Trust and who would sign the letter of my appointment, had given his blessings.

3. After taking charge of the Mosque, it soon became obvious to me that I was being branded by the general Muslims as a Mirzai. For the last about three-quarters of a century there had been a successive line of Mirzai Imams. Muslims could not believe that all of a sudden a Sunni Imam would appear out of the blue. I found myself falling between two stools. My theological differences with both the Lahori and the Qadiani sections were irreconcilable; while the Muslims took it for granted

that I must be a Mirzai, otherwise I would not have been appointed. It took me long to win over the trust of some Muslim religious leaders in the UK.

4. It had been my life-long ambition to tour the Islamic countries by car, so that I could travel even into the rural areas and study first-hand how they were transacting their religious affairs in practice. (This tour took me about three years covering 45,000 miles in more than 40 countries). Before leaving the Mosque, however, I wanted to make sure that this far-famed Mosque and the Islamic Centre remained in the Muslim hands permanently. There were only two or three Mirzai members on the Board of Trustees, but they were very active and wielded a great influence. They were leaving no stone unturned to bring back a Mirzai Imam after I had left.

After long discussions and consultations with my Muslim friends, I called a meeting of all the Muslim Organisations in the UK and Eire, on the 20th July 1968, at the East London Mosque. It was attended by more than a hundred delegates. I explained the situation to them that I was due to start on my tour by the end of the year and that Mirzais were trying their best to have their own Imam installed.

5. There was one very important legal point which was to prove helpful to us in the tug of war which ensued. According to a clause of the Trust Deed, the legal status of the Mirzais, from the very beginning, had been that of Tenants of the Trust which could be terminated. This clause had remained unnoticed by the Muslims until I pointed it out to them.

At this meeting, it was decided unanimously to form a 'Woking Mosque Regeneration Committee' which should take over the physical possession of the Mosque under protest, and appoint an ad hoc Muslim Imam after my departure. It further resolved that the Mosque Trust should be asked to expel all its Mirzai members on the Board and never to appoint a Mirzai Imam again. It was in these circumstances that, in November 1968, I handed over the Mosque to Muslims and left England on my tour."

Our comments

B.A. Misri's account, 20 years after the events, is so full of contradictions and misstatements that only the very bigoted anti-Ahmadiyya zealots can accept it as true. In our comments below, the numbering refers to paragraphs of the same number in the above statement.

1. "...a Trust was formed to run it. That was the period when Mirzaiyat had not shown itself fully in its true colours and the Trust readily agreed to hand over the management of the mosque to the Lahori section of this Movement."

Whenever our opponents are faced with the undeniable historical fact that there have been many great Muslim leaders of the past who regarded Ahmadis not only as being Muslims but as being the most effective exponents of Islam, they trot out the absurd explanation that this Movement had not yet shown its "true colours". The fact is that the opponents of the Movement, who claim to expose its true colours, have been broadcasting their allegations to the Muslim public right from 1891, when the Founder claimed to be the Promised Messiah. By 1913, no Indian Muslim in public life, such as those who initially formed the Woking Mosque Trust, could possibly be unaware of what our opponents call as our "true colours". These first Mosque Trustees rejected our opponents' false propaganda, which is why they felt no hesitation in letting Ahmadis establish a Muslim Mission at the Mosque.

Also, the "Lahori section" did not exist at the time in 1913. The Ahmadiyya Movement was one, which makes it more remarkable that the management of the mosque was handed to its members by Sunni and Shia Muslim leaders.

The website of the present-day management of the Woking Mosque does not mention any such story about how the Mission came to be run by Ahmadis. On the contrary, it speaks of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din in the following glowing terms:

"Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din was learned and charismatic and an inspired leader. He set up residence in the Imam's house, established daily prayers in the mosque and with helpers brought from India, founded the Woking Muslim Mission to spread the message of Islam to the people of Great Britain. ...

One of the things that is impressive about this early movement, and for this the Khwaja must take the credit, was the simplicity of the message. It is evident that this is one of the things that were most influential in persuading converts to adopt Islam. He preached a message that was free of cultural baggage, a pure message based on faith and belief that encompassed the spirit of Islam. He was always positive, always gentle and always good-natured. It was obvious that he embodied many of the

qualities that believers would expect in a man of faith;...

