

# Friday Sermon: A Conference on Some Living Religions

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Last Friday Huzoor gave a discourse with reference to the prophecy of Musleh Maud as given to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and elucidated Hazrat Musleh Maud's (may Allah be pleased with him) secular and spiritual knowledge and also mentioned views of others regarding his superlative knowledge and his commentary of the Holy Qur'an. These views and his achievements are most extensive and it would take months and years to mention them. However, Huzoor today spoke on an aspect that Huzoor wished to mention last Friday but could not due to shortage of time. This dates back to 90 years and relates to the city of London.

A conference on world religions was held here in London in 1924 which was graced by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him). These days our Jama'at is known to others and we have connections; due to the Ahmadiyya persecution many human rights organisations know about us. Due to our connections, we are known to MPs and academics here and other countries. We did not have these connections in those days. Yet God created special circumstances and following discussions, the management of the conference invited Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) to travel to London and address the conference. This was borne of special Divine succour. It was not a small matter for Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) to travel with eleven people, given the financial situation of the Jama'at at the time. He paid for his own passage but for the travel expenses of others loan had to be taken.

Initially it was decided not to travel. Later, after prayer and Istikhara and consultation with the Jama'at the journey was made with special Divine succour. This was a first ever European tour of a Khalifatul Masih. He also went to a few other countries [en route] including Syria and Egypt. Only Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) had the chance to visit Arab countries, later situation there worsened and restrictions continued to be put in place. Today Huzoor briefly spoke about the conference and the views/impressions of the English people as regards Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him). These views/impressions validate his exceptional academic prowess as well as special Divine succour and the narrative also has some historical aspects which our youngsters should be aware of.

Overseas travels was done by sea in those days and used to take many days. En route once Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) led Salat on the deck between the 1<sup>st</sup> class and the 2<sup>nd</sup> class and when finished he sat with his companions when the ship doctor, who was an Italian, happened to pass by. Seeing them, he spontaneously remarked, 'Jesus Christ and his twelve disciples!' Dr Hashmat Ullah Sahib relates that he was astonished upon hearing this. An Italian, who was a follower of the Pope, said something most accurate and spiritual. The twelfth person travelling with Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) was Dr Muhammad Sharif Sahib who had joined them but was travelling privately.

The said conference is widely known as Wembley Conference. In early 1924, a socialist leader William Loftus Hare suggested to hold a religious conference in conjunction with the renowned Wembley Exhibition to which religious representatives of the religions of the British Empire should be invited to expound principles of their religions. Organisers of the conferences which included some Orientalists concurred with this suggestion and a committee was formed under the auspices of The School of Oriental Studies of the London University to extensively prepare for the conference. The Imperial Institute was chosen as the venue and the conference dates were fixed as 22 September to 3 October. The committee chose to invite representatives from the following religions: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jain, Sikhism, Sufism, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Confucianism etc.

Although Maulwi Abdul Rahim Nayyar Sahib had been in London since 1923 but he did not know about this proposed grand conference. After the committee had chosen speakers for the conference and part of 1924 had also passed, Maulwi Sahib came to hear about the conference. He went to see the joint secretary of the committee. M. M Sharples who felt that the Ahmadi point of view on Islam should be included in the conference. When this was discussed in the committee, its vice-president, Dr Sir Thomas W Arnold suggested that Nayyar Sahib should be consulted about choosing speakers for the conference.

These days we sometimes lose hope and say it is too late nothing can be done now. At that time, in spite of everything already arranged, Nayyar Sahib took courage and went to see the committee and convinced them and had the organisers take his suggestions on who to invite as regards Hinduism and Buddhism and Sufism. He suggested the name of Hazrat Sufi Roshan Ali Sahib for Sufism but also informed the committee that Sufi Sahib could only attend with the approval of Hazrat Mirza Bashir ud din Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him). When these names were presented before the committee, Dr Arnold and others most warmly decided that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II should be invited to the conference with a request to bring Sufi Sahib with him. Thus an invite was sent to Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) from the leading Orientalists of Britain.

