

“Call to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,  
and argue with people in the best manner.” (Holy Quran, 16:125)

# *The Light*

AND

## **ISLAMIC REVIEW**

Exponent of Islam and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement  
for over eighty years

**July – September 2004**

In the spirit of the above-cited verse, this periodical attempts to dispel misunderstandings about the religion of Islam and endeavors to facilitate inter-faith dialogue based on reason and rationality.

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احمدیہ انجمن اشاعت اسلام لاہور

◆ Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc., U.S.A. ◆  
P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

*The Light* was founded in 1921 as the organ of the AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA'AT ISLAM (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) of Lahore, Pakistan. *The Islamic Review* was published in England from 1913 for over 50 years, and in the U.S.A. from 1980 to 1991. The present periodical represents the beliefs of the worldwide branches of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore.

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Circulation: Mrs. Samina Malik.

#### Contact information:

'The Light', P.O. Box 3370, Dublin, Ohio 43016, U.S.A.

Phone: 614 – 873 1030 • Fax: 614 – 873 1022

E-mails: aaail@muslim.org • aaail@aol.com

Website: www.muslim.org

The main object of the A.A.I.I.L. is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world — Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, obscured today by grave misconceptions and wrong popular notions.

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Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), our Founder, arose to remind the world that Islam is:

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**Peaceful:** Allows use of force only in unavoidable self-defence. Teaches Muslims to live peacefully under any rule which accords them freedom of religion.

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**Non-sectarian:** Every person professing Islam by the words *La ilaha ill-Allah, Muhammad-ur rasul-ullah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) is a Muslim. A Muslim cannot be expelled from Islam by anyone.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad taught that *no* prophet, old or new, is to arise after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, *Mujaddids* will be raised by God to revive and rekindle the light of Islam.

#### About ourselves

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The Anjuman has produced extensive literature on Islam, originally in English and Urdu, including translations of the Holy Quran with commentaries. These books are being translated into other languages, including French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. The Anjuman has run several Muslim missions around the world, including the first ever in Western Europe.

#### History:

**1889:** Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founds the Ahmadiyya Movement.

**1901:** Movement given name *Ahmadiyya* after Holy Prophet Muhammad's other famous name *Ahmad*.

**1905:** Hazrat Mirza appoints central body (Anjuman) to manage the Movement.

**1908:** Death of Hazrat Mirza. Succeeded by Maulana Nur-ud-Din as Head.

**1914:** Death of Maulana Nur-ud-Din. Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam founded at Lahore as continuation of the original Anjuman. Maulana Muhammad Ali elected as Head.

**1951:** Death of Maulana Muhammad Ali after fifty years of glorious service to the cause of Islam. Maulana Sadr-ud-Din (d. 1981) becomes Head.

**1981–1996:** Dr Saeed Ahmad Khan, an eminent medical doctor and religious scholar, led the Movement, at a time of intense persecution.

**1996–2002:** Prof. Dr Asghar Hameed, a distinguished retired University Professor of Mathematics, and learned Islamic scholar, served as Head.

**2002:** Prof. Dr Abdul Karim Saeed Pasha elected Head.

## The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the Reform of Albanian Islam in the Inter-War Period

By Nathalie Clayer

[This article is an English translation of a paper appearing in French in 2004 under the title (when translated): “The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and the Reform of Albanian Islam in the Inter-War Period”. The author of the article, Dr. Nathalie Clayer, has approved this translation, by Selim Ahmed of UK, and granted permission for its publication here.]

In 1927, after seven years of freshly acquired independence, Albania began to stabilise and undergo political reform.<sup>1</sup> The ‘umbilical cord’ that used to bind the Islamic Community of this small Balkan country<sup>2</sup> with a Muslim majority to Istanbul was at that time once and for all severed. On the one hand, the setting up of national religious structures in 1923, on the other the abolition of the Caliphate and the suppression of the *medrese*’s [*Medrese* is the Turkish form of the Arabic *madrasah* — *Translator*.] in Turkey in 1924, as well as the closing of the *tekke*’s [Dervish lodges (Turkish, from Arabic) — *Translator*.] the following year, brought to an end the organic links that were in existence from a religious point of view between this former province of the Ottoman Empire and the centre on which it depended. It was at that point that the leaders of this Islamic Community received a letter from the ‘Muslim Community of India’. The latter introduced itself as having missions in England, Germany, America and Africa, as having already converted “over a hundred English people” and “about a hundred Germans” and having built mosques in England and Germany: an Islamic community which seems, therefore, to display a missionary dynamism in the very heart of Europe.

In the following years, a relationship would be established between the Albanian Islamic Community and this ‘Muslim Community of India’, or more exactly of Lahore, in this case the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at al-Islam* (‘Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam’).<sup>3</sup> What form did these connections take and why this influence on the part of an Indian missionary organisation among the Albanian Muslims in the Inter-War Period? It is questions such as these that this article will attempt to address.

### From Lahore to Tirana: propagating an Islam for the spiritual conquest of Europe

The only European country with a Muslim majority,

Albania could not do otherwise than be a target of choice for a Muslim missionary organisation such as the Lahore branch of the Ahmadi movement, active in Europe since 1912. In 1927, when the representatives of the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at al-Islam* made contact with the Albanian Islamic Community, they had, indeed, already successfully established a mission at Woking, south of London, some fifteen years previously. Moreover, they had just established another mission in Berlin.<sup>4</sup> It was on the strength of this infrastructure and of their publications in English and German that the Assistant Secretary of the organisation, Muhammad Manzur Ilahi, entered into correspondence with the leaders of Albanian Islam and sent them some of the Lahori Ahmadi network’s productions.<sup>5</sup> Part of the first exchanges of letters between Lahore and Tirana was published in 1927 in the Albanian Muslim Community’s journal *Zani i naltë* (The Supreme Voice). The two letters of Muhammad Manzur Ilahi thus published are quite illuminating as to the way in which the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement tried to attract the Albanian Muslim leaders and as to its intention in making this approach.

The first letter is quite short. Through its missionary activities in Europe, the *Anjuman* wishes to demonstrate that it is the promoter of a progressive Islam that “is to bring salvation from destruction by the forces of materialism”. It wishes to encourage and assist the Albanian Muslims, “surrounded by enemies on all sides”, to advance themselves spiritually in order to surpass these “enemies”. It suggests, therefore, that they read Ahmadi literature and set the Albanian people on “the sure path to progress”.<sup>6</sup> In the second letter, the Assistant Secretary of the *Anjuman* more specifically requests the leadership of the Albanian Islamic Community to translate the English translation of the Koran,<sup>7</sup> of which he has sent a copy, and this for “the spiritual, moral and material advancement of the Albanian people”. The argument put forward by Muhammad Manzur Ilahi is that this translation lies behind a new spirit in the Muslim world, particularly among young educated Muslims, likewise an expansion of Islam in Europe. Indeed, the Islam offered to the Albanian Muslim leaders has three main characteristics. It has made it possible to respond to attacks from the enemies of Islam and above all from Christians. It can win over Europe and the Christians thanks to its spiritual power, a power that will put an end both to the political and to the economic confusions of the Muslim world. Lastly, this is a reformist Islam, adapted to modernity, which takes its stand on the Koran and seeks after the purity of the Prophet’s day, setting aside the interpretations of the classical *fakih* (specialists in Muslim law), which are too much a product of their own time. This Islam, based on a comprehensible Koran, must be united, liberal and perfect.<sup>8</sup>

The last part of Muhammad Manzur Ilahi's letter reveals the manner in which the members of the *Anjuman* intended to operate at that time in South-Eastern Europe. Since Albania was a country with a Muslim majority and there was an Islamic Community there, they were not thinking of sending a mission, but of using this organisation as an intermediary, when asking its members to translate their works into the local language. Specifically, it had to be a local intermediary not only in relation to the Albanian Muslims but also in relation to "neighbouring countries and Christians". Two features show that, in 1927, the Lahori Ahmadiis were considering the Albanian Muslim Community almost as a future Balkan branch of their missionary movement. Muhammad Manzur Ilahi, was, indeed, recommending unrealistically to the Albanian Muslim leaders that they should follow their system for raising money: a system for the voluntary payment of a portion of their members' income, with the members promising to "uphold religion in the world" and to sacrifice their wealth and their time for Islam. Furthermore, since the reform had to come about through the distribution of literature, he was urging the Albanian Islamic Community to translate the *Anjuman's* books prepared in English and German, which he had sent to this end, and to distribute them free of charge.<sup>9</sup>

What was the outcome of this? In 1945, there was some talk of putting a young student of the Medrese of Tirana, Ismail Muçej, in charge of an 'agency' which the *Anjuman* was considering opening in Albania.<sup>10</sup> The imposition of the communist regime did not allow it, and the Albanian Islamic Community never became a branch of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, or its intermediary in the Balkans, in the proper sense of the term. And yet it was 'integrated' — admittedly very loosely — into the Lahori network because it regularly used to receive a variety of publications that came from Lahore and from the organisation's different missions (in England, Germany, Austria, the United States, etc). It was likewise visited by certain members of the network such as, in 1935, Baron Omar Rolf von Ehrenfels — an Austrian anthropologist who converted to Islam<sup>11</sup> — who published his impressions of the trip in the Lahore journal *The Light*.<sup>12</sup> Above all, up until the end of the Second World War, some Albanian Muslims were very much influenced by the *Anjuman's* teachings.

