



THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Issue 11

IN THIS ISSUE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	2
THE CHARGE OF THE SWORD	4
ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS	5
COOK'S CORNER.....	7
KID'S CORNER.....	8
WOMEN IN ISLAM	8
WHY I EMBRACED ISLAM.....	8
THE MIRACLES OF THE QUR'AN	11
STORIES OF THE SAHABAS	13
SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET.....	14
DEATH -- ARE YOU READY?.....	14
BOOK REVIEW	15

THE ISLAMIC BULLETIN

Published by the
Islamic Community of
Northern California
A Non-Profit Corporation
P.O. Box 410186
San Francisco, CA 94141-0186
E-Mail:
info@islamicbulletin.org
Website: <http://www.islamicbulletin.org>

TO GOD WE BELONG AND TO HIM WE RETURN

Life is a brilliant demonstration of God's wisdom and knowledge, a vivid reflection of His art and power. He is the Giver and Creator of life.

Nothing comes to existence by chance, and nobody creates himself or anybody else. Life is a dear and cherishable asset, and no sensible or normal person would like to lose it by choice. Even those who feel so desperate and take their lives by committing slow suicide, try in the last minute to regain their existence and wish to capture a second chance to live. Life is given to man by God, and He is the only Rightful One to take it back; no one else has the right to destroy a life. This is why Islam forbids all kinds of suicide and self-destruction, and recommends patience and good Faith when a dear soul passes away.

When a murderer is executed in punishment, his life is taken away by the right of God and in accordance with His Law.

When God gives life to man, it is not in vain that He endows him with unique qualities and great abilities. Nor is it in vain that He charges him with certain obligations. God means to help man to fulfill the purpose of life and realize the goal of existence. He means to help him to learn the creative art of living and enjoy the good taste of life according to the Divine guidance. Life is a trust from God, and man is a trustee who should handle his trust with honesty and skill, with mindfulness of God and with consciousness of responsibility to Him.

Life may be likened to a journey starting from a certain point and ending at a certain destination. It is a transitory stage, an introduction to the Eternal Life in the Hereafter. In this journey man is a traveler and should be concerned with only what is of use to him in the Future Life. He should do all the good he can and make himself fully prepared to move any minute to Eternity. He should consider his life on this earth as a chance provided for him to make the best of it while he can, because when his time to leave comes he can never delay it for one second.

If his term expires, it will be too late to do anything about it or extend it; but if the person is determined to persist in evil and refuses to repent, then hell is the inevitable consequence. The best use of life is to live it according to the teachings of God and to make it a safe passage to the Future Life of Eternity. Because life is so important as a means to an ultimate end, Islam has laid down a complete system of regulations and principles to show man how to live it, what to take and what to leave, what to do and what to shun, and so on. All men come from God, and there is no doubt that they shall return to Him.

There is a time limit for everyone. All a person has to do to gain God's forgiveness is to ask for it while there is still time, in this life.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor
Assalamu Aleikum

Could you explain some of what Islam teaches in relation to Christianity?

Reading some Islamic books did not resolve my thoughts. I have inquired of some Muslims in my local area but they interpreted these questions as an attack on their faith, so they refused to respond. Another Muslim I asked was not knowledgeable enough to voice his opinion.

1) Both Muslims and Christians agree that God is all powerful and too 'majestic' for the human mind to understand completely.

There is nothing that God can't do. Moreover, both agree that God is eternal and that God's Word is eternal. By this they do not suggest that there are two eternals, for God is one. Likewise, God also possesses some eternal attributes: love, anger, power, wisdom, speech, mercy, etc. Some Muslims agree with Christians on the plurality of God. Both know and value the confession that God is one. At the same time both also understand that God is greater than the figure "one".

Christians believe that God exists as Creator, Word (who became flesh), and Spirit. Since some Muslims believe that God's eternal Word became a book, why can't they believe that His eternal Word became a man? Why do they limit what God can do?

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Tony Poldrugovac
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Response:

Dear Tony,

Thank you for taking the time to write this detailed letter. Due to the fact that the response to your first question took much more space than I imagined, I can only answer the first of the five stated in your letter. The other questions that you asked, God-willing, will be answered in future issues.

I hope the answer set out in this response will enable you to resolve some of the thoughts that you have. I wish to make it quite clear that these are very important questions and I have not the slightest intention nor desire to hurt the religious feelings of Christian friends, so please do not interpret this response as an attack on your faith. However, to answer a question like this I have to be honest and straight-forward. I love Christ (PBUH), Moses (PBUH), and Abraham (PBUH), as I do Muhammed (PBUH) and all other holy prophets of God.

NEED TO CONTACT US?

Web Address: www.islamicbulletin.org

E-Mail: info@islamicbulletin.org

Editor, Islamic Bulletin

P.O. Box 410186

San Francisco, CA 94141-0186, USA



Say: **“We believe in Allah, and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam).” (Quran 3:84)**

The attributes of God are not to be considered as distinct and divine entities or personalities, otherwise we shall have, not one trinity of persons in the Godhead, but several dozen of trinities. An attribute until it actually emanates from its subject has no existence. We cannot qualify the subject by a particular attribute before that attribute has actually proceeded from it and is seen. Hence we say “God is Good” when we enjoy His good and kind action; but we cannot describe Him--properly speaking--as “God is Goodness,” because goodness is not God, but His action and work. It is for this reason that the Quran always attributes to Allah the adjectival appellations, such as the Wise, the Knowing, the Merciful, but never with such descriptions as “God is love, knowledge, word,” and so forth; for love is the action of the lover and not the lover himself, just as knowledge or word is the action of the knowing person and not himself.

I particularly insist on this point because of the error into which have fallen those who maintain the eternity and distinct personality of certain attributes of God. The Verb or the Word of God has been held to be a distinct person of the Deity; whereas the word of God can have no other signification than an expression of His Knowledge and Will. The Quran, too, is called “the word of God,” and some early Muslim doctors of law asserted that it was eternal and uncreated. The same appellation is also given to Jesus Christ in the Quran--Kalimatun minho, i.e. “the Word from Him” (Quran 3: 45). But it would be very unreligious to assert that the Word of God is a distinct person, and that it assumed flesh and became incarnate in the shape of a man of Nazareth or in the form of a book, the former called “the Christ” and the latter “the Quran”.

To sum up this subject, I insistently declare that the Word or any other imaginable attribute of God, not only is it not a distinct divine entity or individuality, but also it could have no actual existence prior to the beginning of time and creation.

The first verse with which St. Johns Gospel commences was often refuted by the early Unitarian writers, who rendered its true reading as follows: “In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God's.”

It will be noticed that the Greek form of the genitive case “Theou,” i.e. “God's” was corrupted into “Theos”; that is, “God,” in the nominative form of the name!

It is also to be observed that the clause “In the beginning was the word” expressly indicates the origin of the word which was not before the beginning! By the “word of God: is not meant a separate and distinct substance, coeval and coexistent with the Almighty, but an expression and proclamation of His knowledge and will when He uttered the word Kun, namely, “Be.” When God said Kun, for the first time, the worlds became; when He said Kun, the Quran was created and written on the “Lowh” or “Table”; and when He pronounced the word “Be,” Jesus was created in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and so on--whenever He wills to create, His order “Be” is sufficient.

The Christian auspiciatory formula: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, does not even mention the name of God! And this is the Christian God! The Quranic formula, on the other hand, which expresses the foundation of the Islamic truth, is a great contrast to the Trinitarians' formula: Bismillahi' r-Rahmani'r- Rahim; that is: In the name of the Most Merciful and Compassionate Allah.

The Christian Trinity- inasmuch as it admits a plurality of persons in the Deity, attributes distinct personal properties to each person; and makes use of family names similar to those in the pagan mythology--cannot be accepted as a true conception of the Deity. Allah is neither the father of a son nor the son of a father. He has no mother, nor is He selfmade.

The belief in “God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Ghost” is a flagrant denial of the unity of God, and an audacious confession in three imperfect beings who, unitedly or separately, cannot be the true God.

Mathematics as a positive science teaches us that a unit is no more nor less than one; that 1 is never equal to 1 plus 1 plus 1; in other

words, 1 cannot be equal to 3, because 1 is the third of the 3. In the same way, 1 is not equal to a third. And vice versa, 3 are not equal to 1, nor can a third be equal to a unit. The unit is the basis of all numbers, and a standard for the measurements and weights of all dimensions, distances, quantities and time. In fact, all numbers are aggregates of the unit 1. Ten is an aggregate of so many equal units of the same kind. Those who maintain the unity of God in the trinity of persons tell us that “Each person is omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal and perfect God; yet there are not 3 omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal and perfect Gods, but 1 omnipotent... God!” If there is no sophistry in the above reasoning then we shall present this “mystery” of the churches by an equation: 1 God=1 God + 1 God + 1 God; therefore: 1 God= 3 Gods. In the first place, 1 god cannot equal 3 gods, but only 1 of them. Secondly, since you admit each person to be a perfect God like His 2 associates, your conclusion that 1+1+1=1 is not mathematical, but an absurdity!

It is either arrogance when it is attempted to prove that 3 units equal 1 unit; or cowardness to admit that three ones equal three ones. In the former case it is never possible to prove a wrong solution of a problem by a false process; and in the second case a lack of courage to confess your belief in three gods.

Besides, we all -Muslim and Christians- believe that God is Omnipresent, that He fills and encompasses every space and particle. Is it conceivable that all the three persons of the Deity at the same time and separately encompass the universe, or is it only one of them at the time? To say “the Deity does this” would be no answer at all. For Deity is not God, but the state of being God, and therefore a quality. Godhead is the quality of one God; it is not susceptible of plurality nor of diminution. There are no godheads but one God-head, which is the attribute of one God alone.

Then we are told that each person of the trinity has some particular attributes which are not proper to the other two. And these attributes indicate -according to human reasoning and language -priority and posteriority among them. The Father always holds the first rank, and is prior to the Son.

The Holy Ghost is not only posterior as the third in the order of counting but even inferior to those from whom he proceeds. Would it not be considered a sin of heresy if the names of three persons were conversely repeated? Will not the signing of the cross upon the countenance or over the elements of the Eucharist be considered impious by the Churches if the formula be reversed thus: “In the name of the Holy Ghost, and of the Son, and of the Father? For if they are absolutely equal and coeval, the order of precedence need not be so scrupulously observed.

The fact is that the Popes and the General Councils have always condemned the Sabelian doctrine which maintained that God is one but that He manifested Himself as the Father or as the Son or as the Holy Spirit, being always one and the same person. Of course, the religion of Islam does not endorse or sanction the Sabelian views. God manifested His Jamal or beauty in Christ, His jelal or glory and majesty in Muhammad, and His wisdom in Solomon, and so on in many other objects of Nature, but none of those prophets is any more God than the vast ocean or the majestic sky.

