

The Conference of World Religions

GOD IN THE 21st CENTURY

Guildhall, 11th February 2014





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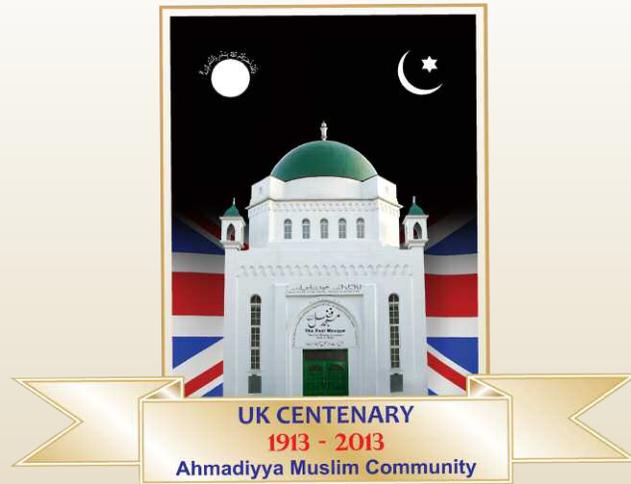
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Note about References

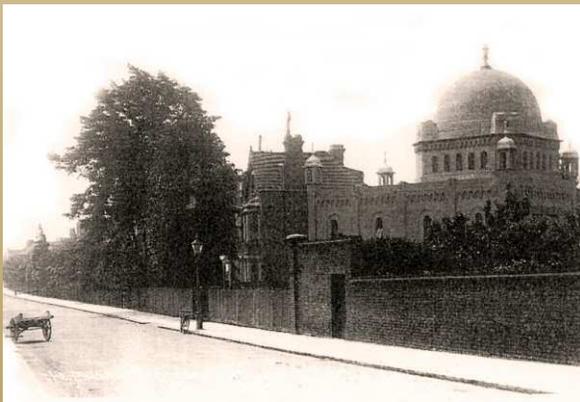
For the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(sa)' or '(saw)' after the words, Holy Prophet, or the name 'Muhammad,' are used normally in small letters. They stand for 'Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam' meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.' Likewise, the letter 'as' or '(as)' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'peace be upon him' derived from 'Alaihis salatu wassalam' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation 'ra' or '(ra)' stands for 'Raziaallahu Ta'ala anhu' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally 'th' or '(th)' for Rahemahullahu Ta'ala means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah, instead of Mecca, etc.



1913-2013: Centenary Celebrations

In 2013, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community celebrated its centenary of its establishment in the UK. Over the past century, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has played an active part in local and national events. It has the distinction of building London's first mosque which was opened in 1926. The historic Fazl Mosque in Putney, also known as The London Mosque, (pictured below) has hosted numerous visits from national and international dignitaries and to this day it remains a vibrant centre for the community and a house of peace for all. During the centenary year, the community organised a number of events to mark this historic milestone. The Conference of World Religions was the final major event to commemorate the centenary.



The London Mosque, 1926



The London Mosque, 2013

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Introduction

For all the achievements and progress of the past century, the world has become increasingly divided and restless with hostilities and conflicts ever-present. The struggle for supremacy of world powers and the spiralling threat of extremism are playing havoc with the world as it lurches perilously from one crisis to the next.

In such a scenario, where political solutions appear to be lacking, does religion have anything to offer? Religion is often accused of being the reason rather than the remedy for injustice and unrest and is deemed incapable of providing robust solutions to the complex challenges of the modern world. So can religion respond to the challenge and enable mankind to achieve peace in the world today? Can it deliver peace that is desirable, achievable and sustainable? Can it inspire real progress in the real world? Can it offer real hope?

The rise of atheism and religious extremism has seen God relegated from modern life but there are emerging voices that are advocating with clarity and conviction, that it is only by turning back to God and His teachings that mankind can truly tackle the root causes that are undermining world peace. They contend that through its common moral framework religion and faith can act as a powerful force in uniting people across continents and cultures by focusing on our shared values.

The Conference of World Religions provided a unique platform for international faith leaders to bring to the fore the distinctive contribution that faith can make and provide a compelling, cohesive and comprehensive mandate for peace which the world so desperately needs.

“We should utilise all of our resources and capabilities to foster a better society, to help God’s Creation and to spread love, affection and peace at every level. The urgent and critical need of the world today is to establish peace and faith in God.”

(His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and Keynote Speaker at the conference)

Background

Holding and participating in conferences that promote a greater understanding of faiths is a tradition of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. In 1897 Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), the founder of the community, wrote to Her Majesty Queen Victoria that she should hold a conference of religions. He wrote:

“This conference should be of a broader scope than that held by the Caesar of Rome as our Honoured Empress has a higher status than the Roman Emperor. An additional reason for this request is that since the people of this country have come to know of the Conference of Religions in America, naturally hearts are excited that Your Majesty should also arrange such a conference in London so that, due to this event, groups of loyal subjects in this country and their leaders and scholars may meet Your Majesty at the capital; and so that Your Majesty’s eyes may also fall on the thousands of loyal subjects of British India, and respected citizens of India be seen in the streets and boulevards of London for a few weeks. It will be necessary that every participant present his faith’s excellences and not malign others. If such a conference takes place, it will be a legendary spiritual event from our Honoured Queen; and England, which has been fed with Islamic matters incorrectly, will be introduced to the true face of Islam. In this way, the people of England will be apprised of the true philosophy of every religion...

...Therefore, it is highly desirable that for the good of humanity a conference of religions be held by the Empress of India to disseminate the reality of religions.”
(*Tohfa-e-Qasariyyah*, p.26, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – *The Promised Messiah*^(as)).

In 1924, a Conference of World Religions was held in London and the then head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was a speaker at that conference (see page 54). The conference, held in Guildhall in 2014 continues the tradition of the community and featured His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community, as the keynote speaker.

An Overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a global Muslim community that has evolved from humble beginnings into one of the world's most dynamic spiritual, social and humanitarian movements. Founded in 1889 in the remote village of Qadian, India, it is the only Islamic organisation to believe that the long-awaited messiah has come in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him).

Prophecies relating to the advent of such a reformer are found in several religions, however, a multitude of reformers would create confusion. For true peace to prevail such prophecies must refer to the advent of a single reformer who would unite mankind under a single message of peace through the revival of Islam, as its teachings are timeless and, uniquely, they uphold and encompass the truth of all previous religions.

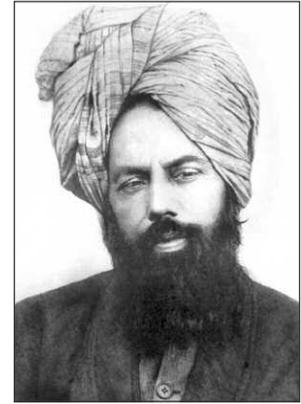
The divine mission of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) was therefore not to bring a new faith or scripture but to revive the beauty of religious harmony as perfected in Islam. He vigorously championed Islam's peaceful teachings and divested Islam of fanatical beliefs. This, he argued was the true Islam as taught by the Holy Qur'an and as reflected in the noble life of the founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed under divine guidance that he was that reformer who was promised for the latter days in fulfilment of the prophecies in Islam relating to the Promised Messiah and Imam Al-Mahdi (i.e the Guided Leader) as well as the prophecies relating to the second spiritual coming of Jesus, Krishna, Buddha (peace be on them all) and other prophets of Allah.

The Community now spans 206 countries with a membership of tens of millions and it seeks to promote the peaceful message of Islam with an emphasis on belief in God, prayer and service to humanity.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the leading Islamic organisation to categorically reject terrorism. The Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) emphatically declared that an aggressive "jihad by the sword" has no place in Islam. He taught his followers to wage an intellectual "jihad of the pen" to defend Islam. To this end, he penned more than 80 books, delivered hundreds of lectures and engaged in scores of public debates. His rigorous and rational



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as)
(The Promised Messiah)

defence of Islam unsettled conventional Muslim thinking. As part of its effort to revive Islam, the Community continues to spread Islam's teachings of moderation and restraint in the face of bitter opposition from the Muslim world.

Similarly, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the only Islamic organisation to endorse a separation of mosque and state. Over a century ago, the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) taught his followers to protect the sanctity of both religion and government by becoming righteous souls as well as loyal citizens. He cautioned against irrational interpretations of Qur'anic pronouncements and continually voiced his concerns over protecting the rights of God's creatures.

This is the Islam that was propounded by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community continues to advocate for universal human rights, it champions the empowerment and education of all, men and women, and it promotes the concepts of loyalty, freedom, equality, respect and peace for all.

“I proclaim to all Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Aryas that I have no enemy in the world. I love mankind with the love a compassionate mother has for her children; even more so. I am only the enemy of the false doctrines which kill truth. Human sympathy is my duty.”



The Khalifa of Islam: *A Man of Peace*

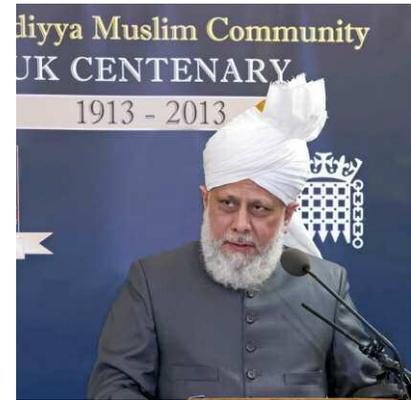
Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in 2003.

His Holiness inspires his community to serve humanity with the spirit of kindness and humility that is integral to Islam. In accordance with the teachings of Islam he upholds the honour of all prophets of God and highlights the role of religion in the promotion of peace.

His Holiness has delivered addresses at the House of Commons, Capitol Hill and the European Parliament and also written to world leaders

urging them to inculcate a true sense of justice and peace in international relations to avoid regional conflicts from engulfing the entire world.

“...it is the duty of all powers to fulfil the requirements of justice and to unite together. All parties need to increase dialogue and open the lines of communication so that they can peacefully discuss the best means to solve the problems of the world. These steps are necessary so that global peace can be established. It is my prayer that Allah grants the people of the world the ability to do this.”
(National Peace Symposium 2013)



“The Holy Qur’an states that one of the Attributes of God Almighty is ‘Salam’ which means He is ‘The Source of Peace.’ It follows that if God truly is the ‘Source of Peace’ then His peace should encompass all of His Creation and all of mankind, rather than be limited to a specific group of people.” (*House of Commons, 11th June 2013*)



“This was perfectly illustrated by the Holy Prophet^{sa} when he famously said a black person is not superior to a white person and nor is a white person superior to a black person. Neither is a European greater or superior to any other national, nor are Africans, Asians or the people of any other part of the world. Differences of nationality, colour or ethnicity act merely as a form of identity and recognition..” (*European Parliament, 4th December 2012*)



“The Qur’an teaches that wherever and whoever counsels you towards goodness and virtue, you should accept it, and wherever and whoever counsels you towards sinful or unjust behaviour, you should reject it..” (*Capitol Hill, 27th June 2012*)

The Conference of World Religions

The worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him), Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper) delivered the keynote address at the historic 'Conference of World Religions' on 11 February 2014.

The conference was organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the UK, as part of its centenary celebrations, at the famous Guildhall in the City of London. The theme of the much anticipated event was 'God in the 21st Century'. Around 500 delegates attended the conference, including faith leaders from various countries, politicians, government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, academics and representatives of various NGOs.

The conference also received messages of support from:

- Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
- His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
- Prime Minister David Cameron.
- His Excellency John Kufuor – *former President of Ghana*.
- His Excellency, John Dramani Mahama – *President of Ghana*.

Dignitaries and faith leaders who spoke at the event included:

- Archbishop Kevin McDonald – *Roman Catholic Church*.
- Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber – *Representative of the Chief Rabbi of Israel*.
- Sheikh Moafaq Tarif – *Spiritual Head of the Druze Community in Israel*.
- Umesh Sharma – *Chairman of the Hindu Council UK*.
- Dr Katrina Lantos-Swett – *Vice-Chair United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*.
- Rt. Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP – *Attorney General*.
- Baroness Berridge – *Chair of the UK Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom or Belief*.
- Rt. Hon Baroness Warsi – *Senior Minister of State at the Foreign Office*.
- Rabbi Jackie Tabick – *Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths*.
- His Excellency Professor Kwaku Danso-Boafo – *High Commissioner of Ghana*.
- Geshe Tashi Tsering – *Representative of the Dalai Lama*.