After pondering over the matter, the invitation was accepted and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) started writing the treatise for the conference. Its translation and revision work was entrusted to Chaudhary Zafrulla Khan Sahib, Maulwi Sher Ali Sahib and Mirza Bashir Ahmad Sahib. However, the piece turned out to be too lengthy for the conference and it was not appropriate to summarise it. It was decided to write another treatise which Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) did and it was translated.

23 September 1924 was a golden day in Huzoor's European tour when Huzoor's superlative treatise was read out at the Wembley Conference and it was a splendid representation of Islam Ahmadiyyat and brought the message of Islam in the true sense to Europe. This was also a fabulous fulfilment of the vision of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) about giving an address in London.

The time for the treatise was 5 p.m. at which point people had been sitting listening to addresses on Islam for two and half hours. However, as soon as it was time for the address, the audience sat down eagerly and the hall became packed full. Attendance at earlier addresses had not been so much. Sir Theodore Mersin who was presiding the conference most politely requested Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) to address the conference. He was already on the stage with his associates; he stood up and briefly said: 'Mr President, sisters and brothers! First and foremost I thank God Who put it in the hearts of the organisers of the conference that people should reflect in this manner on the subject of religion and after listening to speeches on different religions see which religion should be accepted. I now ask my follower Chaudhry Zafrulla Khan Sahib, Bar-at-law, to read my treatise. I am not accustomed to reading in this manner even in my own language because my speeches are always unprepared and I speak for up to six hours. The subject of religion does not conclude here in this world, rather after death it moves on to the next world and man's eternal happiness is associated with faith. Therefore, reflect and ponder over this and I hope you will listen attentively.'

Chaudhry Zafrulla Khan Sahib read the treatise in a commanding tone although he had a bit of sore throat but Divine succour was with him, he took one hour to read the treatise. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him) once said, 'although Chaudhry Zafrulla Sahib read the treatise, it was my tongue [speaking].' The audience listened to the address in a trance. It appeared as if all the audience were Ahmadi, people sat with rapt attention till the end. When the address touched upon something about Islam which was new for them, some people would bounce in their chairs with joy. Subjects such as slavery, usury, polygamy etc. were explained most articulately. The address was listened most eagerly by both men and women. After the address concluded it received an enthusiastic and long applause so much so that the president Sir Theodore Mersin had to wait a few minutes for his remarks.

The gist of the treatise is that Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) mentioned the forming of the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1889 and mentioned the Promised Messiah's (on whom be peace) claim to be the Mahdi as prophesied by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and his claim to be the Messiah as foretold by the Gospels and also Muslim books. He said that due to this claim he faced intense opposition on all fronts. Muslim religious scholars also opposed him vehemently. Yet, in spite of all the enmity people thronged around him and with the grace of God a community was formed which was spreading to different countries of the world. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih said these were the most basic points of the treatise that he was giving. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) further said that after the passing away of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) the system of Khilafat was established in the community and under the auspices of Khilafat the community was moving onwards with missions established in dozens of countries. People from all religious backgrounds were coming into the fold of Islam through the community. He also mentioned that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had said most clearly that there was a need for the Messiah to come in this age, as it had been foretold, because this indeed was the time and the condition when a reformer was needed who was foretold and whose signs were also given. He mentioned that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) also told that God still talked to pious people and listened to their prayers, He is Ever Merciful and Compassionate and by sending the Promised Messiah, He had facilitated reformation of the world. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had given proof of the existence of God by convincing people of belief in God, by proving His Oneness and by instilling connection with Him. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) most clearly said that if a religion cannot offer perfect identification of existence of God, it is not worthy of being called a religion. He also expounded the status of Prophets of God and connection with God of every human for spiritual development. He also explained that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) had elucidated with great wisdom and foresightedness that although the Holy Qur'an is the last law-bearing and perfect Book, it does not mean that man had reached the pinnacle of intellectual progress. Rather, the beauty of the Qur'an being the last Book is that it has a profound treasure-trove of knowledge hidden in it which is given to those who are sincerely serious in its search. Serious search leads to spiritual progress and this also facilitates one to find worldly and academic subjects in the Qur'an in accordance to personal understanding and discernment. Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) said that the Holy Qur'an rejects the objection that Islam was spread with force and he gave the verse of 'there is no compulsion in religion' as a proof. He said fighting is only allowed when there are attempts to eliminate and harm Islam. He also expounded various other subjects in light of Islamic teachings, such as slavery, usury, polygamy, divorce, moral teaching and life after death. He mentioned Divine signs corroborating truthfulness of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and mentioned the following vision of the Promised Messiah:

