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Contemporary Islamic Philosophers’ 2nd Annual Conference

Report: Ibrahim Kalin

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***IQBAL ACADEMY CANADA—
BRIEF INTRODUCTION***

Some elements have always acted as a binding agent for Muslims living around the world. With the diversity in dialects, languages, customs, and cultures, it is no short of a miracle that Muslims find icons of unity that bring them together on one platform. Allama Mohammad Iqbal is one such binding agent that has molded the diverse Muslim communities around the globe into one family.

The experiences of Urdu and Persian literate communities living in Canada were no different. They always experienced that pull towards a center that was characterized by the poetry and philosophy of Allama Iqbal.

Since the early seventies, Muslims from subcontinent, who call Canada their home, have joined each other in commemorating the works of Allama Iqbal. Meetings at different level by individuals and organizations are very well alive in the minds of many.

Continuing on that rich tradition, devotees of Allama Iqbal got together to formerly launch an organization that would strive to preserve, promote and propagate Iqbal’s philosophy, thought and poetry among Muslims and the intellectual community at large. Thus, with the blessings of Professor Mirza Muhammad Munawwar, renowned authority on Allama Iqbal and kind guidance of Dr. Muhammad Suheyl Umar, Director Iqbal Academy Pakistan, ‘*Iqbal Academy Canada*’ was formed in November 1998 in Toronto. Iqbal Academy Canada is affiliated with Iqbal Academy in Pakistan. The president of Pakistan is the patron-in-Chief of Iqbal Academy Pakistan.

Iqbal Academy Canada is very alive to the fact that Allama Iqbal’s message should reach all Muslims. The universality of his message makes it

paramount that it should cross the boundaries of nation~~s~~ and be available to all Muslims alike. Iqbal Academy Canada will ensure that on the Canadian front, his works are available to a wide audience.

Iqbal Academy Canada has identified several projects to achieve its objectives. A permanent platform will be provided to discuss Allama Iqbal's works through national/international seminars. Through these seminars researchers in Iqbal Studies (Iqbaliyat) will have an opportunity to share their research with others. Regular "Iqbal Study" meetings are also being planned to bring together *Iqbal Lovers* around one table on regular basis.

Through these seminars/meetings Iqbal Academy Canada will also bring into the fold the younger generation of Muslims who otherwise may not have the occasion to learn about the great contributions of Allama Iqbal. Similarly, efforts are underway to establish links with the universities in Canada, especially in the Greater Toronto Area, to promote research on Iqbaliyat. The links with universities would make it possible for the academy to reach young students, who are willing to undertake research on the works of Allama Iqbal.

A library has already been established at the central office in Toronto. The book collection at the library would contain books in Urdu, Persian, and English. Iqbal Academy Canada recognizes the importance of passing the light of Iqbal's message to young Muslims. Since English is predominately the preferred mode-of-communication for the younger generation of Muslims in Canada, a significant part of library resources would be devoted to books and other materials in English that highlight Iqbal's works.

The academy would also publish recent research on Allama Iqbal as books, brochures, and other media (e.g., audio/video cassettes and internet). The publishing arm of the academy would also undertake publishing previous research on Iqbal, which is no longer in print.

We, are well aware of the fact that setting the goals are easier than achieving them. But we are also confident that loverfor Allama Iqbal is not limited to few individuals at Iqbal Academy. Please come forward and join the hands to achieve these goals together.

**TORONTO CONFERENCE REMEMBERS RANGE AND DEPTH OF ALLAMAH
IQBAL'S THOUGHT AND UNDERSTANDING**

ZAFAR BANGASH

Great men live in people's consciousness long after they have left the physical world. Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani (Asadabadi), Allamah Muhammad Iqbal, Syed Qutb, Imam Khomeini, Maulana Maudoodi and Dr. Kalim Siddiqui all come into this category. They were men of great ideas which have helped shape the destiny of millions in this century.

The people of Pakistan are rightly proud of Allamah Muhammad Iqbal; he was born in Sialkot, a city that is part of Pakistan today. But Iqbal belongs to the whole *Ummah*: he gave a message that is universally applicable because it was based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the noble Messenger of Allah. He gave a message of hope at a time when despair gripped the Muslims of British India.

