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Between Ourselves

THE COVER
The design on the Cover is the work of a young Egyptian Muslim of Pakistani extraction. It is conceived around the famous sentence in Arabic — Allah jalla jallahu huwa ("God Whose might is illustrious").

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THE CONFLICT OVER BIZERTA

Bizerta, the French naval base, the evacuation of which was to be discussed and agreed upon by both Tunisians and French, after Tunisian independence, has become a sore point in their relationship due to the dilatory tactics used by France. Recently President Habib Bourguiba has stated his firm intention to obtain the evacuation of the base and to defend the integrity of the Tunisian territory. This decision overlooked and ignored has entailed the armed conflict which has taken world opinion by surprise and which resulted in heavy casualties on the Tunisian side.

Since then, following the adoption of the Security Council interim resolution calling for a cease-fire, a truce has intervened.

Before we see what the chances are of a settlement at the present time and therefore the prospects of Tunisian relationships with France, it is useful to look back on this long-pending question in order to get to the root of the crisis.

Genesis of the crisis

The question has been pending since Tunisian independence in 1956: negotiations were to take place subsequently which would have resulted in an agreement, setting a timetable for the evacuation of the French troops stationed there.

Later when the French withdrew from elsewhere in Tunisia, under the agreement of 7th June 1958, it has been accepted that those stationed in the Bizerta area could remain pending negotiations. Since that time several notes have been sent to the French Government about this matter.

Except, therefore, for the restitution to the Tunisian authorities of some barracks located within the town of Bizerta, the French Government, in spite of the constructive propositions for a “conversion” of certain installations for civilian use, avoided every disposition as regards the total evacuation.

At the beginning of July 1961, that is to say three years afterwards, when the situation seemed to be improving, engineering works for the reinforcement of the base and for the extension of a landing track were undertaken by the French military authorities. That was an important fact, if the need was to show the deliberate intention of France to maintain her occupation of the national territory, in spite of the will of the Government and Tunisian people clearly expressed many times.

That is why President Bourguiba, in order to prevent and avoid any conflict, sent a personal message to the head of the French State on 6th July 1961 drawing to his attention how humiliating and contrary to the wishes of the Tunisian Government the attitude of the French Government was.

This message remained unanswered.

Official talks justified this silence as a refusal to discuss the matter. During the popular demonstrations which were taking place all over the territory of the Tunisian Republic on 14th July, President Bourguiba re-asserted the will of his country to see her territory evacuated in a speech delivered in the “Place du Gouvernement”. He also expressed the wish that the evacuation would enable a fruitful co-operation between France and Tunisia. At the end he added that if the principle of evacuation was recognized by France, negotiations would take place to set up the methods and the date for withdrawal.

On 16th July the French chargé d’affaires in Tunis withdrew the reservation which was the reason for the non-reply of the French Government, stating that on the grounds that the popular demonstration was not in itself a means of
pressure but foretold of a reply which according to him would be constructive.

On 17th July President Bourguiba expounded and developed these views, contained in his speech of 14th July before the National Assembly.

On 18th July the French Government handed a verbal note, which amounted to a refusal, to the Tunisian Government. This unexpected change was confirmed by the statement issued by the French Ministry of Information, announcing that reinforcements of paratroops were being sent, or about to be sent, to Bizerta.

Between the oral communication of 16th July from the French chargé d'affaires and the reinforcement of the base announced on 19th July by the French Minister, no new development occurred to explain or justify this surprising attitude.

In view of this obvious threat, the Tunisian authorities immediately forbade any military flights over the national territory. In spite of this, a helicopter left the base to fly over the town of Bizerta. Warning shots were fired by the Tunisian forces. Immediately afterwards four planes arrived from Algeria, dropping paratroops.

The French aggression

It is crystal clear from this chronology of fact that the French reply to the offer provided by the Tunisian Government to negotiate the evacuation was the reinforcement of their military forces, and this in violation of the pledge as stressed in their letter of 17th July 1958:

"The French Government does not intend to keep armed forces, other than those which are there in accordance with negotiated agreements arrived at by the two States, on Tunisian territory."

Following the announcement to the Press by the French Minister on the imminent arrival of French paratroops, the Tunisian Government prohibited all military and civil flights through the Tunisian air space in the Bizerta region and that due south of the city of Gabès. It also announced that instructions were given to shoot at any plane which violated this warning. Despite this fact, acts of aggression were deliberately perpetrated against Tunisia, namely, the bombing of Tunisian positions, the machine-gunning of them, the sending of planes from outside the country, the parachuting of troops, the cruising of three French battleships just outside the Tunisian territorial waters.

In terms of international law it was unmistakably aggression. The Tunisian Government therefore decided on 20th July:

(1) To break off diplomatic relations with France (Consular relations being maintained).

(2) To bring the matter before the Security Council. Mr. Mongi Slim, former Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the U.N., being asked to put the Tunisian case before the Council.

For this armed aggression modern warfare methods were used by France. Very serious incidents took place at Menzel Bourguiba, Sidi Ahmed, Menzel Djemil, Fort Saint. Bombing raids were carried outside the operational zone, civilians were used as targets.

On 20th July, President Bourguiba declared: "Waves of fighter planes with rockets and bombs are attacking civilians, the National Guard and the barricades built to stop French military traffic. Armoured vehicles are firing at demonstrators." Bombs, rockets and even napalm were used against the ill-equipped volunteers. French denials for these disgraceful actions could not stand against the evidence given by foreign correspondents who were on the spot and who witnessed in stunned dismay the atrocities being committed on unarmed civilians, on women and children.

On 24th July the death roll was reckoned to total 670 and the wounded 1,155 on the Tunisian side, while on the French side there were less than thirty dead and 100 wounded.

There is no cover-up for such a disproportion in losses.

The Bizerta crisis is a most unfortunate reminder on a much larger scale of the bombing of the Tunisian village of Sakiet Sidi Youssef by the French on 8th February 1958, when mainly civilians and schoolboys died. There also were witnesses — reliable people from the Red Cross and foreign correspondents. There also the threat to peace urged the Tunisian Government to put the case before the U.N. and to call for the withdrawal of French troops. Franco-Tunisian relations were so strained at the time that it appeared necessary to recourse to a mediation: it was the Anglo-American good offers, the Beeley and Murphy mission, which resulted in the exchange of letters dating back to June 1958.

In fact we are back to June 1958, as nothing tangible has intervened since then as far as Bizerta is concerned, with this difference, that the situation has now deteriorated almost beyond repair. Then the Tunisian Government lodged a complaint against France at the U.N., but this complaint was not pressed too far (it is still pending, as a matter of fact). The Tunisian Ambassador, Mr. Masmoudi, was recalled to Tunis, but the diplomatic relations were not severed and they were continuing at a chargé d'affaires level.

The Security Council

France turning a deaf ear to Tunisian claims engendered a most serious situation to which President Bourguiba tried to draw General de Gaulle's attention, with no success, in a personal message handed to him on 6th July. A situation which resulted in the aggression infringing the sovereignty and security of Tunisia and threatening international peace and security, thus compelling Dr. Mokaddem, the Tunisian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to request that the Security Council be convened "as a matter of extreme urgency" to consider the complaint by Tunisia against France.

The taking of the dispute before the U.N. was a token of Tunisian honesty and good faith — what she expected from the Council was:

First, to bring an immediate end to the aggression.

Second, to help Tunisia, if necessary, to repel it.

Third, to help Tunisia, a permanent member of the United Nations, to remove from her territory this permanent danger of aggression constituted by the presence of French troops on her territory against her will . . . in other words, to give Tunisia all the assistance permitted by the Charter to achieve the final evacuation of French troops from Tunisian soil.
These were the three points brought to the attention of the Council by the Tunisian representative.

A joint resolution by the U.A.R. and Liberia calling for immediate negotiations aimed at the withdrawal of all French forces from Tunisia was defeated, as well as Anglo-American proposals merely for a negotiated settlement of French-Tunisian differences without any mention of French withdrawal.

Following the U.N. resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire and a return of all armed forces to their original positions, truce intervened at midnight on 22nd July — which was not scrupulously obeyed by the French forces. The Council, although adjourned sine die, remains aware of the dispute, and could be re-convened whenever necessary.

The military side of the question, namely the enforcement of the cease-fire orders, is impeded at the moment by the reluctance on the part of the French to enable a discussion to take place between the Tunisian Governor and the French Commander.

The extreme seriousness of the crisis caused the invitation extended by President Bourguiba to the United Nations Secretary-General “for urgent talks” and the calling back home of Tunisian troops in the United Nations Congo force.

Guns have been silenced, but minds are not at peace; the question confronting Tunisia now is the prevention of the recurrence of an aggression which came as a shock to world opinion and which caused indignation throughout the world.

Tunisia’s friends and allies and all peace-loving countries cannot fail to acknowledge that the presence of French forces on Tunisian soil constitutes not only a violation of her sovereignty but also a permanent threat to her security, particularly after what had taken place during the French aggression.

But it must be realized that the French aggression and the atrocities which went with it marks a turning point. No solution short of a rapid evacuation from Bizerta could now restore peace and stability in this part of the world.

France’s pretense that she holds on to the base in order to defend the interests of the Western world no longer makes sense. With a view to the latest deterioration of the situation it is the paramount duty of any country concerned with peace to help France to come back to her senses, were she to persist in her present attitude, and were not reason to prevail at last, the consequences could, and very likely would be, incalculable.

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**A MUSLIM’S PRAYER**

by DR. SYED VAHIDUDDIN

Allah, My Lord! Hidden and manifest, Creator Supreme and fashioner superb! Thine is the world I know and Thine the worlds I know not. Thy mercy envelops creation and Thy light dispels gloom. Burden me not with what I cannot bear and forgive me when I err. My life is a waste: let me not squander Thy bounty and lose hope in Thy loving beneficence. Unto Thee I flee and cry in anguish. Hold me close when my feet fail and lead me with the righteous to victory. Why should I grieve and fear when Thou art nigh and why should I complain against Thy decrees when I know not what Thou hast prepared for me? Ignorant as I am I know not the joy that may lie hidden in sorrow and the sorrow that may lurk in joy. I pray for those who have gone before me and beseech Thy forgiveness for my parents, in whose loving care I grew. Informed with wisdom let me grow in knowledge that comes of Thee. Suffer me not to envy the pleasures that others have and to languish in grief at the loss of what I have. Guard me against pride and lust and make me not vain and hypocrite. Let not passion make me wild and let not power blind me to the transient state of all that life offers. Blessed is he who has surrendered his all unto Thee and who has won his peace in Thy pleasure. May my tears in constant remembrance of Thee sustain the heart and bring deliverance! Bless me with the fullness of life on earth and when the time comes make me return unto Thee united in the fellowship of Thy loving ones. Lord! Grant me above all, I pray, the vision of Thy countenance that Thou hast promised for those who are Thine.
FREEDOM OF ENQUIRY IN ISLAM

by ABDUL TAIB BIN MAHMUD

"Freedom in the absolute sense belongs only to the realm of pure idea, and cannot be found in the practical world. Religion, which has to deal with the inter-relations of individuals important in themselves, has to adjust the necessity of freedom with the preservation of value shared by the totality of mankind. The appreciation of freedom is based on the value of man and his free-will. Practical freedom must therefore seek the proper adjustment between the value of the free-will and the other values of equal necessity for the continued existence of a human society.

"Hence Islam, in dealing with the problem of freedom of enquiry, has to strike a medium between two extremes."

Freedom of enquiry in religions generally

It is the fundamental purpose of every religion to bring into the world what it regards as the truth, and it is complementary to that purpose to propagate that Truth and preserve its purity from corruption. Strict adherence to this twin purpose has caused some religions to prohibit freedom of enquiry, claiming divine inspiration as their sole and exclusive guide. On the other hand, some religions regard truth as the discovery of reason and encourage each contemplative effort as a step in the unfolding of a Fuller Truth. Both these types of religions lend themselves to self-canceling extremes. Whereas, the purely dogmatic religions, by stifling rational activity in religious matters, impoverish its own contents and impede any development to become a universal creed; the purely rationalistic religions drown themselves in subjectivism and relativity of concepts. Unlimited freedom of enquiry seems to result in a frustrating uncertainty and complete divergence of belief amounting to antagonistic schisms even within a small group.

Freedom of a non-believer to accept or to reject

The basic foundation of true faith is internal conviction — an acceptance by the will of an idea or ideal approved by reason or at least not repulsive to it. It necessarily follows from this that freedom of rejection must have been open to a person, and a choice of acceptance must have been exercised by him, before he can properly be given the credit of being a "true believer". The Qur'ān has expressly declared:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion."

"If it had been Thy Lord's will, They would all have believed — All who are on earth — Wilt thou then compel mankind Against their will to believe!"

"The Truth is from your Lord; Let him who will, believe, And let him who will, reject it."

Necessity of prophets because of freedom to believe

God could have made all men accept his revelation. But, if that be the case, what part has man played in his act of belief? On what merit can he claim the reward for virtue? Man, as a morally free being, must elect to accept God by virtue of the exercise of his will to follow the promptings of his moral judgment. God will help him see the necessity of belief. But He leaves the final choice entirely to man himself. For this reason, God sent prophet after prophet as a mercy from Him to convey his message to all nations. It is the corollary of this recognition of man's free choice in religious matters that God sends His prophets to mankind.

Prophets are merely teachers and guides

From time to time prophets or teachers of morality have been sent "to warn" people of the evil consequences of rebelling against God and His law for the preservation of a decent human life. In times of sufferings they came "to give the good news" of God's Beneficence and promise.
of a brighter future. And in times of material prosperity these prophets raised their voice to remind a forgetful humanity of God's favour and to reason with them of the need of their keeping in contact with God. In the case of the Prophet Muhammad, the function of reasoning, warning, and giving the good news, are combined together. The morally depraved Arabs, who had fallen deep in idolatry, needed a fresh reminder of the existence of God, His Unity, of the need for a higher moral life and the necessity of a life after death. Although it is not Muhammad's responsibility to take an account of their action, he must warn the Arabs and:

"Invite (them all) to the way
Of the Lord with wisdom
And beautiful preachings;
And reason with them
In ways that are best
And most gracious."

Appeal to reason in proof of basis of religion

Muhammad's preaching during his calling as a prophet must, therefore, be in the most beautiful form and vitalized with powerful reasoning. These early revelations which God sent to Muhammad in Mecca typify the beauty and rhetorical appeal to reason of Islamic argument for the existence of God.

"He who created the heavens
One above another:
No want of proportion
Wilt thou see
In the creation
Of (God) Most Gracious."  

"He has subjected the sun
And the moon (to His Law);
Each one runs (its course)
For a term appointed.
He doth regulate all affairs,
Explaining the Signs in detail,
That ye may believe with certainty
In the meeting with your Lord."  

"If there were, in the heavens
And the earth, other gods
Besides God, there would
Have been confusion in both."  

"It is He Who sends down
Rain from the sky:
From it ye drink,
And out of it (grows)
The vegetation on which
Ye feed your cattle.
With it He produces
For you corn, olives,
Date-palms, grapes,
And every kind of fruit:
Verily in this is a Sign
For those who give thought."  

"And the things on this earth
Which He has multiplied
In varying colours (and qualities);
Verily in this is a Sign
For men who celebrate
The praises of God (in gratitude).
It is He Who has made
The sea subject, that ye
May eat thereof flesh
That is fresh and tender,
And that ye may extract
Therefrom ornaments to wear;
And thou seest the ships
Thereon that plough the wave,
That ye may seek (thus)
Of the bounty of God
And that ye may be grateful."  

"Seest thou not that it is
God Whose praises all things
In the heavens and on earth
Do celebrate, and the birds
(Of the air) with wings
Outspread? Each one knows
Its own (mode of) prayer
And praise. And God
Knows well all that they do.
Yea, to God belongs
The dominion of the heavens
And the earth; and to God
Is the final goal (of all)."

"We created not the heavens,
The earth, and all between them,
But for just ends."  

"Seest thou not that God
Created the heavens and the earth
For Truth?"

"O ye people,
Adore your Guardian-Lord,
Who created you
And those who came before you,
That ye may have the chance
To learn righteousness."

"To each is a goal
To which God turns him;
Then strive together (as in a race)
Towards all that is good."
one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or has a deeper sense of adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of nature. A purpose, an intention, a design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd system, as at all times to reject it.”

Man in this way has to acquire the knowledge of his Unseen Creator from the inference of his visible surroundings. An enquiry into the heart of nature will bring a man face to face with the presence of pervading uniform law. He is invited by the Qur’ān to project the light of his reason through the window of nature into the concept beyond of the “Sure Reality”. He should ask himself: Who is the author of this universal law, but the One God, the Lord of the Universe?

But sometimes the moral craving of man does not find full satisfaction in this imperfect world. A future life is a necessary part of the Divine Scheme of Creations to ensure full justice. In answering the question

“When we die and become dust (shall we live again)?”

the Qur’ān argues:

“We give (new) life (with rain) to land that is dead.”

If God Omnipotent can cause life to spring from a once dry and barren planet (for such the earth was according to our geologists), why cannot He raise a living soul out of a physically dead body?

If, in the proof of the very basis of religion, Islam demands the exercise of reason, it would be an absurd reversal of principle for it to prohibit its followers to employ the very rational faculty which had helped them in their conversion to Islam.

Freedom of enquiry in religious matters

Hand in hand with the progress in philosophical, scientific and literary spheres went the analytical as well as the constructive movements in religion.

A critical approach to the study of religion is inevitably a part of the concept of Islam as a development of moral and religious history. The Islamic claim as the evolution of the self-same religion, which at various stages has been given the name of Judaism and Christianity, at once raises the thought-provoking question: How does Islam explain the wide divergence, on the one hand, between monotheistic Judaism and Trinitarian Christianity, and, on the other, between these predecessor faiths and Islam?

Broadly speaking, the explanation by Islam can be traced along three main lines of argument.

(1) The first argument is based on the abrogation of earlier messages or revelations by later ones:

“God doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth.”

But, says God:

“None of Our revelations
Do We abrogate
Or cause to be forgotten
But We substitute
Something better or similar.”

(2) The second argument follows from the first. When messages have become rigid in the legalism of the control of State or the authority of organized priesthood, a revival of the “Law” becomes necessary by fresh and fuller revelations. Islam claims to deliver those fuller revelations to a mankind which has now evolved to a mature stage of intellectual development.

The Qur’ānic verses giving rise to this claim are:

“This is a blessed Book We have revealed,
verifying that which was before it.”

“Wherein are all right Books.”

