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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

The HOPE Bulletin

MOTTO ISLAM: I SHALL LOVE ALL MANKIND



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IN MEMORY OF JALAL-UD-DIN AKBAR IBN-I ABDULLAH, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

WATCH AND LISTEN ONLINE

Friday ***Khutba*** in English, and Prayers at 1.00 p.m. (UK time)

By DR ZAHID AZIZ

President, UK Lahore Ahmadiyya Community

The link to this YouTube broadcast is:

<https://youtu.be/9FQwBmlZeaU>

You can also use the following permanent YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWYoLGMhY7et1SIFJyv9jvw/live>

The link to the radio broadcast is:

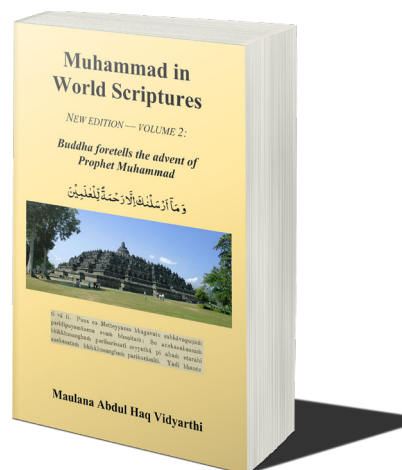
<https://mixlr.com/lahore-ahmadiyya-uk>

You can find the links to this khutba and to previous khutbas at our website: www.ilam.uk

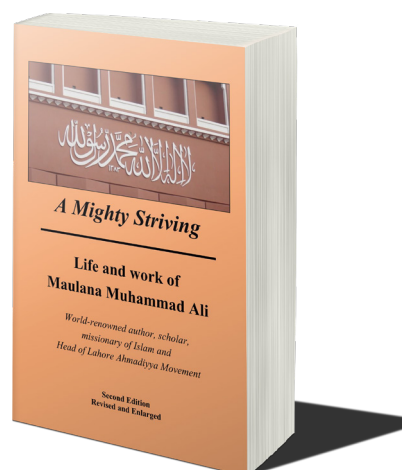
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REVISED EDITIONS OF OUR THREE BOOKS
BY DR. ZAHID AZIZ
ARE NOW AVAILABLE WITH
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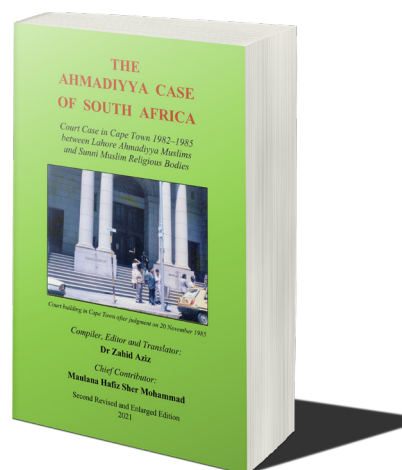
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THE AHMADIYYA CASE OF
SOUTH AFRICA



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IN MEMORY OF THE LATE MOHAMMAD YUSAF KHAN

29 DECEMBER 1927 – 26 AUGUST 2021

By Sajjad Ahmad (Nephew), Gothenburg, Sweden

(He was a devoted and outstanding member of the *Jama'at*, and during his time in Pakistan was a long-standing member of the General Council and the Executive Committee of the Central Anjuman in Lahore. For some time he was Vice President of the Anjuman.)

Mohammad Yusuf Khan died on 26 August 2021 in Lahore and was buried in the Darus Salaam colony graveyard. "Surely we belong to God, and to Him shall we return" (Holy Qur'an, 2:156).

He is survived by his wife and his two sons.

Yusaf Khan was one of six siblings who lived in Ahmadiyya Buildings, Brandreth Road, Lahore, together with their parents. He attended Muslim High School, Lahore, during his early years.

His father, the illustrious Maulana Mohammad Yakub Khan of Pirpiai (KPK province, Pakistan), was an active participant in the independence movement against the British and Hindu rule and a strong advocate of an independent nation for millions of Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. By profession, his father was a prominent educationalist who ensured that all his children received the highest possible level of education. He served as the Headmaster of Muslim High School, Lahore, where his children received their early education.

