



# THE REVIEW of RELIGIONS

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## IN THIS ISSUE

- GUIDE POSTS
- THE FOUNDER OF SIKHISM
- FOCUS ON THE SHROUD
- SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM IN THE WEST
- HUMAN RIGHTS
- SON OF GOD
- HOLY SCRIPTURES EXAMINED
- BOOK REVIEW

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## The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

A monthly magazine devoted to the dissemination of the teachings of Islam, the discussion of Islamic affairs and religion in general.

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### CONTENTS

### Page

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Guide Posts<br>(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)                                       | 2  |
| 2. The Founder of Sikhism  | 7  |
| 3. Focus on the Shroud<br>(Dr. Hussain M. Sajid)                               | 20 |
| 4. Some Misconceptions about Islam in<br>the West<br>(Mustafa Yusaf McDermott) | 22 |
| 5. Human Rights  | 31 |
| 6. Son of God<br>(B. M. Mirza, PhD)  | 34 |
| 7. Holy Scriptures Examined<br>(K. Mahmud)                                     | 43 |
| 8. Book Review   | 48 |

## Guide Posts

### FRUITS OF FASTING

(Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that YOU MAY BECOME RIGHTEOUS.”  
(2:183).

Almighty God has exhorted Muslims to excel one another in righteousness for this is the ideal quality of character; and they have been urged to strive continually towards the perfection of this attribute because in the sight of God, this virtue is the most distinguished mark of honour. God says in the Holy Quran:

“Verily the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous among you.”  
(49:14).

The acquisition of righteousness is the highest and noblest of all ambitions and should be the foremost aspiration of every Muslim. This divine attribute is a heavenly and magnetic energy which is so powerful and attractive that hearts are moved and swayed by its radiation. Hazrat Ali said:

“He who sets righteousness as his ideal has the hardest persons softened and the remotest strangers attracted.”

The Islamic form of fasting is strictly a spiritual exercise and is one of others which also serve as aids towards the development of righteousness. Muslims have been repeatedly reminded in the Holy Quran that they should cultivate the spirit of righteousness in their hearts:

“O ye men worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you that you may become righteous.”  
(3:52).

“The best provision is righteousness.”  
(2:198).

The cultivation of this heavenly attribute has also been emphasised by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad — the Promised Messiah and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement who has written in one of his poems:

“Wonderful is the jewel the name of which is righteousness. Blessed is he who practices righteousness. So, o ye Muslims! perfect your righteousness.”

Successful fasting leads to righteousness providing one imbues oneself with the spirit of fasting which calls for the promotion of a strong desire and resolve to attain spiritual elevation during the period of abstinence. Desire is the motivating force which drives one onwards towards one's cherished goal — whatever it may be; and when coupled with the spirit of resolve there is no power which can prevent one from achieving one's aim other than divine intervention.

A climber cannot expect to reach the summit of a mountain in one stride; nor can a servant of God expect to attain spiritual purification in one stretch of fasting. He cannot make the distance in one jump. He must move from stage to stage; goal to goal; each must be within comfortable reach of the other.

In every prescribed or supplementary fast one should set one's eyes on a goal higher than the one already reached; and the goal should be that one shall emerge from the fast a far more righteous person than at the time one entered into it. If one adopts this practical approach then the blessings of fasting and the feeling of exaltation must be experienced.

How does fasting enable one to grow more righteous? First it should be known that there is fasting and fasting. The mere abstinence from food and water will not serve any spiritual value unless the spirit of fasting is present in the heart. There are many Muslims who fast merely from habit or custom. On being questioned why they fast their reply is that it is a commandment of Allah; yet they ignore other important commandments of Islam and are found to drink, gamble, lie, lend money on interest, neglect prayers, etc. Had they possessed some measure of the spirit of Islam they would realise the importance of giving attention to all the commandments of God and not only to fasting. Their fasting will not effect any change in their daily way of life; nor will they have increased in righteousness which is the primary purpose of fasting.

Ramadhan is a holy month of fasting. It is a holy month in as much as God Himself has promised to pour down blessings upon those who fast in earnest; striving all the time to win the pleasure of God; and seeking divine assistance through prayer and good conduct. It is a time of wonderful opportunities for making spiritual progress.

Not only does one have to refrain from eating and drinking during the hours of fasting but one also has to refrain from anger, back-biting and all forms of immodest speech. One must vigilantly guard one's tongue from the promptings of satan. Although one must observe this vigilance at all times, whether or not one is fasting, extra special attention should be maintained while fasting for it is a time when one's sincere efforts are richly rewarded.

Sin of any kind results from the failure to resist evil temptations. Fasting strengthens one's power of self control and self restraint; and thereby one becomes more fortified against the onslaughts of the devil.