Iqbal also understood what clicked with the subcontinental Muslim. It is said that Arabs are motivated by rhetoric; the Irani mind best responds to philosophical arguments; Muslims of the subcontinent are inspired by poetry. So Iqbal chose poetry as a vehicle to convey his ideas. His poetry, however, was not for the sake of poetry itself. Even though he wrote stirring lyrics, his poetry had a higher purpose. In 1911, for instance, Iqbal moved his audience at the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore to tears when he recited his poem about the Italian attack and occupation of Tripoli, Libya.

Iqbal's admirers reside in all parts of the world. He is, of course, best known in his native Pakistan, but it would be a mistake to assume that his reputation is confined to that land. In Iran, there is perhaps even greater admiration for him because more than half his poetry is in Farsi (Persian). Indeed, according to most authorities on Iqbal; his best poetry is in this language. No less a person than the Rahbar of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has on numerous occasions, expressed great admiration for Iqbal's work in his speeches. Imam Khomeini also did the same.

To find Iqbal's admirers in Canada reflects the universal validity of his message. There is in fact an organization—the Iqbal Academy Canada, affiliated with its name—sake in Pakistan—that aims to promote Iqbal's thought, particularly among the younger generation of Muslims. On June 11, an Iqbal Academy Canada programme in Toronto was attended by more

than 300 people from all walks of life. In typical Toronto tradition, the event was organized round a dinner.

The Academy had invited Professor Sheila McDonough, a specialist on Iqbal who currently teaches at Concordia University in Montreal, Professor Mustansir Mir, author of numerous books on Qur'anic themes as well as a scholar on Iqbal, Dr. Muhammad Suheyl Umar, Director Iqbal Academy Pakistan, and Aslam Kamal, a well-known Pakistani artist who has produced some masterpieces on Iqbal's poetic works as well as Qur'anic calligraphy. Aslam Kamal, however, was unable to attend because the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad refused him a visa saying the visa officer was 'not convinced' that he would leave Canada after the programme!

Despite his absence, however, there were some excellent speeches. There was no rhetoric, nor was there the resort to reading Iqbal's poetry without context or explanation. Similarly, the organizers, to their credit, excluded the itinerant poets who tend to gather on such occasions to recite their own works. The seriousness of the program can also be gauged from the fact that messages were sent by Rafiq Tarar, the president of Pakistan, and the ambassadors of the Islamic Republic of Iran and of Turkey. Extracts from a speech delivered by Ayatullah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on an Iqbal Day Program were also read out.

Events of this nature are invariably organized by a small group of dedicated individuals; this was no exception. Syed Sajjad Hyder, the chief organizer, virtually single-handedly put various parts of the entire program together. The audience, too, was serious and willing to be inspired. They were not disappointed. One could almost feel the presence of Iqbal in the Hall.

Professor McDonough pointed to Iqbal's wide range of reading interests, which were not confined to philosophy or poetry alone. She drew parallels with the writings of such people as Adam Smith, who she said was as much a philosopher as he was economist; Ibn Khaldun and Maulana Shibli Naumani. Other writers have also drawn attention to Iqbal's admiration for Shibli's works, especially his writings on the Seerah and the lives of the Sahaba.

Professor Mustansir Mir, of Ohio State University, held the audience spell-bound with his talk on five separate poems of Iqbal in which he highlighted the poet's original thinking. These are to form part of a book that he is compiling on Iqbal. He referred to Iqbal's great respect for the martyrdom-

seeking Fatima bint Abdullah of Libya, who, by giving her life in the struggle against Italian occupation, inspired millions of others—both men and women—to emulate her example. Professor Mir also reflected on Iqbal's thought about Man's lonely journey through this world before finally coming face to face with Allah. Upon Man's inquiry, Allah merely smiles, indicating that He, too, is in the same position. According to Professor Mir, Iqbal was saying that Man's true friend is only Allah and that he is lonely in this world because this is not his permanent abode.

Although the program was organized by the Iqbal Academy Canada, a brief introduction about the activities of the Iqbal Academy Pakistan was also given by Dr. Muhammad Suheyl Umar . He gave an interesting account of how successive governments in Pakistan had treated the Academy, based on their political preferences rather than any particular interest in the message or thought of Iqbal. Dr. Suheyl Umar's doctoral thesis was on Ibn Arabi. He himself is philosophically inclined with a quiet disposition, preferring to speak shortly and to the point.

