



The Light — London edition

April 2006

The Lahore Ahmadiyya monthly magazine from U.K.

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Next Meeting at Darus Salam:

Date: **Sunday 2nd April 2006**
Time: **3.00 p.m.**
Topic: **The Holy Prophet Muhammad on the occasion of *Milad-un-Nabi***

Regular activities:

Darus-i Quran and Hadith:
Every Friday at 2.30 p.m.
Meetings of the Executive:
First Sunday of every month at 2.00 p.m.
Meeting of the Jama'at:
First Sunday of every month at 3.00 p.m.

Appreciation of article on Islam's teaching on response to abuse and mockery

by **Dr. Zahid Aziz**

There has been much favourable reaction to the article in our last issue *Islam's teaching on response to abuse and mockery*. I sent it by e-mail to my Member of Parliament, Dr Nick Palmer, on 5th February and he replied after just two hours of receiving it. I quote below an extract from his reply:

“ Thank you very much for your email, and for your thoughtful and very welcome article, which I will pass to the Home Office Ministers.

Although, as I tell my Christian and Muslim friends with equal regret, I've never found myself able to believe in a deity of any religion, it has always seemed to me that religious belief in our society has mostly produced very positive results on behaviour, and I hope that my own lack of belief turns out to be wrong. I've been saddened and worried by the increase in mutual suspicion and dislike in recent years, and do all I can to counter it. ... I will keep your article and show it (without quoting your name without your permission) to people who write to me with anxieties about Islam. ”

After Dr Palmer passed on my article to Home Office Ministers, I received a letter from his Parliamentary Assistant enclosing a copy of the reply that he had received from a Minister at the Home Office,

Mr Paul Goggins. In it the Minister wrote that he had “read the article with interest and was encouraged by the stance taken by Dr Aziz” and that the article emphasises that “the way to respond to any form of abuse or mockery is not through violent protest or the use of banners containing extreme slogans but by peaceful means and the use of appropriate language”. The Minister ends his reply as follows: “We remain determined to work in partnership with the Muslim communities to root out extremism and tackle the causes of radicalisation amongst a minority of individuals. I have forwarded Dr Aziz’s article to the relevant policy officials within the Home Office for information.”

Letter from local Christian preacher

One of the people to whom my M.P. had kindly forwarded the article is a local ‘Lay Preacher and Elder of the United Reformed Church’ Mr Hugh L. Barlow. Not having my home address, he went to the lengths of looking in the telephone directory, from which he picked the right name, and wrote me a letter, dated 15th February. I quote from it below:

“May I thank you for the article, which confirmed in substantial detail what I would fully have anticipated, that the Prophet Muhammad gave no licence whatsoever for a violent response to verbal abuse or lampooning. The Prophet went further than I had anticipated in detailed guidance, further than Jesus, if I may say this as a Christian moderate (this is partly but perhaps not entirely because Jesus and the Christian Scriptures give less detailed guidance generally, leaving their later interpreters to adapt broad principles to specific situations). I remain happy to acknowledge that the Prophet has given a clearer brief to his followers on this subject.”

I am truly taken aback that here is a Christian preacher prepared to acknowledge that on this issue the guidance given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad has excelled what is reported from Jesus and his own scriptures! This reminds me of what I wrote in our March issue, that it would be preferable for Muslims that instead of asking the general society to respect them as a community, they should “try to build in people’s hearts *respect for Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad* on the basis of the value and worth of their teachings”. I am grateful to Allah that my article increased a Christian preacher’s respect for the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Our Christian friend then refers to “the collateral issue of proselytisation, in which both of our religions believe” and expresses his standpoint as follows:

“My own approach is that I believe that what I have received is the nearest approach possible to the truth of God, but that it is still possible to learn from others, and I offer what I believe to others in that spirit. I expect what I say and believe to stand comparison and even criticism.”

I hope that we also share the same attitude with our noble Christian friend.

Appreciation from our members abroad

Many Lahore Ahmadiyya members outside the U.K., having received by e-mail either the article by itself or the March issue of this magazine containing the same, have let me know how much they benefitted from it and that they spread it further afield.

Dr Mohammad Ahmad writes from Columbus, Ohio: “I enjoyed reading your recent article on how to respond to critics of Islam. It was very well done”.

