The background of the cover features a sunset sky with a bright sun low on the horizon. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of several mosque structures are visible, including a tall, slender minaret on the left and a cluster of domes and smaller minarets on the right. The overall color palette is dominated by the warm tones of the sunset: oranges, yellows, and reds, transitioning to a darker blue/purple at the top.

Why Islam is my choice

*Personal Accounts of
Spiritual Journeys*

Majlis Ansarullah, USA



A group photo of the elders of the community with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, in front of Baitul-Ḥameed Mosque in Chino, CA.



Akbar Tshaka with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah.



Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, with (Left to Right) Br. Abdul Ghafur, Br. Jonathān M.A. Ghaffār and Br. Raḥmat Jamāl, in 1994 at Baitul-Ḥameed-Mosque in Chino, Calif.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Why Islam is My Choice

Personal Accounts of Spiritual Journeys

Compiled and edited from the pages of Al-Nahl

by

Syed Sajid Ahmad

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Majlis Ansarullah, USA

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Hadrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1935-1908)
Promised Messiah and Mahdī (peace be on him)

Rest assured that this is a tree planted by the Hand of God. He will never permit it to go waste. He will not be satisfied until He has seen it through to its fullness. He will see to it that it is well irrigated and will build a protective fence around it. Thus God will bless my followers with astounding progress and prosperity. Have you left any stones unturned? Had it been the work of man, this tree would have been cut and felled since long and no trace of it would have remained.

Rūḥānī Khazā'in, Vol. 11, Anjām-i-Ātham, p. 64.

Remember, that no one will descend from heaven. All our opponents who are alive today will die and no one will see Jesus Son of Mary descending from heaven. Then their next generation will pass away and no one of them will see this spectacle. Then generation next after that will pass away without seeing the Son of Mary descending from heaven. Then God will make them anxious that though the time of the supremacy of the cross had passed away and the world had undergone great changes, yet the son of Mary has not descended from heaven. Then the wise people will suddenly discard this belief. The third century after today will not yet have come to a close when those who hold this belief, whether Muslims or Christians, will lose all hope and will give up this belief in disgust. There will then be one religion that will prevail in the world and only one leader. I have come only to sow the seed, which has been sown by my hand. Now it will sprout and grow and flourish, and no one can arrest its growth.

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad,
Promised Messiah and Mahdī (peace be on him),
Rūḥānī Khazā'in, Vol. 20, p. 65.

People of the world may be inclined to think that it is Christianity which may ultimately spread throughout the world, or it may be Buddhism which will prevail in the end. But they are certainly wrong in these conjectures. Remember that nothing happens on this Earth unless it has been so willed in Heaven. And, it is God of Heaven who revealed to me that ultimately it will be the religion of Islām which will conquer the hearts of people.

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad,
Promised Messiah and Mahdī (peace be on him),
(Rūḥānī Khazā'in, Vol. 21,
(Brahīn-i-Aḥmadiyyah, Part 5), p 427)

Foreword

Human beings go through their lives in search of the truth. Those who are born into the fold of Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām, are without doubt the most fortunate of all since the message of truth is conferred upon them as a gift from Almighty Allāh.

And then there are those on whom, later in life, Allāh the Exalted bestows the singular honor of taking them by the hand and gently directing them to the truth they were seeking. This book contains the touching and inspiring accounts of some who have been gracious enough to share their own spiritual experiences.

I humbly request prayers for all those who have contributed in any capacity to the compilation and publication of this book. May Almighty Allāh reward them abundantly. Amen.

Yours,

Wajeeh Bajwa

Ṣadr

Majlis Anṣarullāh, USA

Note from the Editor

Since its inception, Al-Nahl has been publishing stories of seekers after truth who found solace in the lap of Islām by joining the community of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908), the Promised Messiah and Mahdī (peace be on him). Aḥmadiyah Muslim Community was founded by the Promised Messiah in 1889.

The first twenty stories published in Al-Naḥl have been collected in these pages. Though the stories have been revised for this book, we have kept bulk of the content. Pictures in this book are as they were first published in the pages of the magazine.

The stories contain various Islāmic terms and expressions. We have added a glossary of these terms at the end for the convenience of the readers.

Thanks are due to Anisa Bushra Salam Bajwa for her assistance in the design of the front cover.

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Yūsef `Abdul-Lateef

Why I Accepted Islām

From an early age, in fact as far back as my pre-teens, I was, although I believed in God, obsessed and not clear about the idea of God, heaven, hell, and His creation. My parents, may Allāh bless their souls, were Christians, adherents of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Therefore, they raised me within that religious discipline, which they believed to be good for me. They sent me to Sunday School and many other church activities, and after I became a grown man and began to travel, I always carried a Bible with me, which I would read not infrequently.

Throughout my teens, into my twenties, I intuitively believed in the benevolence of God and the goodness and brotherhood of mankind. I continually searched for religious and spiritual understanding. When I read something in the Bible that I didn't understand or when I heard something preached in church that I didn't understand, I would ask for explanations from elders of the church.

My somewhat perplexed state of mind concerning my position as one of God's creations continued on into my late twenties. At the age of 27, while living in Chicago, Illinois, I met by chance, Ṭālib Dawūd, an Aḥmadī Muslim. There was something about his appearance and mannerisms that prompted me to ask him "What are you into?" as was the colloquial expression at that time. Without hesitation, he



Yūsef Lateef

said that he was Muslim, and that he was a member of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām. From that moment we became friends and within a few hours of meeting him, he gave me some literature, which contained some of the writings of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, Promised Messiah and Maḥdī (peace be on him), and *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (may Allāh be pleased with him).

During that year, which was 1947, I continued to read the various literature published by the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām, and from time to time I would attend Islāmic classes at the Mosque in Chicago located at 4448 South Wabash. Although, I had not begun saying the five daily obligatory prayers, I continued to read the Aḥmadiyyah literature.

In 1948 I moved to New York, where I found myself visiting the Mosque and continued to read Islāmic literature published by the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām. Finally, in candor I can say, I believed that, as a result of reading the writings of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, and *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad,

Second Successor to the Promised Messiah, the angels of God descended on me. What I am trying to say is that at that point, I believed in my heart that the message of Islām promulgated through the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām was true. Subsequently, in 1948, I became Muslim, and accepted Aḥmadiyyat. I believed that it was incumbent on me to do so. At that moment I felt that to not embrace Islām was equivalent to turning my back on God or the truth. I was convinced then, as I am now, that the way of Aḥmadiyyat is the path of truth, the path followed by the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). I am convinced that it is the path where one does not encounter destruction. I am convinced that it is the path where I and my family can find salvation. I am convinced that it is the true Universal Brotherhood for all mankind.

Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, that I'm no longer perplexed, as I was early on in life about questions such as, Is God the Father? or, Is God the Son? or, is God the Holy Ghost? It is that, I believe in Islām because Islām does not compel me to accept enigmatic matters of religion merely on authority. Islām has furnished me with convincing arguments in support of its doctrines, one of which leaves no doubt, in my mind, that Allāh alone is the Lord of all the Worlds. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh that I am no longer perplexed about Divine Law and its benefits, revelation and its importance, resurrection and the life after death, heaven and hell. I am convinced, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh that Islām which is embodied in the Holy Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, and Sunnah gives detailed answers to all the questions I have ever entertained. In reality, Islām furnishes me with the faith and understanding I have searched for early on in life, and as well it satisfies my spiritual nourishment and my intellect. In fact, I perceive Islām as the perfect religion, perfected by God and offered to mankind through the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings

of Allah be on him) for mankind's eternal evolution. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh.

Dr. Yūsef A. Lateef teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. After becoming an Aḥmadī Muslim, Br. Yūsef has experienced, Divine Signs, first hand.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, No. 2, Winter 1993/Spring 1993.

Bashīr Afzal

How I Accepted Islām

Br. Bashīr Afzal died on July 18, 1993. Innā Lillāhi Wa Innā Ilaihi Rāji'ūn. He was the President of the New York Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at for thirty years and Za'im, Majlis Anṣārullāh, North NJ for about ten years.

I was born in 1902 in Randolph county, Alabama. My parents were devout Christians. They belonged to the Baptist Church. I was raised in a very religious environment at home and I used to attend the church regularly ever since my childhood. From the very early days of my childhood, I had started an immense liking for Jesus Christ without really having understood the truth about him. Contrary to the church's belief, I somehow maintained the perception that Jesus Christ was living among us and that we had simply not found him yet. As I grew older, I became a missionary of the Baptist Church and my desire to find and meet Jesus Christ became ever stronger. When I was 21 years old, I moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where I started working in a metal shop. Being a missionary of the Baptist Church, I was also very active in preaching my faith to all my friends. One day, a colleague at work with who I had been discussing religious matters, came to me and informed me of a new religious organization in town. He urged me to attend their meeting as he thought I was going to like it. Little did I know that this organization was actually the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in



Bashir Afzal

Islām. I became curious about what my colleague had told me. I immediately enquired about the schedule of their meetings and started preparing for it. It was only a couple of days later when I went to attend this meeting. Every one over there was very kind and courteous to me. One of the brothers insisted that I sat in the front row which I did. I was told that a Muslim speaker by the name of Mr. Yūsef Khān was going to speak. I started listening to the speaker with great attention. I heard him say that Jesus Christ never died on the cross and that he died a natural death much later. He spoke about the prophecy of the second advent of Jesus Christ. He said that this prophecy was to be fulfilled in the appearance of another person whose mission would be the same as that of Jesus Christ: the revival of religion. What actually struck me was when he said that this prophecy had already been fulfilled in the person of *Hadrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadian, India, and that he had lived, completed his mission, and passed away. Since my personal belief all along had been that Jesus Christ was living among us, this news, on one hand, made me very happy that I had been right, and finally, I had found Jesus Christ, but on the other hand, I became very sad to know that he had passed away, and I had missed

the opportunity of seeing him.

After the meeting I met with Mr. Yūsef Khān who told me all about the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. He explained to me about the Khilāfat and the organization of the Movement. Eventually he invited me to join Islām. While this brother was talking to me, somehow or the other, I felt in my heart as if I had always belonged there. I felt a kind of satisfaction which I thought I had always sought after. I realized that my Creator, the Almighty God, had after all answered my prayer and here I was standing at the footsteps of the right path to Allāh. I did not hesitate any further. I requested Mr. Yūsef Khān for my initiation into Aḥmadiyyat. Mr. Yūsef Khān very politely told me not to rush into the initiation. He wanted me to pray and think of all the consequences before I did that. But I had made up my mind. I told my host that I was not going to leave until my initiation was accepted. Thus by the grace and blessings of Allāh, the Almighty, I became a Muslim and an Aḥmadī that very night. Since my initiation, to this day, I have never looked back and will, In Shā' Allāh, die an Aḥmadī Muslim.

After my becoming a Muslim, my mother, who loved me a lot, thought that I would not visit her any more. When she mentioned this to me, I told her that I was going to love her more than before as the Holy Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, had laid great emphasis on the love and obedience of one's parents, especially one's mother. She was very glad to know that. I had been very careful to keep my promise for as long as my mother lived. She was likewise very happy with me until her last breath. I could see how the beautiful teachings of Islām were beginning to change my life.

Since I had already possessed an immense love in my heart for Jesus Christ, whom I had always believed to be alive (actually this way Allāh had informed me in a special

way about the second advent of Jesus Christ, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad), I began to read as much as I could about *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him—his character, personality and teachings. The more literature I read, the stronger I felt about my new found faith. I got to a point in my life when I thought I was completely engrossed in the love of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. His love took me to visit Qadian and Rabwah in the 1950s (I can not remember the year correctly). I loved what I saw in Qadian. I would look at the places and imagine in my mind about the various events that took place in that small village during the time of my beloved master. One could witness the power of Allāh by realizing how the voice of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah from that still relatively little known village had reached the corners of the world. All the divine promises given to *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, were unfolding before my eyes and I could see how against all odds, Allāh had fulfilled them.

Allāh has been very kind to me. I have witnessed many signs in my own person after becoming a Muslim. The Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at has always been very good to me. I became president of Jamā‘at Aḥmadiyyah, New York and by the grace of Allāh, held that position for 30 years. The members always cooperated with me and respected me. I can not thank Allāh enough for all the rewards He has bestowed upon me through Islām and Aḥmadiyyat. My only prayer to Allāh is that may He convert all the Christians to the true Islām and keep me steadfast in His way until my death. Amen.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Summer 1993.

Muḥammad Ṣādiq

How I Accepted Aḥmadiyyat

In one of his addresses during the 1993 U.K. annual convention, Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah made a special comment about Br. Muḥammad Ṣādiq, that Bro. Ṣādiq had lost the light of his eyes but Allāh had increased the light of his heart.

My name is Muḥammad Ṣādiq. Before accepting Islām, my name was Howard William Scott. I was told that the first Muslim missionary to the United States was Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq. I liked that name so much that I decided to take it for my own.

I was born in Newark, New Jersey, on October 29, 1912. My parents lived in Irvington, New Jersey, but due to some unpleasant domestic circumstances, they separated. I, along with my mother, was brought to live with my grandparents in Newark. I went to school in Newark, but, unfortunately, could never finish high school.

My family, by tradition, had a very keen interest in the profession of music. I also grew up learning music from my family members. My instructions were mostly in classical music. However, since jazz had gained an overwhelming popularity in this country, my own interest also shifted towards it.

That was the main reason for the discontinuity of my



Muḥammad Şādiq

academic learning. I became a fairly good jazz musician, and it started to pay well, also. So, I decided to make it my career and pursued it further. In those days, there were not too many opportunities for the people of African descent. This, I found out, when I tried to acquire a job in engineering for which I had completed a course and had passed it. In spite of

all my efforts, I could not find a job in that field and, as a result, I stayed with music until I accepted Islām.

My primary source of income, then, came from odd jobs. I finally became a painter and I retired a painter. When I first started to paint, I had very little knowledge of it, but my employer trained me well.

I never had any kids from my marriage. However, my wife asked me to adopt some abandoned children. I gladly accepted that suggestion. In the end, we had three children; all from the same mother. Although I still stay in touch with them, but it is very disappointing to see that they have no interest in Islām.

I was raised in a religious family, but nothing the church said appealed to me. It was not until I found Islām that things started to make sense to me. At first, even I was very skeptical about Islām. As a musician, I used to hear people talk about Islām, but every thing I heard about this religion, sounded so foolish that I did not care much about it. Then, one day in 1947, a friend gave me a book, “The Life of Muḥammad,” written by Şūfī M.R. Bengālī. I was in tears after reading that book. What hurt me so much was that I wanted to be so much like Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh be on him, but I knew that I could never be like him. Then I was introduced to some people who brought Islām to Harlem. One of those men, Ṭālib Dawūd, explained many things to me. He, then, asked me if I was ready to accept Islām. I told him that I was not. He surprisingly asked, “Why!” I said that I was not worthy of being among the Muslims. He asked me to at least accept it on a trial basis, to which I agreed. I was then brought to Missionary Ghulām Yāsīn, who formally initiated me into Aḥmadiyyat by having me fill out a form. He read out the ten conditions of bai‘at (Initiation) to me. I prayed to Allāh for forgiveness of my past sins and took a solemn pledge to live a life of piety. My

wife was very happy to see me accept Islām. She, later on, became a very prominent lady in Islām. After accepting Aḥmadiyyat, I also learned about some other sects of Islām but the fact that *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, in his writings, sounded so much like the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (Peace and Blessings of Allāh be upon him), I had no difficulty in recognizing Ahamdiyyat to be the true Islām.

The same year, after accepting Aḥmadiyyat, I saw *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, the Second Successor to the Promised Messiah, in a dream. I saw that I was in Pakistan and I asked some men that I wished to see the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ (Successor to the Promised Messiah). They said that he was upstairs in his room. When I went to see him, he appeared to be sleeping, but someone told me that he was praying. There was a back door in that room through which I saw Ṭālib Dawūd exiting as I entered the room through the front door.

Then, in 1974, I visited Pakistan and India for the first time. That began a warm relationship with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah. I left there with a wonderful feeling, a kind of a feeling that is hard to explain in words. In the seventies and Rabwah, I had been to Qadian and Rabwah so many times that the border guards on both sides would ask me, “How are you sir, this year?” I wish I could stay in Rabwah longer than I did, but as my mother could not travel with me, I had to return to provide care for her. When I visited Bahishtī Maqbarah in Qadian, I was filled with tears. I felt such a strong belonging to Islām that I had never felt anything like it before.

In the early days of my acceptance, Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef and I would go to New York city and pass out pamphlets as a means of propagation. By doing so we brought many people into Islām, but unfortunately, most of them have not stayed

with us. Once, Bro. ‘Ābid Ḥaneef and I were arrested for passing out literature by the New York police. The police beat us and took us to the court where we were acquitted of all charges. When we were leaving the court, I told my attorney that we had done no wrong, and that the policemen were drunk. He joked with us by saying that he could not do anything about it because the judge was also drunk. Years later, when I met Sir Zafarullā Khān, he asked me whether I had asked for forgiveness from God. I answered, “But I didn’t do anything wrong.” He again asked me the same question and I again answered it the same way. Then, he asked me for the third time and I again replied the same way. After that, he walked away from me without saying anything. Today, I realize what he was trying to tell me.

Accepting Islām and Aḥmadiyyat has been the greatest achievement of my life. Had I continued my profession as a musician, I would have made much more money, but I would not trade my faith for all the wealth in the world. I found in Aḥmadiyyat what I could not find anywhere else. Although I was making good money as a musician, I was never happy. I had seen what happened to other musicians down the road. They ran into a dead end. I also felt lost in that field. It was not until I accepted Islām that I saw a clear vision of the future.

Another affect Islām and the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Movement has had on me is that after joining it, I began to love people. Before I joined Islām, I used to hate people because of the injustices meted out to us by the majority. Once I joined the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Movement, that attitude changed completely. On the whole, I find this a very loving community.

I would like to thank Missionary Ghulām Yāsīn for his efforts in training me and teaching me the Holy Qur’ān. He had a very rigid way of teaching, but I am extremely glad that

he taught us the way he did. He would not let us move until he was satisfied that we had memorized the verses assigned to us. I loved his dedication and style of teaching, and I appreciate it sincerely. Since I have lost the sight in both my eyes, I listen to tapes and try to memorize the Holy Qur'ān as much as I can.

In the end, I would like to mention that there is none better a person in the world than *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah. He is extremely sweet. Today, if there is a way to reach the hearts of people, it is through his sermons and speeches. He speaks the truth and his message touches my heart every time I hear him. While I was attending the London Annual Jalsa (convention) this year, during his address, he said something that touched my heart and I could not help but call out, “na‘ra’-i-takbīr.” The Khalīfatul-Masīḥ immediately recognized my voice. The next thing I heard was a very loving comment about me by the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ. * He named me in the presence of the whole audience, switching abruptly from Urdū to English. This very unexpected reward by the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ was something that I thought I did not deserve and began to weep out of joy. I will never be able to forget this great blessing. One thing I must say about the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ, that if I had no knowledge of Islām at all, but had heard only one of his sermons, I would have accepted Islām, instantly.

May Allāh bless this community. May Allāh shower His immense blessings upon *Ḥaḍrat* Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (May Peace and Blessings be upon him), the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) and his Khulafā (Successors). Amen.

* The comment by the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ was: “Bro. Ṣādiq! Your voice was music to my ears.” Al-Naḥl.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Winter 1994.

Khalīl Maḥmūd

How I Accepted Islām

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts on March 7, 1929. My family was from the West Indies. My father, John Steven Drewry Peters, came to the United States in 1903, and my mother, Josephine Maud Blanchard Peters, came later. At the time of my birth, my name was John Stevens Fredrick Peters. Ironically, I was born ten years after my parents got married and I was ten years old when my mother passed away. Our father took very good care of us, but since the nature of his job was such that he had to travel to many different cities, we were left in the care of our aunt.

I was brought up in a very religious environment. My parents were of a very conservative background. They belonged to the Anglican Church in the West Indies, but after moving to the United States, they joined the Church of Christ in Harvard Square (Cambridge, MA). I went to Sunday School regularly where I learned about Christianity and Jesus Christ. That left a very deep impression on me, and religion became a regular part of my life. As kids, we were always told to respect religion. As a matter of fact, we were not allowed to play on Sundays because that was the Lord's Day. My father was deeply interested in religion. He used to go to other churches, as well, to find out how others worshipped. My father's love for religion left a lasting impression on my life.

In my senior year at Latin Technical High School, I found



Khalīl Maḥmūd

a part time job to keep busy after school. This was the first time I was exposed to the outside world. This exposure was very beneficial, but it also brought some problems. As I grew into my late teens, I began to drift away from religion and started to move into the direction of worldly affairs. I started taking interest in music, and even played with some groups in the Boston area. I was very fortunate, rather, blessed, that

by the time I graduated from high school in 1946, the War had ended. It was then that I was re-acquainted with my friends, who had gone overseas for the War. These friends brought back some of their unique experiences. I instantly became attracted to Islām from what I heard about their experience with Islām and the overseas culture. These friends told me of the great culture of Islām. I soon learned of a teacher, a missionary, who came from New York to visit a small Muslim community in Boston. His name was Chuadhry Ghulām Yāsīn. Then, through Missionary Yāsīn, I was introduced to Bro. ‘Alī Mujtabā who would later become my mentor. This brother was like a community elder: He had a small shop in Boston where he sold Muslim prayer books, incense, candles, prayer rugs and things of that nature. He worked for the railroads, but in his idle time he was to be found in his shop. His pious mannerism greatly influenced me. I began to visit Bro. ‘Alī more frequently and, thus, became further exposed to Islām. I also met Bro. ‘Abdul-Ḥameed, the president of the Boston Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at, through this brother. I was extremely impressed by his pious attitude and his tremendous collection of books. Soon, I saw myself going to meetings and becoming more and more inclined towards the teachings of Islām.

Islām’s message of Universality impressed me the most. The fact, that Islām preached the belief in all the prophets of the world, was in itself a great proof of its truth. I saw it as a uniting force. It was amazing to know that prophets were sent to all the different peoples of the world, but they all brought the same message from the One God. That message of how to live with one another was most beautiful to my eyes, music to my ears, and sweet on my tongue. Another reason why I was attracted to Islām was that Islām brought life into all the other prophets and their respective message. For example, when I found out that Jesus Christ was only a

messenger of Allāh, it felt a little strange, but when I saw the love the Muslims displayed for him and how they gave life to his teachings, it immediately became clear to me that Islām had to be the right path for the humanity. The conclusion, I drew from this, was that Islām had taken all the previous teachings and presented them in their purest form: That Islām presented the truth.

I must narrate another incident that deeply affected me. I once went to visit Bro. Ḥameed in his house. There I first saw a prayer book on his desk and then I saw three men, one of them was Ṣūfī Muṭī‘-ur-Raḥmān Bengālī (the then missionary of New York region), performing Ṣalāt together. When I saw the three of them pray in unison, I realized that this was a true brotherhood. It was a real pretty sight and that left an everlasting mark on me. Many other incidents took place during those days that brought me closer to Islām. Bro. Ḥameed used to take me to the prisons where we would preach to the inmates. I was not sure if he was doing the right thing, but after a while it became clear that Islām’s purpose was to reform the people, no matter what their status was, and bring them closer to God. (Incidentally, it was during this time that I met Malcolm Little, later known as Malcolm X.)

When incidents like these continued to occur, I could no longer hold back my desire to accept Islām. Eventually, I accepted Islām through Bro. ‘Alī Muḥtabā. He gladly brought me to Bro. Ḥameed and I filled out a form, thus, changing my faith. For most people, this transition might have presented a problem, but for me it was comparatively easy. The Church that I used to go to in Boston consisted of mostly Harvard faculty and students from all walks of life. Therefore, their teaching about Jesus’ divinity was not very rigid. It was more of a theological school in Christian studies than a devout, worshipping mission. They did not lay too

much emphasis upon the divinity of Jesus Christ. So, when I became a Muslim, it was rather easy for me to accept the true teachings about Jesus. My father, at first, somewhat objected to my decision, but when he met Chuadhry Ghulām Yāsīn, and saw the changes in me, he too recongnized the beauty of the message of Islām. He told us that he was too old to change, but he would like to see me progress in Islām. I certainly felt blessed for all the changes Islām brought within me.