The transcript of the keynote address delivered by His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper), is now presented.

GOD in the 21st Century

Keynote Address by the Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

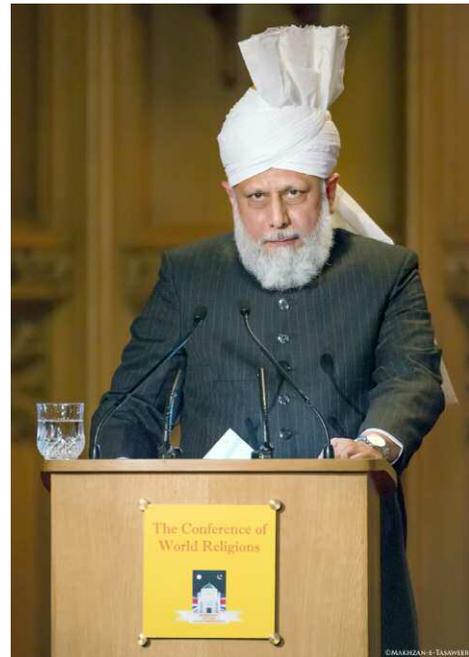
“Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim - In the Name of Allah, the Gracious, Ever Merciful.

All distinguished guests – *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatohu* – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

First of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the distinguished guests for attending this event. I would particularly like to express my gratitude to the eminent guest speakers, who in a very short space of time, have outlined their beliefs and views. I fully understand that to fully explain one’s beliefs in such a short period of time is impossible and so perhaps our distinguished guests will have been unable to discuss everything that they would have liked.

Nonetheless, the fact that the people of different backgrounds have gathered together this evening upon one platform proves that we, who are the followers of various religions, are united by a common desire and objective. And that common objective is to work towards improving the lives of the Creation of the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth – amongst whom human beings have been deemed to be the very highest form.

Over the course of the past year, various events have been held to mark and celebrate the Centenary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the United Kingdom, but today’s event is the best of all. It is an excellent means of providing a common platform for people to come together to discuss the importance of God in



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad



“...if someone is kind to you it is necessary to express your appreciation to them, because being grateful to man is an essential requirement of being grateful to God Almighty. It is this perception and portrayal of God that Islam provides.”

these times. Thus, those who have arranged this event are deserving of our thanks and gratitude. I am personally particularly grateful because through this evening's event I have been introduced to many new people.

These sentiments of gratitude I feel actually turn my attention towards that God, Who according to the teachings of my religion has commanded man to show gratitude to his fellow man wherever it is due. Thus, if someone is kind to you it is necessary to express your appreciation to them, because being grateful to man is an essential requirement of being grateful to God Almighty. It is this perception and portrayal of God that Islam provides. Certainly, if a person who follows the true teachings of Islam and who truly believes in God were to act upon just this one teaching with sincerity, he would find that his gratitude would be a means of spreading love and affection in society, just as a blossoming flower spreads beauty and fragrance amongst its surroundings regardless of which century this is being spread in.

If every single one of us were to act in this way we

would find that the burning hatreds and conflicts of the world that emerge at different times, in different ways and on different occasions would all be buried once and for all and would be replaced by love and peace at all times and at all places.

Some people may think what I am saying is rather idealistic and impossible to practically achieve. Yet, when we look at the long history of religions we come to realise that such a compassionate and caring society is exactly what God desires.

God wills that mankind achieves these noble objectives and reaches such a moral pinnacle. It is for these reasons that God has continually sent His prophets and righteous representatives to all parts of the world. They have been sent in order to reform mankind and to develop a spirit of mutual love, compassion and brotherhood amongst all people. God sent His representatives so that people would be drawn towards fulfilling the rights of God Almighty and discharging the rights of one another.

God's Prophets and chosen people were able to form around themselves a community of such people who strived to lead their lives according to His teachings, whilst those who did not accept them invariably met a sorry fate. Whenever God sent His representatives they were not universally accepted and there were people who opposed religion and dissented. They would say that the claimant was merely trying to instil fear into the people and that in reality there was no need to believe in a God who was said to be the Possessor of all Powers. Yet, those very people who denied God and who opposed the Prophets were ultimately always destroyed.

The Holy Qur'an recounts the incidents of such people who moved far away from God Almighty and consequently became embroiled in various trials and tribulations and were ultimately left ruined. Conversely, those who established a close union with God were successful and always proved to be victorious. Such narrations are given not only in the Qur'an, but in the scriptures of other religions as well. Upon reading or hearing these accounts we are forced to consider and question, whether these stories are just myths and fables or are they steeped in reality? Did those consequences that God's chosen people warned about actually come to occur? Were the signs fulfilled that God's representatives proclaimed? Did God Almighty reward and bestow His bounties on His chosen ones? As a result of the teachings of the Prophets, did people who believed in God come to walk upon a path paved with love and compassion for others?

In this short time, I cannot explain each individual issue in depth, but I can attest to the fact that the history of religion proves that the answer to all of these questions is most certainly 'Yes'. The Holy Scripture that I believe in, the Holy Qur'an, clearly informs us that all of these things are true and that God Almighty sends His prophets with a mission to inculcate the very highest possible standards of spirituality in mankind by forming a close union

with God. Through that union man comes to fulfil not only the rights of God, but also by displaying the very highest moral standards they are led to fulfilling the due rights of God's Creation. And as I said earlier, amongst God's Creation it is human beings who have been deemed to be the very best by God Almighty. Both of these fundamental teachings are such that if they are established in any society, the people who abide by them will not only attain the pleasure of God, but will also be those who spread love, affection and brotherhood.

According to my beliefs as a Muslim, Allah the Almighty sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} for the reformation of the entire world and to instil these paramount objectives amongst mankind. In his efforts to reform, he preached this Divine message constantly and would strive endlessly, day and night. His efforts were not limited to preaching but rather each and every night he would bow down before His Lord in prayer, weeping with such anguish and heartache that the place where he prostrated would become submerged in tears.

What was it that the Holy Prophet^{sa} prayed for so earnestly? It was not for his personal wealth or power. It was not to usurp any government or administration.

Rather, his every prayer was consumed by utter torment beseeching His Lord that why people were not spiritually and morally reforming. Why did they refuse to abandon their cruelties? Why were they unwilling to forsake wrongdoing and evil? And because of all of this why were they throwing themselves into an abyss of destruction? The Holy Prophet's^{sa} agony and anguish was so deep and his state of anxiety and despair was so great, that in the Qur'an Allah addressed him directly, asking if he would grieve himself to death because they did not listen or heed his message.¹

However, God Almighty is He Who listens to earnest and heartfelt prayers and so He answered



those prayers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. History testifies to the fact that those very people who were ignorant and uncivilised, drunkards, fornicators, gamblers, thieves and involved in all types of vices, came to rid themselves of all of these evils and replaced them with the most magnificent moral values instead. Those very people were transformed. Those very people developed an unbreakable bond with God Almighty. Never could any worldly power have brought about such a spiritual revolution.

In worldly terms the early Muslims were very weak, and even if the Muslims did gain any power, it was at a much later time. During that initial period they remained poor, destitute and without means, yet due to their passionate and sincere faith and their close relationship with God they were ever ready to sacrifice their lives for His sake. They developed the highest standards of sacrifice and such an ardent desire to serve mankind that they were ready to hand over all of their possessions and whatever they had in their homes for the sake of helping other people.

If we compare and contrast the lives of those people before and after they came to believe in God, there can be no doubt of the great transformation and metamorphosis that occurred in their hearts, which was entirely due to having gained knowledge and understanding of God. Those very people came to witness the clear signs of God's Help. The spiritual revolution that occurred was not the result of chance or due to a desire to achieve any worldly goal; rather, they witnessed and saw for themselves that the sentiments of love in the heart of the Holy Prophet^{sa} towards other people were unparalleled.

Even Islam's most bitter and ferocious foes were compelled to accept this fact. They were witnesses to the truth that the Holy Prophet^{sa} responded to their brutality, hatred and vicious assaults with nothing but forgiveness, mercy and compassion. They were witnesses to the truth that when the Holy Prophet^{sa} gained victory over the sworn enemies of Islam, who in the past had left no stone unturned in their efforts to destroy the religion, he responded with peace and forgiveness by



saying to them: *I have no personal enmity towards you. I do not wish to take any revenge for the cruelties and persecution that you inflicted upon us in the past. As long as you guarantee that you will live peacefully you are free to remain in Makkah. You will not be treated cruelly or unjustly as a result of your religious differences or beliefs.*

When the countless enemies of Islam observed this incomparable example of benevolence, they had no option but to acknowledge it. To give just one example: Upon seeing the conduct of the Holy Prophet^{sa} an opponent of Islam called Iqrama who had committed monumental cruelties against the Muslims, instinctively said that only a person who was truly from God and whose love for mankind was peerless could act in such a compassionate way. Seeing the example of the Holy Prophet^{sa} those enemies of Islam came to repeatedly and openly proclaim that the law revealed to him was unquestionably true and that the title the Qur'an had conferred upon him as being a 'mercy for all mankind' was entirely justified.

They acknowledged that from every organ, every pore and every fibre of his body gushed forth a spring of mercy and compassion for humanity. They openly affirmed that the Holy Prophet's^{sa} every act was an example of the very highest standards of mercy and proved the truthfulness of the Word of God. In light of these compassionate teachings one question or allegation could potentially be raised, and indeed, is regularly invoked by some non-Muslims. The allegation is that if Islam does teach Muslims to show love and sympathy towards others and if the Holy Prophet^{sa} truly was the 'mercy for all of mankind,' then why were religious wars fought? To understand this question you must be acquainted with the true early history of Islam and keep in mind two important points.

Firstly, history testifies to the fact, which even impartial non-Muslim Orientalists recognise, that in the early years after the Holy Prophet^{sa} made his claim, he and his followers were subjected to the most barbaric and horrific persecution in Makkah by those who were either not religious or were idol worshippers. Indeed many companions

of the Holy Prophet^{sa} including men, women and children, lost their lives. To give just one example of the brutal nature of the opposition: There were instances of Muslim women having each of their legs tied to a different camel and then the camels were made to run in opposing directions, so that the bodies of the Muslim ladies were literally wrenched apart and split asunder into two pieces.

In fact, there is a very long list of atrocities that occurred but I am unable to mention them all here. Yet, despite enduring such inhumane and savage cruelty the Muslims did not seek any form of revenge, either openly or in secret. Rather, after years of facing sustained and bitter persecution the Holy Prophet^{sa} and most of his companions migrated from Makkah. Some of the Muslims went to live in the city of Madinah, whilst some travelled to other places. In Madinah, where the Holy Prophet^{sa} migrated, a large number of people had come to accept Islam. However the disbelievers of Makkah could not bear to see that the Muslims were now living peacefully and had become well settled.

Thus, just 18 months after migration they attacked the Muslims of Madinah with an army of 1000 extremely well-equipped soldiers. In comparison the Muslim army was made up of just 300 people bearing almost no weaponry; just a handful of swords and arrows. If the relative merits of the two armies is assessed then there is no doubt that the best option for the Muslims would have been to retreat and save themselves, rather than to stand up and defend themselves. However, at that time, Allah the Almighty finally commanded the Holy Prophet^{sa} to fight back. This is mentioned in Chapter 22, Verses 40-41 of the Qur'an, where Allah says:

'Permission to *fight* is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged — and Allah indeed has power to help them — Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord

is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty—'

From these verses it becomes clear that when those who had been remorselessly targeted were given permission to fight it was given in order to not only defend themselves but in order to safeguard all religions. And so the second reason permission for war was granted was that if the oppressors had not been forcefully repelled then the enemies of religion would not have let Christians live in peace, nor Jews, nor Muslims and nor the people of any other religion. The truth was that these opponents of Islam wished to eliminate all peace-loving people and instead engulf the world in strife and disorder for their own personal gains.

