

BASHSHAAR



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RADIO NAVTARANG {NSW AUSTRALIA} INTERVIEWS BR SADR-UD-DEAN SAHU KHAN

[President of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-
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1. Question: You must have heard about the news in which a Hindu Indian parliamentarian made certain comments regarding the truth of the Holy Qur'an, and some other unpleasant comments about Prophet Muhammad ?

Answer: Yes, I have

2. Question: Can you please give us your views regarding those comments?

Answer: First of all I need to make it very clear, and right at the outset, that I am not here to criticise or make any adverse or offensive comments about any faith or any religion whether it be Hinduism or for that matter any religion. In fact no individual is entitled to or should criticise any religion as all religions belong to one true God. Give Him any name you want but He is the One and Only. So we are all creatures of the same one God. In fact the

Holy Qur'an says that mankind is a single nation. Now I need to mention that religions don't drop from above but they come through prophets who receive the One God's revelations. What they receive and teach becomes a religion. Every nation

had a prophet and therefore every nation received a Divine revelation. The Holy Qur'an says that there is not a single nation that did not have a prophet sent by the One true God.

Having said all that, let us now look at what was said that you are seeking my comments on.

(i). That the Qur'an cannot be true as proved by the scientists. She referred to and relied on 88:20 that according to her interpretation, the verse says that the earth is flat whereas the scientists say otherwise.

(ii). That Prophet Muhammad married a 6-year old child and consummated the marriage when she was only 9 years old.

(iii). That she made a Mockery of the spiritual ascension of Prophet Muhammad as stated in chapter 17:1 of the Holy Qur'an where Allah says that Allah carried Prophet Muhammad from Ka'bah to Jerusalem. She made it sound as if that was physical as opposed to the same being spiritual.

(iv). She dwelled on the threats made for blasphemy.

Can I first of all say this. It is most unfortunate that she made those statements and comments when in fact they are not only not true but such comments trigger hatred amongst people of different faiths, in this case between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Comments of that nature either from the Muslims, Hindus or followers of any religion can never be justified especially when they are not correct or are offensive. They were very provoking words and comments and should never have been uttered.

We all know that ignorance can and does have very serious consequences. In this case it did. Look at all the fighting and unrest in India. This parliamentarian could not have been that naïve not to see all that.

Let us now go to and comment on each of those 4 issues:

First Issue

1. She said that the Qur'an cannot be true as one of its verses has been proven wrong by the scientists. She referred to and relied on chapter 88 verse 20 that, **according to her interpretation**, the verse says that the earth is flat whereas the scientists have said or proved otherwise.

It is a very dangerous approach to try to give an interpretation of the Arabic words when one does not have any knowledge of the Arabic language. Let us look at chapter 88:20. Reading the Arabic, the interpretation is "**And the earth, how it is spread out**".

The Arabic word used is sootheehat(h). This lady interpreted this Arabic word as "flat". For her education the root word is *satahu* and *basataha* comes from that and it means pressed it or spread it out. So, the earth is spread out not that it is itself flat.

Anyone with very basic Arabic language or grammar will tell you this. *Sataha* means inflated, spherical and round. *Satahahu* means he grappled him and threw him to the ground.

سطح(sataha) according to [Google's Arabic-English](#) online dictionary:

1. Flatten
2. Spread
3. prostrate
4. surface
5. press

سطح(sataha), also according to the [Arabic-English Hans Wehr dictionary](#), at page 409, means:

1. To level
2. To spread out
3. To throw to the ground

From the above meanings of the Arabic term *Satahahu*, interpretation that the earth is flat is in fact a misinterpretation. I hope I have attended to her first issue.

Question: Before we move on to the next issue you have shown that it appears she couldn't rely to this issue that the earth is flat scientifically, that the Qur'an is incorrect. Can you show anything that is already in the Qur'an and that science proves the same to be true today?

Answer: Thank you Prakash Bhai for asking that important question. Yes, I can and can give you just a few examples in the limited time we have.