The family subsequently moved to the newly built Muslim Town colony near the Lahore Canal.

After completing his schooling at the Muslim High School in Lahore, Mohammad Yusuf Khan was enrolled at the Islamia College and later in the Government College, both located in Lahore. His son, Haroon Khan from Saudi Arabia, related that his father was a member of the Government College football team, and that the maroon-coloured blazer of the team remained his most prized possession until his last day.

He participated in the Pakistan independence movement as a student. On one occasion, he and his fellow students were picked up by the police and locked up for a

day. His understanding of the independence movement was that the Muslims were apprehensive about the intentions of the Hindu majority.

He travelled to the United Kingdom in 1950 by sea, intending to become a chartered accountant. The trip had some memorable and adventurous incidents. The first leg of the train journey took him from Karachi to Mumbai. When he arrived at the Mumbai port, Hindu-Muslim riots had broken out all over the Indian subcontinent, and the situation looked extremely dangerous. So, he had to take refuge in a local mosque. Finally, when it was time to embark on the final leg of the long sea voyage between Mumbai and London, he had to take a *tonga* (horse-driven cart) to reach the Mumbai port. During this short but perilous *tonga* ride, his passport somehow slipped out of his pocket. Luckily, the *tonga*-driver saw it and handed it over to him. He then boarded the ship for the UK — a P&O line passenger ship with no vacant places to take on further passengers. However, thanks to Uncle Abdus Salam Khan, who had by now become a merchant navy officer and had a good contact with the sea-going fraternity, the ship's captain was persuaded to create a space for Uncle Yusaf on board the ship.

Upon reaching London, he proceeded to Aberdeen in Scotland and joined R.C. Kelman & Shirreffs, a professional accounting firm, as an apprentice, aiming to qualify as a chartered accountant. He always had fond memories of his stay in Scotland and the welcoming nature of the people there. He qualified in 1960 as a chartered accountant and moved to Woking, England, and found a job in London. During this period he spent most of the time at the Sir Salar Memorial House adjacent to the Shah Jehan Mosque. He had worked in London for some time when he received a letter from his father asking him to return to Pakistan. His father wanted him to look after his disabled mother, a brother and a sister in Lahore. Uncle Yusaf immediately fulfilled his father's wishes, left his lucrative job in London, and began preparations to return to Pakistan. This speaks volumes about the love and veneration Uncle Yusaf Khan had for his father and the dedication to his family.

Incidentally, the Tarbela Dam Project for the production of hydroelectricity was launched around the same when Uncle Yusaf Khan decided to leave for Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan was searching for suitably qualified personnel for the project. Uncle Yusaf Khan applied for the job at the Pakistan High Commission in London. He was interviewed and succeeded in getting the job even before sailing back to Pakistan in December 1960.

Yousaf Khan as a person

Yusaf Khan was his father's most reliable son, who could handle the most difficult situations the family was facing. In Yusaf Khan, his father had found someone who was calm, sensible, self-assured, and level-headed. From the time Uncle Yusaf arrived

back from England in December 1960 to the time both his parents passed away, he stood by their side — in charge of everything that had to do with their day-to-day lives — a most dedicated son and guardian of the calamity-stricken household. In 1967, his father had a stroke too, and like his mother, became bedridden for the rest of his life. When, in 1972 his father passed away at the Kanan Clinic in Lahore, and in 1975 his mother passed away, he was by their bedside — a truly obedient son who cared for his parents until they breathed their last.

In March 2018, I spent six memorable days with Uncle Yusaf Khan in Lahore. I found him an extremely affectionate and a loving person. He had a very good memory. He could readily recall numerous details about past events that had occurred in his own and his father's life with great accuracy. He loved hunting — a sport that his father passionately loved and had trained all his children in right from their childhood. Uncle Yusaf Khan had, in turn, introduced his three sons to the sport. He would often tell us how Abaji (Mohammad Yakub Khan) took all the children hunting around the lakes of Pattoki and Chunian near Lahore in very cold weather. This was to make them physically and mentally strong so that they could endure all kinds of hardships and challenges in coming years. I have had the great privilege of having been on many such hunting excursions with my grandfather, Maulana Mohammad Yakub Khan, and all my beloved uncles during my childhood.