The truth is that there is no mathematical exactitude, no absolute equality between the three persons of the Trinity. If the Father were in every respect equal to the Son or the Holy Spirit, as the unit 1 is positively equal to another figure 1, then there would necessarily be only one person of God and not three, because a unit is not a fragment or fraction nor a multiple of itself. The very difference and relationship that is admitted to exist between the persons of the Trinity leaves no shadow of doubt that they are neither equal to each other nor are they to be identified with one another. The Father begets and is not begotten; the Son is begotten and not a father; the Holy Ghost is the issue of the other two persons; the first person is described as creator and destroyer; the second as savior or redeemer, and the third as life- giver. Consequently none of the three is alone the Creator, the Redeemer and the Life- giver. Then we are told that the second person is the Word of the first Person, becomes man and is sacrificed on the cross to satisfy the justice of his father, and that his incarnation and resurrection are operated and accomplished by the third person.

Strictly speaking, that the gods of the heathen are false and imaginary,

whereas the 3 gods of the Churches have a distinct character, of whom the Father-as another epithet for Creator- is the 1 true God, but the son is only a prophet and servant of God, and the 3rd person one of the innumerable holy spirits in the service of the Almighty God. In the Old Testament, God is called Father because of His being a loving creator and protector, but as the Churches abused this name, the Quran has justly refrained from using it. The Old Testament and the Quran condemn the doctrine of three persons in God; the New Testament does not expressly hold or defend it, but even if it contains hints and traces concerning the Trinity, it is no authority at all, because it was neither seen nor written by Christ himself, nor in the language he spoke, nor did it exist in its present form and contents for-at least- the first two centuries after him.

In conclusion, the back-bone of Islam is the belief in the 1 God and to bring Him in a form of man is to limit His power. Islam holds that human worship reaches without need for intermediaries. No aspect of God's power or divinity is channeled anywhere without threat to divine transcendence. God's power and sanctity are solely God's. They are not dispensed to any creature because Creator and creature are two absolutely different kinds of being which never fuse into each other. God is the Forgiver, Punisher, Judge, and Master. He does not delegate these functions to any creature because that would violate His transcendence and role as sole Governor and Judge of humanity. He is fully responsive to every person's prayer in ever language. His mercy and care for humankind, along with His Omnipotence, demand that all people address themselves directly to Him.

God needs no bureaucracy. He is in direct control of human affairs; and worshippers, thanksgivers, confessors, and supplicators can all address themselves directly to Him.

Dear Editor,
Assalamu Alaikum!

Let me begin by wishing you Ramadan Mubarak and a very huge thank you for sending The Islamic Bulletin I requested. May Allah bless you and the members involved in making the Bulletin possible. During a century when Muslims have been portrayed as barbarians by the media, you are ensuring that the Muslim flag remains high. I have during my lifetime read many newsletters and I would sincerely like to say that none compares to yours. It is simple but yet of high quality. May Allah grant you paradise for your good work.

I once again thank you for your kindness.

S. Bhugaloo
Zeenat-UI-Islam Madrassah
London, England

Dear Editor,
Assalamu Aleikum

We have read your Islamic Bulletin Vol. II, No. 10-93, we are deeply impressed with it's contents, would you kindly send us your periodical regularly to our foundation, so that it will be useful to our Islamic propagation and Guidance.

We pray to Allah SWT to grant you His Blessings. With best wishes. Was Salaam.

Sayyed K. Hegrani/Director
The Public Islamic Institution Propagation
Ghom, Iran

Dear Readers,
Don't be alarmed! You have not missed any issues of the newsletter. Please accept our sincere apologies in that it has taken an unusual amount of time to produce this issue.

- The Editor

THE CHARGE OF THE SWORD

Renowned author James A. Michener is quoted on this subject as saying “No other religion in history spread so rapidly as Islam.... The West has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts that idea, and the Quran is explicit in support of the freedom of Conscience... quoted from Islam, The Misunderstood Religion, Readers Digest (American Ed.) May 1955.

1955? Why then is this still one of the most widely held beliefs about Islam from non- Muslim people?

Still the “Misunderstood Religion,” media coverage of today propagates this misconception in its handling of any story associated with anyone that is Muslim. Recently a tragedy occurred in the case of a man who took the lives of his two children and himself... in the news he wasn’t described as ‘Christian’ father sacrifices the lives of his family after a terrorist attack on home. Serbs are referred to as “Serbs”, and not “Extremist Christian Serb forces”. In no other instance in news coverage are people referred to by a preface as to their religion, except in the case of Muslims. This is blatant discrimination. It is ascribing the actions of individuals in conjunction with the beliefs held by a third of the human population.

Hitler is not referred to as the “Christian” Hitler. The Crusaders’ saving the world from the infidels carried the sign of the cross as their symbol of unity, in spite of the fact that they were invading a land not their own with a Sword; sacking, plundering, robbing the wealth of those lands, not only of their material wealth but of their knowledge of science, literature, math, astronomy, medicine, etc. Wasn’t that the Sword of Christianity? The Spanish Inquisition is a frightening example of a “Sword” being used to force the ‘acceptance’ of Christianity. Do all Christians believe in the methods of the Spanish inquisition?

Another example is of The Ku Klux Klan which is seen with the most powerful symbol of Christianity, the cross, as a burning brand in what is certainly “terrorism”. Are they referred to as a “Fundamentalist Christian Organization”? Do Christians agree with their actions or interpretations of the gospels?

What are the beliefs held by the believers of Islam, the “most misunderstood religion”? Can one really believe that any religion be promoted under duress or by force? Religion is a gift of faith and illumination bestowed by God. As quoted by M.K. Gandhi, “I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was rigid simplicity, the utter self- effacement of the Prophet (Mohammed), the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every trouble.” Young India, 1924.

One must look at “cultural” prejudice in examining this question. How often are Muslims referred to as “third world”? Does not “third world” imply to the western mind third rate, uncivilized or primitive? Can anyone who has examined history refute the influence of the Muslim world on today’s knowledge of scientific thinking? This prejudice towards the Muslim people lingers from the time of the Crusades. What about the numerous sects of Christianity? Are we Muslims to believe that the term Christian is synonymous with the actions of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Lutherans, Methodist, Baptist, etc., which in themselves differ in the interpretation and practices of their beliefs? And finally, how many Western people automatically equate the word Muslim with Middle Eastern peoples?

This ignores the vast groups of Muslims from all over the world. In fact Islam knows no geographic boundaries. One billion people from a vast range of races, nationalities and cultures across the globe-from the southern Philippines to Nigeria-are united by

their common Islamic faith. Only 18% live in the Arab world; the world’s largest Muslim community is in Indonesia. At least one out of every seven persons in the world is a Muslim. Being “Muslim” is not a cultural, geographic, social, or political issue. It is one of spirituality, faith in the Supreme Being, and belief in the teachings of the Prophets.

The Quran is precise in its message for every aspect of our lives regardless of nationality, ethnic and cultural origin, gender, or social- economic level. It not only reaches all levels of understanding and intelligence, but takes into account human frailty and guides us to social conduct which allows us to live together in this world with one another with dignity, honesty, and kindness. But it must be practiced according to the teachings of the Quran. This is a task which requires constant striving and effort; hence, the importance of constant contact with God through daily prayer. It is a “code of conduct” that is concise, pure, understandable, merciful, and hopeful. It is for these reasons--the simplicity of Islam--that Islam has spread so rapidly through the ages. The Quran states:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error.” (Qur’an 2:256)

Islam is the Sword of Truth, whose mere shine eliminates falsehood just like light wipes darkness. Islam is the fastest growing religion today.

“When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory, and thou dost see the people enter Allah’s Religion in crowds.” (Qur’an 110:1-2)

Islam continues to pierce the hearts of countless men and women. Below are the impressions of some people who embraced Islam. All from different countries speaking different languages and having different backgrounds.

AHMED HOLT, a British Civil Contractor who embraced Islam in 1975, says: “The Sword of Islam is not the sword of steel. I know this by experience because the sword of Islam struck deep into my own heart. It didn’t bring death, but it brought a new life; it brought an awareness and it brought an awakening as to who I am, what I am, and what I am here for.” The sword of Islam strikes through God’s grace.

Those not born into Islam feel the special grace of this sword of light when touched by its mighty power and truths.

YUSUF ISLAM, formerly known as Cat Stevens, says, “It will be wrong to judge Islam in the light of the behavior of some Muslims shown in the media.” An analogy often repeated but still appropriate is, “If you see a beautiful car moving down the road, all shiny, new and bright, but the driver of that car is drunk and crashes the car against a wall, you don’t say what a bad car it must be... you feel sorry that the car is badly used by the driver.” Look at the “vehicle”, not the driver, and strive to operate the beautiful car in a manner appropriate to its integrity. Yusuf Islam continues, “Islam guides all human beings in the daily life- in its spiritual, mental and physical dimensions, but we must find the sources of these instructions, the Quran and the example of the Prophet. Then we can see the ideal of Islam.”

BOGDAN KOPANSKI (now Bogdan Ataullak Kopanski): originally Polish now American; PhD in history and politics, had a very interesting journey to Islam and faced severe hardships; was imprisoned twice by the Polish communist regime (1968, 1981-82). He embraced Islam in 1974. “When I was 12 years old I rejected illogical and contradictory faith of the Church. Two years later in 1962- I was fascinated by victorious struggle of the Algerian Muslim mujahhideen against French colonialism. It was the first ARROW of Islam.... The high school and earliest days of my education in the University, I was a typical example of ‘rebel generation’ of Reds.... My way to the Truth of Al- Qur’an was slow and unpaved.... In 1974 I visited Turkey, I wrote my M.A. dissertation about Sultan and Caliph Suleiman Kanuni’s policy towards Polish Kingdom.

There, I was hit by the most beautiful voice of mankind, ADHAN, the call to prayer. My hair stood up. Unknown powerful force led me to old masjid in Istanbul. There, old smiling Turkish, bearded men taught me WUZU, ablution. I confessed to tears SHAHADAH and I prayed my first SALAH Maghrib.... I swept out the rubbish ideologies.... The First time in my life, my mind was relaxed and I felt pleasure of Allah’s love in my heart. I was a Muslim....”

WILFRED HOFMAN, PhD in Law (Harvard) German ambassador to Algeria, “ For some time now, striving for more and more precision and brevity, I have tried to put on paper in a systematic way, all philosophical truths, which in my view can be ascertained beyond reasonable doubt. In the course of this effort it dawned on me that the typical attitude of an agnostic is not an intellectual one; that man simply cannot escape a decision to the greatest harmony with overall reality. Thus, I realize, not without shock, that step by step, in spite of myself and almost unconsciously, in feeling and thinking I have grown into a Muslim. Only one last step remained to be taken: to formalize my conversion. As of today, I am a Muslim.