After I became a Muslim, I spent much of my time with other Aḥmadī Muslims (in those days, most of the Muslims in the United States were Aḥmadī Muslims). I firmly believe that it was due to them that I remained steady in my faith. One brother in particular, Missionary Chaudhry Ghulām Yāsīn, always encouraged me to study. I took his advice and went back to school in 1951. During this time, the high schools were offering programs for war veterans who wanted to continue their education at the college level. These programs were geared to help them get into a college. I also took advantage of that. By the Grace of Allāh, I did extremely well. Many of my teachers were impressed by my performance and helped me get admission into a college. I finally had a choice of going to either Harvard or Brandeis. I chose Brandeis because they had an Arabic Studies program. I studied there for four years and later went to McGill University in Canada. All of a sudden, I was blessed with more than I had ever imagined. After McGill, I got a job at the Harvard library. One year later, an offer came along to work in Africa. I had always wanted to go and help the people of Africa, so I immediately took the job and went to Nigeria. It was supposed to be a temporary posting for one year, but I ended up serving there for twenty seven years.

It was during my stay in Nigeria that I visited many of the Muslim cultures like Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, including Rabwah. In 1971-72, when I was in Pakistan for the Annual Jalsa, unfortunately, war broke out between India and Pakistan, and the Jalsa was cancelled. It was, however, a memorable moment in my life, as I saw war planes fly over my head. I enjoyed my stay in Rabwah very much. From Pakistan, I decided to go for Ḥajj. A visa was arranged for me in Karachi and by the blessings of Allāh, I had this great opportunity to perform the Ḥajj. During the Ḥajj rituals, I had a very pleasant surprise. I was on Mount ‘Arafāt when I was informed that there was a certain individual who knew me and wished to speak to me. Much to my surprise, it was our dear brother, Dr Yūsef Lateef: Just another one of Islām’s sign of Universality. Later on, in 1974, I had the opportunity of visiting Qadian, the birth place of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be upon him. This visit had such a great impact upon me that even volumes may not be enough to express my feelings. To walk and pray at the spots where once my Master did, was an unbelievable experience.

I am very thankful to Allāh that I was introduced to Islām through Aḥmadiyyat. I have read a number of books written by other Muslims, but I have not found the depth of knowledge in their books as compared to the literature published by the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. Also the actions displayed by the other Muslims would have probably taken me away from Islām had I not met the Aḥmadī Muslims first. It was only through Aḥmadiyyah Islām that I was shown the path to God. It is only His blessings that have brought me so many good opportunities in life. Today, I continue to believe firmly in Aḥmadiyyah Islām. I have read many books, but the books of Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah have always outshined. I believe in him not only because I have closely studied his life and have found him to be true, but also because Allāh has shown many

signs in his favor, the most vivid ones being that of the two eclipses in the month of Ramaḍān in 1894. How can anyone deny that? People were looking for such a sign, so why did they not believe in it when it was shown to them?

My message to all those who oppose Islām and Aḥmadiyyat is that they should sincerely pray for true guidance. When I talk to Muslims about Aḥmadiyyat, I ask them of their belief in the coming of Jesus. They try to avoid this question on the pretext that it was not important to the faith. On the contrary, I want to tell them, that the belief in the second coming of the Son of Mary is of prime importance as therein lies the answer to our salvation. We must discuss it because it is the sign of our times. It is a part of our faith. They say that the Ḥadīth concerning the appearance of Jesus is weak and that this belief was brought into Islām by the Christians. I tell them that in the Holy Qur’ān, Allāh says:

“Verily, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allāh and a sign from Him.”
(4[Al-Nisā]:172)

It seems, therefore, that they do not even know Islām. We find that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has been reported to have said to every Muslim that when the Messiah appears in the Ummah, that his greetings be conveyed to him. These people have ignored this message of greetings of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. The Qur’ān says:

“And when you are greeted with a prayer, greet ye with a better prayer, or at least return it. Surely, Allāh takes account of all things.” (4[Al-Nisā]:87)

According to this verse, the Muslims should have dearly held the sayings and the desire of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him). If they could not give back a better greeting, they should have, at least,

returned the desire of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Instead, their leaders got involved in the unnecessary discussion of whether the reporters of the Aḥādīth were authentic or not, thereby, misleading the people. I consider this a great insult to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him). I would say to these people that they listened to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad himself, instead of their maulavīs (Muslim clergy). The greetings of Aḥmadiyyat is that of Salām, so they should accept it when they receive an invitation.

My message to those who are sitting on the edge—those who do not oppose the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at, but are not willing to join it—in the words of the Holy Qur’ān, is

Say, “Everyone acts according to his own way,
and your Lord knows full well who is best guided.”
(17[Banī Isrā’īl]:85)

May Allāh enable all of them to open their eyes and see the true beauty of Islām. May Allāh bless the whole world with the greatest blessings of Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām. Āmīn.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Spring 1994.

Jalāluddīn 'Abdul-Lateef

How I Accepted Islām?

I was born in September of 1941 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. My family would be considered as an average, middle class, working family. There were seven of us growing in that household, six brothers and a sister, may God rest her soul in peace. My parents belonged to the Methodist sect of Christianity. My mother was, and still is to a great extent, a religious person. However, my father was not, and I do not recall him going to church that often in my early years, but later on, when I was about twelve, he also started to attend the Church.

I grew up in an average American environment and spent much of my youth in a rather careless manner. Atlantic City was not the gambling town as it is today, but it was a very aggressive society. We had a mix of many different cultures. The city was a major summer resort. I first heard about Islām from a follower of Elijah Muḥammad of the Nation of Islām. His name was Columbus Wayland. He introduced me to some very abstract interpolations of Islām. I didn't hear much more about Islām until much later in my life, when I had moved to New York. There I was re-acquainted with some of my old friends from New Jersey. One of them, Akbar Tshaka, who had turned to be a very religious person, started preaching me the teachings of Islām. At that time I was not



Jalāluddīn ‘Abdul-Lateef

particularly attracted to religion and did things that young men are usually interested in. It was during this period that many young men like myself enrolled into the military. There I noticed that two of my friends had changed their names to Islāmic ones. I thought that was rather courageous because of the political situation in the country at that time. It also impressed me somewhat. I would often talk to them about Islām and the meaning of their names. However, I was still the least bit interested in religion. Quite frankly, neither were the others. It was just that they had changed their names. Other than that, there was nothing else much different about us.

After leaving the military I went to Boston where I got married. I spent some time in Boston before returning to New York. I quickly revived all my old friendships. There were many political and cultural events taking place in New York at that time. I began to take interest in these events and soon I had an exposure to many different ideas and cultures. During this time I was employed with the New York Telephone Company. In August of 1971, the employees, including me, went on a strike. It was at this time that I got a serious exposure to Islām and its philosophy. By now, my friend Akbar had become interested in Eastern philosophy.

He would read a particular book and then give it to me. We would then discuss it together. He picked up these books from 'Ināyat Khān, the person who allegedly introduced Sufism to America. We began reading these books and I became impressed by the extreme differences between the two cultures. I continued to read and discuss books, and continued to live the way I was used to. Then one day Akbar came across a book by the name of the Teachings of Islām. He read the book and was greatly impressed by its contents and the author. On the back of the book, there was a list of centers of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām in the United States. One of these centers was that of Brooklyn, New York. Akbar gave me the book and himself proceeded to the mission house. On his return, he told me of the many spiritual people he had met at the mission house. He said that he met a brother who knew everything imaginable. As excited as he was, it did not strike me that I should stop what I was doing and go to the mission house. I was content with my way of life. By the Grace of God, however, I still continued to read whatever I could get my hands on. After some time, with Akbar's steady persuasion I was convinced that I should go to the Brooklyn mission house myself. The first event that I attended was a Khuddām meeting. I met Nūrrudīn A. Lateef and many other knowledgeable people. After a few of these meetings, I believe it was Akbar who suggested that I should take the bai'at. Akbar had already accepted Islām and was attending all the meetings. I thought that I was not prepared to give up the life I was living. Yet, brothers in the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Movement kept advising me to adopt the Islāmic way of life, which undoubtedly was far superior to the kind of life I was living.

I was finally convinced that without spirituality, and without turning to God, life had no meaning at all. Although I had been raised in a church-going family, I did not feel that

what they taught us in church was absolutely right. Perhaps that was the reason why I had stopped going to church. Later on, when I had a better understanding, I still did not feel satisfaction with the Christian teachings about God. The message of Islām on the other hand satisfied every part of my thinking. This was definitely the turning point in my life.

The most important teaching of Islām to me was the concept of one God. Although I seldom showed an interest for religious activities, I always believed that there was a Supreme Being. I could not, however, accept the Christian belief regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. I used to pity the people who believed in such myths. To me those concepts were ridiculous, and degrading to the human mind. Islām offered the most convincing arguments of a Living, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Almighty God whose will seemed vividly prevailing in all natural activities and the life of every individual human being. In fact, Islām did what Christianity failed to do: to create respect and love for Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the Aḥmadiyyah explanation about the life of Jesus Christ was an eye opener. To know that Jesus, peace be on him, never died on the cross and lived a long life, having successfully completed his divine mission, was absolutely convincing.

After such powerful arguments, I could not remain silent. One day, I mentioned my desire to be formally accepted into Islām to Brother Muḥammad Ṣādiq, who was the president of our New York Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. He expressed a great deal of joy and asked me to fill out the bai'at form the following Sunday. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, on that day in May 1972, at the Archer Street Mission House in Jamaica, New York, Brother Bilāl Sunni 'Alī and I signed the bai'at forms to change our destiny for good. Since that day, I have never looked back to my previous life. Sometimes I ponder as to what made me deserve such great blessings of Allāh, as I

know that I have nothing special about me. Allāh, through His mercy, again guided me to the right answer. Many of my ancestors were brought to this country from West Africa as slaves. Majority of these slaves were Muslims. Perhaps, one day one of my ancestors, in great pain, turned to Allāh and prayed fervently for the true freedom of someone from his progeny. I have no doubt in my mind that I was the result of those prayers. In Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām, I have found that real freedom which I know no one can take away from me. I now pity those who think that they have gained freedom under the law but little do they know that without the true faith, they are slaves of a worse kind. I pray that Allāh grant all of them this real blessing of Islām. Amen.

Not only did I find the teaching of Islām very impressive, but the brothers I met in the community seemed to me to be true models of that teaching. I was highly impressed by Brother Bashīr Afzal, Missionary ‘Abdul-Ghafoor Ṣūfī, and Brother Muḥammad Ṣādiq. All three of them brought me closer to Islām. My friend Akbar and I would often nod our heads in awe after hearing a sermon by Bro. Bashīr Afzal, may Allāh rest his soul in peace.

My wife did not accept Islām at the same time as I did. We used to discuss certain issues, but I never forced her in any way to accept Islām, as that was against its teaching. I continued to pray for her guidance though, and as a result of Allāh’s blessings, after about two years, she asked me to take her to the Mission House, where, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, she accepted Islām.

After my conversion to Islām, I did not encounter any direct protest from either my friends or my family, but I did feel that there was some hesitation in our relationship. I felt that they respected me for the change they saw in me but because our life-styles were now completely opposite to each other, it was not possible to have social interaction at their

terms. As a result, I saw some of my friends drifting away. That did not bother me however, as Allāh replaced them with much more sincere friends from within my new found community. My mother, whom I really cared about, did not object to my accepting Islām. She was very understanding and had no problem calling me by my new name. I still talk to her about Islām, but I think she is set in her ways.

In 1975, Allāh blessed me with the good fortune of visiting Rabwah and Qadian. This was an unforgettable experience of my life. When I walked the holy precincts of Qadian and Rabwah, my heart was filled with affection for Islām. In Qadian, I had the good fortune of sleeping in the room where *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, was born. I went up the Mināratul-Masiḥ and called out adhān from there. This experience gave such a comfort to my body and soul that to this day I can feel it. The blessings of places like Bahishtī Maqbarah, Bait-ud-Du‘ā, and Masjid Mubārak further solidified my faith. It was also during this trip that I met with Miañ Ṭāhir Aḥmad Ṣāḥib, in Rabwah. I was so highly impressed by him, that when I heard that *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh shower His mercy upon him, had passed away, I immediately felt that Miañ Ṭāhir Aḥmad Ṣāḥib was going to be the next Khalīfah. Today, he is the leading source of my moral training and education. I am just amazed at the amount of work he has to handle, with such little help. That fact alone proves that he is a living sign of Allāh. May Allāh continue to keep him in good health and grant him a very long life. Amen.

The steep moral decline in today’s world is obvious. At the same time, there are many civic and religious organizations claiming to reform the world but we have only seen them failing in their promise. The only organization we see succeeding is the Aḥmadiyya Movement in Islām. That is

because it has been ordained by Allāh, and it is His promise that He will grant dominance to this faith over all others. We know that Allāh can not fail. As members of the community, we must constantly strive to preach the message of Islām as our primary duty. We must bring our brethren out of the darkness which seems to have spread all around them.

My advice to those seeking the truth is to always keep an open mind. The media onslaught of misinformation has never been so great. They should not be misled by what might appear as reality. Today truth can only be found in Islām, through the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām. I invite all my countrymen to save themselves from the aggression of Satan, the rejected one of God. There is no peace outside of true Islām. Let us make it, therefore, our lasting abode.

May Allāh dispel the darkness of evil from the world and grant the wisdom to its people to recognize the message of Allāh, brought by the Holy Prophet of Islām, *Ḥaḍrat Muḥammad Muṣṭafā*, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him. Amen.

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Yaḥyā ‘Abdur Raḥmān

How I Accepted Islām

My name is Yaḥyā ‘Abdur Raḥmān. I was born on December 5, 1939 in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the house that I currently live in. This house was purchased by my grandfather who had immigrated to this country from the West Indies in mid 1920s. The house was passed on to my father John and eventually was inherited by me after my father passed away.

My father’s side of the family belonged to the Methodist Church, but my father was not a particularly religious person. My mother, however, was a Christian Scientist and showed a very keen interest in religion. She used to take an active part in the church activities and was an extremely loving person. I was being raised while my grandparents and my aunts still lived in the house. My grandparents, aunts and my mother all loved and pampered me very much. After finishing grammar school, I joined Rindge Technical High School in Cambridge where I wanted to graduate as an electrician. Meanwhile my father purchased a car. He wanted me to learn driving and obtain a license, so I could drive him around. After receiving my license, I started driving my father’s car. Driving became such a passion with me that I almost always craved for it. When I was not driving my father around, I used to take the car out myself, of course, with the permission of my father. This new found hobby of mine distracted me from my studies, resulting in my having

to leave the school without graduating. My craving for driving continued even after I left school. My intense passion for driving got me into the taxi business. Soon after I was licensed as a cab driver by the city of Cambridge, I started my career first from Central Square, but soon I moved to Harvard Square. Harvard Square has always charmed me even up to this day. This square is the hub of most social and business activities around Harvard University. One can find a fine cross section of people from around the world, most of whom are intellectuals and scholars. I always enjoyed talking to these people as I would drive them in my cab to their respective destinations. I gained so much knowledge just by talking to these people that when I used to discuss some of the same issues with my colleagues, they used to be amazed. Some of them jokingly would say to me that I was going to turn into a scientist or a psychiatrist. At the square, while waiting for passengers, I would buy a newspaper from the stand and read it. This habit of mine gradually grew into reading more serious material. Soon I started reading books on all sorts of subjects.

One day I picked up a newspaper published by the Black Muslim community. It seemed very interesting, so I started reading this newspaper on a regular basis. It must be in early 1960s when one day my wife saw the paper that I had inadvertently brought home. My wife had a job in the Christian Science Monitor's library. She asked me if I was interested in reading more about Islām to which I replied in the affirmative. The following day she brought me a voluminous book on Islām from her library. I started reading that book with a great deal of interest. Some of the issues that I had read in the Black Muslims' newspaper seemed to be in contradiction with this book. I was somewhat perplexed, so I decided to talk about these issues with someone who had knowledge about Islām or was a Muslim



Yaḥyā ‘Abdur Raḥmān

himself. It was at this point that Bro. ‘Abdul-Kabīr Jamī became my friend. I posed him some of the questions which had kept me puzzled because of the contractions I had encountered during my reading. Bro. Kabīr gave me some literature published by the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām, and told me that if I was interested in the study of Islām then I should take it from the real Muslims, meaning the Aḥmadi Muslims. I was so impressed by the literature that I requested Bro. Kabīr to provide me with more. He did and soon I was reading the English translation of the Holy Qur’ān. It seemed as if reading Aḥmadiyyah literature had become an obsession with me. During this time Bro. Kabīr had introduced me to some Aḥmadi brothers including Bro. ‘Ābid Ḥaneef, the president of Boston Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. I was highly impressed by each one of these brothers. Each one of them seemed to be the right kind of role model. I started to attend the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at’s meetings and thus learned much more about Islām and Aḥmadiyyat. On one day, I had just returned home from

one of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at meetings when I began to think that God had brought me a long way into Islām. I pondered upon my past life and felt as if I had been driven all along by some kind of a secret Divine Hand to this point. My passion for driving apparently caused me to drop out of school, but on the other hand, the same passion brought me into the profession of a taxi driver which eventually led me towards Islām. I was convinced that God wanted me to join Islām, lead my life according to its teachings and do what I could to propagate Islām to others. With prayers in my heart, I decided to formally join the fold of Islām. I conveyed my decision to Bro. ‘Ābid Ḥaneef who arranged for me to fill out the initiation form. The pledge that I had to make with Allāh at the time of initiation—to abide by the ten conditions (listed at the end of this volume) for the rest of my life—was so forcefully convincing that I literally felt the words touching the inner core of my soul. I was truly undergoing a revolution. I felt as if I was taking a new birth.

After my initiation I set out to learn as much as possible about my new faith. I started reading the Holy Qur’ān regularly and any literature I could lay my hands on, I would read passionately. I received another ‘shock therapy’ when I met with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh shower His mercy on him, in New York. That pleasing personality and charming smile I can never forget. He warmly embraced me and briefly talked to me. Those few moments of my life have left a lasting impression on my mind. After that meeting with the *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, my mission in life has been to preach Islām to others. I prayed that Allāh may grant me strength and resources to do so. One of the ways I started propagation was to keep plenty of Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at literature

available in my cab. I used to hand out some of this literature to my passengers. Many of them appreciated it. I also used to preach Islām to all my friends. Bro. Rafīq Lake, who joined the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at only a few years ago, is a direct reward of these humble efforts by Allāh.

Islām has completely changed my life. Ever since I embraced Islām I never feel upset about anything. Through this faith I have learned that all hardships come from Allāh, but if one remains steadfast then He removes those difficulties, as Allāh Himself says in the Holy Qur'ān about the believers:

When they are afflicted with pain, they say,
from Allāh have we come and to Allāh shall we
return. (2[Al-Baqarah]:157)

In any case, we must remain obedient to Him. For the last few years, I have developed a disease called multiple sclerosis. I have met with other people who have been afflicted by this disease. I find them stricken with morose and hopelessness, but Allāh, through His mercy, has given me enough strength despite this disease that I move about the house and take care of my own needs. I make every effort to attend the Friday Sermon. I cannot offer enough thanks to Allāh for the innumerable blessings that he has bestowed upon me only because of Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām. I have pondered a lot over the question as to why did Allāh pick such a weak person as myself for such a great reward, but I have always ended up listening to this voice from deep within me.

Allāh has full command over all things.
(22[Luqmān]:32)

After I became a Muslim, I wanted to give myself a Muslim name. My Christian name used to be John Douglas Scott. I changed my first name, John, to the Arabic, Yaḥyā. One day as I opened the Holy Qur'ān to read, it opened up at Sūrah

Raḥmān. The name sounded so good that I inadvertently called myself, ‘the servant of Raḥmān’ or ‘Abdur-Raḥmān. I consider this an act of love and mercy of Allāh towards even as humble a person as myself. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh.

In the end, I pray that Allāh may bestow this great reward of Islām upon all of his servants. There are many who are in the grip of Satan and are deprived of this message of peace. I humbly call upon all my Aḥmadī brothers to reach out to those people and remove their misfortune. May Allāh bless us all with His bounties and grant us a firm resolve to continue the Jihād of propagation. Amen.

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Muḥammad `Īsā Jān Khān

Rewards of a Seeker

The author of this biography is a senior member of the Canadian Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. Many of his articles have been published in Al-Furqān, Rabwah, The Daily Al-Faḍl, Rabwah, and The Aḥmadiyyah Gazette, Canada.

I was born in Mosul, Iraq in 1911. My parents were Nestorian Christians and Kurds by descent. The name given to me at my birth was `Īsā. My mother added the word Jān to it which is an expression of love, so I became `Īsā Jān.

My father was an officer in the military under the Ottoman Turks. During World War I, through a treaty with the Ottoman Turkish Government, the British had gained a sphere of influence in Central and Southern Iraq which included Baghdad and Basra. In 1918, the Ottoman Government accused my father of colluding with the British authorities against the sovereignty of the Ottoman Turks. He was eventually sentenced to death, leaving my mother completely helpless and destitute. The only recourse she had was to turn to the British authorities for help. Due to the near anarchic conditions in the country, the British had brought in a number of trained Civil Servants from British India, who were running the day to day affairs of the administration. One of them was Khān Ṣāḥib Miāñ Meḥmūd

Gul who was appointed the Deputy Commissioner in Basra. My mother presented her plight to the Deputy Commissioner's office. Khān Ṣāhib was a kind person. He was moved by the situation of my mother but apparently had no authority to help her in his official capacity. He offered to marry my mother which she accepted and thus Khān Ṣāhib Miāñ Meḥmūd Gul Ṣāhib became my stepfather. My mother became a Muslim after her marriage to my stepfather. Soon, he was appointed as a Trade Assistant to Iran and the family moved to Tehran. My stepfather thought that in order for me to get a good education, I should move to Lahore where one of my stepbrothers, Dr. Miāñ Ghulām Samdalli, was already living and receiving his education. I was entrusted to his supervision. Since my brother had graduated from Muslim High School, he had a very good opinion about that school and so he wanted me also to go to that school. I was thus admitted to this school and assigned to the boarding house. At this time perhaps my stepbrother had the word Muḥammad added in front of my name. My full name thus became Muḥammad 'Īsā Jān.

At school, I got involved in all kinds of athletic activities. My athletic side was better than my academic one as I excelled in soccer and especially boxing, in which I received the top honors of the time and my school retained the boxing trophy for a long time due to my victories. Syed Ghulām Muṣṭafā was our superintendent in the boarding house. He was not only a kind and generous person but sometimes made one feel as if he was an elder member of one's own family. Syed Ghulām Muṣṭafā was also a very religious person. My own life had been such that without any particular religious direction, I had grown up only to respect the religion but saw no compulsion of practicing or following any particular religious faith. Mr. Muṣṭafā once gave me the Urdū book of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised



Muḥammad ʿĪsā Jān Khān

Messiah, peace be on him, *Islāmi Asool Ki Philosophy (The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām)*, which I read and was highly impressed by it. However, my basic attitude towards religion remained the same. A few days later Mr. Muṣṭafā asked my opinion about the book. “Of course! I am highly impressed,” I exclaimed, “It is a great book.” I saw a big smile on Mr. Muṣṭafā’s face. He asked me if I was willing to perform the Bai‘at and join the Aḥmaddiya Muslim Jamā‘at. I did not want Mr. Muṣṭafā to be unhappy with me only because he was such a nice person. So, without thinking of any consequences and without knowing anything about the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at I agreed to perform the initiation procedure. I accompanied Mr. Muṣṭafā to the mosque on the following Friday where he introduced me to Maulavī Muḥammad ‘Alī, whom later on I recognized to be the head of the Lahori Jamā‘at. Mr. Muṣṭafā told the *Maulānā* Ṣāhib that I had come to be initiated into the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. *Maulānā* Ṣāhib did not show any emotions. He looked at his secretary and advised him to enter my name in the books. The secretary asked me a few questions and as I answered, he kept entering the information in the book. My life did not change with this initiation except for occasionally accompanying Mr. Muṣṭafā

to the mosque. I also became aware that the religious environment was full of hate and rage by one sect against the other. Although I did not had much religious knowledge, I was aware of the general beliefs of the Muslims. Among them one being that of Jesus Christ having physically ascended to the heavens and the other that there could not be another prophet until the Day of Judgment. Being a Muslim by name, I ascribed to both these beliefs. Mr. Muṣṭafā had explained to me some of the Aḥmadiyyah beliefs including the beliefs of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at of Qadian. My religious knowledge mostly remained limited to what I heard from others or Mr. Muṣṭafā. Since I was not so much interested in religion, I never bothered to explore or enhance my own knowledge about it.