Riaz Ahmadali of the Institute for Islamic Studies and Publications, Suriname, used the opening summary of the article in his weekly ‘Spiritual Note’ for Friday 24th February. Riaz also wrote: “Last week I received a phone call from one of the Suriname daily newspapers to give a view about the blasphemy issue. I summarized the excellent article by Dr. Zahid Aziz on this subject and sent it to the paper. They published a summary last Friday. *Alhamdu lillaah*, that the readers of the paper could read our view on the issue as well.”

Mr A.S. Hoeseni writes from Holland on behalf of Stichting Ahmadiyya Isha‘at-i-Islam: “We have translated your article on mockery for publication in our magazine IQRA and our website.”

Sister Nadara Khan writes from Trinidad: “I have forwarded your article to several people, the daily newspapers, and have made copies which I am distributing. I have also passed it on to Kalamazad Mohammed and asked him to publish it in *The Message* and he has agreed. I am hoping that people will better understand how they should behave in circumstances such as what is happening in Europe, and that others will see what the correct position of Islam is in these matters.”

Razia S. F. Dean, from Suva, Fiji, contacted me specially for a copy of the article. Appreciation was also expressed by Yahya Adnan Ahmad from Malaysia and Usman I. Malik from Pakistan, both of whom also asked some further questions. Usman Malik’s question led me to discover further information about Suhail Ibn Amr, for which please see the article on page 7 of this issue.

Three articles on the ‘insult’ issue reviewed

We review here three articles on the ‘insult’ issue, two by Muslims and one by a non-Muslim.

1. Imam Zaid Shakir

Imam Zaid Shakir is a Muslim scholar and writer in the U.S.A. belonging to the Zaytuna Institute and Academy. According to the Institute’s website he accepted Islam in 1977 and has since made a deep study of Islamic law, the Quran and the Arabic language. An article by him, very appropriately entitled *Clash of the Uncivilized*, is published on the Institute’s website, the link to which is as follows:

www.zaytuna.org/articleDetails.asp?articleID=92

As this crisis escalates, writes the Imam, “we would do well by stepping back and attempting to analyze the situation as dispassionately as possible. By doing so, as Muslims, we can hopefully formulate a more productive and meaningful response, and avoid being exploited by either side in the ongoing conflict.”

We happily commend to our readers the following observations which we have extracted from the Imam’s most enlightening and scholarly writing.

1. “... I do not mean to imply that Muslims are not justifiably angry over the caricatures. However, I would agree with those who argue that responses that involve wild outbreaks of frenzied violence are inappropriate, and they only affirm what the cartoonist is trying to imply. Namely, that Islam is a religion that encourages obscurantist violence and terrorism.”

2. “... we go on living our lives oblivious to the ongoing abuse of Islam and our Prophet, peace and blessing of God upon him, until it becomes a major media event. At that point based on urgings issued by parties, the origins of their dubious agendas unknown to us, we are expected to drop everything and hastily rush into the fray. In many instances, our ill-conceived actions only make the situation worse.”

3. “As individuals, we find it difficult to support the Prophet, peace and blessings of God upon him, by adorning ourselves with his lofty character traits, or reviving His Sunnah in our daily lives. On the other hand, as mentioned above, it is all too easy to get swept up into the mob hysteria generated by the crowd, and then engage in outrageous actions that only affirm the offensive claims of the transgressing cartoonist.”

4. “This brings us to my third point, that of counterproductive, one-upmanship militancy. It is during these crises that all Muslims are supposed to drop everything and join the latest “Jihad” fad. Those of us who urge restraint are mocked as not being militant enough, or ridiculed as cowards who are afraid to “stand up to the real enemies of Islam.” No differences in understanding, interpretation, or strategy are allowed, because there is only one correct approach, the one stumbled upon with the aid of modern, sensationalizing media.”

5. “... the current crisis indicates just how bad we are losing in the Jihad of ideas. It is not without significance that the ultimate objective of Jihad is linked to ideas.”