Within a few years, through the work of Kamal-ud-Din and his Muslim Mission, Islam had established a definite foothold within England and from this point onwards it grew steadily in significance. The Woking Mission was a focal point for meetings of influential Muslims in this country, where they discussed and planned the future growth and development of Islam in England, including the establishment of a central mosque in London.”

(See: www.wokingmosque.org.uk)

This is a tribute by the present-day successors of those whom B.A. Misri considered as being the rightful groups to have charge of the Woking Mosque, and who owe their control over the Mosque today to the actions of B.A. Misri in 1968.

2. The account given in this paragraph is a riddle that makes no sense. Having been an opponent of the Ahmadiyya Movement since 1940, he says that he was offered the position of Imam of the Woking Mosque by Ahmadis in 1965. In response to this offer he informed them of his anti-Ahmadiyya views but they said that this did not matter, so he agreed to become Imam! The plain and simple question is: Why did he accept the post, given that he believed that the Mosque was run by Ahmadis whom he considers as heretics in Islam and as not really Muslims at all? Didn't it strike him as bizarre that Ahmadis should be inviting him, an opponent of their Movement, to be Imam?

His further statement, that the ambassador of Pakistan in the U.K. was the official who approved the appointment of the Imam, gives a glimpse of the truth. The Woking Mission was run with the support of other Muslim leading figures from outside the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, who regarded this Movement as best qualified to do the work of the propagation and presentation of Islam. Before Indian independence, it was Muslim princely rulers, such as the Begum of Bhopal and the princes of Hyderabad Deccan, who supported the Ahmadiyya-run Woking Mission, and after independence this position went to the Pakistan High Commission (embassy) in London.

3. He writes: “After taking charge of the Mosque, ... I was being branded by the general Muslims as a Mirzai.” This provides the real inkling into what actually happened. Mr B.A. Misri was perfectly happy to work as Imam of the Mosque and also as Joint Editor of *The Islamic Review* without objection to the religious outlook of the Woking

Mission. For example, the October 1964 issue of *The Islamic Review* is possibly the first in which his name is given as Joint Editor. On the same page where he is thus mentioned, we find a quarter-page advertisement for the book *Jesus in Heaven on Earth* by Khwaja Nazir Ahmad, published by the same Woking Muslim Mission and obtainable from the same Woking Mosque. The thesis of this book regarding the birth and death of Jesus is absolutely heretical in the eyes of the anti-Ahmadiyya and even some other Muslims, including in particular those groups to whom Mr Misri handed the Mosque. The belief that Jesus died and is buried in Kashmir is certainly the most characteristic belief associated with the Ahmadiyya Movement, and not only with the Lahore section of course. Yet B.A. Misri was content to remain the Joint Editor of the magazine of the publishers of this book, even though he claims to have been opposed to the Ahmadiyya Movement since 1940 and writes: “my theological differences with both the Lahori and the Qadiani sections were irreconcilable”.

The same issue of *The Islamic Review*, as all other issues of this magazine, contained a list of books on Islam for sale on its back cover. The first book in this list is Maulana Muhammad Ali's English translation of the Quran. This issue, on page 39, contains a review of a book by Maulana Sadr-ud-Din, beginning with words: “The author is the head of the Lahore section of the Ahmadiyya movement”. Yet Mr Misri did not record any disagreement with this projection and advertisement of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in the magazine.

Let us turn to some issues of *The Islamic Review* for 1968, the year when, according to his own account, Mr Misri was calling upon Muslims to take over the Woking Mosque from the Ahmadi unbelievers. In the April, July and August-September 1968 issues there is serialised an article by Maulana Muhammad Ali in three parts. In the April issue, on page 2, in the right-hand column, we see the name of Mr B.A. Misri as one of three editors. On the same page, in the left-hand column, under ‘Contributors’, the following is stated about Maulana Muhammad Ali:

“The late Muhammad Ali (d. 1951 C.E.), a Pakistani Muslim, was a profound scholar of the religious lore of Islam. He has to his credit the fact of being the first Muslim to have successfully attempted an English translation of the Holy Quran, with a copious commentary. His *Religion of Islam* (xxvii+784) is his *magnum opus*.”