It was upon this background that Allah told the Muslims to not be afraid and that the powerful Makkan army would be defeated because Allah's Help was with the Muslims. History testifies to the fact that with the Help of God, the few and entirely ill-equipped Muslims were able to defeat their opponents who had wished to destroy the peace of the world. Where on the one hand this was a victory for Islam, it was also a timeless triumph for every person who desires for peace to be established in the world. It was a victory for every person who desires for human values to always be preserved and it was a victory for all people who believe religion to be a force for good and for establishing peace in the world.

During the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and during the respective eras of his four Khalifahs (the Rightly Guided Successors), history testifies to the fact that the wars fought by the Muslims were only fought to end cruelty and to establish peace in the world. They were never fought as a

means of inflicting cruelty, injustice or terrorism. When the era of the Khilafat of the Rightly Guided Successors came to an end, in its place a form of monarchy was established. Regrettably, during that era the majority of wars were fought for political or worldly reasons. However, it must be made clear that those wars fought to expand kingdoms and to increase power were not in any way fought in accordance with the teachings of Islam as taught by the Holy Qur'an.

In a similar vein, the actions of Muslim governments or opposition rebel groups today cannot be said to reflect or represent the teachings of Islam in any shape or form. I say without any hesitation that the acts of certain extremist Muslims today, which they conduct in the name of Islam, are actually only serving to defame Islam and religion itself. If people follow such a religious ideology it is quite clear that religion or God cannot play a positive role in establishing peace in the world. Indeed, we would have to admit that those people who say that religion has been a cause of spreading disorder in the world have been proved correct.

However, my faith in my religion increases when I read the prophecies and guidance of the Qur'an and of the Holy Prophet^{sa} about the latter days. Both the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^{sa} prophesied that a time would come when Muslims would forget the true teachings of Islam and would not follow the Qur'an. They further prophesied that those Muslims, who would call themselves religious clerics and leaders, would in reality be the source of strife, corruption and disorder. This is exactly what we are witnessing today. As I have said when I observe all of this, my faith does not diminish but rather increases.

I do not become frustrated and nor do I lose hope, because where the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^{sa} prophesied about the dire state of today's world, they also gave glad tidings that for sake of reviving true Islam, a person would be sent from amongst

the Muslims who would be the Promised Messiah and the *Imam Mahdi* (the Guided One). He would be sent to end all religious wars, and at every level of society would transform all forms of cruelty into peace and harmony. He would work tirelessly to fulfil these noble objectives and would infuse the true spirit of Islam amongst his followers. That true spirit has been outlined in the following verse of the Qur'an where it says:

'O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be *always* just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Allah is aware of what you do.'²

Thus, this verse outlines the necessity for always being fair and just. The standard of justice required is that even if you have to testify against yourself, your parents or your loved ones, you must do so³ without hesitation, because such justice is a guarantor for establishing peace. This is the standard that Allah the Almighty has taught in the Qur'an; but the question is whether such a high standard can ever really be achieved? As I mentioned earlier, the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^{sa} prophesied that a time of disorder, chaos and corruption would befall the world and we can see with our own eyes the way in which this has been fulfilled to the letter. Indeed, it is a great proof that the truthful Word of God has been clearly manifested. In the same way, along with the revival of the faith, which is to occur through the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, this perfect standard of justice will also be established in the world whereby the enmity of a nation will not prove an obstacle in the establishment of justice.

We, Ahmadi Muslims, are fortunate that we not only have faith in these prophecies, but we also have a firm belief that the person who was to be sent by God Almighty has come in the person of our Community's Founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian. We further believe that the



task of reviving Islam, which was started by the Promised Messiah^{as}, is continuing today through the institution of Khilafat – that is the system of spiritual succession. The truth of the Promised Messiah^{as} was proved through God’s help and support and countless Divine signs in his favour.

One of the signs was an increase in earthquakes and other natural disasters resulting from the fact that mankind had forgotten its Creator and because of the widespread disorder and strife in the world. History proves that the numbers of natural disasters in the past century has exceeded those of previous centuries. Another sign was a prophecy by the Promised Messiah^{sa} relating to the downfall of the Tsar of Russia. It was prophesied that due to the Tsar’s brutalities, he would be stripped of his title and reign. As history shows, this also came true. A third prophecy was about the world wars. We have witnessed two World Wars. If we do not mend our ways and recognise our Creator we will witness more of such wars and their horrific consequences. All these prophecies prove that he was a warner from God sent to reform man and bring him towards the right path.

Further, it is quite clear that without the Help of God, a claimant from a small and remote village in India could not have become renowned

throughout the world. And following his demise, without God’s help he could not have left behind such a flourishing Community. A Community which, due to being firmly attached to the institution of Khilafat, was furthering his mission throughout the world, which was to develop a relationship between mankind and God Almighty and of fulfilling the rights of mankind whilst upholding the very highest standards of justice. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has very limited resources and so without God’s Help its message could not have spread to the corners of the world.

Thus, where on the one hand this all proves the existence of God, on the other it shows that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been firmly blessed with Divine help and support. Today, it is the members of the Ahmadiyya Community who are making great financial sacrifices in an effort to help others and are even sacrificing their lives in an effort to establish and maintain peace in the world. In some countries our Community is severely persecuted and the most horrific cruelties are perpetrated against us, but we do not react or retaliate in any way through which the peace of society could be put at any risk.

This is undoubtedly because we act upon the Divine teachings of the Qur’an which were

perfectly outlined and explained by the Founder of our Community. And so it is my prayer that the world comes to understand the need of the time. I hope and pray that we, who are the representatives of different faiths and religions, and who have gathered here today to particularly demonstrate these loving teachings, all strive towards worshipping the One God, by treating His Creation with justice and by fulfilling their due rights. Certainly, these are the original teachings of all religions.

We should utilise all of our resources and capabilities to foster a better society, to help God's Creation and to spread love, affection and peace at every level. The urgent and critical need of the world today is to establish peace and faith in God. If the world understood this reality then all countries, whether large or small, would not, in the name of defence spending, allocate millions and billions of dollars to expand their military capabilities. Rather, they would spend that wealth to feed the hungry, to provide universal education and to improve the living standards of the developing world.

If we assess today's world in a fair manner then we must accept that even the economies of the developed world have become uncertain and unstable. The spending power of the members of the public has vastly diminished. Even here in the Western or developed world, interviews are shown on television where it is said that in the past families used to be able to eat out regularly, but never mind eating out, now they are even forced to go hungry at home on occasions. It is simply not possible for them to eat and live as comfortably as before and the reason for this is that countries are prioritising their defence and military budgets over their social welfare budgets. There is a greater desire to send armies to foreign countries thousands of miles away and to send weapons rather than paying attention to alleviating the problems on one's own doorstep and of solving the problems of a nation's own people.

Thus, disorder is not being spread by religion, but it is actually being spread as a result of political games and ambitions and the fact that peoples and nations are seeking to assert their superiority over one another. Thus, it is the urgent need of the time that all people and all nations pay heed to this; otherwise the world stands on the brink of an unimaginable destruction. Some of the destruction we see in the world today is self-inflicted, whilst some is due to the horrific consequences of natural disasters.

And so in order to protect ourselves and to save mankind we need to turn towards God Almighty and we need to attach ourselves to the Living God Who did not forsake the Prophet Moses^{as} and his people and nor did He forsake the Prophet Jesus^{as} and his disciples. Nor have true Muslims been deprived from attaining the blessings of God and seeing their prayers accepted.

These are not old stories or myths of the past but in fact God is an Ever-Living God Who is alive today. The Promised Messiah^{as} has taught us that God continues to speak to His righteous people and shows them His true signs. Hence, it is our duty to pay heed to the words of the Reformer of the Age and recognise our God in the true spirit. We bear witness that God did show His signs through the Promised Messiah^{as} and continues to do so today.

At the end I would like to say that instead of laying the blame for our mistakes upon God and upon our religions, we should take a look in the mirror and assess our own shortcomings.

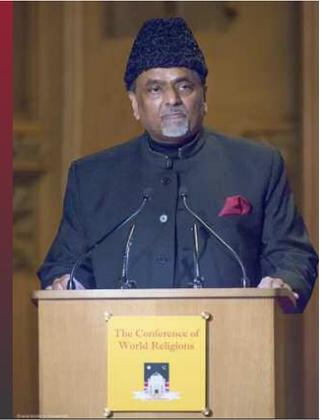
With these words, I would like to once again thank all of the guests for taking the time to come and listen to what I have said today. Thank you very much."

References

1. The Holy Qur'an, Ch.18:V.7.
2. The Holy Qur'an, Ch.5:V.9.
3. The Holy Qur'an, Ch.4:V.36.

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RAFIQ HAYAT*National President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK*

Your Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Your Worshipful Mayors, Your Excellencies, Noble Lords and Ladies, Secretaries of State, Members of Parliament and all distinguished guests, *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuhu*, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this historic event and we are truly honoured by your presence this evening. We have with us senior national and international faith leaders, academics, leading figures from the diplomatic and political world, as well as delegates representing 25 countries. It is a truly amazing assembly.

For all our differences it is clear that we share a common goal, and that is a deep desire for peace, a desire for greater justice in the world and indeed a desire for religion and belief to be able to flourish.

We, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, are deeply honoured to welcome you all today and in fact this conference reflects the essence of our commitment to peace

through dialogue. Our community was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, India who claimed under Divine guidance to be the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi prophesied to appear in the latter days. His life was spent in honouring all prophets and in upholding the dignity of religion and religious freedom. He firmly believed in the Qur'anic commandment that 'there is no compulsion in religion'. He himself partook in a famous Conference of Great Religions in Lahore in 1896 where his speech received wide acclaim and was subsequently published under the title *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*. His community is now established in more than 200 countries and in every country it seeks to promote the concepts of loyalty, freedom, equality, respect and peace. It engages with all people with a view to break down barriers and to enhance understanding. The UK chapter of the community was established in 1913 and this conference is a key part of our centenary celebrations. In fact in 1924 the second Khalifa of our community undertook a special

His life was spent in honouring all prophets and in upholding the dignity of religion and religious freedom. He firmly believed in the Qur'anic commandment that 'there is no compulsion in religion'.

Rafiq Hayat

visit to London to speak at the Conference of World Religions that was held at the Imperial Institute in London.

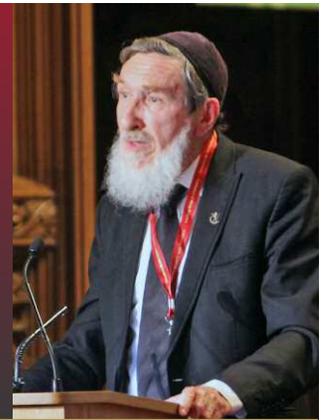
We are very fortunate that London, is now home to the worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, who is the fifth successor of the Promised Messiah^(as). He has addressed parliaments and conventions across the globe and only recent returned from an extensive tour of South East Asia and the Far East. Troubled by the growing conflicts across the world His Holiness has repeatedly emphasised the need for peace

through justice and has counselled the community to continuously engage in self-reformation so that it can be worthy of God's blessings. We are very privileged to have His Holiness with us this evening.

We are also honoured that we have a panel of learned and distinguished speakers and I am sure that through their wise contributions we will all leave with a better understanding of what a belief in God has to offer us all. Thank you once again for joining us this evening. God bless you and enjoy the evening. Thank you.

RABBI PROFESSOR DANIEL SPERBER

Representative of the Chief Rabbi of Israel



His Holiness, the Khalifa of Islam, most distinguished representatives of the faiths, ladies and gentlemen, I feel deeply honoured to have been invited to this very august meeting to represent the Israeli Rabbinate, the Jewish religion, and indeed the Jewish people.