6. “As Muslims, we are carrying the Word of God in an increasingly secular, militarized, and alienated world. ... We carry it by following the concrete example of our Noble Messenger Muhammad, peace and blessings of God upon him. In carrying the word, he endured unimaginable abuses and he persevered through them because he was inspired by a grand vision. That vision was to see his people saved by the life-giving, life-affirming message of Islam.”

7. The Imam, as a convert to Islam in the West, is deeply concerned that in Muslim countries there is little realization or care about the adverse effects of their extreme reactions which are hindering the progress of Islam in the West. He writes:

“Muslims can behave in the most barbaric fashion, murder, plunder, pillage, brutalize and kidnap civilians, desecrate the symbols of other religions, trample on their honor, discard their values and mores, and massacre their fellow Muslims. If any of that undermines the works of Muslims in these Western lands, it does not matter. If it places a barrier between the Western people and Islam, when many of those people are in the most desperate need of Islam, it does not matter. If our Prophet, peace and blessings of God upon him, had responded to those who abused him in Ta’if with similar disregard, none of the generations of Muslims who have come from the descendants of those transgressors would have seen the light of day.”

He goes on to say:

“These campaigns of desperation also implicitly display a lack of confidence in God’s ability to protect his religion and defend the honor of His Prophet, peace and blessings of God upon him. We should do what we can do within lawful limits, and then we depute the affair to God. When we despair of help from God and find ourselves with limited

strategic resources, we sometimes press forward with the most desperate tactics imaginable, taking little time to assess the compatibility of those tactics with Islamic teachings, or their long-term implications for the cause of Islam, especially in the West.”

The Imam can even envisage Muslims in the West splitting from their brethren in the East:

“Whatever we do, as Muslims in the West, we may be approaching the day when we will have to ‘go it alone.’ If our coreligionists in the East cannot respect the fact that we are trying to accomplish things here in the West, and that their oftentimes ill-considered actions undermine that work in many instances, then it will be hard for us to consider them allies. ... The confused incompetence of the Muslim countries around the issue of moon-sighting, a situation that has painful consequences for Muslims here in America is bad enough, the added pressure generated by these reoccurring crises is becoming unbearable for many.”

The Imam concludes his article as follows:

“In conclusion, one should not see the ongoing crisis as a clash of civilizations. Phenomena as deep and complex as civilizations cannot be thrown into conflict overnight by media-driven campaigns. ... The current crisis is the result of a regrettable incident that has been exploited by an uncivilized minority of provocateurs both in the West and the East to advance their conflicting agendas. As long as that exploitation continues, the crisis could aptly be called the clash of the uncivilized.”

We, at *The Light*, have nothing but praise for the clear thinking and forthrightness displayed by Imam Zaid Shakir in this article. He has set an enviable example of analysing this issue objectively and in accordance with the guidance of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, without in the least pandering to popular prejudices or currying favour with one group or another.

2. ‘The respect of a cousin’ by Edward Miller

An article of the above title has been written by Edward Miller, a Jewish attorney of New York, and published in *The Jewish Week* of New York, February 10th, 2006. See this link:

<http://www.thejewishweek.com/top/editletcontent.php3?artid=4825>

By ‘cousin’ Mr Miller means to indicate that he regards Muslims as cousins of the Jews. This, we acknowledge, is true both physically and spiritually. Physically it is because the Arabs and the Israelites are descended from the two brothers Ishmael and Isaac respectively, and spiritually because of the

affinity between the teachings of Judaism and Islam. It may be noted that Muslims regard and revere both Ishmael and Isaac as prophets of God.

In a by-line it is said of the author that he is “active in efforts to reconcile Jews and Muslims”. Certainly this is fully borne out by the contents of this article. As we know, there was a violent reaction to the cartoons, but Mr Miller writes:

“...perhaps we should take a moment to understand the hurt in the hearts of the great majority of Muslims who did not engage in violence. ... The portrayal of Muhammad in a pejorative fashion is to them an inconceivably offensive desecration, on the level of what would be for us the defilement of a Torah scroll. Because it was done in newspapers across Europe, it was a slap in the face repeated thousands of times.”