'I saw in a vision that I was standing on a pulpit in the city of London and was setting forth the truth of Islam in the English language, in a very well reasoned address. Thereafter I caught several birds who were sitting upon small trees and were of white colour and their bodies resembled the bodies of partridges. I interpreted this vision as meaning that though I would not be able to travel to that country but that my writings will be published there and many righteous English people will accept the truth.' [Tadhkirah, p. 239 2009 edition]

The first fulfilment of this vision was this treatise of Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him). He also said that truth is revealed to one if one prays while being free from all bias for forty days for the truth. In conclusion these are the words with which Hazrat Musleh Maud's (may Allah be pleased with him) treatise finished:

'Sisters and brothers, the Light of God has shone forth for you, and that which the world had, owing to the lapse of time, come to regard as a romantic tale, has appeared before your very eyes. The Glory of God has been made manifest to you through a Prophet; yea, a Prophet whose advent had been foretold by all previous Prophets from Noah to Muhammad (on whom be peace and the blessings of God), and God has again demonstrated to you the fact that He is not only the God of those that are dead, but also of those that are living; and not only the God of those that have gone before, but also of those that shall come after. Accept ye then this Light, and let your hearts be lit up with it. Sisters and brothers, this life is but an episode, and it is wrong to

imagine that it is followed by annihilation; there is no such thing as annihilation. The soul was not created for annihilation, but for eternal life. From the moment of his birth, man begins to tread along a never-ending path, and death is nothing but a device to quicken his pace. How is it that you who are constantly striving to outstrip each other in small competitions are completely neglecting this huge competition which is for ever proceeding between those that have gone before and those that have taken their place? Do you not perceive that a righteous man was raised in the East and God has, through him, caused the Truth to be brought to your doors? Be truly grateful for this Grace which you have received, so that you may receive more abundant Grace, and run forward to receive His Mercy, so that His love for you should swell in volume. How is it that you who condemn all such intoxicants as render the brain sluggish are content with teachings that profit not and merely still the yearnings of the soul? You refuse to bow before idols, then how can you bow before an imaginary image of God that gives no sign of life? Come and drink of the Divine nectar of life that God has provided for you; this is a nectar that kills not reason, but illumines it; it does not undermine the nervous system, but strengthens it. Rejoice, ye bridesmaids, and sing joyful hymns, for the bride-groom has come. He who has been sought after has been found. He who was being waited for till the eyes of those who waited had become dim now illumines your eye; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Those who find him find all, and those who see him not will see nothing. And the end of our discourse is praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.'

Thus with great wisdom and great courage Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) mentioned the qualities of Islam and also invited people to Islam. Here just the main points of the hour-long treatise have been mentioned. As mentioned before, the treatise was extremely well-received. Here are some views of the audience.