My family had meanwhile moved to Zahidan in Iran where my stepfather was assigned to the post of the Vice Consul in the British Indian Consulate. During the summer vacation, I would either visit my family in Iran, or with my stepbrother to his ancestral village Surkh Dheri near Mardan (now in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan). A few times I accompanied Mr. Muṣṭafā to his village near Sargodha.

After finishing the high school, I joined Islamia College, Lahore, and lived in their hostel (or dormitory). There I noticed that students sometimes used to engage in an informal religious dialogue. I was also, for the first time exposed to the Christian teachings. Young Christian girls with bibles in their hands used to visit us in our dorms and tried to preach and convert the students to Christianity. I do not remember if they had any success but to this day I have been amazed as to how would someone let these girls go about so freely into the young men's rooms and preach religion to them. I wrote a detailed article on these episodes which was published in *Al-Furqān, Rabwah*, some years ago.

Before my graduation from the college, I once visited

Bahawalpur (then a princely state), on the insistence of a wealthy friend whose family ran a large business firm in that area. The firm's name was H. M. ABDUL RAḤMĀN & SONS. During this visit one of the owners of this firm offered me a lucrative employment. The terms were so attractive that I could not refuse. I was soon made the General Manager of this firm. The firm was housed in a large building in the center of the town. A large furnished apartment on the second floor of this building was given to me for my personal residence. Thus I started a new life. My education had abruptly ended but I could see a bright future for myself. I started living a very comfortable life. My stepfather had finished his last leg of service at Quetta, Baluchistan, (now in Pakistan). I was always fascinated by the character of this city. Quetta's population consisted of various ethnic groups including Pushtoons, Afghans, Iranis, Punjabis, Hazaras and of course, the British. The city was almost completely destroyed by the earthquake of May 31, 1935. The British Indian government rebuilt it in a modern style. The climate was just ideal for a break from the summer heat of anywhere else in India. I made a lot of friends in Quetta with whom I kept up until very late in life.

As mentioned earlier, my life in Bahawalpur had become very comfortable. The owners had handed over almost all their responsibilities to me. They had given me complete freedom to run the business as I wished. They were highly impressed by my hard work and honesty and would proudly and frequently make a mention of it. Since I could fluently speak Arabic, Persian, Pushto, and English, I became very popular with the members of the family of Nawāb (Ruler) of Bahawalpur State. They used to frequently bring their guests for shopping, who used to be diplomats from different countries. This 'Royal' patronage gave a big boost to the business. On the other hand my private life was nothing

more than that of a playboy. I wasted a lot of money on all kinds of idle pursuits. My two younger brothers were also living with me by this time. I had a small office inside the store where I used to do the necessary paper work. However my management responsibilities used to keep me on the floor for most of the day. This used to be a typical day of my life.

In 1940, an event happened in my life that completely turned the rest of my life around. It happened so that one day I noticed a modestly dressed man stop in front of the store on the sidewalk. He started to gaze in amazement at the products on display in the glass case. He spent a long time doing that. I did not take any particular notice but this man started coming back everyday. He would stop at the same spot and watch the products for quite a while. I felt a bit uneasy about this situation so I asked one of my attendants if he knew who the man was. To this the attendant responded in negative. The following day when the same man appeared again, I approached him and requested him to come inside the store and let me, if I could, help him. He came inside and accompanied me to my office without any hesitation. I offered him a chair to sit down and asked him as to what brought him over there. He gave me his name as Saifullāh Fārooq, and further told me that he was a teacher in a local school, and because of prejudice against him by a colleague, he had lost his employment. He told me that because he was an Aḥmadī Muslim, some people carried a grudge against him. His story was very pathetic and sad. I decided in my mind that I would help him with whatever I could. Since I had plenty of accommodation in the building, I offered Mr. Farooq to come and live in the building. At first he hesitated but on further assurance by me, he agreed. The same evening, I accompanied him to his place, picked up some of his necessary items and returned to my apartment. Mr.

Farooq was now living with us in the same building. He used to pray five times a day and recite the Holy Qur'ān in the morning and evening. Besides, he had a very polite mannerism and a charming personality.

I found out that Mr. Farooq possessed a lot of religious knowledge. Sometimes we used to engage in healthy discussions. I used to be the one mostly asking questions and listening attentively to him. It was during one of these discussions that he mentioned that the Holy Qur'ān provided ample evidence of the continuity of prophethood. This angered me somewhat as according to my limited knowledge and hearsay, my belief was that it was an act of apostasy to believe that prophets could appear after the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him. I was sure that Mr. Farooq would never be able to prove what he had just said. So, I promised him that if he could show at least one verse of the Holy Qur'ān that would without qualification or interpretation prove that prophets could continue to appear then I would without further ado, accept Aḥmadiyyat and make initiation the same very day. Mr. Farooq first thought that I was saying that only because I was angry. He therefore tried to avoid any further confrontation but on my insistence, he asked me to bring the Holy Qur'ān which I immediately did. Mr. Farooq opened the Holy Qur'ān at Sūrah Al-A'rāf and giving it back to me asked me to read verse 36. I started reading the verse which goes like this:

O children of Adam! if Messengers come to you from among yourselves, rehearsing My Signs unto you, then whoso shall fear God and do good deeds, on them shall come no grievance nor shall they fear. (7[Al-A'rāf]:36)

I read the verse once but could not believe my eyes. I found myself reading the verse over and over again. Even

though I had completed the traditional reading of the Holy Qur'ān many a time previously but I had not known until that day that this verse was from the same Holy Book. It appeared to me that I was reading that verse for the first time. I was reading that verse and at the same time completely engrossed in the mixed emotions of embarrassment, shame and a strange effect of the discovery of Truth. I must have been dumbfounded by Mr. Farooq, who politely called out to me and asked me of my thoughts about that verse. I remained silent for a few moments, still wondering about the discovery but then I could not hold back my feelings for too long. I told Mr. Farooq that he was right and that I was prepared to fulfill my promise, that is, to accept the Truth and join the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. This event had such a profound effect on my life that I could not sleep all night. I kept wondering about my previous life, about how I never cared about religion and about how I wasted my time and money in the activities totally averse to the Faith. I prayed to Almighty God to forgive me and from then on keep me on the straight path. I remembered the Qur'ānic prayer:

Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after Thou hast guided us; and bestow on us mercy from Thyself; surely, Thou alone art the Bestower. (3[Āl Imrān]:9)

I started thinking about the existence of God and how He had made arrangements for the guidance of mankind. I went deep into my thoughts trying to reason out everything around me. I thought about Mr. Farooq's life who was jobless and did not possess much yet he was apparently living a happy and clean life. On the other hand, I had everything one could wish for and yet I was so restless. This compelled me to rationalize some other issues. Why was I so extravagant while many others were struggling so hard to earn

themselves just one square meal a day? I wore expensive clothes and possessed a large wardrobe full of them while others could not even afford one modest pair of dress. I was living in a large building but many others did not even have a mud house for a shelter. I struggled in great agony with questions like these and remained awake. There was a resolution forming up alongside all this debate in my mind. The resolution was that I would give up that kind of life and adopt a modest living. The following morning I was a changed person. I bought myself some very simple dress, got rid of all my Western style suits, stopped shaving my beard, gave up smoking and all other vices that I had picked up over the years. I filled out the Bai'at form and mailed it to Qadian. A few days later, I visited Qadian and met with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah , may Allāh be pleased with him. I performed the Bai'at at his hands at which time he prayed for me. That magnetic personality I will never be able to forget. I could see in him the real heart of a father, a teacher, a preacher, a friend and a leader. I saw that spiritual glow on his face that might have otherwise sounded to me like fiction. He displayed, and spoke with, passion and tenderness.

I returned to Bahawalpur but my heart was left behind in Qadian. I found myself reading the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at literature most of the time. Soon I had gained enough knowledge so I could preach the claims of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, to others. Meanwhile my stepfather had retired and the family had moved to the village. I had been frequently visiting them and during one of these visits, I got engaged to the daughter of a wealthy and influential landowner from a neighboring village. I wrote a letter to my family informing them of my conversion. I had hoped that they would be pleased to know that my ways had changed and that I had

become a true Muslim but to my surprise, the response was just the opposite. My mother arrived in Bahawalpur within days of the receipt of my letter. She would cry and beg me to give up “Qadianiyyat.” She even threatened me that she would kill herself by jumping from the roof of the building, if I did not listen to her. My mother’s pleas were heart rendering and no matter what I did to calm her she would not stop. I was faced with a choice between my mother and my faith. Allāh granted me the strength to remain steadfast to my faith. After all else failed, my mother pleaded before the owners of the business to remove me from the employment but the owners were not about to get rid of me so easily. One of the owners did advise me that my faith was a matter of my personal choice but I should be careful in discussing it with everybody as that could harm me down the road. My mother finally picked up my two younger brothers and took them back home on the pretext that I would be a ‘bad’ influence on them. On her return my mother discussed the situation with my stepfather who advised that my marriage should not be delayed any further. I was asked to take some leave of absence and return to the village for the marriage. I did accordingly. While preparations were underway, I realized that everybody was asking the question about my conversion to the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. However, on the day of the marriage, there was a big fuss raised over this issue by some. My stepfather told me that I should go before the people who had gathered for the wedding ceremony and make an announcement that I was not an Aḥmadi. I politely told him that I could not lie as the religion did not permit doing so under any circumstances. Hearing my reply, he lost his temper. He went inside and returned with a shotgun. Pointing the shotgun at me, he yelled that I had the last chance to do as he commanded or else I should prepare to die. I said nothing and stood still. A few moments passed and then I suddenly saw his hands drop

on his sides in dismay. People had started to leave the wedding scene. My stepfather went inside the house without saying anything. A short while later, my would be father-in-law came out and started talking to me in a very friendly and mild tone. He told me that he had no objection over my being an Aḥmadī. He said that I should make the announcement as my stepfather had advised so that the wedding ceremony could take place. After the marriage, he said it was my business what faith I professed and followed. I again politely told him that such an act would amount to deception and I was not prepared to deceive anyone, knowingly. In short, the marriage ceremony was canceled with a lot of resentment. I left the village and returned to Bahawalpur.

I began a new life at Bahawalpur. I used to get involved in religious dialogues with anyone who showed even the slightest desire. I noticed that my old friends were becoming uneasy with me and after some time, one by one, they all quit. The business was still going good but a lot of people showed some kind of animosity towards me. Some people had even complained to the owners that I was devoting more time to my faith and not concentrating enough on the affairs of the business. Some others had falsely accused me of stealing from the business. One day, one of the owners called me and told me that he did not believe what the people said because, he said, he knew me too well, but he firmly advised me that it was important for me to keep my faith to myself for as long as I worked for him. I thought he was right but when I returned and took an account of the situation, I knew that no matter how hard I tried, with my new found religious vigor, it was impossible for me to hide my faith. I knew that if I continued to work there, that business was bound to fail and I would be held responsible for that failure. After a lot of pondering and praying to Allāh, I decided to resign and leave

my fate to Allāh. The owners were shocked to see my resignation. They tried very hard to talk me out of that ‘foolishness’ but I insisted that my decision was final. Finally, before letting me go, the senior owner invited me to a dinner where he offered that if I changed my mind at any time, I would be welcome back. I kept up with the owners for some time but as life became more involved in other ways, I lost contact with them.

I came to Qadian. I had completely lost love for money and seemed to have no desire for any worldly gains any more. I had decided to settle down in Qadian and modestly live out the rest of my life in the service of Islām. *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be pleased with him, however, advised me that I must look for a dignified work and that my attitude may be attributed to laziness which Islām was opposed to. He very affectionately advised that I should try the army. World War II was at its peak. Japan was making a lot of gains in South East Asia. Japanese troops had advanced as far as Burma. On the appeals of the Indian political leaders, people were joining the Armed Forces in hordes. I was easily selected in the Army. During my stay in Qadian I had met a number of the companions of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, may peace be on him, who were all nothing but angels, dressed in men’s clothing. One of them, *Ḥaḍrat Maulānā* ‘Abdul-Lateef Bahawalpurī, may Allāh be pleased with him, arranged my marriage with the daughter of *Ḥaḍrat Maulānā* ‘Aṭa Muḥammad Ṣāhib, may Allāh be pleased with him, and thus I got married before leaving for my tenure of duty in the army.

After a short training period in Calcutta, my unit was flown to Burma, near Rangoon. My unit stayed there till the end of War. During the War, I had decided that on my

return, I would start a modest business of my own, and despite an offer of a commission in the army, I preferred to do what I thought I could do best. I moved to Quetta where I had known a lot of friends. I started a small business with the help of some Aḥmadī friends. My wife and son of a few months also had moved to Quetta. The business had started to pick up and I was pleased with my life. A year or so later, in August of 1947, the partition of India took place, creating Pakistan as an independent country. Two provinces, namely, Punjab and Bengal were literally divided in half. Qadian became part of the East Punjab in India. The partition, unfortunately resulted in the Hindu-Muslim sectarian clashes. A large number of people were killed. Despite efforts to control the massacre, there seemed no end in sight. Muslims thus started migrating to Pakistan and the Hindus to India. Many people were killed while traveling to the borders. Sensing the danger, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah made an appeal for Aḥmadī volunteers to be sent to Qadian for the protection of sacred places and innocent civilians and other Muslims who had gathered in Qadian. As soon as his call reached me, I decided to close my business, leave my family in the hands of Allāh and proceed to Qadian. A detailed account of this whole episode has been published in *Al-Furqān*, *Rabwah*, and the *Tarīkh-i-Aḥmadiyyat (The History of Aḥmadiyyat* by *Maulānā* Dost Muḥammad Shāhid *Ṣāhib*.) During this expedition, my left leg was severely wounded by two machine gun bullets. All preparations for the amputation of my leg had been made in the military hospital. At this time, my master, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be pleased with him, showed very special concern for me. His prayers and personal attention kept the surgeon from amputating my leg. The doctor later on told me that it was only a miracle that I was even alive, as, he said, I

had been bleeding profusely all the way from Amritsar to Lahore. I knew that the prayers of the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ had even chased the death away. May Allāh shower countless blessings upon the soul of that great and true lover of God. Amen. My leg carries the scar vividly, to this day. This has been a continuous reminder of my weaknesses and Allāh's great favors. During my absence from Quetta, the business had been looted away. I tried to reestablish it but because of lack of capital it seemed impossible. I then accepted a civilian job at a military installation where I worked for the next twenty years, finally retiring in 1968. Meanwhile, Allāh rewarded me with five sons and three daughters. By the grace of Allāh, all my children are very well placed and are living in four countries. My grandchildren so far, have numbered thirty in all. In 1975, I migrated to Canada and only by the grace, mercy and kindness of Allāh, I have been living in great comfort ever since.

My life has been a clear example of Allāh's mercy towards His humble creature. Sometimes I look back at my life in amazement and wonder as to what made me deserve all these blessings from Allāh. I have seen trials and tribulations throughout my life, but according to His promise, Allāh kept me safe from every single danger and gave me way beyond my needs. As a child, in Basra, I remember having drowned once in River Tigris. Upon recovery from coma, I was told that a fisherman got my still body out of the water. At another occasion, I fell headlong from the roof top of my house. People thought that I had died but for some mysterious reason, Allāh saved my life. Once in Sargodha, in Mr. Muṣṭafā's village, while riding an obstinate horse I fell from its back with one of my feet locked in the stirrup. The horse dragged me in that position for quite some distance until my foot freed up. I learned only after regaining consciousness, how close to death I had come. In 1953, the

mullās in Pakistan had started violent movement against the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. At their instigation, the violence had reached Quetta also. I was accompanying Dr. Major Maḥmūd Aḥmad when we were attacked by the mob. Major Maḥmūd became a martyr in that attack. This incident left an indelible mark on my memory. May Allāh always bless the pious soul of Major Maḥmūd, *Shahīd*. Amen.

I am grateful to Allāh, for His continuous favors upon me. There has never been a moment in my life when I did not experience His rewards. I have experienced numerous signs of the acceptance of prayers, after I joined the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. Many a time through clear dreams, Allāh comforted me and provided me counsel to my concerns. No amount of thanks to Allāh will ever be sufficient for His favors. Aḥmadiyyat is the greatest blessing. I wish and pray that the whole World join the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at, soon as the real salvation can only be found here. I wish to remind those who have been blessed with this great reward that they must prize the high value of it. They must make every effort to protect this precious blessing, as God forbid, losing this would mean losing all. May Allāh continue to grant victories upon victories to our Jamā‘at in the Jihād of propagation and may we all remain united like a rock behind the shield of our beloved Imām, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah , may Allāh support him and grant him success. Āmīn.

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Rafiq Ahmad Lake

How I Accepted Islām

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on July 18, 1944. My parents came to settle in the United States from Jamaica, in the West Indies. My Parents separated early in my childhood; therefore, I do not have much memories of my father. My mother was a very religious lady. One thing that I do remember about my father is that he was always reading a book. My mother never spoke ill of my father and always told me that he was a gentleman.

We used to attend an Episcopal Church, but, later on, switched to the Roman Catholic Church. I attended both public as well as a Catholic school where I lived in the boarding house. During my stay at the boarding school, when I was about twelve years old, I stopped believing in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, peace be on him. My reason at that time was very simple. When I would read in the Bible, “Father, why hast Thou forsaken me,” (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34) I would ask myself: If Jesus was God then why was he so helpless as not to be able to save even himself from the cross. This was a troubling question for me which no one could adequately explain. I would present this particular verse of the Holy Bible to everybody that I considered had the knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures but no one could satisfy me. I had some good time at the boarding school but some of the things that I witnessed over there are of a nature that decency forbids me to write any further about it. I



Rafiq Aḥmad Lake

attended one more year of the public school and then ended my education in the ninth grade. After school, I fell with bad company which kept me away from home for most of the time. My time was, unfortunately, mostly spent on the streets.

My first recollection of Islām was of hearing of the Nation of Islām and of Malcolm X. Since I have always been a boxing fan, I was also fascinated by Cassius Clay, later to be known as Muḥammad ‘Alī. I used to read their newspaper quite frequently. This newspaper, although interesting in many ways, never moved me in a spiritual way. I found a great deal of hatred in this newspaper directed towards the Whites and people belonging to other Faiths. I was raised in a home which had not known any prejudice. I had never heard my mother say anything against anyone on the basis of their color or religious beliefs. I used to hear such things outside of my house but such derogatory remarks only made me upset. I used to wonder why some people put themselves down to such a low level.

It was either the late sixties or early seventies, when I met, John Douglas Scott, now known as Brother Yaḥyā ‘Abdur Raḥmān. I met him through another dear friend, Ron Bacon. Ron had told me that he also had a Muslim name, Aḥmad

Ḥakīm. He further disclosed to me that he attended the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at’s meetings and also the Jum‘ah prayers whenever he could. This brother recently attended our annual convention in Washington DC as a guest. He was much impressed by Masjid Baitur-Raḥmān and speeches of the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ. He admitted having been very moved by that experience. I pray that Allāh bring him in the fold of the True Islām as soon as possible. Amen. Anyway, my friendship with Brother Raḥmān continued to grow. After he joined the Aḥmadiyyah Movement, he used to tell us all the good things about Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. He would not hesitate to carry out a dialogue with me on the issues on which we held opposing views. He always seemed to come out with powerful arguments in support of his views. In the end, I always seemed to be surrendering to his viewpoint. In so doing, I found myself respecting Brother Raḥmān more and more. He undoubtedly, remained my best friend and nothing else, over the years. He used to give me literature to read. I admired the literature as it seemed to contain very valuable and scholarly work. I knew it was the Truth as my heart was witnessing it. However, I was hesitant to take the further step lest my conduct should betray myself. As Brother Raḥmān started to move up in age and I started looking at my life, he recommended to me that I prayed to God for guidance. This was another of his favors to me. May Allāh reward him abundantly. I started to pray vigorously for myself as Brother Raḥmān had advised. I would ask Allāh for guidance and nothing else. In answer to my prayer, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, Allāh through His grace, said to me, “Go to my mosque.” I suddenly realized that that was where Brother Raḥmān used to go to. I prepared myself and proceeded to the mosque. Once at the mosque, I instantly felt accepted and welcomed by everybody. The members met me very courteously. There was a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity about me but no one tried to force me to join the

membership. There was an incident that took place over here which might appear to be a minor one to many people but as I witnessed it, my heart was touched so deeply that it changed the course of my life for ever.

It happened so that a meeting of Majlis Anṣārullāh was being held downstairs. I was made to relax in a chair upstairs. I saw about twelve to thirteen children gathered there. They turned the TV on and started watching a Basketball game in which one of the famous stars was also playing. While the game was on, the person in charge of the children came in and told them to turn off the TV as such a thing was not permitted in the House of Allāh. Besides, he said, that it would make Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef (the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at’s president) very unhappy. I expected that the children would get upset over it but not one of them said anything. They immediately turned off the TV set and got busy in other things. I was simply amazed at the sight of such a perfect example of obedience by the children. There was something spiritual about it. I inadvertently said to myself, “This is where I want to be.” The decision to become a Muslim and join the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at was thus made for me by the children.

I mentioned to Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef about my desire to get initiated into the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. He had me fill out the Bai‘at form and arranged to introduce me to the other members of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. In February 1992, on a Sunday afternoon, after a regular Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at meeting, a short ceremony was held, in which I repeated the vows of the Bai‘at. Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef then spoke briefly, introducing me to the audience. At this occasion someone referring to me said, “He is the closest to Allāh, among us.” Upon this, Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef replied, “Sure he is! He just got rid of all his past sins and now he has no sins.” Those words were so soothing that

I felt as if hundreds of pounds of weight had come off my shoulders. Seeking hereby the help and mercy of Allāh, I do not wish to feel that burden ever again. May Allāh continue to guide me in the right direction. Amen. From Allāh do we come, and to Him shall be the return.

I love reading the Holy Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and Sunnah and the books of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. I had read some of these books before Islām but the same words touch me in a different way now. Through these words, I experience a spiritual relationship with my Lord. It is a different experience altogether. No pleasure can be more than the pleasure of seeking nearness to Allāh. I listen to the Friday sermons of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, very intently and find pearls and gems of wisdom in there. After the Bai'at, on my request, the Khalīfatul-Masīḥ very affectionately gave me the name Rafīq Aḥmad of which I am very humbly proud of.

In the end, I pray for those who are still deprived of this great reward that Allāh show all of them this True path of His and enable them to join the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at soon. Amen.

I also request all my brothers to kindly pray for me that Allāh keep me steadfast in His way and that no hardship, howsoever big it may be, deter me from Allāh. Amen.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Winter 1994-95.

'Alī Murtazā

How I Accepted Islām

My name is 'Alī Murtazā. I was born on May 18, 1952. I live in Brooklyn, New York. I am married and have three children, one girl and two boys. I was born and raised in Eagle Rock, North Carolina, which is in Wake County. At the time of birth, my parents had named me Leonard L. Jones. My family at Eagle Rock was a typical African American Southern Baptist family, meaning you went to church on Sundays from morning until noon. Then the regular service carried over to mid afternoon until 1:30 or 2:00 PM, depending on if the preacher was long winded or not. Religion was always a major part of my life, as the women in my family saw to that. There were prayer meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday night, Bible class on Friday night and church on Sunday.