Mr Miller condemns the publication of the cartoons as “a blatant and vulgar act of disrespect to Islam” and advises that Jews can help to reduce the hostilities by tempering the freedom to publish what they wish with choosing “to convey respect to our Muslim cousins”. How can respect best be shown? It is by “printing something positive about Muhammad”. We, in *The Light*, note that this again reinforces our point that if Muslims want to have respect, the best way is to try to gain respect for the Holy Prophet Muhammad. In this connection Mr Miller says he wants to have brought forth:

“from our rabbinic writings the good our sages saw in Islam and there is quite a bit of such sentiment recorded”.

He argues that while the Jews should criticize their Arab opponents for some of their actions but they must, at the same time, display “gratitude for all the good Islam did for us”.

Mr Miller then quotes an incident recorded in books of Hadith, by which he is deeply touched. His quote is as follows:

“A funeral procession passed us and the Prophet stood up for it. We said, ‘but Prophet of God, this is a funeral of a Jew.’ The Prophet responded, ‘rise.’ ”.

He then observes, and we highlight this:

“One can search the writings of the ancient non-Jewish world for a more powerful example of a public display of respect for the humanity of the Jew. There simply is no more powerful statement than the single word uttered by Muhammad nearly 14 centuries ago.”

We may point out that there are other versions of the same incident as well. In another one in Bukhari, when people said “this is the funeral procession of a Jew”, the Holy Prophet is reported as responding:

“Whenever you see a funeral procession, you should stand up.”

Yet another version in Bukhari is as follows:

“A funeral procession passed in front of the Prophet and he stood up. When he was told that it was the coffin of a Jew, he said, *Is it not a soul?*”

Mr Miller concludes his article in the following words:

“Perhaps this article will be republished in Muslim newspapers... Muslim readers may come to understand that an article by a Jew, in a Jewish newspaper, was one of respect, telling its audience: ‘We know that the one mocked in newspapers in Europe is the one who had the humanity to tell his companions to rise for the funeral procession of a Jew’.”

As Mr Miller expected, his article has been republished by several Muslim websites. Letters of appreciation from Muslims also appeared in subsequent issues of *The Jewish Week*, from which we quote below:

1. “It is difficult for me as a mainstream Muslim to put in words how much I appreciate Edward Miller’s Opinion article (“The Respect Of A Cousin,” Feb. 3). Muslims and Jews have much in common, and we need to spend more time highlighting our common humanity and the good in each other.”
2. “Thank you, Edward Miller, for saying the truth at a time when hatemongering is fashionable ... It is nice to see an honorable person who believes in mutual respect and understanding.”
3. “Your recent Opinion article by Ed Miller, “The Respect Of A Cousin” (Feb. 17), was very good. The best way for Muslims and Jews to coexist is to increase peace and understanding. Our religion holds all humanity in high regard, each being created equal. There are many Hadiths stating examples of how well the Jews were treated in Arabia by the beloved Prophet.”

We concur with all these expressions of appreciation. The Holy Quran says: “And among Moses’

people is a party who guide with truth, and there-with they do justice” (7:159). Here we have seen an example of this.

3. A Muslim article denouncing almost everyone!

From the bright we turn to the inevitable dark side. A contributor on the discussion forum of Young Members (*Shaban*) of our Jama‘at referred me to an article he had seen relating to the present controversy and asked for my comments on it. It is at the following web link:

http://www.shaykhabdalqadir.com/content/articles/Art054_06022006.html

The writer, one Shaykh Dr. Abdalqadir as-Sufi, seeks to prove that according to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) the death penalty is to be applied to anyone who insults the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The article attacks various Muslims as well. In fact the article denounces almost everyone. Shias and “modernists” are classified as *kafirun* and are denounced for undermining Islam by wearing the “cloak of Islam”. The BBC are called “notoriously prejudiced” who sent a “Jew” reporter to interview Muslims outside the Central London Mosque “and he deliberately picked out to interview the wildest and most incoherent in the crowd”. We find this comment rather odd because these interviewees could only have told the reporter the same as what the Shaykh himself believes, namely, that those who insult the Holy Prophet should be punished with the death penalty.

He condemns the entire Danish nation and the European Union in the words “the miserable emotional and spiritual bankruptcy of the Danish people, and indeed the crushed and bewildered denizens of the European Union fortress”.