“We send down to thee the Book
Explaining all things,
A guide, a mercy, and glad tidings
To Muslims.”

“Here are the Signs self-evident
In the mind of those
Endowed with knowledge.”
"This day have I perfected your Religion for you and completed My favour upon you." 26

But both these lines of argument presuppose the continued existence of a common ground: where the messages in the earlier scriptures still maintain some semblance of a common origin with the Qur'anic revelations, but which have been modified at the time of the later revelations when mankind in general has developed a sufficiently high degree of intuition to be ready to grasp the subsequent modifications.

But not all the messages in the earlier scriptures are preserved in the original forms; nor the concepts attached to them consistent with each other. The concept of the Jewish national deity (which at the early stage even impliedly recognized the existence of other deities belonging to other nations and of whom Yahweh was jealous) and the Trinitarian concept, which deified a human — though a great human — personality, cannot be reconciled with the strictly monotheistic God Who, according to Islam, is the One and Only Lord of the Universe.

(3) The third argument therefore takes the form of a criticism.

From the outset of Muhammad's call the believers as well as the non-believers were challenged to study and reflect on the "history" of the nations before them, if they want to verify the truth of the teachings of Islam. 27

A papal commission to ascertain the location of the landing-place of Noah's Ark, and to prove the unreliability of the Qur'an, calls to mind this Islamic challenge. The Bible gives the name of the landing-place of Noah's Ark as "Mount Ararat". The Church asserted that "Mount Ararat" is in modern times called Mount Nasis, while the Qur'an in its account of Noah gave the name of "Mount Judi". 28 After an extensive study of facts the Commission reported that the location was in the "Assyrian Urardu mountains, locally known to the inhabitants as the "Mountains of Judi" (in Armenia). 29

The Qur'anic refutation of the Divinity of Jesus 30 and his death by crucifixion 11 might be proved conclusively when the research on the Dead Sea Scrolls are complete.

Besides criticisms on external evidence of history, the Qur'an also initiated criticism on the basis of internal evidence. The test laid down by it is:

"God has revealed
(From time to time)
The most beautiful Message
In the form of a Book
Consistent with itself." 31

On the ground of external as well as internal evidence, the Qur'an condemned the Jews for not following the law of Moses, 32 and accused that, in their desire to suit the law to their particular purpose, they forged and interpolated the Torah. 33 The doctrine of the Trinity is, according to the Qur'an, the creation of an unbounded reverence 34 and the remnants of a pagan practice. 35

In the hands of the Muslim thinker Ibn Hazm, these arguments of the Qur'an have become the basis of the science of comparative religion 36 and the theory of "Higher Criticism", 37 for which Spinoza was wrongly recognized as the originator.

The challenge to delve into history has inspired Ibn Khaldun to produce what Hegel might later call "Reflective History" and "Philosophical History". 48

In the theological sphere the critical approach initiated by the Qur'an gave rise to numerous schools of thought, widely divergent in their detailed concepts, although basically agreed on the fundamentals. It is characteristic of Islam that difference of opinion seldom, if ever, amounted to such a pitch as to cause one school of thought to fanatically ex-communicate another. 49

The explanation for this attitude of unity in diversity is found in the Qur'anic realistic approach to the problem of interpretation. In the Qur'an are found:

". . . verses
Basic or fundamental
(of established meaning).
They are the foundation
Of the Book: Others are allegorical." 50

The fundamentals are taken as dogmas of established meanings, at least of meanings with not a wide latitude for interpretation. They are meant to elicit the intuition which interprets it at the time.

But, to use the words of the late Professor Whitehead:

"A dogma, in the sense of a precise statement, can never be final; it can only be found in its adjustment of certain abstract concepts. But the estimate of the status of these concepts remains for determination." 51

Yet Islam, by claiming the Qur'an to be the final revelation of God, 52 must allow for the creative nature of men and society. Freedom of interpretation was, therefore, granted by allowing a wide latitude of meanings to be extracted from the non-literal interpretation of the allegories.

Limitations of freedom of enquiry

By introducing the critical approach into religions, Islam exposes itself to a broadside of criticism; by encouraging freedom of speculation, it opens itself to every conceivable adjustment of contingencies. Islam, as a creative force of history, has succeeded in welding together Arabic, Hellenistic, Sassani and Indian elements into what is now called Islamic civilization:

"Islamic form was given to almost every aspect of life, whatever its content." 53

But Islam as a religion in the restricted sense of the word has a more difficult duty of maintaining its spiritual purity while enriching its content. This difficulty merges with the problem of perpetuating freedom of enquiry.

Fair criticism based on facts and sound knowledge, Islam is confident and even sure to be able to withstand. 54 The abuse of reason and the havoc of unfounded prejudices, whims and fancies are the dangers to be safeguarded against. The line has to be drawn for the guidance of earnest searchers of truth between valid and licentious criticism.

Love of Truth

The first safeguard against the misuse of reason is, of course, the love of Truth. The Qur'an in very severe terms condemns any form of falsehood. 55 The first and foremost
duty of the enquirer is to sift the truth from the false and to reveal the truth so as not to mislead others.23 Personal love,24 respect and even deep reverence25 do not afford excuses to deviate in the slightest degree from the truth.26 There is no compromise between truth and falsehood.27 If the believers aspire to live up to the purpose they are created for, they should

"... witness no falsehood; and, if they pass vanity, they (should) pass it nobly."28

In connection with this cardinal duty of observing truth steadfastly, the Qur’anic address for the Early Fathers of the Church is worth quoting at some length:

"O People of the Book,
Commit no excess
In your religion: nor say
Of God aught but the Truth.
Jesus Christ, son of Mary,
Was (no more than)
A prophet of God."29

although (as the Qur’an rightly commented in another verse), he was deserving of:

"Honour
In this world and the Hereafter
And of (the company of) those
Nearest to God."30

Heavy indeed is the responsibility of a Muslim to uphold his integrity. Especially heavy is the duty to hold fast to the truth in all matters touching the essentials of religion. The Qur’an made this very clear when it says:

"Who can be more wicked
Than one who inventeth
A lie against God."31

Muhammad, who is looked upon as the ideal example of integrity in Islam (he is called “al-Amin”),32 refuses to add his own conjecture as to the nature of God to the revelation in the Qur’an:

"I have," he said, "no more knowledge of God than you."33

His dealings with the people of Arabia and his knowledge about the reception of Jesus by simple generations after him warned him of the possibility of exaggerated veneration among the followers who loved him dearly. He, therefore, took particular care to remind them in very strong language not to ascribe an untrue thing to him.34

Islam has been frequently emphasized in the Qur’an as "the Religion of Truth",35 and as such it must be preserved for all time!

Humility

The second safeguard against the misuse of reason is of a psychological nature. It is meant to give the discipline to intellect in its very approach to the question of truth — the discipline which is necessary in view of the possible distortion of facts by personal desires and prejudices. Love of truth should be accompanied by the humility of acknowledging the limited capacity of the intellect to encompass an unlimited field of knowledge. Before the critic goes to the task of finding fault, he must first "earnestly seek to understand the Qur’an,"36 otherwise his criticism of Islam will be misleading for lack of proper foundation. Those who "dispute about the signs of God without authority," says the Qur’an, "have nothing in their breasts, but (the quest for) Greatness."37

The causes of unbelief, according to the Qur’anic analysis of human dispositions, are usually pride and greed.38 It is pride that blinds the eyes to the truth and perverts the reason.

Furthermore, pride has the tendency to give rise to personal jealousy, which, if not smothered early, will be the disrupting force in society. Religious followers have been known to fall

"... into schisms, through insolent envy among themselves."39

Yet the very foundations of religious institutions depend on unity and stability. If an orderly state of society is to be preserved, the evils of pride must not be allowed to play their part in the religious quest for truth. If the searchers after truth aim to achieve their noble goal, their quest must be conducted in a spirit impartial and humble.

Sense of responsibility

The third safeguard follows logically from the serious nature of religious beliefs. The enquirer, as a social being, must, while taking advantage of his freedom to criticize and speculate, at the same time be conscious of the very far-reaching effect of his view and criticism on the mind of others. And, if he made an error, he would be instrumental in causing the undesirable acts of others, which are based on his incorrect speculation. A person is, in Islam, answerable for the wrong done by others which are directly the consequence of his irresponsible exercise of influence.40 Therefore, whatever criticism or speculation he wishes to pursue, he must first assure himself of the existence of a proper ground for it.

Thus the Qur’an lays down the rule:

"Follow not (nor act on) that
Of which you have
NO KNOWLEDGE, for
Every act of hearing.
Or of seeing,
Or of (feeling in) the heart
Will be enquired into
(On the Day of Reckoning)."41

An argument that is not founded on facts or sound knowledge must at all costs be avoided,42 so that the noble intellect will not be marred with prejudices or degraded by an imposing desire.43

Conclusion

Freedom in the absolute sense belongs only to the realm of pure idea, and cannot be found in the practical world.

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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
O Thou Beloved, Lord of the Loveliest Names,  
Creator of the beauty of the universe,  
With thought of Thee, how could one countenance the shames  
Of hate of man for man, of avarice and worse,  
Of grinding greed and selfishness and anger’s passion flames?  
With thought of Thee,  
Our thought should be:  
“All people and all things are Thine,

So must we love all people and in all things see Thy face Divine.”

So let us live  
That we may find it  
Easy to forgive  
And, in forgiveness, give out love to bind it.  
Thou art the Merciful, the Mightiest to Forgive.  
Teach us Thy Way, that humbly walking therein we may live.

Continued from page 10

Religion, which has to deal with the inter-relations of individuals important in themselves, has to adjust the necessity of freedom with the preservation of value shared by the totality of mankind. The appreciation of freedom is based on the value of man and his free-will. Practical freedom must therefore seek the proper adjustment between the value of the free-will and the other values of equal necessity for the continued existence of a human society.

Hence Islam, in dealing with the problem of freedom of enquiry, has to strike a medium between two extremes. In recognition of the value of the human free-will and the right of that will to exert itself as the creative power in man, Islam has made sacred the liberty of enquiry. Within the limits set by it to prevent the extremes of misuses, Islam has encouraged, and in fact enjoined, every Muslim to unleash the curiosity of his intellect so that for the temporal as well as for the spiritual advancement of mankind his reason may delve into the depth of the profoundest learnings, and his mind soar to the peak of the highest speculation.

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A CHRISTIAN LOOKS AT ISLAM

by JOHN ROWLAND

"We should be prepared to see that the great religions are not, as we used so often to be told, mutually exclusive."

The significance of Islam

Muhammad was born in the sixth century of our era, somewhere between the years 570 and 580. One thing should be pointed out to all Christians right at the beginning, and that is that the common habit of calling the religion of Muslims by the name "Mohammadism" is quite wrong, for they would say that this implies that Muhammad was a god, and this they do not believe. Islam has always been a completely monotheistic religion, involving a belief in One Almighty God, and not more than one. Muhammad himself never claimed anything like divine descent, and he is emphatically not worshipped.

Moreover Islam is, even more than Christianity, the religion of a book — but the book is, of course, not the Bible; it is the Qur’an. To most Muslims the Qur’an has all the answers to all the questions as to human behaviour. The word "Islam" means roughly what in English we should describe as "submission", and a Muslim is a person who submits to God's laws. The word "Allah" means not just God, as many people would say, but The God — that is to say, the One and Only God, as distinct from just one god among many.

Life of the Prophet of Islam

Muhammad himself was born at Mecca in Arabia. Little is known in detail of his childhood and youth, up to the time of his marriage, which took place when he was twenty-five years old. His wife, fifteen years older than he, was a comparatively wealthy woman, and his marriage appears to have been a completely happy one; it also gave him material comfort. His wife, Khadija, is regarded by Muslims with very great respect. She accepted his religious ideas and was, in fact, the first of his disciples when he began to preach.

As with so many religious leaders, Muhammad seems quite clearly in his life to have acquired the habit of retiring into solitude for meditation and prayer. One night (this is the story as told by Muslims) when he was in a cave some miles from Mecca he had a vision. The Archangel Gabriel came to him, and told him that he had been chosen to be a prophet of God. This was fifteen years after his marriage, when he was forty years old. Other messages followed later, and the bulk of these messages are embodied in the Qur’an as we have it today. A small community was formed, after the first message, to study them and to try to put their teachings into effect.

Now, as we know from the history of many religions, when a man says that he has received messages direct from Heaven, many people will say that he is a charlatan or that he is mad. And though he made some converts, many of the people of Mecca, to begin with, thought that he was either faking the messages or that he was a misguided dreamer.

He was not, however, disturbed by this reaction. He continued to preach his ideas. He made converts, not only in his home town of Mecca but far beyond. After some years of preaching, there were more followers of Islam to be found in the city of Medina, some 250 miles away, than in Mecca itself. He therefore left Mecca and went to Medina, where he set up a kind of headquarters.

It is this move from Mecca to Medina that Muslims regard as being the most important thing that happened in the early history of their religion. It is usually called by an Arabic word transliterated into English as the Hijrah — a word that means the separation or migration. The year of this move was 622 in our era, and that date has to the Muslim something of the significance that Christmas has to Christians. The Hijrah year is dated from that event — in the form in which it has come to the West, the Muslim years are dated A.H. (or After Hijrah), just as Christians date their years A.D.

At Medina Muhammad was thus accepted as a great leader — a leader in political as well as religious matters. And to start with he seems to have tried to weld the various religious groups into one solid body under his own leadership. Almost the only direct rebuff that came at the beginning was that of the Jewish trading community, and this in spite of the fact that something of Judaism was incorporated in Islam. Muhammad thought of Abraham as the father of the Arabs as well as the Jews; but the Jewish religion was old-established and had its own beliefs; and for the most part the Jews would have little to do with him. They said that he had not fully understood what the Old Testament prophets were trying to do; he replied that the Jews themselves had distorted the teachings of their own prophets over the centuries.

Christians, too, did not think his ideas acceptable. Muhammad revered Jesus as one of the greatest of the forerunners of Islam, but he said that the Christians worshipped their Christ, although Jesus himself had nowhere expressed any belief in the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

There would, indeed, appear to have been a period of civil war in Arabia following Muhammad's first messages. It was about eight years after the Hijrah before he was able to re-enter Mecca as a conqueror. It had been a heart-breaking period of war; but in his hour of victory he showed himself merciful and tolerant; and in a short time almost the whole of the country had accepted his teachings and his leadership.

He was, in fact, a statesman as well as a prophet. He worked out a system of government which was quite satisfactory for his country. And, even when he was accepted as the greatest man in the land, he continued to live quite simply, and he insisted on doing various menial tasks with his own hands. Even at the height of his power and influence, he denied any claim to divine origin, and also said that he
was not able to work miracles. "God," he once said, "has not sent me to work wonders; he has sent me to preach."

His teachings

And what did he preach? First and foremost, as I have already said, his ideas are set out in the Qur'án. It preaches absolute submission to the will of God.

The Muslims say that the whole of the Qur'án — every word of it — came to Muhammad as a direct inspiration from God, in periods of revelation that were spread over several years.

The Qur'án is, in almost its entirety, a guide to conduct as well as a guide to what the Muslim is to believe. One rule requires the frequent repetition of the basic belief, the fundamental creed — that God is One, and that Muhammad is His prophet. Daily prayers are to be recited at specified times — five times every day. There is, too, a rule as to fasting - a period of fast is to be observed for a month each year (the month called Ramadhan). Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the period of fast is a very real deprivation. No strict Muslim can eat or drink during the hours of daylight in the month of Ramadhan. When the sun has set, moderate amounts of food and drink are permissible. Yet, under the blazing sun of the East, such a deprivation is something very difficult to endure. Not even to drink a sip of water from sunrise to sunset for a whole month is something which means a great display of will-power; and it may well be that strengthening the will is one of the things at which all religions should aim. All Muslims are to give alms to the poor. Every one of the faithful who can afford it is expected to make a pilgrimage, at least once in his life, to Mecca, the holy place of Islam.

One of the vital strengths of Islam is that it is a wholly democratic religion. In Africa, where Islam has gained many converts in recent years, one of the strongest things telling in its favour is the fact that there is absolute equality of rich and poor; there is, too, absolute equality of race. There is no colour bar among Muslims.

Great religions are not mutually exclusive

The main point on which non-Muslims will find it difficult to agree is, of course, the suggestion that Muhammad is the last and the greatest of the prophets. As I have already suggested, many of the Jewish and Christian prophets are acceptable to Muslims, but the belief of Islam that Muhammad is the last of the line, and that quarrels as to meaning and interpretation can now stop, is something that Christians and others will find it not easy to accept.

Yet, as some modern writers have pointed out, the Muslim conception of Allah is not really very different from the Old Testament view of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts. There are, too, many parallels between Islam and Christianity, even Christianity in its most orthodox form. The Archangel Gabriel, for instance, plays a part not completely different from that ascribed by some Christians to the Holy Spirit, though he is not, of course, put on an equality with God. There is, too, an idea of the Word of God which has some relationship with the Greek logos (the term which is translated as "the word" in the Fourth Gospel).

There are, too, various lines of thought in Islam as in all religions, differences of emphasis by thinkers of different countries and different times. There are some who take a mystical outlook — the group called the Sufis. There are others who would take a more matter-of-fact attitude. Yet it is not a difficult religion; it is, basically, a simple religion.

But what should be our attitude, as Christians, towards Islam? Surely we should be prepared to see that it proves that the great religions are not, as we used so often to be told, mutually exclusive. Islam accepts a good deal on the basis of Judaism; it also accepts a good deal of the basis of Christianity. And if it adds on to that some things that both Jews and Christians find it difficult to accept — well, that cannot be helped.

The point, as I see it, is this: religions appear to have come to mankind in such a way that they suit the attitude of mind of particular peoples at particular periods in history. If Christians have a different background and a different way of looking at things — all well and good. We just have to face that fact as best we can, and to try to understand the working of God's universe. But, all the same, I feel that Islam, though it is not, in its entirety, acceptable to many Western peoples in the 20th century, still has a vitally important part to play in the modern world, still has a very real message for some people at some time. If we agree on that, we shall be more tolerant, and the horrors of the religious wars, the religious persecutions of the past, will not come to plague the world again.
IS THE QUR’ANIC GOD AN OBJECT OF FEAR?

A crude perversion of truth

by MUHAMMAD YAKUB KHAN

“Scholarship could hardly be put to a grosser perversion of truth than has been done in the voluminous book, God of Justice, by Daud Rahbar, painting the Qur’anic God, of whom Rahmán—Rahím (Beneficent—Merciful) are the two dominant attributes, as an object of dread rather than love, and a Muslim’s faith and whole ethics as the outcome of that dread.”