In this short note Maulana Muhammad Ali is called a “Muslim” twice, and his literary services to Islam

are hailed. One wishes that at the nation-wide meeting of Muslims called by Mr Misri in London in July 1968 (see his paragraph 4) someone should have read out the above extract and asked him: “Why have you been serving for the past four years as Joint Editor of a magazine which even now describes the head of the Lahore Ahmadis as a great servant of Islam, a magazine which is going all over the world, while you have gathered us here to tell us that these people are heretics and unbelievers, from whom we must snatch the Woking Mosque with utmost urgency?” Is this not blatant hypocrisy?

When the common *Mullahs* arrived in England from Pakistan, following the large-scale immigration of workers from Pakistan in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they found it most objectionable that the Woking Mission was run under Lahore Ahmadiyya influence, even though this Mission preached Islam on broad, non-sectarian lines, without reference to Ahmadiyya doctrines. They thus started agitating to wrest the Mosque from Ahmadi hands. As far as we can see, it was then that Mr Misri decided to throw in his lot with them. It seems that it was not sufficient for him merely to state before these protestors that he was not an Ahmadi. To prove that he was not an Ahmadi, he had to hand over the Mosque to them! Yet, bizarrely, even at that stage Mr Misri still considered it appropriate to remain Joint Editor of the Mission’s magazine which was praising Maulana Muhammad Ali’s services to Islam.

4. Here he writes: “Before leaving the Mosque however, I wanted to make sure that this far-famed Mosque and the Islamic Centre remained in the Muslim hands permanently.” As we see, sometimes the truth slips out from his pen. He admits that the Mosque was “far-famed”. But how did it become far-famed in the Muslim world when, according to him, from the very beginning it was being run by the heretical Ahmadis preaching a false picture of Islam? It became far-famed due to the great success of the Islamic propagation work done by mission since 1913 by Imams and other workers belonging to the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, which Mr Misri has implicitly admitted. “Far-famed” may be the reason why Mr Misri accepted the post of Imam of the Woking Mosque in the first place. It was, in those days, a very prestigious position. The holder was, in effect, the head of the Muslim community in the U.K. The Imam met and welcomed high officials, heads of state, royalty, dignitaries and famous figures from all over the Muslim world. Some people (who were not Ahmadis) even called this Mosque as being like a Mecca in the West. Mr Misri must have weighed up the prestige of this post against the slur of being branded a “Mirzai”.

5. His statement that a committee was appointed “which should take over the physical possession of the Mosque *under protest*” is a clear admission that they occupied the Mosque unlawfully by force. The so-called “very important legal point” was only argued later “in the tug of war which ensued”. It may be noted that the anti-Ahmadiyya groups believe that they are entitled to take any action whatsoever against the lives, properties and rights of Ahmadis as well as those whom they refer to as “Ahmadi sympathisers”, regardless of whether such actions contravene any legal or moral codes, or are even in breach of Islamic teachings themselves. They are convinced that this is a *jihad* that they are undertaking.

Perhaps our opponents, living in the West, should reflect over why today they have difficulty in convincing non-Muslims in these countries that they will abide by the law of the land in which they have come to live. In practice, time and again they incite the Muslim masses to take “direct action” on some so-called Islamic issue or other, which they declare as a *jihad* to be waged with disregard for any law, principle, moral or scruple.

Mr B.A. Misri died some years ago. Those who are publishing his statement in support of their anti-Ahmadiyya standpoint may care to reply to our comments.

Tyranny of the majority

Article by Pakistani Professor

There is an article in the Pakistan newspaper *The News International*, entitled *The Age of Rights* by Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Professor of Political Science at the University of Stockholm, Sweden. The link to this article on the paper’s website is:

http://thenews.jang.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=45219

(Unfortunately it is impossible for us to give the date of publication because the above webpage merely displays the current date.) The learned Professor writes:

“It is, however, important to emphasise that democracy without human rights of individuals and cultural rights of minorities being safeguarded can only mean majority rule and majority decisions. This can easily become the tyranny of a brute majority.