Next, a ruler of the U.A.E. is attacked. When the author lived there, an article was published by an Indian doctor, “a modernist Muslim”, who had “clearly insulted the Messenger of Allah”. The culprit was brought to court at the author’s instigation and found guilty. However, the Indian government intervened and the man was allowed to return to India. The Shaykh writes: “This was a direct result of the weakness of an Arab ruler”. We suspect that the only crime of the “modernist Muslim” was probably to give an interpretation of Islam different from the author of this article, which the latter represents as insulting the Holy Prophet.

In this connection the Shaykh could not resist a tirade against the Hindu religion, saying: “The Indian government which declares it is secular, but in reality worships at the temples of monkeys,

elephants and a little blue man, intervened in the name of their notorious tolerance”.

Then the author fulminates against the late Ayatullah Khomeini for his role in the Salman Rushdie affair: “Perhaps in order to appear, as it were, the Defender of the Faith, Imam Khomeini issued a Fatwa calling for the execution of the miserable author.” One cannot understand why he is condemning Khomeini when he himself believes that such a person should be executed. The reason is of course that he regards Khomeini as a *kafir* and hence objects to him appearing as the defender of Islam.

The Palestinian President is attacked for adopting “their traditional position of shame” because he instructed his people that despite the insult “they should not commit any acts of violence”. This, says the author, is in effect telling them that “in the matter of the commanded defence of the Messenger of Allah, they were not to raise a finger”.

The Shaykh has given his own view as follows:

“...in the event of a direct attack by insult against the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, a strategy must be applied which guarantees that the enemy is eliminated. For this reason, the one who attacks is identified. An executioner or executioners are sent to carry out the authorised sentence of execution. Then and only after the assassination is the order declared, to warn off others from similar action.”

This view is entirely outrageous. It is plainly against the teachings of Islam, against any moral standards, and absurd and bizarre. He is suggesting that a person should be secretly convicted as guilty and sentenced to death, without the least opportunity to explain or defend himself, then murdered, and the judgment announced *subsequently*!

We may add here that a point that has been overlooked in this whole controversy is that Muslim groups have been accusing *each other* of insulting the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia are denounced by the traditional Sunnis of Pakistan and India (known as Barelvis) for insulting the Holy Prophet because the Wahhabis oppose the holding of certain ceremonies and celebrations in his honour, such as celebrating his birthday. The Wahhabis and the like, for their part, accuse these traditional Sunnis of revering the Holy Prophet in a way that only God ought to be honoured, and thus indulging in *shirk* or polytheism, the gravest sin in Islam. Maulana Maudoodi has been condemned by his critics for insulting a

number of prophets and the wives of the Holy Prophet. Should then the leaders of the various Muslim sects sentence each other to death?

Finally, we turn to the arguments used by the author to support his claim that Islam prescribes this penalty. The only passage from the Holy Quran that he quotes is as follows:

“Allah and His angels call down blessings on the Prophet. You who have belief! call down blessings on him and ask for complete peace and safety for him. As for those who abuse Allah and His Messenger, Allah’s curse is on them in the world and the hereafter. He has prepared a humiliating punishment for them. And those who abuse men and women who are believers, when they have not merited it, bear the weight of slander and clear wrongdoing.” — 33:56–58. (Translation as given in article)

For abusing the Holy Prophet, these verses do not mention any punishment to be applied in this world by Muslims. Curse of God being upon the maligners means that because of their actions their hearts become estranged from God. How Muslims must respond is clear from the beginning of this passage: they must call for blessings to come down upon the Holy Prophet. In other words, Muslims must pray that people of the world come to bless, and not abuse, the Holy Prophet, and Muslims must also strive to present the true picture of the life and qualities of the Holy Prophet so that as his noble character becomes more and more widely known the people of the world start blessing and praising the Holy Prophet. The last part of the above passage, as given in the Shaykh’s article, condemns those who abuse believing men and women with false allegations against them. Should such abuse be punishable with death as well? The inclusion here of abuse against ordinary believers shows that these verses are not enunciating any law of blasphemy in regard to sacred figures.

In his article the Shaykh has given lengthy quotations from works of *Fiqh* (ancient Islamic jurisprudence) ruling that death is the penalty for insulting the Holy Prophet. But *Fiqh* is often wrong. When there is no sign or trace of this teaching in the Quran, and in fact the Quran plainly contradicts that a punishment of any kind should be applied, then the rulings of the *Fiqh* cannot be accepted.