Rules of fair interpretation

The proper way to get at the spirit of a religion would be to look at it through the glasses of the best minds among the followers of that religion, who have drunk deep at that spiritual fountain. To tear a text from its context or to take literally a text meant metaphorically, or again, to choose out of the several senses a word carries, the one that fits in with the critic’s own angle — all these can hardly be called fair criticism. Much of the misunderstanding and misconception about Islam in Christian missionary writings or those of Western orientalists, even though scholarly and profusely annotated with references, stems from this basic error.

Here are a few typical instances of this kind of approach to the understanding of Islam. The Qur’an speaks of the Prophet in the words:

Wajadaka dàllan fahadá
“He (God) found you in a state of being dàll, and He guided you.”

The word dàll means: (1) One who has lost the way; (2) One lost in the pursuit of something.

It would be quite a distortion to put the first meaning on the word, as is too often done, and draw the conclusion that the Prophet was not free from the taint of sin as Jesus was. The honest interpretation would be the second one, picturing the Prophet so intensely given to exploring the deepest significance of life that this quest had become the all-dominating passion of his life. And, historically, this is the only apt description of the Prophet’s mental state, when frequently he would retreat to the solitude of the cave of Hira, staying there for days on end, to meditate and find a satisfying answer to the riddle of life.

The same mistaken line is taken in respect of interpreting the word istighfár — which, taken on its face value, means asking forgiveness for sins. The word, however, carries a much deeper significance. Derived from the root ghifar, which means covering, the word carries the significance of protection against human failings and short-comings. As such istighfár becomes an indispensable equipment for a seeker after truth at every stage of spiritual advancement, however high it may be. Since the field of spiritual advancement, according to Islam, is unbounded, and each altitude attained falls short of the next higher altitude, God’s grace is invoked to cover up the short-falling. Istighfár, thus, is intended to be a lever for progress, higher and still higher, on the pilgrimage towards Truth, which is an incessant process. To turn a blind eye to this profound spiritual philosophy underlying the word istighfár, and to make it the basis for the allegation that the Prophet was not free from sin, is a cheap approach.

This is something in the spirit of Jesus’ utterance, “Why callest thou me good?”, which only emphasizes that God alone is perfect goodness, and man’s goodness, however great, is nothing to speak of. It would hardly be a faithful inference from it that Jesus was not free from sin.

To what lengths of distortion this kind of approach may lead is so glaringly reflected in a voluminous book, God of Justice, by Daud Rahbar. By giving a twist to the meaning of just one word, taqwa, the book has defaced the whole message of Islam, depicting it as a cult of brute force with fear as the dominating note in the relationship between God and man, as conceived in the Qur’an.

Scholarship could hardly be put to a grosser perversion of truth. Even a casual non-Muslim student of the Qur’an cannot miss that Rahmán and Rahím (Beneficent and Merciful) are the two dominant notes in the Qur’anic conception of God. The very opening words of the Qur’an’s opening chapter are Rab, Rahmán and Rahím. That is the most striking note that runs throughout the whole of the Book from cover to cover. Every one of its suras (chapters) begins with the words Rahmán and Rahím. This concept of God’s all-pervasive beneficence has sunk so deep into the Muslim’s whole outlook on life that he does not set his hand to anything but with the recitation of the words Bism-illäh-ir Rahmán-ir-Rahím (“In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful”). The Qur’an sums up the whole purpose of its message and the Prophet’s mission in the words: mà arsalinâka ilâ rahmatan lil dînîn (“We (God) have not sent thee (O prophet) but as a blessing unto mankind”). Of all His attributes, that of mercy has been repeatedly described in the Qur’an as superseding all others.

A misreading of meaning into the Qur’an

It is rather surprising that the author, who is a born Muslim and was brought up in the lap of the culture of Islam, should have turned a blind eye to this all-pervading note of the Qur’an, and painted the Qur’an’s God as an embodiment of might Who rules by fear rather than love. He writes:

“The present thesis was a result of the writer’s quest for the dominant note of the Qur’an’s doctrine of Allah with a view to determining the nature of that relationship to God in which man finds himself in the light of Qur’anic teaching.”

“Such a dominant note,” he goes on to say, “did leave its echo behind such perusals of the Qur’an as were made by the writer... This dominant note is God’s strict justice of the Judgment Day. This thesis brings out the idea that the
essentical motive principle of virtuous conduct in Qur’anic thought is fear of God the strict Judge."

No objective student of the Qur’án, from a perusal of the Book, would come to the conclusion the writer has done. A non-Muslim scholar, Rev. Kenneth Cragg, one-time editor of Christian Missionary magazine, The Muslim 'World, in his book The Call of the Minaret, to cite just one instance, has come to just the opposite conclusion. He writes :

"The most important of the Divine names in Islam are the two titles, al-Rahmán and al-Rahim, usually rendered into English as 'the Compassionate, the Merciful'. They are derived from the same root, meaning mercy or compassion... The Rahmán is One Who in His character is merciful. The Rahim is He in merciful action. He who is merciful behaves mercifully. His mercy is of His essence, and also of His deeds" (p. 40).

To make strict, unrelenting justice the dominant trait of God as depicted in the Qur’án is an outrage both on sound scholarship and that Book. The dominant trait, as Dr. Cragg rightly puts it, is that of mercy, both in the sense of that being the essence of His Being and in that of His dealings with His creatures.

Justice no attribute of God

Any fair and honest attempt to determine the dominant note in the Qur’ánic concept of God, before pronouncing it to be strict justice, would have at least looked for the various uses of the word 'adl, the Arabic equivalent for justice, in the Qur’án. The author has taken much pains to consult his concordance and marshal quite a wealth of verses using certain selected words which suited the purpose of his thesis, such as God's qadra (power), God's 'ilm (knowledge), God's mashhia (will), God's tadil (leading astray), God's hidaya (guidance), God's qadá (decree), God's qadr or tagdir, God's lutf (favour), God's tawfiq (succour), God's khadhilun (abandonment), God's maghira (forgiveness), 'afw (forgiveness), God's rahma (mercy), God's hubb or wud (love) and so forth. He has devoted the bulk of a 446-page book to quoting in extenso all the verses in which these words or their variants have been used. The one word, however, which he has not touched but has completely blacked out is the word 'adl (justice), which, as he tells us, is the crux of the whole of his research.

It should have been the obvious duty of any fair and honest criticism, before jumping to the conclusion of branding the Qur’án’s God as a stern judge, knowing no tenderness or relenting, extorting obedience through fear-motive, to have referred to the Qur’án to see whether the word 'adl (justice) is at all used about God and His dealings with man.

It is striking that whereas the Qur’án describes God by many attribute epithets, not once has He been described as 'Adil (just). Even of its variants used in the Qur’án, not one makes the exercise of justice as an attribute of God. Here are the verses which use the word 'adl or its various derivatives :

fa-'addala
He Who created thee, then made thee complete, then made thee in a right good state (82 : 7).

wa in tadil kulla 'adlin
Even though he offer every compensation, it will not be accepted from him (6:70).

li adila
And I (Prophet) am commanded to do justice between you (42:15).

hi rabbihim ya'adilun
Yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord (6:1).

Those who believe not in the Hereafter and they set up equals with their Lord (6:151).

ya'adilun
And of Moses' people is a party who guide with truth, and therewith they do justice (7:181).

And of those whom We have created is a community who guide with the truth and therewith do justice (7:181).

Is there a god besides God? Nay, they are people who deviate (27:60).

'tadilu
But if you fear that you will not do justice, then marry only one (4:3).

And you cannot do justice between wives (4:129).

So follow not your low desires, lest you deviate (4:135).

And let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably (5:8).

'idilu
Be just: that is nearer to taqwa (5:7).

'jadilu
And when you speak, be just, though it be against a relative (6:153).

'ad
Or the expiation thereof is the feeding of the poor or equivalent of it in fasting (5:95).

Beware of the day when compensation will not be accepted from him (2:48).

zawá 'adlin
And whenever among you kills it intentionally, the compensation thereof is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you judge (5:95).

O you who believe, call to witness between you, when death draws nigh to one of you, at the time of making the will two just persons from among you (5:106).

'adlin
Even though he offer every compensation it will not be accepted from him (6:69).

zawai 'adlin
When they (divorced wives) have reached their prescribed time, retain them with kindness or dismiss them with kindness, and call to witness two just persons from among you (65:2).

bil 'adli
O you who believe, when you contract a debt for a fixed time, write it down. And let a scribe write it down between you with fairness (2:282).

Surely God commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice (4:58).

And God sets forth a parable of two men: one of them dumb controlling naught, and he is a burden to his master... Is he equal with him who enjoins justice and he is on the right path (16:76).

Surely, God enjoins justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred (16:90).

And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them. Then if one of them does wrong to the other, fight that which does wrong till it return to God's command. Then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably (49:9).

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'adlan
And the word of thy Lord has been accomplished truly and justly (6:116).

This exhausts the list of the uses the Qur'an makes of the word 'adl (justice) and its variants. Not one of these relates to relationship between God and man. Justice is invariably enjoined as a relationship between man and man. The other derivative meanings are deviating from the right path, compensation, well-proportioned adjustment, setting up equals with God, equivalent and fairness. There is not the remotest suggestion anywhere in the Qur'an that 'adl (justice) can be the basis of relationship between God and man.

Man owes all he is and has to God. He owes his very existence to Him. For the sustenance of that existence he depends every minute of his life on the bounties and munificence of God. To import the very idea of justice between man and his Creator is the height of stupidity. The Qur'an, rooted as it is in the profound wisdom of God, therefore, not once refers to God as just, which would be an affront to His exalted transcendental beneficence. What audacity to devote a whole book to painting the Qur'an's God as a relentless judge, with no higher standards than that of the pound of flesh in His dealings with man!

Justice: an obsession of Church Creed

Justice as the basis of relationship between God and man is an obsession of the Christian theology. That basic error has landed the Church in a whole quagmire of creeds and dogmas which are palpably repellant to common sense. Since God is just, He must punish human sins. He simply cannot forgive free of indemnity. To extricate Him from this self-created predicament, His love comes to His rescue. He sends His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for the sins of man. In doing so, paradoxically, He exposes Himself to a graver charge of injustice by sending an innocent, gentle, altogether sweet and lovable soul like Jesus to the horrid tortures of crucifixion.

This, the author has the audacity to tell us in all seriousness, reflects a better relationship between God and man than the one in Islam. To quote his own words (p. 179):

"The normal motives to obey the law of God, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are . . . trust in the promises and fear of the judgments of the Divine Law-Giver. But in Christianity love becomes the essential motive principle of virtuous conduct. Why? The answer is simple. In Christianity God is, before anything else, the Father. His love transcends His justice. In the Qur'anic thought Fear of God becomes the essential motive-principle of virtuous conduct. Why? . . . The answer to why fear-motive prevails in the Qur'an is that the Qur'an's God is, before anything else, a strict judge. His justice is unrelaxing. He will forgive none but those who believe in Him and obey commandments."

These are awfully irresponsible statements to make. As discussed before, there is nothing in the Qur'an to warrant the allegation that in Islam God's relationship to man is regulated by the human standards of justice. The Qur'an, as also shown before, has repeatedly set forth that relationship to be on the highest possible level of beneficence and mercy. That is, indeed, the implication of the fourth attribute of God in the opening chapter of the Qur'an, in addition to Rab, Rahmân and Rahîm — the attribute of Malik-i-Yaum-iddîn, Master of the Judgment Day. God is expressly described here as a Master, not as a Judge, to underline that He is free to condone and forgive man's transgressions. Unlike Christianity, which ties down God's hands to the demands of justice, so as to make Him incapable of forgiving sins without exacting the penalty for it, the Islamic concept of God as a Master suffers from no such inhibitions. The writer's claim about God's love transcending His justice in Christianity is not quite intelligible either. To send His own Son to the cross does not sound much like love transcending justice: rather it looks like putting justice above love.

Misinterpretation of the word taqwa

Now to come to the logic with which the writer has worked out this conclusion. As said before, it has been done by giving a little twist to the meaning of the Qur'anic word taqwa. The Qur'anic concept of taqwa is so all-encompassing that it sums up in one word the whole purpose, message and mission of the Qur'anic revelation. As a matter of fact taqwa is equivalent to the whole substance of Islam. Nevertheless, wherever the Qur'an uses the expression ittaq-ul-Allah, the writer renders it as "safeguard against the wrath of God or fear the wrath of God". After quoting a number of verses where this expression has been used, the book makes the sweeping statement:

"In all the remaining contexts wherever we find the phrase 'guard ye yourselves against God'; it of course means 'guard ye yourselves against God's wrath Who will not be lax or lenient in His justice on the judgment day'."

Here the writer admits that the real meaning of the phrase ittaq-ul-Allah is "guard against God", but takes it for granted that it means guarding against the wrath of God.

What a case of arguing in a circle! He first starts with the presumption that the Qur'anic God is a God of wrath, injects that connotation of his own in the word taqwa, and comes back to the conclusion on the strength of that self-imposed meaning on that word that God in Islam is an object of fear, and that a Muslim's faith is born of his dread of God.

No objective student of the Qur'an can miss the fact that the same word used in a variety of contexts carries a different significance. The writer conveniently forgets this well-known principle of interpretation, and thrusts on the word taqwa a significance of wrath it nowhere in all the Qur'an carries when used about God.

The word taqwa comes from the root waqa, which carries the sense of saving, guarding, preserving. The writer himself says that the word muttaqi originally means one who is on his guard. But when he comes to answering the question "What is it that a muttaqi is to guard himself against?" he goes completely off the track. Quoting verse after verse where the phrase ittaq-ul-Allah has been used, he renders it as "Guard against (the wrath of) God", putting the sense of his own importation in brackets. He is himself conscious of the fact that the word taqwa itself has no suggestion of wrath, and that is why he puts that word in brackets.

This is all the precious logic that the author has discovered to build this fantastic theory of his own, viz., that the basis of the relationship of man to God as given in the Qur'an is fear of the wrath of God, thrusting on the word taqwa the significance of fear, and ascribing it to the Qur'an.

Elimination of fear: the main purpose of faith in God

A mere cursory glance at the Qur'an should leave no objective reader in any doubt that the very notion of fear is
incompatible with the concept of God in the Qur’an. A Book which for the first time in the history of religion proclaimed the principle of No compulsion in religion (Lā ikrāha fid‘īn) cannot very well make fear-motive the basis of faith in God.

Faith in God has indeed been time and again described in the Qur’an as a means — the only means — to dispel all fear, and bring peace of mind. The writer cannot be unaware of the Qur’anic verse:

alā bi zikr-il-Allah-i tatmainal qalub
"Surely, the remembrance of God alone brings peace of mind" (13:28).

An object of fear cannot very well be expected to bring mental peace.

Time and again it has been described in the Qur’an as a privilege of the “friends of God” that they are above the reach of fear or grief:

innu addiyā-l-Allah-i lá khaufun ‘alaihim wa lá hinta yahzūnin
“Of a certainty, the friends of God are free from fear nor have they any grief” (10:62).

The whole of the Qur’an is sprinkled with this assurance that, if man has faith in God and leads a good life, he becomes free from fear and grief. That is indeed the whole burden of its message. But the scholarly author tells the world in all seriousness that the Qur’an is a message of living in the shadow of perpetual fear of a wrathful God.

**Qur’anic definition of taqwa**

The Qur’an leaves us in no doubt as to what exactly the word taqwa connotes. It means the attainment of the high destiny for which man has been created. That destiny, as the Book puts it in so many words, is for man to be the vicegerent of God on earth (2:30). But it has to be worked out by man himself. The only way to do it is to have faith in God and lead a life in keeping with God’s commandments. Taqwa connotes keeping within these God-ordained bounds — the hudud-ul-Allah — and guarding against violating or transgressing those bounds. Taqwa, thus, is the essential equipment for the growth and development of the Divine in man. It is co-extensive with the whole code of the Islamic way, and its observance. Here is the definition the Qur’an itself provides as to who really is a muttaqî, i.e. a man possessing the virtue of taqwa:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is that one believe in God and the Hereafter, and the angels, and the Book, and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and to those who ask and to set slaves free, and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and make good their word when they pledge, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict. These are they who have proved true and these are they who are muttaqîn (those possessing taqwa)” (2:177).

It is so many qualities — qualities of mental attitude (faith) as well as behaviour in life, all calculated to bring out the Divine mettle in man in full shine and lustre — that go to make a man possessor of taqwa. Taqwa thus is the highest virtue, the highest fulfilment of the Divine in man.

Elsewhere the Qur’an employs the familiar simile of human dress to drive home the significance of taqwa. It says:

“O children of Adam. We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame and as an adornment. But the best clothing is that of taqwa” (7:26).

In other words what dress is to our physical body — a covering for our nakedness and an embellishment — taqwa likewise is a protection against disfigurement of the soul within us and its blossoming into something lovely and beautiful.

In another place taqwa is likened to spiritual provision:

“And make provisions for yourselves (when going on the pilgrimage) — the best provision (however) is that of taqwa” (2:197).

Just as material provisions are necessary to sustain our physical life, there is the still higher life of the spirit and the soul for which, too, there are provisions without which it cannot be sustained in full health and vigour. That is taqwa.

Taqwa thus is the food, the sustenance, the nourishment of the soul within us. And the Qur’an reminds us that we must not lose sight of this need of ours — a need, it tells us, higher than the material nourishment or wherewithal. Taqwa is in many verses described as the goal and the objective of life:

“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may cultivate taqwa” (2:183).

“And when We made a covenant with you (Jews) while you were at the foot of the mountain: Hold fast that which We have given you and bear in mind what is therein, so that you may attain taqwa” (2:63).

“O mankind, obey your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may attain taqwa” (2:21).

“(And, know that) this is My path, the right one; so follow it, and follow not other ways which will lead you astray. This He enjoins on you so that you may attain taqwa” (6:154).

Taqwa thus is a spiritual state to be worked for, deserved and attained. The way to do it is by worshipping none but our Creator and doing His will, which alone is the path that leads thereto.

Indeed, the whole of the Qur’an is an exposition of what taqwa is, and to blaze the path that leads to that spiritual development, stage by stage. In one word it is the pilgrimage of the spirit towards the attainment or fulfilment of the highest destiny man has been created for — cultivating, fostering, nourishing, fructification and fruition of the Divine in man.