VENGATACHALAM ADIYAR (now Abdullah Adiyar): Indian, noted Tamil writer and journalist; worked as a news editor in Dr. M. Karunanidhi’s daily MURASOLI for 17 years; assisted 3 former Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu; received Kalaimamani Award (Big Gem of Arts) from Tamil Nadu Government in 1982. He embraced Islam in 1987. “In Islam I found suitable replies to nagging queries arising in my mind with regard to the theory of creation, status of woman, creation of universe, etc. The life history of the Holy Prophet attracted me very much and made easy for me to compare with other world leaders and their philosophies.”

HERBERT HOBOHM (now Amam Hobohm): German diplomat and social worker. An intellectual who has been serving the German diplomatic missions around the world. Presently working as Cultural Attache at the German Embassy in Riyadh. He embraced Islam in 1941. “I have lived under different systems of life and have had the opportunity of studying various ideologies, but have come to the conclusion that none is a perfect as Islam. None of the systems has got a complete code of a noble life. Only Islam has it; and that is why good men embrace it. Islam is not theoretical; it is practical. It means complete submission to the will of God.”

CASSIUS CLAY (now Muhammad Ali); American, three times World Heavyweight Champion, formerly a Christian. He embraced Islam in 1965. “I have had many nice moments in my life. But the feelings I had while standing on Mount Arafat on the day of HAJJ (Muslims’ pilgrimage), was the most unique. I felt exalted by the indescribable spiritual atmosphere there as over a million and a half pilgrims invoked God to forgive them of their sins and bestow on them His choicest blessings. It was an exhilarating experience to see to people belonging to different colors, races and nationalities, kings, heads of states and ordinary men from very poor countries all clad in two simple white sheets praying to God without any sense of either pride or inferiority. It was a practical manifestation of the concept of equality in Islam.”

If one studies the Quran it is impossible to withhold belief in its words. “Islam appears to me like a perfect work of architecture. All its parts are harmoniously conceived to compliment and support each other. Nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure.” This from **LEOPOLD WEISS** (Mohammad Asad), Austrian statesman, journalist, former foreign correspondent, and author.

This then is “The Sword of Islam “... the spiritual light and power of belief in the one supreme creator and ruler of all mankind and the message of hope brought to us in the Quran. A sword of steel holds no power over this true “Sword of Islam”.

ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CURATIVE POWERS OF ALCOHOL

At the present time alcohol consumption appears to be on the increase all over the world. As a result of this most countries have to face growing problems arising from alcohol use and alcoholism. Quite apart from the cost to human health this results in a substantial economic loss due to road and industrial accidents, work absenteeism, and the costs of treating and rehabilitating alcoholic persons.

Islam freed the Medina society from this economic pressure which the modern world is suffering under its crushing burden. Governments and large constellations of companies make tremendous profits from the local sale and export of alcohol. They are not prepared to disturb their whole economy in order to get rid of alcoholism at home. Companies are not even ready to reduce their use of ‘propaganda’ and ‘persuasion’ which are portrayed in their advertisements and T.V. commercials. But they are ready to donate a negligible sum of their enormous profit to help solve some of the problems of their victimized alcoholics. It is like the shedding of crocodile tears.

Al-Khamr as used in the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith of the Prophet means any material which causes intoxication. It comes from the Arabic word Yakhmur which means to cover or to curtail. Al-Khamr is so called because it covers or curtails the proper functioning of the mind. It is commonly used as a synonym of wine or alcoholic drinks because these were the only intoxicating material used by the Arabs at the time of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

Many methods of dealing with the problems of alcohol in society have been proposed and experimented with throughout man’s history. These have included total prohibition; many and varied types of legislative control to regulate the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages and the nationalization of the alcohol industry. None can be aid to have solved the problem.

The basis of the attitude of Islam to the question of alcohol consumption has been little understood in Western countries. The prohibition of alcohol in the Holy Qur’an and its effects in the daily life of Islamic peoples have been judged on the basis of prohibition results in countries such as the US.

Since antiquity alcohol has been used not only as a social lubricant, aperitif and source of pleasure but also as a remedy for many different ailments and diseases ranging from insomnia and indigestion to heart attacks and as an anesthetic. The list of diseases for which alcohol was used as a remedy was indeed very long.

The Arabs in Jahilia (pre-Islam) period used alcohol to boost courage and benevolence. They also used it as a remedy for their ailments and diseases. There are many Hadiths to show how the new converts tried to convince the Prophet (pbuh) that they used alcohol only as a remedy, and asked for his permission to continue doing so. The Prophet (pbuh) emphatically denied the benefits of liquor as a remedy and clearly mentioned it as a cause of ailment and disease and not a remedy for any disease.

Muslim, Abu Da’ood and Tirmizi narrate the following Hadith: “A man called Tariq Al Joofi came to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked permission to consume liquor (alcohol), the Prophet refused. The man said: I use it and prescribe it as a medicine. The Prophet (pbuh) answered: ‘It is a disease and ailment.’”

Another Hadith says that a man called Tariq ibn Swaid Al Hadrami came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: “O Messenger of God, In our land we have vineyards and we make wine and drink.” The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Stop drinking.” The man proclaimed: “We use it as a remedy for the sick.” The Prophet said: “It’s no remedy. It is an illness itself.” (Narrated by Muslim)

Abu Da’ood narrated this Hadith: “God has made for every illness a cure, but never get your cure by things prohibited.” Al-Bukhari also narrated a similar Hadith in which the Prophet (pbuh) said: “God didn’t make your remedy in any of the things prohibited.”

ISLAM AND ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Alcoholic drinks are the only poison that is licensed in many countries. However, Islam took a clear attitude towards alcoholic drinks more than 1400 years ago. Islam prohibits such drinks. Any drink that causes drunkenness is prohibited in Islam regardless of the matter it is made from and regardless of the quantity.

According to Islam, if too much of a drink causes drunkenness, then any small quantity of this drink is prohibited, because all alcoholics start with small quantities, then they become the slaves of alcohol.

Following is a detailed study of some of the misconceptions about the curative powers of alcohol and the many problems associated with alcohol consumption.

ALCOHOL AND GENERAL HEALTH

Alcoholic drinks, which are prohibited by Islam, have a destructive effect on the nervous system through the direct toxic effect. Besides, alcohol may lead to alcoholism with its psychological and mental troubles such as convulsion and hallucination. Further, alcohol leads to malnutrition caused by inflammations in the digestive system, repeated vomiting, loss of appetite, and bad absorption in the digestive system.

The alcoholic becomes careless, selfish, easily provoked, and suspicious. He may suffer paranoia. The alcoholic may end up being hated by his wife and children. He suffers from melancholy. He may then end up committing suicide for he has no reason to live for. An alcoholic may suffer from hallucination: he may think he sees unreal ghosts or hear unreal voices or smell unreal scents. Alcohol causes decay in the cells of the brain and the cortex. This may cause alcoholic psychosis and loss of memory. In this stage, the alcoholic loses the ability to distinguish the concrete from the abstract and the real from the unreal. He cannot even know the day or the place. The alcoholic loses the ability to calculate, to add, or subtract the easiest numbers. The alcoholic cannot remember the most recent incidents in his life.

The alcoholic may become unable to stand up without losing his balance. When he walks, he staggers. When he speaks, he slurs.

Scientists and governments now do their best to solve the problem of drunkenness and alcoholic drinks, but in vain. In contrast, Islam solved this problem by means of one single verse in the Holy Quran, where alcoholic drinks were prohibited fourteen centuries ago. Once you believe in Allah, you accept and submit to His orders and all your problems are solved.

Islam prohibited all kinds of alcoholic drinks 1400 years ago. Islam did not wait for scientific research to prove the destructive effects of alcohol on human body and human mind. In Islam, the principle is simple, clear, and logical: prevention is better than cure. In other civilizations, alcoholic drinks are allowed and then problems occur. It is then that doctors, psychologists, and sociologists start trying to solve the problems caused by alcohol. Islam does not only prohibit drinking alcoholic drinks, but also prohibits making them. Islam also prohibits carrying, selling, or buying such drinks. According to Islam, if something is prohibited, all means to it are also prohibited. Also according to Islam it is no use to forbid something and allow means leading to it at the same time. If alcoholic drinks are prohibited, all means to them are prohibited; Islam prohibits the making, transporting, importing, exporting, buying, and selling of such drinks. In Islam, alcohol is not allowed and problems are not given the chance to occur.

ALCOHOL AND THE STOMACH

It was believed that alcoholic drinks function as appetizers, but this is against facts. Alcoholic drinks function as appetizers for the first week or month only, then soon the stomach and other parts of the digestive system become inflamed. Infections and ulcers begin to show up; vomiting starts; all appetite is lost.

The gastroscope shows that any small quantity of alcohol causes an inflammation in the inner membrane of the stomach. Some people believe that a little alcohol has no harm, but this is scientifically not true. Further, as we know, all alcoholics started with small quantities, then they found

themselves chronic cases of alcoholism. A person who drinks occasionally may become an alcoholic under the pressure of any psychological shock or emotional problem or social crisis. This shows us the wisdom of Allah; in Islam all alcoholic drinks are prohibited no matter how small the quantity is. Alcohol, if drunk repeatedly, causes stomach inflammations and the death of stomach cells. As a result, stomach acids decrease and result in bad digestion. Further, many microbes pass without being destroyed by the acid, which is destroyed by alcohol itself. The decrease of the stomach acid leads to a decrease in vitamin B 12 and causes severe anemia. This chronic inflammation of the stomach is accompanied with paleness, fast pulse, and heart failure. Further, this stomach inflammation may develop a probable ulcer, and then a probable stomach cancer. All these troubles are caused by alcohol.

ALCOHOL AND FALSE WARMTH

It was also believed that alcoholic drinks cause warmth in the human body. But facts prove that it is only a false warmth caused by the widening of outer blood vessels. But if the drunkard is exposed to cold weather, he loses all his warmth and energy and may die of cold thinking he is enjoying warmth.

ALCOHOL AND THE BRAIN

Alcohol hits the brain mercilessly. Firstly, alcohol has a direct destructive anesthetic effect on the brain. Secondly, the brain is damaged by the lack of blood that reaches it owing to the hardening of blood vessels and heart failure. Thirdly, the brain suffers the anemia that accompanies alcoholism. If the brain is damaged, all problems begin to arise, one after the other. Alcohol has a tremendous effect on the brain, the cortex, and the nervous system in general. The cortex cells are in charge of controlling man's muscles and systems in the human body.

If a driver is drunk, he cannot control his speed or react to emergency cases or avoid accidents. When a man is drunk, he cannot observe, judge, or react well. A drunken person loses much of his mental and physical efficiency, no matter how small the drunken quantity of alcohol. Even if a person is accustomed to alcohol, his abilities fall off when he drinks alcohol. A person who has drunk alcohol loses some of his abilities and senses: he cannot see, taste, or smell as a normal person does. His comprehension ability and muscular balance fall off too. Research has shown that 50% of death cases in some countries are caused directly or indirectly by alcoholic drinks.