Judaism, as is well known, is the progenitor of the monotheistic religions, the so-called Abrahamic family; it posits a single Supreme Being Who created the world, indeed the universe, and all that is in it, putting humankind on the world, not as masters, but as custodians, to tend and improve it, and preserve it for further generations. The Talmud tells a story of a certain Rabbi who saw an old man planting a carob tree. "Old man", he said, "why are you planting a carob tree that will only give its fruits in seventy years time?" The old man replied, "My forefathers

planted carob trees so that I could benefit from them. I shall plant a carob tree for my grandchildren". Hence, the involvement in conservation and ecology is not merely a matter of global interest, but it is also a divine directive. The concept of the Sabbath as a day of rest for all people constitutes a unique contribution to world civilization. Likewise, the notion of a Sabbatical year, when all debts are cancelled, giving an opportunity for the debt-ridden impoverished to reconstitute their lives, and when all privately owned land becomes public property for one year, creating a situation *de jure* of greater financial equality, and also a keener understanding that the land actually belongs to God and not to humans, this too is a spiritual message of the greatest import. The Hebrew Bible has numerous laws, that may be divided

into two categories: the one ritual laws, which refers primarily to Jews, and the other social-interpersonal laws, that constitute a blueprint for the morality and ethical behaviour of all humankind. Hence, charity, the dignity of the individual, the overriding value of human life, the care for the poor, the indigent and those less favoured by nature, are cardinal notions in Judaism, which have become universally accepted as humanitarian values. But Judaism sees them also as divine directives. The Bible formulates two interrelated commandments: to love one's God and to love one's neighbour, interrelated because all humans have in them a component of divinity. Hence, we respect the other and seek universal harmony in the spirit of these twin "loves".

The Rabbis tell us that he who saves a single life it is as though he has saved the whole universe. So the single individual is, in a sense, a microcosm of the whole universe, a microcosm that, as stated above, also has a component of divinity, or perhaps is infused throughout with the element of divinity. Each of us is a universe of its own; and when we view the other we are viewing yet another universe. Hence our care towards the other is our care towards its universe and its Supreme Creator which both encompasses it as well as being contained within it. A true experiential realisation of this truth creates for each and every one of us a tremendous duty of responsibility towards all that surrounds us.

Regretfully, we live in a world of ever-increasing secularism, on the one hand, and, as a sort of counter-reaction, a rapid growth of extremist and intolerant pietism. We live in a society where materialism is seen as a positive value of the highest order, and where the gap between the have and have nots has reached terrifying proportions. In the name of progress, and comfort we are depleting the world's natural resources, polluting our fresh-water assets, destroying our forests, and I hardly need to continue this litany of these ecological maladies. We live in a world riven with political and

"...charity, the dignity of the individual, the overriding value of human life, the care for the poor, the indigent and those less favoured by nature, are cardinal notions in Judaism, which have become universally accepted as humanitarian values. But Judaism sees them also as divine directives."

Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber

religious strife and turmoil. The name of God and His messages are trampled underfoot in the name of rationalism and political expediency.

Let us return to simple unsophisticated faith in the sanctity of God, of man and His nature, and seek cures for the ills that plague our society: help, mutual respect and the legitimacy of pluralistic faith, thus ushering in a new vision of peace and harmony among all peoples.

We spoke of the tremendous duty of responsibility we bear towards one another. We pray to the Almighty that we may carry out this duty faithfully to the betterment of humanity and indeed of ourselves, and with God's help we will surely succeed.

ARCHBISHOP KEVIN MCDONALD

Catholic Church UK



I am both honoured and grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church at this Conference of World Religions organised by the Ahmaddiyya Muslim Community in this, your centenary year. It is a sign of the times that a gathering of this kind should take place and it is a reason to be grateful for the times in which we live.

The heart and the centre of Christian faith is, of course, the person of Jesus Christ. One of the most vital tasks of the first followers of Christ - the people who began to celebrate Easter, to celebrate the resurrection of their Lord from the dead - was to discern and decide under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the set of books which were to be recognised as the normative witness to their Risen Lord. It was eventually settled over a long period of time and the result of that process of discernment was what we call the Canon of Sacred Scripture and at the heart of it, of course, are the gospels. These are words of Jesus to his disciples taken from St Matthew's gospel:

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again. You are the light of the world. Your light must shine in the sight of men, so that seeing your good works, they may give the praise to Your Father in heaven. And in St John's gospel he says:

*Peace I bequeath you,
My own peace I give you,
A peace that the world cannot give,
This is my gift to you.*

It was in obedience to the Lord's words and, I believe, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that in 1986 that Pope John Paul II convened the gathering of Christian leaders and representatives of other religions to pray and witness to peace together in Assisi. I see today's meeting as another moment in the contemporary process of the coming together of religions in the cause of peace and justice. We would all explain our reasons for responding to the call to be here together in different ways, shaped by our deepest convictions and beliefs. I am convinced, however, that the contribution that each of us has to make and most crucially the contribution we can and must make together is vital for the peace of the world.

As Christians we recognise Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, as the Prince of Peace. We pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and to guide us in the way of peace. But Christians cannot and do not stand alone in the cause of peace but must stand in solidarity with all people of faith. Last June, Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, who is Pope Francis's principal advisor on interfaith matters visited several communities of other religions in this country and in our dialogue we focused on the theme of peace from different perspectives. What struck me most as I listened to contributions from representatives of different religions was that consistently there was a clear connection between prayer and peace. Men and women become people of peace precisely through prayerful fidelity to the religious truth in which

they believe. That is how it works. We can be peacemakers if we personally receive the gift of peace.

And the reasons we need to come together, is that our witness to peace will be all the more effective if it can be a common and concerted witness. When Pope Benedict addressed politicians in Westminster Hall in 2010 he spoke of the vital contribution that religions must make to the Common Good, to identifying and promoting the values that underpin our lives, that underpin social harmony and peace in our communities and in the world. Christian values have created the moral framework for our social life in this country but as Christian faith loses its purchase in society our moral compass falters and we lose direction. Changing that situation is a task for all faith communities who live together in this country. We must be in solidarity, not in conflict and the terrible events we watch unfolding in Syria and elsewhere should act as a stimulus for taking this forward. To me one of the most shocking and discouraging things in our world today is to see people of religion at odds with one another.

It is often said that Britain is now a secular country, but that is rather simplistic. In Britain today we welcome people from all over the world – people of different races and different faiths. What I want to say is that it is vital that together, we identify the shared values that can be the basis of a peaceful society and a more peaceful world.

And I suggest that in Britain we have a special responsibility for contributing to this process because this is a fundamentally tolerant society. We are free to learn and receive from one another and to contribute to the Common Good together. I see today's meeting as another opportunity to learn that lesson afresh, to commit ourselves to peace together, and to do that for ourselves for our society and for our world. Our theme today is "God in the 21st century." I believe that all of us, from the vantage points of our own faith communities should be able to see our coming together in the cause of peace as being as an opportunity to be part of God's purposes in our own times. Thank you.

I also have a message from my superiors. This is from the Vatican, specifically from Cardinal Peter Turkson who is the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace [see *Messages of Support section, page 44*].

"We must be in solidarity, not in conflict and the terrible events we watch unfolding in Syria and elsewhere should act as a stimulus for taking this forward. To me one of the most shocking and discouraging things in our world today is to see people of religion at odds with one another."

"Men and women become people of peace precisely through prayerful fidelity to the religious truth in which they believe. That is how it works. We can be peacemakers if we personally receive the gift of peace."

Archbishop
Kevin McDonald

SHEIKH MOAFAQ TARIF

Spiritual Leader of the Druze Community of Israel – Sheikh Tarif addressed the delegates in Arabic and the following translation was read out afterwards



In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of all the worlds and peace be upon all the Prophets and Messengers.

Respected Imam of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, the Khalifa Mirza Masroor Ahmad, may Allah be his helper, distinguished religious leaders and guests, it is a great honour to stand in front of you on behalf of myself and on behalf of the people of the Unitarian Druze in Israel, a sect which has strong relations and close ties with all sects and religions in the Holy Land, which is a peace loving land, the promised land, the cradle of faith and the home and place of spiritual journey of all the prophets.

Dear brothers and sisters, everyone who reads the Holy Qur'an, the Old and New Testaments, finds that the heavenly religions recognise the power of God and they urge to recognise the unity of the great creator. All these heavenly religions agree on the unity of God, the Almighty and everyone is created equally despite the difference in colour, gender, religion and belief. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognise one another, verily the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is most righteous among you." This means that God created human beings in His own image. He sent prophets and messengers to invite people to worship God and prevent them from fighting each other. Everyone who believes in God is a brother to his fellow brother, who believes in the same God. He has a full right to profess his religion

freely as it is stated that there is no difference between Arab and non-Arab, except by piety.

My brothers, some wonder whether the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Creator of the universe, exists or not, and what are the signs of His presence and existence. Allah the Almighty sent His prophets and messengers to unite and let people live according to His commandments, after creating the universe out of nothing. Every human being with a sound mind should clearly reach the fact that a supreme engineer is behind its design as each physical body consists of a head, without which nothing functions and operates. As the physical head is the summit of everything, so is the Supreme Being who is called Al-Bari and it is the same God Who created the Holy Land, in the Holy Land religious tolerance and understanding between all the religious groups. All the heavenly religions are from God and are based on sacredness, nobility and purification. All those who believe in God, believe in the brotherhood of nations, justice and pure faith in God.

The pure objective of all religions here is reformation, creation of peace, love and understanding and all the ways and methods in implementing it. Unfortunately, we observe that some people attempt to misinterpret and misquote anything related to religion which transforms a merciful religion into a merciless religion of intolerance. Every religion enjoins goodness, harmony, tolerance, love, brotherhood and forgiveness.

I am really grateful to his holiness, the Head of

the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and its members, for this invitation, and in congratulating you for this impressive conference of world religions. Let us all join our hands in renouncing violence and aggression in all its forms, and sow the seed of love by developing peace not only in the east, but all over the world. The earth is vast and spacious, there is a place in the world for everyone, let us all, the religious leaders as well as the political leaders, hold fast to

the rope of Allah and let us not be divided among ourselves. In order to have unity let us help and support one another in righteousness and piety instead of cooperating with each other in sin and aggression. Blessed are the peacemakers for they are called the sons of God.

Finally, I extend on behalf of the Druze community, our warmest congratulations with regard to this special and honourable event.

RABBI JACKIE TABICK

Co-President of the World Congress of Faiths.



First let me say how honoured I am to have been invited to attend this gathering this evening and I bring greetings from my co-president, Reverend Marcus Braybrooke, who would have loved to have been with you but could not make it and sent me in his place, so thank you very much.

The connections between the World Congress of Faiths and that event in 1924 are very close. The founder of the World Congress of Faiths, Sir Francis Younghusband attended that meeting in Imperial Institute and perhaps it was that meeting that helped him along the way to found the World Congress. It was the strange route journey for Sir Francis Younghusband. He was a scion of the British Empire who had been sent out to help rule in India and Tibet and while he was there he gained a different understanding of religion and spirituality. He came back and said that the religions of the East were like the beautiful mountains of Tibet in comparison to what he felt the Church of England was at that time, was the low foothills.

He also brought to the World Congress of

Faiths a really important value that I'd like to share with you this evening, he called it fellowship and it means various different things as the years have gone by. To Sir Francis Younghusband it didn't just mean the fellowship that one gains from being in the company of just wonderful people, though that is part of what we seek in interfaith relationships; to get to know other people, to get to learn to be excited about the differences between faiths, to be supportive of each other on our spiritual journeys through life. His notion of fellowship though went deeper, he wanted us to have an understanding of the oneness that lies behind all these differences, the oneness of creation, the oneness as the source of our spiritual desires and this is what he brought and I think in looking around the world today if only we could all follow this value of being excited of the differences between faiths, being true to our own faiths but understanding and valuing the oneness behind all faiths as all of us of creatures of the oneness, the spirituality, the God that is there. And so I bring you greetings and may you go from

strength to strength and as a rabbi I say to you, 'mazel tov', which is both saying wonderful that

you've got this far and good luck for the future and thank you again very much indeed.

MR UMESH CHANDER SHARMA

Chairman of the Hindu Council UK.



His Holiness, faith leaders and political leaders, I am deeply honoured that I have been invited to address the conference because many years ago when I visited Huzur sahib [Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad], first time, I suggested to Huzur sahib to have these kind of conferences where we can openly discuss our problems and bring faiths together, communities together, and to my surprise Huzur sahib told me: "Umesh, these things are happening for so many years, come next time". So I am glad I have been able to attend all those conferences and today I am addressing the conference as a chairman of Hindu Council UK.