Almighty God has promised that He will bless and reward those who are grateful to Him for the favours He has bestowed upon them:

“ . . . And Allah will certainly reward the grateful.”

(3:145).

As fasting is a time when one is seeking and hankering after a good measure of divine blessings a golden opportunity is presented to increase and express one's gratitude to God for all His bounties and favours. Self denial enables one to appreciate more fully the good things of life; and this realisation makes one more thankful to God for one's daily provision. Gratitude encourages charity which is another Islamic virtue that should be exercised more freely and generously when fasting. Abstinence from food and drink creates a deeper feeling of understanding and sympathy for one's less fortunate brethren who are suffering on account of poverty, famine and other kinds of distress.

While every virtue is meritorious perhaps the greatest of them all is patience. It is the key to self-mastery and the secret of success in every field of physical and spiritual life. Throughout the Holy Quran Muslims have been exhorted to cultivate this cardinal virtue for without this firm basis the edifice of righteousness cannot be properly constructed. Patience is an avenue through which the blessings of God flow:

“And seek help with patience and prayer.”

(2:46).

Patience is a pre-requisite for spiritual prosperity:

“O you believe, be patient and enjoin patience and be firm and fear God that you may prosper.”

(3:199).

Patience surmounts all obstacles and is the antidote for every affliction:

“And We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives, and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient.”

(2:151).

Impatience is a thorn in the flesh. It disturbs one's equilibrium and irritates the nervous system. Patience is not an easy virtue to master and is rarely reflected to a high degree even among those who are counted as spiritual personalities, for often they rage and quarrel like little children, even among themselves. Fasting helps to subdue the passions and develop patience. Too many people ruin their lives through anger and frustration. The patient man,

having learned how to control himself, possesses peace of mind and is revered for his spiritual strength which lifts him into the realms of righteousness where he dwells contented with his Lord.

While fasting, special attention should be given to prayer which is the direct line of communication between man and his Creator. God Almighty says:

“ . . . Pray unto Me. I will answer your prayer.”

(40:61).

Keeping in mind that God Himself has declared that the purpose of fasting is to become righteous, and He answers the prayer of the supplicant, one should fervently pray that one may attain to a higher degree of righteousness: Certainly God will answer this prayer and one will become joyous in the knowledge and experience of spiritual elevation which is the successful fulfilment of the purpose of fasting. One will realise the efficacy of fasting and witness within oneself a holy change for the better and personally understand how fasting helps one to become more righteous.

Steadfastness is an essential quality of faith without which one cannot progress very far along the path of righteousness. Fasting trains one to be steadfast in purpose when, despite hunger, thirst and fatigue, one must continue to the end. Self discipline strengthens the power of steadfastness which is the force that breaks down barriers, overcomes obstacles and enables one to hold on to the rope of Allah in the midst of the storms of life. Regarding this vital ingredient of faith God says in the Holy Quran:

“And We will surely try you until We distinguish those among you who strive for the cause of Allah and those who are STEADFAST. And We will make known the facts about you.”

(47:32).

“Verily those who say ‘Our Lord is Allah’, and then remain STEADFAST — no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.”

(45:14).

“But none is granted save those who are STEADFAST; and none is granted save those who possess a large share of good.”

(41:36).

“ . . . And exhort one another to be STEADFAST.”

(103:4).

“ . . . Verily the STEADFAST will have their reward without measure.”

(39:11).

“Allah is with the STEADFAST.”

(2:245).

Fasting reminds one of the importance of this indispensable part of faith — steadfastness. Whatever physical inconvenience one feels when fasting one must complete the fast to the finish, unless one is suddenly stricken by illness. Steadfastness nourishes righteousness.

Fasting entails hardship and discomfort to a lesser or greater extent depending on the climate, length of the day and other factors. On account of their constitution some people feel the effects of fasting more than others. The ability to bear hardships cheerfully is a mark of spiritual maturity. One must always be prepared to face hardships for they are inevitable. God says in the Holy Quran:

“We have created man to face hardships.”

(90:5).

Successful fasting causes one to become detached to some extent from material influences depending very much upon the attention and devotion one assigns to it. The body feels light and the soul bright. One does not feel fettered to this planet but seems to float over it in the realm of the angels.

When fasting one is reminded that the body should not rule the mind but rather the mind should rule the body; for as a man thinketh so he is. Righteousness may be speedily acquired by constantly feeding the mind with pure and holy thoughts through meditation, reading and conversation on spiritual matters.

Bad habits are enemies of spiritual progress. One should never become their slaves. One must break them once and for all if one wants to soar into the higher realms of holiness; otherwise they will hold one earth bound like a balloon at the end of a chain. Fasting helps to break bad habits such as smoking, tobacco chewing, reading trashy literature, visiting the cinema, watching television stories, sloth and laziness, flippant conversation, extravagance, over eating and so many other worthless and harmful pursuits.