Alcoholic drinks have a very bad influence on the most valuable organ in the human body, i.e., the brain. Besides, alcohol increases the secretion of stomach acids, which will later on cause stomach inflammation and stomach ulcer. If a person has already got an ulcer in his stomach, one glass of wine is enough to cause bleeding in the stomach or a hole in that poor organ.

ALCOHOL AND THE SEXUAL DRIVE

Continuous drinking of alcohol drinks ends up with sexual impotency. This shows us the wisdom of prohibiting alcohol in Islam. To add, some bad alcohols may cause complete blindness and heart failure owing to their severe toxicity.

ALCOHOL LEADING TO MORE ALCOHOL

The danger of alcoholic drinks, which are prohibited by Islam, is that alcohol leads to more alcohol. The sons of an alcoholic tend to be alcoholics too. In other words, alcohol may easily push its drinker to the catastrophe of alcoholism, which is a fatal blow to both the mind and the body.

In these days, countries that allow alcohol are suffering from it and the number of alcoholics is increasing rapidly. In the U.S.A., for example, the number of alcoholics has increased from 4,000,000 in the 1960's to 10,000,000 in the 70's.

THE ALCOHOLIC'S MOUTH

The alcoholic may develop some infections in the mouth, which are severely painful to the alcoholic. Further, some microbes may attack the throat of the alcoholic and cause a severe infection there. This throat infection makes swallowing and breathing extremely difficult for the alcoholic.

THE ALCOHOLIC'S APPETITE

At the beginning alcohol motivates appetite. But soon later, most of the digestive organs become inflamed; the stomach acid decreases; the digestive process slows down; appetite for food disappears. Some people in some countries think that wine and other alcoholic drinks are appetizers and are served with almost all meals. But this is nothing more than a common mistake. Alcohol functions as an appetizer for a few meals only. Later, alcohol becomes a killer of appetite and a destroyer of the digestive system starting from the mouth until the rectum.

THE ALCOHOLIC'S HEAD

The alcoholic usually has a headache. So he takes a great deal of aspirin and its derivatives. Besides, the alcoholic usually smokes. So aspirin plus cigarettes plus anxiety plus the toxicity of alcohol itself pushes him into a vicious circle of emotional anxiety.

THE ALCOHOLIC'S LIVER

Alcohol has a destructive effect on the liver also. A person who drinks alcoholic for ten years will most probably have problems in his liver. By means of the electron microscope, the examiner of the liver can easily discover the effect of alcohol on the liver in twenty-four hours after drinking. In the liver, the alcohol hits the nucleus of the cells there first. When the nuclei of the liver cells die, the cells die and cease to multiply. Besides, the liver fails to oxidize fats, which therefore gather in and around the liver. The gathering of these fats around the liver will end up with the complete failure of the liver. Because of alcohol, the liver cannot transform carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Because of alcohol, the liver fails to remove poisons from the body. This will cause the increase of the ration of poisons in the blood. These poisons affect the activity of the brain and disturb the drunkard's emotions, behavior, and mental abilities. He/she soon fails to write well; his/her hand shakes; his breathing becomes difficult; his belly swells; and his temperature rises.

Some people think that some alcoholic drinks are less dangerous than others. But the fact is that all alcoholic drinks are equally dangerous, because if the alcohol percentage is small in a drink, the glass of that drink is made large. This means that the quantity of alcohol is the same in each glass of drink. That is why Islam prohibits all types of drinks and prohibits drinking any small quantities. Islam prohibits the drinking of even a drop of any alcoholic drink, because problems always start this way; a small glass on a social occasion, then another glass on another social occasion, then eventually buying alcoholic drinks to consume at mealtime, then getting drunk, and then becoming an alcoholic with all his pains, his sufferings, his diseases, and problems he creates for his wife, children, and family.

In conclusion, alcoholic drinks effect and damage all systems of the body. Alcohol damages the nervous system, the digestive system, and the blood system directly and it damages all other systems indirectly.

What kind of life will a person lead if he has infections, inflammation, ulcers, and cancers everywhere in his body? Also, what kind of life is it when a person loses memory, loses appetite, loses mental abilities, and has hallucinations?

Islam has saved humanity from all this torture by guiding us to the right way. Because of our religion, Muslims know the right way from the wrong way and Allah has given us the mind with which we have to choose and bear responsibility. All thanks is due to Allah, who gave us the Holy Quran in which to follow and lead us on the right path of Islam.



VITELLO TONNATO

(Servings for 6 people)

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. roast beef
- 2 cans tuna fish
- 12 capers
- 4 anchovies
- 4 cups mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon French mustard
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 celery stalk

Preparation:

Fill a large pot with water.

Add the meat, onion, carrot, celery, and salt. Boil till meat is tender.

When meat is tender, transfer to tray and allow to cool. (The extra broth may be kept refrigerated and used for future use as the liquid for your rice or pasta).

Now slice the beef into thin slices and arrange on platter; keep aside.

Put the tuna, capers, anchovies, mayonnaise, mustard, and 3 tablespoons of cold water in the blender for 1 minute and blend till smooth.

Pour the tuna mixture over the meat so that the meat is totally covered with sauce.

Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

Delizioso & Buon Appetito!!



DON'T FORGET TO SAY:

Bismillah (in the name of Allah) -- when doing something.

Assalamu'Alaikum (peace be on you) -- when meeting a Muslim.

Walaikumus salaam (peace be on you too) -- in reply.

Insha'Allah (if Allah wishes) -- when hoping to do something.

Subhanallah (Glory to Allah) -- to praise someone.

Ma sha Allah (what Allah likes) -- in appreciation.

Fi Amanillah (in the protection of Allah) -- when saying good-bye.

Jazakallahu Khair (may Allah give reward you) -- to thank a person.

Tawakkaltu' Alallah (I rely on Allah) -- to solve a problem.

La Illaha Illal Lah (there is no god but Allah) -- when getting up.

Alhamdu lillah (praise be to Allah) - when you sneeze.

Yarhamukallah (may Allah bless you) -- in hearing someone sneeze.

Amin (accept our prayer) -- when joining a Du'a' (supplication).

Ya Allah (O Allah) -- when in pain or distress.

Astaghfirullah (O Allah forgive me) -- to be sorry for a bad action.

Na'udhubillah (we seek refuge with Allah) -- to show your dislike.

Inna lillah Weina ileihe Rajeun (To God we belong and to Him we return) -- when you hear about someone's death.



Muslim women are no more or less ugly than other women, but they do not flaunt their attractions. Muslim women expect to be appreciated for their mind and characters, not just for their bodies. A Muslim woman is required to conceal her attractions from men by a strictly modest, straight-forward type of attire. Modest dress does not degrade women, but it discourages lust in men. Within the close family circle, she is free to dress informally and to beautify herself; in fact, she is strongly encouraged to make herself attractive for her husband since her beauty is reserved for him. She is also free to do the same among other Muslim women if no man is present. But outside her home and at any time when she is in the presence of non-mahrem men, even within her home, she is required to wear a covering-type of dress which will make it clear to anyone who sees her that she is a chaste, modest and pure woman, and that she does not want her sexuality to enter into the interaction in the slightest degree.

A Muslim woman in this business-like, non-attracting kind of dress which brings out her femininity while concealing her sexuality, and with correspondingly straight-forward behavior, automatically elicits and receives the respect of men just as nuns, whose habits are somewhat similar to the covering dress of Muslim women, have always been respected. This type of dress, which is known as hijab or purdah, is prescribed by a direct order in the Qur'an and is a characteristic by which a conscientious Muslim woman is recognizable anywhere in the world. We will have more to say on this subject in the section on clothing.

It is within this context that the Islamic concept of womanhood may be understood most clearly. The respect and status which a Muslim woman enjoys are not tied up in any way with her physical attractiveness or social skills in relation to men; rather it is concealing and reserving her beauty and sexuality, her feminine charms and favors, exclusively for the man she has married which marks her as a virtuous woman and gains her respect. Indeed, Islam prescribes hijab not only to protect society from the disruption produced by uncontrolled expressions of sexual interest and in order to protect woman's dignity and honor, but also in order to neutralize her sexuality so that she can be a positive, constructive force in society rather than a harmful one. Due to this modest dress and the propriety of her manner and behavior, men can regard and treat her as a person, not a sex object; that is, her value to the society has no relationship to her physical attractions but solely to her worth as a human being. Consequently, as a Muslim woman grows older she loses none of her value either in her own eyes or in the sight of society, for among Muslims a woman's worth, like a man's, increases with age due to her wisdom and experience instead of decreasing with her declining youthfulness and beauty. For the Muslim woman, her character and personal attainments, her modesty and dignity, her piety and intelligence, and her feminine role as wife and mother are the sources of status and respect within the community rather than her possessing sexual interest, attractiveness or easy sociability with men.

But lest it be thought that the responsibility for maintaining pure relations with the opposite sex rests with women alone, we have only to cite the following well-known Qur'anic verse:

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them. And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty..." (Quran 24:30-31)

The Islamic teachings thus inculcate in men and women alike a strong sense of hay, that is, shyness, reserve and modesty in the presence of the opposite sex (and indeed, in relation to modesty, of one's own sex as well), which acts as a very strong deterrent against indecency. Due to this, a conscious Muslim man avoids just as scrupulously as his Muslim sister anything which would lead him toward what is forbidden or would lower him in his own eyes or before his Lord; likewise his dress and manner demonstrate that he possesses self-respect and is free of indecent intentions and desires. In short, chastity, modesty and purity are not merely external restraints imposed by religion or society but are rather inner qualities which devout Muslim men as well as women deeply cherish and desire to uphold.

It will be obvious from this that Muslims generally do not feel at ease with the current trends in Western society. Conscientious Muslims who come to visit or to live in Western countries are often deeply shocked by the general lack of shame and modesty, by the fact that illicit sex is no longer censured in the society as a whole, and they regard the open display of flesh and the overt sexual behavior which they see all around them as animalistic and degrading. The fact that sexual undertones can be observed in innumerable aspects of the interaction between men and women in Western society-- between a professor and his student, a doctor and his patient, or a boss and a secretary in an office, for example, and between neighbors, friends and even relatives--in the form of the off-color joke, the compliments, the back-patting, the constant undercurrent of sexually-tinged innuendo which one encounters on so many occasions is also very distressing to them.

Among Muslims, apart from the very westernized and others, primarily young people, who have lost their sense of direction, such behavior is very rare indeed; certainly the interaction of men and women who fear God and strictly observe His limits is completely free of these elements. The observing of the limits informs both the man and the woman that there is no place and no wish for anything to do with sex in their interaction; indeed, if there were such undertones it would be felt as a great threat as well as a gross insult, and would render further interaction prohibited and impossible. To a conscious Muslim man or woman, attention from any member of the opposite sex other than one's own spouse in the form of free talk, compliments, playfulness, suggestive comments, touching in any form (including handshaking and patting on the back), and anything else which has sexual undertones is insulting, degrading and very much disliked.