It was during my younger years in North Carolina that I started to question the concept of the divinity of Christ. I left Eagle Rock, N.C., when I was fourteen years old and went to Atlantic City, New Jersey, to live with my mother. I stayed there until 1972, the year I joined the United States Navy. While I was in the navy, my mother passed away. I decided to settle in New York after my military tour was over. When I got to New York, I was advised by my mother's best friend to look up her son, Akbar Musafiri Tshaka, to help me get settled. So, in the summer of 1975, I met Akbar and was immediately impressed with his name and his looks, or I

should say style, as he was what we called “hip.” Akbar invited me to have dinner with him at a local Indian restaurant. This was the first time I had ever tasted Indian food, and I fell in love with the food instantly. We ate and talked about the world and Islām. As I did not know anything about Islām, Akbar gave me a book, as a gift. The book was entitled, “The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām” by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadian. This was to be one of many books given to me by Akbar. Through reading this book and others, I developed a thirst for knowledge about Islām, and I started to read anything I could find on the subject. I became overwhelmed with the character and teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the prayers that he would recite, and all the effort his followers took to preserve his actions, sayings, and other details of his life. I became particularly interested in the Sufi books as they brought me in touch with the beauty, fragrance, and love of Islām. Coupled with the book of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, about Jesus in India, my belief in the divinity in Jesus was removed so completely as if I never believed in it. I guess in a way I never did.

In 1977, I took an overseas job which landed me in Iran. I could not believe I was in a land where Muslim saints had been born, lived, and died. I was moved by the warmth that the Iranian people extended to strangers. Here I was befriended by a Persian brother by the name of Hussein Rajabī, he became my guide, teacher and friend. Hussein gave me a book entitled “Nahjul-Balāghah of *Ḥaḍrat* ‘Alī.” This book increased my knowledge even more as I read his eloquent and spiritually deep sermons. In Iran, during the summer of 1977, Hussein Rajabī took me to an unfinished mosque on the outskirts of Tehran called “Hussayniyya Haiet Benī Fāṭimah” where I accepted Islām at the hand of



‘Alī Murtazā

Ayatollah Nassere Makareme Shirazy. My stay in Iran was short but the memories will last me all my life.

In August of 1977, I returned to New York with a new religion, and found myself a stranger in my own country as there was such a contrast between the Islāmic society of Iran and the Non-Islāmic society of America. Thus began my spiritual Jihād with myself as everything I used to do that was Un-Islāmic became repugnant, and I found myself becoming more of a loner. My life was going through such an upheaval during this time that I feared losing what I had gained through Islām as I started to lose touch with the Islāmic connections I had made within the Aḥmadiyyah Community when the mission house was moved out of Brooklyn. I stayed caught up in this dilemma until around 1991 during the Gulf Crisis.

It was at this time that I felt an intense need to take control of my life and decide if I was going to be a Muslim or something else. So I prayed to Allāh for guidance. Prior to this I had a dream during Ramaḍān of 1984. In the dream, I saw the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him, laying his hands on the afflicted people and healing them one by one. I had been summoned to be among the people being healed. I always remembered this dream

and its details.

During the Gulf Crisis, Akbar and I started to have night vigils on the phone discussing the ramifications of the war. It was during one of these conversations that Akbar informed me that the Aḥmadiyyah Community was having a Qur'ānic exhibition at a hotel in New York City and suggested we get together and attend. At this exhibition I met Brother Nazīr Ayāz, President of the New York Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. Ayāz Ṣāhib invited Akbar and myself to the upcoming Muṣliḥ Mau'ūd Day meeting at the Jamaica Queens mission house. We accepted his invitation and when I entered the mosque it was like coming home especially when I saw Nūrrudīn 'Abdul-Latīf and 'Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm (during 1979 Nūrrudīn invited me to his home and gave me some instructions in learning how to read Arabic along with some books about *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Aḥmadiyyat. When the Muṣliḥ Mau'ūd Day meeting concluded, Brother Nazīr Ayāz made the announcement that there were two Aḥmadīs who had been away from the community for a while and he asked the congregation to give us Salāms to welcome us back. As I was not an Aḥmadī, I wanted to correct Ayāz Ṣāhib's statement, and right at that moment I knew what I had been looking for, and I knew what had been keeping me from Aḥmadiyyat. I knew that to become an Aḥmadī one had to accept the ten conditions of bai'at. In the past, I did not feel I could live up to the standard that the bai'at represented, but at that instant I saw that in order to become purified, it could only be done by accepting those ten conditions. In short, I had to give up hell to obtain paradise. So on March 10, 1991. I accepted Aḥmadiyyat through *Maulānā* Mukhtār Aḥmad Cheema, during the Khilāfat of our beloved Khalīfatul-Masīḥ, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah.

Since becoming an Aḥmadī I have had the blessings from Allāh to meet the Khalīfah several times, each one better than before, visited Rabwah, and Qadian, and met the righteous people of both places. Additionally, Allāh has blessed me with spiritual experiences that have increased my faith and made me to understand and to fear and to love Allāh.

I conclude this brief outline of my acceptance of Islām and Aḥmadiyyat with:

Subḥānallāhi Wa Bi-Ḥamdihī, Subḥānallāhil-‘Aẓīm.
Allāhumma Ṣalli ‘Alā Muḥammadin Wa Āli Muḥammad.

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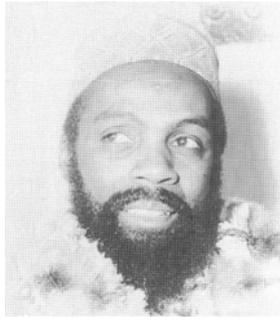
'Abdur Raqeeb Walī

How I Accepted Islām

I was born in Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1932. My family lived under a strict religious environment, although I do not remember that any member of my family was particularly strict about imposing their views upon others. My parents were Christians and belonged to the 'Church of God and Saints of Christ.' The members of this church considered themselves to be the Lost Tribes of the House of Israel. The membership was predominantly Afro-Americans, and were mainly settled on the East coast of the United States.

My grandfather was a minister in the church, and my grandmother was called an elder. As far as I remember, both of them lead a very pious life. My grandfather used to love perfumes. Whenever he visited us, we could tell from the scent in the air that he had arrived. We would all rush to gather around him as he had such a loving and charming personality.

My early education was through the Public School system. I was doing fine until I got into the high school. At this stage, I somehow lost interest in my studies and eventually dropped out of the High School in 1949 without graduating. That same year I moved to Boston where I joined a group of musicians, who used to play in a night club. One of the members of the group once expressed his desire to acquire a copy of the Holy Qur'ān so he could read it. I learned from somebody that there was a Muslim by the name of Khalīl



‘Abdur Raqeeb Walī

Maḥmūd, who worked in the Harvard University. I met this brother and mentioned to him about our need of the Holy Qur’ān. This brother was very hospitable. After only a few moments of our introduction, I felt as if we had always been very close friends. He got me the Holy Qur’ān, and before we parted, he expressed his desire to me that I visited him frequently if possible. I promised that I would do so. I started visiting Brother Khalīl Maḥmūd often. He introduced Islām to me in a very pleasant manner. I found out from him that he himself was a convert to Islām. I had become very fond of him and perhaps that was the main reason, why I wanted to visit him more often. He proved to be a good friend. The time spent with him was never wasted as one always learned some pieces of wisdom from him. It was amazing to see the amount of religious knowledge that he possessed. As I started to learn more and more about Islām, my urge to meet this brother grew even stronger. The Islāmic teachings had undoubtedly, started to influence me. Brother Zaigham, who was the Aḥmadiyyah regional missionary, used to visit the Boston area, from time to time. Whenever he visited, Brother Khalīl Maḥmūd invited me to meet with him. I had grown fond of the missionary as well. In his company, I not only learned more about Islām but other religions as well. Once

Brother Zaigham debated with a non-Aḥmadī Muslim from Harvard University on the subject of Khātām-an-Nabiyyīn. I was amazed by the superb quality of arguments presented by the missionary as opposed to his opponent who seemed to have no clear argument in support of his beliefs. In the end, the missionary left his opponent speechless. This debate had the greatest impact upon me as far as my own faith was concerned. I began to think seriously about the truth of Islām as presented by the Aḥmadiyyah Movement. Soon, I was so impressed that I decided to join the Movement. It is ironic that during one of those days, in 1958, a non-Aḥmadī friend gave me a book entitled, Aḥmadiyyat or the True Islām. Little did this friend know that he was actually converting me to Aḥmadiyyat, the True Islām. After I finished reading that book, I visited Brother Khalīl Maḥmūd and requested him to accept my initiation into Islām. He was immensely pleased and brought me a Bai‘at or initiation form, which I filled out and signed away without any hesitation. Allāh had thus provided me the right guidance. It was a day of great delight for me as I thanked Allāh for His Mercy and Kindness.

After the Bai‘at, I felt that it was only the beginning. Islām demanded that I became a good Muslim not merely by name but in deed as well. I started attending Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at meetings where I was introduced to other Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at members, including Brother ‘Ābid Ḥaneef, who was the President of the community. However, I soon lost the company of Brother Khalīl Maḥmūd as he moved to Africa on a career assignment.

I had married soon after I had moved to Boston but that marriage did not last too long. After becoming a Muslim, I had desired very much that my wife became a Muslim just as well but despite my hard work, I realized that she would not budge from her old ways. I could tolerate anything else but



‘Abdur Raqeeb Walī with Mas‘ūd Aḥmad Dehlavi Ṣāḥib,
then Editor Al-Faḍl Rabwah, and Anwar Hussain Ṣāḥib
in San Francisco.

one thing, alcohol. I had persuaded my wife to give up drinking alcohol but she could not. Once she herself told me that it was all right with her if we separated. I did not see any rationale in staying in that marriage either, so we divorced.

In 1968 Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. He was a great Civil Rights leader. His death in that cause had brought about some realization especially among the political leaders. Many opportunities thus opened up for the Afro-Americans to improve their situation. I took advantage of one of the scholarships that I could avail of. I joined Brandeis University to complete my education. I did this despite my two full-time jobs. By the grace of God Almighty, I received a Bachelor’s degree in 1974. During this time, I was also elected the president of Boston Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. Somehow, Allāh gave me the strength to carry out all my responsibilities, amicably. One of the brothers, Bashīr by name and who was originally from India, once asked me to visit Qadian. This brother had seen in a dream that I was to sign my Nikāḥ papers within the following six months. Exactly six months later I visited Qadian. Qadian was beyond

my imagination. The spiritual impact it had over me is unforgettable. Brother Bashīr had arranged my meeting with my would-be wife's parents. I visited their house. In short, I got married in a simple ceremony. After our marriage, I found out that my father-in-law was slightly reluctant about our marriage but my mother-in-law had seen a dream in which she was shown the words, I shall protect your daughters, written on a green banner. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh, we have had a very successful marriage. Allāh has rewarded us with four beautiful children. I moved to San Francisco in 1977 and eventually to Merced, California, where I am currently living with my family. I work as a Muslim Chaplain in three of the State's prisons.

Once I had an opportunity to go to Saudi Arabia and Nigeria to teach English language in those countries. Although these visits were short but they left immeasurable effect on my memories. In Nigeria, I was particularly impressed by the work of an Aḥmadī brother, Dr. Ziauddīn. He was nothing but an angel. Once during my stay in Nigeria, cholera epidemic broke out. Dr. Ziauddīn worked relentlessly, round the clock, and going door to door, during this epidemic. Sometimes, he would rush to help even in the middle of the night. He provided free services and medicine, and thus by himself saved hundreds of lives. To me, Dr. Ziauddīn's life was a perfect example of a true Muslim. I am convinced that the quiet and peaceful revolution that is being brought about in the whole world today is the direct result of the true Messianic touch of *Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad*, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) and his *Khulafā* (Successors). I am convinced that by reviving the institution of *Khilāfat* in Islām, Allāh has demonstrated his ultimate virtue of mercy upon the mankind. I have met *Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad*, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh have mercy on him, and *Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad*,



Walī is addressing a function, while *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, later Khalīfatul-Masiḥ IV, is presiding.

Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, a number of times. I truly believe that without these Khulafā, Aḥmadīs would have met the same fate as had millions of other Muslims. My humble message to all Aḥmadīs therefore is to regard their faith as the most valuable virtue. Remain steadfast to Khilāfat, and in turn you will be protected from Satan.

May Allāh continue to keep us on the right path and bring all those into the fold of the true Islām who have not yet recognized the voice of the Imām of our times. Āmīn.

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'Aṭāul Jalāl Nūruddīn

How I Accepted Islām

My name is 'Aṭāul Jalāl Nūruddīn, generally known as simply, Jalāl. I was born on August 16, 1949 in Dayton, Ohio. My name at birth was James Marcus Jones. I lived with my mother who was a single parent but was largely responsible for raising me and my two sisters. I remember having seen my father when he had reunited with the family briefly. My parents eventually divorced, leaving me and my sisters to the care of my mother. I frequently visited my paternal grandparents who lived only around the corner from us. My Grandfather Jones would occasionally take me to the church with him. I basically did this to stay in the company of my grandfather without any interest in the church itself. This went on until I was 15. When I look back at my life, I feel that my visits to the church gave me some religious foundation and made me believe in God. I never became a devout Christian but I did not mind going to church, occasionally.

My family was relatively poor but I never realized that, as all my childhood needs were being provided for by my mother. My older sisters also took good care of me. My mother was a very loving person but did not seem to pay attention to religion. I remember that once at the age of about 14, I asked her about the purpose of all the creation and about our own. She could see that something was disturbing me. She hugged me and tried to change the subject but did not actually attempt to answer my question.



‘Aṭāul Jalāl Nūruddīn

I was generally a good student in school. Until my early years in high school, I was an ‘A’ student. As time went by, I got influenced by bad company and gradually got involved in drinking alcohol. My friends were mostly people who indulged heavily in alcohol, drugs and other shameful activities such as I can not even mention here. In short, I used to hang out in the bars and the streets of the city of Dayton. Soon I became the one who used to drink the most alcohol out of all my friends. Naturally, this kind of activities affected my studies and my grades started to fall.

After my graduation from the high school in 1967, I got an employment with the General Motors. They selected me to go to their engineering school. This was a great opportunity but I did not realize at that time. I had no interest left in any kind of studies because of my lifestyle. My lack of interest in the studies did not get me too far. I failed a couple of tests and was let go by the school. There was no significant change in my life for the next few years. Alcohol and drugs had become an addiction with me. Meanwhile I continued to work for General Motors. I had completed an apprenticeship program, as a result of which I was moved into a fairly well

paying job. I was quite capable of taking care of myself, financially. However I wasted most of my money on alcohol and drugs. During this time I also got married and had two children. I must admit that the marriage did create some sense of responsibility in me, and I seemed to have found some direction in life. However, soon I left my wife and children for another woman. With this I got further deeply involved with alcohol and drugs, not to mention that I had never reduced the consumption of alcohol. I found myself depressed all the time. The only way I could see out of depression was to drown myself in alcohol. This had further deteriorated my condition.

Some of my friends suggested that I should seek treatment for my condition. On my investigation, I found out that there was a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in town that was run by Brother Muḏaffar Aḥmad Ḍafar, our current Nā'ib Amīr I. I met with him and some other Aḥmadī Muslims. I was very impressed by all of them. They seem to show a genuine and deep rooted concern for me. These Aḥmadī friends started visiting me once a while and would talk to me about their religion. I liked these brothers so much that without much pondering, I thought that their religion must be true. On their insistence, I even accepted Islām. However, my domestic life did not seem to be improving, and I had not quite started to follow the teachings of Islām. My ex-wife had left the town after leaving the children with my mother. The other woman that I lived with was an alcoholic, and I was addicted to both drugs and alcohol. I remained extremely perturbed and nothing could provide me comfort.

In 1978, one day, in my state of extreme anxiety, I suddenly remembered to turn to God for help. This thought was so powerful that I felt as if some external force was leading me into that direction. That day I prayed to God in my own way. This was the first time I prayed completely

absorbed in that act. There was no other thought and no other reaction or feeling in my mind or body. I prayed for a long time, basically that my difficulties are removed and that I find true peace of mind. At the end of the prayer, I felt very relaxed.

The following day, the results of my prayers began to unveil. One of the Aḥmadī friends met me and took me back to see Brother Muḥaffar Aḥmad Ḥafar. Brother Muḥaffar gave me a copy of the Holy Qurʾān saying that if I read that book on a regular basis then I would definitely find peace. I accepted the book thankfully, came home and started reading it. When I read the first chapter, Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah, I started pondering over its meanings. Each word seemed so powerfully describing the holy names of God that I found myself repeating that chapter again and again. I could not bear the awe and majesty with which the Being of God has been presented in the verses of that Sūrah (chapter). Each verse was self convincing of its truth. The more I was reading, the more impact I felt on my heart. This impact, I thought, was enough evidence of the truth of that Holy Book. Soon I went and met with Brother Muḥaffar again. This time I begged him that I wanted to sign the baiʿat form but on one condition that he would let me live a few days in the mission house. He thought that might be possible. He, however, said that he would have to get permission from the missionary in-charge and would let me know. The following day, Brother Muḥaffar called me to inform that I could move into the mission house. Although I had a comfortable apartment to live in, I suddenly had this strong urge to live in the mission house for a few days, perhaps to cleanse myself.

At the mission house, I met with a very kind-hearted and noble old man, Maulavī Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, who was the missionary to Dayton. I signed the baiʿat form and started living in the mission house. Within a few days, in the

company of Maulavī Ibrāhīm Ṣāhib, I learned how to pray, memorized the Ṣalāt and some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān that are recited after Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah. I also read some light books and other material about Islām and the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. Allāh had turned my life completely around. Here I realized that not only had I found the True God but also that He had accepted my prayers.

One day, while I still lived in the mission house, a lady came to the mission house who was in need of a shelter. Maulavī Ibrāhīm Ṣāhib, looking at her plight, permitted her to stay in one of the rooms. This lady wore a veil and started spending her time in the study of the religion. She observed strict privacy and many a time we were not even aware that she lived in the same building. A few days later, Maulavī Ibrāhīm Ṣāhib called me and asked me if I would marry that lady. I hesitated to respond as I had not seen or met with the lady. Moreover, I was not thinking about a marriage at all. However, some unseen influence prevailed and I agreed to the proposal. What a blessing of Allāh that was! Today, after seventeen years, we are still happily married. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh. I soon found an apartment as we had to start a normal family life. I was very fortunate to remain in touch with Brother Muẓaffar Aḥmad Ṣafar and Maulavī Ibrāhīm Ṣāhib from whom I continued to learn more and more.

Love for the Aḥmadiyyah Community started to grow in my heart. Soon the urge to meet with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be merciful to him, grew very intense in my heart. I, therefore, decided to visit Rabwah and started saving for the journey. In 1980, Allāh provided me the opportunity to visit both Qadian as well as Rabwah.

I can not express in words my feelings about Qadian. I actually felt as if I were in a spiritual trance. My most memorable visit was to the gravesite of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā

Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. I was overcome by emotions to think about the pure life that he lived. The brothers I met in Qadian were all extremely friendly. I could see, in their eyes, the warmth of their friendship and love of one Aḥmadī for another.

Rabwah was another great experience. Meeting with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be merciful to him, made me instantly fall in admiration for him. He spoke so softly and with such tender emotions that I had never experienced before. There was an aura about him that instantly convinced one as to why he was the Amīr-ul-Mu'minīn. Rabwah was a town full of people with warm hearts. Everyone seemed to reach out to us in a manner as if they wanted to be blessed by touching us.

While in Rabwah, I learnt about the history of that town. I learned how that town had risen from a virtual desert where life was impossible to exist. The prayers of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Second Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be pleased with him, had not only turned the impossible into the possible but had changed the entire landscape into a green and bustling town. There are mosques everywhere but are packed with the believers at the Ṣalāt times. An environment of true Islāmic society could be experienced in Rabwah. While in Rabwah, I also met with *Ḥaḍrat* Miañ Ṭāhir Aḥmad, who later became the fourth successor to the Promised Messiah, who was then in-charge of Waqf-i-Jadīd.

These visits made my faith stronger. My quest for spiritual knowledge increased. I started reading any kind of religious literature I could lay my hands on. I have always longed to be in the company of Aḥmadī brothers. The annual conventions and Anṣārullāh Ijtimās are usually good opportunities to meet with so many brothers. At such occasions, when I see

brothers treating each other with extreme respect and kindness, I am reminded of the verse of the Holy Qur'an, which goes like this:

kuntum khaira ummatin ukhrijat linnās,

meaning,

You are the best people raised for the good of mankind (3[Āl Imrān]:111),

and I can also see an abundant display of:

ruḥamā'u bainahum,

meaning,

tender among themselves (48[Al-Fath]:30).

Aḥmadiyyat is all good. If I find a weakness in someone, that helps me to do a self analysis, find my own faults, pray for that brother's weakness to be removed while supplicating that Allāh continue to cover up my faults and help me overcome my own weaknesses. In other words, it is a reminder to continue asking for forgiveness from Allāh.

Allāh has blessed me in so many ways ever since I accepted Aḥmadiyyat or the True Islām. One of the great rewards I have received is that I have seen a number of true dreams. I had dreamt that *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah had passed away and I was looking at his face that wore a beautiful smile. A month later, I heard the sad news that *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be merciful to him, had passed away. I knew that he was successful in his Khilāfat as I interpreted the smile on his face in my dream. There have been numerous other occasions when Allāh granted me a true dream either as a result of my supplications in a particular matter or sometimes even without asking Him.

My message to all those who are yet out of the pale of Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām, is to come and experience it. My

message is the message of Islām, that is, peace and love, peace and harmony, peace and respect.

May Allāh continue to grant strength to our Jamā‘at. Remove the pain of persecution from the innocent Pakistani Aḥmadī brethren and grant us all an increase in our faith. Āmīn.

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Spring 1996.

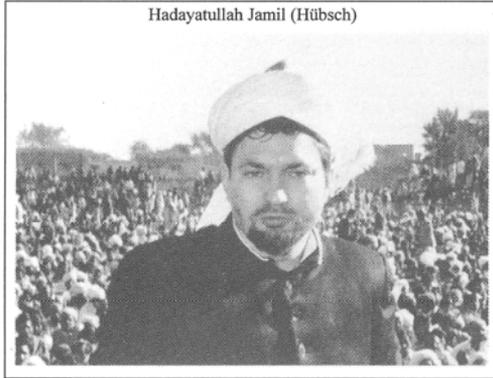
Hadayatullāh Jamīl (Hübsch)

How I Accepted Islām

It was the Spring of 1969, when I found myself naked in the desert of Morocco, only with a crucifix-rosary around my neck, despaired of all the goods of the Western culture, nearly insane. I was stripped of all the material objects of the Western culture. I had left behind me, a straight career of being a rebel, who could not believe in what the school teachers were trying to teach and who would raise his voice and fists against the cruelties of Western politics. I was engaged in the student revolution of 1968, which I quit due to the discrepancies between their words and deeds. I then turned to the Hippie Movement. This movement promised a world of wild love and strange experiences of the mind. The goal of this movement was to attain peace, but by destroying all ties with the world by drug abuse. My first collection of poetry had been published by a famous German publishing house. I became known as a poet who left room for great hope. In spite of the fact that I was a so-called leader of the young generation, I could neither find any satisfaction in the materialistic world, nor did I enjoy the games of the young ones. Being frustrated by the drug experience and the moral decline of those who had sought to change the society by force, I had turned towards Zen Buddhism.

I dropped out of the car after my girlfriend stopped the car

Hadayatullah Jamil (Hübsch)



at my request. I ran towards the desert wishing to leave behind the world and all that it contained. I had thrown away the clothes I was wearing as the only symbol of that world that I also wanted to leave behind. Only this hidden desire for something called God must have lived in my soul as I did not tear off my rosary. But then it happened. All of a sudden I stopped running, nay, I was halted as if some external force had grabbed hold of me. I stood still for a moment or two and then slowly lifted my face up towards the sky above me. I heard a nonhuman voice escaping my tortured throat in great agony, saying: O Allāh, please purify me. I did not know who Allāh was and knew nothing about Islām, other than some flimsy description my school teachers had given me. That too seemed to have escaped my memory. I did not know any Muslims and had not as yet disclosed the state of my mind to anyone. Yet it happened, as if I had received a revelation: O Allāh, please purify me. The actual words were, of course, in German language, my mother tongue.

Immediately after I had uttered these words, this prayer of utmost helplessness, I heard a soft tune of a flute coming from the nearby mountains. I felt consoled, and returned to the car.