#### **From Tirana to Lahore: from translating texts to sending students**

The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman's* influence on the Albanian Islamic Community is chiefly detectable in two ways: on the one hand by the translation into Albanian of numerous texts of Lahori Ahmadi production and, on the other, by the fact that students were sent to Lahore.

From 1927, the date of the Lahoris' first contacts with Albania, up until the annexation of the country by fascist Italy in 1939, numerous articles appearing in the organ of the Albanian Islamic Community were translations or adapted translations of texts taken from Lahori Ahmadi periodicals and books. From 1927 to 1929, they were as yet relatively few in number. But from 1930 onwards, nearly all the issues of *Zani i naltë* included at least one contribution drawn, in the first instance, from the journal *The Light* of Lahore, but also from other Lahori Ahmadi periodicals: *Moslemische Revue* from Berlin, *The Islamic Review* from Woking and *Young Islam*.<sup>13</sup> To these texts a number of others are to be added, prepared on the basis of translations of passages from particular Lahori Ahmadi works, such as the books by Khwaja Kamaluddin, founder of the Woking Ahmadi mission (*Table Talk*, *al-Islam* or *The Threshold of Truth*).<sup>14</sup>

Aside from these journal articles, the Albanian Islamic Community also published during 1927–1939 the translations of a booklet and a book by Muhammad Ali, the *Anjuman's* spiritual head, and of a booklet by Khwaja Kamaluddin.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, four issues of a small journal describing itself as the Albanian-language supplement of the Lahore journal *The Light* appeared in 1936, thereby offering the Albanian public still further access — direct or indirect — to the *Anjuman's* works.<sup>16</sup>

What was the subject matter of these texts drawn from or inspired by the Lahori Ahmadi corpus? We can distinguish four major categories. Many are concerned with the Muslim faith in general, with the personality of the Prophet and with the Holy Book of Islam, the Koran, from a reformist perspective. Others deal with the role of Islam in modern society. On this topic, two themes crop up most frequently: the condition of women and Islam's freedom from incompatibility with science, education and progress. Women do not have to be veiled. They should receive schooling. Islam does not forbid photography, the Koran may be broadcast over the radio, and Muslims need to be educated. A third group consists of texts aiming to reassert the value of Islam in relation to the West and Christianity. In these, an appeal is made to the greatness of the Muslim world during the Middle Ages, to the superiority of Muslim Spain compared with a barbarous West, or else to brotherhood in Islam. Positive appreciations of Islam by Christians and other non-Muslims are adduced, and above all the conversion of Europeans. Islam's worldwide numerical strength is underscored by way of statistical tables, and more precise facts are given about the Islamic communities of Europe, Japan and America. To this group should be added texts that reassert the value not only of Islam, but also of religion in general, in opposition to materialism and atheism. Lastly, the fourth category is that of the texts that

more specifically concern the Ahmadiyya Movement, its missions and their activities, with the emphasis on the expansion of Islam in Europe.

In order to gauge the *Anjuman*'s influence, it is also interesting to enquire into the translators of these texts. For that, it is necessary to draw a distinction between two periods. Between 1927 and 1931, the Ahmadi texts are translated by two people in the main: the Administrative Director and lecturer at the Medrese of Tirana, Junus Bulej,<sup>17</sup> who generally translated from German and, from 1929 onwards, the young Professor of Mathematics and Chemistry at the American Technical College in Tirana, Omer (or Ymer) M. Sharra,<sup>18</sup> who translated from English.<sup>19</sup> No ulema were involved, therefore. One can assume that they had been more or less appointed to translate the Ahmadi texts by members of the leadership of the Islamic Community. But, being a teacher at the Medrese, Junus Bulej seems to have had his imitators among the students, all the more so as it became, in the 1930's, part of the education of the religious authorities-to-be trained in that establishment to use and to translate Ahmadi literature.

Following the 1929 Congress, the Albanian Islamic Community and its institutions were indeed reformed, particularly the Medrese of Tirana, which became the sole establishment for Muslim religious education in the country, under the name 'Medrese General' (*Medrese e përgjithshme*). As for the journal *Zani i naltë*, after two long interruptions of seven and nine months in 1929 and 1930–1931 due to the reorganisation of the Community and a new law on the press, it also took on a new appearance, with a new editor, Haki Sharofi, in charge. In addition, it was decided to allow the Medrese's students to express themselves through it "in order to convey to public opinion some idea of the way in which future Muslim religious professionals were being educated".<sup>20</sup> Now the greater part of the articles supplied from then on by the students were translations of texts taken from Ahmadi periodicals. It should be stressed here that, in the Medrese General's new curriculum, English had replaced French, a western foreign language taught at the Medrese of Tirana prior to 1929.<sup>21</sup> This change is no coincidence. It was due to the desire on the part of the Muslim Community's leaders to give their future functionaries a chance to have access to a body of work like that of the *Anjuman*.<sup>22</sup> In 1932, five students from the Medrese trained in translation and in this way supplied the organ of the Islamic Community with texts. By 1939 there were over fifteen of them,<sup>23</sup> amongst whom was Hasan Selami, who, after graduating in 1935, ran the English classes at the Medrese for several years before leaving to pursue his studies in Cairo.<sup>24</sup>

Following the annexation of the country by Italy, *Zani i naltë* was replaced by the journal *Kultura islame* (Islamic Culture). The Italian occupation seems to have led the publishers of the new organ of the Islamic Community to discontinue making direct references to Ahmadi journals or at any rate to discontinue offering plain translations made by the students of the Medrese.<sup>25</sup> Yet the influence of the *Anjuman* did not disappear, since, alongside the translations of the Egyptian modernist authors who made their appearance at that time,<sup>26</sup> translations of articles or extracts from Ahmadi books are still to be found in *Kultura islame*, as well as references to Muhammad Ali and his disciples. Besides, a letter from the Honorary Secretary of the *Anjuman*, Aziz Bakhsh, is published in the issue for September–October 1940. The latter fact definitely indicates that the correspondence that the Albanian Islamic Community had maintained with the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement was still continuing.<sup>27</sup> The Ahmadi corpus also becomes more in evidence again in 1943–1944, after the Italian occupation had ended, when the ensuing German occupation seems to have allowed more freedom to the leaders of Albanian Islam. Some students of the Medrese, such as Ismail Muçej, also went back to publishing articles based on material provided by the *Anjuman*.<sup>28</sup> In 1944, the Islamic Community even republished a series of religious books, one of these being the translation of the booklet by Muhammad Ali on the life of the Prophet.

The continuation of Ahmadi influence in the Albanian Islamic Community's publications is not surprising, inasmuch as the managing editor of *Kultura islame*, Sadik Bega, was a young graduate of the Medrese who, in his time, had himself translated articles from Ahmadi journals. Above all, the journal's editor, Sherif Putra, also a graduate of the Medrese and author of a very large number of translations of Ahmadi texts, was a former scholarship holder of the *Anjuman* in Lahore.<sup>29</sup>

For the propagation of Islam in its Lahori Ahmadiyya interpretation was not limited to passing on its literary productions in the Albanian language. The attraction of the *Anjuman* was strong enough also to prompt several young Albanian Muslims to go and undertake advanced theological studies in India. According to the reports of the Director of the Medrese, the *Anjuman* had offered scholarships and young Albanians wanted to take advantage of them. This happened first of all with two out of the ten first graduates of the Medrese, Sherif Putra and Ejup Fazli Kraja, who had started working for the Islamic Community on leaving the Medrese in October 1932. After many difficulties, due in particular to having to meet their travel expenses, for which no provision had been made either by the *Anjuman* or by the Albanian Islamic Community, they finally got under way for the Indies at the

end of the year 1934. They were joined by Halil Junus Repishti, scion of a well-known family of traders and ulema from Shkodra. It should be noted that the latter had not studied at the Medrese of Tirana, but in the religious establishments of his native city. Ahmadi influence had succeeded, then, in emerging to some degree from the context of the *Medrese e Përgjithshme*.<sup>30</sup> Finally, three other graduates of the Medrese left for the Indies in 1935. Yet it seems they never arrived. Reaching Cairo, one stage on their long voyage, they would have been prevented from carrying on.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, Lahore only received, all told, three Albanian students. They took courses there notably in Arabic, the history of Islam, *hadith*, English and Urdu. Ejup Kraja, in particular, entered the University of the Punjab, [This is the University of the Punjab, Lahore, now in Pakistan — *Translator*.] where, in 1937, he took courses in the 'Arts and Philosophy' department. In 1936, all three of them published the aforementioned Albanian-language supplement of the journal *The Light*, which ceased publication after four issues for lack of resources. Housed, fed and clothed by the *Anjuman*, which also used to provide them with the books it published, Sherif Putra and his two friends seem, in spite of everything, to have had a great deal of trouble getting hold of other books and maintaining a decent standard of living in Lahore. In order to help them, the Albanian Islamic Community made several appeals for funds.<sup>32</sup> We do not know whether or not these difficult conditions underlay the return of the three students to Albania after having spent three years in the Indies. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1939, Halil Repishti and Ejup Kraja were, indeed, repatriated.<sup>33</sup> In fact, both of them quickly set off again for Egypt, since in October 1939 they were excluded from al-Azhar on account of their Ahmadi beliefs.<sup>34</sup> In 1940, when they were studying at the American University in Cairo and were given a grant by the Albanian Islamic Community, they published in an Egyptian newspaper a declaration in which they acknowledged their mistake and the deviance of Ahmadi doctrines.<sup>35</sup> As for Sherif Putra, he also went back to Albania, at the latest during 1939, since in September he became editor there of the Islamic Community's new publication.