In summary, Islam regards the sexual urge as an extremely powerful element in human nature, one which clamors for free expression if given even slight encouragement. Without such guidelines and limits for governing it as we have just discussed, and without the certainty that such behavior is forbidden and will be very severely punished in the Hereafter, it will naturally seek to express itself freely, as we see in Western societies. Recognizing the strength of this drive and the fact that it is always present in any situation where men and women interact freely with one another, are alone together, and where bodies are exposed, Islam does not permit any of these things; for it is obviously far more desirable and effective--as well as much more realistic--to prevent temptation than to expect people to resist it when circumstances impel them toward it.

Islam also insists on the right of an individual to have a spouse who belongs exclusively to him/her. It totally rejects the notion that what people feel for each other or the pleasure they derive from an act should be taken as the criteria of right and wrong, and that obedience to the unbridled demands of animal desires should be permitted to dominate the lives of human beings. The moral and spiritual harm done to individuals, and through them to their society, when they disregard the vital need of the human personality for purity and integrity to follow blind physical desire, cannot be assessed by anyone but God, Who has so clearly and absolutely prohibited such acts, and Who has also informed us the awesome penalties which such proscribed deeds will incur in the Life-to-Come.

Why I Embraced Islam

AN ACCOUNT OF A FRENCH SCHOLAR WHO ACCEPTED ISLAM - VINCENT MONTAGNE

Vincent Montagne is a French scholar and a tourist specialized in the study of Arab and Islamic issues. He spent many years in the eastern and the western Arab countries. He also went to Iran, Senegal and Indonesia, and visited Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Niger, Mauritania and Sierra Leone. He published about one hundred theses and articles; this in addition to twenty books on Islam, Islamic civilization, Muslims and Arabic language. Some of these books are the following: Islam in Indonesia, Islam in the USSR, World of Islam, Arabs...etc. Montagne also spent six years of his life translating Ibn Khaldun Introduction to French language. The end of this tour of thought and countries was culminated by his declaration of Islam in Mauritania. "France and The Arab World" journal published a detailed article about his conversion to Islam. The said article was republished in full by the Tunisian journal "La Presse" journal also published parts of the article. But no comment was given of any kind by both papers. Let us now hear what Mr. Montagne has to explain regarding why he embraced Islam.

Q: Would you kindly tell us how your interest in Islam began?

A: "When a person embraces Islam, he is actually choosing a religion, nay a way in which he stepped over his own self. In other words, he was chosen a new concept of the universe, a way of life and joined very clearly a new nation united by faith. For me this in fact meant that I should stand, despite my old age, in the line of the poor people, in the midst of tempests' area and to the side of the Palestinians. It also means that I should stand away from the big powers and put money aside without too much hermitage that I should be on the side of justice and right.

While we find the contemporary world makes technology an end that justifies the means, and this is really unfortunate, we find that abiding by Islam makes one reject this concept and believe in higher values. Still I remained a French national just like Charles De Gaulle and France remains my home land, but the Arab world is my spiritual country as Loy Masinion told me in May 1940. My belief in Islam represents the fulfillment of my inner cravings, and the ultimate goal of my existence. It does not tear me, as it is claimed, into two loyalties. It, on the contrary, gathers all the threads of feeling into one harmonious whole.

My conversion to Islam may be attributed to religious, ethical and social factors as well as to cultural motives and eternal support. As regards the religious factors the holy Prophet Muhammad reminds us in one of his sayings of a permanent truth. He says: Every child is born in nature (belief in Islam). His parents make him Jew, Christian or Magian.

I grew up in a Catholic family, and had forsaken all religious rites since my early days. Christian beliefs seemed to me mysterious, its rites looked useless. As regards the clergymen, although I appreciate solitary contemplation, yet I do not find myself in need of a mediator between the Creator and the created.

I felt afterwards the great obstacles between Islam and Christianity namely the deification of Jesus Christ which is completely rejected in Islam, and the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) which the Christians refuse. Thus all attempts of compromise seemed to me a source of trouble and disturbance. It was essential for me to make choice the one or the other i.e. Islam or Christianity.

Despite constant research on and analysis of the language of the Qur’an by both scholars and philologists to find the underlying element which gives the Qur’an its unsurpassed meaning, it continues to elude them. This is because man’s unconscious faculties seem to respond to Allah alone, regardless of any external factors, be they social, cultural, or psychological.

Because of the Qur’an’s impact on such deep levels of consciousness, Muhammad’s adversaries dreaded people listening to it, particularly the non-believers. Its influence on those who listened to it was so powerful that Walid ibn Mughirah, a staunch opponent of Muhammad (SAW), after listening to its recitation said: “It indeed overflows with sweet clarity; it is fruitful at its lowest and prodigious at its highest, and towers over all human diction.”

This same soothing and overwhelming power of the Qur’an was experienced by ‘Umar ibn al- Khattab before embracing Islam. Having learned that his father-in-law and sister had denounced their old religions and declared their allegiance to Muhammad (SAW) and the new faith, ‘Umar rushed to their house filled with rage. However, arriving to hear the Qur’an being recited, his anger soon vanished and shortly afterwards he himself became a Muslim.

The spontaneous emotional change in Umar happened because the words of the Qur’an stirred deep within, bringing him calm. In the same way, the verses which cause the hearts of believers everywhere to throb with elation are equally able to produce the same effect in the heart of someone who has yet to believe in Allah.

There are within man inborn talents and faculties know only to Allah. He alone can reach them and cause them to respond to His words without the soul detecting their true nature. This divine ability of the Qur’an to remain appropriate to an infinite number of situations confounded Arabs and non- believing scholars alike. They tried to justify their failure to comprehend this miracle by accusing Muhammad (SAW) of sorcery. They claimed he had cast a spell on those tempted to listen to him, admitting that no human could produce diction appropriate to so many situations or could influence people’s thoughts unhampered by their different aptitudes. If Muhammad (SAW) was a sorcerer and could cast a spell on those who listened to him recite the Qur’an, how as it that some listeners were influenced by the spell but not others? If the Qur’an was indeed Muhammad’s own composition, why weren’t Arab scholars and linguists able to rival the fields and the arts of diction, such scholars were in a superior position to Muhammad (SAW) who was know to be illiterate. What prevented them from exposing him if he was an impostor as they claimed? The answer is that the Qur’an is Allah’s speech, and no man can compete with Him. To those opponents Allah says:

“It is not poet’s speech- little is it that ye believe! Nor diviner’s speech- little is it that ye remember!” (Al- Haqqah 69:41-2)

Even the answer is not without challenge, for poetry is governed by metre and other literary devices. The assumption that the language of the Qur’an was metrical verse in which the rules of poetry are observed was utterly false. The Arabs, more than any other people, knew this because of their superior skill in poetry. Their hypocrisy and denial of Allah were affirmed by Allah’s saying to them, “Little is it that ye believe!”

Q: How did you discover the Holy Quran?

A: The first time I came across the Quran was through the French translation of its meanings in Andrea de Riyar edition published in 1647.(That was actually the first translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran in French; there are now more than 30 translations done mostly by French scholars not without misunderstanding either intentionally or otherwise). I discovered the said French translation in Saint Sir School, which is a military school near Paris whose graduates become officers in the army. I was one of its students between 1934-1936. Every week I used to copy a few chosen verses from the Quran.

Q: What is your response to the Christian’s theory of Jesus Christ being the son of God?

A: I could have a son. The only attitude that seemed logical and acceptable to me was that of the Quran which says:

“Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: So believe in Allah and His Messenger. (Quran 4:171)

They disbelieve who say: “Allah is one of three (in a trinity): for there is no god except One God.” (Quran 5:73)

Again in Sura Ikhlas we read:

“Say: He is Allah, The One: Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.” (Quran 112:1-4)

The first Christians were not far from this belief; it was only in 320 A.D. that Jesus was officially declared as God and the Son of God. What is more strange, however, is that at the fourth Rome Convention in 1215 which was held to define the nature of God the said convention declared that God the One neither begetteth nor was He begotten, which is identical to the Islamic creed.

I could not accept three major beliefs on Christ especially trinity and crucifixion, on which the Holy Quran says:

“That they said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus’ the Son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah;-” but they killed him not, nor crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.” (Quran 4:157)

Notice that Muslims believe in the Holy Quran as the word of God while the Bible is not so for Christians. Christ for them is the word of God. I don’t have the slightest doubt that the message of Muhammad is true. I believe that Muhammad is the seal of all prophets and messengers of God and that he was sent to all humanity; his message was revealed to complete the revelation in the Old and the New Testament. My best proof for this is the Holy Quran: the Great miracle. I reject all Pascal’s impressions on the apostle of Islam except one of them which reads: That the Quran is not authored by Muhammad and that the Bible was not written by Matthew.

Q: What was your attitude of your friends after you became Muslim?

A: I received lately a letter from Beirut sent by a Lebanese Christian friend of mine wherein he requests me to avoid all provoking and inimical expression which usually come forth from a new convert to Islam, he says, “I shall pay much attention to this claim for the following factors:

- Because Muslims regard Christians with respect and call them People of the Book.

- The Holy Quran calls for benevolence saying:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion.” (Quran 2:256)

- The Holy Quran also describes the Christians in very friendly words saying:

“And nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say; “We are Christians”; because amongst these are men devoted to learning, and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant”. (Quran 5:82)

Q: What were the factors that led you to Islam?

A: There were many social and ethical factors that led me to the house of Islam. As regards the ethical factors I found out that Islam did not accept the principle of original sin. The Holy Quran says in this respect:

Thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and fell into error. But his Lord chose him (For His Grace): He turned to him, and gave him guidance. (Quran 20:121-122)

Thus we do not find in Islam any sin complex as it is know in the Anglo-Saxon precept. Chastity and hermitry are not beyond the reach of human beings. Here are some verses from the Holy Quran to this effect:

“Thus have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced.” (Quran 2:143)

“And has imposed no difficulties on you in religion.” (Quran 22:78)

Q: What are some of the misconceptions against Islam?

A: I have found there to be five major misconceptions always raised against Islam, however, I do not see them logical at all. These misconceptions are predestination, prejudice, cruelty, serfdom and polygamy. Predestination for instance is nothing but depending upon God and complete submission to Him. Divine will is represented in orders which have nothing to do with predestination. Human freewill can best be illustrated in the Holy Quran in the following verses among many others:

“This is an admonition: whosoever will, let him take a (straight) Path to His Lord. But ye will not, except as God wills.”

The second misconception is one of prejudice. They claim that Islam teaches prejudice. As a matter of fact Islam does not order its people to use force except in self-defense or in justified war “jihad”.

The third accusation is that legal punishments in Islam are said to be cruel. Islam does not order the application of those punishments except in exceptional cases and according to certain conditions. Thus very few hands were cut during the first three decades of Islamic era, but the fruit was very great. People’s properties were secure. There were also very few instances of stoning the adulteress, but the cost was chastity and legal children. Islam also regards the crime against a man’s life to be a crime on life itself. Thus it takes the life of the criminal to secure life itself.