This event was my real initiation into the fold of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon

him. Of course, I did not become a Muslim right away as I did not know what Islām was and what was required to become a Muslim. Months of horror and difficulties followed. After a long journey, I managed to return to Frankfurt, Germany, my home town. There, I did not wish to re-associate with those hippies again. I soon came across a book on Yoga, while I was visiting a friend's apartment. I thought it to be wise to adopt this line of mental training for myself. I then proceeded to exercise Yoga for some weeks. By the way, I also carried a Mandala, a kind of a picture used to maintain concentration during meditation. One day I sat on my bed to start my breathing exercises. I turned on a music cassette to help me with my exercise. That was the only kind of music that I liked in those days. This music was produced by some Pakistani musicians who had visited London in 1967. The music was known as Pakistani Soul Session.

Suddenly I saw a calligraphy in the shape of 'OM' (Hindu word for Unity, All, or God). This shape lit up and turned into a beam that was pointing straight towards my library on the wall behind me. It seemed as if that beam of light was trying to show me something. I got up in amazement and followed the beam. My books were lying in a disarray as I had lost interest in reading the books and had therefore not cared to keep the books in any particular order. To my surprise, I saw the light entering one particular book and did not emerge from the other side. I immediately pulled the book. The beam of light suddenly disappeared. The book was a copy of the German translation of the Holy Qur'ān that was given to me as a Christmas present by an uncle, many years ago. My hands were trembling from what I had just experienced. I opened the book at once and having read only two or three of the lines, I was instantly convinced of its truth. My heart started pounding loudly as if to testify to that truth. I could not but admit that I was a Muslim.

I must explain that. When this uncle of mine had sent me this gift, I had merely had a glimpse into the book. As I have stated before, my knowledge about Islām was scant. I simply knew what a somewhat educated person in the West would know about Islām. The few lines that I had just read though, had struck my heart with such an impact that I thought I was left with no choice but to declare myself a Muslim, without realizing what that would mean for me and what I was supposed to do.

It was the Fall season and despite this experience I was mentally not prepared to take any further step. I was living with my mother in her house. I continued to quietly live there. A few days must have passed when reading a newspaper, my eyes focused on a tiny news item that said that the month of Ramaḍān was about to set in. I suddenly realized that being a Muslim, I was supposed to fast too.

Since I did not know anything about the fasting, I decided to contact a local mosque to find out all the details. I picked the telephone directory and started calling the consulates of Muslim countries, one by one. Fortunately, someone from the Lebanese consulate told me about the Nūr Mosque (which happens to be the mosque of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at). I called the mosque where the Imām answered the phone.

The Imām was very kind. He politely asked for my address and promised that he would mail me a calendar. Having received that calendar, a day or so later, I began to fast in the prescribed way. After a few days, I decided to go to the mosque myself. I was warmly welcomed by the missionary, Imām Mas'ūd Jehlumī. He also presented me a copy of the German version of Kishtī Nūḥ (The Noah's Ark, which also includes, Our Teaching). Imām Jehlumī further persuaded me to purchase a copy of the German translation of the Holy Qur'ān, published by the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. He

informed me that the translation that I had, was not the true representation of the Qur'ānic verses. I also purchased a copy of the prayer book. This helped me learn the Muslim prayer by heart in a matter of a few days. As I have stated earlier, I was mentally very perturbed because of my past sins. On the day of 'Īd-ul-Fiṭr, I thought that I should perform the Ḥajj. This was inspired by two reasons: One that I had heard that the Ḥajj washes away all of one's past sins and second that somehow, I was afraid that my end was near and that I was going to die very soon.

Having decided that, I proceeded to make a travel plan. Since I did not have enough money, I decided to hitchhike my way through Spain, cross over to Morocco, and along the northern coast of Africa, try to reach Arabia. This was a strange plan indeed, but I could not find a better alternative. So a few days later, I took whatever little money I had, my sleeping bag, some food, and quietly slipped out of my mother's house. I made my way into Spain hitch-hiking, and from time to time, getting rides from people driving in that direction. Everything was fine until I reached the border of Morocco. The Moroccan authorities would not let me cross the border. They sent me back, perhaps because I looked like a hippie. I showed them my copy of the Holy Qur'ān which contained the Arabic script alongside the translation. I even recited Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah to them to assure them that I was a Muslim but, unfortunately, they would not permit me into the so called 'Land of the Muslims.' I was deeply hurt. I started to ponder over my past sins for some times and then realized that I should prostrate before my Lord, my Allāh, and ask for His forgiveness. Since I was in the town of Ceuta in Spain, where the Moroccan border just touches, I knew that there had to be a mosque in that town as some Muslims do live in that town. Therefore, I set out looking for a mosque. I asked a young boy who showed me the way to the

mosque. As I reached the mosque, I saw a sign on its wall, saying that the non-Muslims (meaning the Whites) could not enter the mosque. I thought to myself that I was not the kind of person these people should be afraid of. So I entered the mosque. There was no one inside. I performed my ablution in a fountain, and then entered the prayer room. It was late afternoon. I started to offer four raka'āt of prayers. Soon I was overwhelmed with emotions and began to cry. I cried in a manner that I had never done in my life. My face had become completely wet with tears, while I continued to say my prayers properly. At one point as I was completely absorbed in the act of prayer lying prostrate in front of Allāh, and totally unaware of my surroundings, someone violently shook me and tried to drag me out of the mosque. I could not understand the motive behind such behavior. However, despite that constant interruption, I completed my prayers and only after saying As-salāmu 'Alaikum Wa Raḥmatullāh, did I pay any attention to that person. He commanded me to follow him, and so he brought me out of the mosque. It was almost time for Maghrib prayers and some people had gathered to say their prayers. I tried to befriend them by showing them my copy of the Arabic/German Holy Qur'ān while ensuring them that I was a Muslim and only wanted to say my prayers in congregation with them. No matter how much I begged them to let me in the mosque, it was of no avail. They seemed hostile towards me and just wanted me out of there. I must admit though that in those days, I was not fully in control of myself. Perhaps they saw something in me that put them off and were, therefore, determined to get me out of their mosque.

As far as religious knowledge is concerned, I did not possess much of that either. I had read Kishtī Nūḥ, but could not understand much of it. I could however tell, that it must have been written by some extremely holy personage as I

used to notice angels around the chair that I would sit in to read that book. I did not fully grasp the meaning of that experience but it surely was enough to make me respect that book and whoever its holy author was. I did not understand the teaching of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, as I only had the dire urge to have my sins cleansed and to be purified by some magical way.

After I was turned out of the mosque by these stubborn people, I noticed a few children running around outside the mosque. Inadvertently, I turned to them and started reciting *Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah* to them. They gathered around me and joined me in reciting that *Sūrah*. I was deeply moved by this sight and suddenly realized that abruptly leaving my mother, without having informed her where I was, must have hurt her a lot. Allāh must have been displeased with me for doing so. I realized that my Ḥajj would not have been acceptable anyway as I had left my mother grieving behind me.

It would be too long to narrate the story of how I returned to Germany. However, during my return journey, I spent a week in the shadow of the great Muslim citadel of *Al-Ḥamrā* in Granada, Spain. There I said my prayers openly on the grass, being surrounded by the Spanish Children. I am very thankful to those children as they brought me bread and oranges to eat. I had no money left to buy myself any food and so I ate the food brought by the children considering it as a great reward from Almighty Allāh.

On the following day of my return, finally arriving in Frankfurt, Germany, I proceeded to the mosque. I was still in no better shape. I must have looked like a beggar or even worse. I had, however, freed myself of such worries. I did not care at all how I looked. My only concern was to be accepted by God. I took the incident of my being turned out of the mosque in Ceuta to be the will of God, but the thought of the same happening to me at the *Nūr Mosque* shuddered me. I

just prayed that I be permitted to pray at the Nūr Mosque. I imagined that to be a punishment for my sins which perhaps were so grave that Allāh did not will my entry into His sacred places.

As I reached the mosque, shabbily dressed—and must have appeared to be insane—I was stopped by a gentleman in front of the main door of the mosque. He informed me that I was not supposed to enter the mosque. I was, naturally, very deeply shocked. My fear had come true, that Allāh did not want me to pray inside the mosque. I did not know what to do. I did not have any money that I could offer as a sacrifice. My fame, my worldly gains, my money, my talents, my friends and associations, all I had given up long ago. I did not seem to have any future. I had no goal in life, and any greed or hunger. All I had wanted was to be able to pray inside a mosque. I desperately tried to argue with the person who had stopped me but in vain. He did not budge one bit from his position.

While I was faced with this dilemma, all of sudden a strange thought came to mind. I wanted to sacrifice my eyes for the sake of Allāh. I prayed to Allāh that I was prepared to blind myself if only He would accept that sacrifice and let me inside the mosque. Having said that prayer in my heart, I looked up and saw a sign pointing to the direction of the office. I quickly proceeded towards the office, but once again, the person at the door, refused to let me in. I had no doubt now, that it was all because of my appearance. I then repeated that prayer in my heart, and lo and behold, another man showed up at the door who was directly looking at me, came near me and inquired of me the purpose of my being there. I told him about my wish, i.e., to be permitted inside the mosque to pray. To my utter surprise, he just let me in as if I had been denied my right. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh.

I had been inside the Nūr Mosque two or three times

before, so I had a fairly good idea of where all the different rooms were. I immediately proceeded towards the prayer room and began to say my prayer. The room had not yet filled with people. An elderly man, with a big white turban and a flowing white beard stood gracefully on the pulpit and addressed in a language that I did not understand. After the sunnah prayer, I quietly sat down but was still afraid that I might be turned out of the mosque. As I sat there, I wondered who that charming personality was and what was the language he was speaking in. Then I saw him becoming silent, and for a moment or so, hiding behind the pulpit. I was becoming further curious as to what was going on. As the man stood up again, he was looking directly at me. I saw a powerful ray of light emerging out of each one of his eyes and piercing my eyes. I went blind. I could not see anything until the prayer service started. The whole event was a unique experience for me. Although I joined in the prayer service, but I could not understand what had just happened.

Later on, I realized that it was a Friday, and as Allāh had willed, I had reached the mosque when the Friday prayer service had just started. The holy man behind the pulpit was none else but *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be pleased with him. After a visit to Spain, he was in Germany to visit the German Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. When I found out the dates that he spent in Spain, I was surprised, as all that time I was also in Spain, spending my days in Al-Ḥamrā. The person who had stopped me from entering the mosque at the main entrance was a member of the local Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at who was assigned that duty. I must admit now that he was rightly discharging his duty. Any person who would appear the way I did could be a security risk. I only thank Allāh that despite all those difficulties, He, so graciously, got me through all the obstacles, and granted me my wish.

After some time, I formally became a Muslim by signing the Bai'at form, thus entering the fold of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāṣir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah, may Allāh be pleased with him, gave me the name, Ḥadāyatullāh, meaning, the one guided by Allāh himself. It is true that I was not guided directly by any man into the path of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, but only through the miraculous power of prayers.

In the end I pray, may Allāh bring many more Ḥadāyatullāhs into the fold of Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at where, most certainly, they will find the light and the real peace.

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Akbar Tshaka Aḥmadī

How I Accepted Islām

My name is Akbar Tshaka Aḥmadī. I am originally from Atlantic City, New Jersey. I was born August 11, 1939. I was educated in Atlantic City High School. My family's background is from the Christian faith. Following is a synopsis of how I became an Aḥmadī Muslim.

Aḥmadiyyat the true Islām is so lucid, so brilliant and sublime that a seeker after truth has no problems in discerning its pure beauty, thus it makes acceptance of Aḥmadiyyat easy in the sense that it furnishes the seeker with verified proofs of its genuine and increasingly glowing spiritual reality.

One day back in 1972, I was in Weisers bookstore buying up book by book of "The Sufi Message" by Ināyat Khān, the famous ṣūfī mystic. I was a few feet away when I noticed a book titled "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām." Under the title it said, "by the founder of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām." Now, for some strange reason, knowing nothing about Aḥmadiyyat, I thought that Aḥmadiyyat was so ancient a *dīn* that there was no current information about it. I immediately grabbed the book and turned the page.

When I saw the face of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, peace be upon him, I was immediately wonderstruck. I had never seen a man so handsome wherein one could easily gaze at the spiritual demeanor that the photo presented. I read the brief information under his photograph that gives the

reader a short outline about him. Then proceeded to my flat to read this book that I felt was a precious gem. All the books on Islām that I had previously read were nothing like what appeared to me while reading this sublime book. I immediately wrote to the mosque in Washington DC to get a list of Aḥmadiyyah literature. After receiving it, I was aroused with ecstatic admiration of the titles and wide range of books that Aḥmadiyyat offered especially the books on Jesus (peace be on him).

I saw that there was a mosque in Jamaica, New York, so I figured I could get books from the mosque rather than dealing with the mail to Washington back and forth, etc. I proceeded to the mosque one Jumu‘a day and I was in the street a half hour or more searching for the mosque because I couldn’t find it. This was because it was on the second story and I could not find an address number when suddenly I espied brothers and sisters emerging from upstairs coming down the sidewalk. I immediately rushed over and gave my Salāms and said I wanted to purchase some books and literature.

A brother said, “Brother Bashīr, we have to go back upstairs. This brother wants to buy some books.” So we went back into the mosque. I was pleased with their easy manner and willingness to help me. They did not have as many books as I thought they would have but what I found was more significant any way. After I purchased what I could, one of the brothers at the mosque came over to me. His manner was soft but intense and loving. He said, “Brother, I’m buying this book for you,” and, he gave me the book. This affected me with a strong emotion towards the seriousness of Aḥmadīs and in particular this brother, who I later found out was ‘Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm who became mentor and sincere Muslim brother. The book he bought for me was “Islām and its Comparison with Other Religions,” by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā

Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace and blessings and mercy of Allāh). The book was so overall and copious with knowledge and light that it didn't take any time to perceive the truth and beauty of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him), and the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at.

The outstanding spirituality and widespread literary dimension of the explanation of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him), along with the sacredness of his personality and character poured into his writings with such force of accuracy, that I said to myself, "I have finally found the true Islām that I was searching for in my studies." And having made an investigation of the truth, I found it in Aḥmadiyyat. I went back to the mosque and met a brother who was inquiring, "Does this brother," referring to me, "have all his books?" Then he said, "Does he have his book on the angels and the Real Revolution?" The titles he was inquiring about were almost knocking me down as they were so profound. This brother was a walking library himself, who I came to find out was Nūruddīn 'Abdul-Latīf, who like 'Umar also became mentor and serious Muslim friend. He lent me a stack of books which after reading I became very much aware of the truth of the claim of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, with certainty. Shortly thereafter I was ready to sign the bai'at form.

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Yūsuf `Alī

How I Accepted Islām

I am just a simple poet, Joseph was my name
And after I accepted Islām, Yūsuf it became

God gives gifts, and when he gave me mine
It was Him and His prophets plus rhythm and rhyme

How I accepted Islām, many people ask
Therefore, let me explain to you this heartfelt task

My family were God-leaning people so they would say
Yet, I often wondered why not in God's name we should
pray

My mother would prepare our meal, and that was very
nice
Yet, I would wonder why not thank God instead of Jesus
Christ

I only read the Bible because I was in need of God
Yet all I did get was an indecisive mental plod

When I heard the name Islām, I said, oh let me try that
Because I searched through Christianity, and still I wasn't
standing pat

The first Islām presented to me was surely out of place
Because it emphasized, only, how to love one race

And the God I sought created man no matter what his
color

And if in fact He created us all then we all must be
brothers

My sister I do believe was a very special gift
Because it was through her my heart became humble, and
started that upward lift

All of my life I wanted a good wife, and through my sister I
found Jameela

Yet by far, I found Allāh, and am blessed with the
companionship of her charisma

Aḥmadiyyat Praise to God is where it all began

All of the strife that was in my life walked out when
Muḥaffar and her walked in

Muḥaffar Aḥmad married my sister, and I am most pleased
to say

I do not know why I started to cry, it all just happened that
way



Yūsuf 'Alī

He was more than a brother to everyone, and I loved him
from my heart

It hurt me so that he had to go yet we all must part

He presented to me a true Islām far different from the first
To my surprise, it opened my eyes, and yes it quenched my
thirst

The Promised Messiah, without a doubt, was close to me
A fatherly love, purer than a Dove could ever be
Seeing his picture to me was an outstanding thing
I had to hear the message he did bring

The message he brought was of a prophet named
Muḥammad

Yet, I was receiving the same message from a prophet
named Aḥmad

I am just a simple poet Yūsuf is my name
I seek not fortune nor do I seek fame

I struggle everyday to follow the Promised Messiah, this I
don't deny

Over the years I spilled my tears I guess you wonder why

God our Lord, the merciful, the kind, and all Supreme
Was a hidden treasure Who desired to be Seen

I am not for pomp nor am I for show
But I tell you people this much I do know

If you truly want that God be seen then follow this plan
Follow the Messiah and take his Khalīfah's hand

His name is Ṭāhir Aḥmad, and I am sure you'll find
His arms wide open loving and kind

I am just a simple poet, Yūsuf is my name
Yet many will think that I'm insane or at the least vain

Edited from Al-Naḥl, Vol. 9, No. 1.

'Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm

How I Accepted Islām

My name is 'Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm. I am African American and am 56 years old. I was born in Roseboro, North Carolina on the 18th of February 1942. I am a professional barber and I work in Harlem New York. I live in both Harlem and Winston-Salem because I have my family living in Winston-Salem. I live in Harlem only for the reason of delivering the Message of Islām, for that reason and for that reason alone. Harlem is the heart for Renaissance Movements among African Americans. And I believe for Aḥmadiyyat to become rooted in America among African Americans, it will start from Harlem.

How I accepted Aḥmadiyyat is by Allāh's Grace alone, starting with the family, the Mother (Mattie Culbreth) and Father (Elvie Culbreth), Allāh blessed me with. I was the 8th child of my 9 brothers and 1 sister. My family's background was rooted in religion. My Mother's father (Harry Parker) was a Pentecostal minister, and my Father's grandfather (Isaac Culbreth) was a Pentecostal deacon. In my community you were either a Baptist or a Pentecostal. One almost had to be one or the other. As a young boy I was told to look after my Grandfather Isaac on account of his age but in truth it was he who was looking after me. He was what you might call my tutor on the rites of passage from my adolescence into manhood. A lot of his way of doing things and explaining things came from my attachment to him. Aside

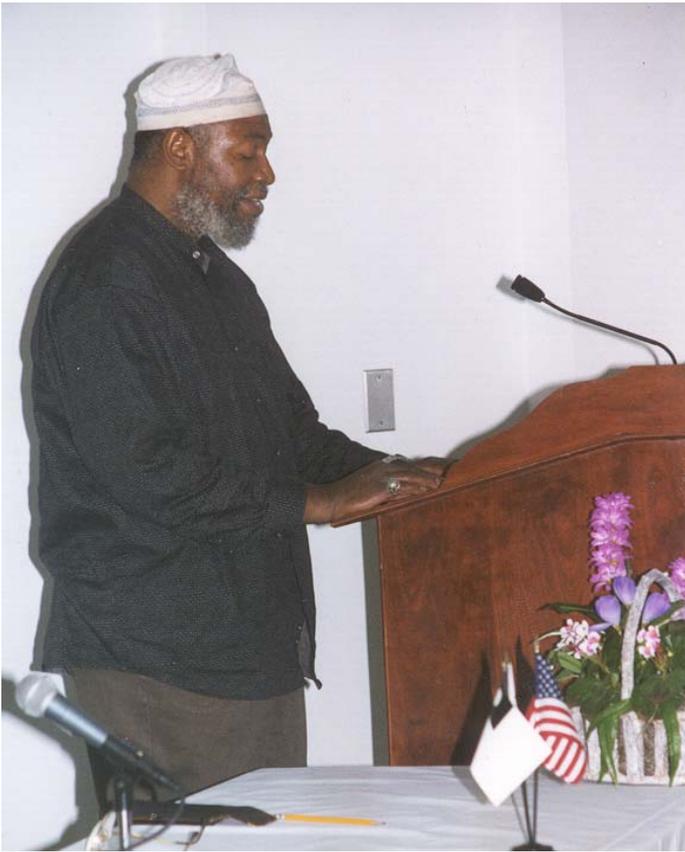
from my father, his example left an indelible mark on me with regards to my character development. These two men were both highly regarded officials in the Christian church and in the community.

My mother was the disciplinarian of the house and my father supported her decisions. The discipline in the house was centered on the teachings of Christianity. That meant if you were a school age child and were playing in church on Sunday or did anything not acceptable, then on Monday you had to hear about it again from the principal of your school. This was the type of reinforcement the Christian teachings had when I was coming along.

Christian preachers in my area were noted for their fiery preaching style and the messages that they delivered in their preaching. One of those messages that stuck with me was about being in the wrong place on Judgment Day. That message never left me and would be a type of discrimination I kept with me through my life's journey.

I left North Carolina around 1961 and went to Philadelphia to pursue an education in classical music. It was, however, short lived as around the same time I had gotten married and needed to find employment to support my family. I studied and learned the trade of barbering and eventually migrated to New York.

During my early years in New York, I was affiliated with various movements of the time which included the Black Nationalist Movement where I had briefly met Queen Mother Moore, Stokely Carmichael, and others. I also attended Nation of Islām Rallies held in Harlem in front of Michaux's bookstore on 125th street and Lenox and got to see Malcolm X (El-Ḥajj Malik El-Shabazz) and Elijah Muḥammad in person. During this time I was having a series of dreams. In one of those dreams I saw that I came in contact with a spiritual person. That person I thought was a



‘Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm

Black Rabbi who had interested me in the history of the Black Jews and how Black people were the lost tribe of the Jews, the Black Israelites. As I could relate to this story knowing that my ancestors were slaves, his story appealed to me and gave me a historical identity. I therefore, joined the Judaic faith and thought I had found my ancestral spiritual roots. This attachment, however, would be short lived as about the same time, I came in contact with Aḥmadiyyah literature and started to learn about the teachings of Islām. I compared what the Black Israelites were teaching to that of

the teachings of Islām, and Islām prevailed.

Around 1967, being a neighborhood barber I met ‘Uthmān ‘Abdus-Salām who managed a local bookstore. Sometimes he would be my customer and sometimes I would be his. During a period when he was ill he sent word to me to make a house call to cut his hair. On this occasion we got into a discussion about Revelation and the Bible. He explained to me how Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah was represented in the Book of Revelations in the Bible, and then he asked me, “Do you know that after the Bible revelation continues?” When he said that I wanted to get to the source of this knowledge because this information was powerful and inspiring. He then introduced me to Aḥmadiyyah literature and I was in agreement with all that I read from the Aḥmadiyyah perspective. It was plain and clear and kept me looking for more. As I seemed to always get into debates with some of my Judaic brothers, I was excited to find that there was proof to substantiate what my studies had vaguely touched upon. And one of those books was “Where Did Jesus Die.” This was significant, as I never accepted the idol of Jesus Christ. And now I was armed with the argument that proved he was not God.

My relationship with brother ‘Uthmān ‘Abdus-Salām continued to grow. He would invite me to have dinner with him at his home every Sunday and would give me more books to read on Islām. ‘Abdus-Salām was bringing me to Islām at a slow pace but it was much too slow for my ego as I felt there was still more that he had not shared with me. Around this time, I learned about the Muslim way of praying and the ritual washing before prayer called Wuḍū. Although I had not yet formally accepted Islām, I had already been convinced of its message of truth. So, I started applying what I was learning. At this time I had a spiritual experience through a dream.

I dreamt that, in the process of my making Wuḍū, a voice

from someone next to me said, “Come on and join the Prayer.” I saw a number of people dressed in different colors, lined up for Prayer along the ocean front and out over the ocean the leader of the Prayer was a man that was hovering over the ocean as if he was sitting on the clouds and a bright light was glowing where his face was supposed to be.