Unlike his seafaring brother, Captain Abdus Salam Khan, and his elder brother in the Pakistan Armed Forces, Lieutenant Colonel M. Aslam Khan, Uncle Yusaf Khan was the one who was always present in Lahore and in a position to look after his parents and making financial contributions to the household. The reality was that all the “three lovely sons” played a pivotal role in taking care of their parents in an exemplary manner during their old age.

The Qur'an says:

“They ask thee as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend it is for the parents, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, Allah surely is knower of it” (2:215).

The household expenses of their parents were jointly funded by all three brothers, and the accounts were maintained by Uncle Yusaf Khan. All the important decisions were made by him on their behalf. If anyone in the household was taken ill, he would either take them to the doctor, or if it concerned one of his parents, he would fetch the doctor from the clinic in his car. Several servants were employed to look after the

disabled parents. Uncle Yusaf Khan was mentally a strong person who faced challenges with courage and patience.

Yusaf Khan was a deeply observant and extremely honest person. He earned distinction in his work of auditing work at the Tarbela Dam Project and WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority). Uncle Ross Mahmood (England) relates that during his early years at the Tarbela Dam Project, a foreign subcontractor tried to embezzle billions of rupees from the project. Uncle Yusaf Khan quickly detected the attempted fraud, and with the support of the Government of Pakistan, foiled it, for which he was duly praised. Thereafter, he joined Coode & Partners in Lahore as a senior accountant. Then in 1968, he joined WAPDA, where he enjoyed a twenty-year career until 1988. He then joined the Water Wing of the firm as Deputy Chief Accountant and retired as General Manager. In between, he had various important posts, including that of Chief Accountant, and Chief Internal Auditor. He made major contributions to the modernization of WAPDA'S financial system.

Uncle Yusaf Khan never showed his emotions in times of grief and always showed stoical courage — just like his father. When one of his sons, my dear Umar Khan of blessed memory, died in a road accident a few years ago, he remained composed despite the tragic loss of a young son who was due to get married in a few weeks' time. He was a highly intelligent and foresighted person and possessed a calm temperament.

In 1967/68, Pakistan Television Lahore broadcasted a quiz programme, "Shaheen," moderated by the late Professor Ashfaq Ahmed. On one occasion, Uncle Yusaf, his elder brother Col. Mohammad Aslam Khan, and his cousin Mansoor participated in the programme and won the competition against three opponents, receiving a trophy from the professor.

Uncle Yusaf Khan was deeply religious, just like his father. He was always helpful to others and went out of the way in helping them during his tenure at WAPDA. He was, however, very shy to relate these things.

During my last visit to Pakistan in March 2018, he showed me his personal diaries filled with selected verses of the Holy Qur'an, all carefully handwritten. He had a copy of the *Bayan-ul-Qur'an* in front of him, signed by his uncle, the illustrious Maulana Muhammad Ali — a book he had recommended and urged me to read several times during my visits.

Unique Brotherly support to achieve a brilliant career in Life

I asked him about how he had planned to go to Scotland to pursue a career in chartered accountancy, and who was the person who had actually inspired him. Here is the story he related:

“One day, Abdus Salam Khan [his elder brother] came to me and asked me to get ready to leave for England to attend a course in chartered accountancy. I looked at him in amazement and asked him who would bear the high costs of such a venture. I didn’t even have a pair of slippers, or a bag to put my personal effects in. Abdus Salam Khan was a brave and courageous person who took risks all his life and had a great gift for solving difficult problems. He smiled at my query, and the very next day, I received a new pair of slippers and a brand-new bag, as well as all my travelling expenses to England. As a matter of fact, he was the driving force and the source of inspiration for me to attend the chartered accountancy course in the United Kingdom. At several stages of preparations to reach Aberdeen, Abdus Salam Khan supported and encouraged me wherever and whenever I needed it.

