English transliteration (in dotting, vowelling, and syntax), as well as in English spelling, punctuation, and usage in many of the essays, there does not appear to have been any real editorial work undertaken. If only for present lack of space, it would be impossible to correct the errors in transliteration, but the task would be further hampered by the fact that the editors do not appear to have chosen any particular transliteration system at all for the volume. This disregard of editorial duties on the part of Hovannisian and Sabagh is a slight to all of the scholars involved. One would hope that these problems will be ameliorated in future Levi Della Vida Award volumes.

David C. Reisman


South Africa has attracted numerous visitors who were either officially invited or were lured to its shores because of what they had read or heard. Indeed, South Africa's colourful and heterogeneous Muslim community has been described, by quite a number of visitors, as dynamic and vibrant. However, despite their dynamism, they have been (and still are) in need of continuous guidance and advice from spiritually illuminated and inspired individuals from abroad. During the latter part of the 20th century there was an array of prominent individuals who came to South Africa from the South Asian continent; from amongst them was the renowned scholar Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqi, the principal founder of the now famous Aleemiyah Institute and Dr. I. H. Qureshi, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Karachi.

One of the most notable amongst these was the son-in-law of Maulana Siddiqi, namely Maulana Dr Fazl-ur-Rahman Ansari who is the author of a series of booklets (some of which were published by the [now defunct] Cape Town based Islamic Publications Bureau) and his two volume publication The Quranic Foundations and Structure of the Muslim Society; this work appeared in 1973 subsequent to his second South African visit, and it was very popular during that period because memories of his visit were still fresh in the minds of the community.

The Maulana's visits in 1970 and 1972 were memorable; they left a deep impression upon the minds of the South African Muslim community. They frantically followed him wherever he went and had all his lectures recorded and circulated after his departure. The Maulana's lectures were well appreciated and it is for this reason that they were transcribed and edited. This book under review contains the speeches which the Maulana delivered during his 1970 and 1972 tours...
respectively. They were inspiring indeed! When he came on his first trip he struck a spiritual cord with the South African Muslims.

One of the persons who chose to painstakingly transcribe these lectures was Mr Mahdie Kriel who was, at that time, a young man yearning for spiritual guidance and inspiration. The process of transcribing took him more than a year because of his personal circumstances. This transcriber went so far as to re-present the Maulana's lectures on a local Muslim radio station, namely Radio 786, and also took the liberty of basing his own pre-\textit{khutbah} lectures on these. After Mr Kriel completed this task of transcribing the lectures, he drew upon the expertise of Dr Yasien Mohamed, a University of the Western Cape academic, as well as Ms Awaatief Daniels, also a UWC employee, to provide editorial assistance and support. As a consequence of their cooperation, they were able produce a beautifully presented compilation of Ansari's speeches.

The editor, Dr Mohamed, did an excellent job. In his introductory note (pp. 20–22) he clarified his position with regard to editing transcribed lectures as opposed to editing written work. He was conscious of the fact that the rules of speech are different from those of writing. He divided the lectures into three sections; the first set of lectures (1–9) focussed on the basics of Islam, the second set (10–17) dealt with issues of an intellectual nature, and the third set (18–22) concentrated on the spiritual dimensions of Islam.

The editorial committee opted to publish all his speeches, 23 in all. Each of these formed a chapter in the compilation. And because the length of one speech differed from the other, the chapters also varied in length. Although there has been an overlap in some of the topics covered by the Maulana, each dealt with a different aspect and theme. For example, the range of topics he covered was, inter alia, “Knowledge and the Self”, “What is Islam”? “The Principle of Unity”, and “Why Religion”? These carefully constructed and beautifully presented lectures were well thought out by the Maulana.

Whilst one lauds the contents of the speeches and the manner in which they were presented, there are a few concerns when constantly listening to them, and more so when reading the edited speeches in print. Before noting these, one must hasten to add that listening to a speech is also not the same as reading them in a transcribed and printed form, and one should also bear in mind the constraints experienced by the speaker who tried his utmost to do justice to the topic and to achieve his objective.

When scrutinizing the printed text, one observes with a certain amount of uneasiness the way the Maulana chose to translate some of the Qur'\text{"an}ic verses and prophetic statements. In some instances, he provided the meaning and not the translation of the verse or statement. An example or two would suffice. In chapter 2 he refers to verse 11 in \textit{S\text{"a}rat al-Hajj} 22. His translation on page 46 reads: “There are those who believe, or render their devotion, loyalty or faith on flimsy foundation. When good comes to such a person, he becomes elated, and when a test comes from Allah, he performs a somersault”! Compare his off-the-cuff translation to that of Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley; they rendered the verse in the following manner: “Among the people there is one who worships Allah right on the edge. If
good befalls him, he reverts to his former ways, losing both the dunya and the akhira. That is indeed sheer loss”. Although one may not fully accept the fairly fresh Bewley rendition (published Norwich: Bookwork, 1999), it is undoubtedly more faithful to the Arabic text. One also notes how far the Maulana shifted from the actual text! The Maulana quoted the prophetic statement which he translated: “O Jābir, the first thing God Almighty created in the entire universe was the Nūr of Muḥammad”. If one looks at the Arabic [Awwalu mā khalaqa Allāhu nūrī], it should have read: “The first thing which Allah created was my light”. Even though one may critically view his translations, one should understand that the Maulana liberally translated these in order to fulfil his goal and that was to convey the message.

The editorial team, one assumes, grappled with the problem of translation and opted to transcribe them as they appeared in the lectures. And one may conclude that it was not easy for them to decide upon this. Nevertheless, it is an issue of concern. Besides these, the editorial team occasionally overlooked some of the misprints and mistakes that appeared at the galley proof stage of the publication. On page 46 the dots were not in place in the Arabic verse; a few others occur elsewhere in the publication. On page 42 the wrong diacritical marks appear at the end of two of the Arabic words in the prophetic statement; they are supposed to have been dammatūn instead of dammas. See also a typing error on the last line of page 63. On page 39, a verse is probably missing midway in the third paragraph. The reviewer hastens to add that misprints, mistakes and incorrect translations do not occur all over the book; these only appear in certain places. Nevertheless, they mar the presentation.

The book is indeed a valuable contribution to the reading community here in South Africa (and abroad). The publication should be seen as an important addition to the list of publications which help to elucidate the meaning of Islam to Muslims and those not belonging to the Islamic tradition. Maulana Dr Ansari’s input cannot be side-stepped when evaluating the transformation of the South African Muslim community; he, no doubt, had a hand in it.

The editorial team must be praised for bringing out the book which has a helpful glossary (pp. 288–295) as well as a biographical sketch of the Maulana (pp. 13–17). They should also be commended for making available the published lectures to a wider audience who might not have had the opportunity of knowing Maulana’s thoughts and ideas. Although the book makes easy reading, it contains a great deal to think about. It is a welcome publication for young and old.

Muhammad Haron

* The authenticity of this tradition is questioned by the majority of scholars of Ḥadīth. (Ed.)