After this experience, I again pushed the issue onto ‘Abdus-Salām to take me to the source of knowledge that he had been giving me piecemeal so far. That is when he took me to meet the Aḥmadīs, the most beautiful people I ever met. This was at the Archer St. Mission house in Queens. These people looked like what I had imagined righteous people should look like. They reminded me of the righteous people of ancient times. My impression or reaction I felt from them towards me was “Love.” There I met Muṣṭaphā Dilleo, Bashīr Afzal, Muḥammad Ṣādiq, Da’ūd Aḥmad, Hādī Nāsir, Yūsef Lateef, Muḥammad ‘Īsā ‘Abdul-Jamāl, Nūrrudīn ‘Abdul-Latīf, ‘Abdul-Ḥameed, Mubārik Jamīl, and Khalīl Aḥmad Nāsir.

‘Abdus-Salām had taken me there for the purpose of accepting Aḥmadiyyat but Bashīr Afzal, the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at president, gave me the bai‘at form and said, “Take this home and study these conditions for a week,” before allowing me to sign. But I was ready to sign the bai‘at form the first day I came to the mosque. I finally signed the bai‘at form in 1969 under *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Nāsir Aḥmad, Third Successor to the Promised Messiah. I did not know until much later that there were many different sects in Islām. When I did come to know of the differences, however, I knew I was among those who practiced the true Islām.

The two people who were really the role models for me and who I tried to learn as much from were the late Bashīr Afzal and late Muḥammad Ṣādiq. Bashīr Afzal was a key person in the Renaissance of Islām among the African Americans. He

sometimes studied with Elijah Muḥammad and Noble Drew ‘Alī as he was their contemporary and both Noble Drew and Elijah Muḥammad had studied the Aḥmadiyyah literature. Muḥammad Ṣādiq, from his musical affiliation, knew a host of famous African American musicians. It was always inspiring to hear his stories of his days before he accepted Islām and how he came into the True Islām. They had always impressed me with their steadfastness and the way they manifested the teachings of Aḥmadiyyat, from the time they were young men until the sunset of their lives. It was through them that I really saw the meaning of Aḥmadiyyat, the religion of Islām in its original purity. Both of them treated me as if I were their own son nourishing me spiritually and guiding me along the way. At that time it would have been very easy for an African American to lose his or her way due to the social and political attractions toward the Afrocentric Movements of that time. But my spiritual quest was to be in the right place on the Judgment Day. Bashīr Afzal and Muḥammad Ṣādiq were the role models that kept continued to point the way. Muḥammad Ṣādiq would chide me with a loving smile on his face a little before he passed on by saying, “We rescued you from those Black Jews.”

Now I have been an Aḥmadī Muslim for about 29 years. I have witnessed the growth of Aḥmadiyyat in America. The symbol of that growth is Baitur-Raḥmān, the Central mosque in Silver Spring, Maryland. Through these 29 years, I have been elected to several offices in the Aḥmadiyyat Movement including local Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at president. However, I do not think that any of these offices was as fulfilling as being a member of Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah (the young men’s association for men between the age of 15 and 40 years). This branch in Aḥmadiyyat was the answer to all the challenges, cultural and political, of that time. The Khuddām at that time were bustling with young lions and

the activities we were involved in kept us always in new ventures. For example, brother Munīr Ḥāmid, Bilāl ‘Abdus Salām, Nūruddīn ‘Abdul-Latīf, Akbar Tshaka, Jalāluddīn ‘Abdul-Latīf, Bilāl Sunni ‘Alī, Aḥmad Bashīr and other members of the Khuddām got together to publish a monthly paper called the The Real Revolution. This paper was edited by brother Munīr Ḥāmid and the title was taken from the book of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīruddīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu, entitled, Inqilāb-i-Ḥaḳīqī (The Real Revolution). This was our way of combating the publications put out by other groups at that time. It created an excitement among the Khuddām and soon became quite a tool for propagation. In this paper, Friday sermons of the Khalifatul-Masīh, and verses of the Qur’ān with commentary, Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and writings of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) were published. The Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at was indeed growing. The members who were active in Khuddām back then are still active. Some of the members whom we thought were not as active, grew to become active leaders of the Jamā‘at for the purpose of establishing Aḥmadiyyat, the True Islām, in America.

In conclusion all I can say about my acceptance of Islām is Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh. Who would have thought that I would be able to join the Community of Jesus’ Second Coming when he was to appear among the followers of Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him. Now when I reflect on the preacher’s message of my youth concerning the Judgment Day, I know that I am in the right place. I pray that Allāh will Grace more of my people like he has graced me. Āmīn.

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Moḥsin Maḥmūd

How I Accepted Islām

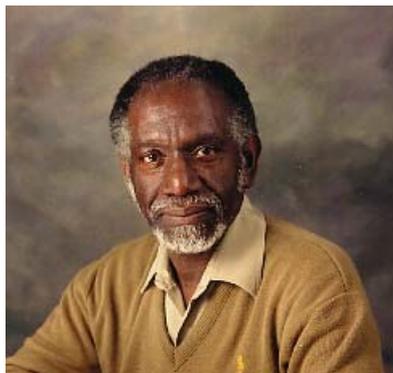
My name is Moḥsin Maḥmūd. I am 73 years old and I live in Queens, New York. I am the seventh of eight children. My parents were from the Barbados. But due to family problems and economics, I was orphaned at age 3.

From the age of 3 to 18, I lived in foster homes. I stayed the longest with Ms. Gladden, one of my foster parents. I stayed with her from 3 to 4 years. She had a son about my age and a grand-daughter who lived in Richmond, Virginia.

My parents were Protestants and I guess Ms. Gladden was too. I cannot say exactly what denomination my foster parents were and at the age I was during this time, it really did not matter a lot. As a foster child you just did what you were told, and tried to stay out of trouble, especially if you had a good foster home.

I joined the U.S. Army in 1944 during World War II where I served as a cook in New Orleans. During this time, I visited New Guinea and the Philippines. After I left the service, I stayed with my brother and mother on 112th Street in Harlem. I became employed in the hospital as a porter, and later having passed a civil service test, worked with the Department of Sanitation for about 34 years. During this time, I had married and had two children.

I lived in Harlem, New York during the period of Renaissance when the Nation of Islām had started to become



Moḥsin Maḥmūd

a controversial organization, and Malcolm X had just started to become known.

There was a Jazz musician most popularly known as Art Blakey, whose Muslim name was ‘Abdullah Bin Hannah. He was a drummer, and lived with his wife Zainab on 117th Street between 5th and Lenox. When he was in town he used to hold meetings at his place. These meetings were informal discussions that revolved around various themes. The one that hooked me was “Who are You?” As this question caused me to look inside of myself to find out who I was, I became actively involved in these discussions. Eventually, I came to realize that my roots were from Africa and Islām.

‘Abdullah was an Aḥmadī Muslim and was also the president of the New York Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at at the time. Back then there were not a lot of foreign Muslims, and Aḥmadiyyat was not very controversial. Islām, however, was controversial, as it seemed to be the religion of the Renaissance movement. I mean people were searching out their past, seeking their identity and Islām was it! Islām suddenly seemed to be a powerful source. The underlying message was to declare to oneself that one individual could make a difference in helping the Black people. People saw

the message of Islām as revolutionary, and the one that quietly caused them to bring about a change in themselves. I saw the answers to my curiosity in Islām. At last, on the urging of ‘Abdullāh, I accepted Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām. I am thankful to all the brothers and sisters who helped me to get to where I am today. I am very grateful for their help and their caring.

The mission house at that time was in a loft on 116th Street between Lexington and 7th Ave. Missionary Ghulām Yāsīn was the Aḥmadiyyah missionary. At that time a large number of African American musicians were Aḥmadīs, such as Ḥassan Ḥakīm, Ḥalīm Rashīd, Şāhib Shahad, McKoy Tyner and others would come to the mission house when they were in town and especially on Jumu‘ah or Friday for prayers. However some would soon fade away as the missionary admonished them to find suitable occupations, as the money from their occupations was not acceptable, that of playing music in bars where their profession was promoting all sorts of unacceptable behavior. To some of them, however, the attraction to Islām was so strong that gradually they had to make the change and eventually became very good members of the Aḥmadiyyah Community.

There were some hard times for the movement in those days. Through misunderstanding and hurt quite a few brothers dropped out of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā‘at. But there were also quite a few who stayed. I can only repeat how grateful I am to all the brothers and sisters who helped me:

I had the opportunity to meet Muḥammad Zafrullāh Khān, Khalīl Aḥmad Nāsir and ‘Abdul-Kadir Zaigham. These meetings were very inspirational and were of great benefit to me.

In this short glimpse I hope that it has become clear that I came into Aḥmadiyyat because it was the True Islām. All the

people, who were intellectually motivated, nationally motivated and spiritually motivated, were all Aḥmādī Muslims, and they became my mentors, my tutors, and my friends. I pray for them and I thank Allāh for bringing these people in my life. I will always be grateful to them for the path they showed me, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi Rabbil-‘Ālamīn.

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Raḥmat Jamāl

The Seekers of the Truth

Transcript of an Interview with Waseem Sayed.

W: As-Salāmu ‘Alaikum. Peace be with you. My name is Waseem Aḥmad Sayed, and it is my great honor and privilege to welcome you all to this beautiful Baitul-Ḥameed mosque, where we are recording the first historic program of Muslim Television Aḥmadiyyah Los Angeles. Baitul-Ḥameed Mosque is situated in Chino, California, about 40 miles east of Los Angeles in the county of San Bernardino, about 1,000 yards north of Highway 60 on Ramona Avenue. It is quite appropriate for this first program that we have with us Br. Raḥmat Jamāl, the man who has the honor of being the first member of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim community of Los Angeles. Br. Jamāl was born into a Baptist Christian family, he was baptized at the age of 11 in the Ohio River in Cincinnati. He embraced Islām a few years later at a very young age and moved to Los Angeles in 1951 and has been at the forefront of our [local Aḥmadiyyah Muslim] Jamā‘at activities ever since. Welcome Br. Jamāl. It is a pleasure and a great honor for us to have this opportunity to sit and talk to you about Islām in the US.

R: Thank you very much, and I would like to say that it is a great pleasure for me to be here in the beautiful Baitul-

Ḥameed Mosque. Every time I visit here, I think of the grace of God, or Allāh, because this mosque is a product of 7 years of prayers. I happen to know that God answers prayers because this mosque has been one of my prayers on a daily basis. And that prayer came true, and we're sitting here as a witness to that prayer.

Living in Los Angeles was a turn of fate because when I was in Ohio, after I had become Muslim, I had a choice to make, to either come to Los Angeles or go to New York, and I guess it was the will of Allāh that I came to Los Angeles because there were other Aḥmadīs in New York and the eastern states, but there weren't any Aḥmadīs on the west coast, to my knowledge. Allāh turned me to come to Los Angeles because my wife at the time had a brother here and he had been here, he found out about Los Angeles because he was in the navy during World War II and he had established himself here after the war, and he had sent for his mother. We said, okay, we'll go to Los Angeles, we'll take a look. If we don't like it, we can go back to New York. I was thinking about leaving the country at the time. At the end of this program you'll find out why I had inclinations to leave the United States. When you know what the conditions were in the United States, from the 1920s to 50s, you'll understand why my inclinations were to leave. After I came to Los Angeles and saw what it was like and how the people were here, I liked it and decided to stay and [that is how] why I happened to be the first Aḥmadī here in southern California.

W: That's an extremely interesting way of telling us how you came to Los Angeles. But one of the things I have always wanted to ask you, ever since I met you (which I think was in England in 1967) has been that you were born into a Baptist Christian family, and baptized at the age of 11 and a few years later, at a very young, tender age, you embraced Islām. At that time, in those days, in that age, it was a tremendous

decision. How did you come about deciding to become a Muslim in a society which was fully engulfed as enemies against Islām.

R: Well, I don't think that in the US there was enmity towards Islām, per se. Christianity had enmity towards Islām from day one, from the birth of Islām Christianity had an obligation to Islām because Islām was a rival, due to the fact that they were both preaching the same thing. But I don't think Islām was strong enough to cause any kind of reaction. But what I've found, you have to understand what was going on in the US at the time that I heard about Islām. There was a lot of discrimination going on, there's some going on today, but it's settled, I don't think it's been as bad as it was then. Say, you wanted a job. You pick up the newspaper and it would say, "Carpenter wanted. White only."

W: What year was this?

R: This was in the 30s, 40s, even the 50s. I have seen personally, I have seen on my way to school. You see a flat for rent, "White Only." And with public transportation, in the south, the Afro-Americans had to sit in the back of the buses. And if the bus was full, you had to give up your seat for the white person. And in the North, they didn't have that system, but they had to open this thing for you, and many times I have gotten on the public transportation—on the bus or the tram—and you sit down beside a white person, and they just get up go sit somewhere else, they wouldn't sit beside you. And it was just constantly public humiliation. So this was one of the reasons why I found Islām attractive, because it didn't have that element. It had equality. That God made us all and he didn't make anybody any better than anybody else. I could not have remained that way. I wasn't a part of that system anyways. I just had no place to go. I didn't believe in it. I didn't like it. And when Islām came along, I found my way out of it. I can put that as one of the forefronts of my



Br. Rahmat Jamal with
Mir Mahmud Aḥmad Nasir,
former Amir and Missionary Incharge, USA

accepting Islām because it had that attraction at the beginning. Now let's get into the truth. How is it possible for a person to have self-esteem when you have a system that teaches you that only European or white Americans had done anything for humanity. We learned about Edison, we learned about Newton, we learned about Einstein, we learned about Beethoven, we learned about Bach, we learned about Mozart, we learned about Alexander Bell, we learned about George Washington, we learned about Martha Washington. We learned about all these big people in the European community. We were taught that they were the only people that had made any achievements. When I started studying about Islām, I found out, much to my surprise, that all of the things—that these scientists that Christianity had made themselves so superior with—the Muslims had no such idea of any kind [of] superiority as far as your race or your color is concerned. And that it is based upon your abilities and your character and the kind of character you have, that's

where your “superiority” is, and nowhere else.

W: One thing that continues to confound me, having not experienced any of these things firsthand, is that if you listen to the message of Christianity today, despite the fact that we know what has happened in South Africa over the many many years in the past, when I here all of this and when I try to share it with what I hear from Christianity today, I find it difficult to believe that almost five centuries in the United States, until the fifties, that people were treated so poorly. How do you square all of that with your experience firsthand with what we see of Christianity today, being delivered all over the world 24 hours a day on many television channels via satellite to every part of the globe. What do you have to say today?

R: Well, it’s ironic that during the Civil Rights Movement, from 1954 or 55 up until 67 or 68, there was very intense civil rights Movements—they call it a business in the United States—that were involved in Civil Rights. The irony of Christianity sometimes is that they didn’t feel that they were doing anything wrong because they believed the Bible said, this is what they were and this is how they would be treated and this is their level of civilization. And let me tell you the criteria they used. The criteria was that Noah had three sons—Ham, Shem and Japheth. His father got drunk. Ham looked up on the nakedness of his father, and God cursed him to be subservient in the world until judgment day. So African Americans happened to be the descendents of Ham. So they said that no matter how they were treated; God punished them.

W: And these are the teachings that you were taught from the very beginning?

R: Yes.

W: By your parents?

R: No. This came from the white community of the time. That's how they justified the treatment of African Americans in the United States.

W: Coming back to the question, though, what has changed during Christianity to enable it to now offer a different society structure, in which the Blacks need not be treated as God had meant them to be treated, according to the previous beliefs?

R: You can not look to the Church. You have to look at the political system. If you'll notice, the rights of African Americans in the US came through the political system, it did not come through the Church. This is a very fair commentary on the Church, because when the slaves were emancipated, it came through the political system. It came through Abraham Lincoln. This was the first Republican party. And those people who supported that—the freedom of the slaves—though we know it came from God—these people were just instruments. But the Church was not the instrument, because the pope gave his approval of slavery in the 15th century. Pope Nicholas V, he was presiding over at the time, said, “You can have their bodies if you save their souls.” This is why it is related that throughout the history of slavery that they said that only good people could read the Bible. Only one or two people were taught to read the Bible, and they read the Bible to the other slaves.

W: It really served no part in permitting the Afro-Americans to have all their rights. It was more of the political process.

R: It was a political thing and there were some people who saw slavery as wrong and they supported the abolitionists...

W: ... Many of us who did not experience these things first hand and have never done so, have a difficult time understanding the basis for those societies who operate on structures of that type. Is it possible, do you think, that a

Christian society can slowly evolve, based on Christian principles into one that eliminates these kind of barriers in society that you had to go through and experience? Could they come back if we had, an ultra-nationalist leader in the country for example, or some other circumstances like this?

R: From the Christian belief?

W: In a society where predominantly Christians live?

R: The things I faced could be corrected through Christianity? I don't know, I don't think so.

W: Could they be corrected and could they seriously come back?

R: Yes, it could, because, what happened was that they cut the state from the religion. So religions don't have the power that they used to. Christianity used to have a great deal of power. At one time the Pope had his own army. If you put the power back in the hands of the Church, the power is in the judicial system and the political system, not in the Church. The Church is only a place where people go and pray now—but the Church used to be calling the shots in the Christian Culture. If you bring that force back into play, you will have the same problems again, because Christianity does not deal with those problems, and it was never meant to deal with those problems, and it never did deal with those problems. They just let them go until the politicians found political solutions for those problems. And politics, as you know, only works under pressure, and it was the pressure of the Civil Rights Movement that created the Civil Rights legislation, or else we wouldn't have had that, because in 1926 the Ku Klux Klan was so strong in America that they publicly paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. When World War II ended, and you had a strong communist force in the world, then the United States and the western countries, they had to look at their racial policies because they were getting pressure from Civil Rights groups



A group photo from a west coast convention held in the early eighties.

and also from the communists that said, You people claim to be this, you claim to be that, look what goes on in your country. You don't treat your people right, you use segregation. Because during World War II the army was segregated—I don't know if people knew that or not—but the army and the navy and the marines were all segregated in World War II, and, it was President Truman, and not President Roosevelt, who was the president during World War II, and the military forces were segregated. You had your colored regiments and your white regiments, all done under Christianity.

W: I understand what you are trying to say. I want to just highlight the situation that exists today in the world, where again a predominantly Christian society is massacring a huge number of people simply because they do not have the mechanisms within Christianity to recognize the rights of people who are different from them, whether it is on a racial basis or on a religious basis. And I had in mind, particularly, the situation in Bosnia, for example. And I have yet to hear a Christian organization stand up and say, and take and promote effective measures to bring that genocide to an end.

It can exist at any time.

R: I agree, it can exist. In fact it is already existing now. Because the Serbs are basically Christian. The Pope has not, from my knowledge, spoken out against what is going on in Bosnia to bring this thing to an end, because these people are fighting Muslims and Muslims are a threat to the Christian religion. So therefore if they can find some way to weaken Islām or to weaken the Muslims, they'll use some excuse to do it. And Saddam Hussein, another point of interest, I would think, in that respect.

W: Before we diverge too far from where we started, I want to come back and discuss again your introduction to and your embracing of Islām. You mentioned that these factors drove you towards an alternative. That before you knew of Islām there was no other alternative that you were aware of. You became aware of this alternative, and you liked what it taught, and therefore you embraced it. But this alternative, why did it become available to you only in the city? Was that something that was linked to an awareness of Islām that was generated by immigrants in this country from the Middle Eastern countries? Or how did this awareness start to be preached in America so that it became common knowledge to many many Afro-Americans, and they embraced Islām in large numbers. Where did this start from?

R: Well, this is historic, from *Ḥaḍrat* Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ṣāhib, who was the first missionary to be sent to the United States by the second Khalīfah of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement, *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (radiyallāhu ‘anhu). At that particular time, the information had spread from my area but it emanated from him (*Ḥaḍrat* Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ṣāhib) and there were other people, in Chicago and New York, who had already accepted Islām in large groups. When the American musicians started accepting Islām—they traveled a lot—and when they came to



A group photo from a west coast convention held in the early eighties.

a town, they were usually honored by the society. These were talented people, and they earned quite a bit of money, and they weren't in the category of jobs that were usually offered to African-Americans—as waiters, and bus boys and porters and these kinds of jobs. I can remember those days when being a taxi driver was “too high” of a job for Afro-Americans. And they come along, very talented people, they made records and all this kinds of business. And when they started accepting Islām, people thought it was a big thing. At first, I thought it was just a fad. America pulled a fad. You know, the clothes are a fad, the language is a fad, the way they cut their hair is a fad, and America goes through fad after fad after fad. So when I heard about Islām, I thought it was another fad. But after I started investigating, I found out that it wasn't a fad—it had a lot of substance to it. So I started taking it seriously. At the time Muslims were also out there preaching their wares, and when I heard about them, I heard about the other Muslims at the same time. So I went to one of their places. When I went to one of their temples, the first thing they would do then is search you. And I got searched.

And my wife was with me at the time, and we went into their place, and we sat down. And we heard this sermon about black supremacy. “The black man is the best man. He was the first man. The white man is the devil, he is from the Yakub, Satan. They didn’t know what Yakub was. He can’t be a Muslim because they are openly people. That he can never be a Muslim.” So black people are better than white people, this is what he taught.

W: Who was the person saying this?

R: I don’t remember who the person was, but he was one of the ministers. They had a temple in Cincinnati at the time and he was one of the ministers. And then they played some military song, “Fight Muslims / Fight for your own / Fight for the nation / Fight for your own.” You want to fight? Fight what? I’m supposed to be in a place of God. I couldn’t accept this. In my bringing up, my family—I am grateful to God for this aspect of them, my family—because they taught us that we were made better than any other people but they also taught us that no other people are any better than us. I went to school. The first school I went to was all African American. And the second neighborhood we moved to was a mixed neighborhood. This is when I began seeing signs like “white only” and all. And I went to a mixed school. I am only using that term. I don’t believe in black and white. I use that term because those are the terms they used in those days. Well, when I went to that school, I saw what their schoolwork was like, what their alphabets were like. And I learned that when you grow up in an American school, you had to fight, because if you don’t, people would run all over you. You maintained your hierarchy by how well you could handle yourself. And I also had that experience with the so-called white people. And they weren’t superior in that respect either. I also knew what the other side was like, too. I lived in a neighborhood of African Americans. I knew what they were like, too. I knew



Among the audience during a west coast convention held in the early eighties.

what they thought, I knew how they talked, I knew what they did, I knew everything about them. There was no way you could tell me that they were superior. I lived with them for twenty years. Now, how can this group of people come out of nowhere all of a sudden and call one group of people superior to another? So I couldn't buy that story and so I never went back there again. I went there one time and when they started saying, These people are superior. These people I'd gone to school with, these people I played music with, these people I'd known for twenty years, they were superior? I couldn't buy that either. So therefore I went to the other Islām.

W: How was your introduction to Aḥmadiyyat arranged by God? What happened that you came to Aḥmadiyyat and joined it so quickly after you had entered into an acceptance fundamentally of Islām and its principles?

R: There were two friends of mine, who had been exposed to people who knew about Islām. Well, I hadn't. So they became Muslim. So, they were finding converts. They said, "This is the thing to do. You got to become one. You got to

come and find out about Islām. You got to get out of this system that you've been in for so long." But they didn't know much. So I got interested and went to a couple of meetings in meeting halls that were built by a Dr. Khān, and he was a Pakistani. And he established three mosques, centers. One in Cincinnati, [one in] Dayton and [one] someplace in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. And this sounded more logical. This was more reasonable, what Islām was like. They had this holy fan up there, that you put money in there and your prayers get answered. I never met Dr. Khān, but I met some of his people. That was more reasonable. But what really made me convinced about the teachings of Islām were two friends of mine that said that there's somebody coming from New York and he's going to be in Cincinnati over the weekend. He's a person you have to meet. Now I don't know whether he met Muftī Şāhib or not, he probably didn't because I don't think he was that old but he had probably met some of his people that followed Muftī Şāhib, he'd probably contacted some of those people. He converted a lot of Afro-Americans to Islām. Kauser Şāhib knows him well. He converted a lot of Afro-Americans to Islām.

W: Kauser Şāhib being [*Maulānā*] Inamul-Haq Kauser Şāhib?

R: Yes, yes. The Imām here at the Baitul-Ḥameed Mosque, Imām Kauser Şāhib. He knows Ṭālib Dawūd. His name has changed now but his name was at the time, Ṭālib Dawūd.

W: So Ṭālib Dawūd was the man who answered your question.