Allamah Iqbal's personality is a great unifying force. This is so because he gives a message of hope, universal brotherhood and selfhood (*kehudi*) which are the hallmarks of a true believer, qualities that Allah emphasizes repeatedly in the Qur'an, Iqbal has admirers in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and through out the Arab world. This constitutes the heartland of Islam, where much can be achieved by creating bonds of unity against the forces of *kufir* and *dhulm* that currently reign supreme in the world.

**SHORT REPORT ON A TWO-DAY SEMINAR HELD ON ALLAMA IQBAL AND
POET KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM HELD ON 6TH & 7TH NOVEMBER, 1998**

PROF. SIRAJUL HOQUE

The cultivation of poetry of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and poet Kazi Nazrul Islam is essential for our national existence. These two noble and renowned poets of the sub-continent clearly brought forward the sorrows and sufferings of human being in their poetry irrespective of cast and creed. On the one side the heritage and greatness of Islam was embodied and personalized in their poems and on the other hand they devoted themselves to emancipate the nation from the imperialistic designs and clutches. They cultivated the ideal of humanity in their poetry. In the nourishment of our

arts and literature their role is undeniable. So we should cultivate the works of poet Allama Iqbal and poet Nazrul Islam all the ages to come.

The speakers viewed their opinion in the Seminar held on the occasion of 121st birth anniversary of poet Allama Iqbal and the birth centennial of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. A two-day seminar was organized jointly by Allama Iqbal Research Academy and Anannya Shahittya Sanskriti Sangsad (unique literary and cultural society), where the reputed intellectuals, poets and litterateur of the country have joined. The topics of discussion of the first and second day of seminar were respectively **“The poet of humanity Kazi Nazrul Islam”** and **“The influence of poetry of Allama Iqbal in our thought, consciousness and literature”**.

The seminar was held on 6th and 7th November, 1998 (Friday and Saturday) at 4 pm. in the Auditorium of the Cultural Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran, House no. 54, Road no. 8/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

The seminar of the first day was held under the chairmanship of poet Mohammad Nurul Huda, Executive Director of Nazrul Institute while Syed Anwer Hossain, Director General of Bangla Academy attended as chief guest. Mr. Ali Avarseji, Cultural Counsellor of the Islamic Republic of Iran joined as special guest. Among other speakers who discussed in the seminar were Mr. M. Abdur Rashid Chawdhury, formerly editor of the Dhaka Digest, Mr. Zakir Hossain, editor The Daily Hizbullah, Prof. Sirajul Haque, President Allama Iqbal Research Academy and Anannya Shahittya Sanskriti Sangsad, Mr. Samir Ahmed Joint Secy. Anannya Shahittya Sanskriti Sangsad.

Mr. Iqbal Babu, Mr. Zahir Bishwas, poet Amin al Asad, poet Tahmidul Islam recited from the poems of Nazrul Islam.

The Seminar of the second day was presided over by commodore M. Ataur Rahman, Chairman Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd., while Syed Ali Ahsan, National Professor and Vice Chancellor of the Darul Ihsan University (formerly Head of the Deptt. of Bengali of Karachi university) was chief guest. Mrs. Kulsoom Abul Basher, Chairperson of the Urdu and Persian Department of Dhaka University, Dr. Ahmed Tamindari, Iranian Visiting Professor of the above Department of Dhaka University, poet al Mojahidi literary editor of the Daily Ettefaq spoke as special guest. Among others who spoke in the seminar were Prof. Sirajul Haque, President of Both of the above organizations, Mr. M. Abdur Rashid Chawdhry, formerly editor

of the Dhaka Digest, Prof. Abdul Awal, Secy. Of the Allama Iqbal Research Academy.

Mr. Morashed Ali Al Quadery, Mr. Zahir Biswas, Mr. Raihanul Amin, Mrs. Tahmina Manjo Mazid recited from the poems of Allama Iqbal. The seminar was begun by recitation from the holy Quran and Mr. Abul Kalam Sarkar and Mr. Mohammed Nasir Uddin Khan recited some verses of the holy Quran. The seminar was concluded with light refreshment.