### The search for a 'modern', 'European' Islam and its limitations

Why did the leaders of Albanian Islam and the young executives whom they had begun to educate turn towards Lahore and the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at al-Islam*? Let us go back over the Albanian situation in order to understand these links forged with an Indian Islam. When, in 1927, the *Anjuman* made contact with the Albanian Islamic Community, a debate over the reform of Islam and Islamic

institutions was getting underway in Albania. At the centre of this discussion, which covered the pages of the Community's publication, was Salih Vuçitern, Director General of Vakfs (the Islamic Community's properties in mortmain).<sup>36</sup> Very close to President Ahmed Zogu, back in position again as Head of State since the end of the year 1924, and true intermediary between the political authorities and the Islamic Community, Salih Vuçitern made an appeal at that time directed towards the "need for reform". In it, he was suggesting a reorganisation of the vakfs, the closure of unnecessary mosques, the suppression of the regional *medrese*'s and their replacement by two boarding schools, at Shkodra and at Tirana, where a modern religious education would be provided. He was motivated in this by the fact that the Albanian Muslims were "surrounded on all sides by cultured peoples" and that the only means of survival, under these conditions, was to raise the standards of Albanian society.<sup>37</sup> Of course, this move should be placed in the wider context of the politics of the reforms carried out by Ahmed Zogu, all the more so as Salih Vuçitern, an admirer, moreover, of Atatürk, was one of his close advisers. This policy led notably to the introduction of the civil code in 1928, the reorganisation of religious Communities in 1929, with the aim of state control, and the abolition of wearing the veil in 1937.

The aid that the *Anjuman* offered for the purpose of "the spiritual advancement of Albanian Muslims", of setting them on "the road to progress", and of causing them to "surpass their enemies" corresponded exactly, then, to the process that Salih Vuçitern wanted to set in motion. Is it any wonder, then, that it was he who, in 1928, only one year, therefore, after the first contacts with the Ahmadiyya Movement, made an appeal for funds in each prefecture in order to publish a number of books and distribute them free of charge, including *Muhammed — Our Prophet* by Muhammad Ali, adopting, therefore, an approach close to the one suggested by the Assistant Secretary of the *Anjuman*?<sup>38</sup> Three years later, when the book by Muhammad Ali came out, a member of the Islamic Community was confirming that this translation had been made on the initiative of Salih Vuçitern, with his desire for reform, "in order to rescue the Albanian Muslims from the swamps of age-old apathy in which they are immersed", in order to "advance them from the religious point of view and from the national point of view by means of culture". Isa Domni added, in a spirit probably quite close to Salih Vuçitern's: "To set up a *medrese* in every corner of Albania, to build mosques everywhere achieves nothing and can be of no use without culturally shaping the intellect and transforming the spirit of Muslims by means of good advice, a good education, and with the help of high-quality literature, written or translated according to need".<sup>39</sup>

The Islam of the *Ahmadiyya Anjuman* corresponded, then, to this Islam compatible with modernity, science and rationality of which Salih Vuçitern and some of his colleagues were in search. This was actually an Islam advocated by several reformist groups of the Muslim world of the time.<sup>40</sup> What probably also attracted the Albanian Muslim leaders in the Lahori Ahmadi arguments was, paradoxically, the European side of this missionary movement — not its Indian side. One of the central ingredients in Albanian nation building had been, since the final years of Ottoman rule, the building of a ‘European’ Albanian Muslim identity, as opposed to an ‘Asian’ Turkish Muslim identity, in order to legitimise the wish of Albanian Muslims not to emigrate to Anatolia in the event of the Empire’s demise. What is more, as in the other Balkan countries, modernisation was synonymous with de-ottomanisation and europeanisation. Since the country had a Muslim majority, Albanian reformers like Salih Vuçitern accordingly wanted to create an Islam compatible with Europe. Now, the Lahori Ahmadi were trying to propagate a European Islam in Western Europe, drawing even western intellectuals into their ranks.<sup>41</sup>

Another aspect of the *Anjuman*’s arguments must also have been right on target: the ‘arsenal’ that it had been able to develop in response to Islam’s loss of prestige among educated Muslims on the one hand and in response to the onslaughts of Christian propaganda on the other. For Salih Vuçitern and the leaders of Albanian Islam were up against these two problems. The most educated Muslims, under the influence of scientism and Kemalism, tended to reject Islam as responsible for the backwardness of the country and incompatible with progress. The Bektashi Muslims, being affiliated with that brotherhood of the most heterodox and syncretistic kind, were the first to denounce Sunni Islam as incapable of reforming itself and as an impediment to progress and modernity.<sup>42</sup> As for the Christians, some had even aimed to reconvert the Albanian Muslims to the “religion of their ancestors”.<sup>43</sup>

In answer to the challenges of modernity, science, reason and Europeaness, the *Anjuman* was offering a body of work in western languages (English and German), readily translatable into Albanian. Albanian literature — religious and non-religious — was as yet only in its early stages. Knowledge of Arabic was relatively limited, above all on the part of the most reform-minded, and Turkish Islam, to which Albanian Islam had been tied, was in the throes of Mustafa Kemal’s reforms. In the same way, for the advanced theological studies that the Islamic Community was itself unable to set up, there was the problem of choosing where the graduates of the Medrese should go. There was no longer any possibility of going to Istanbul, the former educational centre of the Albanian ulema under the

Ottoman Empire. Since 1925, provision had been made for sending young people to al-Azhar.<sup>44</sup> In 1940, they amounted to about twenty students in Cairo from Albania.<sup>45</sup> The contacts established with the Ahmadiyya Movement offered an alternative to the Egyptian capital that was credible enough, it appears, during the first half of the 1930’s, before the second contingent of students was stopped at Cairo.

This latter incident and the relatively insignificant number of students who did indeed pursue their studies in Lahore should lead us to wonder about the actual influence of the *Anjuman* in Albania. The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement exercised a direct influence on three main circles: the leaders of Albanian Islam who, like Salih Vuçitern, were part of the reformist current; all or some of the students of the Medrese of Tirana, enthusiastic readers and translators of the literary output of the *Anjuman*’s network; and lastly a few other Muslims, following the example of the young Halil Repishti of Shkodra, who went off to study in Lahore. We may also judge that it had an indirect influence on wider Muslim circles, particularly among the readers of the Islamic Community’s publication. Indeed, the use of texts from the Lahori Ahmadi corpus gave a very specific profile to Albanian Islamic journals. As compared with the journal of the Islamic Community of Yugoslavia, for example, *Zani i naltë* and *Kultura islame* had a much more significant cultural dimension, allotting less space to the religious sciences. Even so, one should not overestimate this journalistic influence. The distribution of the Islamic Community’s journals remained limited. In 1939, the number of subscribers to the journal *Zani i naltë* amounted to a little over two hundred, and half of them lived in the Albanian capital.<sup>46</sup> In 1941 *Kultura islame*, run by a young duo consisting of Sadik Bega and Sherif Putra, would have had 2,400 subscribers.<sup>47</sup> Proselytism of the Lahori Ahmadi variety, backed up by written material, suited educated youth and intellectuals, but not the masses, still very largely unlettered in Albania at this time and supervised by a ‘clergy’ of a very poor standard.<sup>48</sup>

More fundamentally, if the impact of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement remained limited, it is above all because the reformist Muslim tendency using the Ahmadi ‘arsenal’ was, in fact, very much a minority within the Albanian Muslim population and its élite. At the time the journal *Drita* appeared, published by the three Albanian students in Lahore, the publishers of *Zani i naltë* were announcing “a new Islamic spirit”. But they foresaw that the publication was going to be fought against on two fronts, by the ‘conservatives’ and by the ‘non-religious’, since it was created for the nationalists who had understood that the progress of the Albanian nation would only

come about when the Muslim section of the population had developed to an appropriate degree.<sup>49</sup> In fact, a significant section of the Muslim élite, Bektashis and non-Bektashis, was more modernist than reformist, in the sense that this term has in the history of Islam in the 19th–20th centuries, and had difficulty seeing how (Sunni) Islam could be compatible with modernity, as we have seen.