Al Fazl reported after the treatise of Mirza Bashir ud Din Ahmad the president of the conference said in his remarks that the Ahmadiyya Movement and other such current movements prove that Islam is a living religion and high level scholarship was engaged in for its renaissance. Mirza Bashir ud Din who was accompanied by many green-turbaned followers said that Ahmadiyya Movement is an important and natural revival of Islam just as dispensation of Jesus was for the dispensation of Moses. Its objective is not to introduce any new religious law; rather it is the dissemination of the true and real Islam.

The president said that he did not have to say much as the treatise had itself proved its quality and refinement. He thanked Hazrat Musleh Maud from himself and also on behalf of the audience for the excellence of order and excellence of thought of the treatise and said that the faces of the audience were in accord with what he was saying. He said he was sure that he was rightfully thanking on behalf of the audience and was paying the dues of representing them. He congratulated Hazrat Musleh Maud on the success of the treatise and said that his piece was the best among the ones read on the day. He said 'do you not think that you came here for the success that you received today!' After the conference concluded Sir Theodore Mersin stood on the stage for a long time talking and repeatedly praised the treatise.

Head of the Free Church Dr Walter Wash who was a great orator said that he was most fortunate to listen to the treatise. A professor of law said that as he listened he felt as if it was the beginning of a new era. He also said that had thousands been spent in some other way, it would not have availed such great success. A priest said that three years ago he had seen in a dream that Jesus had come with thirteen disciples and now the dream had been fulfilled. Huzoor explained the thirteenth person in the group was Chaudhary Zafrulla Khan. Miss Sharples, the conference secretary said that people were greatly praising the treatise and then said that a person said that His Holiness appeared to be the Luther of the age. Some said, 'there is fire in him', someone said this treatise was the best. After the conference had finished a German professor came forward while walking on the road to greet Hazrat Musleh Maud and congratulate him and said that very important Englishman were sitting next to him who would slap their knees and say that these were great ideas and one did not get to hear such great ideas every day. He said many spontaneously remarked, 'what a beautiful and true principle.' Mr Lane, a high-ranking officer in the India Office acknowledge that Hazrat Musleh Maud's treatise was excellent and the best among the rest.

Bhai Abdul Rahman Qadiani related that a person went up to Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) and said that he had worked in India for thirty years as a missionary and had studied the circumstances and arguments of Muslims. However, he had never heard something as clear and refined as the treatise presented on the day. It had affected him greatly as regards its thoughts, its order and its arguments. Another person said that he had come from France and previously he gave preference to Islam over Christianity but gave preference to Buddhism over Islam. After listening to Hazrat Musleh Maud's treatise as well as the Buddhism viewpoint he acknowledged that in reality Islam was the best religion. He said he was most influenced by the way Islam's excellence was depicted and no other religion could contend with it. M. Sharples said that a man came up to her and said that although he was not invited to tea but could he be allowed in because he wanted to meet the person who had come from India to represent Islam and was the leader of Ahmadis. He met with Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) and told Maulwi Mubarak Ali Sahib that he had listened the Buddhist treatise as well as others but this was the best among all treatises. Although Mr Lane from the India Office had attended, his wife could not make it. She came the next day and met with people of the entourage and said that her husband had told her how successful and popular the treatise had been. An atheist woman said she had found the treatise charming and she found the ideas in it great and truthful. Another woman said she was from the Baha'i faith but after listening to the treatise she had changed her mind and wanted to listen to further such lectures and said that if she was informed of the time and place she would definitely attend. A Christian woman who had attended the conference with her daughter followed Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) and insisted on inviting him to tea. Huzoor decline owing to his other engagements but she continued to insist and had him to agree, saying it did not matter what time they came as long as they did! Another person said that he found the treatise to be lovelier than the sentiments of patriotism.