## The Founder of Sikhism

(This article has been reproduced from the 1908 January issue of the Review of Religions. Wherever the writer used the word Muhammadan it has been altered to Muslim but not where it appears in quotes taken from the writings of non-Muslims — Editor.)

Sikhism is the religion of about two million of the people of the Punjab, and therefore on numerical grounds it does not occupy a place in the great religions of the world. But the political importance of the Sikh community, combined with various other reasons, entitles it to a certain degree of prominence. Sikhism (from the Punjabi *Sikh* — a disciple) was founded by Nanak generally known as Bawa Nanak who was born in a village near Lahore in the year 1469 of the Christian era. Though the later history of Sikhism shows it to be a political movement opposed to the Muslim rulers of the country and this attitude of the later Sikh Gurus was the cause of Sikhism being ultimately regarded as an offshoot of Hinduism, yet so close was the relation of the founder of Sikhism to Islam that even the most superficial inquirers into the reality of this creed have been led to conclude that it was meant as a sort of a compromise between Hinduism and Islam. This view of the nature of Sikhism has been taken an exception to by Dr. Trumpp, the able translator of the sacred Sikh scriptures, known as the *Adi-Granth*. But the mistaken views of this learned writer are based on the wrong supposition that the mystic principles of *Sufism* or *Tasawwuf* are derived from Hindu sources, it being a fact that Nanak had the closest relations with the Muslim *Sufis* of the time. The word *Sufi* is undoubtedly of an Arabic origin and *Sufism* existed in Islam long before the Muslims settled in India, Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam, being generally admitted by the *Sufis* to be the founder of their system. Dr. Trumpp's views on this point must therefore be rejected at the very commencement of an enquiry into the religion of the founder of Sikhism, his deep knowledge of the Sikh scriptures notwithstanding. For a detailed refutation of his views, I would refer the reader to the article on Sikhism in Hugh's Dictionary of Islam whose learned author has, after a study of the various manuscripts in the original language, found such a deep connection existing between Islam and true Sikhism that he has considered it necessary to discuss the latter cult in a *Dictionary of Islam*.

Mr. Frederic Pincott, the author of the article alluded to above, comes to the conclusion that "a careful investigation of early Sikh traditions points

strongly to the conclusion that the religion of Nanak was really intended as a compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism, if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a Muhammadan sect." But a deeper reflection combined with certain other facts to which Mr. Pincott evidently had not access, places it beyond all doubt that it is truer to speak of the religion of the founder of Sikhism as the Islam of the *Sufis* than as a compromise between Hinduism and Islam. Early traditions of Nanak are preserved in the *Sákhis* or traditional stories, while his sayings have been collected in the *Granth*, and it is chiefly from these two sources that information as to the religion of Nanak is sought. But the evidence from both these sources is not so trustworthy as to be accepted without limitation. The *Granth* did not come into existence in the form of a written collection until after the Sikh community had assumed the attitude of a political movement directed against the authority of the Muslim monarchs and gradually drifted into the old Hinduism which the Founder himself had renounced. Mr. Pincott says:

"Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, was an active and ambitious man. He laid aside the dress of a *faqir* which had been worn by all his predecessors and converted the voluntary offerings of his disciples into a tax. This raised him to some importance, and enabled him to take men into his pay, a proceeding which conferred additional dignity upon him, and, at the same time, intensified the jealousy of his Muhammadan neighbours. As an additional means of uniting his community into one compact body, he collected the words of Nanak, and those of other saintly personages into a book, which he called *Granth*, i.e., the book, and strictly enjoined his followers to accept no speech as authoritative which was not contained in the book."

The circumstances under which the *Granth* was collected clearly show that the object of Guru Arjan was to separate Sikhism from Islam. At any rate, a split having already been caused, the collector must have taken the greatest precaution to exclude all sayings from the collection which clearly favoured Islam. And as all sayings which he did not admit into the collection were to be treated as inauthoritative, it was natural that they should have soon been forgotten. It must, moreover, be remembered that the words of Nanak were transmitted orally for nearly three-quarters of a century, and, therefore, with the change of the Sikh attitude towards Islam, imperceptible change must have been brought about in the words of Nanak, and as the long course of oral transmission cannot be expected to have preserved the sayings in their pristine purity, the changes from time to time must have been in accordance with the growing tendency of Sikhism. As regards the *Sákhis*, they contain such a profusion of curious traditions that information derived from this source also must be taken with reserve, as historical accuracy does not seem to have been aimed at in them, but being an earlier record they have no doubt a greater claim upon our attention, and with proper sifting many useful facts can be drawn from them.