This is a philosophy of life before which every other philosophy sinks into insignificance. The concept of Rab, which, in one word, sums up the whole of this philosophy, is something much more than the earthly relationship of love between father and son as implied in the Christian concept of God as Ab (Father). It is, moreover, the only interpretation of the relationship between God and man which is true to the facts of life, which gives meaning and purpose to life, and brings the sunshine of hope and cheer in the rough and tumble of life.

The rough and ready method in which the author of God of Justice has handled that word of profound spiritual import, reading into it such crude concepts as wrath and fear, is an approach one would hardly associate with a man of the author’s scholarship.

**Church dilemma of God’s justice and love**

It will not be out of place to offer a few comments on the Christian concept of God’s justice and love. This is what

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the Church creed amounts to. God created man in sin, and, having done so, was at a loss how to extricate him from sin's evil consequences. He could not just forgive it. It would have been against the demands of justice, and God, who is Just, would do no such thing as to let sin go unpunished. Yet His love pulled the other way, urging that something must be done to ensure salvation for a sinning humanity. In this conflict between the demands of His own two attributes, justice and love, He resorted to a device which would fulfil the demands of both, viz., punishing sin yet saving man. He decided to make His own son, Jesus Christ, pay the penalty for man's sin with His own blood, so that after that satisfaction of the wages of sin the obstruction to forgiveness by God might be removed. And, in implementation of that plan, He sent Jesus to earth in human form, and made Him suffer crucifixion. The whole problem, as would be seen, arose out of God's inability to forgive sin free of retribution.

This assumption, however, that unredeemed forgiveness of sin is something unbecoming of God's justice, is to miss the whole significance of the word justice. Justice presupposes the existence of rights. Injustice is a name for the violation of certain rights. Where no rights are involved the question of justice does not arise. The question of rights does not at all enter into the relationship between man and God, and for that matter the very occasion for God's attribute of justice to come into play does not arise. Man owes everything he has — his very existence, his faculties, his life's wherewithal — to God as a free gift. He cannot claim these as a matter of right. We find some people born healthy and handsome, some deformed, deaf, dumb and blind. No question of justice is involved here, because man has no rights against God. If we were to judge God's dealings with His creation by the standards of justice as understood in human relationship, the whole machinery of creation would fail to make any sense. Why should thousands of animals be killed daily to provide meat for men? Why should God allow a cat to pounce upon the poor rat and make a meal of it? A dog may well complain why it has been made a dog — not man. Even the vegetables we eat and the water we drink teem with tiny life-cells, which in the process, perish. The very idea of importing justice into God's dealings with His creatures is belied by the facts of life.

Bible on unredeemed forgiveness of sin

The countless unearned blessings of God which we find showered on us every minute of our life — blessings but for which life itself would become impossible — are certainly not the outcome of any justice which we can claim as a matter of right and God is bound as a matter of duty to give. If these blessings come as a grace of God without any "payment" on our part, why cannot our sins be forgiven without exacting any penalty for them?

This has been exactly the teaching both of the Old and the New Testaments. Both unambiguously say that God forgives human sins without retribution. Indeed, forgiveness and retribution are mutually incompatible. A forgiveness ceases to be forgiveness the moment its retribution has been paid — even though by the innocent third party in the person of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness means forgiveness free of retribution. And that is what both New and Old Testaments emphatically teach. Here are some of the relevant quotations:

"And if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day be converted unto thee, saying, I repent; forgive him." (Luke 17:3, 4).

In the parables of the lost sheep and lost goat, Jesus likens the recovery of each to penance by a sinner, not only enough to earn him God's forgiveness, but a matter for rejoicing:

"I say to you that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doeth repentance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke 15:7).

"So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." (Luke 15:10).

The mere repentance of the prodigal son is likened to the coming of a dead son to life:

"Because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found. And they began to be merry." (Luke 15:24).

Again, in reply to a question as to how to get life eternal, Jesus referred the questioner to the law, and when the latter recited the commandments about the love of God and one's neighbours, he assured him, saying:

"And he said to him: Thou hast answered right. This do, and thou shalt live." (Luke 10: 25-28).

All these utterances of Jesus make forgiveness dependent upon just one thing — sincere repentance. The Church ideas of justice and retribution were unknown to him.

Coming to the Old Testament, there also we find penance repeatedly emphasized as the only means to get God's forgiveness — just penance, no penalty. Here are some quotations:

"Go, and proclaim these words towards the north. And thou shalt say : Return, O rebellious Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not turn my face away from you; for I am holy, saith the Lord, and I will not be angry for ever." (Jeremiah 3:12).

"And My people, upon whom My name is called, being converted, shall make supplication to Me, and seek out My face, and do penance for their most wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land." (I Chronicles, 7:14).

"He that hideth his sins shall not prosper: but he that shall confess and forsake them shall obtain mercy." (Proverbs, 28:13).

"And I fell down before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for all your sins which you had committed against the Lord, and had provoked Him to wrath." (Deuteronomy, 9:19).

"And the Lord said: I have forgiven according to thy word." (Numbers, 14:19, 20).

When Pharaoh and his people, for their sins, were visited with the plague of the frogs, God forgave them when
Moses prayed on their behalf: the frogs perished and they were rid of the pest. *No compensation was needed as an atonement* (Exodus, 8:8-13).

Thus, the whole basis of the Church creed that forgiveness of sin is incompatible with God's attribute of justice is out and out arbitrary, belied both by the facts of life and the teachings of the Bible.

The Qur'án, therefore, describes God in relation to the Judgment Day, not as 'Adil (Just) or a Strict Judge, as the author of *God of Justice* puts it, but as Mālik (Master). Who can, if He so wish, condone and forgive our lapses and sins of omission and commission, without any let or hindrance, free of all price, penalty or retribution.

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DEATH OF A FRIEND

Mourned by Muslims and Non-Muslims alike

Funeral service for Shaikh Muhammad Jamal-ad-Din, President of the Surinaamsche Islamitische Vereeniging, Keizerstraat 90, Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, South America.

The prayers were led by the Maulana 'Abdul Haq Vidyarthi. In our picture are seen men and women offering Janaza for Shaikh Muhammad Jamal-ad-Din, who died on 22nd April 1961. The deceased was a devoted worker in the cause of Islam in Dutch Guiana and was respected by all Muslims and non-Muslims alike.
WHY I ACCEPTED ISLAM

by THE REVEREND R. J. FLOWERS

The reason for my change from Orthodox Western so-called Christian Church to "Islam" or a proclaimed Eastern Religious faith is a very serious and vital one. This is not an act of impulse, but one of long and due deliberation, meditation and prayer. I am not a youth living in a world of fantasy but an aged, full, mature man who has served 13 years with H.M. Forces, seen much of the world in all its aspects, and from youth brought up in a dominating Western Orthodox and Unorthodox so-called Christian home and atmosphere.

My service with the Crown Forces and wide travels brought me in contact with Eastern countries and the people themselves, which naturally enough had religious beliefs other than the Western dogmas, creeds, etc. The actions and attitudes of our Western races under the cloak of so-called Christianity caused me much revulsion, and in disgust I became a free-thinker. In consequence of this decision, I decided to investigate the truth and sincerity of Orthodox Christian teachings, practice and actions generally; again, an investigation into unorthodox movements likewise, and in both cases proved them a mass of fabrication and hypocrisy. Yes, full of pomp, vanity, party malice and racial discriminations, all too often carried out by intrigue, or alibis on grounds of hierarchy ruling, but in truth class distinction.

After my ordination I gave up church work and devoted my time to welfare work among all ages and races, no matter their creed or colour, and do so today. A great deal of my time is devoted to visiting the sick, needy and infirm, and in faith healing and animal welfare work. Here again I tested and proved the sincerity of Orthodox and Unorthodox Churches as to the welfare side of their movements. Alas, the sad same story, dogmas and creeds must be the first consideration.

The simplicity of truth and the sincerity of the Muslim people and Islamic doctrine has finally brought me to my decision to change to the Islamic faith. I gladly give up all association with Western so-called Christianity, and have only one aim, that of complete and utmost service to humanity of all life in and through the One and only God. Praise be to God for this vital decision, and, by the Grace of Allah, I hope to be of service to the Islamic faith and people. I am but a humble servant devoted to that sincere cause of Universal Brotherhood in the Fatherhood of the One and only God, and to Universal Humanity to All Life.

I herewith publicly proclaim that no influence or pressure has ever been used, and that my decision is one of absolute free will from the depths of my heart to the glory of God and Truth.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
"Die Heilige Qur'an" in Afrikaans

Five years of devoted work and concentration by a leading Cape Muslim, Imam M. A. Baker, of Simonstown, has at last culminated with the publication in Cape Town of an Afrikaans version of the Qur'an.

Handsomely bound in green — traditional colour of the Muslims — the translation has more than 500 pages, and includes an introduction by Mr. Baker, who has been Principal of the Simonstown Muslim School for the past thirty years.

"There are three reasons why I undertook this work," he said to the reporter of The Cape Times.

"First, to help Afrikaans-speaking Muslim pupils to understand the Arabic version of the Qur'an; secondly, to help teachers to give Islamic religious instruction, and thirdly to make the teachings of Islam known to other Afrikaans-speaking people."

Mr. Baker said he had started the translation in 1954 and had finished the manuscript at the end of 1959. The translation was then referred to several authorities on Afrikaans, including leading poets, to ensure that the grammar and idiom were absolutely correct before publication.

"I have dedicated this work to my wife, Mrs. Tayba Baker, who died last May and who steadfastly encouraged me to complete the task I had set myself."

"Own language"

Mr. Baker, who is Imam of the Simonstown Muslim community, holds the Hoër Taalbond certificate. He was educated at Trafalgar High School and Zonnebloem Training College, Cape Town.

Mr. Herman Steytler, of Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, publishers of the Afrikaans version, said most local Malays had only a smattering of Arabic, and the purpose of publishing the translation was "to give the Malay his Scripture in his own language. The Afrikaans is of the highest standard, and I am sure it is a gesture that they will appreciate."

If sufficient funds are available it is expected that the next edition would be printed with Arabic text. To all the Afrikaans-speaking Muslims, however, we strongly recommend the work in its present form.

The translation has been published by Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, Cape Town, South Africa. Price R3.75.
THE BIRTH OF PAKISTAN: 14th AUGUST 1947

Threshold of a new history

by SYED AMJAD HUSAIN

Not a bread movement

To the future historian of distant posterity, 14th August 1947 will appear just a threshold of a new history of the political and social life of humanity. To be sure, it is a landmark which inspires a serious student of history to read his subject in a quite different light. Previously, according to Western methods, history was read with reference to the political and economic aspects of human life, but henceforward, with a revolutionary turn of history on the soil of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, one is obliged to read history with reference to the cultural and spiritual aspirations of man. Looking back through the corridor of history, our penetrating inner vision can find nothing but a naked claim for bread behind the booming cannons and the rattling swords and bayonets of the revolutions that took place in France and Russia. These two revolutions, though claimed by certain historians as the glorious uprising of the people for the establishment of a perfect social order, will appear to the deep-thinking merely a protest, a just protest but nothing more than a protest, of the hungry stomach against human greed of the most callous type. Here on the Indo-Pakistan land ten million brutally impoverished people brought about a quite new type of revolution in the annals of mankind. Ten million people professing a unique faith rose suddenly from a long slumber and started a revolution shorn of all meanness and violence. Here was a revolution quite new of its kind — an earnest constitutional uprising for a greater thing than bread. It was a movement for life, for the preservation of real culture and for the fostering of a nobler outlook on life. So, it was not a bread movement — it was one that is essentially a life-movement, and it is this characteristic of the Pakistan movement that distinguishes it from the previous chapters of human history.

No fanatical outburst

The enemies of the Pakistan movement have affirmed that the Pakistan movement, launched by the late Muhammad ‘Ali Jinnah, was in fact a successful exploitation of the religious sentiments of the fanatical Muslim masses. They say that the miracle was wrought by the very old weapon in the hands of the Muslim leaders — the “Islam in danger” slogan. That is to say the Muslims as a nation can be easily aroused to a fanatical frenzy. Let us see whether this charge against the Indo-Pakistan Muslims can stand the test of history.

It is an indisputable fact of history that in this sub-continent the Muslims have never been fanatical in their dealings to their fellow compatriots during the long period from 712 to 1875 C.E., when the political power of the Muslims finally collapsed by the failure of the Indian Liberation Movement, otherwise known as the Sepoy Mutiny. Between 1192 and 1707 C.E. (the year of the death of Aurangzeb) the Muslims were absolutely the masters of the sub-continent. They came into this vast country with unsheathed sword and not with any political stratagem and trickery like the Britishers. They ruled over this extensive empire for close on 700 years and, throughout all this period, they had to depend on their own might for their existence in the midst of a vast alien population. Here, reasonably, they had the grounds for becoming a proselytizing power. Indeed, they had the justification, if, of course, that term be permitted, to stoop to fanaticism, which was the order of the day. But history amply bears testimony to the fact that they did nothing of the sort. Not to speak of physical persecution of their powerless subjects, they never took to the more “civilized” form of persecution as done in India in our times. That sort of persecution has been christened “cultural genocide” by Sir Zafrullah Khan, ex-Foreign Minister of Pakistan.

The Muslims of Indo-Pakistan in their palmy days accorded an ideal humane treatment to their Hindu subjects, which serves as an example for all good administrations of all ages. While being the unchallenged rulers of this sub-continent, they never abused their powers in order to exterminate the faiths of their subject nation. Far from pursuing the policy of exterminating the religion of the Hindus, which is basically repugnant to Islam, they took very good care not even to injure the religious susceptibilities of these people, although some of their religious practices were nothing short of barbarity. That is why we find that after casting so much civilizing influence upon the non-Muslims, one of the most loathsome practices of the Hindus, sati, was not banned by the Muslims lest they might be looked upon as an unwelcome State interference in religious matters. So they allowed it to continue so as to be stopped by another ruling power of a later date.

A nation which was free from the taint of fanaticism in their heyday and at a time when it was not regarded as a vice by the most enlightened opinion, a nation whose overdose of religious toleration subsequently did much to bring about its downfall, cannot be expected to rise through a fanatical frenzy at any of the subsequent stages of its sociomoral existence. A political stupor of a century or thereabouts cannot make a fanatical rubble of such an ideal nation, whose cultural superstructure has been an envy, even
in their worst days. The outstanding facts of history proclaim loudly to the world that, during the long arduous course of Islam in this sub-continent, it never yielded to the forces of fanaticism and religious despotism that came from within and without. In a country where the touch of the shadow of a man was enough to undermine the faith of another, the role of a democratic religion like Islam in such a country was at once inspiring and unwelcome. So the moment it set its foot on the soil of Indo-Pakistan, it found itself in a death grapple with the most reactionary forces of the country. And all throughout the period it had to fight its battle alone without the aid of the State, which assiduously maintained an absolute neutrality in the matter. Indeed, nowhere had this religion been politically and culturally so hard-pressed as here in this part of the world, and nowhere has this religion shown its wonderful vitality and brilliance as here in this country.

A superior ideology was at stake

It is often asked why the Indian Muslims were bent upon the partition of the country. Why did they not acquiesce in the suggestion of the Indian National Congress with a view to jointly setting up a democratic State in an undivided India? Does Islam favour exclusive dealing, being a creed of exclusivism? If it does not, then why did the Muslims of this region refuse to form a democratic State in co-operation with their fellow compatriots?

All these questions must not perplex one who has been a deep student of Indian history. While studying his subject, he will not fail to notice that, since the entry of the Muslims, Indian history has been mainly a history of a war between two opposing cultural forces, before which all battles on the political stage of India sink into insignificance. It is the most long-drawn-out war that has ever been waged, and its final result is still in the womb of the future. It is a war between the old and the new, between the decrepit and the fresh and between the most reactionary and the most progressive cultural trends of the world.

In view of such a state of things, the unification of the two nations representing the two opposing cultural forces was practically out of the question. Moreover, the blood-stained pages of early Indian history were against such a coalition, where the dismal tales of Buddhists and many other non-Aryan races are recorded in letters of blood and tears. But for their political power and unequalled military prowess, the Muslims also would have shared the same fate. Such was the role of early Hinduism. It was, however, believed that the rational thinking of the twentieth century had softened the neo-Hindu mentality to some extent. But, surprisingly, facts belied such an assumption. It was proved beyond any shadow of doubt that Islam must fight out its last battle with its worn-out adversary on the ideological plane. And hence it needed a base of operation.

In an undivided India the inferior ideology of the overriding majority would have every possible chance of smothering Islam to death, whereas, in Pakistan, the superior ideology of the majority has every opportunity of sustaining and evolving the non-Muslim faiths unto perfection.
NEW ENTRANTS TO THE ISLAMIC FAITH

Mr. and Mrs. Underwood at their wedding ceremony in Lagos, Nigeria, on 30th March 1961. Miss Simmons, of England (now Mrs. Underwood), accepted Islam in 1959. She made her husband also declare his faith in Islam before marriage.

At least two persons a week become Muslims in Great Britain. Reasons for change of their faith are as varied as individual temperaments. Some have been studying Islam for years before taking such a step. Some have just been impressed by the noble example of devout Muslims with whom they have come into contact during their travels in Muslim countries. Others have their personal reasons for changing their faith. Islam, however, welcomes them all. The starting point is the change of belief and one’s willingness to live one’s life according to the tenets of Islam. There is no baptism or any particular ceremony at the time of declaration. The new entrant is asked to utter the following words:

“I do hereby faithfully and solemnly declare of my own free will that I worship God and God alone; that I believe Muhammad to be His Messenger and Servant; that I respect equally all Prophets — Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc., and that I will live a Muslim life by the help of Allah.

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa 'l-Lah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan 'Abdi-hu wa Rasulahu

(I bear witness that there is but One God and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and His Messenger.)"

The following is the list of persons who have recently become Muslims at the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, Surrey, England:

Mr. Philip Henry Easton, Epsom, England.
Mr. John Ernest Benskin, Cornwall, England.
Mr. Lawrence Worsfold, Woking, England.
Miss Rita —, British West Indies.
Mrs. Gillian Coughlan, Banbury, Oxon, England.
Mr. Raymond Shelton, Jersey City, U.S.A.
Mrs. Mary Rahman, Liverpool, England.
Miss Patricia Mary Deacon, Bournemouth, England.
THE MU'TAZILAH AND THE BEGINNING OF RATIONALISM IN ISLAM

by SHEIKH SALEH FIRUZ

“...The aims of mankind’s new generations are comprehension and knowledge. The principles of pain and pleasure have sufficiently been analyzed so as to be unable to represent the targets of human effort any more. They have now received their true shape, which is the educative medium or means, and in no way an aim. The target is above, a knowledge without end, as behind every hill there is another goal, and so infinitely through existence’s landscape whereon we find ourselves and which we cannot apprehend.”