1. **Embryology.** You know that in those primitive times, at the time of the revelations of the Holy Qur'an, there were no Ct scans or Xray facilities as we have today. The Holy Qur'an sets out in detail the progress of the foetus, stage by stage. So many modern scientists could not believe what they read in the Qur'an and said that they (the verses) were not humanly possible. See 23:12-14.

23:12 And certainly We create man of an extract of clay,

23:13 Then We make him a small life-germ in a firm resting-place,

23:14 Then We make the life-germ a clot, then We make the clot a lump of flesh, then We make (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothe the bones with flesh, then We cause it to grow into another creation.

2. They (the scientists) after reading what was in the Qur'an well before any scientific findings, accepted that the Qur'an was a Divine Book and accepted Islam.

3. The Holy Qur'an mentions that the sea water and sweet water meet but they do not mix. 55:19-20.

55:19 - He has made the two seas to flow freely — they meet:

55:20 - Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass.

Also 25:53. **53 And He it is Who has made the two seas to flow freely, the one sweet, very sweet, and the other saltish, bitter. And between the two He has made a barrier and inviolable obstruction.**

The scientists today make those findings, well after what was written over 1400 years ago.

4. The mountains serve as pegs. 78:6-7.

78:6 - Have We not made the earth an expanse

78:7 - And the mountains as pegs?

Further in 16:15 Allah says:

And He has cast firm mountains in the earth lest it quake with you, and rivers and roads that you may go aright,

I can go on and on and provide numerous other examples. So, the point is that if the basis or the reasoning for this lady's conclusion that since the earth is not flat and the Qur'an says otherwise, then the Qur'an cannot be true then on her own reasoning and logics, in view of what I have said, she has to admit that the Qur'an is the truth.

Second Issue

Now I turn to the next issue, a major issue, and that is that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) married a 6 year old child and consummated the marriage when she was only 9 years old. This view has been unfairly used against Islam and Prophet Muhammad in that how could a prophet of God, a prophet of Islam do this. Unfortunately, a lot of Muslims themselves have a similar view.

The short answer is that the allegations are not true. What makes it worse is that she referred to Dr Zakir Naik, a Muslim, to support her views. With respect, in my opinion, both of them are wrong. Let me give you my reasons. I need to first of all point out that the erroneous view is based on a single Hadith that mentions that the age of Hazrath Aisha was 6 at the time of the marriage and 9 at consummation. Please note that the Hadith is a word of man but the Holy Qur'an are the words of Allah. Prophet Muhammad himself instructed that if any hadith contradicted the Qur'an, his hadith ought to be rejected. Relevantly Allah says in chapter 4:6:

“And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage. Then if you find in them maturity of intellect,...”

Maulana Muhammad Ali Sahib explained that according to Abu Hanifa, majority is attained at eighteen years, but if maturity of intellect is not attained at eighteen, the limit may be extended. These words, moreover, show that marriage should be performed at the age when a person has attained majority, for the age of marriage is spoken of as being the age of attaining majority. This verse of the Holy Qur'an would override any hadith. In any event the Hadith referred to and relied upon by those who believe that the age of Hazrath Aisha was 6 at marriage and 9 at consummation cannot be correct and I give my reasons:

1. Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), was the daughter of Abu Bakr, a very close companion of prophet Muhammad. Abu Bakr had a number of children and Aisha was one of them. All of Abu Bakr's children were born before Muhammad became a prophet. He became a prophet in 610. He spent 13 years of his prophethood in Makkah before he migrated to Medina. The marriage took place in the year of migration (622) and consummated in 624. So even if Aisha was born just one year before Muhammad became a prophet ie 609, Aisha would have been at the very least 15 years old and 17 when it was consummated. The marriage took place in Medina well after the

migration. This is a universally accepted fact by both friends and foes. Please note that she would have been 15 if she was born in 609. But I will prove that she was born in 605 so that would make her 17 at marriage and 19 at the time of consummation.

2. What becomes even more interesting is that prophet Muhammad died at the age of 62 and Aisha remained his widow for 40 years. Prophet Muhammad's prophethood was for a period of 23 years. Aisha was 67 when she died. So she was (67-40) 27 when prophet Muhammad passed away in 632. So Aisha's birthdate would be $632-27=605$. In other words Aisha must have been born 5 years prior to Prophet Muhammad becoming a prophet ie $610-5=605$.