But the reformist Muslim tendency was also in conflict with conservative Muslim circles, including a large section of the ulema and minor religious functionaries (imams, muezzins). When Salih Vuçitern called for reform in 1927, reactions were not slow in coming. The same thing happened when the regional *medrese*'s were suppressed or when the abolition of wearing the veil was decreed in 1937. The most virulent reactions came from Shkodra, the metropolis of northern Albania, bastion of Muslim traditionalism.<sup>50</sup> Even so, it is likely that the reformist tendency that monopolised the machinery of the Islamic Community was out of step not only with the religious folk of Shkodra, but also with those of other parts of the country. This opposition can be gauged by an announcement made by the editors of *Zani i naltë* in 1933. According to them, the journal was not the mouthpiece of the ulema, but of the Islamic Community, that is, the organisation representing the Muslim sector of the population. They added that there were no clergy in Islam and that the aim of the journal was not to defend the hojas and form a parasitic clique living off the general public, but to contribute to the nation's cultural, social and economic development according to the precepts of the Koran.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond this struggle for legitimacy between reformists and traditionalist ulema, there could be the problem of the Ahmadiyya Movement's image in the Muslim world. Outside the country, we have seen that it had been possible for the Albanian Muslims' connections with the *Anjuman* to turn problematic. At Cairo, in 1935, three students had been unable to continue their journey to Lahore. Four years later, two others were expelled from al-Azhar and had to renounce their Ahmadi beliefs. It should be noted that these incidents did not stop the Albanian Islamic Community publishing another letter from the *Anjuman* in its periodical publication in 1940. Yet this same publication, in 1936, had echoed a reaction from the Albanian Muslim community itself. A reader was denouncing the deviant views of Lahore's young Albanian students, who, in their journal *Drita*, had written that Joseph was the father of Jesus. And he concluded: "this defamatory doctrine coming from the Islamic movement in Lahore has been contradicted by all the competent scholars in the Muslim world. We want our students to bring us culture and not a defamatory doctrine that is against the Koran".<sup>52</sup> Already in 1933, a doubt did exist in some

minds since two young Muslims from Shkodra appear to have taken the trouble to write to the Sheikh of al-Azhar to ask him what view to take of the Ahmadiyya movement.<sup>53</sup> Should one also see in this critical approach a reflection of the fact that the Albanian Islamic Community did not have the translation of the Koran by Muhammad Ali translated into Albanian? Did those ulema capable of carrying out such a translation refuse to make use of this controversial text? The question remains open.<sup>54</sup>

The definitive obstacle seen by the Albanian reformists to the propagation of Lahori Ahmadi Islam was the imposition of the communist regime at the end of the Second World War. In 1945, the new authorities intercepted the last parcel of books sent by the *Anjuman* to the young Ismail Muçej and advised, that is to say, enjoined the latter — charged by the Indians with opening an agency in Albania — to break off his correspondence with Lahore. Subsequently, Albanian Islam was brought to heel, the country was practically closed off and, in 1967, all forms of religion were forbidden there until 1991.

Yet Lahori Ahmadi influence continued to make itself felt among some Albanian Muslims, not in Albania itself, but in the United States. One of the main representatives of these is Imam Vehbi Ismaili. The author of numerous translations of articles from journals of the Lahori network when he was a student of the *Medrese* during 1936–1937, then a student at al-Azhar from 1938 onwards, Vehbi Ismaili (or Vehbi Hoxha) is, indeed, behind numerous publications appearing in Albanian from the 1950's onwards on American soil, in which elements of Lahori Ahmadi thought can be directly or indirectly detected.<sup>55</sup> And one could follow the continuing impact of the Lahori missionary activity of the inter-war period down to our own time, because, since the fall of communism in Albania, the publications of Vehbi Ismaili have been distributed in the country. These include, for example, the book 'Islam and the Prayers' (*Islamizmi dhe lutjet*), which the author says he wrote under the particular inspiration of the books of Muhammad Ali and Khwaja Kamaluddin.<sup>56</sup>

To return to the inter-war period, Albanian-Indian contacts are far from having been marginal in the transformations of Albanian Islam. They should be placed at the heart of a process of political and religious reform driven from the top, whose promoters, following the example of Salih Vuçitern, wanted to make Albania "a European country and the most advanced Muslim state".<sup>57</sup> One could see a paradox in the fact that this reformist group looking for a western Islam turned towards the East. But that would be to forget that, although Indian, the *Anjuman* was then at the heart of Islam's first phases of expansion in Western Europe. ■



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- 1 Albania acquired independence in 1913, but was occupied by various powers during the First World War. Only in 1920 did it fully recover that independence that it lost once again in 1939.
  - 2 By 'Islamic Community' with a capital 'C' I mean here the official Muslim religious institutions.
  - 3 This denotes a branch of the Ahmadi movement, which arose in the Panjab at the end of the 19th Century. Shortly after the death of its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908), this movement split into two. The greater part of the Ahmadi faithful made up the Qadiani Ahmadiyya Movement, behind the son of the founder, considering Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be a prophet. Another group, much less significant numerically and holding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be only a reformer (*mujaddid*), constituted the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement (Smith, 1956). I shall not discuss here the activity of the Qadianis, whose impact in Albania was considerably less significant than that of the Lahoris.
  - 4 The *Anjuman* likewise founded a mission to Java.
  - 5 It should be noted that, at about the same time, the Qadiani branch had also started to take an interest in the Albanian Muslims. Indeed, in the course of 1927, the head of the Albanian Legation in London, Eqrem bey Vlora, wrote to the Grand Mufti of Albania that the Imam of the London Mosque, Rahim Bakhsh Dard, intended to come to Albania in order to visit the country, but also for the purposes of study, the Muslims of India being interested in the Albanian Islamic Community. The diplomat added that this man had been recommended to him and that he should therefore be accorded the appropriate hospitality, so that India should have a good impression of the Islamic Community of Albania (Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit (Tirana) — henceforth AQSh — Fondi 882 (Komuniteti Mysliman), viti 1927, dosja 112). I have been unable to find any trace of this visit, assuming it indeed took place.
  - 6 "Nji letër e derguem nga komunitetin mysliman të Hindit", *Zani i naltë*, IV/12, July 1927, pp. 377–378 (the letter is accompanied by a photograph of the Berlin mosque).
  - 7 This refers to the translation into English, prepared by Muhammad Ali, the spiritual head of the *Anjuman* (d. 1951), and published in 1920.
  - 8 'Nje leter e Komunitetit të Hindit Villaut Hafis Isa Domni', *Zani i naltë*, V, No. 2, December 1927, pp. 425–430.
  - 9 *Ibid.*
  - 10 Luli-Dizdari-Bushati 1997, p. 667.
  - 11 Baron Omar Rolf von Ehrenfels (born 1901) apparently converted to Islam at the Lahori Ahmadi mission's