Notwithstanding the circumstances attending the collection of the *Granth* as pointed out above, there are clear traces in that book which show Nanak's renunciation of Hinduism and his acceptance of the faith of Islam. At the time of Nanak, the great distinction between Islam and Hinduism was that the former taught the Unity of God while the latter represented idol-worship. Now the one thing on which stress is laid in the sayings of Nanak is the Unity of God. The mere fact that Nanak used sometimes the word *Paramesur* or *Hari* and sometimes the word *Khuda* or *Allah* as the name of the Divine Being does not show that his conception of God was a compromise between the Hindu and Muslim conceptions. According to the Hindu conception of the Divine Being, soul and matter are not a creation of God, but are co-eternal with Him, while Nanak taught that the soul of man was "a ray of light from the light Divine," and that He was the Creator of the universe, and his whole teaching in relation to God is nothing more than a reproduction of the utterances of the Muslim *Sufis* as Mr. Pincott has shown at length. In accordance, too, with the teachings of Islam, Nanak denies the incarnation of the Divine Being, as he says: "He does not die nor perish, He neither comes nor goes."

Another important point to be borne in mind is that in the whole of the *Granth*, Nanak nowhere deprecates the Holy Quran while he speaks of the Vedas as mere stories which do not possess the vital power to bring life to their votaries. None has more keenly felt this attack on the Vedas than Swami Daya Nand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, who is exasperated to unrestrainable rage at Nanak's description of the Vedas and speaks of him in opprobrious terms. In the *Satayarth Prakash*, he thus speaks of Nanak: "He (Nanak) wanted to show that he had some pretensions to the knowledge of *Sanskrit*. But how could one know *Sanskrit* without learning it. It is possible that he might have passed for a *Sanskrit* scholar before those ignorant villagers who had never heard a man speaking *Sanskrit*. He could never have done it unless he was anxious for gaining public applause, fame and glory. He must have sought after fame or he would have preached in the language he knew and told the people that he had not read *Sanskrit*. Since he was a little vain, he must have even resorted to some sort of imposture to gain reputation and acquire fame. Hence it is that in his book called *Grantha*, the *Vedas* have been praised as well as censured, because had he not done so, some one might have asked him the meaning of a *Vedic Mantra*, and as he would not have been able to explain it, he would have been lowered in the estimation of the people. Anticipating this difficulty he, from the first, denounced the Vedas here and there, but occasionally also spoke well of the Vedas, because had he not done so, the people would have called him a *Nāstika*, i.e., an atheist or a reviler of the Vedas," (English translation of *Satayarth Prakash*, page 506). Some of these remarks are, no doubt, uncalled for but a strong adherent of the Vedas like Swami Daya Nand could not pass over a denunciation of the Vedas without taking to task the person who had done it. An example of the rejection of the Vedas by Nanak is the following verse of the *Granth* which has

been quoted in the *Satyarth Prakash* also: "Even Brahma who read the *Vedas* died, for all the four *Vedas* are mere stories. The *Vedas* can never know the greatness of a *Sādhu* (i.e., one who knows God)."

As regards the Holy Quran, the attitude of Nanak towards this book was always respectful and he enjoined the reciting of the Holy Quran and the saying of prayers in accordance with the Muslim faith. Consider the following verses of the *Granth* which are taken from Trumpp's translation as given in Hugh's Dictionary:

"Then thou art a Mulla, then thou are a Qazi, if thou knowest the name of God (*Khuda*).

"None, though he be very learned, will remain, he hurries onwards.

"He is a Qazi by whom his own self is abandoned, and the One Name is made His support.

"He is, and will be, He will not be destroyed, true is the Creator.

"Five times he prays (*Niwaj gujarhi*), he reads the book of the Quran."  
(*Translation*, page 37).

In these verses the reading of the Quran, the saying of the five daily prayers, and entire submission of oneself to God which is the literal significance of Islam, are strictly enjoined as the true way to salvation. On another occasion we have in the *Granth*: "*Pirs*, Prophets, Saliks, Sadiqs, Martyrs, Shaikhs, Mullas and Darvishes; blessings will come to those who constantly recite *darud*." Dr. Trumpp wrongly translates *darud* as meaning "the salvation of God" and the passage becomes meaningless as it reads in his translation: "A great blessing has come upon them who continually recite his salvation" (*translation*, page 75.) Now reciting the salvation of God does not carry any significance. The true meaning of *darud* is "invoking the blessings of God upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad" as the Muslims are commanded to do in the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. Hence the verse means that of all the righteous men "blessings will come to those who continually pray for the blessings of God upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad"; in other words Divine blessings cannot be granted to any person who is not a follower of the Holy Prophet of Islam. These are clear evidences of Nanak's profession of Islam and his renunciation of Hinduism.