3. Two points are established here. At migration Aisha was $622-605=17$ ie date of marriage being 17 and since marriage was consummated 2 years afterwards would establish that marriage was consummated in 624, making her 19.

4. According to the majority of Islamic scholars, Asma was 10 years older than Aisha. Also, according to these scholars, Asma died at the age of 100 in 695 CE or 73 Hijra. Aisha being 10 years younger would have been 90 if she had survived until 695. This would make Aisha's birthdate $695 - 90$ that is 605 CE and consequently Aisha's birthdate in 605 CE. This is consistent with and supports what I have said earlier.

5. The assertion that Aisha was 9 comes from a single hadith, this hadith was not subjected to the same scrutiny as other reliable Ahadith were. In fact this Hadith was recorded as a result of the testimony of only one single man, a man whose other proclamations were called into question due to his advanced age and poor memory.

6. Aisha was reported to have taken part in battles alongside the Prophet, riding a camel providing water for others. Muhammad prohibited children from fighting and taking part in battles in any way, meaning she must have been reckoned as an adult.

7. Reasons for confusion (opinion)

It is mentioned that Aisha herself stated she was 6, however this neglects to mention that it was not Aisha herself speaking, but the reciter of the Hadith who, as mentioned, was not subjected to the same rigour as other followers of the prophet were.

8. I need to also mention that Aisha was already engaged to Zubair before prophet Muhammad came

into the scene. That engagement was broken because the family of Zubair feared Zubair would also be convinced into accepting Islam. What does that say? Aisha was of marriageable age well before the proposed marriage to prophet Muhammad.

9. I need to finish off by referring to what the two famous Imams, Imam Malik and Al Shaffi said about any Hadith that had no root in *Hijaz* meaning in Makkah or Medina. They said “**Any tradition with no root in Hijaz has no substance, meaning they are not trustworthy**”. This particular Hadith that people seem to be referring to and relying upon was outside the *Hijaz*. That is from Iraq.

Third Issue

She made a mockery of the spiritual ascension of prophet Muhammad as stated in chapter 17::1 of the Holy Qur’an where Allah says that Allah carried prophet Muhammad from Kabah to Jerusalem. She made it sound as if that was an actual physical as opposed to the same being spiritual.

The Holy Quran in 17:1 mentions how Allah said that He carried His servant, that is prophet Muhammad, from Kabah to Jerusalem. That was a spiritual experience, not a physical ascension. She does not know that chapter 17:60 spells out that it was a vision. This view is supported in a number of ways.

1. This was a vision of glory. Bodily ascension is not a Quranic theme. Admittedly prophet Muhammad was not asleep but was in a vision though not in a dream.
2. In the tradition of al-Muslim and Tirmidih Ibn Abbas relates “*the apostle of God has seen God in his heart not his eyes*”.
3. Malik bin Sahsia Ansari relates the prophet saying “*I was lying in the Kabah between the state of dream and consciousness*”.
4. His wife Aisha reported he was transported only by spirit. His body did not leave its place.
5. There is not a single reliable Hadith that says Prophet Muhammad said it was a physical ascension.
6. On the other hand Prophet Muhammad said “*whilst I lay on the ground next to the Kabah there came an angel and cut open my heart and took out my heart. And then a golden basin full of faith was brought unto me and my heart was washed.*”
7. The fact that this experience was spiritual and not physical does not diminish the extraordinary value attaching to this experience of the prophet.

Fourth Issue

The fourth issue is punishment for blasphemy. She dwelled on the threats made to her personally for blasphemy.

I need to immediately say that the threats are wrong both religiously and morally.

First of all, what is blasphemy? Blasphemy is generally defined as the exhibition of irreverent behaviour or language towards God, religion or anything held sacred. It is a sensitive issue for many, especially those who have an unshakeable faith in their beliefs, religious leaders, holy book, places of worship and rituals.

So what was said in the instant case does amount to blasphemy. Offensive statements made against the Holy Qur’an and our prophet does amount to blasphemy within the definition.