The contribution of Abu Huzail

Shahrastani maintains that there were no important differences between Amru’s and Vasil’s brand of rationalism. After the translation of the Greek classics into Arabic, the Mu’tazilah (Separatists) resorted to a consistent study of all that Greek culture gave to the world. Their research revealed to them many new ways of speculation, which they knew how to adapt skillfully to Islamic doctrine. Their ranks kept gaining in strength, while their schools spread all over the empire. At that time their leading representative was Abu Huzail Ibn Hamedan al-Alafa, born in 135 A.H. (752 C.E.). He had studied philosophy in Baghdad under Osman Ibn Khalid al-Tawil, who was Vasil’s student. Under the reign of the Caliph al-Mansur, Abu Huzail wrote several works on the existence of God’s attributes as such. Shahristani tells that Abu Huzail lived 100 years and died in 235 A.H. Abu Huzail did not adopt the views of previous rationalists on God’s attributes. These attributes, he explained, are in some ways God’s manifestations and aspects. God knows with the knowledge He wields within Himself. God is powerful with the power He wields within His fold. God lives with the life self-contained within His Being. Previous rationalists had affirmed that God knows and that His knowledge was within His Being, while Abu Huzail contended that God knows with the knowledge which is His Being. There is no difference, in form, between Vasil’s and Abu Huzail’s dogmas on God’s all-sapience.

Yet there is a slight difference in spirit between these two conceptions, and this lies in that Vasil and his followers deny altogether the existence of God’s attributes. Abu Huzail, in his expounding, admits the existence of the Supreme Being which identified Himself with His attributes; yet He admits the existence of these attributes only under the reservation that they identify themselves with the Divine Being. They claimed that God was One and nothing but One, on all sides, nay, that His attributes identify themselves with His Being, i.e., that the attributes were the Supreme Being Himself. In other words, the attributes were not a part, and the Supreme Being another part. It is noteworthy to dwell on Huzail’s contention on God’s will and man’s will. For him, God’s will is the same as God’s knowledge. Yet Abu Huzail affirmed in all truth that God does always what He wills with a renewed will so that there is no contradiction in effect. For Him, God’s message is divided into two parts. In the first, there is no contradiction and inertia as there is in the act of creation, while the second part admits concession and approves of contradiction and inertia. Commandments and interdictions come in this part. Abu Huzail supposes that man’s obedience is an attribute which has no connections with physical conditions.

There is some difference between physical acts and ideas. The latter depend on free-will and should be considered as such. Abu Huzail’s conception on the world creation is very attractive. He here adopted an Hellenistic thesis on the eternity of the world and affirmed that, only, by that way, could many intricate postulates of the Qur’an be clarified. Abu Huzail opines that there is no being in infinite movement without a beginning and an end, because creation is the setting of the Supreme Being into movement, the end of this state of being causes inertia in movement, and the return to the state of peace or nonentity. He wrote somewhere: “I did not say that there is infinite movement because the existing movement is bound to have an end. Consequently, from its very inception, matter is in a state of peace and will. At the end, it returns to the state of inertia and remains thereto for ever. Movement is creation.”

He, besides, advanced that man has a free will of his own while he is in life in this world. In the other world, within the blessed and the damned, all acts and movements are devoid of free will, i.e., dependant on the incomprehensible God’s will. Men’s deeds on this earth are freely willed and rewarded as such. In the other world, there is no responsibility for acts and there are no God’s commandments either. This is why the acts of the blessed and the damned and their movements will stop. There will, therefore, be no eternal grace or eternal expiation. Abu Huzail, in this exposition of his, is close to Plato, who had said: “Even if there were no God’s commandments, men would
come to recognize the Creator and to differentiate between good and evil.” This means that this possibility of recognition will result in good being rewarded and evil punished.

Nizam — the first world encyclopaedist

The most reputed of Huzzii’s followers was Ibrahim Ibn Seyer Ibn Hanin-nizam. Often the Caliph Mamun used to call for Huzzii and Nizam to conduct a discussion before him, and, listening, he enjoyed it intensely. Nizam had studied many Greek philosophical works, which had a portentious influence on his future works. Nizam was not of outstanding capabilities in apologetics and theology, not of Abu Huzzii’s calibre, at any rate, yet he was stronger in natural sciences and philosophy. He can be considered as one of the first Islamic encyclopaedists and, at the same time, one of the first world encyclopaedists, as Islamic encyclopaedists made themselves known several centuries before the advent of Encyclopaedical Movement in Europe. He, somehow, limited God’s power in that he removed evil from God’s power, maintaining, thus, that evil cannot be ascribed to the Almighty, who is none but All-mercifulness. His school is very close to the optimistic Hellenistic philosophy, while, at the same time, it does not wield anything irrational in its postulates.

EPILOGUE

(This article is the non-completed extract from my father’s work “Science and Philosophy in Islam”, written during the 1950–1958 lapse. At the end of 1959, the author of the above lines died, having lived many years in the hope of meeting his son, living abroad, in political emigration. The grave covers many hopes and thus in the spirit of Amru Ibn ‘Ubaid’s poems: “Oh! you who were deceived by your hopes... the grave is the sole hope of what man has deserved.” My father passed beyond. After a long time, his friends dispatched me his manuscripts, which breathe the spirit of a whole generation which had lived in the hope of Islam’s revival and the expectation that the culture of its mighty spirit could spread anew its blessings on mankind’s sons. I will try, in a few lines, to terminate my father’s article, using the sources which are now available to me.—Kamal Ibn Firuz.)

Early Islamic community gave scope for the Islamic postulate to be interpreted in various ways

Rationalistic postulates can generally be expounded in five main points: (1) Rejection of all attributes in matter of exposition and critical consideration of the Oneness of God; (2) God is not responsible for human acts which result in evil, and, consequently, conviction that man has a free will conferred on him to do as he wills; (3) nobody is in a position to see God, neither will anybody ever see Him; (4) ability of the human mind to perceive the truth without God sending Messengers; (5) conviction that the Qur’ân was revealed under the impact of circumstances and spontaneously.

In the above article, the Mu’tazilah are branded as the rationalistic school of interpretation of Islamic doctrines, yet this does not mean, at the time, that they were exclusive in their rationalism, or even that they represented an homogeneous group of schools. Rationalistically-orientated thinkers could be found in various schools whose groupings were more or less systematized along comparative and historical lines, rather than in a rigid classification thereto. We can thus find rationalists among Kharijis, traditionalists, moderate gnostics and mystics. All these trends appeared in the first century of the Hijrah. Such early interpretative ramifications, unusual to other religions, testify patently to the fact that the pristine Islamic community was liberal and gave scope for the Islamic postulate to be interpreted in various ways, which resulted sometimes in totally contradictory inferences.

The early cosmopolitan character of Islam, with such an unparalleled liberalism, infused fresh blood to the new doctrine, which, in fact, shows that anything new abides by the proverb which states that truth, however old, is always young. The motley features of these various schools and trends, revolving around hundreds of various interpretative groups, brought home to us that Islam was, at its beginnings, as much a religiously authoritative. Yet, parallel to this, we should know that at that time, the Islamic thinkers were not subject to alien influences. They, so to say, set forth their dogmatic expounding and commentaries in total independence. We avail ourselves of the opportunity to explain the contents of the Islamic dogma. It is not at all the same process as in Christian theology and, maybe, in the Hebrew one. No doubt the latter is much more similar to Islam as regards methodology, yet, without any prejudices, we can conclude that Islamic apologetics do not wield the incisiveness of the Torah interpreters, as well as that of other books of the oldest period prophets of the Bible. Nor has it the intricate symbolism abounding in the books of the latter-period prophets, not even the subtle parable of the style of the New Testament. The latter’s symbolism had compelled Christian apologetics to search for the formulation of striking dogmas which, nowadays, characteristically enough, confer a rudimentary ecclesiastical feature to Christian apologetics, of which there was not even a trace in primitive Christianity.

Early Islam was an evolutionary doctrine and when it turned authoritative its progress stopped

A similar innovation had been attempted in Islam later. In a certain aspect, this innovation appears to have its half-justified statute, yet it does not wield, in any case, such pretensions as the Christian Churches wield, all the more that Islam has no Church, in the abstract sense, as the Christians have. Should we wish to examine what we ought to believe in Islam, from a more or less non-popular viewpoint, we will find out that there is no dogma in Islam. Dogmatics of Islam are too abstract, if any at all, so that in this case a more plastic formulation is impossible. Supposing we want to use descriptive apologetics, the Islamic dogma on God’s Unity still has a multi-dimensional conception of God. God is Omnipotent. God is the Light of the heaven and the earth, i.e., of the whole Universe; the light is from within and not from without, as outside does not exist in the infinite. His location (throne) is sky and earth, hence the infinite Universe; again, whereby there nothing else save Him, and which exist within Him. There is no space without God and there is no end to God. Should we wish to concentrate on the effectual side, we detect there ninety-nine God’s names, which explains that all possible acts from the simplest moves to the highest moral postulates can be integrated into an eternal dynamism stemming from the omnipotency which we had mentioned in the descriptive formula. This means that Islamic dogma on God’s Oneness is far from being comprehended, its repetition being only insinuative suggestion, which incites us to thought in some rare moments. Yet it is not an ordinary formula about which one ought not to think and speculate, as is the case with Christianity. This short apercu on the leading dogma, foundation of Islam’s monotheism, can lead us best to the abstractness of Islamic dogmatics. Through
its media, we can grasp why such divergent interpretations could co-exist without anyone gaining pace over the other. It is a special feature of Islam to be at the same time an agnostic religion. We cannot explain it, though, today, the facts which facilitate its understanding exist. The rest of Islam's dogmas, whose number is likewise unspecified, wield the same abstract character. This leads the thinker to a formula on which we could rely upon and which would supply us with the specific key enabling us to assess who is the faithful and who the unfaithful. In this case, we are not in a position to seriously give our judgment on the right faith of an individual, yet we could arrive at such a conclusion via an entirely different way — the examination of every individual's deeds and thorough evaluation of his devotion and faithful adherence to religion. Islam, therefore, assesses devotion according to the actions. For Islam, acts are the supreme indicator of individual allegiance to universal God's will. This criterion, so much criticized by Christianity, has appeared as the only possible medium for judging the moral standard of the individual, whose inner dogmatic apprehension does not interest us as much as his acts. This is why the acts are the only criterion testifying belief or disbelief. Islam is, therefore, a moral discipline which is concerned generally with the maintenance of a specific complex of relations between individuals, groups and the whole of humanity as a practical collective. Islam's aim is mankind's mental and moral evolution, and this evolution was based on an intrinsic self-controlling basis, being, simultaneously, the collectivity's duty, the latter being set, not on a dogmatic basis as a Church, but as a political organization, which is there to observe individual behaviour and control it. This is why Islam is construed as an evolutionary discipline and not an authoritative one. Pristine Islam was enabled, for this reason, to spread swiftly because subject peoples have always craved for liberalism. Yet its impact became narrower and narrower, so that medieval Islam turned to authoritarianism, more or less static, and it was perhaps on the verge of becoming a Church-like organization. Islam then became exclusive and rudimentary, impregnating with these colours all peoples on large geographic latitudes and compelling them to jugulate the pristine liberalism and its interpretative varieties.

Rationalists among the Kharijis and Gnostics

One of the most extreme Kharij's trends, known under the name of Mansurites after its founder Abu Mansur al-Agili, yielded many rationalistic tendencies in the interpretation of the Qur'an. For example, it explained that love, compassion and goodwill were Paradise, while wickedness and hatred were Hell. This school appeared at the moment when Islam started losing some of its liberalism, and one of the inquisitors of Islam's history, Haijaj, had killed Abu Mansur and forbade the burial of his body, so as to even defame him posthumously. Another trend, very close to the Kharijis, are the Hatabites, whose founder, Abu Hatab Muhammad Zain Asadi, propounded that Paradise is the blessings of this earth and Hell its hardships, and, consequently, that this world yields an eternal character and has no end. The anti-liberal elements killed this rationalist as well. Another branch of the Kharijis, the Zerarites, asserted that God's attributes are renewable, i.e., stem from evolution.

Among moderate gnostics there were many rationalists as well, and if we study all these possible schools we shall arrive at a conclusion that they all have common rationalistic trends. The leading moderate gnostic school was the Batiniye. Its founder, Hasan Ibn 'Ali al-Sabah, was Hamdan al-Kamari's pupil. The Batiniye maintain that God is outside the grasp of the human mind, yet He is Likewise present within the province of this mind. God is not sapient, yet He is not un-sapient either. He is the Creator of the mind which encompasses everything, and the mind is the creator of the person who is not perfect and all that stems from the person has its end in the mind wherefrom it wields or whereby it nears perfection, and only by this way does the Almighty come to the consciousness of Himself.

There is an entire group of the Kharijis, with about thirteen various schools, which hold a common assignation: the Agarida, who come out with the doctrine that whatever is good is God's deed and whatever is bad is man's deed. Other important schools which wield a more or less independent character, as the Yunussites, affirm that only the knowledge of truth and the purpose of existence is religion's aim. Only those who were loyal and loved their fellow men, they say, will enter Paradise, and not those who believed that prayer and formal religiousness are the only factors for admission to Paradise. The Jabriyes, whose founder was Jahm Ibn Safy-bn-al-Tirmizi, likewise wielded rationalistic trends, though these opposed the Mu'tazilah concepts. They believe in the non-existence of human free-will, thus representing extreme determinist in Islamic thinkers. Of other leading Islamic rationalistic schools it is noteworthy to mention the Sheikhiyah, whose leaders were gnostics, but their gnosia was founded on rationalism, which demonstrates the relativity of all possible religious truths, insisting on the eternal evolution of the human mind which is the only tangible source of human progress and simultaneously the judge of human deeds. Human responsibility grows parallel with human conceivability, so that the more a man comprehends the more he is responsible for his acts. One can find very interesting suppositions on collective and rational responsibility where the more intelligent are responsible for the orientation and acts of the less intelligent, and, in the event that the first neglect the second, collective responsibility and whatever goes with it hits the collectivity, which can assure an expanded context and even encompass the whole of mankind and a series of generations. Acquaintance-knowledge is the foundation of responsibility and the sole referee of the situation. The one who does not understand and sins is punished on these counts does not feel the intensity of the punishment as does the one who was conscious of the aims of his deeds and whatever goes with them.

The era of decay in Islam

Within this short article it is not an easy affair to encompass all the possible schools which strove to give a rationalistic interpretation of Islamic doctrine. As stated, their conclusions are sometimes very contradictory, yet this should not lead us to the inference that they all were the successors of a single methodology. They were seeking comprehensible explanations of the Qur'an and the Traditions and were extending to anyone the right to discuss the ways to understanding of theological theories on a liberal basis. Consequently, we may conclude that Islamic rationalists were, at the same time, adepts of liberalism, which is the most characteristic feature of Islam's doctrine. Unfortunately, the influence of other religions, their pomp and authority, had their impact on the Islamic world, which gradually kept losing its pristine liberal aspect, resorting to

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scholastic interpretation which became formalistic and which put an end to expression of any free thought in Islam.

This was a decadency era which tended even to nurture the trend for the setting up of a Church-like organization. This pseudo-church had such a damaging influence on the development of Islamic culture and political emancipation that individual liberal schools, which appeared in later Islamic history, were excommunicated as heretics, though they self-styled themselves as independents. The best example in this respect is represented with the factions of gnostics coming out from Shaikhiye as Babism and Bahaiism, which, in the meantime, had declared total independence from the Islamic spiritual community.

The revival of Islam can only be expected from a new rationalistic movement

We are all in the expectation of Islam’s revival. To all intents and purposes, we are still not in a position to see when this will occur, but we can say that this revival can only be expected from a new rationalistic movement. Traditionalists have had much time at their disposal whereby they have displayed a total incapacity to maintain the standard of Islamic culture at its deserved level. Gnostics expected a revival in the far future, at the consumption of time, while the mystics were not in a position to reach the height of mystical mysticism known in other religions, and are not an element able to pursue on their own any kind of renaissance. The return to liberalism which alone will impart impetus to Islam’s rationalism can revive it and make it blossom anew. In the adverse case, should the traditionalists fail to maintain their rigid stand, modern Islamic thinkers will be compelled to seek truth outside Islam’s province and its sources.

This is crystal clear today, when we witness that, among young Muslim generations in contact with rationalism within materialistic and pragmatical philosophies, some Muslims are parting entirely from Islam, which represents a mutual loss. One loses their father’s creed and cuts liaisons with their own past, while the community loses its intelligentsia and the leading elements which form the culture’s mainstays and its practical realization. Today we have a host of examples in all Islamic countries, whether free or not, of how much this unnatural plight is harmful for the integral cohesion of the community and its political unity. Today, there is a slogan in the mouths of almost all the so-called “progressive elements” in all Islamic countries to the effect that modern society, or its formal structure in a common State, should be founded on an ideology completely alien to religion. On this insists Communists, Socialists, Nationalists, and motley political liberals, to whom it is quite secondary that Islamic spiritual civilization adopt a laic aspect, gradually leading the Islamic peoples towards splitting mutual hatred, and, finally, differentiation, which is the death-knell of Islamic culture and thought. Finally, it would not be in the least desirable to assume that Islamic civilization in its present form does not wield any vital values and does not represent for its so-called followers anything else but painful reminiscences. The only saddening thing is that other ideologies, which hold the concept of a new civilization, are either romantic, nationalistic or Utopian. Similarly to Communism, they do not wield a real value in their basic teachings which would qualify them as the heirs of ancient medieval civilizations. We well know that the Communist ideology, however amended, still remains an immature concept which holds its own contradiction within its implementation, as it holds inadequacy in ruling a mankind which reaches a new phase of social life. This phase covers new generations, which want to know and not to suppose, who want to have justification for every effort they make, which, ultimately, do not believe any more in happiness or welfare, and do not tend towards it either on earth or outside it.

The aims of mankind’s new generations are comprehension and knowledge. The principles of pain and pleasure have sufficiently been analyzed so as to be unable to represent the targets of human effort any more. They have now received their true shape, which is the educative medium or means, and in no way an aim. The target is above, a knowledge without end, as behind every hill there is another goal, and so infinitely through existence’s landscape whereon we find ourselves and which we cannot apprehend.