The only thing that can be said against this is that if Nanak had renounced Hinduism and professed Islam, why did he sometimes praise the *Vedas* or express a belief in the doctrine of transmigration. As regards the first objection, even a Muslim does not outright condemn the *Vedas*, for he does not deny that these books may have been revealed to Hindus through the prophets of God, and hence it is not inconsistent with the belief that he holds

that he may speak of the Vedas reverently and in fact every Muslim ought to do so. But when the Vedas are rejected by a Muslim, it is meant that they have been altered to such an extent that truth has almost been hidden under the mass of errors invented, and introduced into them, by the later generations, and that hence they do not now possess the vitality to breathe spiritual life into a man. This is exactly what Nanak said and he does not go beyond this. As regards the doctrine of transmigration, even the *sufis* hold it in a certain sense. They do not believe, as the Hindus do, that the soul of man passes from one body to another in this world, but they hold that the souls of the evil doers acquire a resemblance with certain lower animals, and therefore in a spiritual sense they speak of the soul of man passing into the form of an animal. Nanak may have meant nothing more than this, and his words may have been misinterpreted by his followers as they gradually departed from his true teachings, or such verses may have been altogether of a later growth. It is even possible that as the change of Nanak's faith to Islam was gradual, he being originally a Hindu, ideas which do not quite tally with the teachings of Islam may have been expressed by him at an earlier period when he had not been yet wholly converted to Islam and these expressions may have been preserved by such of his disciples as came from among the Hindus and retained a Hindu bent of mind. We say this, because, besides what is contained in the *Granth* and the *Sákhis*, there is clear and strong historical proof of the conversion of Nanak to Islam, but before referring to it we would say a few words about the testimony available from the *Sakhis* and other manuscripts dealt with in Mr. Pincott's article on Sikhism.

"The traditions of Nanak preserved in the *Janam Sakhi*," writes Mr. Pincott, "are full of evidences of his alliance with Muhammadanism." Nanak was an employee in the service of Nawab Daulat Khan when he first felt a call to a religious duty. His interview with his master after the inspiration is thus described in the *Janam Sákhi*. The Nawab sent for Nanak and the latter replied; "'Hear, O Nawab, when I was thy servant, I came before thee; now I am not thy servant; now I am become the servant of *Khuda* (God)'. The Nawab said: 'Sir, (if) you have become such, then come with me and say prayers (*Niwaj* or *Namaz*). It is Friday.' Nanak said: 'Go, Sir.' The Nawab, with the Qazi and Nanak, and a great concourse of people went into the Jami Masjid and stood there. All the people who came into the Masjid began to say, 'To-day Nanak has entered this sect!' There was a commotion among the respectable Hindus in Sultanpür; and Jairam, being much grieved, returned home. Nanaki (Nanak's sister) perceiving that her husband came home dejected, rose up and said, 'Why it is that you are to-day so grieved?' Jairam replied, 'Listen, O servant of *Paramesur* (God), what has thy brother Nanak done! He has gone with the Nawab into the Jami' Masjid to pray; and in the city, there is an outcry among the Hindus and Musalmans that Nanak has become a Turk (Muslim) to-day' (India Office manuscript, No. 2885, fol. 39)" (Hugh's Dictionary of Islam, page 586).

To this anecdote, Mr. Pincott adds the following significant note:

“From the foregoing, it is perfectly clear that the immediate successors of Nanak believed that he went very close to Muhammadanism; and we can scarcely doubt the accuracy of their view of the matter, when we consider the almost contemporaneous character of the record, from which extracts have been given, and the numerous confirmatory evidences contained in the religion itself. . . . It will, also, be noticed that Muhammadans are affected by the logic and piety of Nanak; and to them he shows himself so partial that he openly accompanies them to the mosque and thereby causes his Hindu neighbours and friends to believe that he is actually converted to the faith of Islam.”

It should be borne in mind that the proof Nanak gave of his having become a servant of God was not by going to a Hindu temple, but by joining a Muslim public service in a mosque; and therefore even if he may not have become a thorough convert to Islam at this early stage, he had no respect for Hindu forms of worship. After this we find Nanak assuming the garb of Muslim *faqirs* (not of Hindu *Sādhus*) and seeking their company, living and conversing with them freely. We find him openly giving and receiving Muhammadan forms of salutation, and giving his assent to being called a *Darwesh*. Among the Muslim *Sufis* he seems to be quite at home, while the Hindus missed in him every mark of being a Hindu, as the anecdote of Nanak's journey to Benares shows. After these events, Nanak remained for full twelve years in the company of Shaikh Farid, a famous Muslim saint, and at this time he seems to have been thoroughly converted to Islam, even if he had before this any predilection for Hinduism. I again take from Mr. Pincott's article the story of his first interview with Shaikh Farid:

“The most significant associate which Nanak found was undoubtedly Shaikh Farid. He was a famous Muhammadan Pir, and a strict *Sufi* who attracted much attention by his piety and formed a school of devotees of his own. Shaikh Farid must have gained considerable notoriety in his day, for his special disciples are still to be found in the Punjab, who go by the name of Shaikh Farid's *faqirs*. This strict Muhammadan became the confidential friend and companion of Nanak; and if all other traditions had failed, this alone would have been enough to establish the eclectic character of early Sikhism. The first greeting of these famous men is significant enough. Shaikh Farid exclaimed, “*Allah, Allah, O Darwesh*”; to which Nanak replied, ‘*Allah* is the object of my efforts, O Farid! Come Shaikh Farid! *Allah, Allah* (only) is ever my object. The words in the original being *Allah, Farid, Judhi; hamesa, āu, Sekh Farid, Juhdi Allah Allah*. (India Office MS., No. 1728, fol. 86.) The use of the Arabic term *Juhd* implies the energy of the purpose with which he sought for *Allah*; and the whole phrase is forcibly Muhammadan in tone.”

“An intimacy at once sprang up between these two remarkable men; and Shaikh Farid accompanied Nanak in all his wanderings for the next twelve years.”

To stick to his theory that Nanak's religion was an admixture of Hindu and Muslim ideas, Mr. Pincott regards Nanak's intimacy with Shaikh Farid as not going beyond proving the “eclectic character” of early Sikhism, but the fact is that close friendship and constant company with a Muslim *Pir* for twelve long years shows clearly that Nanak had been completely converted to Islam, for without an agreement of religious ideas such an intimacy which was based only on religious grounds could never have remained unbroken for such a long time. In fact, as I will show later on, there is actual historical proof that at this time Nanak observed all the religious ceremonies of Islam and all the religious practices observed by the *Sufis* generally. Even the *Janam Sakhi* shows clearly that after this Nanak was looked upon as a true Muslim, and his very touch was looked upon as defiling the Hindu and his sacred places. The following anecdote with the comment upon it is taken from the same writer whom I have already quoted:

“As soon as Nanak and his friend Shaikh Farid began to travel in company, it is related that they reached a place called *Bislar*, where the people applied cow-dung to every spot on which they had stood, as soon as they departed. (I.O. MS. No. 1728, fol. 94.) The obvious meaning of this is, that orthodox Hindus considered every spot polluted which Nanak and his companion had visited. This could never have been related of Nanak, had he remained a Hindu by religion.”

There is also a tradition in the *Janam Sākhi* that Nanak had performed a pilgrimage to Mecca, but European critics generally consider it to be a fabrication, though Mr. Pincott adds that “the mere intervention of the tale is enough to prove that those who most intimately knew Nanak considered his relationship to Muhammadanism sufficiently close to warrant the belief in such a pilgrimage.” But as we have stated above, the condition of Sikhism had so changed after the death of its founder that any invention in favour of Islam was not possible though many such details might have been suppressed. It was not impossible that a man who passed twelve years of his life in the company of a Muslim and who was travelling from place to place for the greater part of his life should perform a pilgrimage to the sacred Muslim temple at Mecca. “In the course of his teaching in Mecca,” we are told, “Nanak is made to say: ‘Though men, they are like women, who do not obey the *Sunnat* and Divine commandment nor the order of the book (i.e., Quran).’ (I.O. MS. No. 1728, fol. 212). He also admitted the intercession of Muhammad, denounced the drinking of Bhang, wine, etc., acknowledged the existence of hell, the punishment of the wicked, and the resurrection of mankind; in fact, the words here ascribed to Nanak contain a full confession of Islam.”

The full text of this teaching as given in the *Janam Sakhi* of Baba Nanak is as follows:

“His worship (the prophet) has said in his decision and the book.

“Dogs that watch well at night time are better than non-praying men.

“The wretches who do not wake and remain asleep after the call (to prayer.)

“Who do not obey *Sunnat* and Divine commandment nor the order of the book:

“They are burnt in hell, like roasted meat on a spit.

“Great misery befall them, who are drinking *Bhang* and wine.

“Who walk according to the advice of their lust, they will suffer great pain:

“At the day of resurrection there will be a clamour of noise.

“At that day mountains will fly about as when cotton is corded, O Kazi, none other will sit (there), God Himself will stand.

“According to justice all will be decided, the tablet is handed over at the gate.

“Just inquiries are made there; by whom sins were committed,

“They are bound thrown into hell, with a layer (of earth) on their neck and with a black face.

“The doers of good works will be unconcerned at that day.

“Those will be rescued, O Nanak, whose shelter his worship (the Prophet) is.”