ACTIVITIES IQBAL SOCIETY, DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN
MINUTES NO 1
Of the Meeting of Iqbal Society
12.12.98

Participants: H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan, Polatov P.A.,

Qurban Vose, Sattorzoda A., Jorabek Nazriev,

Mohammadiev A., Abdushukurova T.M., Alimardonov A,

Ayni K., Bekzoda, Mirzohodiev M., Polatova Sh., Rajabov Kh.

Agenda: New membership of Iqbal Society

New composition of Executive Committee

Current problems

Speaking on the first issue H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan dwelled upon services of Iqbal Society and its Chairman Hodizoda. Then the new staff of Iqbal Society, consisting of 25 members was proposed for discussion. Each nominee was discussed separately by participants. Polatov A.P. supplementing what was said by the previous speaker – Ambassador of Pakistan said that for successful activity the Society had to do its worthy bit – close study and dissemination of Iqbal's life and ideas which are of extreme importance.

Then Sattorzoda A. suggested Mirzohomidov Mirzomuhammad for membership instead of Niyazov J.

So Iqbal Society consisting of 25 members was approved.

Suggesting Qurban Vose, Sattorzoda A., Abdushukurova T.M. and Salimzoda O. for membership of the Executive Committee H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan, underlined the necessity of two co-chairmen – a representative of Pakistan and Tajikistan. Jorabek Nazriev proposed Alimardonov A. for membership as well.

The Executive Committee was elected in the following composition:

1. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan – co- chairman
2. Qurban Vose – co-chairman
3. Polatov P.A.
4. Sattorzoda A.
5. Abdushukurova T.M.
6. Salimzoda O.
7. Alimardonov A.

Khojayorov N.F. was elected secretary of Iqbal’s Committee.

MINUTES NO 2

OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF IQBAL SOCIETY

9.12.98

Participants: H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan, Polatov P.A.,

Qurban Vose, Abdushukurova T.M., Khojaerov N. F.,

Agenda: a) Organization of Iqbal Day

b) Approval of Iqbal Day estimate

c) Approval of the letter dedicated to the Day

d) Current issues

Speaking on the first issue Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan drew attention of the participants to the fact that two guests – Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javed Iqbal – son of Allama Iqbal and Director of Iqbal Academy (Lahore) accepted the invitation of the Committee. The guests have to be met at an appropriate level. Polatov backing up H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan said that for arrangement of such and important event it

was necessary to envisage expenditure. Qurban Bose noted that Iqbal was a man of great honour for the people of eastern countries and friendship between Pakistan and Tajikistan gets strengthened thanks to his ideas.

The following resolutions were passed:

- a) To send letters to concerning offices about Commemoration arrangements
- b) To approve the expenditure of the arrangement and present its copy to the Embassy of Pakistan

MINUTES NO 3

OF THE IQBAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

16.12.98

Participants: Qurban Vose, Abdushukurova T.M.,

Sattorzoda A., Alimardonov A.

- Agenda:**
- a) **Regulations about arranging of a contest – reciting Iqbal’s verses**
 - b) Approval of composition of judges
 - c) Current issues

Speaking on the first issue chairman of Iqbal Society underlined the necessity of regulations for the use by the heads of Dushanbe universities. On the other hand it would be of certain help in carrying out the stage by stage contest. Regulations may safeguard from some errors as winners have to be three in number from each educational establishment (schools and universities). Then the second stage have to be started.

Sattorzoda A. and Abdushukurova T.M. backed this proposal as well.

The following resolution was passed:

To approve the regulations of “Contest – 99”

Abdushukurova, speaking on the second issue, proposed to include the following people in the composition of referees:

1. Golnazar Keldi

2. Qurban Vose
3. Nizam Nurjanov
4. Saloh Soleh
5. A Pakistani representative
6. Ali Muhammadi
7. Abdushukurova T. M.
8. The above mentioned nominees were approved.

MINUTES

OF THE MEETING OF IQBAL COMMITTEE

27.01.1999

**Participants: H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan, Missers Qurban Vose,
Jurabek Nazriev, Polatov P.A.,**

Mohammadiev A., Polatova Sh., Rajabov Kh., Shamsiddin Vuritdinov –
City council representative, Niyazov, Alimardonov A., Afsahzod A.