- mosque in Berlin, around 1927. In the current literature he is said to have been attracted towards Islam while staying among the Muslims of the Balkans and Turkey and that it was a Yugoslavian imam who had suggested to him that he get in touch with the imam of the new Berlin mosque, Dr S. M. Abdullah (Khulusi 1963, pp. 234–235).
- 12 Cf. *Zani i naltë*, nos. 9–10, Shtatuer–Qershuer 1935, pp. 292–296.
- 13 It should be noted that translations were similarly made from other English-language Islamic periodicals, including Qadiani Ahmadi journals like Chicago's *Moslem Sunrise* and *The Review of Religions*, or even anti-Ahmadi ones like *Genuine Islam* from Singapore (I am very grateful to Eric Germain for providing me with the publication details of these periodicals).
- 14 For example, in issue IX/2–3 October–November 1933, there is an article with the title 'Modern Chemistry and Islam', translated by Hasan Selami, the translation of correspondence between the Islamic Community of America and President Roosevelt, an article drawn from *The Light* on a new mosque in London, and an article by Junus Bulej on the spiritual significance of fasting, according to Dr Hamid Marcus of the Berlin mosque.
- 15 Muhamet Ali, *Një përshkrim i shkurtër i jetës së profetit t'islamizmës* (trans. Omer M. Sharra), Shkodër, 'Ora e Shkodrës', 1929, 74 pp.; Muhamet Ali, *Muhamedi profeti i ynë*, Shkodër, 'Ora e Shkodrës', 1931, 247 pp.; and *Disa të vërteta morale* (trans. Sh. Putra), Tirana, 'Tirana', 1939, 45 pp. It is possible that the booklet entitled *Islamizmi*, published by the Islamic Community in 1929, is also translated from an Ahmadi text. I have not been able to check this. In addition, it is necessary to point out that there were, in 1935 and 1938, two translations of works by Ömer Rıza Doğrul, a Turkish author himself steeped in Ahmadi texts, who translated the translation of the Koran prepared by Muhammad Ali (cf. Uzun, 1994 on this individual).
- 16 On this periodical, see below.
- 17 On Junus Bulej (1892–1966), originally from Shkodra, cf. Luli-Dizdari-Bushati 1997, pp. 399–414.
- 18 On Ymer Sharra (1901–1975), who was born in Vlora (in South-West Albania), see Gogaj 1999, p. 54.
- 19 According to the United States reissue of the book Muhamet Ali, *Një përshkrim i shkurtër i jetës së profetit t'islamizmës*, translated by Omer M. Sharra, which Imam Vehbi Ismaili has made available to me, Omer Sharra was at that time Professor of English at the Medrese of Tirana. I am immensely grateful to Imam Vehbi Ismail, who was kind enough to reply to my queries and send me publications.
- 20 *Zani i naltë*, VI/2, Tetuer 1931, p. 66.
- 21 Cf. *Rregulore e Medreses së Përgjithshme të Komunitetit Mysliman Shqiptar*, Shkodër, Ora e Shkodrës, 1931.
- 22 Henceforth, in fact, the Medrese of Tirana constituted an exception in the Balkans, since French and German remained the only western languages taught in establishments of this type down to the Second World War (Popovic 1997). Attention is drawn to this change of foreign language at the Medrese of Tirana and the reason for it by Sherif Putra, an Albanian student at Lahore, in an article published in *The Light* ('Islam in Albania', *The Light*, vol. XIII, no. 5, 1/2/1935, p. 2). I owe my knowledge of this article to Mr Nasir Ahmad of Lahore, to whom I am immensely grateful.
- 23 I have listed seventeen names of students having made translations. Some of them used the signature 'Devrani', the pseudonym of a person whose status is not at present known to me.
- 24 Hasan Selami died in Cairo in 1944 (cf. Ismaili 1993, p. 169, and *Kultura islame*, V/11, korrik 1944, pp. 316–322).
- 25 For example, in issue 1/4, pp. 143–146, one article had been explicitly compiled from the *Moslemische Revue*.
- 26 In this way there were published in serial form translations of Taha Husayn's 'Guides to Thought' and Muhammad Haykal's 'Life of Muhammad'.
- 27 This letter, dated 13th May 1940, was a reply to a telegram of 27th April 1940, sent to the *Anjuman* by Behxet Shapati, the Head of the Albanian Islamic Community, on the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet (cf. *Kultura Islame*, II/13–14, shtator–tetor 1940, p. 50).
- 28 Luli-Dizdari-Bushati 1997, pp. 666–667.
- 29 The Head of the Albanian Islamic Community, Behxet Shapati, who was the author of numerous articles in the journal, also seems to have been familiar with Ahmadi literature.
- 30 According to Imam Vehbi Ismaili, Halil Junus Repishti and Ejup Kraja were friends.
- 31 Cf. F. 882, v. 1934, d. 78, report dated 20/4/1935; F. 882, v. 1935, d. 2, report dated 1/5/1935; and *Zani i naltë*, XI/3, marc 1936, back cover.
- 32 Cf. for example 'Për të gatue një kler të ri', *Zani i naltë*, X/11, Nanduer 1935, pp. 348–351.
- 33 AQSh, F. 882, v. 1939, d. 52.

- 34 *Oriente Moderno*, XIX, 1939, p. 619.
- 35 Cf. AQSh, F. 882, v. 1939, d. 95, and *Oriente Moderno*, XX, 1940, p. 460.
- 36 Born in 1880 at Vuçitern (in Kosovo), Salih Vuçitern had undertaken theological and secondary school education in Istanbul. Arriving in Albania at the time of the Balkan wars (1912–1913), he was notably Inspector of Education in the Mat region in 1919 and Prefect of Dibra in 1922. In 1921, he was Director General of Vakfs, a post that he occupied until 1939, then once more from 1942 onwards. He was a Deputy from 1921 to 1925 and from 1928 to 1932, and a Senator from 1925 to 1928. From 1928 to 1930, he was Minister of Public Works. During the 1930's, he was in charge of the administration of agricultural reform. In 1938, he was president of SITA, the Electricity Society of Tirana. During the Italian occupation, he was interned for two and a half years. A Zog loyalist and member of the militant movement supporting his restoration, he was arrested in October 1945 by the communist authorities and died in prison four years later (cf. Taylor 1937, p. 1146; Schmidt-Neke 1987, p. 355; Villamasi 1995, see Index).
- 37 'Deklaratë. Mbi nevojën e reformave', *Zani i naltë*, IV/7, Fruer 1927, p. 196–207.
- 38 The process was repeated in 1944, on the same lines (cf. *Kultura islame*, V/7–8, Mars–Prillë 1944, p. 204).
- 39 'Pak fjalë rreth një libri', *Zani i naltë*, VI/2, Tetuer 1931, pp. 62–65.
- 40 On this subject, see Dupont and Mayeur-Jaouen 2002.
- 41 That is the way Sherif Putra, for example, was looking at it when he said: "I assure the Anjuman that though it has for the present students from one European country only, that is, Albania, yet within a short time it will have many students from different parts of Europe, because the European Muslims look to this Anjuman for the spreading of Islam. They believe that if there is any body who can save Islam from these crises, it is the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, Lahore" (*The Light*, XIII, no. 5, 1/1/1935, p. 2).
- 42 See especially the polemic pitting Mehdi Frashëri, an intellectual and Albanian political figure of Bektashi origin, against the Islamic Community (*Zani i naltë*, V/10–11, gusht–stator 1928, pp. 678–690 and dheter 1928, pp. 726–734).
- 43 See, for example, C. T. Erickson, 'Albania, the Key to the Moslem World', *The Moslem World* 1914, 4, pp. 115–119, and 'La questione religiosa in Albania', *Roma e l'Oriente*, VI/34/1913, pp. 199–208.
- 44 *Zani i naltë*, II/4, qershor–korrik 1925, p. 487.
- 45 Some graduates of the Medrese of Tirana studied not at al-Azhar but at the University of Cairo, following the example of Sadik Bega, a graduate of the Faculty of Arts [French, 'la faculté des Lettres' — *Translator*].
- 46 AQSh, F. 882, v. 1939, d. 90.
- 47 AQSh, F. 882, v.1941, d. 15.
- 48 In 1939, the editors of *Kultura islame* received a letter which drew attention to the discrepancy between the journal's content and the reality of Islam in the Albanian countryside (AQSh, F. 882, v. 1939, d. 119, f. 16–17).
- 49 'Nji revistë shqipe në Lahorë', *Zani i naltë*, XI/3, Mars 1936, pp. 99–100.
- 50 On reactions to the reform project launched by Salih Vuçitern in 1927, cf. *Zani i naltë* (year 1927), and on reactions to the abolition of wearing the veil in 1937, see Morozzo della Rocca 1990, pp. 35–36.
- 51 'Detyra jonë', *Zani i naltë*, nos. 2–3, tetuer–nanduer 1933, pp. 16–19. In the article in *The Light* cited in notes 22 and 41, Sherif Putra came out very strongly against the Mullas and 'mullatism'.
- 52 'Si u kriju Krishti?', *Zani i naltë*, nos. 10–11, tetuer–nanduer 1936, p. 351.
- 53 Cf. Luli-Dizdari-Bushati 1997, pp. 585–586.
- 54 Let us recall that, on the other hand, the translation by Muhammad Ali was translated into Turkish in 1934 (cf. *supra*, note 15), and that this Turkish translation formed the basis of a translation into Serbo-Croat published in Sarajevo in 1937 by M. Pandža and Dž. Čaušević (Popovic 1973). According to Fethi Mehdiu (1996, p. 99), one Shejh Jahja, son of Shejh Shefqet of Djakovica (Kosovo), had made a translation of the Koran into Albanian on the basis of the translation of Pandža and Čaušević and that of Karabeg. But this translation remained in manuscript. In Albania, Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, who applied himself to a translation-commentary of the Koran in the 1930's, used other works. He points out, however, that he has taken "Indian Muslim scholars" as a model when he gives the verses in transcription for those who are unfamiliar with the Arabic script (Bardhi 1998, p. 128).
- 55 On Vehbi and his activity, cf. Luli-Dizdari-Bushati 1997, pp. 595–624.
- 56 Ismaili, 1993 (see the two Prefaces).
- 57 According to relatives of Salih Vuçitern interviewed in Shkodra in June 1995.

## Dowie: A sign to America and the World (Part 2)

By Muhammad Sadiq, Columbus Ohio

*[This article completes a series of Jummah Khutbas (sermons) given by the author. As part of his research, Mr. Sadiq visited Zion City and was able to obtain fascinating historical documents pertaining to Dr. Dowie. This segment continues from the Jan.-Mar. 2004 volume.]*

The writer, Ernest Sullivan Bates, commenting on Dowie's fiasco in New York, tells us that the failure in New York was Dowie's "first check" in his meteoric rise as an evangelist. Was it just a coincidence that only 57 days before the New York debacle, Hazrat Ahmad had predicted Dowie's destruction and that calamity would certainly overtake him? Or was this God's Work and His Sign of Hazrat Ahmad's truth and that Elijah III's days were numbered?