R: Yes, he answered my question and got me in touch with the Aḥmadiyyah Movement. He said, 'You have to get to the real source of the religious information, because the other people, they have information from here, too; so you may as well get the information from the source.' He gave me the address to the Washington, D.C. or the Chicago center. But I



Pioneer American Aḥmadi Muslim, Br Raḥmat Jamāl,
at home.

was so impressed with his knowledge and his understanding—how he explained Islām as opposed to Christianity, and the human dignity that Islām recognized in people that Christianity failed to recognize in people because Christianity (as I found out later) could never have all these things because Christianity wasn't sent to do this job. But Islām was sent to do this particular job—to teach people how to live, to teach people from different nations, different colors, different parts of the world to develop a system and how people can live in that [system], and he was explaining that to me. You're never going to find that in Christianity, that's what the problem was.

W: If I can summarize, you're saying that, essentially, all of the information on Islām began to increase openly and widely subsequent to the arrival in the United States of *Ḥadrat* Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ṣāhib.

R: Yes, I would say that, that's correct, that's correct, yes.

W: You came here in 1921, why is it that although Muslims were here, really nothing was talked about, preached about openly?

R: No, no.

W: ... I now want to turn to what happened after you

accepted Islām. It has always intrigued me to ask a person who accepts Islām, who converts to Islām, what happens to his identity, before and after accepting Islām? I have always known you as Br. Raḥmat Jamāl, what was your name prior to this, what did your friends think about you, what did your parents—how did they deal with this transformation, this identity change, and how did you deal with this?

R: Well, the simplest way to put it is, I think one has to realize that Afro-Americans, by and large, have an identity problem. People were taken from Africa and brought here as slaves. Whatever they were called, or whatever their names were, whatever their family names were, that was all abolished. They took on the names of the people who owned them. And I think that Mr. Alex Huxly, in his book *Roots*, he wrote, I'm Alex Huxly, and talking to him... That when he was in search of his family, he got taken to a certain plantation; all of a sudden his research seemed to have stopped. At that, he said, Well I came from the head, why is there no record of these people on this particular plantation? And to his surprise, he discovered that his family members were listed among the cows, were listed [with] the chickens and the goats and the pigs and all the other things that the people owned. So those people took the names of their owners. So, when people ask me what my name was prior to my becoming a Muslim, to think about it, I don't really know, because the name that I was given by the people who owned my ancestors—that wasn't my name. And whatever my name was, it was that of my African ancestors. Because here, they demolished those names completely because they didn't want any unity among people who they had in slavery because unity made problems. So, therefore, they denied you of your name, and also, they split the families up. Every time they had the opportunity, they would split the family because they did not want that unity because unity meant problems.



Br. Raḥmat Jamāl with some of the attendees of a West Coast annual convention held in San Francisco.

So, therefore, in my case, or I think in most Afro-Americans' case who have become Muslims—that part of their life didn't exist, because they don't acknowledge that, and we feel—most of the people who are Muslim feel—that the Afro-American people at large, won't really feel free until they get rid of that identity, because it gives enmity. As long as you can accept that, your knowledge has to be limited. I don't care what position you hold in the world—this is my point of view—I don't care what position you hold in the world, as long as you have that label on you, your knowledge is limited. You have to recognize what that is and what you're carrying around. So I think that, the point you are missing about Mr. Turner, I think this is one of the points he was making, when he was saying how he's sensing Islām was through the [efforts of] Afro-Americans in the 1920s when Dr. Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq arrived here for teaching Islām—because it builds the Afro-American.

W: I think we are stepping ahead because the remark that we had on that is not recorded. But let's come to that, right now, I think it's important.

R: But the other question about you, what happened after that, after you became Muslim. But there was one point, another point I wanted to make is that the difference between Islām and Christianity. See, Christianity had a need to tell people untruth. Because if you tell people the truth, colonialism can not prosper. It can not work. You have to tell people lies in colonialism. You have to tell people things that are not true to make colonialism work. What I found in Islām was that Muslims were more honest, they were more truthful, in the portrayal of themselves and in the portrayal of other people. Muslims never claimed that all the advances in the world were done by them. The Christians, they didn't say that outright, but this was in their system. They never taught any achievements done by other people. Everybody who wears a shoe—the mold of the shoe, and how the shoe was made—that mold was invented by an Afro-American, but they never gave him credit for it, and many other ideas in the American society were invented by Afro-Americans, but they never got any recognition for it. What Islām did—that was so impressive to me, and when I knew that this was the right religion for me—was that it did credit to other people who had made contributions in the human depth. For instance, Islām readily admits that they borrowed things, information, from the Greeks. They readily admitted that they borrowed things from the Romans, and from the Mongols and from the Chinese civilization. There is one Ḥadīth—and Ḥadīth incidentally are the things that Prophet Muḥammad said, we call that Ḥadīth—and the Ḥadīth said that go to China to seek knowledge if you have to. Which indicates, that there is knowledge in China too, and there have been great Chinese breakthroughs in the past, like gunpowder, and paper itself was a Chinese invention. Islām recognizes these things, and this is one of the things that attracted me to Islām.

W: Okay, good enough. So far as the question about



Br. Raḥmat Jamāl (left) delivering a speech at a West Coast annual convention in San Francisco and (right) taking notes.

identity is concerned, prior to accepting Islām, you had an identity imposed on you—something that you could not necessarily understand the root of, or even if you tried to trace it back, you would go as far amongst inclusion in a list of items belonging to the slaves' owner, and that would be the best you could do. But accepting Islām gave you an identity, or at least brought you closer to something that was attached to something.

R: Yes, but let me explain Islāmic identity: the way it works. When Islām gives you an identity, the first thing it does is, it attaches you to the other Muslims, because usually, Muslims pick names, or they choose names for themselves, or parents choose names for their children that are attributes of God. And when you receive one of those names, you have an attribute already attached to yourself. That attribute not only gives you an identity, it also gives you an objective in life. And these things are unheard of in Christianity. So, I feel that the ultimate, or the basic reason for Islām coming to the United States, was the basic reason for it to solve this African

American problem.

W: So what is the identity that your name gives you, and the objective?

R: Oh, my name depicts me as a merciful person. My name is Raḥmat, which means mercy, and my last name is Jamāl, which means beauty. Not physical beauty but mercy in a tribute to beauty. As a merciful person, in a sense, that attribute becomes a beautiful thing. And that gives me an objective in my life, that gives me a direction, to stop me from doing certain things because that's not in accordance with my attribute, that's not in accordance with my name, and if I do that I would be, so to speak, throwing mud on my name, if I commit certain acts that I can't commit, with that objective in life.

W: Before I come to dealing with that quote of Prof. Richard Turner, I want to deal with a couple of other questions which handle this theme that we have arrived at, which is, what happened after you accepted Islām. What did you gain by accepting Islām, apart from what you have already discussed on the subject of identity?

R: I think the first thing you realize, you gain a sense of respect, you gain a sense of dignity, you gain a sense of security. Because you can not have either one of these things without the proper knowledge, and, Islām provides you the proper knowledge to gain these things.

W: What do you mean by proper knowledge?

R: You have to know what God is, who He is, and what He does. You have to know what people are, why they were put here and how they're supposed to treat each other. You have to know what religion is, and what was its purpose for being sent down to mankind. And, when these things are explained to you, you have a sense of security—you know what you have to do, you know what your responsibilities are and you



West Coast presidents of early 80s with *Maulānā* Munir Chaudhry and *Maulānā* Zafar Sarwar.

know what not to do. Christianity also states that the truth will set you free. But apparently they don't have that truth to set you free because there was slavery for two hundred years and that "proof" that those people had all those years because they had churches, they were allowed to read the Bible, but Christianity contains that the Bible was the truth, but these people were never fed anything until it came to the politicians. That statement only applies to Islām, because the truth does set you free. Until you have the truth, you are in some kind of bondage, some kind of position of servitude to somebody if you don't understand the truth about life, about the world, about people, about God, about everything. When you learn the truth about that—that's when you truly are free.

W: So the first thing that you gained from accepting Islām is a knowledge of all these essential things that you talk about, which was consistent, which you understood and could accept as truth and [it] liberated you. What other

benefits did you gain?

R: It seems like life got better. I can't explain what exactly got better, but life as a whole, overall, got better than it was before. When I was back in those days of ignorance, it seemed like you had too many problems—you were making those problems yourself. I think after I became a Muslim, my life actually got better.

W: So today, though, when all these problems—certainly those ones about slavery and being the property of somebody else, and having to face the color barrier, and sit apart from the white, and sitting in the back of the bus—all those problems and all those unfairnesses have disappeared, is there still some relevance for the African Americans in the message of Islām. Is there a need for Islām?

R: Yes. That need is still there.

W: Is it dire? Or is it less dire?

R: I want to point out something to you—those civil rights organizations back in the '50s and '60s, they thought they were fighting racism, but they were not fighting racism—they were fighting Jim Crow. Now let me explain what Jim Crow is. Jim Crow is a law that regulates racism. It's not a law of just this and this, it's not a law of murder, it's not a law of robbing a bank. Jim Crow is a law that says that you can't go in this restroom, you can't go in this restaurant, you can't go to the front of this bus, otherwise, you'll be arrested. What the Civil Rights leaders admitted later was that in a respect, Malcolm X was right—we were not fighting racism, we were fighting Jim Crow. The Jim Crow Laws in the south—that's what we were fighting. Today, you still have racism. The only problem is, it's under the ground. But it's still there because no one has dealt with it yet. And Christianity can not deal with it and the only religion that can deal with it is Islām because Islām deals with these different nationalities, different cultures. *Ḥadīrat* Muḥammad (peace and blessings

of Allah be on him) has said that the Arab is not better than the Jew, the Jew is not better than the Arab, the non-Arab is not better than the Arab [and vice versa], black is no better than the white [and vice versa]. He has pointed out all these things, and the Holy Qur'ān backs him up and the Ḥadīth and the sunna—the things he said and the things he did—all back him up. You don't have racism in Islām because Islām deals with racism. Christianity does not deal with racism because Jesus was not sent to do that business. Jews don't deal with racism because Judaism was not sent for that purpose. Moses was sent to free the Jews from the Pharaoh, and that's what he did. Jesus was sent to add some things to the Jewish religion, and to compile what was there, and to allow them some things that they weren't allowed before, and to put some restrictions on what they already had. That is what Jesus' mission was and that's why he was given the Injīl (Gospel). That is why you find racism in all places and countries. They don't do it publicly anymore, they do it southerly. An African American goes to get a job, but they don't say "whites only" but they just take the application and say, we'll give you a call. We have a lot of applications, if we decide to hire you, we'll call you. But that application goes right into the waste can after you leave. These kinds of things—that's what they call subtle racism but it still is [racism].

W: I understand. There is still a lot of effort being pulled by legislation or by legislators, by the political forces that exist, into trying true legislation to control and remove and eliminate such abuse—such unfairness. Only recently, I was listening to where other new legal efforts to eliminate unfairness in the labeling policies of banks, for example, to visible minorities. And daily you hear of these efforts. Do you not think that we can't through legislation eliminate all forms of racism?

R: No, you can't do that because legislation has no answer for racism. For instance, if you don't like me, I don't care how many laws I pass, you still won't like me. And if you can find any way to get around those laws, you're going to do it. For example, in 1929, the 20s I'd say, there was Prohibition here. Alcohol in America was illegal. And if you were caught drinking, you could go to jail. But they didn't stop the drinking. You know why? Because they didn't give the people a good enough reason. It was an unenforceable law because it was something people wanted to do. They said, you can't drink because it was a law. They didn't say, you can't drink for a reason—this is the reason that you shouldn't drink, because it does this and that and this other thing. They didn't do that. They just said it's illegal. So people think that if they pass laws, [they think] that people are going to abide by them, but they don't. There's no way I can legislate you to like somebody. You may not break that law openly, but you're going to break it in a way that you won't get caught at it. You're going to find a way to get around that law just like the people found a way around Prohibition. So, racism is the same thing and it still is. These skinheads prove it.

W: So, in summary, then, the answer to the question I asked—the relevance of Islām for the African Americans is still as dire, still as necessary, today, in your opinion, as it was in the past.

R: Yes, it is still necessary.

W: In the last section, we were discussing the relevance of Islām to the African American community and to the impact that it had on his life, vis a vis, his identity prior to Islām, etc. I now want to quote to you a reference that you had mentioned in your talk [in the] last section. This is from Prof. Richard Brent Turner, who is an Assistant Professor at the University of California as he writes in his article, “The Aḥmadiyya Mission to Blacks in the United States in the



Br Raḥmat Jamāl with Ikrāmūl-Ḥāq Jattāla in 1970.

1920s.” He writes, “The Aḥmadiyya Mission among Afro-Americans in the 1920s was far more significant than its number of converts would indicate. Perhaps, the Aḥmadiyya Mission could be understood as the beginning of a new, symbolic theme in Afro-American religious history.” I would love to hear your comment on his assessment of the impact of the Aḥmadiyya Mission on Afro-Americans in the early 20s.

R: The understanding that I get out of this statement, that prior to Islām we have earlier discussed the condition of America and we also discussed how the Afro-American people were treated, how they were degraded—and Islām came along and offered them hope. Because there was no hope in Christianity, because Christianity allowed those people to be oppressed. One of those things that they learned after becoming Muslims, they learned: do not oppress, and do not be oppressed. And that’s a very powerful statement to the Muslims. You do not oppress other people, but nor do you allow other people to oppress you. You keep that oppression down, whatever the cost. Look what Islām had to offer the Afro-Americans, where they had nothing, as far as

their dignity, as far as knowledge, as far as their uplift, identity and things like that—there was nothing offered to them by Christianity. All of these things were offered to them by Islām. And another point of interest, not only Afro-Americans—but the African continent itself is the only continent in the world where the inhabitants are predominantly Muslim—you look at Asia, you look at Europe, you look at South America, I'm just giving you an example. Africa has about a 70% population of Muslims and about a 30% populations of non-Muslims. It is the only continent in the world that has a plurality of Muslims. So, this alone points out to the fact that for African people, of all the people in the world, Islām was made to order. And Afro-Americans are no exception to that rule. As a matter of fact, it is more applicable to them because their rights, their identity—everything—had been taken away and Islām restored all of that back to them. And I think this is what Mr. Turner is trying to express. This is what I read from his statement.

W: And also, it would not be amiss—when you say that Islām gave all these rights to the Afro-Americans, it's important to recognize that by so doing and by so assisting in the emancipation of the Afro-Americans, it removed from the American society one major cause of future lack of peace, of future disturbances, so it gave to the whole of society, not only to Afro-Americans, but also to the rest of the population, this mercy, that it enables them all to understand how important it is that everybody be given his and her due position in life regardless of color and race so they can live in peace. I feel also that the work that *Ḥaḍrat* Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ṣāhib (may Allāh be pleased with him) did when he came was in fact propagation of Islām in America proper. Prior to that, all the Muslims that were here were not able seriously, together even, to give any

meaningful defense of Islām when it was challenged and abused. But let me now come to an end of this meeting that we have had, a very profitable one I might add, by thanking you for providing us with all this time and being available. There are many other questions, I'm sure, that I can ask, but we will leave that for a future meeting. To conclude, by mentioning that a lot of the issues that we have discussed in this interview impacted on some fundamental problems that American society faced and continues to face. Nothing was stated to be taken in the vein that no good is embodied in Christianity or in America. Islām's position on the issue of other religions says that all were founded by Prophets of God who were sent by God for the reformation of various people throughout the ages. Islām's purpose is to establish peace on earth, and it teaches that in order to establish peace, man has to believe in the unity of God and the unity of mankind, and not only to believe in an academic sense but that the practices of his or her religion have to be consistent with the establishment of that unity of mankind. And this, Islām provides an excellent way of doing. All the religions, according to Islām, that came prior to it, were sent by God for specific people for a specific time, this is why God did not arrange for their messages to be preserved, and they continue to experience changes and adulterations by man's hand. It is these errors and these shortcomings which, when man tries to apply it to the age in which we are living today, lead to severe problems and severe likelihood of a cessation of peace. By following Islām man can attain that peace which he has been working so hard to try and attain. May Allāh, may God, enable all of us to understand and practice that true teaching of Islām which can lead all of us to live peaceful and enjoyable, prosperous lives here on Earth. May Allāh enable us to do this...

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Bilāl `Abdus Salām

How I accepted Islām and Aḥmadiyyat

I was born in 1934 in the state of Florida. My birth name was Earnest Moorhead. I changed this name in 1976 to Bilāl `Abdus Salām.

My mother was a very spiritual woman, so I am told. My mother and father died when I was six years old. My elder sister raised me and my younger brothers and three sisters. Two brothers and four sisters are deceased; four of us by the grace of Allāh are living.

The sister that raised me is enjoying old age. She is a very religious woman. She gave me the religious training that I needed. I had to go to church every Sunday and sometime in between.

I went to school in Philadelphia but when I was eight years old, I was sent to a boarding school for discipline. In this school, we had to learn the books of the Bible, the Old and the New Testament.

At the age of fourteen I ran away from home. I worked odd jobs from New Jersey to New England. That's when I started to learn about horses. I worked at the racetrack until 1950. In that year I joined the Army in April. I spent fourteen months in the Korean war and finished my military duty in Japan.

In 1953 I was discharged and when I returned home, I



Bilāl ‘Abdus Salām with Munīr Ḥāmīd.

started studying religion. I became a minister of the Gospel in 1957. My ministry gave me a good insight into the Bible. I became somewhat confused. On one hand they say you should call on Jesus for help and the other hand God says, I am a jealous God, thou shall have no gods before me. From here I began to search for the right way, the Bible was not that.

My first contact with Islām was in 1960, one year after my marriage. I met an old army buddy Shaikh Muḥammad who was a Sunnī Muslim. He told me about Islām, the fundamentals of Islām, Muḥammad (peace be upon him) being the prophet for all mankind. This impressed me very

much. The other thing was that Jesus was a prophet of God and not His son, this gave my soul a great relief. I did not believe in Jesus' son-ship anyway, with this I felt that I was on the right track. I remained with Shaikh for a year. One day he was reading the Qur'ān and inside the Qur'ān I saw written Aḥmadiyyah Movement in Islām, and I asked him what is Aḥmadiyyah. He said, They are not Muslims. I inquired, Why then are you reading their book? He said, They write good books. The next question I asked him was where were they. Then he told me where they were but then he said, Don't go there, if you do, don't come back here. So that's what I did exactly.

When I went there to the Aḥmadiyyah book store, the first thing that I saw was the photograph of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, and I asked the person there, who was an Aḥmadi named Zafar Bashīr, Who is he? And he began to explain it to me. Though I later found that he belonged to the Anjuman Ishā'at-i-Islām group, and did not follow the ways of the movement, but he told me about *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and about him being the second coming of the Chirst. That conversation about *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah was soul uplifting for me. We talked for two hours and I was convinced about the truth of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah. After the conversation I felt as though a heavy burden was lifted from me. My soul felt very light and my heart was full of joy, "I have found the truth, Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh." In the same year I met Munīr Ḥāmid. We became very brotherly. I myself being a new Aḥmadi, he gave me some books on Aḥmadiyyah in Islām. The first was the Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām. When I read this book it gave me a real understanding of the true Islām. I put aside all of my books that were written by the Sunnī Muslims and read nothing but Aḥmadi



Bilāl ‘Abdus Salām with ‘Umar Bilāl Ebrahīm.

books. Munīr was the one who directed twenty two of us to the true Islām. My thanks to Allāh and this brother, our present Nā’ib Amīr.

My most exciting moment was when I went to Rabwah and Qadian. This was in 1974-75. Visiting those places made my conviction in Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām, even firmer. The brothers we met were humble and loving and welcomed us warmly. I was so excited during my first meeting with the third Khalīfah that I could not utter anything. This was the most spiritual experience that I have ever had. I could not control my emotions because for the first time in my life I

had met a man who was chosen by God himself. May Allāh bless his soul and may Allāh bless the hands of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, whom I met also in 1974. I found him to be very wise, and knowledgeable of Islām and Aḥmadiyyat. My second spiritual experience was when I went to Qadian. Meeting with the Amīr of Qadian and other darveshān was a very pleasing experience for me. I also had the blessed opportunity of sleeping in the room where *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah was born, my most memorable experience which I would always cherish.

I had a great wish to devote my life for the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at and thank God my request was formally accepted by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah in 1997. I served the Philadelphia Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at as its vice president from 1983 to 1998. In 1998 I was appointed Missionary for Baltimore. I pray that my life and my death will be in the service of Islām and Aḥmadiyyah. Long live Aḥmadiyyah Khilāfat!

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Evan (‘Umar) Wicks

My Journey to Islām

How on earth does a white thirty something American, raised by very strict Christian parents, convert to Islām? Well it started something like this...

I’d been married for about 11 years or so when one day, I noticed my son getting all dressed up. I asked him where he was going. He replied that he was going to the Mosque. “What’s that,” I asked. “It’s an Islāmic house of worship,” he said. “What are you going there for?” I asked. He told me that he was converting to Islām.” “WHAT!!!!!!” I got so mad at this point (being a good Christian and all) that I told him in not so nice a tone that if he ever mentioned the word Islām, or Muslim, that I would kick him out of the house. Stupid kid, what did he know? But, for the next while (not sure of the duration here) he would sneak out on Fridays and Sundays to the Mosque. He even got my wife and her father to go once. (I thought they were going shopping.)

One day I heard my son upstairs talking. No one was home and he wasn’t on the phone, so I wondered what was going on. I went to the stairs and listened. Something about, “Has the Messiah already come?” I don’t know what it was that made me keep listening but I did. He came downstairs and asked me if he could practice his speech in front of me. I said, ok, and he proceeded to give his speech to me. It was pretty good. I told him that he just needed to slow down a little and he’d be fine.

He asked me if I'd like to go with him to the Mosque and listen to him give the speech. Mmmmm, I thought, this would be the perfect chance for me to go and set these people straight. I'd show these camel jockeys a thing or two about religion. These terrorists weren't going to corrupt my son. So I went.

My son gave his speech (Has the Messiah already come?) and he did very well. Then this gentleman (a Dr.) got up and gave a speech about the beauties of Islām. He was reading from "The Essence of Islām." This man was so passionate about what he was talking about, that he had me captivated.

I went home thinking that these people weren't all that bad. They sure prayed funny though. All that bowing and stuff. Looked like they were doing the wave at a baseball game or something. I kept thinking about what that gentleman had said about Islām being like a Rose, and how beautiful it was. Well needless to say my interest peeked. So I asked my son if I could go with him next Sunday. His jaw dropped. I don't think he really believed that I had asked him that, but he said, "Sure." When Sunday came around I went with him to the Mosque. Again that same gentleman was reading from that book and again talking about the beauties of Islām. I think by this time I was starting to get really interested in learning about Islām. I started going every Sunday with my son. One Sunday he had to work and so I went without him. I wanted to hear more. I heard one Sunday that they even had a service on Friday (something called Jum'ah) and asked if I could come then. I was told that I would be most welcome. So I started going to the Mosque twice a week. My wife thought I was a little strange but didn't really say anything.

This went on for some time, when all of a sudden something called Ramaḍān came up. I didn't know what this was, and was wondering why my son was so hungry all the



Evan ('Umar) Wicks

time. The month came and went. My son was invited over to someone's house for something called Eid. (Sometimes I wondered why these people didn't just speak English for crying out loud.) The person that was hosting this told my son to invite his parents as well. I thought this would be fun and interesting so we accepted.

We arrived at the house and were greeted very warmly. We all sat around talking about different things, when the subject changed to religion.

There's an old saying, "It's better to keep your mouth shut and appear stupid, than to open it and remove all doubt." Looking back, I should have kept my mouth shut. But the host was very gracious and took me into his study and took down a book from the shelf. It was entitled "Islām, the Summit of Religious Evolution." He said he had written it and that he thought I might find it interesting. The next day I picked it up and started reading it. I found it so fascinating that I could not put it down. I was learning things that were completely different from what I was taught growing up. Some preacher told me something and I just accepted it. Islām, I learned later, teaches people to investigate and not just accept things blindly. Anyway, I read that book with the Bible right next to me. Every time there was a reference to the Bible you better believe I was checking it out to make

sure this guy wasn't saying anything that wasn't true. Well, that book was what started me on my quest to find the truth. I've since read many books on religion, not just dealing with Islām either. I've read books by Armstrong, Spong, Burton Mach, Freidman, just to name a few. As well as books about Islām. And with each book I read the madder I got. I felt like I was lied to all my life and everything I knew was all based on a lie. But, as I kept reading I kept learning. My life has taken on a new meaning since finding Islām.