**Agenda: Discussion and adoption of the following issues
dedicated to Iqbal Day commemoration:**

1. Adoption of Proposed Agenda
2. Proposing the concept of having Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal as the Patron of Iqbal Society
3. Decoration of an award by the President of Republic on Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal.
4. Naming a Park/Road/Avenue after the name of Iqbal. Inauguration to be made by Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal.
5. Plantation of a tree by Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal and Ambassador of Pakistan.
6. Getting the premises of Opera Ballet for the main function in Dushanbe
7. Details of the Programme in Opera Ballet

8. Coverage of Iqbal week on the media contact to be made with Ministry of Culture, Committee on Radio and Television and Print Media
9. Arrangement of Programs in Khojand Kurganteppa and Khorog
10. Letters to all the concern authorities to inform about the Programme and responsibility to follow up
11. Arrangement of organising the tableau as performed at Iqbal Day Nov. 1997
12. Arrangement of organising the performance of Jazirbod in the State Youth Theatre
13. Publication of articles dedicated to Iqbal by Tajik Scholars to be presented to guests in the Seminar in April 1999
14. Conducting the Contest of recitation of Iqbal's poems;
Venue and the timing of the Contest
Composition of Committee of judges
15. Organising meetings of the guests from Pakistan, with state leadership, public figures, poets, writers.
16. Arrangements for the guests from Pakistan visiting places of interest.
17. Arrangement of transportation and venues for different events.
18. Other matters.

The proposed agenda was unanimously adopted by the participants.

Speaking on the second issue H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan, co-chairman of the Committee, proposed the concept of having Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal as the Patron of Iqbal Society.

Nomination of Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal as the Patron of Iqbal Society was warmly approved. Simultaneously the Society members – representatives of government and public organisations passed a resolution to apply to the President for naming a park/road/avenue after the name of Iqbal and decoration of an award on Justice (retired) Senator Dr. Javid Iqbal. A tree will be planted by Dr. Javid Iqbal and H.E. Ambassador of Pakistan.

Iqbal Society members decided to get the premises of Opera an ballet theatre for the main function in Dushanbe.

Working out the details of the programme in Opera and bllet theatre was entrusted to Nazriev J., Afsahzod A., Vosiev K., Shamsiddinov.

Participants decided to enlist the co-operation of the Ministry of Culture, TV and Radio Committee and print media for coverage of Iqbal week. Vosiev K. was appointed responsible for this arrangement.

As for arrangements of programmes in Khojand, Kurgantepa and Khorog co-chairman Vosiev K. informed that special messages were already sent to the heads of the local hukumats about the celebration and they were requested to favour the arrangements of the celebration. It was suggested to send Iqbal Committee members to the said cities for participation in the local arrangements.

In the state youth theatre “Jazirbod” performance will be shown. Abdushukurova T. and Afsahzod A. were appointed responsible for it.

Ali Muhammadi informed the Committee members about articles of scholars dedicated to Allama Iqbal. It will be presented to guests of the seminar in April, 1999. Ali Mohammadi was appointed responsible for the publication.

The contest of recitation of Iqbal’s poems, venue, timing of the contest, composition of Committee judges were under consideration as well.

It was decided that a meeting of the Executive Committee of Iqbal Society would be held on 15 February 1999 at 1500 hours at the Pakistan (Chancery) Embassy premises located at 37A Rudaki Avenue, Dushanbe.

MINUTES

OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF IQBAL SOCIETY AT THE PAKISTAN EMBASSY CHAMBER

27.01.1999

PRESIDENT: H.E. Mr. Khalid Amir Kahan, Mr. Vosiev Qurban, Mr. Himmatzoda Mahmadsharif (Acting Chairman CNT) Mr. Jurabek

Nazriev, Mr. Sattorzoda A. (recently appointed Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdushukurova T. M.

- 1.1 The Co-Chairman H. E. Ambassador Khalid Amir Khan welcomed the members of the executive committee to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Agenda of the meeting was adopted unanimously.
- 1.3 The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of Iqbal Society dated February 15, 1999, were approved.
- 3.1 Report of Mr. Vosiev Qurban – Co-Chairman, about the discussion with Mr. Fattoev Saidmorad President’s Adviser, concerning the Iqbal Day commemoration “The idea of celebration of Iqbal Day commemoration is fully backed by President but he wished the visit of Javid Iqbal to take place on a higher level. He is the son of a prominent poet, philosopher and his presence gives solemnity to celebration of 1100th anniversary of Samani State.