The Holy Qur’an mentions many blasphemous utterances by non-believers and hypocrites against the Holy Prophet Muhammad without sanctioning any physical punishment for the perpetrators:

Verily, those who annoy Allah and His Messenger—Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them an abasing punishment. And those who malign believing men and believing women for what they have not earned shall bear the guilt of calumny and a manifest sin. (Ch.33:Vs.58-59).

It is abundantly clear that there is no punishment in Islam for blasphemy. No such punishment is prescribed in the Holy Qur’an, or in any of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad. Islam promotes the need for respect of all religions for the sake of peace in society, but it does not set out any punishment for blasphemy despite the offence it may cause people of faith.

We have evidence in the traditions of the Holy Prophet where Abdullah bin Ubayyee (Chief of the hypocrites) continuously abused the Prophet, and opposed him severely in Madinah.

When he passed away, the Prophet stood to offer his funeral prayers but was asked by one of his companions, “*O Allah’s Apostle! Do you offer the prayer for this man although he said so-and-so on such-and-such-a day?*” and “*that he is a hypocrite!*”. The Prophet ignored his statements and continued to offer the funeral prayers of the dead man. (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 192). This was well before other relevant Quranic revelations.

The above example shows that the Prophet never ordered any punishment for anyone who insulted or

abused him or God; on the contrary he went to pray for them that they be guided aright.

If somebody uses foul language against any holy person or teaching, Islam advises to keep away from such people as The Holy Qur'an says,

And when you see those who trifle with our signs then turn thou away from them until then engage in a discourse other than that and if Satan cause thee to forget then sit not, after recollection, with the unjust people. (Ch.6: V.69)

It should be noted that the 'abasing punishment' of blaspheming God and His Messenger rests with God alone and it is up to Him whether He punishes such persons in this world or in the hereafter. The authority to punish blasphemers has not been delegated to anyone.

The Holy Prophet was repeatedly mocked by the believers. The Holy Qur'an points out that his opponents claimed he was "a madman" (Ch.15:V.7) and that "there is madness in him" (23:71). Indeed, many of the disbelievers thought that he was "a victim of deception" (17:48). Furthermore, he was labelled a "poet" and "a fabricator" by the disbelievers (16:102).

But the blasphemous statements did not stop there. Not only did they make personal attacks on the Holy Prophet, they also insulted the Holy Qur'an, calling it a book of "confused dreams." Indeed, the Holy Qur'an itself points to the fact that they (the disbelievers) saw its contents as "mere stories of the ancients" (16:25).

Despite the ill-treatment and disrespect shown to both the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'an, God instructed him not to retaliate, because, God says: "***We will, surely, suffice thee against those who mock***" (15:96). In other words, God Himself is sufficient to deal with those who commit blasphemy against Him, the Holy Prophet or the Holy Qur'an and He does not allow anyone else to mete out punishment in this regard. The Holy Prophet was advised by God to remain patient and to ***...follow not the disbelievers and hypocrites, and leave alone their annoyance, and put thy trust in Allah; for Allah is sufficient as a Guardian***" 33:49.

The Holy Qur'an gives clear guidance on how Muslims should behave when they are faced with those committing blasphemy. Instead of punishing the blasphemers, believers are advised to leave the company of such people until they change the topic of their conversation. Allah says:

"...when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them" 4:141.

Anyone who takes the trouble to find out what Islam and the prophet taught would and should be criticising the individuals not the religion of Islam or the prophet. If any individual says or does anything wrong meaning contrary to his or her religion, then for God's sake criticise the individual or individuals not the religion.

Apparently, this lady was threatened to be killed. With such beautiful guidance promoted in the Holy Qur'an, how can anyone contend that the punishment of death for blasphemy is justified in Islam? As I have pointed out, the threats are and were both religiously and morally wrong.

I would and could have referred to other examples on each of the 4 issues but I am mindful of the allocated time.

I hope that I have clarified all the misconceptions on all the four issues. Can I also please encourage the audience to ask any questions they may have.

They can contact me on 0411031324 or send their comments or questions to sdsahukhan@hotmail.com

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Radio Navtarang, and particularly my dear brother Prakash, for giving me this opportunity.