The article is full of cheap attacks along with the fury and bitterness that the author feels against anyone with whom he disagrees. It is far from a reasoned analysis or rational study of the Islamic teachings on this issue.

Suhail Ibn Amr

The man the Holy Prophet refused to punish for making speeches abusing him

In the article on *Islam's teaching on response to abuse and mockery* I had mentioned briefly, without giving reference, the incident of a man Suhail Ibn Amr who used to employ his skill of eloquence and oratory against the Holy Prophet. Being captured at the battle of Badr, a Muslim suggested that his teeth should be knocked out as a punishment. The Holy Prophet Muhammad emphatically rejected this, saying that if he allowed this to happen then Allah would punish His Prophet in the same way.

One of our young members from Pakistan, Usman I. Malik, asked me for the source of this incident. It is given in the famous biography of the Holy Prophet *Sirat-un-Nabi* by Maulana Shibli, who refers to the well-known history of Islam by Tabari. This story is also found in Muhammad Husain Hykal's renowned life of the Holy Prophet, and a slightly different version is recorded in the classical biography *Sirat Ibn Hisham*. It turns out that Suhail Ibn Amr was an important person who later became a Muslim and thus one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet. Biographies of some Companions can be found at the University of Southern California Muslim Texts website (USC-MSA), where there is one of Suhail Ibn Amr. For the interest of our readers we quote from it below.

“ At the Battle of Badr, when Suhayl fell into the hands of the Muslims as a prisoner, Umar ibn al-Khattab came up to the Prophet and said: ‘Messenger of God! Let me pull out the two middle incisors of Suhayl ibn Amr so that he would not stand up and be able to speak out against you after this day.

‘Certainly not, Umar,’ cautioned the Prophet. ‘I would not mutilate anyone lest God mutilate me even though I am a Prophet.’ And calling Umar closer to him, the blessed Prophet said:

‘Umar, perhaps Suhayl will do something in the future which will please you’.

Suhayl ibn Amr was a prominent person among the Quraysh. He was clever and articulate and his opinion carried weight among his people. He was known as the *khatib* or spokesman and orator of the Quraysh. He was to play a major role in concluding the famous truce of Hudaibiyyah.”

His conversion to Islam took place when the Muslims conquered Makka. This life story relates the following about it:

“ Ten thousand Muslims converged on Makkah ... The Quraysh realized that there was no hope of resisting let alone of defeating the Muslim forces. They were completely at the mercy of the Prophet. What was to be their fate, they who had harried and persecuted the Muslims, tortured and boycotted them, driven them out of their hearths and homes, stirred up others against them, made war on them?

The city surrendered to the Prophet. He received the leaders of the Quraysh in a spirit of tolerance and magnanimity. In a voice full of compassion and tenderness he asked: ‘O people of the Quraysh! What do you think I will do with you?’ Thereupon, the adversary of Islam of yesterday, Suhayl ibn Amr, replied: ‘We think (you will treat us) well, noble brother, son of a noble brother.’ A radiant smile flashed across the lips of the beloved of God as he said: ‘Go, for you are free.’

At this moment of unsurpassed compassion, nobility and greatness, all the emotions of Suhayl ibn Amr were shaken and he announced his Islam ... His acceptance of Islam at that particular time was not the Islam of a defeated man passively giving himself up to his fate. It was instead, as his later life was to demonstrate, the Islam of a man whom the greatness of Muhammad and the greatness of the religion he proclaimed had captivated.”

Now we come to how the words of the Holy Prophet, “perhaps Suhayl will do something in the future which will please you”, were fulfilled. This account goes on to relate:

“ When the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, passed away, the news quickly reached Makkah, where Suhayl was still resident. The Muslims were plunged into a state of confusion and dismay just as in Madinah. In Madinah, Abu Bakr, may God be pleased with him, quelled the confusion with his decisive words: ‘Whoever worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead. And whoever worships Allah, Allah is indeed Living and will never die.’