Principles were sent for silent action; they are worthy of our attention until they have facilitated our concentration on the topic of the purpose of existence, yet they become a burden when they requested us to close our eyes and move blindly into a fog without our knowing why we must do it and whether what we were doing was really right. It is not surprising, therefore, if today anyone exploits any possible means to prove that he is right, and he alone. This irrational element is omnipresent in all imposed ideologies and inert doctrines which seek aggression for the sake of aggression and will constitute the fate-bearing factor which creates a new primate or two-legged animal from the sapient being that was man, which moves within the boundaries of its instincts and which would but slightly differentiate from the rest of the animal kingdom. We should be today at least clear whether we ought to consider the human being as an exception in the biological sense or as an ordinary casual link within it. The theory of relativity, which is no more a philosophy yet still unelaborated to become dogmatic, demonstrated that only what was possible happens in a given space and at a given time possible for its realization. If this is true, then intellect and comprehension were only made possible to the human kind.

We have, therefore, to adopt this criterian as the sole implication whose implementation holds its own proof. Let us be sure, therefore, that we are the only part of the Universe which is conscious about itself and let us be worthy of this sapience and perfection. It is possible that this lies in our hands and also possible that it does not. We could be even more perfect, provided we return to where we started. The concept of understanding was not conditioned with the building of material civilization, however attractive this could be. The mind was not devised to construct dams, electric centrals, atomic reactors and penicillin only. It was devised for something far superior, maybe for the gradual domination and mastery of the Universe. Possibly it refers to God’s creation principle: let it be and it was. Therefore, we ought to respect the gift of the cosmos centred within our personality and give it alone the right of way. Return to rationalism, nay reintegration of rationalism into Islam, could be tantamount to the rehabilitation of that Islamic culture and civilization which our grandfathers had so jealously kept safe. The present chaos in Islamic countries is the result of the authoritativeness of the uncalled, the fight against spiritual liberalism, and the elimination of rationalistic methods in the interpretation and practical application of the Islamic doctrine and blind subservience to the critically uninvestigated sources of tradition. The day we succeed in getting rid of these pangs, we shall be able to declare that Islam’s revival is on the horizon.
THE QUESTION OF CALIPHATE IN ISLAM

by AFZAL IQBAL

The Shi'ah

Shi'ah is a general name for a large group of very different Muslim sections, the starting point of all of which is the recognition of 'Ali as the legitimate Caliph after the death of the Prophet. This creed came into existence with the death of the Prophet, when a section of the public opinion in Medina advanced the view that the leadership of the Muslim community should pass on to the family of the Prophet. The most deserving candidates in this family were 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, and 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. It was, however, generally believed that 'Ali was more deserving of the honour. 'Abbas, the senior member of the family, did not contest this point of view.

There was no clear text in the Qur'an about the successor of the Prophet. It, therefore, became a matter for decision by the people in accordance with their own judgment. The al-Ansar (the Helpers) thought that they were more deserving than others, al-Muhajirun thought the same about themselves, but the supporters of 'Ali differed from both; for they considered the Caliphate as a moral heritage more or less on par with the physical heritage of property. Had the Prophet left some property, 'Ali, who was his nearest relation, would have inherited it. He was, therefore, entitled to inherit the moral heritage left by the Prophet. This was the crux of the controversy. The claim of 'Ali was not clearly supported either by the Qur'an or the Hadith, for had it been so at that time neither al-Muhajirun (the Emigrants) nor al-Ansar could have possibly insisted on their own individual viewpoints and 'Ali would have been unanimously elected as the Caliph if there had been a clear indication that the Prophet had wished it to be so. The Shi'ah, however, held that the Prophet had indicated his wishes, notably on the occasion of the return journey from the performance of his last pilgrimage. During a halt at a place called Khumm, he had convened an assembly of the people accompanying him and used these words in the course of his speech: "'Ali is to me what Aaron was to Moses, Almighty God! be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes, help those who help him, and frustrate the hopes of those who betray him." On the other hand the Prophet's nomination of Abu Bakr led prayers during his last illness pointed to a different choice. Whatever the truth, there is ample evidence to show that 'Ali approved the election of Abu Bakr and he gave the same approval to the election of 'Umar and after some reluctance to that of 'Uthman. This action, however, did not prevent him from thinking that he was more deserving than those who had been elected as Caliphs.

Al-Bukhari quotes Ibn 'Abbas as an authority for the following incident. During the illness of the Prophet, 'Ali as he emerged from the house of the Prophet was asked anxious questions about the health of the Prophet by Ibn 'Abbas. 'Ali told him that the Prophet was improving and that he hoped he would recover very soon. At this al-'Abbas took the hand of 'Ali and said: "Believe me by God, the Prophet will not survive the illness. I know the faces of the family of 'Abd al-Muttalib and can tell you what they look like when they are about to die. Let us, therefore, go and ask him about his wishes regarding his successor. If he says that we are to succeed him we would know where we stand. If he does not speak to us about this subject we will insist and make him commit the charge to us. 'Ali did not listen to these entreaties and told al-'Abbas: "By God, if we were to ask him and he were to refuse then the people will never give us the Caliphate after a clear verdict from the Prophet. By God, I shall not go and ask him about it."

A group of the Companions considered 'Ali as a better candidate for leadership than Abu Bakr and 'Umar and others. Among these were 'Ammar, Abu Dharr, Salman al-Farisi, Jabir Ibn 'Abdullah, al-'Abbas and his sons, Abu Ibn Ka'b and Hudhayfah. The movement gained momentum. The supporters of 'Ali claimed that the leadership of the Muslim community was a matter too grave to be left to the unrestricted judgment of the people. It was a pillar of religion and could not be trifled with. No prophet could possibly ignore such a weighty matter which could not be left to the discretion of the people. They claimed, therefore, that the Prophet had appointed 'Ali during his lifetime as his successor. They supported this contention by quoting some texts which at that time were not known to the contemporary traditionists and jurists and most of which were either fabricated or could not be established as genuine.

The supporters of 'Ali, however, insisted on this claim and called 'Ali the Wasiy or legatee who was designated by the Prophet and God. By conferring this title on their candidate they sought to establish that 'Ali had been appointed a Caliph by the Prophet, whose legatee he was. He was not, therefore, the leader-elect but the leader appointed by the Prophet.

'Ali, consistent with this tradition, appointed his own successor and so did each of his successors. The word Wasiy or legatee was used very exclusively for 'Ali, especially by the poets, and came to assume the dignity of a title. Many traditions were advanced in support of their claim. Similar principles underlie their exegesis of the Qur'an, which regards a vast number of verses as evidence for the Shi'ah claims. The Shi'ah believe in the infallibility of 'Ali and the Imams who came after him. They were all considered innocent and it was believed that they could neither commit a sin nor make a mistake. They hold that the spiritual heritage bequeathed by the Prophet devolved on 'Ali and his descendants. They repudiate the authority of the people to elect a spiritual head in supersedion of the claims of the Prophet's family; for, according to the Shi'ah belief the Imamate descends by divine appointment in the apostolic line. The Imam, besides being a descendant of the Prophet, must be Mus'um or sinless — he should bear the purest character.

The position of 'Ali among Shi'ahs

We will do well to quote the views of Ibn Abi l-Hadid, who was a moderate Shi'ah, for that would give us an idea of the general beliefs of the community: "Our supporters and comrades (Shi'ahs) — who are very moderate and compromising — believe that 'Ali is the Superman in this world and in the hereafter. To him belongs the highest place in Heaven, and in him is manifested the best of human character and behaviour. Whoever is his enemy is the

* For previous instalment please refer to The Islamic Review for June 1961.—Ed., I.R._

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enemy of God and his place is Hell, where he will live for
ever with the infidels and the hypocrites, unless such a person
repents during his lifetime and dies with allegiance and
love towards 'Ali. As for the good men of al-Muhajirun
and al-Ansar who were elected leaders before him, had 'Ali
repudiated their leadership and had he detested them, even
if he did not fight them, we would have said that they were
among those who would perish like those who repudiated
God and were detested by the Prophet. This was because
it has been proved that the Prophet told 'Ali "my war is
yours and so is my peace. 0 God! Support his ('Ali's)
supporters and hate his enemies". The Prophet also told
'Ali, "only true (believers) are those who love you and
hypocrites are those who hate you".

Ibn Abi 'l-Hadid continues to say: "We found out,
however, that 'Ali approved of their leadership and said his
prayers behind them. We, therefore, follow him and do
not go beyond what he said or did. Have you not seen that
we repudiated Mu'awiyah when 'Ali did so? When 'Ali
cursed Mu'awiyah we did the same. When he issued a
verdict that those in Syria including the Companions were
on the wrong path we endorsed this judgment. In brief we
do not consider that there is any difference between 'Ali
and the Prophet except that of the prophethood. We associate
him with the Prophet in every virtue except that of prophethood.
But we respect the Companions who were respected
by 'Ali and were not repudiated by him."

The belief in the infallibility of 'Ali, who was considered
a Superman, led his supporters to review the events of
Muslim history leading to the election of Abu Bakr, 'Umar
and 'Uthman. The party comprised both of extremists as
well as moderate elements. While some of them were con-
tent to believe that the three Caliphs and their supporters
committed an error of judgment knowing full well that 'Ali
was the more deserving of the three and should have been
elected as Caliph, others went to the extreme of dubbing
them all unbelievers who had defied the will of the Prophet
and had entered into a conspiracy to prevent the election of
the most deserving candidate who had been already
nominated the Caliph by the Prophet during his lifetime.
This claim necessitated the re-interpretation of historical
events not only after the death of the Prophet but even
before it. An example of this effort is a Shi'ah claim that
the Prophet knew that he was dying and he, therefore, sent
for both Abu Bakr and 'Umar and ordered them to proceed
in a campaign under the command of 'Usamah; the idea
being that the two veterans should leave Medina so that
'Ali could be elected without any opposition during their
absence when the Prophet would breathe his last. They
could not have opposed the election of 'Ali under the cir-
cumstances because it would have been a fait accompli.
Abu Bakr and 'Umar are charged with dilatory tactics, for
they are said to have unnecessarily prolonged their stay in
Medina while the Prophet had already fallen sick and his
sickness was assuming serious proportions. 'Usamah
delayed the departure of his army for several days in spite
of the Prophet urging him to proceed urgently.4

The position of 'Ali amongst extremist Shi'ahs — belief in
'Ali's Divinity

The extremist elements among the Shi'ahs were not
satisfied with the belief that 'Ali was the best of God's
creatures and that he came next only to the Prophet and
that he was infallible. They went a step further and deified
him. They claimed that a Divine part was settled in 'Ali
and had mixed with his body; that 'Ali knew the unknown
and the unseen and many prophecies are attributed to him.
It was through the Divine force in his body that the gate
of Khaybar was flung open. 'Ali is stated to have said after
the celebrated victory of Khaybar: "By God, I did not
remove the gate of Khaybar by any physical force. I removed
it by heavenly power." The Shi'ah also believe that 'Ali will
reappear one day and when he reappears, "thunder is his
voice, lightning his smile". It is stated that among the first
who advanced the theory of divinity during the lifetime of
'Ali was 'Abdullah Ibn Saba', a Jew. This Jew, who was
responsible for raising a revolt in Syria, was the agent
provocateur who incited people against 'Uthman and sub-
sequently deified 'Ali. He founded a secret society under
the cover of Islam in order to destroy it. He moved to
Basrah after accepting Islam and made it the centre of his
activities, but he was soon thrown out of the country by the
provincial governor. He then went to Kufah, where he was
meted similar treatment. Later he travelled to Egypt, where
he gathered a large number of followers. His principal
teachings revolved round the Prophet's "legatee" and the
"return" (al-Raf'a). He used the theory of the Prophet's
disappearance to create a schism in Islam; he stirred
hatred and violence against 'Uthman, who was accused of
having usurped the Caliphate. His theory of the return held
out a hope to the people that the Prophet would return. He
said, "It is very strange that they say that Jesus will
return." Then without any logical link he jumped to the
next stage and claimed that 'Ali would return. When 'Ali
was assassinated Ibn Hazm quotes Ibn Saba, the Jew, as
protesting: "By God, by God, we shall never believe that
'Ali died. He shall never die until he fills the world with
justice as it is now filled with injustice." It is obvious that
Ibn Saba derived his theory of return from Judaism. The
Jews believed that Ilyas had ascended the heavens and would
return one day to bring back religion and law. The same
idea occurs in Christianity in its early stages. This idea
has been developed by the Shi'ahs, who believe in the
"disappearance" of the Imams. The disappeared Imam,
according to their belief, will return one day and fill the
world with justice. This is a basic idea leading to the
theory of al-Mahdi, al-Muntazar (the awaited).

One wonders why the Shi'ah deified 'Ali in preference
to Muhammad whom they considered the Prophet and whom
they acknowledged as superior to 'Ali. A section of his
followers has attributed to 'Ali a variety of miracles and
the knowledge of the unknown. They claimed that their
leader knew everything which was to happen in the future.
In support of this contention they fabricated a tradition from
'Ali which runs somewhat like this: "Ask me before you
lose me, by God, whatever you ask me about events from
now till the hour of judgment or about any caravan winding
its way in a vast desert, I shall answer you in the greatest
default telling you the names of the singer in the caravan
who urges the camels to proceed, the leader, the driver,
the passengers, the destination and whoever God killed in the
caravan together with those who died a natural death." The
supporters also claim that 'Ali had foretold the martyrdom
of Husain and the events of Karbala. He had also foretold
the emergence of al-Hajjaj, al-Khwarizj, the Omayyads
and their kingdom, the dynasty of Ban Buwah and the
Abbasides.5 These and other stories spread rapidly among
the Shi'ahs, who nearly stated that their leader had foretold
all events till the day of judgment.

It is significant that the majority of the Shi'ahs were in
Iraq, which was the cradle of different religions and civiliza-
tions and where existed the adherents of Mani and Mazdak,
in addition to a large number of Christians and Jews. In such a country which had witnessed the interplay of a large number of creeds it is understandable that the creed of the transmigration of Divine soul into a human body could flourish among others. This is one reason why the theory of Divinity for ‘Ali could flourish in Iraq and not in Arabia, where the people did not attach any divinity to the Prophet of Islam, about whom the Qur’anic verse clearly lays down:  

"Indeed I am a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is only one God."  

The belief in the divinity of ‘Ali is clearly contrary to the simple and uninvolved teachings of Islam which lay an overwhelming stress on the unity of God and on the necessity of human beings refraining from associating any other power with Him. It is fortunate, however, that this belief in the divinity of ‘Ali is shared only by a small minority of the extremist Shi’ah community called al-Ghulaat: “The national characteristics of a people, the climatic conditions under which they exist, the natural features of the country in which they dwell, the influence of older cults, all give a colour and a complexion to their beliefs and doctrines. Iran gave birth to agnosticism: from there emanated the docetic conceptions which permeated the Roman world and impressed upon the primitive beliefs of the Judaical Christians the conception of a divinity who discoursed familiarly with mankind on earth. . . . ‘Ali's personality fired the imagination of Manichaicism. It took the place of the docetic Christ among the people. The process of deification was not confined to ‘Ali. His successors were deified with him.”

The basic Shi’ah theory about ‘Ali

The basic Shi’ah theory, however, relates to the Caliphate. The supporters of ‘Ali thought that he was the natural leader of the Muslims appointed by the Prophet and that he was to be succeeded by his descendants according to a line of succession drawn by God. Allegiance to the Imam and obedience to him are parts of the Shi’ah faith. The Imam according to them is, however, not the same person as envisaged by the Sunnah, who believe that he is a pious Muslim who acts for the Prophet in ensuring that the teachings of Islam are fully observed. The Caliph is merely an elected head of the community who exerts the people to follow the command of God and is looked upon as the supreme authority in justice, administration and war with the significant proviso that he has no right to legislate except in cases where there is no clear text available either in the Qur’an or in the Sunnah. The Shi’ah, however, attach a different meaning to the functions of the Imam. The first Imam, according to them, had inherited the knowledge of the Prophet and was not an ordinary human being. He was above men, a Superman, a man who was infallible. There were two kinds of knowledge, the manifest and the hidden. According to the Shi’ah belief both of them were taught to ‘Ali by the Prophet, who fully acquainted him with the obvious and the secret meanings of the Qur’an. The Prophet had revealed to ‘Ali the secrets of the Creation and the mystery of the unseen. This was the legacy of the Imam from the Prophet and he left this legacy in turn to his own successor. The first Imam was, therefore, the greatest teacher and the Shi’ah do not believe in knowledge and Hadith unless it comes to them through the Imam. The Shi’ah are not, however, agreed upon the number of Imams and their order of lineage.

Sub-divisions among Shi’ahs — Zaydis

There are a large number of Shi’ah sub-divisions which far exceed the well-known number of seventy-two. The most prominent among the many sects were, however, al-Zaidiyah or the Zaydis and al-Imamiyyah or the Imamis. Zaydis are the followers of Zayd, son of Ali II (Zayn al-Abideen), son of Husain. They affirm that the Imamate descended from ‘Ali to Hasan, then to Husayn; from Husayn it devolved upon ‘Ali II (Zayn al-Abideen); and from him it passed to Zayd, and not, as is held by the Ithna ‘Ashariyyah, to Muhammad al-Bakir. They are moderate and closely approach the Sunnah creed. Zayd, the founder of the sect, was a student of Wasiil Ibn ‘Ata’, the leader of the Mu’tazilah. Zayd did not share the general view about Abu Bakr and ‘Umar being usurpers of the office of Caliph. He believed that while a better person was available, a lesser man could be elected a Caliph. He, therefore, held that while ‘Ali was definitely a better man than both Abu Bakr and ‘Umar there was no ground to suggest that those who had been duly elected were usurpers. He therefore recognizes their Caliphate as valid and also conceded the right of election to the people whose choice was however restricted to the Prophet’s family. Their attitude towards the theory of the Imamate was also moderate. They did not believe that there was an irrevocable text on the succession to the Caliphate because this was not covered by any revelation in the Qur’an. Every descendant of Fatimah (daughter of the Prophet) who was learned, pious, courageous, generous and in a position to fight for the right cause could claim his right to be an Imam if he was capable of leading the community. In other words the qualifications of a candidate for the Caliphate were that he should be a Fatimite and that he should be capable of asserting by force of arms his right to the Imamate. This was a positive attitude as against the negative approach of the Imamis, whose Imams ended with the disappeared Imam and who did not, therefore, aspire to leadership any more. Muhammad al-Bakir, the brother of Zayd, who is recognized as the rightfull Imam by the majority of the Shi’ah, deprecated the use of force. Zayd rose in arms against the Umayyad Caliph Hisham Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and was killed in 121 A.H. (738 C.E.). His son Yahya followed in the footsteps of his father and was killed in 125 A.H. (742 C.E.). The creed of Zayd is still practised in the Yemen.