After this, Dowie went on a worldwide fundraising trip that was unsuccessful and finances in Zion City steadily deteriorated. Then, on Sunday, September 24, 1905, Dowie preached in the Shiloh Temple. Lindsay recalls that incident:

Though he did not know it, that day was to be a fateful day in the life of the man who, just one year before, had declared himself the First Apostle of the Christian Catholic Church.

Arthur Newcomb in his book, *Dowie, Anointed of the Lord* tells the story of what happened that afternoon:

His queer rasping voice filled the tabernacle, opening Zion's now elaborate and impressive ritual. This consummated, he began his sermon. It was magnificent.

His sermon ended, the First Apostle retired. A table for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was prepared...

The sacrament was all but finished - only a few more words remained to be spoken.

Again the people waited.

Suddenly their leader shook his right hand as if some foul thing clung to it. He beat it upon the arm of his chair. Those near him saw him sway

He turned, ghastly pale, to an attending deacon who hurried to his side. Dowie was half led, half borne away.

Never again was he to lift his voice in Shiloh Tabernacle!" (Lindsay, pp. 237 - 239).

Lindsay goes on to comment:

"John Alexander Dowie had suffered a stroke. His side was paralyzed....Prayer was offered and hope for a complete restoration was expressed by officers to the waiting congregation - a hope that was never realized...(Lindsay, p.239).

Misfortune after misfortune dogged the steps of Alexander Dowie. Lindsay elaborates on this:

It was a sad blow to Dr. Dowie when by decision of the court an election was authorized to determine who should be overseer of Zion. He retired to Shiloh House a broken man, but still believing that by some miracle Zion would be restored to him. This hope, however, was never to be fulfilled.

A Chicago newspaper of the time carried an interesting comment on the tragic circumstances which had befallen the city:

The curtain is about to fall. The star has left the stage. The prompter has closed his books; the scene-shifters are shuffling in the wings; and the stage manager has his finger on the bell. Only a few more phrases that the audience could easily supply and the words 'ring down' will be given and we shall have looked for the last time upon the tragedy of Zion City.

It is a city hopelessly bankrupt, facing an indebtedness of six million dollars - a city built on sand. {Did not Jesus (SAS) warn against building one's house on sand?} The dream of Zion as conceived by Dowie is gone forever. The vision has faded. A receiver from the courts held the keys to the Administration Building, the factories, the hospice, the bank. The venture into commercial enterprises, a field in which Dowie was an amateur, overthrew the church. Dowie, sick, suffering from hallucinations, still sat in Shiloh House. The fire of ambition still burned in his eyes, and a note of defiance in his voice. But his eyes were deeply sunken and his voice quavered in disappointment (Lindsay, p. 250).

The parents of author Lindsay visited Dowie toward the end and he recounts their visit:

They remember him that day as a very sick man, sitting in a wheel chair with sunken eyes and pale drawn face....John Alexander grew steadily weaker in body, and finally was unable to speak in public even from his wheel chair. It seemed that every form of disease had fastened itself upon his body, and his life strength was slowly ebbing away...Few came to see him in those days. The great disappointment that had come to the people, their shattered hopes, the

loss of investments reducing some to poverty had created a reaction that was not healed while Dr. Dowie lingered in his illness. Still a few were loyal to him (Lindsay, p.250).

Commenting on religious eccentrics, author Karl Shaw writes:

Dowie was the absolute ruler of his people, and from his church pulpit. He dispensed the law ... Dowie was an ambitious evangelist ... and he embarked on an expensive and ruinous campaign to spread the word of the Apostolic Church to the rest of America. He suffered a crippling stroke and with his health and financial problems mounting he turned to a close friend and disciple Glenn Wilbur Voliva...Voliva studied Dowie's accounts and found a discrepancy of about \$2 million. He denounced his old friend as a fraudulent polygamist, banished him from the community and established himself as the new leader ... Dowie died insane two years later (Shaw, p.58).

Affliction and scandal continued to follow Dowie. Syed Hasanat Ahmad writes:

In December {of 1905}, another attack of paralysis struck him down and this time he was completely crippled. But along with the physical torture, mental torture followed. His own wife and son disowned him. They revealed his misdeeds. Dr. Dowie's son got hold of letters that the modern Elijah had written to a rich heiress, Miss Hofer. Startling disclosures came to light that he was involved with several women. His private rooms were found to be stocked with the choicest wines, although he denounced publicly all intoxicating liquors" (Ahmad, Hasanat, pp. 11 and 12).

He goes on to write:

On February 20, 1907, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad issued another handbill announcing the appearance of another heavenly sign. The handbill said:

'God has informed me: I will reveal a fresh sign which will be a great victory. This will be a sign for the whole world...The sign will be at the Hand of God and everyone should wait for it. God will manifest this sign shortly. It will be an evidence of Divine Help. It will be testimony of this humble being who is being abused by all. Blessed is he, who hearkens to this sign.'

Within a fortnight of the publication of this handbill came the death of Alexander Dowie in the first week of March. The death of Dowie within the lifetime of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad caused a great sensation.

Even in India, details of his death were carried by "The Pioneer Lukhnow (March 12, 1907), 'The Civil and Military Gazette (March 12 1907), and the Indian Daily Telegraph (March 12, 1907). The Boston Herald carried a detailed and documented feature on Dowie in its issue of June 23, 1907. It devoted a full page to the prophecy of Ahmad along with a large size portrait of him. The feature was headed with two banners. They ran:

'GREAT IS MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD, THE MESSIAH FORETOLD PATHETIC DEATH OF DOWIE'

The Boston Herald ...recalled some of the observations of Alexander Dowie...'In India there is a foolish messiah ...if I put my foot on them, I would crush out their lives.'

The paper also quoted another direct reference made by Dowie in his journal, 'The Leaves of Healing' (December 12, 1903). 'If I am not God's Prophet, there is none on God's earth.' At another place 'The Boston Herald' quoted him as saying in his journal (Feb. 14, 1904), 'I pray for the day to come when the crescent shall disappear and may God destroy it.'

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad emerged victorious in this historic prayer-duel. It was left to an American newspaper to acknowledge this historic event. 'The Truth Seeker', another leading American journal, referred to the clear victory of Ahmad in its issue of June 15, 1907. In an editorial captioned '*The War of the Prophets*, it said:

'Dowie called Muhammad as king of impostors. He not only prophesied that Islam will meet its destruction at the hands of Zion, but he used to pray daily that the crescent is wiped out from the surface of the earth. When the news of the prophecy reached the Indian Messiah, then he challenged the Elijah and invited him in a prayer-duel that whosoever is the liar should die in the lifetime of the true Messiah.

The Qadiyani Messiah prophesied that if Dowie accepted the challenge, he would die in his (Ahmad's) lifetime with great disgrace and adversity, and even if he did not accept his challenge, even then his end is drawing close and death will overtake him. His Zion City will meet a great fall. This indeed was a great prophecy that Zion will fall on bad times and Dowie will die in his lifetime. This was a dangerous assertion on the part of the Promised Messiah that he should challenge Elijah the Second in the contest of long age, especially when the challenger himself is about fifteen years older than Dowie and

had many diseases. Circumstances were against Ahmad, but ultimately Ahmad emerged victorious” (Ahmad, Hasanat, pp.11 - 14).

Hazrat Ahmad, clearly and decisively, against all odds, “emerged victorious” from this prayer duel with John Alexander Dowie, as acknowledged by “*The Truth Seeker*” and many other American and foreign journals of the day, even in India. These were non-Ahmadi, usually non-Muslim publications, not biased in favor of Hazrat Ahmad. Yet, this story has been forgotten and ignored by the books and encyclopedias of today. In the Zion City Hall, you can get a booklet about their founder, Dowie, but nowhere is there any mention of Hazrat Ahmad or his momentous prayer-duel with Alexander Dowie. Today, only in Ahmadi literature can you read about this great victory of Hazrat Ahmad over Dr. Dowie. There are various reasons for this erasure from history of this momentous event. Basically, because many want to forget it and cover it up. But it should not be so! Hazrat Ahmad addressed both continents - Asia and North America, in his 1903 challenge and the whole world, in his 1907 handbill that prophesied: “This will be a sign for the whole world.”

When God shows a sign to the whole world, the world should pay attention because God does not show signs without an important purpose that is always beneficial to mankind. This sign of God has been buried in the pages of history. It deserves to be resurrected. ■

## REFERENCES

Note: Some of the preceding material has been obtained from Qadiyani sources. I have not hesitated to use them any more than I would hesitate to use a source because it came from non-Muslims. I thank all sources for throwing light on Hazrat Ahmad’s signs to the world. There is a hadith about knowledge being the lost camel of the believer and that he should seek it wherever it is found.