Sometime in 1956, he joined me in Aberdeen to prepare for the Master Mariner examination — to enter the merchant navy profession. In fact, there were many candidates who were preparing for the final examination, and they all used to get together in our apartment in Aberdeen. They used to hold short question and answer sessions among themselves. I saw that Abdus Salam Khan always played the leading role and gave the others lectures on all possible topics of navigation and seamanship. The indigenous Britons looked at him in amazement and were highly impressed with his wide-ranging knowledge related to the Master Mariners exam. May Allah bless his soul. *Ameen.*”

Childhood Memories

Some of my childhood memories are still vivid. I was brought up partly by my grandfather, Maulana Mohammad Yakub Khan, my grandmother, and partly by my three uncles. Uncle Yusaf Khan was for us (my two brothers and our mother— his sister) a great source of care, empathy and mercy.

In the last few years of Uncle Yusaf Khan’s parents’ lives, they were moved to the Hill Station Abbottabad every summer because the hot summers in Lahore were unbearable for the two bedridden elderlies.

During the period of their stay in Abbottabad, my school in Lahore used to open early after the summer holidays, and it required that I should return to Lahore earlier than the rest of the family. Uncle Yusaf Khan was always there to take care of me. He would

often wait for me outside the gate of Crescent Model School in Shadman Colony, Lahore, during his lunch breaks to give me a weekly allowance for my meals and other needs. This went on for several years.

He was a truly compassionate person at heart. He lived only at a stone's throw away from his parents' home and visited them every day. Even after both his parents had passed away, he continued his vital help to the household by helping his elder brother, Abdus Salam Khan, who had by then himself become disabled due to a road accident. Uncle Yusaf Khan had a special place in his heart for my mother (his sister) and used to bring her meals, especially prepared for her, a practice which continued until she passed away in 1991.

Uncle Yusaf Khan's cousin, Hamid Rehman of San Diego, California, relates:

"I have fond memories of Yusaf Bhai. He came back from England in December 1960. I was in Karachi at the time, visiting my aunt. I had just finished my O Level exams and my parents had given me the gift of visiting Karachi before I joined Government College Lahore in January 1961.

Yusaf Bhai came by ship. I got my first wristwatch which he had bought in Aden, where the ship had stopped. My mother had asked him to bring a watch for me.

He got a job with WAPDA and was posted to Tarbela. On the weekends, he would frequently visit my parents in Abbottabad driving his Mini minor car, which he had brought back from the United Kingdom.

Uncle Yusaf Khan was married with Naheed Bhabi in Abbottabad.

In 1963, he got transferred to Lahore and rented a house called the Little House on the Main Boulevard of Gulberg. He invited me to stay with him as I was then doing my B.Sc. in Government College Lahore. I stayed with him for about two years and have pleasant memories of the time.

Haroon and Umar were born while I was staying with Uncle Yusaf Khan.

May Allah grant Yusaf Bhai *Jannah. Ameen.*"

A Pathan with a Pen

In 2010, Uncle Abdus Salam undertook a most difficult task of writing the book titled *A Pathan with a Pen* on the life of his father, the illustrious Mohammad Yakub Khan. He started the project amidst great financial strain and other impediments but did not give up. In continuation of his project, I launched a website from Sweden, *mykwoking.se*, in 2014 and began working under his supervision. Uncle Yusaf Khan lent me his full support and encouraged me to keep up the good work.

Uncle Yusaf touched many lives by his selfless and countless acts of kindness, never expecting any favours in return. May Allah (swt) be pleased with him, and may his soul dwell in paradise. *Ameen*.

My sources:

The late Mohammed Yusaf Khan (during my visit to Pakistan in March, 2018).

Mrs. Naheed Yusaf Khan.

The late Abdus Salam Khan (2010 -2016, Los Angeles, California).

Haroon Khan (Yusaf Khan's elder son, Saudi Arabia).

Ross Mahmood, England; Hamid Rehman, San Diego, California (Yusaf Khan's cousins).

* * *

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

(Text of a speech by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan, (former *Imam* of the Shah Johan Mosque, Woking) 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 meta-physical 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 to 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 ﷺ. 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 ﷺ, 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.

* * *

Our Christian Friend Writes from Manchester ...

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

Iain Dixon

"This Christmas, and every day, may we become life-givers — breathing out words of kindness and good deeds to all around. May we become Christmas reflections — reflecting to others the great love and mercy Allah has shown to each one of us."