It is absolutely unreasonable to think that the story of the pilgrimage to Mecca is a fabrication for the simple reason that it shows a full confession of Islam on the part of Nanak, for Nanak's own conduct leaves no doubt that he was a thorough convert to Islam, as the events already narrated have shown, and even the Granth contains exhortations for the saying of five daily prayers and the constant reading of the Holy Quran as we have already shown in a quotation. But in addition to these facts on which light has already been cast, though the right conclusions may not have been drawn therefrom, we would here refer to two important testimonies showing that Nanak was thoroughly converted to Islam. The first of these is the discovery of the *Chola* (cloak) of Nanak. It may not be logically correct to style the disclosure of the important facts relating to Nanak's *Chola* as the discovery of the *Chola* itself, yet so great is the misconception that exists about its true nature even in the minds of those who are fully aware of its origin, and so immensely important and so utterly



subversive of long cherished theories are the facts now disclosed that there is hardly any exaggeration in terming the disclosure as an actual discovery of the *Chola*.

The *Chola* reverently called the *Chola Sahib* by the Sikhs is kept at Dera Nanak in the Punjab in a sacred building specially built for the sacred relic left by the founder of Sikhism. It is a long cloak with short sleeves and is made of brown cotton cloth. It is stated in the *Sakhi* of the *Chola* that upon Nanak's death, the sacred *Chola* passed to his first successor, Angrad, who wore it about his head at the time of his being ordained a Guru and kept it with him throughout his life with great honour and respect. The ceremony of seeking a blessing from the *Chola* by wearing it about the head at the time of being ordained a Guru was duly gone through by every succeeding Guru until the time of the fifth Guru Arjan Das. Not only did they wear it on their heads at the time of succession, but also sought blessing from it on all important occasions. Now in the days of Arjan Das a tank (pond) was being dug at Amritsar and many zealous Sikhs were engaged in the task. One of them named Tota Ram worked so hard and with such zeal that being extremely pleased with him, Arjan Das expressed his readiness to grant him anything that he asked. Upon this Tota Ram begged of him the *Sukhi Dan*, i.e., the gift which should give him eternal happiness, or the thing by which he should be guided in his religion. Arjan Das knew at once that he was asking for the *Chola*, for in the *Chola* only was the guidance to the true religion, and said: "Thou hast asked of me my whole property." He then made over the *Chola* to Tota Ram. After some time it fell into the hands of Kabil Mal, a descendant of Nanak, and since then it has remained in the hands of his descendants at Dera Nanak in the Gurdaspur district.

The origin of the *Chola* is thus described by a tradition related in the *Sakhi* of Bhai Bala, more commonly known as Angad's *Sakhi*, Angad being the first Guru whom Nanak himself had nominated to succeed him:

"Mardana humbly asked the Guru (i.e., Nanak) as to Arabia. The Guru replied that he would take Mardana to that country if he liked. Again the Guru said: Mardana, how dost thou like the ideas of going to Arabia?' He replied, 'Just as it please you.' Then Nanak set off from that place and they both reached Arabia. The king of this country was known as Lajward. The people were in an evil plight on account of his cruelty and oppression. He used to murder every one who went to his country from India. In this adversity they humbly prayed to God and their prayer was accepted on account of their humility. A voice then came to Nanak from heaven, saying, 'Nanak, I am well pleased with thee and grant thee a dress.' Nanak, said, 'As it please thee, O Lord, for thou art one and without any partner or rival.' Then Nanak prostrated himself and thanked God. A cloak (*Chola*) was then granted him and upon it were written the words of nature in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Hindi and

Sanskrit. Having donned the *Chola*, the Guru seated himself outside the gate of the city. After seven days there was a general talk among the people that there was a *darwesh*, wearing a cloak on which were written the thirty sections of the Divine Quran. The news was at last brought to the king that outside the city there sat a *darwesh* wearing a cloak on which were written the thirty sections of the Quran. Upon hearing this the king sent his vizier to get the cloak from the *darwesh*. The vizier accordingly went to Nanak and told him that he should make over the cloak to him as the king wanted it, and that he should be punished in case of disobedience. Nanak told him to take off the cloak if it was in his power. The people then ran to him but they could not take off the cloak as it was a gift of God and had been woven by the hands of nature."

The tradition then goes on to relate that the king tried all the means in his power to get the cloak from the *darwesh* but that he was unsuccessful. We have here of course fact and fiction mixed together, or at any rate facts greatly exaggerated to make them look supernatural. But the fact, no doubt, remains and is strongly corroborated by other historical testimony that a *Chola* was worn by Nanak. It is not necessary for us to discuss how he got it. The mere fact that the tradition relates the *Chola* as having come down from heaven and the words written upon it as having been written by the hand of God does not throw any discredit upon its truthfulness. The words written upon the *Chola* may have been revealed to Nanak by God and in that case they would be spoken of as having come down from heaven or as having been written by the hand of God. Such metaphors are common in spiritual language, and that which is revealed by God is spoken of as the work of God.

