

The Woking Muslim Mission —

A story of inspiration and sacrifice

Speech by Dr Zahid Aziz

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(Note: Dr Zahid Aziz, a member and author of the Lahore Ahmadiyya in UK, is the creator and developer of this website www.wokingmuslim.org).

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 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 Isha‘at Islam at Lahore. One of them was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, founder of the Woking Muslim Mission. He was inspired by the picture of Islam presented by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. 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 relating 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 Woking 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 the Holy Prophet's life which resembled 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. As he wrote in a report of his work in 1913, sent to the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Qadian, India: "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 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 their 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 Isha'at 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.