Regarding the fourth misconception, namely that of serfdom, as a matter of fact serfdom or slavery was an established law in the world when Islam was revealed. Islam in fact restricted it and put a gradual solution for serfdom. Thus the Holy Quran encourages the liberation of slaves, so much so that slave liberation is regarded in Islam as an act of worship. It is made the atonement for many major sins. Among the closest companions to the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him were former slaves like Bilal, Suhaib and Salman the Persian. Islam in point of truth came to liberate slaves and not otherwise.

The question of polygamy which is misunderstood by many non-Muslims. Polygamy is thought to be one of the weak points in Islam while in truth it is an advantage as well as an achievement. First of all Islam did not establish polygamy, it restricted it to a limited number instead of too many wives. Polygamy in Islam is actually the exception in a law that is meant to encompass all human cases. Is not polygamy better than the numerous prostitutes who are secretly resorted to beside the legal wives in the west? Justice is a very important condition to apply polygamy. Do not widows and unmarried old girls prefer to be second wives instead of their solitary lives of hardship? How just, then, is the religion of Islam!

I find great peace in Islam which I do not find anywhere else; this is due to the fact that Islam does not divide between body and soul. Islam appreciates the mind and the body. It respects the guest and keeping one’s word, which are essential elements in a just war like the one going on in Palestine.

Moving then to the social factors that convinced me to embrace Islam is that my belief in Islam means that I have become member in a 600 million nation of Islam. This did not lead to cutting off my national origin. I have lived more than thirty years in North Africa, Iran, Lebanon, Senegal and Indonesia, and have wandered around the world like a new Ibn Battuta, the famous Arab tourist, everywhere I went I found the same way of life, the same faith and the same human sentiments. I found Islamic society to be one of courage, simplicity and hermitry. I liked to live merely on dates and milk and to have nothing to do with oil dollars which I am afraid would be a curse and not a blessing.

As regards the forbidden foods they do not disturb me because I have never had wine, and can go without pork and I do not smoke. The five pillars of faith represent personal steadfastness.

The cultural factors that convinced him of the truth of Islam. Europeans still speak proudly of what they have to given Arabs and to the world at large. They count the schools, means of transport, telephones... etc. They forget however what they owe to Arabs which is not a small thing. The Arabs have kept the Greek legacy. It was thanks to them that we now read for Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others. The greatest capitals of learning in the world were at one time Cairo, Baghdad, Tulaytula and Palermo to mention only a few.

Arabic language is first of all the Language of Divine revelation. One cannot have real access to Arabian culture unless he reads the Quran which is the source of inspiration for Arab writers both modern and old. Quranic verses are often quoted in grammatical illustrations. The Holy Quran is in fact the mainstay of Arabic thinking. Read the great genius Ibn Khaldoun, or the famous poet Al Mutanabbi, or the well- known philosopher Ibn Rushd, and all others, and you will see the influence of the Quran on them all.

The fifth factor that incited him to enter the fold of Islam. He says: By embracing Islam I find myself joining a new camp, a camp different from the two struggling camps namely that of neo-colonialism and the Zionist aggressive camp. I have joined a new world extending from Senegal to Indonesia, a world of real sentiment; I have not joined this world because of its richness; but because I liked the Palestinians who are victims of their own brethren as they are victims of their staunch enemy.

I have joined the world of emigrant workers who have taken the place of slaves in our age, and who are about two million people in France, thus representing the second largest community in my country bigger even than the Protestants and the Jews. I have received two congratulations for embracing Islam, one from a Muslim brother in Indonesia; and the other from an Arab priest. My first Friday prayer was in Noukshott in the Rimaal mosque. That great event took place on the 22nd of July 1977. From henceforward I was called Al Mansour Al Shafii. Al Mansour in Arabic is equivalent to my Christian name Vincent, though I believe that there is no supporter except God. I took Al Shafii School of Jurisprudence for the sake of my Muslim brothers in Indonesia, the biggest Islamic community the world over.

Similarly, the allegation that the Qur’an was the language of a soothsayer is equally unfounded. Apart from the fact that a soothsayer, like anyone else, is prone to forgetfulness as the years go by, he may need to modify his speech to the needs of each new situation. Hence came Allah’s remark “Little is it that ye remember!”

Furthermore, a soothsayer’s words burdened with conventions of speech which, no matter how elaborate, cannot apply to more than one situation by using the same words and referring to one thought. Another miraculous feature of the Qur’an is its superb use of both metrical composition and prose, in such exquisite harmony that the shift from one style to the other is barely perceptible. This intermingling of metrical and non-metrical composition is present throughout the whole of the Qur’an, as the following verses exemplify:

“Lo those who ward off (evil) are among gardens and watersprings. (And it is said unto them: Enter them in peace, secure. And we remove whatever rancor may be in their breasts. As brethren, face to face, (they rest) on couches raised. Toil cometh not unto them there, nor will they be expelled from thence... Announce (O Muhammad) unto My slaves that verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful, and that My doom is the dolorous doom. And tell them of Abraham’s guest. (How) when they came unto him, and said: Peace. He said: Lo! We are afraid of you.” (Quran Al-Hijr 15:45-52)

When reading the original Arabic of the above verse the reader moves from metric composition to prose without experiencing the slightest change of style or mode.

The same mingling of metrical and non- metrical composition can be observed in the following verse from the Surah of Yusuf (12). In this chapter, the wife of the ruler al-’Aziz commands Joseph to come out and face the women, whom she has assembled,

“Come out unto them! And when they saw him they exalted him and cut their hands exclaiming: Allah blameless! This is not a human being. This is no other than some gracious angel. She said: This is he on whose account ye blamed me. I asked of him an evil act, but he proved continent, but if he do not my behest he verily shall be imprisoned, and verily shall be of those brought low.” (Quran 12:31-32)

Although the original version of the phrase translated as: ‘This is he on whose account ye blamed me’ is indeed metrical diction in which the rules and technique of Arabic poetry are observed, it is almost impossible for the listener to detect the shift from one form to the other, nor does this exquisite mingling impinge on the fluidity of expression or impair its meaning.

The Qur’an is truly unique in its composition. It is neither prose nor verse, deriving its unique and inimitable eloquence and meaningfulness from the divine attributes and powers of its Maker. It is these same divine attributes which have set the Qur’an above emulation and given it its transcendental powers.

When the non-believers failed to detract from the Qur’an’s credibility or give sound justification for their antagonism to it, Allah’s speech and message to mankind, they focused their attack on Muhammad instead. They contended that if Allah

truly sought someone to serve Him as His Messenger to mankind He would have favored one of their highly esteemed dignitaries.

They argued that Muhammad’s illiteracy and humble status within the community, as well as his humility, made him ineligible for such a divine task. This rancorous and conniving strategy is revealed in the Surah al-Zukhruf (43) where Allah says:

“And now that the Truth has come unto them they say: This is mere magic, and lo! We are disbelievers therein. And they say: If only this Qur’an had been revealed to some great man of the two towns”. (Quran Al-Zukhruf 43:30-31)

These verses show how jealous, resentful, and confused the idolaters were. Although they described the Qur’an as mere magic, they nevertheless wished that it had been revealed to one of their unbelieving dignitaries, knowing that such a favor would have given them a pretext to herald the view that Allah had no feud with their idols. It would then have been easy for them to distort the message to suit their own ends, to tighten their grip on the minds of their followers and to ensure their submissiveness while expanding their wealth and power. To accept the message and abide by its imperatives and the discipline of Allah however is to forfeit all this authority and corruption. This hidden trait is revealed in the Surah al-Qasas:

“And they say: If we were to follow the Guidance with thee we should be torn out of our land.” (Quran 28:57)

THE MEANING OF THE MUQATTA’AT LETTERS

By their resentment of Muhammad and in their defiance of Allah, the idolaters consciously unveiled their hidden belief in the truth of the message and its miraculous nature. The very choice of Muhammad (SAW) as the recipient of Allah’s Message was itself miraculous. Still another miracle of the Qur’an can be found in the mysterious usage of the so-called Muqatta’at letters that occur in certain chapters.

The choice of Muhammad (SAW) as the Messenger of Allah was miraculous because he could neither read nor write. He had no knowledge of the skills of literature, yet he reached to mankind in a language that was unique in terms of its clarity, intelligibility and its inimitability. All these factors were clear indications to the Qur’an’s divine origin. An illiterate can utter words and reproduce sentences, but to construct new ones is something which no illiterate has been known to do.

Many of the passages revealed to Muhammad began with the letters of the Arabic alphabet, such as alif, lam, mim as a further challenge to the skeptics. Despite his illiteracy, Muhammad was able to pronounce those letters in which he had no education and which he had never previously heard spoken.

If the Qur’an were of Muhammad’s (SAW) own making, the pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet, which he had not learnt, would have been beyond his ability, for only a person who had learnt how to read and write could identify these letters and utter them correctly.



SAEED-BIN JUBAIR

An account of Saeed-bin-Jubair, who is a famous Tabie. The Prophet (PBUH) has said:

“To utter truth in the face of a tyrant is the best Jihad.”

This is a story of Jihad of that type. At that time, Hajjaj-bin-Yusuf, the notorious blood-shedder was in power. Hajjaj’s harshness and tyranny are well known in human history. The rules in those days, in spite of their shortcomings, never lagged behind in propagating the faith, yet we treat them as the worst among rules because of the contrast with the just and God- fearing rulers. He was the viceroy of king Abdul Malik-bin-Marwan for Hijaz and Iraq. The king lived in Damascus and Hajjaj had his headquarters at Koofah. Saeed-bin-Jubair had fought against Hajjaj on the side of Ibnul-Ashath. After the defeat, Saeed (Rahmatullah alaih) ran away and took asylum in Mecca. The Government posted a very stern person as the Governor of Mecca, with instructions to arrest Saeed. The Governor assembled all the people of Mecca and read before them the order of King Abdul Malik, which said:

“Any person who gives shelter to Saeed (Rahmatullah alaih) shall meet the same fate as Saeed himself.”

He then announced to the people:

“By Allah, I must kill the person who gives shelter to Saeed (Rahmatullah alaih). His and his neighbors’ houses shall be razed to the ground.”

Saeed was arrested with great difficulty and sent to Koofah. When he was brought before Hajjaj, the following conversation took place:

Hajjaj: “What is your name?”

Saeed: “My name is Saeed (lit. Auspicious).”

Hajjaj: “What is your father’s name?”

Saeed: “Jubair (lit. Trimmed).”

Hajjaj: “No, you are in fact Shaqi (lit. Wretched) son of Kusair (lit. a broken thing).”

Saeed: “My mother knew my name better than you do.”

Hajjaj: “You are wretched and so is your mother.”

Saeed: “The Knower of the hidden things is some One else.”

Hajjaj: “Look! I am putting you to sword.”

Saeed: “Then my mother was right in giving me this name.”

Hajjaj: “I shall send you to Hell.”