Today's topic is very interesting: God in the 21st century. It means that at least one thing is sure, that all of us, we believe that God exists. And another thing that is very clear is that all the political leadership and other groups, they have failed to bring peace, harmony among the communities or in the world as a whole. You can see conflicts all over the place and for one reason or another people don't believe political leaders. So I think this is the time when we have to come back to our faith and when I say "faith" I mean faith is to believe 100%, we cannot choose part of what our Messiah said, what our books are saying, we have to follow them 100%.

Today, although in Hindu religion there are many scriptures, many sayings, many books, I have chosen Bhagavad Gita as our guidelines, as

our guiding light, because Bhagavad Gita is our scripture which lord Krishna himself told Arjuna when Arjuna was in a state of deep, deep depression. He was not very sure what to do, what decision he has to make and at that particular time lord Krishna guided him. I have one verse from Bhagavad Gita in which Krishna says: "Always think of me. Become my devotee. Worship me. And offer your homage unto me, thus you will come to me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend." This is verse 18.65. Because Gita's message is for the whole universe, it is not for Indian communities, not for India, it is for the universe because at no stage lord Krishna has mentioned about Hindus, he has spoken about mankind because Gita will tell you what is the aim of life, what is happiness, what is death, because all these problems today they are caused by ignorance.

If we follow the path of lord Krishna's teachings, all the problems which we are facing, they can be addressed, because Gita is message of oneness, Gita is message for love and service to those who need it. Gita is not for one community, or for one aim.

I am very very thankful that His Holiness has provided a platform for us like this today, where we can hear and share our faiths and our thoughts, but one thing I would say that when we come back to our devotees when we talk to them, we should lead by example. They will only listen when they

see, like Huzur sahib's example, that he is leading by example. He means what he says and he says it openly and they do it practically. With these words

I thank again and extend my best wishes to the conference. Thank you.

DR KATRINA LANTOS-SWETT

Vice-Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.



Good evening. I must say that this is the third opportunity that I have to be with a gathering of the Ahmadiya community and each time I feel uplifted and moved by the marvellous spirit amongst this people and I sense that same spirit here today and I'm so delighted to be here.

I want to thank you for that kind introduction. It truly is an honour and privilege to be here with all of you this evening as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the presence of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the United Kingdom.

A little more than seven months ago I was privileged to receive a humanitarian award at your annual convention in America in Pennsylvania's capital city. And a year before that I had the great honour of meeting His Holiness for the first time in America's capital city and now tonight I am truly grateful and delighted to have the opportunity once again to join you in Great Britain's capital, in a joyful celebration of tolerance, and freedom, which is the hallmark of your community and its people. Simply stated you, the Ahmadiyya community, are living proof that religion can indeed be a true friend of peace, understanding and liberty.

Yes, it is true that in all too many times and places, religion has been used to fuel humanity's darkest impulses. We can just think of the wars raged right here on this continent centuries ago in the name of religion. Or we can think of the witch hunts of early America or the excuses the

forces of religion offered for racial oppression and we can think of the horrors of modern terrorism that violent practitioners of religious extremism have unleashed. But this undeniable record of violence and repression in religion's name is no excuse for driving religion from society. And yet, nearly a century ago when the Ahmadiyya community arrived here in London, parts of the world began to do exactly that. In many countries a terrible experiment was unleashed on humanity – the silencing of religion as a truly autonomous voice of conscience, independent of government. It was replaced with the brute force of all-powerful governments. Regimes like Nazi Germany, despotisms like Soviet Russia, driven by ruthless ideologies like fascism and communism that recognised no limits of any kind on the power of the state and its rulers. As a result during the last century more people died at the hands of these brutal systems than at the hands of all the religions combined in centuries past.

But at the same time, looking back at the 20th century we also see something beautiful and precious. We see brave human beings imbued by their religious teachings rising up and becoming a light in the darkness and a witness for human rights and dignity. We see in America in the mid 20th century a mighty civil rights movement, rising from the country's churches, challenging racial tyranny and its supporters, including those

within the church. It was these churches that empowered Martin Luther King Jr and his generation to press on and achieve justice and equality, under the law. We see in India right before America's civil rights revolution, the Hindu philosophy of satyagraha or non-violent civil disobedience, galvanising Mahatma Ghandi to bring independence to his country. We see across eastern Europe and the soviet empire, starting in the 1980s, Pope John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Church, sowing the seeds for ending the iron curtain, tearing down the Berlin wall, dissolving the Soviet Union, and helping free hundreds of millions of people. We see in South Africa the collapse of its apartheid system thanks not only to Nelson Mandela, but to a generation of church leaders who spoke truth to their society including to other church leaders. And when apartheid fell it was people of faith who helped lead the drive for national reconciliation and embrace and receive forgiveness for the misdeeds of the past. And yes, looking back on the 20th century we see you, the Ahmadiyya community, standing not just for yourselves, but for all of humanity, against humanity's oppressors.

My colleague from USCIRF who is here with me tonight, Professor Mary Ann Glendon, shared with me a remarkable story about the adoption of the universal declaration of human rights, which enshrines the international community's commitment to freedom of religion. The nation of Pakistan, which was an original signatory was represented by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, an Ahmadi Muslim, who signed the universal declaration on behalf of Pakistan. Sadly, one cannot help but wonder what Mr Khan's fate would be if he were alive and living in Pakistan today.

In standing up for peace and embracing the dictum of love for all hatred for none the Ahmadiyya community was right and is right; yes, religion can assume toxic form, but the way to defeat religious ideas that harm, is not by shutting down all religious ideas, but by

embracing those that heal. The way to combat expressions of faith that dishonour some people is by affirming those that honour all people and the way to counter the religious extremism of some is by affirming religious freedom for all.

And as we move through the 21st century this affirmation is the job of the commission on which I serve. Our job is to stand for the right of every person and a group, to choose what to believe or not to believe and practise their beliefs openly, peacefully, and in accordance with their conscience. And this precious birthright, this precious liberty is the birthright of everyone in this room. You, who stand for tolerance and freedom for others must have someone standing for you, and speaking for myself and for my colleagues on the commission, we continue to stand with you and for you today. We stand against any person or government, anywhere in the world, from Pakistan to Indonesia to Saudi Arabia, who refuses to recognise your sacred right to be Ahmadiyya Muslims. We, like you, stand for tolerance, and freedom. We, like you, stand for a world where people of all backgrounds and beliefs can come together and learn from each other. To learn implies listening, and to listen implies respect and tolerance. I am grateful indeed that the Ahmadiyya community is about respect for our fellow human beings and toleration of their right to express their views openly and candidly and to see those views discussed in a civil and fair minded way.

Today in the 21st century thanks to the internet, more people than ever are being confronted by the full range of thought and opinion which characterises the human family. In this new world respect and tolerance are not optional, but critical. The alternative is more conflict and strife, more violence and war, and more disruption and despair. In other words, if we want a more peaceful, prosperous, stable world, we must stand for freedom. To suppress freedom in the name of stability is to create the conditions that make stability impossible.

Indeed countries like Pakistan which suppress or tolerate the suppression of groups like the Ahmadiyya, provide fertile ground for more poverty and insecurity, more war and terror and more radical movements and activities. Clearly the struggle for religious freedom remains an uphill one.

But the good news is that you and I are not alone. Around the world, the calls for the protection of this right are being amplified as never before, they are being heard across countries and continents, the message they send is clear: religious freedom matters and must be protected. It is time for governments around the world to hear and heed this message.

I'd like to close my remarks today with an anecdote that I think illustrates the profound possibility that religion has to transform not only our lives individually, but the world around us. 150 years ago a beleaguered American president seeing his country torn apart by a dreadful civil war delivered an unforgettable speech that we call the Gettysburg address. If you ask any American school child where the phrase 'government of the people by the people and for the people' comes from they will eagerly say "but of course, Abraham Lincoln and the

Gettysburg address". But in fact, this famous phrase has a much older patrimony. John Wycliffe, a Catholic priest in England, many hundreds of years ago, was inspired to undertake the translation of the Bible from its original Latin Vulgate into the common vernacular of the people, believing call to make the word of God available to every person. When he had finished this great task for which he was persecuted, and hounded, he wrote something very interesting in the fly leaf of that first translation. He wrote the following: "The translation is complete and shall make possible government of the people, by the people and for the people." Now, I can't be completely sure what he meant by that, but I like to think that what he meant when he wrote those words, is that when individuals are empowered, to connect to the divine and the transcendent, for themselves it not only has the power to transform their lives spiritually, but that higher vision of who they are and what they may become, imbues them also with the desire to improve and to ennoble the present world in which we live. May we all redouble our efforts to do just that, thank you.

RT HON BARONESS WARSI

Senior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government.



Your Holiness, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen
 Good evening and Assalamo Alaikum. It's an honour to speak before such an illustrious audience in such prestigious surroundings here at the Conference of World Religions and it's a testament to the openness and the pragmatism

and the humility of the Ahmadiyya Community that your flagship global event today is not just about celebrating your own faith but about celebrating all faiths and you only have to look around Britain to see the huge contribution the Ahmadiyya Community is making in all walks of

“I have said on numerous occasions people who do God inevitably then do good and you only have to look at the number of volunteering hours and the amount of charitable giving within faith communities to see how true that is.”

Baroness Warsi

life especially in relation to charity and especially in relation to social action.

And ladies and gentlemen, politics if done sincerely, if it is done with commitment is one of the highest forms of public service and I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a politician from your community, you refer to him as Lord Tariq Ahmad, I refer to him as Tariq Bhai. He's a huge ambassador not just for your community but for so many other faiths in this country and Tariq Bhai your loyalty and commitment is something that I value very dearly, thank you very much.

I think in my introduction it was said that I famously once said that this government would do God and I think what prompted me to say that were the famous words of the last Archbishop of Canterbury when he said that unfortunately religion and faith was being seen as the preserve of minorities, foreigners and oddities. Now I'm not sure whether I could describe people in this room as minorities, foreigners or oddities but I certainly felt that faith was not being given its proper place in the public sphere. Some of you may recall those famous words of Alistair

Campbell when he said we don't do God and I therefore felt that we needed to show a step change in that direction and say that we did do God and that this government would do God. And what I meant by that ladies and gentlemen, is that we would do things differently in three ways; that first of all we would support people in their right to follow a faith and remember that nearly, even in the last census, that nearly 70 percent of people in Britain said that they had an affiliation with a faith, with a religion. That secondly we would harness the good deeds that faith groups do exemplify, by the selfless contribution of the Ahmadi Community and as I have said on numerous occasions people who do God inevitably then do good and you only have to look at the number of volunteering hours and the amount of charitable giving within faith communities to see how true that is. And thirdly that we would tackle the intolerance, the unacceptable intolerance that people of faith face both in this country but also overseas and therefore in my international role as minister at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office I made freedom of religion and belief a personal priority in the human rights brief.

But I felt that we needed to go further than that and when we talk about freedom of religion and belief I felt that we needed to explain what that meant; it meant people having the freedom to have a faith, to be able to manifest that faith, to be able to change that faith, to be able to show that they can have no faith and to be protected and promoted in that belief. So I think that I was reminded of that just a few weeks ago when I met the Ahmadiyya Community at their Keighley mosque who said that they wanted the government to continue to endeavour in that area.

Ladies and gentlemen as a politician I define myself by what I stand for rather than what I stand against and in faith it's also more powerful if you define yourself by the expression of your religion rather than the expression of which religion you're against. If we define ourselves by what we stand for and the values in all faiths will stand with us

because they are universal and if we define our faiths in a matter which is open and tolerant and non-judgemental and one in which celebrates the space for others and not just demanding the space for oneself and if we define ourselves in that positive way, in the way that so many people here are defining themselves, then it's actually the kind of celebration that we are seeing here

tonight that we will be able to see in so many parts around the world.

It is clearly been an important moment for so many different faiths to be able to come up here and express their solidarity to each other and their solidarity and commitment to interfaith work and it's been a privilege ladies and gentlemen for me to be a part of that.

BARONESS BERRIDGE

Chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for International Religious Freedom of Belief.