For this reason President considers more appropriate to invite Mr. Javid Iqbal, his wife and Mr. Suheyl Umar, Director Iqbal Academy Pakistan as State Guests in September, 1999, during the celebration of 1100th anniversary of Samani State-National Holiday of Tajikistan.

I have to inform Mr. Fattoev Saidmorad about the decision of the Executive Committee concerning the issue.

- 3.2 H. Ambassador Mr. Khalid Amir Khan. “I appreciate the decision taken by the President. What are the view of the members of the Executive”?
- 3.3 Abdushukirova T. M. “It would be advisable if Mr. Javid Iqbal visit our country a week ahead of Samani State celebration. We’d be able to organize all the arrangements of the programme”.
- 3.4 Nazriev Jurabek. “It will be quite possible to implement all the arrangements within Samani State celebration. We would organize the meeting of Javid Iqbal with scholars of the Tajik Academy of Sciences and students. As far his visit to different regions of the country it will be organized by the government”. Himmatzoda M. “It would be better if the visit took place in the birthday of Allama Iqbal but if the idea of the President differs we have to manage the implementation of the programme during Samani State celebration”.

3.5 Sattorzoda. “If we could keep our guest, Mr. Javid Iqbal and his companions for some days after the celebration would be able to organize the arrangements included into the programme.

3.6 H. E. Mr. Khalid Amir Khan. “I think the ideas suggested by the Executive Committee members may be accepted”.

ABOUT THE QUR’AN & RESPONSE OF DR. S. H. NASR TO THE *ATLANTIC MONTHLY* MAGAZINE

PREPARED BY: IBRAHIM KALIN

This text was prepared by Ibrahim Kalin on the basis of the statement by Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University about the article published in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*.

“The article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* about the Qur’an does not say anything new nor does it add anything to the centuries-old misunderstanding of the Qur’an by the West. The main issue is not how one looks at the Qur’an as a so-called historical text and analyzes it according to the principles of textual or Biblical criticism but it is rather how one conceives the very notion of revelation. It has to be well noted that what corresponds to Christ as the word of God in Christianity is not the Prophet Muhammad but the Qur’an in Islam. Although this fundamental point is quoted very briefly in the article, the author apparently has not understood its meaning. The acceptance of the Qur’an as the word of God, as logos suggests that the so-called historical and textual study of the Qur’an is tantamount to questioning the historical existence of Jesus Christ as some people in the West have claimed. The rules of biblical criticism do not apply to the Qur’an as God’s revelation because what corresponds to the Bible is the *hadith* collection which comprises the words and deeds of the Prophet of Islam as the Bible comprises the words and deeds of Jesus Christ who is the word of God. It is obvious that both the *hadith* books and the Bible were compiled after the revelation whereas the Qur’an has existed in its present form from the very beginning of Islamic revelation. To claim that the so-called history of the Qur’an undermines or casts doubt on its being a Divine revelation is not only to misunderstand the nature of the Qur’an but also to go against the historical evidence. This is a plain fact that any person with a sound mind accepts unless one already has a premeditated idea about the Qur’an not as God’s revelation but as a text written by a human being.

Besides these fundamental points, the author confuses many issues. First of all, the so-called textual and historical study of the Qur'an does not entail the rejection of the Qur'an as God's word as it has not entailed the rejection of the Qur'an as God's word as it has not entailed for generations of Muslim scholars from the Mu'tazilites to the Sufi. Anybody who knows at least the basics of Islam and Islamic history cannot deny the fact that the classical scholarship, especially the sciences of Arabic grammar, lexicography, and Quranic exegesis, not to mention the other sciences devoted to the study of the Qur'an, is peerless in studying and analyzing the Qur'an in its minutest details. To claim that Muslims have not studied the historical and textual dimensions of the Qur'an is to admit a total ignorance of Islam and Muslims unless one has a preconceived agenda to blame Muslims for taking their sacred book seriously. At this point, the author's mentioning of some modern Muslim thinkers as a proof for his claim that the Qur'an is not the word of God is totally flawed and misleading. Although the historicist and modernist reading of the Qur'an represents only a small minority in the Islamic world, even this perspective does not abrogate the Divine origin of the Qur'an as the author seems to imply. To claim to read the Qur'an from a certain historical or rather historical point of view without denying its sacred character is one thing; but to see the Qur'an as a text devoid of any Divine substance and written by human beings in the way many modern Westerners claim the Bible was written is another.