Newspaper Manchester Guardian reported the conference on 24 September 1924 and said: 'An incident that caused excitement in the conference took place when a new sect of Islam was mentioned.' They said they were using the term new sect for ease as its adherent did not consider it as a correct term. The paper said: 'According to people of this sect they were established 34 years ago by the Messiah who is prophesied in the Bible and other books. This Movement claims that God laid the foundation of this Movement in accordance with His explicit revelations so that mankind may reach God through Islam. A person from India wearing a white turban, with a radiant, pleasant face supporting a black beard and whose title is His Holiness Khalifatul Masih Al-Haaj Mirza Bashir ud Din Mahmood Ahmad, or for short Khalifatul Masih, presented the aforementioned challenge in his treatise which was entitled 'Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam'...one of his followers wearing a red Turkish cap read his treatise in an excellent manner...he concluded his treatise which mostly promoted and supported Islam on a passionate appeal in which he invited the audience to accept this new Messiah and his new teaching. It is also important to state that the commendations and cheers this treatise received were not afforded to any other treatise before it.'

Bhai Abdul Rahman Qadiani related that a unanimous resolution was passed after the conclusion of the treatise which thanked His Holiness for useful information, academic ideas and great advice. Upon hearing of the treatise a professor who was also a priest first came to the house and also attended the conference. He was most impressed and also took some books away. While listening to the treatise he bounced on his chair with excitement. He later said he would preach Islamic thoughts.

This treatise and the one which was written earlier, both are translated in English. Thought the facts and figures given in them are of that time as the Jama'at has progressed a lot but the knowledge, the beauty and everything remains the same. Our English-speaking members and youngsters should read them. May God have boundless blessings on Hazrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) who left a treasure for us on almost every subject. Fazl e Umer Foundation should try and speed up the process to translate his works in various languages. They are making efforts but further speed is required.

Next Huzoor announced that he would lead funeral Prayer in absentia of Kamal Ahmed Krogh Sahib of Denmark. He was born in 1942. After completing his education he taught various subjects till 2003. He

accepted Islam in 1960s and was one of the students of Abdus Salam Madsen Sahib. Until his death he was a most loyal, sincere and loving Ahmadi who had an ardent love of Khilafat. When Huzoor toured Denmark, in spite of his illness, he would regularly come to meet. He served the Jama'at in various capacities for long periods of time. His love for Tabligh was obsessive. His wife says when he came home late after Jama'at work he would start planning for the next day's meetings and would then sit up till midnight writing reports which he would send to ameer sahib and only then went to bed.

Ameer Sahib Denmark writes that Krogh Sahib always assisted him with obedience and compliance and when a copy of Danish translation of the Qur'an was presented to the Danish prime minister he was present, in fact he had arranged the meeting. He would hold a programme on every Friday evening for the education and training of youngsters. He authored many books and also did many translations and revised/reviewed the Danish translation of The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam. He took the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat to many in 1970s and 1980s. In 2004 he suffered from stroke and in spite of his ailment remained regular at Friday Prayers and Jama'at gatherings. He frequently asked ameer sahib about Huzoor's wellbeing in an emotional tenor. On 18 February he fell ill and passed away on 19 February. He leaves behind a widow, a son and a daughter. His widow is also serving the Jama'at and does translation work.

Krogh Sahib was also very popular among people outside the Jama'at and many have left their comments on the Danish electronic media.

One comment says that Krogh Sahib was a great man who was always greatly admired. He was a role model and as an academic was well-versed in all his subjects. Another comment says that Kamal Sahib was a teacher who can never be forgotten. Yet another comment says I was very impressed with a teacher like Kamal Ahmed Krogh. He was a good and righteous man. Another comment says I had many students who had been Kamal Krogh's students and they would always remember him with regard. Those who had been his students were head and shoulders ahead of others in religious studies. Another comment says, I hope there will be another soul in Denmark to continue his works that he had initiated to build bridges between the Danes and Muslim immigrants. He had started this to create an atmosphere for dialogue. It is sad that rather than promote mutual accord some people in our society put fuel on fire.

May God elevate the status of the deceased, grant steadfastness and courage to his widow and children and may He ever keep them connected to the Jama'at.