Good evening your holiness, ladies and gentlemen. I bring just brief thanks this evening to the Ahmadiyya community. When we founded this All Party Parliamentary Group, nearly two years ago now, I knew very little of your community. But when we were founding a group like this we needed parliamentarians, who are in the House of Commons and House of Lords, from all the different parties. But of course to run a group like this we need the support of those who are in the world council of religions, and those who hold no religion at all. We felt very much that as we founded the group that if we use just the services of one particular religious group who were keen to support us we would look and seem as if we were only representing that one group. So we set about meeting the different religious communities in the UK and the more difficult task of seeking to persuade them to resource and finance a group within parliament that would raise awareness of this human right. But I'm incredibly thankful that the Ahmadiyya community has indeed come on board with us and works alongside Sikhs, Hindus other Muslims, Christians and the British Humanist Association

in order for us to raise the profile of this human right.

But during this time when I have looked at the Ahmadiyya community, I would like to say that they have known persecution, but in fact it is all too true to say that they know persecution. The situation from Masud Ahmad arrested in November in Pakistan, the situation not long ago for Umad Farooq who was shot in Pakistan and was a student here in Sunderland in the UK, and although we are proud in the UK to offer asylum to those who have to flee religious persecution, our work is aimed at ensuring that you can reside in the countries that you choose to reside in and freely practise your beliefs. I'm incredibly grateful for the support the community gives to our work. We are parliamentarians and we are seeking to work alongside the government to be that helpful pressure to prick the conscience of governments and we are looking to work not only in the UK but to build links with politicians in all jurisdictions who wish to fight for that freedom and I do hope that one day your support will mean that your community can live in the country of your choice. Thank you so much for your hospitality.

PROF. KWAKU DANSO-BOAFO

Ghanaian High Commissioner to London who read out a message on behalf of Ambassador Al-Hajj Baba Kamara (the special representative of the President of Ghana)



His Holiness, unrivalled leaders in government and politics, excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I am honoured to bring you greetings from His Excellency John Dramani

Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana who also sends his sincere apologies for his inability to join you at this timely and relevant Conference of World Religions. Here is the President's brief message:

"Just this past September, the people of my nation, Ghana, were badly shaken when one of our most distinguished citizens was killed during the terrorist siege of the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya. Professor Kofi Awoonor, a renowned poet, diplomat, academic and statesman had his life cut short by religious fanatics. These killers discarded Islam's abiding message of peace and went on a daily rampage that claimed lives of several people, including Muslims. This event in Kenya brought home to Ghanaians, and indeed people all around the world, the sad reality of the devastating impact of religious intolerance, fanaticism and terrorism in our world today. But this should not be the case. We are all indeed reminded that almighty Allah has been sending His noble prophets and messengers into the world, with messages promoting peace, orderliness, mutual respect and harmonious co-existence among people of all races, creeds and religions. In Ghana, this harmonious co-existence is demonstrated in many aspects of life including within my own extended family, where both Muslims and Christian relatives live together in love and peace. Efforts deep in religious tolerance and harmony have also resulted in parliament passing an act establishing a National Peace Council, which is an umbrella organisation of eminent religious leaders from various faiths. The National Peace Council has been instrumental in promoting mutual respect and peaceful co-existence amongst all our citizens. In fact, the stature and importance of this council became most evident when the results of the last election were challenged in court and tensions rose high. It played a key role in reducing tensions and keeping Ghanaians of different religions and political groups united in peace.

However we are all aware that all around the world, religious bigotry, intolerance and hatred are causing major problems for millions of people. This is why I consider this Conference of World Religions to be so important, so timely and truly relevant, especially as we seek to mobilise all the world religions to say no to intolerance, fanaticism and terrorism in the name of religion. The conference is a worthy effort that will surely bring people of different religions together and promote peace in our world together. I wish to congratulate the world leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community for his wisdom in organising such a worthy conference. I wish you every success in your deliberations, thank you so much."

RT. HON DOMINIC GRIEVE QC MP
The Attorney General



Your Holiness, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, Assalamo Alaikum. It gives me great pleasure to come here this evening. I don't think I can think of a more apt location for this inter-faith conference looking forward to the 21st century, than we should meet in a great hall of merchants – the very people who took Britain, England and then Britain, outwardly looking towards the rest of the world and have had the miraculous consequence of bringing all of you together in this place again this evening. It's a tribute to them, in the sense that they were a people of broad vision, even if I have no doubt that they were also in part motivated by materialist instincts; but also that in promoting their ideas, they were broad minded and tended towards inclusion. It is after all the city of London, which in the 19th century became the great place where Jews, some of my Jewish forebears, and after them others of other religious groups, other than Christian, were first able to find their feet, to succeed in British society and to take themselves forward and their families in participating in our national life.

Here we are this evening discussing faith and on an interfaith basis. I have no doubt in my mind that's a very important thing for us to do. One thing I discovered a long time ago as a person of Christian faith, is that it always seemed to me that it is very

"...the right of individual conscience lies at the very fundamental base of everything which I think identifies which we would now call British values – a right to manifest your religion, or your lack of it, in peace and to do so by personal choice without coercion of any kind.."

Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve QC MP

much easier for somebody who has faith to understand people of other faiths than it is for those who have no faith at all. So the dialogue on which we are going to embark this evening strikes me as being an especially important one. We also have to recognise of course that we live in a society where people may choose to have no faith at all. Indeed the right of individual conscience lies at the very fundamental base of everything which I think identifies which we would now call British values – a right to manifest your religion, or your lack of it, in peace and to do so by personal choice without coercion of any kind. And that of course is one of the duties which the state has in upholding. And one which the present government and its predecessors put at the very heart of their government agenda. So for those reasons I would like once again and I have done it on many occasions before, to thank Your Holiness

and the Ahmadi community for the astonishing contribution which you make to our national life, because as I know in my own constituency and all of you in this hall this evening know irrespective of your faith background, the dialogue which has been so persistently and constantly engaged by the community has provided an environment in which we can meet and talk and discuss these matters. Secure in the knowledge for those of us who do have faith, that

the faith that we promote may be a benefit to all, and for those who do not, the realisation that those of faith have something to contribute as well.

On that note I will bring my remarks to an end. But I am conscious that the Prime Minister, in the knowledge that this was taking place this evening, sent a message to you all as delegates, which he's asked me to read out.



"I send my sincere greetings to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community as you come together with faiths from around the world to unite for social and international peace. I recognise the great work you do here in Britain – from interfaith events across the country to helping communities who have been affected by the recent floods. And, today highlights the significant work you do for interfaith relations and peace overseas."

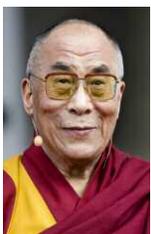
"I'm delighted that the British Government is represented today and will join His Holiness and faith leaders and politicians from around the world to discuss how faiths can come together to help bring peace"

GESHE TASHI TSERING

Representing His Holiness, The Dalai Lama



Geshe Tashi Tsering read out a message sent by His Holiness, The Dalai Lama for the Conference.



"All religions teach the virtues of love, altruism and patience, therefore, even though they may hold different philosophical points of view we should respect them all. Every religious tradition has made a significant contribution to humanity for centuries past. In the future too, such traditions can help us promote peace in our respective communities and bring about harmony and understanding between neighbours. The important thing is for all believers to put the teaching of their respective religious traditions into practice sincerely in their day-to-day lives."

Essentially, all religions teach us to discipline and transform ourselves so that we can achieve inner peace and a kind heart. In this era of rapid advancement, material development has brought with it undue emphasis on external progress. As a result we often forget to foster the most basic human need for kindness,

love, cooperation and caring. Yet, the very development of human society is founded on such a basis. So, preserving our essential humanity involves cultivating a sense of responsibility for our fellow human beings.

Today, our interdependent world requires us to accept the oneness of humanity. Many of our worlds problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a human family. We forget that despite the superficial differences between us, people are same in their basic wish for peace and happiness. Conflict in the name of religion occurs when people fail to grasp the true intent of the respective faith.

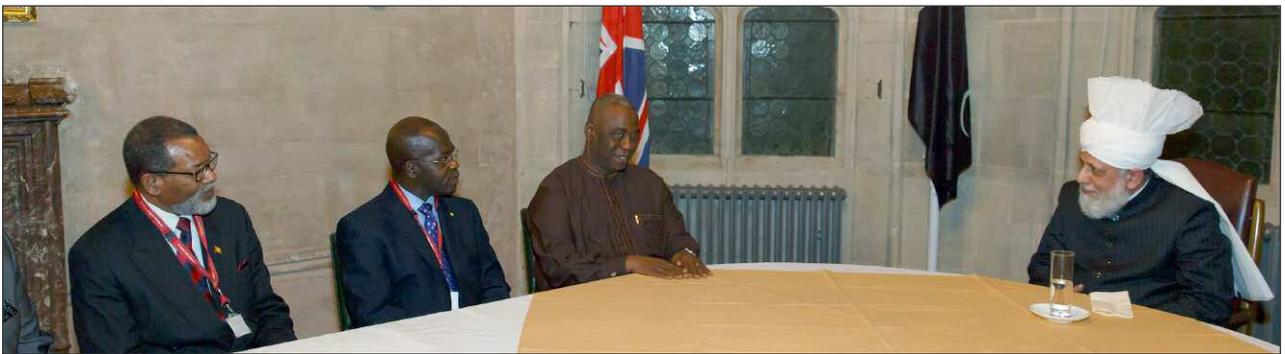
For some time I have felt that there are measures we can adopt to help us nurture understanding and harmony among our different religious traditions, and thus promote peace and security in society. We should convene regular inter-faith meetings among leaders of different religious traditions so they can share the spiritual experiences and insights. We should also promote meetings of scholars to discuss and study what they have, rather than what is different, among various religious traditions. Finally, and perhaps most important for the far-reaching effect it can have, we should encourage contacts along the followers of different religions and visits to each other places of pilgrimage and prayer. I firmly believe that if these steps are taken, the general public will develop respect for other religious traditions. This, in turn, help promote harmony in society.

It is in this context that I give my wholehearted support to the Conference of World Religions being convened in London on 11th of February 2014 by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK. I believe that meetings of the sort have a powerful symbolic effect. The simple fact of the leaders of many religions coming together and speaking from the shared platform sets a strong example to millions of religious followers all over the world. It signals and need to reach out to each other and work for the common human goal of peace and happiness. On this auspicious occasion I offer my greetings to everyone attending and participating in the event and I pray that the fruits of your exchanges will be far-reaching and long lasting.

30 January 2014



Rabbi Oded Weiner, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Prof Daniel Sperber, representative of the Chief Rabbi of Israel and Muhammad Sharif Odeh Sb, Amir of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community of Kababir with His Holiness.



HE Prof. Kwaku Danso-Boafo, Ghanaian High Commissioner to UK and Al Hajj Baba Kamara – (special representative of the President of Ghana) and HE Mr Joslyn Whiteman, the High Commissioner of Grenada meeting with His Holiness.



Geshe Tashi Tsering, representing His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, meeting with His Holiness



Sheikh Moafaq Tarif, Spiritual Head of The Druze Community in Israel and delegation meeting with His Holiness.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V presented a special commemorative gift to the speakers.

(Pictures of some of the speakers receiving the gift are shown below)



Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber – Representing Chief Rabbi of Israel.



Geshe Tashi Tsering – representing His Holiness, The Dalai Lama.



Archbishop Kevin McDonald – Representing the Catholic Church.



Al Hajj Baba Kamara – Special Representative of the President of Ghana



Deputy Edwin Kenneth Ayres MBE – Chief Commoner of the City of London Corporation



Dr Katrina Lantos-Swett – Vice-Chair US Commission on International Religious Freedom

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**BUCKINGHAM PALACE**

Mr. Rafiq Hayat,
National President,
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK.

The Queen was pleased to receive your kind message, sent on behalf of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK, on the occasion of the Conference of World Religions which is being held today at the Guildhall, as part of the Association's centenary celebrations.

Her Majesty was interested to learn of the aims of the conference and appreciates your thoughtfulness in writing as you did. In return, The Queen sends her best wishes to you all for a most successful and memorable gathering.

PRIVATE SECRETARY

11th February, 2014.