I pray each day that I never stop learning and never stop finding meaning in my life.

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Farīd Aḥmad

How I Became an Aḥmadī

Interview By Ḥameed Malik of Dallas.

I was born in District Chittagong during November 1932. It was British India, now it is Bangladesh.

I was not very religious during my adolescent years. I joined Pakistan Air Force in 1951 at the age of 19, and I was sent for training to Kohat, then West Pakistan, now Pakistan. In 1958 I transferred to Chittagong. It was the same year I got married and someone presented a copy of the “Glorious Qur’ān” to me which is authored by Dr. Murmaduke Pikhthall. After reading the Holy Qur’ān, I observed the erring behavior of Muslim Maulavīs. They did not practice what they preached.

During my stay in Karachi 1953-55, I also investigated Christianity just out of curiosity. I attended Christian churches but their belief of Trinity, Divinity of Jesus, his celibacy and God incarnation, original sin, atonement and salvation, etc., appeared to me most cumbersome and beyond my comprehension and intelligence so much so that to me it was going back to Paganism.

In 1967, when I was working in the port of Chittagong as a Superintendent of Lighthouse and Moorings, I met a very

nice West Pakistani individual by the name of Lt. Commander Marghoob ‘Ālam, who held a dual rank of Assistant Harbor Master and Port pilot of Chittagong. A good friendship developed between us. His piousness, demeanor, attitude, honesty, knowledge about religions and straight forwardness impressed me. From time to time we discussed spiritual matters. He was affiliated with Lahore section of Aḥmadiyyah Jamā‘at.

One day during a family tea party at his residence, he introduced me to an Aḥmadiyyah Jamā‘at Missionary, Maulavī Muḥammad Yaḥyā from Germany. During the discussions, he explained that there was in fact no difference in the beliefs of Aḥmadīs and non-Aḥmadīs except that Aḥmadīs believe that Imām Mahdī and Messiah has come in the person of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (peace be on him) of Qadian to rejuvenate Islām to its previous glory. The Muslims and people of all other religions and faiths have been waiting of a Messiah as mentioned in the Holy Bible, the Holy Qur‘ān and all other revealed scriptures. He also said that Aḥmadīs under the teachings and leadership of their Imām lived in well knit society founded by him, known as the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at, which have preachers and missionaries spread over almost all the countries of the world.

I had now started attending Friday (Jum‘ah) prayers with Marghoob ‘Ālam at his house where he was delivering Khutbahs either in English or in Urdū, unlike the Maulavīs reciting the same Arabic text from some hundred years old writings like talking parrots. By now we had become good family friends as neighbors living in the same colony. I started taking my wife and children as well for the Jum‘ah prayers, for the first time in life. During a friendly visit to his house, Mr. Marghoob ‘Ālam presented me a copy of Holy Qur‘ān translated by Maulavī Muḥammad ‘Alī of Lahore and



Farīd Aḥmad

a copy of the “Teaching of Islām,” Lahori version of the “Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām” by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him).

After I read the book “Philosophy of Teachings Islām,” I was really astounded with the philosophical contents of this book, which explained in depth the wisdom of the Holy Qur’ān. It was first time in my life to discover what a beautiful religion Islām was! Until now I had never heard of such beauties of Islām from any other Muslim Maulavī. I found those Maulavīs always stuck up in quarrelling about small petty matters, local customs, rituals and Wahnābī-Sunnī feuds, etc.

Prior to this, my original information about Qadiani Aḥmadīs was very limited. What I had heard was usual lies that Aḥmadīs are infidels and Mirzā Ṣāḥib claimed to be a Prophet and on some occasions he even claimed himself to be a God (Na’ūdhu Billāh), and that he died ignominiously, etc.

Time was passing when I heard the sad news in November 1971 that my friend Marghoob ‘Ālam died accidentally after falling from the ship. I was saddened by the loss of my close

friend. He belonged to Lahori section of Aḥmadiyyat, which did not have any organization except for a handful people in Chittagong.

The death of my friend saddened me, and I looked upto Allāh for comfort. My dislike of Sunnī Maulavīs prompted me to visit mainstream Aḥmadiyyah Mosque in Chowk Bazār in Chittagong. They gave me two books, one was “Aḥmadiyyat Kā Paighām” (Massage of Aḥmadiyyat) in Bengali language, and the other one was “Maha Shushanbad” (Great Joyful News) by Aḥsanullāh Sikdar, which was about the coming of Mahdī and Messiah of the later days as predicted in the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur’ān. Aḥsanullāh Sikdar was the same person who traveled to Qadian on foot, approximately 1200 miles, to take the Bai’at (Allegiance) of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdī, peace be on him. Upon reading these books it felt like someone had applied put Marham-i-‘Īsā, the ointment of Jesus, on my wounds. I became further convinced about the truth of Aḥmadiyyat. I was still not ready, however, at all to leave my father’s religion.

I was shocked when in 1974, Zulfiqar ‘Alī Bhutto, then the Prime Minister of Pakistan, declared Aḥmadīs as Non-Muslims. That meant Aḥmadīs were thrown out of the pale of Islām. I was already impressed with Aḥmadi Muslims; this news did not deter me from Aḥmadiyyat but actually strengthened my interest in it. I quickly decided that it would be better be a non-Muslim as Aḥmadīs rather than be so called general Sunnī Muslim. I was attracted towards Aḥmadiyyat and my soul and mind were getting convinced that Aḥmadiyyat must have the truth since all the 72 sects of Islām had risen against them, fulfilling a saying of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that Islām will be divided into 73 sects and only one

Jamā'at will be paradise bound. It was not a minor incident because it was the first time in the history of Islām in 1974 that such a major infamous decision was taken by a Pakistani government joining hands with all the 72 sects of Muslims. They all got together, all united, and they all fully co-operated with each other to fight against a tiny Muslim Aḥmadiyyah Jamā'at. It was more astonishing to know that prior to their co-operation, all these Muslim Sects differed each other with a great animosity. This incident triggered in my heart to approach the Aḥmadiyyah mosque in a hurry and initiated into Aḥmadiyyat with the help of respected Ghulām Aḥmad Khān, then the president of Chittagong Jamā'at.

Even though I took the Bai'at, I was still not 100% convinced, therefore I felt urge to search more about Aḥmadiyyat. So in 1977, I planned to go to Rabwah, Pakistan, to attend the Annual Convention. Rabwah was also the International Headquarter of the Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Jamā'at. My intentions were not only to attend the convention but also to see for myself the Aḥmadi character. I attended the convention and felt spiritual awakening in my soul. As a guest, I slept in guest quarters, I ate with them and mixed with all social classes of the people. I must confess, I was very pleased with their discipline and their organization, especially how they organized and conducted themselves. I still remember the beautiful and soul moving scene when innocent looking small children were offering water to thirsty guests in the crowd. I also noticed that their overall cleanliness was exceptional despite the fact that there was a crowd of over 200,000. I also felt the loving attention and humble service given to the guests during the convention. It was kind of a living miracle to see 200,000 people being fed breakfast, lunch and dinner in a very short span of time by all volunteer work for the sake of the religion of Islām. All I

can say is that I was really amazed.

The experience was so inspiring that next year I also took my wife to the Annual Convention, but this time I decided to go to Qadian, India, instead of Rabwah, Pakistan. My wife saw with her own eyes and experienced same feelings that I felt. Even though I was living on limited budget, money was not a concern for my future journeys to enjoy the feelings of closeness to Allāh and meet godly people. Therefore, in 1979 I took my wife to Rabwah, and the following year my wife, daughter, my brother-in-law also accompanied me to Rabwah. They also felt what I originally had experienced—the blessings of the annual convention. As a result, my wife and her brother converted to Aḥmadiyyat, al-ḥamdu lillāh. In 1982, I again took my wife to Qadian, and then in 1995 I attended the Jalsa by myself. In 1997, I took my other daughter along, who is a doctor in California, to Qadian. During these journeys I experienced miraculous help on several occasions from Allāh but lack of space does not allow me to cover those experiences at this time. I will write about these events at a later time, In Shā' Allāh.

I am grateful to my creator and sustainer Allāh that He has enlightened my way to this destination. I request all the brothers who would read my spiritual journey to pray for my wife's health and my own health. May Allāh bless us with the best of this world and the hereafter. May Allāh bring all Muslims and mankind into the fold of Aḥmadiyyat, the true Islām. Amen.

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Glossary

adhān اَذَان : Verbal call, made loudly, to announce the formal Islamic worship five times a day.

aḥādīth أَحَادِيثُ : Plural of ḥadīth.

Aḥmadī أَحْمَدِي : A follower of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

Aḥmadī Muslim أَحْمَدِي مُسْلِم : see Aḥmadī

Aḥmadīs: Plural of Aḥmadī

Aḥmadiyya أَحْمَدِيَّة : see Aḥmadiyyat

Aḥmadiyyah أَحْمَدِيَّة : see Aḥmadiyyat

Aḥmadiyyat أَحْمَدِيَّت : Muslim sect believing *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad to be the Promised Messiah (second coming) and the Mahdi awaited by Muslims, peace be on him.

Aḥmadiyyat Kā Paighām (Massage of Aḥmadiyyat): A booklet authored by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (Second Successor to the Promised Messiah), raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu.

Al-Ḥamdu Lillāh اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰه : All praise belongs to Allāh.

Al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi Rabbil-‘Ālamīn. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the worlds.

Allāh الله : The one and only God.

Al-Naḥl, An-Naḥl اَلنَّحْل : the bee. English magazine published by Majlis Anṣārullāh USA.

Āmīn [Āmeen] آمِينَ : So be it. Amen.

Amīr, Ameer أمير : Commander, Head. National head of the Aḥmadiyyah Community.

Amīrul-Mu’minīn, Ameerul-Mu’mineen امير المؤمنين : The Commander of the Faithful. Khalīfah.

Anjuman Ishā‘at-i-Islām: Also known as the Lahori Aḥmadis. The group of Aḥmadis who do not believe in the prophethood of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, and do not pledge allegiance to the Aḥmadiyyah Khilāfat.

Anṣārullāh: Helpers of Allāh. See Majlis Anṣārullāh.

As-Salāmu ‘Alaikum Wa Raḥmatullāh Peace be with you and blessings of Allāh.

Ayyadahullāhu Ta‘ālā Bi-Naṣrihil-‘Azīz أَيَّدَهُ اللهُ تَعَالَى بِنَصْرِهِ الْعَزِيزِ : May Allāh, the Exalted, support him with His Mighty help.

Bahishtī Maqbarah بَهْشْتِي مَقْبَرَه : heavenly graveyard.

Graveyard established by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (peace be on him).

Bai‘at بَيْعَت : pledge of initiation, covenant of association.

Entering the pledge of allegiance with the Aḥmadiyyah khilāfat.

Bait-ud-Du‘ā, Bait al-Du‘ā بَيْتُ الدُّعَاءِ : A room in his house designated by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, just for praying.

darveshān: plural of darvesh: In Ahmadi Muslims, who stayed in Qadian, under precarious conditions, to safeguard the sacred places, at the partition of the subcontinent of India in 1947.

Dīn: Religion, Faith

Eid: See ‘Īd.

El-Ḥājj, al-Ḥājj الْحَاجَّ : a person who has performed the prescribed Islāmic pilgrimage to Mecca during its appointed days. Ḥājjī

Ḥadāyatullāhs: Persons guided by Allah.

Ḥadīth حَدِيث: Saying of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

Ḥaḍrat حَضْرَت [Hadhrat, Hazrat]: His Holiness

Hajj حَج : Formal pilgrimage to Mecca during appointed time of the year.

Īd: Muslim religious celebration, festival.

Īd-ul-Fiṭr, Īd al-Fiṭr: Celebration at the end of Ramaḍān.

Ijtimā', Ijtemā: Rally.

imām اِمَام : leader, chief, guide

Innā Lillāhi Wa Innā Ilaihi Rāji'un: From Allāh have we come and to Allāh shall we return. (2[Al-Baqarah]:157)

Inqilāb-i-Haqīqī (The Real Revolution): A lecture by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, the Second Successor to the Promised Messiah.

Inshā' Allāh, inshā'allāh, In Shā' Allāh: God willing.

Islām اِسْلَام : submission

Īthār: Selflessness. Social Services.

Jalsa (Jalsah) Salāna (Salanah) جَلْسَةُ سَالَانَةٍ : Annual Convention

Jamā'at جَمَاعَت : Community, Organization

Jamā'at Aḥmadiyyah: The Aḥmadiyyah Muslim Community.

Jamāl: beauty

Jannatul-Firdaus, Jannah al-Firdaus: paradise, heaven.

Jihād جِهَاد : strife

Jum'ah, Jumu'ah, Jum'a, Jumu'a جُمُعَة , جُمُعَة : Friday. (Friday Prayer Services)

Khādim خَادِم : servant, attendant. A member of Majlis Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah.

Khalīfah, khalīfa خَلِيفَة : Vicegerent. Successors to *Ḥaḍrat* Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. Also calif, caliph, kalif, kaliph, khalif.

Khalīfatul-Masīḥ, Khalīfat-ul-Masīḥ, Khalīfah al-Masīḥ خَلِيفَةُ الْمَسِيح : Successor to *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him. Supreme head of the worldwide Aḥmadiyya Muslim community.

Khilāfat, Khilāfah خِلَافَةٌ : succession, caliphate

Khilāfat-i-Aḥmadiyyah خِلَافَتِ أَحْمَدِيَّةٍ : Aḥmadiyyah Khilāfat.

Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah خُدَّامُ الْأَحْمَدِيَّةِ : see Majlis

Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah.

Khuddām خُدَّام : Plural of khādim. Servants, attendants.

Member of Majlis Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah.

Khulafā خُلَفَاء : Plural of khalifah.

Khutbah, khutba خُطْبَةٌ : Address, (Friday) sermon.

Kishti Nūḥ (The Noah's Ark

Lahore section of Aḥmadiyyah Jamā'at: See Anjuman

Ishā'at-i-Islām.

Maghrib مَغْرِب : West. Sunset. Islamic formal worship after sunset.

Mahdī مَهْدِي : Rightly guided.

Majlis Anṣārullāh مَجْلِسُ أَنْصَارِ اللَّهِ (Organization of Helpers of

God): The organization of all Aḥmadī men aver 40 years of age.

Majlis Khuddāmul-Aḥmmadiyyah مَجْلِسُ خُدَّامِ الْأَحْمَدِيَّةِ :

(Organization of Servants of Aḥmadiyyat): The organization of all Aḥmadi men from 16 to 40 years of age.

Mandala, a kind of a picture used to maintain concentration during meditation.

Marham-i-'Īsā, the ointment of Jesus, used on his injuries caused by crucifixion.

Masīḥ-i-Mau'ūd, Masīḥ Mau'ood مَسِيحٌ مَوْعُودٌ : Ḥaḍrat Mirzā

Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah (Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, peace be on him)

Maulavī, Maulvī مَوْلَوِي : Muslim priest, Muslim divine.

Mināratul-Masīḥ: Minaret of the Messiah in Qadian, India.

Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad, Ḥaḍrat: See Muṣliḥ Mau'ūd.

Muftī Muḥammad Ṣādiq (1872-1957): A companion of

Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, who was the first Aḥmadiyyah Muslim missionary to the US (1921-192). He founded the Muslim Sunrise in the US in 1921.

Muḥammad مُحَمَّد : Praiseworthy, commendable, laudable.

Holy Prophet of Islām (571-632), peace and blessings of Allāh be on him.

mulla: Muslim clergy.

mūṣī, moosee, musee, moosi: one who has willed.

Muṣliḥ Mau‘ūd, Muṣliḥ-i-Mau‘ūd, Musleh Mau‘ood: مُصْلِحٌ مَوْعُودٌ

(The Promised Reformer): *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Bashīr-ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Aḥmad (1889-1965), Khalīfatul-Masīḥ II, raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu, who fulfilled the prophesy of *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, about the advent of a Reformer.

Muṣṭafā مُصْطَفَى : chosen, selected, preferred, favorite. The

Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be on him).

Na‘ūdhu Billāh: God forbid

Nā‘ib نَائِب : Assistant

na‘ra’-i-takbīr: Call to raise the slogan of the greatness of God, responded by Allāhu Akbar, God is Great.

Nikāḥ نِكَاح : Marriage announcement

OM: (Hindu word for Unity, All, or God).

per se: by itself, in itself, intrinsically.

The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islām: A lecture written by *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadian.

Promised Messiah: *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835-1908).

qā’id قَائِد : leader. National departmental office holder of Majlis Anṣārullāh

Qadian قَادِيَان : A town in northwest India where *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, peace be on him, lived.

Qadiyaniyyat: Related to Qadian. Used by anti-Aḥmadiyya forces to denote the ideas related to the Promised Messiah (peace be on him) or Aḥmadiyya. Aḥmadiyyat. Qur'ān, Quran, Koran: recitation, a book most read. The Holy Book revealed to Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, in Arabic over 23 years.

Rabwah رَبْوَه : A town established by the Aḥmadiyyah Community as their headquarters in Pakistan. The town is located in District Jhang in Punjab next to River Chenāb.

raḍiyallāhu ‘anhu: رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ : May Allāh be pleased with him.

raḥimahullāh رَحِمَهُ اللهُ : May Allāh have mercy on him

Raḥmat: Mercy

raka‘āt رَكَعَات : Plural of rak‘at

rak‘at, rak ‘ah رَكَعَه : A section of the prescribed Prayer. Plural: raka‘āt

Ramaḍān (Ramadhān, Ramazān, Ramzān) رَمَضَانَ : Islamic lunar month ascribed for prescribed fasting.

Şāḥib صَاحِب : Companion, fellow, friend, owner, originator.

Mr., a gentleman.

Salām: Greeting of peace.

Salāms: Plural of Salām.

Şalāt صَلَاة : Formal Prayer offered according to a prescribed procedure. Thus, Şalātut-Tahajjud, Şalātul-Fajr, Şalātuż-Zuhr, Şalātul-‘Asr, Şalātul-Maghrib, Şalātul-‘Ishā.

Shahīd: Martyr.

Subḥānallāhi Wa Bi-Ḥamdihī, Subḥānallāhil-‘Aẓīm.

Allāhumma Şalli ‘Alā Muḥammadin Wa Āli Muḥammad: Holy is Allah, worthy of all praise, Holy is Allah the great. Allah, bestow Thy blessings on Muḥammad and the people of Muḥammad.

Şūfī: A follower of Sufism. A surname.

Şūfī Muṭī‘-ur-Raḥmān Bengālī: Aḥmadī Muslim missionary.

Sufism: Being a Ṣūfī. A simple life of righteousness and service to the cause of man and God.

Sunnah سُنَّة : practice of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh be on him.

sunnah prayer: Non-obligatory portion of formal Islāmic worship offered following the example of the Holy Prophet, Muḥammad, peace and blessings of Allāh on him.

Sunnī: Traditionists. A sect of Islam.

Sūrah سُورَة : A chapter of the Holy Qur'ān. There are 114 Sūrahs (chapters)—of various lengths—in the Holy Qur'ān.

tablīgh تَبْلِيغ : preaching, propagation

Ummah, Ummat أُمَّة : nation, people. Muslims.

Urdū اُردُو : National language of Pakistan, also spoken in some areas of India and adjoining regions comprising mostly of Arabic, Persian and Hindī words and expressions.

vis-à-vis (pronounced as veezavee): in regard to, in relation to.

Wahhābī: Muslim sect founded by Muḥammad bin 'Abdul-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century.

Waqf-i-Jadīd, Waqf Jadīd, Waqf-i-Jadeed, Waqf Jadeed وَقْفِ جَدِيد : New Devotion. A scheme among the Aḥmadiyyah community to arrange for the educational and medical support of the people of the less endowed countries of the world.

Wuḍū وُضُو : Ablution. Prescribed washing before Islamic worship.

Zafrulla Khān, Sir Muḥammad Zafarullāh Khān مُحَمَّد ظَفَرُ اللَّهِ خَانَ : (February 6, 1893 - September 1, 1985). Barrister-at-Law, Lincoln's Inn, 1914. Member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1926-1935. Member, Governor-General's

Executive Council, India, 1935-1941. Judge, Supreme Court of India, 1941-1947. Foreign Minister, Pakistan, 1947-1954. Judge, International Court of Justice, 1954-1961 (Vice President, 1958-1961). Permanent Representative, Pakistan at United Nations, 1961-1964. President, General Assembly of United Nations, 1962-1963. Judge, International Court of Justice, 1964-1973 (President, 1970-1973).

za'im زعيم : leader, chief, head, boss, strongman. Head of a local chapter of Majlis Anṣārullāh.

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III. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajjud (pre-dawn supererogatory Prayers) and invoking *Darūd* (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.

IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.

V. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trials; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

VI. That he/she shall refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations, and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Qur'ān; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) the guiding principles in every walk of his/her life.

VII. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.

VIII. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.

IX. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.

X. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connection demanding devoted dutifulness.

(Translated from *Ishtihār Takmīl--i--Tablīgh*, January 12, 1889)



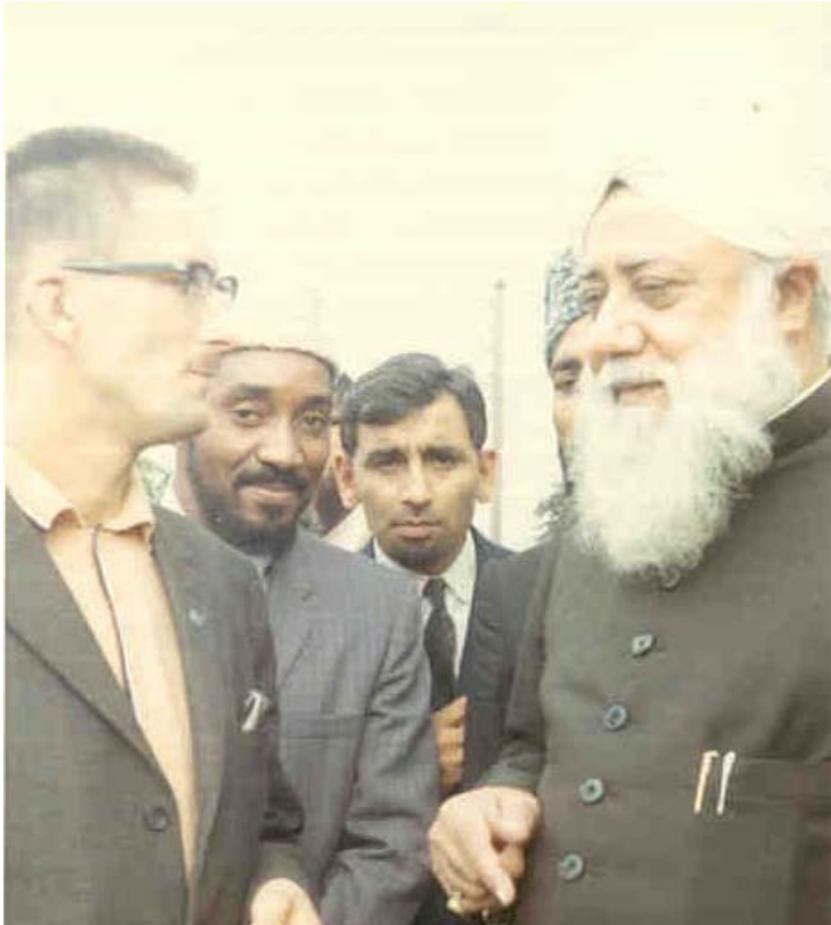
Br. Raḥmat Jamāl in a group photo with *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, joined by prominent Aḥmadi Muslim officers and members.



Ḥaḍrat Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah, with Bilāl 'Abdus Salām to his right and Abdullah and Muḥammad to his left.



Br. Raḥmat Jamāl following *Ḥaḍrat* Mirzā Ṭāhir Aḥmad, Fourth Successor to the Promised Messiah.



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