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**EDITOR’S NOTE:** The Boston Herald article, as cited by Mr. Sadiq above, featuring the prophetic triumph of Hazrat Mirza Sahib over John Alexander Dowie and including a prominently displayed, full-body picture of Hazrat Mirza therein as well, has been retrieved from the Boston Public Library. An image of the article is available for viewing at the muslim.org website. Other articles that followed the events between Hazrat Mirza and Dr. Dowie are also in the process of being obtained and when received, *insha Allah*, will also be made available for viewing via the internet.

## *Call For Papers!*

The *Light and Islamic Review* welcomes submissions of articles for publication. Preferably, articles should be between 5-10 pages long, single-spaced, in *Microsoft Word* format and submitted via e-mail. Authors from all faiths and denominations are welcome, the subject matter of the paper, though, must be substantively related to Islam. Please contact the Editorial Board for more information on Editorial Guidelines.

## Truth Unveiled: a response to the book 'Unveiling Islam' by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner

Compiled by Directors of AAAIL, Inc. USA

*[A book under the title 'Truth Unveiled' is being compiled by the Board Members of AAAIL Inc., USA. Its Preface, Introduction and part of Chapter 1 have been published in prior issues. This segment continues from the Apr.-Jun. 2004 volume where Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, being quoted from his book 'Four Questions Answered', examines the theory of salvation through accursed sacrifice.]*

### Doctrine of accursed sacrifice opens the floodgate of sin

A second aspect of this doctrine is that a belief in the doctrine results in forgiveness of all sins even if freedom from sin is not achieved. Such a belief gives total freedom to wicked persons to proceed against the property, life, and honor of peaceful citizens by any means they desire, such as killing, theft, false testimony and embezzlement. A simple belief in the accursed sacrifice can then wash off these heinous sins against these innocent persons and enable the perpetrators to enjoy their ill gotten gains. Similarly, adulterers can keep on living in the impure state of adultery and by a mere admission of belief in the accursed sacrifice save themselves from accountability before God. It is obvious that this cannot be so. To commit these heinous crimes and then to seek refuge behind the accursed sacrifice is nothing but the way of the wicked. It appears that even Paul began to suspect that this was not an appropriate belief. Hence he remarked: "Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (Romans 6: 9, 10). The statement above suggests that the sacrifice of Jesus is for the first sin and Jesus cannot be crucified a second time. This statement, however, puts Paul in great difficulty. If it is true that the sacrifice of Jesus is only for the first sin, then it follows, for example, that Prophet David will be eternally damned. According to the Christians, he committed adultery with Uriah's wife and kept her in his house, without God's permission, to the end of his life. This lady is from the holy maternal lineage of Mary and a grandmother several generations removed of Jesus. In addition, David had about a hundred wives, which according to the Christians, is not allowable. These sins were not committed just once but were repeated daily. Since the accursed sacrifice is no immunity against committing sin, it follows that among the Christians too there are many

repeat sinners, i.e., persons who sin after their first sin. According to the principle laid down by Paul, sins repeated after the first time are not forgivable and their punishment is eternal damnation.

There is no need to go far in search of an example, Mr. Sirajuddin, just consider your own situation. Mr. Sirajuddin, originally a Muslim, first accepted the son of Mary as the son of God and was baptized into the belief of the accursed sacrifice. Then he came to Qadian and converted back to Islam after affirming that he had been hasty in getting baptized. He began to say the Muslim prayers and acknowledged many times before me that he now understood the absurdity of the doctrine of atonement and considered it false. After his return from Qadian, he was again ensnared into the Christian missionaries' trap and converted yet again to Christianity. This calls for reflection by Mr. Sirajuddin. After being baptized into Christianity, he reneged and by words and actions acted against the Christian faith. This, according to the Christian belief, is a cardinal sin and in line with the saying of Paul, this sin, having been committed for a second time, is unforgivable because it requires a second crucifixion.

It could be argued that Paul was either mistaken or lied outright in curtailing the doctrine of atonement and that, in fact, a belief in the accursed sacrifice nullifies all sins. If this argument is accepted, then such a faith, which has no accountability for any kind of sin, including theft, adultery, lies, murder, and embezzlement, will nurture sinfulness. It will be quite appropriate for the law enforcement agencies to require a guarantee of good behavior from the followers of a faith that has this belief.

Since this open invitation to sinfulness must, of necessity, be rejected, the only resort is to backtrack to the first argument that a believer in the accursed sacrifice achieves moral purity and deliverance from sin. However, this argument has already been shown to be fallacious and was rebutted with the help of examples from the Christian scriptures about the alleged sins of Prophet David, the grandmothers of Jesus, and the disciples of Jesus. We have also mentioned news reports about the sinful ways of some Christian priests. In addition, all knowledgeable persons are fully aware of the depraved moral condition of the Western civilization.

Despite the above reasoning, if someone, to make an argument, cites the holy life of a Christian, what is the guarantee that the person is actually sinless? Many scoundrels, embezzlers, adulterers, shameless drunkards and atheists superficially lead lives of apparent purity, but from within, these men are like sepulchers enclosing nothing but offensive carcasses and bones.

### **All nations have good and bad natured persons**

It would be incorrect to assume that all individuals are naturally inclined to goodness in some nations and to evil in others. God ordained laws of nature to ensure dispensation of both kinds of persons in all nations. Each nation has its share of ill natured, immoral, malicious and wicked persons, just like it has its share of noble natured, moral, good character, and pious persons. There is no nation that is not subjected to this law of nature, be they Hindus, Parsis, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists or even those who belong to the so called low castes of India. As nations progress in civilization and culture, the moral system begins to emphasize honor, knowledge and dignity. This creates the environment in which persons with basic goodness of nature are recognized in the community for their piety and noble character and become role models for others. No nation is devoid of such persons. Unless a natural inclination to goodness already exists in a person, a mere conversion to another religion will not create it because the instinctive nature of man created by God does not change. It will have to be admitted by all genuine seekers of truth that nature doles out a basic disposition and religion only provides a framework for the appropriate control and use of this disposition. Thus, some persons have a greater portion of meekness and affection in their disposition and others more of harshness and anger. The role of religion is to divert the fruits of basic goodness, such as love, obedience, sincerity and faithfulness, which idolaters feel for their idols or worshippers of men feel for their incarnate deities, to God and to make such persons show the same obedience to Him as had formerly been shown by them to their deities.

### **Effect of religion on human faculties**

The Gospels do not delve into the issue of how religion affects human faculties because the Gospels lack a scientific approach to problems. The Qu'ran, however, comments on this issue repeatedly and in great detail. It states that the objective of religion is not to change the natural faculties of man and to show that a wolf can be turned into a sheep. It is outside the power of religion to do this but it can and does provide guidance for the right use of faculties according to the requirements of the situation. It is also within the competence of religion to advise the use of all faculties, rather than to emphasize reliance only on a particular sub set like mercy and forgiveness because none of the human faculties are inherently evil. It is only the excessive or deficient use of faculties, or their misuse, which is bad. A person is culpable, not for the natural faculties he is endowed with, but for their misuse. Thus, God, the Supreme Dispenser, has endowed to all nations an equal measure of natural faculties. Just as physical features like nose, eyes, mouth, hands and feet, are given to persons of

all nations, so too is the dispensation of the internal faculties. Accordingly, in every nation there are good and evil persons depending upon whether they have used their faculties moderately or have been excessive or deficient in their use. The credit for the level of goodness and civility in a society cannot automatically be ascribed to the prevalent religion of the community because much of it may be the result of a natural dispensation. The level of civic goodness of a community is, therefore, not a reliable test for the efficacy and truthfulness of a religion. A necessary and sufficient test for this purpose is that there exist in some perfect followers of that religion spiritual excellence unparalleled in followers of other religions. I state with great emphasis that Islam alone meets this test. Islam has propelled thousands of its adherents to that elevated spiritual life where it can be claimed that the spirit of God dwells in them. They accept the light of God and become a manifestation of His splendor. Such people have been found among the Muslims in all centuries and their pure life is not without proof, or merely their own claim, but God gives testimony to it.

