Jamal Badawi describes Hasan Al-Banna’s influence as “most inspirational”

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Excerpt:

What book or person has been most influential to your life?

Jamal Badawi: I have read many books, but Hasan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been most inspirational. In his short life he visited over three thousand villages in Egypt, preaching Islam in a comprehensive yet moderate way, thus re-igniting the spiritual passion in people’s heart. Since his assassination in 1949, at the age of forty-three, his ideas have been widely adopted beyond the boundaries of his homeland by millions. More than any other individual, he has epitomised twentieth century Islamic thought and ideology.
On Mount Nur With Dr. Jamal Badawi

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Ed al-Adha has again come and passed. Millions of pilgrims have taken the journey of a lifetime to the Holy of Holies, rebuilt by the prophet Abraham. The valley of Makhzoum will resonate with the yearning of their souls to be closer to their Creator. As the hearts of the pilgrims are still aflame with the life-altering experiences of Hajj, we ask another spiritual traveller to take us on an imaginary journey to the nearby Mount Nur and share with us his spiritual reflections and life journey.

He is Dr. Jamal Badawi, lecturer in both management and Islamic Studies at Saint Mary's University in Canada. In his more public role as a renowned speaker on Islam, Dr. Badawi is perceived as a soft-spoken man of overwhelming modesty, yet his fiery and unflinching beliefs and strength in profoundly change the hearts and minds of those who have seen him or heard him. The power of his speech and quiet, exemplary manner is an illuminating light that shines the darkness of ignorance and confusion.

On Mount Nur is an imaginary journey of spiritual enlightenment, what unique experience initiated your life journey as a seeker and sharer of knowledge?

What book or person has been most influential to your life?

As a fountain of knowledge to others, how do you replenish that resource?

What advice would you give to others considering a career in religious education?

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If you were to choose three short selections from the Qur’an to take on this imaginary journey to Mount Nur, what would they be?“Be mindful of Allah and Allah will give you knowledge. Anyone who has faith, Allah will guide him.”

Al-Hafidz says unexpectedly when we put our trust in Him. In 1979, at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, I was asked to produce and present a series of 97-hour programmes on Islam to be shown in the States and Canada. They were presented as a “Unit method” that is they were initiated by questions to which I would provide the answers. It is the holy mercy of Allah that these programmes, commenced only as a short series, but the audience were so well received that now the series extends to over 300 programmes. As a further benefit from Allah, the research for these programmes formed a wonderful basis for self-education.

... And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, Allah will suffice him... (Sura 65: Verses 3)

The most pertinent example of this in my life is when I was appointed researcher in Islamic studies at Et Men’s where I had been teaching management studies. I have no degree teaching in Islamic studies, yet I was voted full professor de facto.

... surely the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the one who has the most sincere faith... (Sura 46: Verses 14-15) The most important thing is to be conscious of Allah. Our actions should be beyond the dual, whether it is in our prayer or reciting the Qur’an. Headstrong prevents us from seeing the true benefit of prayer and remembering Allah. All of us would be examples, and Allah will be our foundation and our support.

What are the three Hadiths that you would take with you to Mount Nur and how would they enrich your soul and spirituality?

... One of you (believes in seeking to be a Muslim and to be a Muslim) here is a reminder of the sanctity of the Companions of the Prophet. Take it not only as a slogan but there should be a deep sense of brotherhood which is fundamental to the success of Islam as a way of life and the well-being of society.

“Actions are but intention and every man shall have but that which he intended... (Sura 5: Verses 149) We live in a world where there is little time for reflection and our lives are often wrapped up in action and when our action seems to succeed in life, we think it is our own doing and we do not remember that it is Allah who has granted us that success. Therefore, the intention of our actions must be pure and we must constantly remind ourselves that we are nothing but for the grace of Allah. We should say: ‘Ask Allah to help us to keep our promise; By Allah, we will do your will;’ as he is the one that is both a reminder and a comforter. It is a reminder of the transcendence of this life but also a reassurance that any time of failing is in peacetime that ultimately there is success for those who believe in Allah.

What would be your innermost thought about this spiritual journey?

As an overwhelming sense of contentment and gratitude to Allah, Allah has sufficed me in everything that my work and my family. He has blessed me with a job at the University that sustains my family and myself so that I may devote the rest of my time to doing work on an unexplored field and related spiritually rewarding. He has blessed me with a wife who is always loving, patient, understanding and supportive. She has been my best critic and I always consult her when I prepare programmes. We are blessed with five children and fourteen grandchildren. I will spend my time on Mount Nur reflecting on Allah’s grace and remembering that I am nothing without Allah’s mercy.

As you complete your imaginary journey, how would you apply your reflections to the real world?

After September 11th, we all live in a more precarious world. There is an intellectual battle against not just Muslims but also Islam. The ‘cut and paste’ approach, i.e. picking out examples out of context from the Qur’an is very damaging to the integrity of Islam. Islam is portrayed in the media as an aggressive religion and many fundamental concepts are called into question or even ridiculed. There is an improper understanding of such issues as idolatry and many have asked why the Prophet peace be upon him, married so many wives. As Muslims, we cannot bury our heads in the sand; we must combat the prejudices and provide the answers. However, it is only with deep knowledge and understanding that we can hope to depict mistrusted truth and show that such horrific effects as those that September 11th are completely un-Islamic. After all, peace and humility are at the core of Islam.