Imamis — Ithna ‘Ashariyyahs and the Isma’ilis

The other important sect, the Imamis, was so called because their beliefs were centred round the institution of Imam. They claimed that the Prophet had entrusted the Caliphate to ‘Ali, who was deprived of his right by Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, who thus became usurpers and had to be repudiated as such by the Muslim community. They considered the recognition of the Imam as a part of their faith. All the sub-divisions of the Imamis are not, however, agreed on the number of their Imams. One of their most famous sub-divisions is the Ithna ‘Ashariyyahs (twelvers). The number of Imams according to this sect is twelve. This is the official creed of Iran today. Another branch of the Imamis was the Isma’ilis. They were called Isma’ilis because they, as the Imamate with Isma’il, a son of Ja’far al-Sadiq. They played a notable role in the history of Islam inasmuch as they gave a lead in adopting the principles of neo-Platonism to their beliefs. Instead of accepting Islam in the accepted sense of a faithful believer they started the rational process of asking questions and raising doubts. Why should stones be thrown during the pilgrimage? Why are people asked to run between the mounds of Safa and Marwa during the Hajj? This rational process was unfortunately carried a little too far, for the arguments were directed more towards details than to the fundamental teach-
ings, which were misinterpreted. It was stated, for example, that revelation was nothing more than the calmness of the soul. The pseudo-intellectual approach towards religion led them to believe that the religious rites had no importance whatever and that they were meant only for the illiterate masses. The prophets, it was claimed, addressed the masses while philosophers were indeed the prophets of the intelligentsia. They did not consider it necessary to stick to the verbal meanings of the Qur’ān because that was not necessary for the intellectuals who should approach it allegorically and try to understand it through interpretation. We have mentioned this section in passing for it does not fall under the scope of our work because it actually became important during the Abbaside period, with which we are not dealing in this book. A remnant of this creed were the Fatimites in Egypt and North Africa. They later spread to Syria, Persia and India, and work today under the leadership of the Agha Khan.

All the Imamis generally believe in the return of an awaited Imam, though according to different sections the name of the awaited Imam differs. One section, for example, is waiting for the reappearance of al-Ja’far al-Sadiq, another awaits Muhammad, son of ‘Abdullah, son of Hasan, son of Husayn, son of ‘Ali Ibn Ali Talib; still a third section Muhammad Ibn al-Hanifyah and believes that he is on the mount of Radhwah. He will remain there till God permits him to reappear in this world. One of the spokesmen of this section was the Arab poet Kuthayr ‘Azzah, who said:

“Behold, the Imams are from the Qur’ān and they are four alike:
‘Ali and his three sons (and grandsons) 
Undoubtedly there are successors,
One is the man of faith and righteousness (Hasan)
Another was lost in Karbala (Husayn)
And the third will never die until he leads the horses with the banner,
He has disappeared and will not be seen for a time,
In (the mount of Radhwah) with (his food and honey and water).”

The famous Umayyad poet al-Sayyid ‘Iymari also believed that Muhammad Ibn Hanfıyah was alive on the mount of Radhwah; that he was being guarded by a lion and a tiger, that he had two rich springs of water and honey and that he would reappear and would fill the world with justice just as it was filled with injustice at the moment. The origin of all such beliefs, as we have seen, was Ibn Saba’s teaching about the return of the Prophet which he borrowed from Judaism. The Shi‘ahs, who failed in the beginning to capture political power and were later persecuted by those who were in power, sought to compensate themselves with the hope of an awaited Imam, the awaited Mahdi, in order to fight their frustration which they faced on account of being in the wilderness.

The Shi‘ahs and the Khawarij

It will be clear by now that both the Khawarij and the Shi‘ahs were supporters of ‘Ali. The Shi‘ahs, however, believed that the Khawarij, who deserted ‘Ali because he accepted arbitration in the Battle of Saffin, were the men who were most eager in referring to arbitration the dispute with Mu‘awiyyah. They forced upon ‘Ali, against his own judgment, Abu Musa as the representative of the House of Muhammad; but no sooner had the terms been settled than these soldier-theologians fell into a controversy about the

sinfulness of submitting any cause to human judgment. Some kind of a conspiracy against ‘Ali is therefore implied in favour of Mu‘awiyyah, but this is not borne out by facts, as the Khawarij fought the Umayyads for a whole century. This could not have happened if they had any secret understanding with the enemies of ‘Ali. The Battle of Safin was not, however, the final parting point, because even after that the Khawarij did not give up their belief that the Umayyad Caliphs were usurpers and aggressors. This is where both the sects met on common ground and joined forces to fight the Umayyads. There was, however, a fundamental difference in their methods of fighting. While the Khawarij fought openly without making any efforts to conceal their strong resentment against the Umayyads, the Shi‘ah fought openly only when they could, but most of the time they resorted to secret weapons of warfare not necessarily in the field of arms. Most of them believed in Takeyye, a principle which allowed the temporary suppression of truth in the interest of self-preservation, or an outward conformity with an alien religious belief or practice, as Syed Ameer Ali defines it. Most of the Shi‘ahs, for example, excused their conduct during the period of the first three Caliphs by saying that they accepted the leadership of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman in accordance with the principle of Takeyye. The Khawarij were, however, a puritanical lot who placed no premium on their life and honour if their principles were involved. They would go to any extreme for the sake of religion in the defence of which they fought battles. They were, therefore, an open enemy and could be dealt with as such for they were easily identified. The Shi‘ahs were a greater danger to the Umayyads than the Khawarij because they functioned secretly. The Umayyads engaged a large number of spies in order to keep an eye on the activities of the Shi‘ahs, who were persecuted. Hasan was stabbed by the Umayyads, Husayn was killed in Karbala. Members of the Prophet’s family were followed by the spies of the Government. They were insulted and killed wherever they were found. The hands and legs of people were cut merely on the suspicion that they belonged to the Prophet’s family. Whoever was suspected of supporting or sheltering them was arrested and imprisoned, his property confiscated and the wrath of the Government fell on his relations. This criminal conspiracy culminated in the martyrdom of Husayn during the rule of the Umayyad prefect Ibn Ziyad. Later al-Hajjaj broke all previous records of persecution. He was Governor of Iraq and was extremely intolerant of the Shi‘ahs. So great was the fear he instilled in the minds of the people that a man in the street preferred to call himself an unbeliever or an infidel to being called a supporter of ‘Ali. Once a man went to al-Hajjaj and said, “O Prefect, my family have done a grievous wrong to me. They have named me ‘Ali while I am but a poor man who badly requires your help.” Al-Hajjaj was much pleased at this approach and immediately gave a job to this man! Al-Mad‘ain says: “Ziyad Ibn Summayyah used to search for the Shi‘ahs in Kufah.”

REFERENCES
1 The Muqaddamah of Ibn Khaldun.
2 For example 33 : 33 ; 57 : 26 ; 11 : 74 ; 24 : 35.
3 Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah.
4 Nahj al-Balaghah.
5 Al-Shahrastani.
6 Al-Mubarrad of al-Kamel.

32 THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
Dear Sir,

I read with keen interest your thought-provoking editorial in the January 1961 issue of *The Islamic Review*, and wish to associate my views with your vivid expositions.

It is gratifying that you have ably exposed the decline in the moral and spiritual aspects of world Muslim statesmen and politicians. Truly, Muslim governing classes think less of Friday prayers than they do of the Sunday services of our counterparts. Here at this end, where they rub shoulders with Christians and are almost plunged into the Western way of life, it has been asserted by a large number of our former imperial educationists that the Muslims are backward because they profess their religion.

In a world full of constant fear, only the spiritual touch can bring peace and happiness to mankind. Muslims have them in abundance in their faith. It is only for them to profess them in all practical purposes and find the solutions to the world problems. If the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, then the doing of His commandments is the hope for salvation in this world and to the depth of our eternity.

Yours in Islam,

N. OLAYIMIKA IDRIS.

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BOURGUIBA’S INNOVATIONS REJECTED
Larchmont Acres,
Larchmont, New York.
14th July 1961.

Dear Sir,

I have received the copy you sent me of *Islam Our Choice*, and was, of course, thrilled to see my article. However, I was just as interested in reading the other stories of Europeans and Americans who have embraced Islam, particularly Professor Abd al-Karim Julius Germanus and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall.

By chance I happened to obtain a copy of the February 1961 issue of *The Islamic Review*, in which the editorial concerned Habib Bourguiba’s recent speech about additional dispensations for workers as a valid excuse not to observe the fast of Ramadhan so that the volume of national production would not suffer. Had this article been only one of many contributions to your magazine, I would take no issue with your broad-minded policy of allowing all shades of opinion to be freely expressed. However, because it appeared as an editorial, I was surprised as well as shocked that an Islamic publication of your calibre should take such a stand.

The zealous efforts of so-called “reformers” as Habib Bourguiba to mould Islam to fit the changing conditions of modern life can have only one result — the abandonment of the teachings laid down in clear and unambiguous terms by the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Islam can never be reconciled with the materialistic philosophies upon which our modern society is built. If Bourguiba’s recommendations were carried out, the practice of Islam would soon be past history. His same argument that Ramadhan impairs the national economy could be used with equal effectivness against the other pillars of the faith as well. For instance, he could argue that taking time off from work to pray results in a decline of national productivity. Following this same line of reasoning, it would be logical for Habib Bourguiba to prohibit the Pilgrimage to Mecca because the State could not afford the loss of so many workers needed to labour in industries at home. It is noteworthy that the Communist governments of the Soviet Union and China employ against Islam, tactics identical to those of the Tunisian President.

It is beyond my comprehension how one who attacks the pillars of Islam as harmful and injurious to the individual and to the community as a whole can still be considered a leader of Muslims.

Yours in Islam,

MARYAM JAMEELAH
(Margaret Marcus).

* * * *

THE QUESTION OF CALIPHATE IN ISLAM

Dear Sir,

The appearance of an article under the above title, concerning the beliefs and doctrines of the Shi‘ahs, in your current number encourages the hope that the subject is to be dealt with in a constructive manner with a view to giving the reader a useful insight into the tenets of the Shi‘ah, especially where these differ from the views entertained by other schools of Islamic thought. Unfortunately this does not appear to have been any part of the author’s intention. As regards the early historical development of the controversy between the Shi‘ah and the non-Shi‘ah in Islam, he has scarcely done justice to his subject.

Nobody, I think, would wish to deny that the split in the ranks of the early Muslims which gave rise to the controversy between Shi‘ah and non-Shi‘ah was due to the impact of tribal politics on a people ignorant of the broader issues. They were not all so ignorant, however, and the real misfortune was that the political leadership passed eventually into the hands of those who, while being politically able and determined, were morally ill-suited to nurture the spirituality of Islam and whose main concerns were the establishment of worldly dominion, the entrenchment of their own position, and the amassing of power and wealth.
This state of affairs created a climate in which an independent approach to the problems of religion became necessary, especially for those who were not prepared to follow the religious dictates of temporal rulers whom they knew to be unworthy. Thus there came into being some variety of attitude and spiritual emphasis, while there remained more identity than difference as regards belief and doctrine. It was not until much later that any further differentiation took place, by which time historical events had left their indelible mark and heaped up a mountain of bitterness between Shi‘ah and non-Shi‘ah. Even so, there was common recognition of a common purpose, the arguments being about the means of attaining the ideal of Islam, not about the nature of the ideal itself; and there was a common allegiance to God and acceptance by all of the mission and teaching of the Prophet. There was, therefore, even in later times, much common ground and always the hope that, with the passage of time, bitter feelings would pass away and concerted effort towards the attainment of the Islamic ideal become a real possibility. This remains a hope and a promise not yet completely fulfilled today, and, this being so, it seems a pity that the author of the article under notice should be so bent on reopening old controversies.

If his object were that of showing that there are present-day differences of outlook and viewpoint it would be sufficient to point out that human ideas do not remain static and that Islam has always been concerned with development — development of the human personality, development of an ideal community, leading to the establishment of institutions of justice and good government and ultimately to the universal triumph of good. Progress towards the ideal can only be achieved by means of changes in the heart and mind of man, and this presupposes some differentiation of the ideas which motivate action. In these circumstances differences of emphasis and approach, and even what could be called differences of belief and doctrine would not be matters of dismay but would be of happy augury for the future by bringing to the solution of a common problem a richer legacy of ideas than would otherwise be the case.

If, however, as seems possible, the author’s intention is to try to throw new light on the historical development of the Shi‘ah controversy, it cannot be claimed that he has done so. He has, moreover, in restating certain popular, and to some extent erroneous, accounts of Shi‘ah ideas, chosen language likely to prove offensive to those with Shi‘ah sympathies, and this, to say the least of it, would appear to me to be a tactical error in the present climate of Muslim affairs.

But the greater mistake lies in the muddled and erroneous impression the author manages to create that the principles of Shi‘ah belief were built up as part of a plot to destroy the unity of Islam. This too is not a new idea, and I find it altogether too difficult to believe. All the facts of history are, moreover, against any such conclusion, in spite of the testimony of Ibn Saba’, who, if he ever existed at all, was a person of little account whose supposed wide influence on Shi‘ah ideas (note the author’s reference to his “large number of followers” in Egypt) was the invention of a later generation. If there were plots and counterplots, as no doubt there were, they were conceived and hatched in the interests of temporal rulers bent upon bolstering up their already tottering political power, and they ought not to be blamed on the Shi‘ah. Indeed, many current popular descriptions of so-called heterodox Shi‘ah dogma, and especially of the dogma of what Mr. Afzal Iqbal calls “the extremist elements”, stem from the political propaganda of the Abbaside Caliphs in their efforts to discredit the claims and popularity of the Fatimide rulers of Egypt.

A good deal of what Mr. Afzal Iqbal has to say about Shi‘ah beliefs is in effect an elaboration of his statement that the Shi‘ah “believe that ‘Ali is the Superman”. It is difficult to know what he means by this, but presumably not what is implied by modern connotations of the term “superman”. I do not think that any important number of people among the Shi‘ah have at any time thought of ‘Ali as a superman; and there is a great deal of difference between such an idea as this and the attainment of righteousness and perfection of character which is, after all (and on the authority of the Qur’an), within the compass of every Muslim through the guidance of God. Again, on the subject of what he calls “infallibility” he betrays the same sort of misunderstanding: surely the term mutam refers to attainment of virtue and perfect piety, the building up of an unblemished character. The belief would thus be that ‘Ali and the Imams of the Prophet’s House did not err, not that they could not err (by reason of some inborn magic character which would have rendered their attainment worthless).

As regards the theory of the deification of ‘Ali, it goes without saying that all Shi‘ah worthy of the name would utterly condemn such a bizarre notion. As Mr. Iqbal himself points out, this belief was never entertained by more than a small minority of people.

Although he has obviously been at great pains to study his subject, Mr. Iqbal seems to have concentrated too much on minority views and picturesque aberrations. His statement that the number of Shi‘ah sub-divisions far exceeded 72 is evidence of this tendency. This, after all, is only the opinion of some encyclopaedia whom he does not quote. Side by side with this he seems not to realize that the home of Shi‘ah belief was al-Madina, not al’-Iraq, and that its great exponent was Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq, whom he does not mention. It would have been interesting to have had from his pen some account of the not inconsiderable influence of Imam Ja’far’s teaching upon the sum-total of beliefs and doctrine, practice and opinion, which Mr. Iqbal himself would regard as being the orthodox teaching of Islam.

I think that today people are often shocked when they read Muslim history and find that it is fairly liberally sprinkled with accounts of theological differences and doctrinal arguments; they fail to appreciate the beneficial results of Muslim tolerance. Had our predecessors been less tolerant their attitude might have favoured the permanent crystallization and perpetuation of many a dissident view — to the permanent detriment of Islam. As it was, however, such views and interpretations, especially the more extreme, found in the prevailing climate of liberality and tolerance no ground suited to their nourishment and tended to fade away. If today we feel a need for closing the ranks and encouraging unity and uniformity, we would do well to consider carefully the means we should employ. It is a wise providence that has regard for such matters; as the Qur’an puts it: “God’s is the final argument; had He willed He could indeed have guided all of you” (The Qur’an, 6 : 149).

Yours sincerely,

A. F. B. BAINES-HEWITT,
President, the Muslim Society in Great Britain.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
THE SPELLING OF THE NAME OF THE LAST MESSENGER OF GOD

34a Ellingham Road,

Dear Sir,

In English, as in every other language, every word that is used as the name of a person has one and only one spelling. Still many people, even among the learned, spell the name of the Last Messenger of God in different ways. "Ambedkar, in his recent book on Pakistan," writes Professor W. C. Smith, "spells the name 'Muhammad' in four different ways in one paragraph, and in a total of nine different ways before he has finished the chapter" (Modern Islam in India, p. 410). Even books written by Muslims also sometimes display the same appalling state of affairs.

There is only one God; there is only an unaltered and unalterable Book revealed by Him for all human beings and for all times to come; there is only one complete code of life for the entire humanity; there is only one race consisting of all the souls living in this world; and there is only one place on the face of the globe which is the centre of all those who submit themselves to the will of God. Why then should there be not one and only one spelling in English of the name of the Prophet Muhammad?

Nobody in Britain would dare write the name of Jesus Christ or for that matter even the name of the Queen or the Prime Minister in different ways. Why should then the name of our Prophet suffer at the hands of Muslims and non-Muslims alike? It is time that such a practice should be stopped entirely.

Yours faithfully,

K. H. MUMTAZ.

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Pen Pals


Miss Resia Cehic. Age 13. Address: 39 Railway Place, Footscray, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Would like to have pen friends in either Japan or France.

Abul Hasan. Address: Rainbow Mess, Sepoy Para, Rajshahi City, East Pakistan. A medical college student of the University, wants pen friends of any age, colour, religion, nationality, class, male or female, to correspond in English. Interests: Correspondence, photography, stamps, games and tourism.

Mohammad Hassan Anmeerally. Address: 29 Magon Street, Port Louis, Mauritius. Would like to correspond with Muslims from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and Pakistan.

Solly Essa. Address: P.O. Box 4824, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa. Age 21. Would like pen pals from any part of the world, of either sex, preferably in Islamic countries.


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A MUSLIM CATECHISM

for beginners and young children

by MUHAMMAD RAFEEQ

The need for a Muslim Catechism is greatly felt in all English-speaking countries, where thousands of Muslim children attending schools have no proper text-books from which to learn about their religion. The present work fulfils this need in a simple language.