### **Signs of a pure life**

The Qur'an gives the signs of an extremely pious life as the performance of miracles, acceptance of prayers, communication with God, prophetic revelations and God's help and assistance. Thousands of persons, throughout the history of Islam, have exhibited these signs. In this age, this humble person is present to show this example. But where are such persons in Christendom who exhibit the signs of true belief and pious life as stated in the Gospels? Everything is recognized by its distinctive signs, just as a tree is recognized by its fruits. If the claim of a pure life is merely a claim, unsubstantiated by the established signs given in the Scriptures, then such a claim must be considered false. Do the Gospels not mention any signs of true and real belief? Do they not mention these signs to be the gift of the supernatural? Then if the signs of a pious life are given in the Gospels, all Christians that claim to lead a pure life should be measured against these signs. Compare, if you will, a holy Christian clergyman with the humblest Muslim in terms of their spirituality and acceptance of prayers. If the clergyman is found to have even a fraction of the heavenly light of the Muslim, I stand to be contradicted and condemned. To prove this point, I have challenged the Christians many times but they have not responded. I state with total honesty, and with complete conviction, as God is my witness, that true faith and a genuine pious life, born from heavenly light, is not to be found in any faith except Islam. This pure life that I have been granted is not merely my own claim, but is corroborated by heavenly testimonies. Indeed, such a claim can only be verified with such evidence, as there is no other way of knowing if the



claimant is a hypocrite and a dishonest person. However, when there exist persons whose pure lives are heavenly corroborated, then others in the community that exhibit signs of piety would also be considered genuinely pure. Because the community is an organic whole, a single corroborated example of pure life is sufficient to show that the community is capable of receiving pure spiritual life.<sup>7</sup>

On this basis, I addressed an announcement to the Christians to resolve this contention conclusively. If they are genuine seekers of truth, they should have responded, but they have not. I repeat the challenge again. Christians and Muslims both lay claim to true faith and purity of life. The issue to be decided is which one of these two communities possesses the true faith and pious life in the eyes of God. The faith of the other community, it follows, is made up of Satanic ideas and its claim to holy life is a mere delusion born of spiritual blindness. I believe that the faith that is corroborated by heavenly testimony and shows signs of acceptance by God is the correct and chosen faith, and, similarly, the pure life is the one that is backed by heavenly signs. All nations of the world claim that persons of great piety have passed and are present among them and their deeds and conduct are cited in support of the claim. However, without the objective test mentioned above, it is not possible to judge the real validity of the claims. Therefore, if the Christians think that belief in the redemption of Christ leads to pure faith and a pious life, then it is incumbent upon them to come forward and enter a contest with me for the acceptance of prayers and manifestation of signs. If their lives are shown to be holy by the test of Heavenly signs, I shall be deserving of every punishment and dishonor.

I emphatically declare that, judged by spiritual standards, Christians lead an extremely unclean life. The Holy God, who is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, abhors their beliefs even as we abhor an extremely dirty and rotten carcass. If they think I am not correct, or that God is not with me in what I say, let them resolve our contention in a rational and civilized manner as stated above. I repeat that the holy life, which descends from Heaven and illumines the heart, is not to be found among the Christians. However, as I have stated before, instinctive goodness of disposition is present in some of them just as it is present in persons of other communities. I am not, however, discussing here this instinctive goodness. Persons endowed with this goodness and meekness are to be found to a greater or lesser extent in every community and even those considered to be of lowly castes are not devoid of this instinctive goodness. My reference here, however, is to the pure spiritual life that is born out of the living word of God, descends from the heaven and is backed by Heavenly signs. It is this life that is not to be found among Christians. What then is the benefit of the accursed sacrifice?

### **Holy Prophet's mission was to teach purity, truth and patience**

The Christian belief of salvation, attributed by the Christians to Jesus, has been discussed in detail above. This naturally brings up the question whether the mission of our Prophet (peace and the blessings of Allah be on him) reiterates the same method of an accursed love and sacrifice for the salvation and purification of mankind or presents some alternate way? The simple answer to this is that Islam does not accept this grotesque method of the accursed sacrifice, and accursed love as a means of salvation. Instead, for attaining real purification, it instructs us to sacrifice our own cleansed self, after washing it in the waters of sincerity and purifying it in the fire of truth and patience. Accordingly, the Quran says:

“Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve.” (2:112)

This verse implies that a person who places himself in the service of God, totally dedicates his life to Him, and is active in the performance of good deeds, will be rewarded through his closeness with God. For such, there is neither fear nor grief. Thus, God will reward and make free from fear and grief a person who performs acts of goodness and employs all his faculties in the way of God so that his word, action, movement, rest and his entire life is solely for Allah.

### **The word *Islam* implies righteousness**

The condition of submission (*islam*) referred to in the above verse has also been called righteousness (*istiqamah*) elsewhere in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an teaches us the prayer, “Guide us on the right (*mustaqam* from *istiqamah*) path. The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors”(1:5–6). This prayer beseeches the Lord to establish us on righteousness so that we may follow the path of those on whom the Lord bestowed reward and heavenly blessings. It should be noted that righteous conduct in any situation depends upon the objective, and the objective of man's creation is to serve God. The righteous conduct for a person, therefore, is total devotion to God in accordance with the real purpose of his creation, i.e., the eternal submission to God. When a person, with all his faculties, devotes himself totally to God then, without a doubt, he is blessed with the reward of a pious life. When a window is opened toward the sun, sunshine streams in through it. Likewise, when a man turns himself totally toward God, and all veils are lifted between man and God, a Divine spark alights on him and fills him with spiritual light and washes away all his internal impurities. This great change

metamorphoses him into a new man and it can be said that such a person leads a pious life. The place to achieve this pure life is here in this world. Allah, Glory be to Him, refers to this in the Qur'anic verse:

“And whoever is blind in this (world) he will be blind in the Hereafter, and further away from the path.” (17:72).

This verse shows that the spiritual faculties required to see God are taken from this world. Those who fail to develop these faculties here by confining their faith to mere stories and fables commit themselves to eternal darkness. Thus, to achieve piety and real salvation, God has taught us to commit ourselves totally to Him and fall down sincerely before Him. We must completely shun the abomination of taking a created for a God even if it means getting killed, cut to pieces, or getting burned, for in so doing we would certify to the existence of the true God with our blood. It is for this reason that God has named our religion Islam (submission) as it implies that we have surrendered ourselves to Him.

The laws of nature also testify that the way to purity and salvation taught by the Qur'an is in conformity with processes in the physical world designed to achieve similar objectives. It is common experience that plants and animals fed on a poor diet and deprived of good nutrition fall prey to disease. Nature has, therefore, provided for a preventive system that allows wholesome things to reach them while blocking the useless ones. For instance, the trees have two features that keep them healthy. Firstly, they burrow deep into the earth with their roots so that they may not dry up by becoming detached from their source of nutrition. Secondly, they absorb water from the soil through the veins in their roots and obtain nourishment from it. The same principle applies to man in his quest for spiritual development. Only those are successful who, with sincerity and constancy, establish a firm belief in God, and by seeking His protection burrow deep into His love with their roots. With sincere repentance, they incline to God and in this way absorb, through their veins, humility and meekness, the spiritual water that dissipates the dryness of sin and removes their weakness.

### **Two meanings of the word *istighfar* (protection from sin) in the Qur'an**

*Istighfar*, or seeking protection from sin, strengthens the roots of faith. The term has been used in the Qur'an in two senses. One meaning is to fortify against sin by firming the love of God in one's heart through a close association with Him. To ask His help so that temptation to evil, which rages furiously when a person is distant from God, may seize to manifest itself. This is the *istighfar* of those who are close to God and know that separation from Him, even

for a moment, is their doom. They, therefore, seek His protection so that God may continue to hold them in His love. The second kind of *istighfar* is to leave a sinful state for refuge in God, to implant His love in the heart and to draw pure nourishment from it, much as a tree implants itself in the ground to get its nourishment. By so doing, the repentant person is saved from the aridity of sin and spiritual decay. Both these situations are called *istighfar* because the root word *ghafar* from which *istighfar* has been derived means 'to cover' or 'to suppress'. Thus, *istighfar* is a prayer to God, by one established in His love, asking Him to suppress his inclination to sin, to keep him from exposing his human frailties by enveloping him in His mantle of Divinity, and to bless him with a portion of His purity. However, if sin has already been committed then *istighfar* is a prayer that God may cover it up and protect the sinner from its evil consequences. Since God is the source of all munificence and His Light is always available to dispel all darkness, the right path to a pious life lies in stretching out the hands, from the fear of an impious life, toward this Fountain of Purity so that it may flow toward us rapidly and wash us completely of all filth.

There is no sacrifice more pleasing to God than that we submit ourselves completely to Him even if it entails embracing death in His path. It is precisely such a sacrifice that God has taught us to make. Thus, in the Qur'an, He says, “You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend out of what you love” (3:92). This is the path to salvation that the Quran has taught us, and numerous heavenly signs testify that this is, indeed, the right path. Human intellect also testifies to it. It follows then that an affair proven by testimony must over ride a mere uncorroborated allegation. Jesus acted according to the teachings of the Qur'an, and was therefore rewarded by God. Similarly, those who lead their life by the holy teachings of the Qur'an will become like Jesus. This holy -scripture is ready to make thousands into the likeness of Jesus and has already done so for millions. Most respectfully we ask the Christian priests, what spiritual progress have they made by deifying a weak and helpless man? If they can substantiate some spiritual progress, then certainly their teachings are worthy of consideration. But if they cannot, then O unfortunate worshippers of the created! Come and see our spiritual development and accept Islam as your religion. Is it not fair to say that the one who possesses Divine testimony to his holy life, has clear knowledge, and immaculate love of God is the one who has the right on his side, and the one who relies only on fables and stories is an unfortunate impostor feeding on filth?” (End of quotation from “The Four Questions Answered”). ■

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