In Makkah Suhayl performed the same role in dispelling the vain ideas some Muslims may have had and directing them to the eternal truths of Islam. He called the Muslims together and in his brilliant and salutary style, he affirmed to them that Muhammad was indeed the Messenger of Allah and that he did not die until he had discharged his trust and propagated the message and that it was the duty of all believers after his death to apply themselves assiduously to following his example and way of life.

On this day more than others, the prophetic words of the Messenger shone forth. Did not the Prophet say to Umar when the latter sought permission to pull out Suhayl's teeth at Badr: 'Leave them, for one day perhaps they would bring you joy'?

When the news of Suhayl's stand in Makkah reached the Muslims of Madinah and they heard of his persuasive speech strengthening the faith in the hearts of the believers, Umar ibn al-Khattab remembered the words of the Prophet. The day had come when Islam benefitted from the two middle incisors of Suhayl which Umar had wanted to pull out. "

(See the link:

www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/history/biographies/sahaabah/bio.SUHAYL_IBN_AMR.html)

The talent and skill which Suhail Ibn Amr used to employ against Islam he employed the same in support of Islam. If the Holy Prophet had agreed to injuring or killing him after the battle of Badr, or had inflicted harsh punishment on him and others after conquering Makka, a man of Suhail's abilities would have been lost to Islam.

Muslims of today must learn a lesson from this in how to respond to their foes. If they follow the Holy Prophet's example, those who use their energies and resources to revile Islam today will be using the same to help Islam tomorrow. It is stated in the Holy Quran:

"And who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah and does good, and says: I am surely of those who submit? ... Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you is enmity would be as if he were a warm friend. And none is granted (to do) it but those who are patient, and none is granted (to do) it but the owner of a mighty good fortune." (41:33-35)

Obituary: Rafi Sharif

American convert from Judaism

Tariq Ahmad from Washington D.C., U.S.A., has reported to Lahore Ahmadiyya Jama'ats that our brother Rafi Sharif died in hospital in Baltimore on 2nd March 2006 — *inna lillahi wa inna ilai-hi raji'un* ("We belong to God and to Him do we return"). Sometime ago he had a liver and kidney transplant, but the strong medications he had to take for his new kidney affected his liver, and this, with other complications, led to his death. Tariq Ahmad has written a note about the life of Rafi Sharif which we reproduce below.

"It is with a heavy heart that I inform you that brother Rafi Sharif passed away this morning (*inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun*). He led a valiant fight against tremendous odds, however it was his time to move on. May Allah shower his *maghfirat* on Rafi's soul and place him in *Jannat-i-firdaus* with other fellow Ahmadiis who remained true to their belief despite overwhelming odds and strived with their utmost in His path. May Allah also give patience to his family members, especially his 12 year old daughter who has now lost both her mother and father in these past few months. She now needs all of our support and prayers.

Rafi's *namaz-i-janaza* will be held on Sunday March 5th and he will be buried in a VA Cemetery (Veteran's Affairs) in Maryland.

Rafi had a long and honorable service in the Marine Corps of USA, where he retired as a Staff Sergeant. Subsequently he rose to a high post with the Boy Scouts of America and was then employed with the State of Maryland (in USA) in their department of Veteran's Affairs. He also taught for two years in a school in the city of Baltimore.

Rafi had an incredibly rich background. He embraced Islam about half a century ago at a time when Islam was almost unknown in American society. He was not only of Jewish descent, but from an Orthodox Jewish family. His introduction to Ahmadiyyat was by joining the Qadiani Jama'at which he left in the early 1980s and joined the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, taking his *bai'at* at the hands of our late *Amir* Hazrat Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan in Lahore, Pakistan.

Rafi, although a white Muslim, was a teacher with the African-American Moorish Science Temple group and had close dealings with the Nation of Islam. He was well known in the Baltimore Muslim and interfaith community for hosting *zikrs*, interfaith discussions and other community events. He was very much interested in the Sufi or the mystical side of Islam. The list goes on and on. He really was a unique individual who had been actively involved in the American Muslim community for many years before Muslims started to arrive in large numbers during the 1970s. He led a fascinating and full life.

Rafi was 66 years old when he passed away. He is survived by two sons and two daughters with many grand children from his first marriage and by a 12-year old daughter from his second marriage. He is also survived by grieving members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement in the Washington D.C. area. "