[This interview is accessible online on Radio Navtarang's website]

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

(Text of a speech by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan, (former Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, UK) delivered at a conference held on November 24, 1960 in Oxford)

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen!

The more I have been listening to addresses from this platform, the more confused I have been getting in my religious thoughts. First of all, it seems to me that God is not something to be discovered; the moment we discover Him, He ceases to be God. I think the right approach to the question of God is that He reveals Himself. This is the very first fallacy scientists fall victims to, when they set out to discover God.

God, so far as His nature is concerned, is certainly beyond human comprehension. All that we can and

need to know about Him is how He deals with human beings. I think it is but another form of escapism from the struggle of life to probe into such metaphysical questions as the nature of reality. We are here in the midst of this life, and the main question before us is not: *Why are we here?* The main question is: *How shall we lead this life?* The answer is very simple. We must play this game of life according to the rules of our game. In religious parlance, we must live according to the laws of God. I am afraid I emphatically differ with the view that religion and science are incompatible. From the Islamic point of view, the universe we live in is the work of God, whereas religion is the Word of God. Since both emanate from the same Source, there can be no contradiction, no incompatibility between the two.

Science and Religion Basically Identical

As a matter of fact, we have it on the authority of the Qur'an that the whole of nature observes this religion of conformity to the laws of God. That is what man must do too, we are told. That, in a nutshell, seems to be the whole message and mission of religion— *viz.* to do the Will of God. That is precisely what the word Islam literally connotes: Complete self-surrender to God's will. This, indeed, is the one theme that runs throughout the Quranic message. To give just one quotation, the Book says:

"Do they seek a religion other than the religion ordained by God, whereas to Him submits whatever is in the heavens and on earth? ... And whoever seeks a religion other than that of conformity to God's Will, it shall not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the long run (lit., hereafter)" (3:83, 85).

Here is an unequivocal declaration that the religion observed by the whole of the universe is none other than that of conformity to the Will of God. In the realm of physical nature, we call that Will the laws of God, which are the subject-matter of the physical sciences. In the sphere of the life of the spirit, those laws form the subject of revelation vouchsafed to the Divinely inspired teachers. To put it more pointedly, we may say that science is the religion of nature, and religion the science of life. Science and religion, thus, are not mutually exclusive; they are two facets of the same process.

Now, what is the purpose of this religion of conformity? First of all, it ensures a smooth working of nature, making it possible for the latent potentialities in everything to grow and develop. To take a homely illustration, let us watch the life story of a small seed; say an apple seed. What do we find? We find the whole of the apple tree — the roots, the trunk, the leaves, the flowers, and the fruit — locked up within that tiny thing. Its Divinely ordained destiny is that it should unfold those potentialities, that it should grow and develop into a full-fledged

tree with all its foliage and flowers, culminating in the delicious fruit which is its highest goal to reach. This journey, by slow gradual stages, towards that goal, can be fulfilled only by going through well-defined processes of the laws governing plant life. It must be put into proper soil at the proper season; it must be regularly watered, and weeded and manured, and otherwise looked after. All these laws must be observed before it can fulfil its destiny. Man has been created in the image of God. In other words, he has Divine attributes embedded in his nature. To work out those attributes is the purpose of his creation. And religion chalks out the way how do it.

No Renunciation of Life

At this stage, we must take note of another vital aspect of the teachings of Islam, which likewise bears the stamp of scientific validity. Just as you need soil for the growth and development of that small seed, so do we need some sort of soil for the growth of the soul qualities and Divine attributes within us. This worldly life in which we find ourselves placed, with all its demands and calls, its ups and downs, its sorrows and sunshine, constitutes that soil. All these vicissitudes of life are so many opportunities, and escapism from the demands of life in any shape or form is to miss those opportunities. It is something like missing the only bus which can carry you to your destination. So, in Islam, there is to be no renunciation of this worldly life. It is the express Divine purpose that we should work out the image of God in us through living a full life. I remember a distinguished scientist describing this image of God within us as the imprisoned splendour. This worldly life, according to the Islamic teachings, is meant to quicken that sleeping beauty within man, and make it grow and develop. In this respect as well, we find the processes of science and religion quite identical— the phenomenon of the soul growth running parallel to that in the realm of physical nature.