As I write this, the countdown to Christmas is well and truly on. The shops are buzzing with people searching for presents to give to loved ones, streets and homes are filled with lights and glitter, and children have faces full of wonder and excitement, eagerly looking forward to December 25th.

How are you feeling about it?

What about you? How are you feeling about Christmas? Does the growing commercialism of this time frustrate you? Or maybe religious thought guards you from desiring joy in this season because it doesn't fit into your doctrinal "tick box" of what is right and wrong? And what is the so-called "real meaning of Christmas" anyway?

The choices people make

A Muslim friend said to me today that she is looking forward to buying her real Christmas tree, and putting it up. She is looking forward to decorating it — and has fond Christmas memories of the past. Oh, that those days would return, she pleads! In contrast, I have a Christian friend who rejects Christmas totally — he sees it as an abomination, and will do everything to distance himself from it. He would rather be dead than have a Christmas tree in the house!

My confession

I have a confession to make. For many years I came into the latter category. But over time, it dawned on me that I spent so much effort purposely being miserable, trying to kick back at what I saw around me — I actually became arrogant and self-righteous. In trying to be “pure” I actually became the worse person on earth! Being a devout Christmas-hater drove people away from me, and didn’t draw people closer to God at all.

A sensible balance

Oscar Hammerstein famously wrote:

“A bell’s not a bell ‘til you ring it.
A song’s not a song ‘til you sing it.
Love isn’t love ‘til you give it away.”

Saturation of love

Over the years, I have come to appreciate Christmas more. Whether it is seen from a religious perspective, or purely from a secular point of view, none can deny that there is a saturation of kindness, generosity and love at this time of year. People spend extra effort to help the poor and homeless, and charitable giving rises considerably. Actually, rather than Christmas being self-centred, many people rejoice in putting others first at this time of year. Truly, love isn’t love ‘til you give it away. Christmas is a time when love is truly given away by the tonnes.

Spiritual lessons

People argue about the timing of the birth of Jesus. People have proved it was in the spring, some have proved it was in the autumn, and some even maintain that although Jesus was not born on December 25th, that we can prove he was conceived in Mary’s womb on December 25th. But whenever he was born, the message he brought was surely more important than a date in a diary, or a note on a calendar. Forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, love for God and mankind — these were all gifts unwrapped to us when Jesus came into the world. For this, we can be thankful. For this, we should be thankful.

Christmas decorations

Whether we are Muslim, or whether we are Christian, we can celebrate Christmas every day of the year. How? By decorating ourselves with qualities of kindness, love and compassion, and by being presents sent from heaven to the lost and broken around us. It was said of Jesus:

“... and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us’ ”
(Matthew 1:23).

This Christmas, may we remember how Allah has been faithful to us this year: how He has protected and guided us, how He has provided for us. His companionship has been constant. Truly, we are reminded in the coming of Jesus to this world that Allah has been with us, that His unseen hand has been with us, and that we too are called to be Immanuels, bringing hope to the desperate, comfort to the hurting — being Allah’s hands and feet to a broken world. As we help those less fortunate than ourselves, may many people say with thankful hearts that “God is truly with us.” May each one of us become the true meaning of Christmas, and reflections of Allah’s love.

Be a great Christmas

St Ambrose of Milan said:

“Open wide your door to the one who comes. Open your soul, throw open the depths of your heart to see the riches of simplicity, the treasures of peace, the sweetness of grace. Open your heart and run to meet the Sun of eternal light that illuminates all men.”

Instead of arguing about the rights and wrongs of Christmas, may we seek the one Christmas is all about, and also seek to be a great Christmas to all around us. Allah, speaking through the Prophet Isaiah, said that His true servants would display “the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness, and be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3). Rather than arguing about Christmas trees, may we instead seek to be trees of righteousness, bringing blessing to all around us.

It is well-known that plants and trees produce life-giving oxygen, “breathing out” that which is beneficial to us.

This Christmas, and every day, may we become life-givers — breathing out words of kindness and good deeds to all around. May we become Christmas reflections

—reflecting to others the great love and mercy Allah has shown to each one of us. So, from my heart to yours, I wish that you all may become a very happy Christmas!

* * *

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ISLAM stands for: I SHALL LOVE ALL MANKIND

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