It is unfortunate that such aberrant views of Islam, Muslims and their sacred book can still find a voice in the American public. The centuries-old misconceptions about Islam, its Prophet and its sacred book cannot be accepted as 'objective facts' under the pretext of scholarly or historical evidence. We all know too well the history of Orientalism as many of its hostile claims and allegations about Islam have been now rejected by the serious scholars of Islam as simply spurious and biased. It is also unfortunate that the Western world takes a few minority voices in the Islamic world as representative of 'true' Islam and blames the rest of the Islamic world and history as subjective and limited in understanding themselves, their religion and their sacred book. It is obvious that the type of people aggrandized by Western academia and media as the 'Martin Luthers of Islam' is primarily the type of people who would give credit, in one way or another, to the doubts and baseless allegations cast upon Islam and Muslims by some Western

writers. The so-called 'true' and modern Islam of such Western writers is the type of Islam that will be accepted as valid only when it meets the current dictated standards of Western notions of religion, revelation and prophethood. Needless to say, this is another case of Euro-centrism that has plagued the Western as well as non-Western world for so long in all domains of knowledge from literature and philosophy to political science and comparative religion.

We live at a time when all of us need dialogue and mutual understanding between the members of world religions, especially between Muslims, Christians and Jews. Such a dialogue has to be based on sound principles and carried out with sincerity and in earnest with mutual respect. Insulting the sacred book of Muslims and blaming them for taking the word of God seriously is certainly not the best way to participate in such a dialogue and to gain understanding.

Philosophy Extension Lectures Ways to God

By Professor Dr. George F. McLean

The Inaugural Lecture will be presided over by Professor Dr. Khalid Hamid Sheikh Vice-Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore On 22 February 1999 at 11.00 a.m. at the Auditorium Centre for South Asian Studies, New Campus, Lahore

Chief Guest: Professor M. Saeed Sheikh

Professor Dr. George F. McLean is Secretary of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington D. C. He delivered Iqbal Memorial Lecture at the University of the Punjab in 1997. Since then he has worked on some themes of Allam Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* and developed them into a series of lectures entitled "ways to God", the main points of which he will present in this series of lectures from 22 to 24 February 1999. The venue of the last two lectures will be the Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

DR. ABSAR AHMAD

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**THE HERITAGE OF IBN ‘ARABI
AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM HELD AT LADY MARGARET HALL,
OXFORD 9TH – 11TH APRIL 1999**

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Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society

**THE HERITAGE OF IBN ‘ARABI
AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM TO BE HELD AT LADY MARGARET
HALL, OXFORD 9TH – 11TH APRIL 1999**

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MUHYIDDIN IBN ‘ARABI SOCIETY
CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS’ 2ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

In the Light of Mahdi Hai'ri Yazdi's

The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy

Dr. Mahdi Aminrazavi

Mary Washington College

Dr. Nasr Arif

School of Islamic and Social Sciences

Dr. Ali Raza Mir

Monmouth University

Ibrahim Kalin

George Washington University

M. A. Muqtedar Khan

Georgetown University

Venue: International Institute of Islamic Thought

Date: February 27th, 1999

Time: 10-3.00

Email: Muqtedar@yahoo.com

Contemporary Islamic Philosophers held their Second Annual Conference. This year the conference focused on a landmark book in the contemporary history of Islamic Philosophy. Mahdi Hai'ri Yazdi's *The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy* is not only a major work in the tradition of Islamic philosophical thought but is also among the first to be written in English. It marks a new chapter in the rich tradition of *Falasifah*; indeed it is an outstanding manifestation of the contemporary renewal in Islamic Thought. The five speakers presented their critiques of the book and then there was an open forum which will explore topics such as Islamic Epistemology, Islamic Science and Islamic Philosophy.

Sponsors:

American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences; Intl. Inst. of Islamic Thought & Ass. Of Muslim Social Scientists.