Saeed: “If I knew that you had that power, I would have taken you as my god.”

Hajjaj: “What is your belief about the Prophet (SAW)?”

Saeed: “He was an apostle of Mercy and a Prophet of Allah, sent with the best Guidance for the whole creation.”

Hajjaj: “What do you say about the Khalifas?”

Saeed: “I am not a warder over them. Everybody is responsible for his own actions.”

Hajjaj: “Who is the most exalted of the four Khalifahs?”

Saeed: “The one who had been able to please Allah more than the rest?”

Hajjaj: “Which of them had been able to please Allah?”

Saeed: “This is known only to Him. Who knows what is hidden in the bosoms and what the hearts conceal.”

Hajjaj: “Is Ali in Paradise or in Hell?”

Saeed: “I can answer only after I visit the two places and meet their dwellers.”

Hajjaj: “How shall I fare on the Day of Judgment?”

Saeed: “I am not fit to receive the knowledge of the unseen?”

Hajjaj: “You do not intend to tell me the truth.”

Saeed: “But I did not tell a lie either.”

The Islamic Bulletin

Hajjaj: “Why do you never laugh?”

Saeed: “I do not see anything to laugh at; and indeed why should one laugh, who is created from dust, who has to appear on the Day of Judgment, and is always surrounded by tribulations.”

Hajjaj: “But I do laugh.”

Saeed: “Allah has created us with different temperaments.”

Hajjaj: “I am now going to kill you.”

Saeed: “The time and manner of my death have already been decreed.”

Hajjaj: “Allah has preferred me to you.”

Saeed: “Nobody can be proud of his relation with Allah, unless he knows his position; and Allah is the only knower of the unseen.”

Hajjaj: “Why should I not be proud of my relation with Allah, when I am with the Amir-ul- Mominin and you are with the rebels?”

Saeed: “I am with the other Muslims. I myself shun mischief, but nobody can change the decree of Allah.”

Hajjaj: “What do you say about what we collect for Amir-ul-Mominin?”

Saeed: “I do not know what you collect for him.”

Hajjaj sent for gold, silver and dresses from the treasury and showed these to Saeed.

Saeed: “These are useful, provided you are able to obtain with them the things that may provide you peace on the Day of Consternation (i.e. Day of Judgment), when every nursing mother will forget her nursing, and every pregnant one will be delivered of her burden, and when nothing but good will be of any avail.”

Hajjaj: “Are our collections not good?”

Saeed: “You have collected them, and you are the best judge.”

Hajjaj: “Do you like any of these things for yourself?”

Saeed: “I only like the things which Allah likes.”

Hajjaj: “Woe to you!”

Saeed: “Woe is for the person who is deprived of Paradise and is made to enter Hell.”

Hajjaj: “(Annoyed): “Say how should I kill you?”

Saeed: “As you would like to be killed.”

Hajjaj: “Should I forgive you?”

Saeed: “Allah’s forgiveness is real. Your forgiveness is of no value.”

Hajjaj: “(To the executioner): ‘Kill this man.’”

Saeed laughed while he was being taken for execution. Hajjaj was informed of this. He called him back.

Hajjaj: “What made you laugh?”

Saeed: “Your boldness with Allah, and His clemency to you.”

Hajjaj: “I am killing a person who has caused dissent among the Muslims.” (To the Executioner) “Kill him in front of me.”

Saeed: “Let me say my Salat of two rakaats.”

After finishing Salat, he faced Qiblah and recited:

“Verily, I have turned my face toward Him. Who created the heavens and earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters.”

Hajjaj: “Turn him from our Qiblah and let him face the Qiblah of the Christians, who also caused dissension and dispute among their community.”

His face immediately turned to the other direction.

Saeed: “Whithersoever Ye turn, there is Allah’s Face. For Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.” (Quran 2:115)

Hajjaj: “Make him lie on his face. We are only responsible for appearance.”

Saeed was made to lie on his face.

Saeed: “From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again.” (Quran 20:55)

Hajjaj: “Kill him!!”

Saeed: “I call you to witness what I recite: “I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, who is all alone and Who has no partner and I bear witness that Muhammad (SAW) is His slave and His Messenger.”

He was then beheaded -- Inna lillahi wa Inna ilaihi rajeun -- To God We Belong And To Him We Return.

After the execution, too much blood came out from Saeed’s body. Hajjaj himself marveled greatly at it. He inquired the reason from his doctors, who said: “His tranquility and composure at the time of death had kept his blood in its original form. Generally, people to be executed are so much scared and afraid of death that their blood curdles and does not flow profusely.”

SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET

CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH AND PREPARATION FOR IT BY GOOD DEEDS

Allah and His Messenger, peace be upon him, encourage us to contemplate death and be ready for it with good deeds. This is regarded as a sign of goodness.

Ibn ‘Umar reports: “I came to the Prophet (pbuh) and I was the tenth of the first ten people (who embraced Islam). A man from among the Ansar got up and said: “O Prophet of Allah, who is the most sagacious and the most prudent among the people?” He replied: “Those who are most aware of death and prepare themselves for it. They are the wisest of people and will have honor in this world and a generous reward in the Hereafter.”

Ibn ‘Umar also said that Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) said: “You should remember the reality that brings an end to all worldly joys and pleasures, namely, death.”

Ibn Mas’ud narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) explained the following words of Allah, the Exalted: “The hearts of those whom Allah wills to guide, He opens to Islam.” This means, the Messenger explained, that, “When the light (of truth) enters the heart it expands and opens up.” The Companions asked: “Is there any evidence of this (in the life of a Muslim)?” He replied: “Being ever mindful of the eternal life of the Hereafter, and remaining at guard in this life of delusion, and preparing oneself for death before it comes.” (This is reported by Ibn Jarir through different chains each of which strengthens the other.)

EXCELLENCE OF A LONG LIFE ENRICHED WITH GOOD DEEDS

It is reported by Abdurrahman ibn Abu Bakrah on the authority of his father that a man asked:

“O Messenger of Allah! Who is the best of all people?” He replied, “He who lives long and does good deeds.” The man asked, “And who is the worst of men?” The Prophet (PBUH) replied: “He who lives long but commits evil.” (Narrated by Ahmad and at-Tirmidhi)

Abu S’aeed Al Khudri (R.A.A.) relates that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “The world is green and sweet (i.e. it is full of riches and captivation) and Allah will appoint (as His) vicegerent in it, and will see how you behave. Then beware of this world and the women (i.e. shun indulgence in the world and sexual misbehavior and licentiousness).” (Narrated by Muslim)

DEATH -- ARE YOU READY?

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN SOMEONE DIES?

It is Sunnah to do the following when a person dies:

1) Advise the dying person to say: “La ilah illa-Allah” (there is no god but Allah).

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri that the Prophet

(pbuh) said: “Prompt your dying people to say: ‘Lailaha illah-Allah’.”

Another report on the authority of Mu’adh ibn Jabal states that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: “He whose last words are ‘La ilaha illa-Allah’ shall enter Paradise.”

This prompting (talzin) is necessary only when the dying person is unable to utter the Shahadah (La ilaha illa-Allah...). If such a person is able to utter these words then there is no need for prompting, but he should rather be advised to do so. Such advice is useful in cases of persons who are in possession of their faculties of reason and speech.

If one is already mentally impaired such advice cannot be of benefit. But one who is unable to speak might say these words in his heart. The scholars are of the opinion that no pressure should be put on the dying person. So one should not say to him, “Say, ‘La ilaha illa-Allah’,” lest he should become annoyed and utter something improper. One might say the Shahada, however, in such a way that the dying person might be able to hear it and repeat it. If he utters it once, he should not be asked to repeat it unless he says some words after it. In such a case he should be asked to repeat Shahadah to ensure that it be his last utterance.

Most scholars are of the opinion that one attending a dying person may repeat only the words: “La ilaha illa-Allah”, according to the apparent meaning of the hadith. Others are of the opinion that the dying person should be prompted to utter the two testimonies (that is, “I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger”). The purpose is to remind him of the Oneness of Allah, which includes both of the two testimonies.

2) Lay the dying person so that the qibla is on his right side.

To this effect it is recorded that Abu Qatadah said: “Upon arrival in Madinah, the Prophet (pbuh) inquired about a person called al-Bara ibn Ma’rur. The people told the Prophet (pbuh) that he had died, and had willed one-third of his property to the Prophet (pbuh), and that his face be turned toward the Ka’bah at the time of his death. Hearing this, the Prophet (pbuh) said: ‘He has been true to his innate nature. I return the one-third of his property to his children.’ Then the Prophet (pbuh) left and offered a prayer for him and prayed, saying: ‘O Allah! Forgive him, have mercy on him, and cause him to enter Your Paradise. Indeed, You have accepted this prayer’.”

Ahmad reported that Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (pbuh), at the time of her death, turned toward the Ka’bah and placed her right hand under her head. This is the sleeping position recommended by the Prophet (pbuh). In a grave, the dead body should also be placed in the same position.

3) Recite Surah YaSin from the Quran.

This is reported by Ahmad, Abu Daw’ud, Nasa’i, Al-Hakim, and Ibn Hibban, and the last two of them grade it as a sound hadith. They report also on the authority of M’aqil ibn Yasar, that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “Ya Sin is the heart of the Quran. Whoever recites it seeking the pleasure of Allah and the hereafter will receive Allah’s forgiveness. So recite it to your dead.”

Ibn Hibban observes: This hadith refers to the recitation of Yasin for those on the eve of death and not for those already dead. This interpretation is supported by Ahmad, who recorded in his Al-Musnad that Safwan states: “The most eminent scholars say: ‘The recitation of Surah YaSin at the time of a person’s death makes death easy for him’.” The compiler of Musnad al-Firdaus attributes this hadith to Abu ad-Darda and Abu Dharr. They both narrated: “The Prophet (pbuh) said: ‘If any person is on his deathbed and YaSin is recited to him, Allah makes his suffering easier’.”

4) Close the eyes of the deceased.

It is narrated by Muslim that the Prophet (pbuh) went to visit Abu Salmah. He saw that his eyes were wide open and blank with the stare of death. So the Prophet (pbuh) closed his eyes and said: “Verily, when a soul is seized, the eyesight follows it.”

5) Cover the deceased.

‘Aishah said: “When the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), he was covered with a piece of cloth that had some designs on it.” This is reported by Bukhari and Muslim.

The objective here is clearly to safeguard the respect and dignity of the deceased in death against prying eyes and against the exposure of his or her body to the idle curiosity of those looking for changes in its physical condition and features.

There is a consensus among scholars regarding the permissibility of kissing a dead person. The Prophet (pbuh) kissed ‘Uthman ibn Maz’un after his death. Similarly, when the Prophet (pbuh) died, Abu Bakr leaned over him and kissed him between his eyes saying: “O my Prophet! O my best friend!!”

6) Prepare the body for burial without delay, as soon as death is confirmed (by specialists i.e., a qualified physician or the like).