Unfortunately Pakistani democracy has had the tendency of becoming majoritarian

tyranny. Was it not the popularly-elected Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who used his parliamentary majority to have the Ahmadiyya community declared non-Muslims? Now, I am not saying that Sunnis and Shias must accept the claims of the Ahmadis that they are Muslims. Ironically, Ahmadis also do not consider those other than them proper Muslims.

Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, a leading Ahmadi, did not participate in the funeral prayers of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, even when the latter had appointed him as Pakistan's foreign minister. So, I hold no brief for any sects accepting each other as good Muslims. It is quite all right for each sect to believe that it alone represents the true message of Islam but such a conviction should be kept out of politics. My point is that a democracy has no business to connect the religious beliefs of its citizens to their political rights."

The declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims by Mr Bhutto's National Assembly (parliament) in 1974 was not a case of an elected majority party overruling the minority opposition. It was a case of the majority secular party deciding to follow the minority religious parties who had fomented riots against Ahmadis all over the country in support of their demand to have them declared non-Muslim. Seeing the apparent mass popularity of the opposition's demands, Mr Bhutto sought to capture that appeal for himself by accepting them, so that he could claim the glory of this great achievement.

It was a case of tyranny by religious leaders who are able to mobilise their followers to come out on the streets and intimidate the rest of the population. The rulers, as well as the educated and enlightened sections of the country, were too afraid to resist the demands of the religious fanatics, and to expose these demands as being contrary to Islam and detrimental to harmony between Muslim sects in the country. Until the rulers and the intelligentsia discharge their duty of educating the people in matters where they are wrong, instead of courting popularity by encouraging ignorance and prejudice, there will be no hope for any improvement.

As to the Professor's comments that "Ahmadis also do not consider those other than them proper Muslims" and that Sir Zafrullah Khan did not join the funeral prayers for Mr Jinnah, these actions do **not** reflect the beliefs and practice of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement. On the question of "proper"

Muslims, we believe that being a "proper" or "true" Muslim is an *ideal* to be aimed for, but which all Muslims, whether Ahmadis or not, fall short of. It is impossible for any human to determine who is a proper and true Muslim; only God can determine that. The only issue to be determined by Muslims is: who should we treat as a Muslim in our dealings in this world? The only issue to be determined by Muslim state authorities is: who should be treated as Muslim for the purposes of the law of the land?

The answer provided by Islam, and fully accepted and promoted by the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, is that any person who proclaims his faith by the *Kalima Shahadat*, or any person who prays facing the *Qibla* in Makka, is a Muslim. Towards such a person we must fulfil all the obligations and duties that Islam requires of a Muslim towards a fellow Muslim. And that person, must, of course, fulfil the same in return towards us. With the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement this is not simply a statement made in words. Our Movement came into existence in 1914 to uphold this doctrine when it was being rejected and undermined by a section within the original Ahmadiyya Movement, the section to which Sir Zafrullah Khan belonged. The Lahore Ahmadis have staunchly supported this great principle of Islam and defended it by producing some of the most authoritative writings ever in the history of Islam on this issue. They stood and argued against the Qadiani Jama'at stance which taught that Ahmadis must not hold funeral prayers for any deceased who is not an Ahmadi because all such persons are outside the fold of Islam.

In 1914 Maulana Muhammad Ali was well settled in Qadian and heavily involved in the literary, missionary and community work of the Movement since 1900. Yet he gave up everything for the sake of fighting for this principle. He wrote:

"I have an urge in my heart that compels me to speak out even if I have to accept all manner of tribulation. Calling the followers of the *Qibla* as being *kafir* is the crime which Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad bitterly accused his opponent Maulvis of committing. But alas! Today we ourselves are doing what we accused others of. I shudder at the thought of calling those who recite the *Kalima*, 'There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', as being *kafirs* and excluded from the fold of Islam. ... I am prepared to face whatever consequences I may have to bear, and I pray to Allah to give me the strength to be steadfast upon the truth and grant me patience in adversity."

— *Paigham Sulh*, 19 March 1914.