Reason and Revelation

Another common misconception is the so-called contradiction between reason and revelation. Islam recognises no such contradiction. The lights of reason and revelation are mutually complementary, not contradictory. In physical life, when we cannot see certain things with the naked eye, we bring to its aid some instrument, say, a telescope or a microscope. The evidence of this instrument cannot be said to nullify that of the naked eye. The functions of the two are supplementary. Likewise, reason and revelation are also mutually supplementary. In the intricacies of life too subtle for unaided reason to probe and explore, revelation from God comes to man's help to illuminate his path and sustain and strengthen him in the vicissitudes of life.

The Book of Nature

As a matter of fact, Islam attaches as much importance to the study of nature as to that of the Qur'an. In order to drive home moral and spiritual truths, attention is invited to the phenomena of nature. *Why don't you, reflect?* — this is the repeated exhortation to man. People given to conventional modes of thought and ancestor-worship are repeatedly reminded that this is not the way to find the truth. Their ancestors might have been in the wrong. To find the truth they must think for themselves. One particular phenomenon of nature forms the repeated theme of the Qur'an — that of rainfall. The main problem before humanity is, *how* can you revive moral and spiritual values? There is a great hue and cry on all sides that morality is going down and unless something is done to revive moral values, we are heading for some big crash. The question is, *how* can it be done? That is the practical problem that is before modern man. The Qur'an's answer to this quest of man is very clear and emphatic. It says: Look at the common phenomenon how at the touch of rainfall dead soil quickens to life, and the whole face of the earth is covered with verdure. The spiritual rain of revelation also, it concludes, can bring about moral regeneration. I am quite positive that no amount of scientific investigation can create that dynamic force in human life, individual as well as social, that can bring about moral regeneration. Even the latest discoveries of science, which have led to the dissolution of matter into something non-material, furnish only negative evidence of the existence of God. They by no means clinch the vital issue whether God really exists. But for such a firm conviction in God's existence, there can be no force which can revolutionise human life. That live conviction is born of the spiritual experience of revelation alone.

Universality of Revelation

As I said before, God must reveal Himself; He cannot be discovered. And here we come to another basic teaching of Islam — the universality of revelation. The Islamic view is that the light of revelation has been vouchsafed to humanity from the very dawn of life. There have not been any people, the Qur'an declares, to whom a Prophet was not sent. Revelation is to spiritual regeneration what rainfall is to the upsurge of life in physical nature. The Qur'an, repeatedly drawing upon this parallelism, says: *See how the dead soil is resuscitated, how after a dry spell, clouds come up, breezes blow, and these clouds laden with vapour are brought to the dry land, and how rain falls, and when there is rainfall, then something happens — a new life springs up. There is verdure all around. The whole of nature blossoms, as if some new life has been whispered into the ears of nature.* This, the Qur'an tells us, is the way to bring

about spiritual regeneration. Divine revelation alone releases that life-giving soul-energy.

Another point to note in this analogy is that just as rain comes from above, the water of spiritual life must also come from above. No earth-rooted human wisdom can supply this need. A friend, in his learned discourse, very rightly said the smallest things and the greatest things in this universe are very near. That applies with equal force to the point in hand. The processes of physical and spiritual regeneration are so close to each other. Just as there can be no life in physical nature unless from above comes the water of life in the form of rain, there cannot be released that soul-energy which alone can transform human life and bring about a spiritual renaissance.