The guardian of the deceased should wash, wrap, and arrange for the burial of the body soon after the funeral prayer for the deceased, because the body might deteriorate if burial is delayed. This is based on a report, recorded by Abu Daw’ud from al-Husayn ibn Wujuh that when Talhah ibn al-Bara fell ill, the Prophet (pbuh) said: “I see that Talhah is on the verge of death. Inform me about him (when he passes away) and make immediate preparations for his burial, for a Muslim’s remains should not be left long with his family after his death.”

The burial may be delayed only for the guardian, provided no physical deterioration in the condition of the body is feared from such delay. On the authority of Ali ibn Abu Talib that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “O Ali, never delay three things: prayer when its time approaches, the funeral when death is confirmed, and marrying a widow or a divorcee when a suitable match is found for her.”

7) Settle the debt of the deceased.

Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and Tirmidhi have recorded a hadith on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: “A believer’s soul remains in suspense until all his debts are paid off.” -Tirmidhi considers this a sound hadith.

This means that the judgment regarding a soul’s salvation or perdition or its entry into Paradise is held in abeyance until its debts are fully paid off and settled. This applies to a person who leaves some property upon his death. His debt should be paid out of the property that he leaves behind. In the case of a person who dies in debt which he sincerely intended to pay, but has no property (nor leaves any behind to pay his debt), according to a confirmed report, his debt will be settled by Allah, the Exalted. Concerning a person who dies in debt with sufficient means to pay it and was willing to do so, but his heirs do not pay it, Bukhari records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “If anyone takes other people’s money with the intention to repay it and then he or she should die without settling the debt, Allah will pay the debt on his behalf. And if anyone takes money or property (of others) with the intention of destroying it, Allah will destroy him.”

A hadith recorded by Ahmad, Abu Nu’aym, Al-Bazzar, and At-Tabarani from the Prophet (pbuh) says: “The debtor will be summoned before Allah on the Day of Judgement. Then Allah will ask him: ‘O Son of Adam! Why did you incurdebt and infringe on others’ rights?’ The man would reply: ‘My Lord! You know I took it, but I neither abused nor lost it. It was stolen or burned in a fire or lost its value.’ Allah, the Almighty and Exalted, will say: ‘My slave has told the truth, and I am more entitled (than anyone else) to settle his debt.’ Then Allah will issue a command and something will be placed on his scales causing his good deeds to outweigh his bad ones. And so, by Allah’s Grace, he will enter Paradise.”

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: “I am nearer to the nearer to the believers than their own selves. So if someone dies leaving behind debt, but no wherewithal to settle it, we shall pay his debt, and if

someone dies and leaves some estate behind him, it is for his heirs (to pay his debt).” This hadith shows that the debt of a deceased Muslim may be paid from the public exchequer out of the zakah funds specified as the portion for the people in debt. This is one of the prescribed categories of zakah recipients. Death by itself does not annul one’s debt or other responsibilities to the living.

BOOK REVIEW

“THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TAWHEED”

by Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips (Islamic Monotheism) 1990, 213 pp., \$12.00

Tawheed Publications, PO Box 3835, Riyadh 11481, Saudi Arabia

What is Tawheed? In his Foreword, the author explains:

...Tawheed is the very foundation of Islam on which all the other pillars and principles depend. If one’s Tawheed is not sound, the rest of one’s Islam becomes, in effect, a series of pagan rituals. p.iv

Despite the importance of this doctrine, there is a dearth of books about this subject written specifically with the English-speaking Muslim in mind. This book is a welcome remedy to this problem. It provides a detailed discussion of a complex subject in a straight-forward style, which with a few exceptions, is very readable. It includes an index of the hadiths cited, as well as an informative bibliography. Many parts of it were originally prepared as instructional materials for the Minaret ar-Riyadh English Medium Islamic School and have been circulated in Muslim communities across the United States and in the West Indies. Despite its apparently simple style, it is based upon deep and thorough scholarship. The author advises:

Although this book is based on the approach used in classical Arabic texts on the science of Tawheed such as al-‘Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah, I have deliberately avoided the presentation of the theological issues found in classical works which have little or no relevance to modern English readers. p. vii

The foundation of the author’s exposition of Tawheed is laid out in Chapter 1. It is devoted entirely to a detailed discussion of the meaning of the term Tawheed (“unification”) and its three categories:

1) Tawheed ar-Ruboobeyah (“Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)

2) Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (“Maintaining the Unit of Allah’s Names and Attributes”)

3) Tawheed al-‘Ebaadah (“Maintaining the Unity of Allah’s Worship”)

He maintains that the three overlap and are inseparable to such a degree that whoever omits any single aspect has failed to complete the requirements of Tawheed and may be guilty of “shirk”, the idolatrous association of partners with Allah. His arguments are supported by citations from various hadith, the Quran, and other sources. This method of exposition is used throughout the book.

The remainder of the book consists of discussions of diverse topics in support of his view of Tawheed. Many of these topics have seldom been discussed adequately in the Islamic literature for the English-speaking reader until now. The appeal of the book is further enhanced by the author’s comparative consideration of diverse religious beliefs and practices such as Christianity, Judaism, Shi’ism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Yoruba, Sufism, Buddhism, Jainism. Darwinism and Marxism are even considered.

The following outline and summary of the remaining chapters of the book point out the depth and breadth of his treatment of the subject of Tawheed.

Chapter 2. -- The CATEGORIES OF SHIRK

The discussion of shirk parallels the categories of Tawheed discussed in Chapter 1. It includes consideration of Shirk by Association, by Negation, by Humanization, and by Deification. The chapter concludes with the subjects of Major Shirk (the worship of any other than Allah) and Minor Shirk (riyaa, the practice of worship for show).

Chapter 3. -- ALLAH'S COVENANT WITH ADAM

The subjects discussed include The Barzakh, (the partition between death and resurrection), Pre-Creation, (the soul of each child is created prior to its birth on earth), The Fitrah, (an infant's natural belief in Allah), the Born Muslim, (is not automatically guaranteed Paradise), the Covenant, (between man and Allah made during pre-creation is to practice the principle of Tawheed into our daily lives). Included is a refutation of the Hindu and Buddhist concept of reincarnation and Karma.

Chapter 4. -- CHARMS AND OMENS

The subjects discussed include Charms, (such as the Rabbit's foot, horseshoes, and the improper use of the Quran), Ruling on Charms, (Charms are shirk), Omens (belief in omens, or tiyarah, was practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia, but is shirk in Islam), Fa'l, (the Good Omen, which has very limited and strict acceptance only if used as an "optimistic term"), and The Islamic Ruling on Omens, (belief in omens has been rejected by the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw).) This chapter concludes with a brief consideration of some of the more popular "bad luck" omens prevalent in Western society such as knocking on wood, spilling salt, breaking a mirror, black cats, and the # 13.

Chapter 5. -- FORTUNETELLING

The subjects discussed are the World of the Jinn, (Jinn are a creation of Allah which co-exists with man on the earth and may have occult powers), the Islamic Ruling on Fortunetelling, (Islam opposes any form of association with those who practice fortunetelling), Visitation of Fortunetellers, (forbidden), Belief in Fortune Tellers, (makes a Muslim a disbeliever and includes those who read the books and writings of fortunetellers, listen to them on radio, or watch them on television). All the various methods of fortunetelling used around the world are forbidden, including palm-reading, I-Ching, fortune cookies, tea leaves, Zodiacal signs and Bio-rhythm computer programs.

Chapter 6. -- ASTROLOGY

The relatively lengthy principle subject of this chapter is the Arguments of Muslim Astrologists, (in support of the practice of astrology including the use of court astrologers by the later Umayyad caliphs), and the Islamic argument against it. The Islamic Ruling on Horoscopes (is that they are forbidden). This is a particularly important chapter because of the widespread belief and influence of astrology in Western society, and apparently among some contemporary Muslims.

Chapter 7. -- MAGIC

This chapter discusses the Reality of Magic, and the Islamic Ruling on Magic (the practice and learning of magic is classified as Kufr). This fascinating chapter includes consideration of the reality of occult phenomena such as haunted houses, levitation, possession, clairvoyance, materialization and reincarnation. It offers some explanations for their causes, such as the influence of jinns, and concludes with a strong warning against involvement with magic. Like the previous chapter on astrology, this is

another important one because of the widespread belief in the occult in Western society.

Chapter 8. -- TRANSCENDENCY

This chapter discusses the concept of Allah's transcendency over all creation, its Significance in helping man avoid belief in the erroneous concept of the immanence of Allah, the Danger of the Immanence Concept which could lead one to treat created matter as equal to Allah or to believe that one may be possessed of divinity equal to Allah, and Clear Proofs of Allah's transcendency including consideration of the following proofs: natural proof, rayer proof, the Mir'raaj proof, Quranic proof, Hadeethic proof, logical proof, and the consensus of Early Scholars. The discussion of these proofs is sometimes tends to the abstract and may require diligent effort on the part of the reader to grasp.

Chapter 9. -- SEEING ALLAH

This chapter discusses several diverse issues related to the question of whether or not Allah can be seen by humans. The issues include whether or not Allah was seen by Moses and Muhammad (saws), as well as the spiritual wisdom of not being able to see Allah.

Chapter 10. -- SAINT WORSHIP

This chapter discusses Saint worship and its bases, including Allah's Favor of some people over others as a test of their spiritual integrity; Taqwaa, the spiritual power of the pious, which cannot be judged by others; Wallee: the "Saint", the error of the Sufi practices of worshipping saints; Fanaa, the Sufi's mystical beliefs and practices which allegedly lead to union of Man with God; and Roohullaah, the "Spirit" of Allah mentioned in the Quran often used by Sufis to support the mystic belief in the re-unification of the human soul with Allah. The author makes a valiant attempt to discuss these complex ideas as clearly as possible.

Chapter 11. -- GRAVE WORSHIP

This chapter discusses the practice of grave worship in Islam and rejects it. The discussion includes consideration of Prayers to the Dead, The Evolutionary Model of Religion, The Degeneration Model of Religion, The Beginning of Shirk, The Excessive Praise of the Righteous, Grave Restrictions, "Taking Graves as places of Worship". Masjids with Graves, The Prophet's Grave, Salaah in the Prophet's Masjid (salah may be performed). This chapter is very clear in its argument against grave worship, and includes an interesting reference to the Chinese practice of ancestor worship.

The book ends with a two page "Conclusion" which holds that

...it is the duty of every sincere believer in God to put aside his or her cultural experiences and emotional ties to family, tribe or nation, and acquire a working knowledge of Tawheed, the foundation of faith. For, it is only in the application of that knowledge that man may achieve salvation. p. 204.

This book is recommended reading. It provides a detailed exposition of Islamic monotheism written specifically with the English-speaking reader in mind. The book is a compact reference source for information on the principle of Tawheed as well as western and other beliefs and practices which may violate this principle. The knowledge it provides will help to keep the devout English-speaking Muslim, and others, on the Straight Path.