10 DOWNING STREET

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**Prime Minister's message to the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community and delegates of the peace conference 2014.**

"I send my sincere greetings to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community as you come together with faiths from around the world to unite for social and international peace. I recognise the great work you do here in Britain – from interfaith events across the country to helping communities who have been affected by the recent floods. And, today highlights the significant work you do for interfaith relations and peace overseas.

I'm delighted that the British Government is represented today and will join His Holiness and faith leaders and politicians from around the world to discuss how faiths can come together to help bring about peace."

David Cameron
Prime Minister



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

Centenary Celebration of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
Guildhall, London, 11 February 2014

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, I am grateful for the opportunity to direct this my prayerful greeting to the Centenary Conference of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, especially as representatives of different faiths gather to consider peace.

I make my own and share with you the words which Pope Francis addressed, on 20th March, to representatives of the world's religions who gathered for the inauguration, on the previous day, of his ministry as the Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Peter.

With the Holy Father, I pray that your conference increase awareness of "the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect. There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace. But before all else we need to keep alive in our world the thirst for the absolute, and to counter the dominance of a one-dimensional vision of the human person, a vision which reduces human beings to what they produce and to what they consume: this is one of the most insidious temptations of our time."¹

Rather, may love, that "extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace" and which "has its origin in God,"² inspire our shared commitment to promoting the justice and peace of the whole human family.

Finally, I wish to commend your gathering and deliberations to God's guidance and inspiration. May His Peace be with you all!

Cardinal Peter K.A Turkson,
President

¹ Pope Francis, *Address to Representatives...of the Different Religions*, 20 March 2013.

² Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009, § 1.



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

All religions teach the virtues of love, altruism and patience, therefore, even though they may hold different philosophical points of view, we should respect them all. Every religious tradition has made a significant contribution to humanity for centuries past. In the future too, such traditions can help us promote peace in our own respective communities and bring about harmony and understanding between neighbours. The important thing is for all believers to put the teaching of their respective religious traditions into practice sincerely in their day-to-day lives.

Essentially, all religions teach us to discipline and transform ourselves so that we can achieve inner peace and a kind heart. In this era of rapid advancement, material development has brought with it an undue emphasis on external progress. As a result we often forget to foster the most basic human need for kindness, love, cooperation and caring. Yet, the very development of human society is founded on such a basis. So, preserving our essential humanity involves cultivating a sense of responsibility for our fellow human beings.

Today, our interdependent world requires us to accept the oneness of humanity. Many of our world's problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a human family. We forget that despite the superficial differences between us, people are same in their basic wish for peace and happiness. Conflict in the name of religion occurs when people fail to grasp the true intent of their respective faith.

For some time I have felt that there are measures we can adopt to help us nurture understanding and harmony among our different religious traditions, and thus promote peace and security in society. We should convene regular inter-faith meetings among leaders of different religious traditions so they can share their spiritual experiences and insights. We should also promote meetings of scholars to discuss and study what they have in common, rather than what is different, among various religious traditions. Finally, and perhaps most important for the far-reaching effect it can have, we should encourage contacts among the followers of different religions and visits to each other's places of pilgrimage and prayer. I firmly believe that if these steps are taken, the general public will develop respect for other religious traditions. This, in turn, will help promote harmony in society.

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30 January 2014

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Archbishop of York's Message to the 2014 Conference of World Religions at the Guildhall

I send you my greetings and prayers for the 2014 centenary Conference of World Religions. This important event which brings together people of faith, government officials and peacemakers, is a wonderful opportunity to explore and witness the contribution which religion has to offer our world in the 21st century.

I pray that your time together, discussion and learning will be fruitful, helping to build up mutual understanding and friendship. May this Conference inspire, equip and enable all those taking part to show how our faith in God, and the values we hold in common as fellow human beings can bring a powerful message of hope and peace in the world today.

With every blessing

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read 'Sentamu Eboracensis'.

+ Sentamu Ebor

John Kufuor – Former President of Ghana and now Special Envoy to the United Nations on Climate Change

His Holiness Hazrat Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community worldwide, Religious Leaders, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with deep regret that I am unable to join you as you gather for such an historic conference in London today.

Indeed, it had been my ardent desire to be with you but exigencies of international engagement has meant that I am unavoidably absent at this great event. As you may well be aware, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, recently appointed me as one of the two Special Envoys on Climate Change. The other is Jens Stoltenberg, former Prime Minister of Norway. That assignment demands my services elsewhere and thus my inability to be with you.

Your Holiness, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen. Your conference today could not have been at a more opportune time than now where there is civil strife in almost every part of the globe. Be it in Europe, Asia, Africa the Americas, everywhere you turn, there is report of upheavals and turmoil all around. Some of the conflicts are political, others ideological and others still, religious. These conflicts have led to the up-rooting of whole societies and destabilised once peaceful communities and even nations. This has resulted in the creation of refugee situations with their attendant suffering and uncertainty. The future of whole generations is lost as they sojourn in foreign lands under difficult and stressful situations. The lives of once dignified people are shattered as they scavenge for a living under circumstances alien to them. The people they have left behind fare no better and live in constant fear as they do now know when the next bomb will explode or from where the next bullet will be fired or when their community will be raided.

This makes your conference, centered on the need for world peace all the more important. Unless as human being, we find a way to live together in peace, be it politically or religiously, we will continue to decimate each other in search of an elusive haven.

The Ahmadi motto: “Love for All, Hatred for None” is particularly recommended for all mankind in these very trying times.

I am of the firm belief that is we believe in the commonality of the human being and see each other as our ‘brother’s keeper,’ we would have come a long way to ensuring world peace. We must be tolerant of each other’s views and learn to live with our differences be they political, religious, ideological, racial or otherwise.

It is in this course that during my time as President, I instituted the National Peace Council as an overarching body for peace in Ghana. Membership of the Council is made up of distinguished personalities including heads of the major religions in the country.

Your Holiness, it is with pleasure that I mention to you that your own servant, Maulvi A Wahab Adam, Ameer and Missionary In Charge of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Ghana, is a member of this Council.

This Council, I believe, has contributed in large part to the peace and tranquillity that we enjoy in Ghana to date and it is no wonder, that other countries in Africa are now emulating our example. In fact in Ghana, it is a common sight to see the head of a Christian religion have team with his counterpart from the Ahmadi Community or any other religion for that matter.

As the whole world’s attention is turned on your conference today, I have no doubt that you will come out with conclusions that will help and ensure that we bequeath a better inheritance to our future generations.

Once again, Your Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community worldwide, do accept my apologies for not being able to be with you today. I hope in future, it will be possible for me to join you and your spiritual faithfuls to deliberate on ways for world peace and brotherly co-existence.

Thank you and may God Bless us all.



Home Office

James Brokenshire MP
SECURITY MINISTER

2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

10 FEB 2014

Dear Mr Rafiq,

Thank you for your kind invitation to the Conference of World Religion on the 11th of February.

Unfortunately due to a prior commitment I will not be able to attend but wish you well with the event. Indeed, I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ahmadiyya Community on their centenary year in the UK. I am aware of the great contribution Ahmadi Muslims have made to British society, including extensive programme of charitable work, care for the environment and your continuing efforts to find common values that unify society which is exemplified by this conference.

I commend the strength and resilience the Ahmadiyya Community have shown in the face of the persecution you have suffered, not only abroad, but also sadly in the UK. This abuse is wholly unacceptable and I want to reassure you that we are absolutely committed to tackling extremism in all its forms.

I wish you the greatest success with your conference and the continued work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.

Yours sincerely,

James Brokenshire

Lord Alton – Vice-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Religious Freedom or Belief



The Conference of World Religions is timely and important. One of the greatest global challenges is combating intolerance and encouraging people to learn to live together. Every man and woman has the right to hold religious beliefs or not to do so and no-one has the right to persecute others because their own beliefs are different. Our goal must be the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect and this Conference is an important contribution to the attainment of that objective.

David Alton
(Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool)
House of Lords,
London SW1A 0PW

Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP
Chairman, Home Affairs Committee



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

10th January 2014

Message of Support

I am pleased to welcome everyone to the World Religions Conference. This important initiative is vital for our society. Your values of tolerance, understanding and unity are integral to communities across the UK.

The conference is a great opportunity for its participants to meet representatives of different religions from all around the World.

It is important to celebrate differences and similarities and reflect on the meaning of religion in our own lives.

I wish your conference every success.

*With every good wish
Go safely
Keith Vaz*

Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP



Exhibition on the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).



Interfaith Exhibition in the East and West Crypt.

1924

Background to The Conference of Some Living Religions



Hazrat Mirza Bashir-uddin
Mahmood Ahmad^(ra)

In 1924, a special conference was held in London at the Imperial Institute to discuss different faiths that existed in the British Empire. A number of distinguished speakers presented papers at the conference and the then head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-uddin Mahmood Ahmad^(ra) travelled from India to attend and speak at the conference. The background to the event is noted below by Sir E Denison Ross in his book, *Religions of the Empire, Duckworth 1925*, that summarises the proceedings of the conference. Sir Denison noted,

“The Conference consisted of two parts. The first was devoted mainly to a series of papers on the Oriental Religions of the Empire and various Modern Movements arising out of them. Each of these papers was contributed by a scholarly adherent of the particular religion, who touched lightly upon creed and dogma, and gave his chief

attention to a matter-of-fact description of his religion as it worked in personal and social life. The second part of the Conference was devoted to the Psychology and Sociology of Religion, and a series of papers was read by specialists who expounded the religious process and its mode and purpose as it operated in their sphere of observation. All speakers from the platform were accorded an equal status, and no controversy, either religious or political, was introduced into the meetings. The chief aim of the Conference made it unnecessary to include in the programme any lectures on Judaism or Christianity, as the organizers considered that their function was chiefly to familiarise those attending the lectures with the religions of the Empire relatively little known in this country.”

Sir Denison also said that the 1924 conference received messages of support from both His Majesty the King of England and The Prime Minister, as noted below. It was fitting therefore that the 2014 conference also received similar messages of support.

Sir Denison notes,

“Although in every sense unofficial, our Conference was favoured by high patronage. In reply to a loyal greeting sent by vote of the Conference to His Majesty the King on the occasion of the opening session on September 22nd, the following telegram was received:

Balmoral Castle, O.H.M.S., September 22nd, 1924.

Chairman of Conference on Some Living Religions within the Empire, Imperial Institute, S.W.

I am commanded to express the thanks of the

King to you and members of Conference for your kind message of loyal greetings to His Majesty.

STAMFORDHAM.

“Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister at the time, was good enough to forward a friendly message in the following terms:

10, Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W.1.

I am glad to have this opportunity to send a word of greeting to the Conference on Some Living Religions within the Empire.

Many religions and many creeds live in amity within our Empire, each by their different way leading our peoples onwards towards some ultimate light. I welcome cordially the objects of the Conference and the knowledge which it spreads amongst us that our peoples, in the aspirations of the Spirit, " walk not back to back but with an unity of track."

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

22nd September, 1924.

Sir Denison also noted his delight at the attendance of the head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, observing:

“As we had foreseen, it was not always possible to secure the attendance in London of all whom we had invited to read papers; but the response was from the outset most encouraging, and we were especially gratified that the Khalifat-ul-Masih, the head of the Ahmadiyya Movement, immediately signified his intention to come to London with a number of his followers for the express purpose of attending the Conference. This remarkable enterprise led to great publicity in the Press and secured considerable interest for our Conference.”

He added that:

“Those who attended the Conference must well remember the distinguished figure of His Holiness the Khalifat-ul-Masih, the centre of a group of twelve green-turbaned followers As head of the Ahmadiyya Community, the Khalifat-ul-Masih resides at Qadian in the Punjab, and was able to call to his side several well-known Moslem theologians and scholars of high standing. The lecture composed by His Holiness was read by Ch. Zafar Allah Khan, LL.B. (London), barrister-at-law. Zulfigar Ali Khan should also be mentioned, as one who, by his manly and gracious demeanour, made friends on all sides. Dr. Muhammad Din came specially from Chicago, M. Mubarak Ali from Berlin, and F. R. Hakeem from the Gold Coast, making no less than twenty members of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

In fact Islam was represented by three speakers one of which was an address by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra). William Loftus Hare writes:

“After a brief adjournment, the conference reassembled to hear the paper by Al Haj the Khalifaht-al-Masih, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din, the head of the Ahmadiyya movement which has its headquarters at Qadian in the Punjab. Supported by a band of green-turbaned scholars, the Khalifaht al Masiah made a fine impressive picture. He spoke a few words in English:

‘Sisters and Brothers: First of all I intend to put a few ideas before the minds of the members of the conference, that people may think over serious questions, and decide for themselves what religion they should accept. I should like to apologise to you for asking my friend and follower to read my paper to you, for I am not accustomed to read papers. In

my own language I have spoken sometimes six hours before an audience of 10,000 people but I think it will be more difficult to read in a language that I do not know well.’