Can be obtained from – THE SHAH JEHN MOSQUE, WOKING, SURREY, ENGLAND – Price 9d.

The author holds a doctorate in Arabic from the Universities of Frankfort (Germany) and Oxford (England). To get a more intimate knowledge of Islamic culture than books can give she travelled extensively in Egypt and other Arab countries, including Pakistan and India. What she particularly set out to discover was something of the trends and problems which are stirring the world of Islam as a result of the encounter between its traditional Islamic concepts and the demands of the fast-pressing Western civilization. As she tells us:

“This book is an attempt to analyse the problems of the contemporary Muslim world in relation to their ancient foundations and to examine the reasons for their particular importance in our day. . . . The Islamic world has emerged from its centuries-long isolation and has renewed its participation in world affairs. Many of its conflicts are caused by the re-established contacts with the West. The second task of this essay, therefore, is an analysis of the problems caused by the meeting of the Western and Eastern mentalities.”

Three extensive stays in Egypt and one in Pakistan, she tells us, gave her an opportunity to make personal friendship with men and women in every walk of life, and thereby form a first-hand impression of the Muslim way of life and evaluate the Muslim point of view.

The study, in pursuance of the above object, begins with a look at the cultural foundations of Islam, and the revivalist and reform currents which arose from time to time; and she brings a penetrating insight indeed to bear on the appreciation of this cultural past of Islam, and the correct import of the present modernization trends.

So far as the foundations of religion are concerned, the author’s conclusion is that Westernization has left Muslims completely untouched. This is evidenced by the utter failure of the Christian missionary movement on the Muslim mind. She writes (p. 28):

“In our days a new appraisal of Islam by its devotees is in process; the validity and acceptability of its social standards in view of the demands and preoccupations of the modern age is being scrutinized. But in all this soul-searching, its fundamental truth has never been questioned. It is an undeniable fact that in the many decades, even centuries, of missionary endeavor in Islamic lands, conversions of Muslims to Christianity have been comparatively few, in some regions almost nil. Neither among the illiterate poverty-stricken masses nor amongst the intellectuals, the cultural and political leaders, has Christianity found any widespread entrance or acceptance. Atomic scientists, zoologists and mathematicians remain convinced Muslims. It is significant to note that there have been no conversions among the many Muslim students in Western countries, however Westernized their outlook may have become. This is not an accident. It proves that Islam has values not only for the ignorant, but satisfies as well the religious and emotional needs of the cultured intellectual whose demands upon the scientific accuracy in the secular sphere are becoming increasingly high.”

The most burning question for Muslims in the context of modern conditions is the separation of the secular from the purely religious, the treatment of minorities, and other such-like demands of the modern State. Here again, the writer sees the answer in the city-State set up by the Prophet on his migration to Medina, and the constitution he drew up for a composite State, comprising both Muslims and non-Muslims. She says:

“The Jews were incorporated into the community of Islam as equals; they had the same claim to protection by the other participants in the charter and identical obligations towards them. Their sub-groups and clans were listed in as careful detail as were those of the Arabs. Most important, they were explicitly guarantied the right to remain Jews, probably the world’s first documented granting of religious liberty” (pp. 57, 58).

After this glowing tribute to Islam’s basic principle of religious freedom, as scrupulously implemented by the Prophet himself in the Charter of Medina, the writer goes on to underline the importance of some others of its features for the guidance of modern Muslim statesmen. She writes (p. 58):

“It (Charter of Medina) is even more important yet. It is a landmark in the development of Islam as a political concept which actually begins with it, and which again has assumed such importance in our own time. In particular it holds several elements of interest for the modern community of Islam. It contains the germs of the separation of national concerns from those of the religious ummah which in principle should be, though not in fact are, common to all Muslim nations. It also shows an early comprehension of the necessity of social and political integration of minority groups into the body politic without depriving them of their religious freedom. It is remarkable that an Arab in the seventh century A.D., should have understood that. The Prophet’s outstanding ability as a political leader emerges from the charter as it does from the Koran: the former expressed in legal terms, while the latter, even in the Medinan period, still remains inspirational” (italics ours).

This analysis of the great potentials of Islam as a force for social and political integration in the present-day complex conditions shows deep insight which the writer has brought to bear upon her study. There are one or two things in this most remarkable book, however, which call for reconsideration in the light of fuller facts which presumably could not be made available to her. One relates to the subsequent punishment of certain Jewish groups. This she describes as the Prophet’s “only cruel and deplorable, though necessary, act in his whole career”. Her words though necessary show that the writer is well aware of the historical facts that these Jewish tribes were proved guilty not only of acts of treason, but of actual sabotage against the young city-State of Medina, and that the verdict against them was pronounced by a judge of their own choice and according to the Jewish law as laid down in the Bible. The Prophet’s only part in it was to let justice have its course, and not stop the implementation of the sentence.
Perhaps there were good reasons for doing so, but for which the whole structure of the State yet in the making would have collapsed.\textsuperscript{1}

The other flaw relates to describing the Ahmadiyya Movement as a whole as not believing in the finality of prophethood with the Prophet Muhammad, and the assertion that the founder of the movement, “Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) claimed to be a Nabi or prophet”. This again is due to lack of full information about this movement, which she could easily have got from Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, who has written a Foreword to the book.

As regards the first, it is only a half-truth to say, as the book does (p. 68) that the Ahmadiyya Movement does not take the Qur’ānic declaration Khātām al-Nabiyyīn to mean that prophethood came to a close for all time to come with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. That is the view of just one section of the movement. A substantial section representing the cream of the movement such as the late Maulana Muhammad ‘Ali, renowned scholar of Islam and author of the English translation of the Qur’ān adjudged as a standard work of high scholarship, and the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, who founded the half-a-century-old Islamic Mission at Woking, so strongly upheld the view of the Prophet Muhammad being the last prophet that it led to a split in the movement over this sole issue. This is a fact about the movement which no historian, or orientalist, dealing with modern movements in Islam has failed to note and underline. Professor Guillaume, the well-known Arabist and Islamist, in his book Islam (p. 126), says:

“Kamaluddin and Muhammad Ali left the parent body and founded the Lahore party, leaving the original Ahmadis with the title of Qadianis. The schism occurred on the vital question of the status of the Founder, Ahmad. To the Qadianis he was a prophet; to the seceders he was merely a reformer.”

The second statement that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement claimed to be a Nabi (prophet) is according to the Lahore group, totally wrong. As a matter of fact, they say, he vehemently protested against his opponents attributing such a claim to him, declaring in most emphatic words that he considered anyone claiming to be a prophet after the Prophet Muhammad to be a Kuffīr, outside the pale of Islam. The Lahore party’s version has escaped the writer’s notice. That a section of a teacher’s followers, they argue, should have read into some of the statements in his writings a claim to prophethood is a common human weakness which tends to over-rate the position of a religious leader one happens to accept. According to them such far-fetched interpretations born of over-zeal carry little weight against the Founder’s own repeated denunciation of such a creed in such strong language as “sending a curse on a claimant to prophethood”, \textsuperscript{2} and “declaring a claimant to prophethood after the Prophet Muhammad as a Kuffīr, outside the pale of Islam”.\textsuperscript{3}

* * * *


This is a 32-page dissertation giving a rational exposition of the principles and teachings of Islam. The gradual awakening of the human mind through history, the need for guidance through revelation, the universality of revelation, its finalization with the advent of the Prophet Muhammad are some of the points brought out in an easy, common sense way. The concept of Rabb al-Alamin has been explained as Islam’s distinctive contribution underlying the working of an evolutionary process as much in the inner growth of human personality as in external nature.

In the light of this new outlook introduced by the Qur’ān, religion attains a new notation of balanced living in harmony with the whole of the creative process. This is how it is summed up:

“Religion, then, is the means whereby man may cultivate and enlarge the natural gifts bestowed upon him, working out his biological heritage as it were hand in hand with God, developing his personality in sympathy and harmony with the rest of creation, fulfilling his duty and responsibility to his Maker, his fellow men and to the whole world of his being.”

The Shi’ah angle of the institution of Imamāt has also been touched upon. The continuance of “guidance from on high” has been justified as a standing need of the grow-

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\textsuperscript{1} The tribe concerned was the Banū Quraizah. They lived in a well-fortified colony of their own in the outskirts of Medina, and entered into a non-aggression pact with the Muslims. But actually they acted as the fifth column for the Meccans, who had twice attacked Medina, but had suffered defeat. In a last desperate bid to crush once for all the growing power of Islam the Meccans attacked Medina a third time, coming in full force with an army 24,000 strong. The Muslims, barely 3,000 men, finding themselves no match for such a formidable force, dug a 15-foot deep ditch to stem the advancing hosts and entrenched within the town. Just at this juncture, when they were engaged in a life and death struggle for their very survival, the Banū Quraizeh joined the invaders and, in violation of the pact, took part in this battle, known as the Battle of Ahzab (Confederates), also as the Battle of the Ditch. While the main battle raged on the side of the ditch, a part of the Banū Quraizah, sallying forth from their stronghold in the rear of the town, made an abortive attempt to strike at the Meccans, but had suffered defeat. As the siege dragged on for full three weeks without any signs of weakening in the town’s defences, the whole thing ended in a fiasco. The Meccans, seeing the futility of the operations any longer, raised the siege and marched back to their far-off homes. The Banū Quraizah, however, who retreated to their own stronghold in Medina, were still within easy striking distance. Their attitude was still one of hostility. They took the main actor in organizing the Ahzāb expedition, one Huyayyib-ibn-Akhtab, the ex-chief of Banū Nadir, earlier to the Banū Nadir, viz., exile to a distant place along with all their wealth and belongings. Instead, however, they showed defiance, and it was not until after a month-long siege that they lost all hope of stirring up trouble against the Muslim community, and surrendered on the stipulation that a judge of their own choice from among the Muslims, Sa’ūd bin-Ma’āz, be appointed to decide their fate. Sa’ūd came of a tribe, Aus, which in pre-Islam days had been the traditional ally of the Banū Quraizah. The condition was accepted and Sa’ūd given the sole charge to deal with their offence. The whole tribe of Aus brought pressure upon their chief, Sa’ūd, in favour of the Banū Quraizeh. But Sa’ūd based his decision on the Jews’ own scripture, which lays down:

“If at any time thou come to fight against a city, thou shalt offer it peace.

“If they receive it and open the gates to thee, all the people that are therein shall be saved, and shall serve thee paying tribute.

“But if they will not make peace and shall begin war against thee, thou shalt besiege it.

“And when the Lord thy God shall deliver it into thy hands, thou shalt slay all that are therein of the male sex, with the edge of the sword.” (Deuteronomy 20:10-13).

\textsuperscript{2} Majma’ah Iṣbahārīt (p. 224).

\textsuperscript{3} Taqārīr Wājiḥ-al-‘Ilan (23rd October 1891).
To a Muslim reader the most interesting part of the book is the author’s encounter with a Su’udi Governor, his hospitality, his interrogations about how people in the West thought about Islam, the Muslim prayer and so forth, and the author’s replies. This shows the deep interest which the dwellers of the desert of Arabia take in religion.

In addition to Arabs and Yemenites, the book tells about the white men whom love of adventure or diplomatic service took to those shores. Snouck Hurgronjie, the noted Dutch orientalist, embraced Islam to satisfy his curiosity to visit the Ka’ba, forbidden to non-Muslims. Another Dutchman, Pieter Hendrik van der Hoog, did the same, adopting the name ‘Abd al-Ali. A Russian diplomat, Karim Sokolov, had not many pilgrims to look after because the Soviet Government did not encourage its Muslim subjects stepping out from behind the Iron Curtain. His main job was to carry on anti-imperialism propaganda among the pilgrims from the colonial countries. Though a scoffer at God and religion, Sokolov was for once shaken out of his Communist dope when his son died at Jeddah. He never believed in life after death, he said, but “when I had a son (dead) I began to believe that life would not end thus.”

FACES IN SHEM, by D. Van der Meulen. Published by John Murray, 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, 1961. 194 pp., price 21/-.

Shem, one of the three sons of Noah, was the father of the Arabs, according to tradition. That explains the name of the book; for it is an account of the people of Arabia the author met, while in the Dutch diplomatic service posted as Consul at Jeddah to look after the Indonesian pilgrims to the Hajj from Java and other parts of Indonesia, when that country was a Dutch colony.

It is a most readable book. What makes it so is the author’s gift to weave a good story and tell it in a simple style which puts the reader at ease, and makes him read more and more of it. And incidentally — without letting you feel it — it gives you an insight into how life in that little-known part of the world moves. It is a world of contrasts, grinding poverty side by side with medieval pomp and splendour, camel-caravans side by side with Cadillacs. The pictures with which it is profusely illustrated lend additional charm to the book, giving the reader a glimpse into how people in the Biblical region of the Yemen and Su’udi Arabia live and dress and pray, and what interests are specially dear to them.
ELEMENTARY TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

by M. MUNIR AHMAD

GOD

God is the one who has created us, you and me, heaven and earth and everything which lives in them. God is one and unique, He has no child nor has He a father. He is all powerful and does not need help from anybody.

We believe in God because He has created us and created things around us which we need. God is our dear friend, we must know Him. He helps us when we ask for help from Him and gives comfort. Some people do not believe in God, they are ignorant of the truth, but we are not one of them.

We can get help from God by prayers, by doing good deeds and helping each other in good things, and by keeping faith in all circumstances. Even when, apparently, He does not help us, it is for our own good, so that we could mend our ways and stand more firmly on the Path of Virtue.

God likes good children, who are clean and tidy, obey their parents and teachers, respect their elders and are kind to the younger ones, who do not tell lies or steal, or call each other by bad names. God loves people who never break their promise and are brave in doing good.

PROPHETS

God loves all mankind and likes them to be good and enjoy the good and beautiful things He has created for us. He likes us to be in peace and comfort and to be thankful to Him for what He has given us. But there are some people who are greedy and selfish, and break the peace. Then they hurt themselves and hurt everybody else around them, and people become morally so low that they do not know how to be good again. Then God selects one really good man out of the people and speaks to him, and tells him the ways in which people could become good again, and please their God and live in peace. The man with whom God speaks and to whom He tells good things for his people is called a Prophet. All prophets bring guidance from God.

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus Christ and Muhammad were all prophets of God. God sent them to the people when they needed guidance from Him. Our prophet’s name is Muhammad. When we call his name we say, “Peace and the Blessing of God be upon him!”

We should believe in prophets because they guide us to God, who created us. They bring God’s message and commandments. They teach us wisdom and we make progress through them in all spheres of life. If we love prophets and obey them, God will love us too, and how wonderful it is to be loved by God.

ANGELS

Angels are made of light. They convey the messages of God to his prophets and good people. We cannot see them but they can see us. They are friends of good people and always help them and pray to God for them. There are many Angels; every Angel is given a job in the Heavens and Earth. The name of the Angel who brings the word of God or “Wahy” is Gabriel. The name of the Angel who causes death to people at their appointed time is ‘Izrael. There are other Angels who always guard the lives of men, women and children as long as they are alive. Angels always do good and they cannot do evil.

We cannot see the Angels but really good people do see them and talk to them. Angels do not like bad people and do not recommend them to God.

If you want to be friends with the Angels, God tells you to do good deeds and pray for the Angels and they will pray for you and help you along. Also if a person does his utmost to do good deeds and is not afraid of failure, difficulties or enemies and is
steadfast, the Angels of God will come to him and make his heart very brave, and help him along to a successful life.

**THE QUR’ÁN**

Our holy book, the Qur’án, is a word of God spoken to the Holy Prophet Muhammad 1,470 years ago. It is a Pure word of God. Our Prophet did not mix his own words in it. God first spoke to the Prophet when he was 40 years of age in the month of Ramadhan and gave instructions to the world in small pieces which are called *ayāats* (verses) and *Suras* (chapters). These instructions and commandments continued for 23 years and completed the Qur’án in the month of Ramadhan. So revelation of the Qur’án started in the month of Ramadhan and was also completed in that month 23 years afterwards. That is why we Muslims consider this month very sacred and observe fasting for 30 days.

The Qur’án is a pure book, it is all truth; there is no untruth in it. It gives true guidance for every difficulty in life. We must read it daily and try to find the answer for our difficulties in life. If you yourself cannot find the answer, ask somebody else, who knows the Qur’án, to guide you. It is written in the Qur’án that anybody who reads the Qur’án and acts on the teachings will be loved by God, His Prophets and Angels, and good men, and he will be happy.

If somebody is reading the Qur’án we must listen to it and not make a noise. Reading a fixed portion of the Qur’án early in the morning brings the blessings of God on the reader and God likes it very much. When you read the Qur’án you must clean yourself and say a little prayer before reading it. Blessed and very lucky are those children who read the Qur’án and act on its teachings.

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**THE CALIPH AND HIS SON**

by JA’FAR ANSARI

Caliph ‘Umar was one of the first four noted caliphs of Islam. He was a great, just and illustrious ruler. One day his young son came crying from school, and Caliph ‘Umar asked him tenderly why he was crying. Said the son, “O father, my co-mates are mocking me, saying that although I am Caliph’s son I am wearing an old shirt, torn and torn in many places. I cannot bear their ridicule, O father; it is degrading!”

Caliph ‘Umar’s eyes slowly ran over his son’s shirt, and then over his own. His eyes noticed fourteen tears and holes in his own garment, of which some were patched with pieces of hide. Yet he felt sorry in his heart for his son, who was, unlike him, only a small youngster, and had wishes and fancies particular to his age.

Soon ‘Umar sent the Treasurer the following note: “Please allow me four dhirhams as loan, which you can deduct from my remuneration next month.” Such a request for a loan of a few coins was sent to the guardian of the public treasury from the ruler of the great and expanding empire of early Muslims!

But what was the reply that the Caliph received from the keeper of the Treasury? — “I shall be pleased to give you a loan as requested — but on one condition. I want a guarantee from you that you will live to the end of next month so that you may repay the loan. But, if you pass away before the time-limit the debt will be outstanding against you!”

Caliph ‘Umar read the reply, and as he did so his eyes began to shed drops of tears. He breathed a heavy sigh, and turning to his son, said, “O my dear son! How am I to find a new shirt for you? I cannot even say that I may live just for a few hours. By God I cannot say! How can I utter that I will live a month to pay off the debt? Forgive me my son, wear the same shirt and hurry to school. God will show mercy to us!”, and with tears coursing down his cheeks the Caliph turned away from his son.
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