Acceptance of all World Prophets

Intellectually and academically, we may prove or disprove anything, but what really matters is a change in practical life. That is the main problem of man. That is what is the sole object of religion. Therefore, one of the basic principles of Islam is to bring about a change for better in human life. Divine revelation has been vouchsafed to mankind ever since the dawn of life, and there has not been a nation that has not had a Prophet, or a teacher sent unto them so that they might be guided. As a corollary to this it is enjoined upon a Muslim that he must profess faith in all the Prophets of the world that were ever and anywhere raised. A Muslim is told that he cannot be a Muslim unless he accepts all these Prophets as much as he accepts the Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]. Some of these Prophets — Abraham, Moses, Noah, Jesus — have been mentioned by name, and there have been numerous more, we are told, who have not been mentioned. The Qur'an is so keen on this basic principle that it demands that no discrimination should be made between one Prophet and another. And it gives the reason also why not to make any discrimination. Because, it says, it is the light that you are concerned with, the light from God, of which these Prophets were so many channels. It is immaterial which window the light comes through. It may come from any window, and you have to accept it, because with that light is bound up the growth and development of the imprisoned splendour in you, which is your soul life.

Revelation: A Higher Source of Knowledge

This is the story of religion and science in Islam — a very simple and common-sense story. Incidentally, I feel, it is a mistake to make the question of religion the concern only of the higher intellectual levels of scientists and philosophers, who, after all, constitute only a drop in the ocean of humanity. Religion is a thing that is needed as much as daily bread for every individual. The meanest of human beings needs that soul nourishment, which must therefore be as simple

as possible, so as to be intelligible to the meanest understanding. Of course, there are levels — levels of soul development. At the highest level you reach a stage when you may even feel the living presence of God. We can't see God with these physical eyes, but it is a great mistake, I would very humbly submit, to presume that these few senses are the only sources of knowledge.

It is presumptuous on the part of scientists to claim that there is nothing beyond the prison walls of these five senses through which we look at the universe. Within the experience of all of us there come moments when suddenly some new window within us is flung open and new light comes in, which is beyond the reach of these physical senses. The artist and the poet owe the masterpieces of their arts to such flashes. These flashes attain to the highest culmination in the lives of the Prophets. These highly attuned souls get so attuned to God that, we are told, God becomes their eyes with which they see and He becomes their ears with which they may hear. Such is the very close nearness to God they attain. This highest level may not be within reach of all of us, but the impact of these spiritual beacons who have appeared from time to time leaves an imprint on the mind of humanity. The lives of these spiritual luminaries, such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (pbuh), Buddha and Krishna, are a source of immense inspiration to all seekers after truth.

All Religions Basically One

We in Islam believe that they all meant the same thing, that though they spoke in different accents and different words, they conveyed the same message. The Islamic teaching is that just as God is one, the light of religion He sends for man's guidance is also one. Very few people know that according to Islam religion has always been one and the same. That religion is the religion of doing God's will or conformity to God's laws. This is what we find underlined in the Qur'an again and again; this is what has been exemplified in the life of every Prophet that we know of. About Abraham we read in the Qur'an that when God said to him, submit to God's will, forthwith came the response: *"I submit to the will of the Creator of the Universe."* Conformity to God's will — that has always been the one religion taught by all Prophets. Of course, for Christians you are very

familiar with Jesus' historic words: *"Thy will, not my will."*

One Law Throughout the Universe

So, this is the real thing: that there is but one religion which is observed both in nature and in man. With that is bound up the smooth working of the universe as well as the growth and development of human personality in the individual and social life. This is the only way that can bring peace, in individual as well as international life. There is absolutely no contradiction between science and religion; they are aspects of the same truth, one being the work of God, the other the Word of God. The ultimate aim is to steep ourselves in Divine attributes. This can never be done unless we discover some personal contact with God, the Source of life, even though on a very humble scale. We may not be able to rise very high, but in Islam it is open to every individual to have direct access to God, Who is the Source of all light and life. From God comes all the inspiration for the higher and nobler things in life. What sunshine is for physical life on earth, God is for man's spiritual life. The Qur'an describes God as the light of the heavens and the earth. The closer we get to that source of light and life, the higher we grow in our spiritual stature. The tragedy with the followers of all revealed religions has always been that they have failed to convert the truths of those religions into personal experience. What they have in their heads is only what I should say, second-hand stuff, hearsay. Unless the teaching of the Prophets is recapitulated in personal experience, it remains dead theology, but it is by no means religion.

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"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to my fellow creatures, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again".

William Penn

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May Allah grant them Jannatul Firdause.