The Secretary of the delegation then read the paper.”

The Secretary of the delegation was Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan^(ra) who was a Pakistani politician, diplomat, and international jurist, subsequently known particularly for his representation of Pakistan at the United Nations (UN).

In the book about the event, William Loftus Hare described the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community contribution at the event as follows:

“The Ahmadiyya movement is about 34 years old, being founded by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He claimed to be Madhi and the Messiah of ancient prophecy. He met great opposition, but with increasing success. Missions have been sent to many countries. Ahmadiyya claims to be the outcome of Islam just as Christianity was of Judaism, an inevitable and necessary development ; not to be as a new law but to expound anew the teachings of Islam. The claim to be the Messiah was not a claim to be identical with Jesus, but to have received his power and spirit. The speaker gave great attention to showing that this age is one destined for the fulfilment of the promises of the ancient prophecy, and a long argument followed to prove that God still guides and inspires men as in the olden days. The speaker then gave a doctrinal discourse on what he described as Regenerated Islam, beginning with the belief in the Unity of God, upon which all other excellencies of belief and conduct depend. The speaker concluded by af-



Hazrat Khalifahtul Masih II^(ra) (white turban) at the Imperial Institute, London where ‘The Conference of Religions within the Empire’ was held in 1924. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan^(ra) is seated immediately to the right of him holding a walking stick.

firming the necessity of applying the moral qualities generated by religion to socio-logical and political problems.

The Islamic day was in every respect a great achievement.”

Sir Denison noted that during the course of the Conference, several receptions were held. One was kindly given by Lady Blomfield at Claridge's and another was held at the Ritz Hotel at the invitation of Mr A. R. Dard to meet the leader of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The photographic groups taken bear objective witness to the unique character of these cosmopolitan assemblies.

At the concluding session of the

Conference a number of those who had addressed us were invited to the platform; a few short addresses, including a brilliant one in Hindustani by His Holiness the Khalifat-ul-Masih, were given, expressing satisfaction at the success of the Conference...”

The exhibition was designed to appeal to the Christian population of Britain to provide greater awareness and influence of ‘the living sister religions of the Empire’. There was concern at the early stages by the organisers that due to the political unrest that prevailed in India at the time, there might be difficulties on securing Indian speakers or writers of papers. However, the only challenge that was faced concerned the timing, space and costs of the event.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT BY SIR MUHAMMAD ZAFRULLA KHAN^(RA)

“The London Conference of Living Religions began on 22 September 1924. Hazrat Khalifahtul Masih II’s paper on “The Ahmadiyya Movement” was presented on 23 September and was read out by Chaudhry Muhammad Zafrulla Khan. The paper was well-received and much appreciated:

“People sat with rapt attention and many seemed to jump with pleasure at every new phase of Islam discovered. ... At the close of the lecture people cheered and cheered again and the president had to wait some minutes to make his remarks. He thanked His Holiness for having so beautifully explained to them the religious truths”. (Review of Religions, October 1924)

In the summer of 1924, Hazrat Sahib^(ra) was invited to represent Islam in the Conference of Empire Religions held in the Imperial Institute, London. He accepted the invitation and travelled to London with a party of divines and scholars, which included the late Sahibzada Mirza Sharif Ahmad Sahib, the late Hafiz Raushan ‘Ali Sahib, the late Maulawi Zulfiqar ‘Ali Khan Sahib, the late Chaudhri Fateh Muhammad Sial Sahib, the late Shaikh Yaqub ‘Ali Irfani Sahib, the late Bhai ‘Abdur Rahman Qadiani Sahib. Dr. Hashmatullah Khan Sahib and others. Chaudri Muhammad Sharif Sahib, Montgomery, was accorded permission to join the party of his own. Master Muhammad Din Sahib was called from America. The late Al-Haj Maulawi ‘Abdur Rahim Nayyar was in charge of the London Mission.

I was already in Europe and was directed to be available. A furnished residence, 6, Chesham Place, was rented for accommodation of the party. We were crowded, all arrangements were reduced to the minimum

and simplest, but we were a happy and cheerful company.

Hazrat Sahib^(ra) and those accompanying him had taken time *en route* to visit Palestine and Syria and had made a brief stop in Rome. I had arrived in London in good time to welcome the party on arrival. It was a historic visit. It is much to be regretted that a detailed authentic account of it has not yet been published, though plenty of published and unpublished material is available for a whole volume.

I shall here confine myself to only one main incident. It must, however, be stated that it was a great privilege to be afforded the opportunity of being in the intimate company of Hazrat Khalifahtul Masih II^(ra) and so many other eminent and revered personages for a period of several weeks. There was much to observe and a great deal to note and learn. One felt one was a member of a peripatetic spiritual academy. All manner of topics and problems, social and economic, moral and spiritual came up and were discussed, debated and pronounced upon. A discussion sometimes developed between Hazrat Sahib^(ra) and the late Hafiz Raushan ‘Ali Sahib in which the latter always sought to maintain his position with such cogency, clarity and pertinacity that no possible aspect was left unexplored. It was an intellectual treat to witness and derive benefit from the treasures of knowledge and learning which were drawn upon in clarification, support and refutation of a proposition as the discussion proceeded. One revelled in the whole process of illumination. It was a tremendously rewarding and enriching experience, enlivened throughout with sincere goodwill, deep affection and the common bond of allegiance and devotion

that we cherished towards our beloved and revered leader.

Hazrat Sahib^(ra) had written his paper for the Conference in Urdu and I had been accorded the privilege of translating it into English. On the evening preceding the day on which it was to be read out I was summoned to Hazrat Sahib's presence and was told by him that the question under consideration was who should read out the paper at the Conference. He said it had been suggested that he should read it himself, but he did not feel quite at home in English and was not sure of his pronunciation of unfamiliar words. One or two other names had also been suggested and Hazrat Sahib asked for my view. I submitted very respectfully that I would be the best choice for the purpose. Hazrat Sahib intimated that the matter should be determined by a test. The two or three of us whose names had been suggested were asked to read aloud portions of the paper and scouts were posted at various points up and down the house, with, all intervening doors left open, to listen and report on the quality of the performance of each. I recall that the late Sahibzada Mirza Sharif Ahmad's report was in my favour, except that he had noticed a slight huskiness in my voice. Hazrat Sahib concurred and thus I was awarded the honour, subject to the direction that Dr. Hashmatullah Khan Sahib should look after my throat to ensure against any hoarseness developing.

Dr. Sahib took so serious a view of his responsibility that he started a series of energetic paintings of my unoffending throat with a strong nauseous tincture each application of which brought me to the verge of sickness. By breakfast time next morning I had endured three or four of these vigorous ministrations, and at breakfast felt compelled to appeal to Hazrat Sahib against a

continuation of the torture. My throat was in truth beginning to be hoarse in consequence of this sharp pre-cautionary treatment. My plaint was received with a hearty laugh by Hazrat Sahib and by everyone around the table, not excepting even Dr. Sahib himself, and my further penance was mercifully remitted.

The paper was to be read in the afternoon session of the Conference in the main hall of the Imperial Institute. There was a record attendance, every seat was occupied and a number of people had to stand in the wings, at the back of the hall and down the main corridor. My turn came and I stepped up to the lectern. My throat was dry and I felt nervous. Hazrat Sahib^(ra) was seated next to the lectern. Just when I was about to start reading, he leaned over and, in a tone the sweetness and gentleness of which were at once soothing and heartening, said: "Do not be uneasy; I shall be praying." This most affectionate gesture reassured me completely and I was able to proceed confidently with my task. The paper was listened to with rapt attention.

The moment the reading was finished people made a rush to the platform in their eagerness to greet and felicitate Hazrat Sahib^(ra). I descended from the platform and stood aside. A gentleman wearing an Edward VII beard and a cap, who had been standing at the farthest end of the hall during the reading, came up to me and shaking my hand with heartiness exclaimed: 'I am somewhat hard of hearing and was standing away back; I heard every word clearly, and good eighteenth century English at that, no modern nonsense about it.' I was well content."

(Review of Religions, 2008)

1924 CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The 'Conference on Some Living Religions within the Empire' was held at the Imperial Institute, Wembley, London, from 22 September to 3 October. Its objectives was as follows:

- To bring together in conference, for the first time in history, the leading representatives of the great historic religions of the world.
- To show to men, in the most impressive way, what and how many important truths the various religions held and teach in common.
- To promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among religious men of diverse faiths, through friendly conference and mutual good understanding, while not seeking to foster the temper of indifferentism, and not striving to achieve any formal and outward unity.
- To set forth, by those most competent to speak, what are deemed the important distinctive truths held and taught by each religion and by the various chief branches of Christendom.
- To indicate the impregnable foundations of theism and the reasons for man's faith in immortality and thus to unite and strengthen the forces which are adverse to a materialistic philosophy of the universe.
- To secure from leading scholars, representing the Brahman, Buddhist, Confucian, Parsee, Islam, Jewish and other faiths and from representatives of the various churches of Christendom, full and accurate statements of the spiritual and other effects of the religions which they hold upon the literature, art, commerce, government, domestic and social life of the peoples among whom these faiths have prevailed.
- To inquire what light each religion has afforded, or may afford, to the other religions of the world.
- To set forth, for permanent record to be published to the world, an accurate and authoritative account of the present condition and outlook of religion among the leading nations of the earth.
- To discover what light religion has to throw on the great problems of the present age, especially the important questions connected with temperance, labour, education, wealth and poverty.
- To bring the nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship, in the hope of securing permanent international peace.



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GUILDHALL

Guildhall in the City of London had been used as a town hall for several hundred years and is still the ceremonial and administrative centre of the City of London and its Corporation.

Guildhall hosts many events throughout the year, the most notable one being the Lord Mayor's Banquet, which is held in honour of the immediate-past Lord Mayor and is the first to be hosted by the new Lord Mayor of the City of London. In keeping with tradition, it is at this Banquet that the Prime Minister makes a major world affairs speech.

Guildhall, built between 1411 and 1440, was designed to reflect the importance of London's ruling elite. In the twenty-first century its splendour is still awe-inspiring and within the walls of this national treasure lie six rooms providing unique surroundings for corporate and private functions.

Together with its history and tradition with the very latest state-of-the-art built-in communication technology made it an ideal location for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to choose this as the setting for this historic event.

The Great Hall where the main conference was held can accommodate up to 900 people in an environment of a high-arched ceiling, Gothic stained glass windows and monuments to national heroes.

Immediately beneath Guildhall is the largest medieval crypt in London. The east crypt has a vaulted ceiling resting upon stone and marble pillars and provides a versatile, unusual and atmospheric venue. This was just ideal to hold the welcome reception and display the exhibition.

Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace



www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

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The Conference of World Religions

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK organised a Conference of World Religions on 11th February 2014 as part of its centenary celebrations.

The venue was the prestigious Guildhall in the city of London and the event was attended by 500 guests including faith leaders from various countries, politicians, government officials, representatives of various NGOs and academics. The theme of the Conference was ‘God in the 21st Century’.

Speakers from different faiths addressed the gathering including representatives from the Chief Rabbi of Israel, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Vatican. The event also received messages of support from Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address given by the head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.

The speeches given by the various dignitaries and the keynote address delivered at this historical event are presented in this book.

“The urgent and critical need of the world today is to establish peace and faith in God. If the world understood this reality then all countries, whether large or small, would not, in the name of defence spending, allocate millions and billions of dollars to expand their military capabilities. Rather, they would spend that wealth to feed the hungry, to provide universal education and to improve the living standards of the developing world.”
(Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V – Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community)