So far as to the history of the *Chola* as given in the sacred books of the Sikhs. Tradition described the words written upon it as being words of five different languages, but what these words actually were was known to none. On account of the high repute and sanctity of the *Chola* among the Sikhs, the practice had become common from the very earliest times of offering to it coverings to protect it from wear and tear. These offerings were made even by Rajas and great *Raises* who worshipped it and sought blessings from it. Some of the most famous men among the Sikhs are said to have offered these coverings. As the coverings increased, the *Chola* itself became a thing quite unseen. The practice, therefore, became common very early of showing only a very small part of the sleeve of the *Chola* to the worshippers, the rest remaining hidden. The letters over this part became quite obscure on account of being constantly handled and rubbed. Within recent times no one could see the real *Chola*, the credulous and mostly ignorant worshippers remaining satisfied with a corner.

The words written upon the *Chola* which tradition describes as having been written by the hand of God remained a mystery until very recent times, it being generally supposed that verses from the sacred scriptures of all regions

were written upon it. On the 30th September 1895, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (the Promised Messiah) with some of his companions undertook a journey to Dera Nanak to see the *Chola* and discover, if possible, the actual words written upon it. The journey ended in a remarkable success. By special arrangements made with the guardians of the *Chola*, about three hundred coverings, mostly of fine cloth or silk, were taken off, and the words which had not been seen for more than three hundred years were thus revealed. All the coverings were removed one by one and it took the guardians more than an hour to unveil the hidden words of the *Chola*. As the last covering was taken off, a startling disclosure was made. There was not a single verse of the Vedas or any other religious book upon it except the Holy Quran, nor was there any writing upon it in any language except Arabic. From top to bottom the verses of the Holy Quran, especially those refuting the false doctrines of other faiths with regard to Divine Unity and attributes, were written upon it.

The part revealed first of all contained the well-known verse with which the Holy Quran itself and every one of its chapters begins, "In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate." Then followed the reputed formula of the Muslim, "Nothing deserves to be worshipped besides God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." When this revelation was made, the guardians shrank a little from further disclosure but they were prevailed upon by various inducements. Verse after verse of the Holy Quran was then revealed. I quote here two or three examples. "Verily the true religion with God is the faith of Islam." "Say, God is One. Everything owes its existence to God, but God owes His existence to none. Neither does He beget, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him." "Verily those who enter into thy *bai'at*, O Prophet, enter into the *bai'at* of God." Besides these there were the well-known verse known as the *Ayat ul Kursi*, the Chapter entitled the *Help*, the chapter entitled the *Fatiha*, the names of the Divine Being mentioned in the Holy Quran, and several other verses of the Quran, in all of which importance is attached to adherence to the principles of Islam.

Is it only a chance with no purpose beneath it that the *Chola* of Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, has verses of the Holy Quran written upon it? The whole history of the *Chola* belies such a supposition. Nanak wore the *Chola* that no one might be deceived as to the religion he professed. The evidence of the Unity of God and of the Divine mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was not only uttered by his lips, but was expressed on his very clothes. How could he be best known as a Muslim except by wearing a cloak which could not be worn by any but the truest Muslim? Wherever he passed he was a easily known to all as a Muslim, and perhaps this was the reason that when he set his foot on Hindu ground, the place was at once purified with cow-dung; urine and dung of cows being the things which are superstitiously believed by the Hindus to purify, and are even

administered to human beings when they are deemed to have done an unholy deed. The asserted origin of the *Chola* also corroborates the conclusion that Nanak wore it as an apparent sign of his being a Muslim. Being a Hindu by birth, he could not for a moment wear the *Chola* unless he had renounced the faith condemned by the words of the *Chola*. The *Chola*, in fact, affords the only uninterrupted, and, therefore, the only sure testimony of Nanak's religious principles. It is a thing which Nanak's own hands prepared and it did not, like the Granth, come into existence a century after the founder.

In short, there are strong and valid arguments showing that the *Chola* which is now kept at Dera Nanak is the very *chola* which Nanak wore as a sign of Islam. Firstly, it is mentioned in the *Sakhi* of Angad, Nanak's first successor, and the *sakhi* is one of the earliest writings of the Sikh religion. Secondly, there is a book in the hands of the descendants of Kabli Mal, the present guardians of the *Chola*, known as the *Chola sakhi*, and in it, it is clearly stated that the *Chola* was the gift of God to Nakan, and that his successors all sought blessings from it and honoured it. This is a clear proof that the *Chola* has ever been regarded as the spiritual gift of Nanak to his successors and as a source of blessings. Thirdly, the *Chola* has been honoured and respected and even worshipped by the followers of Nanak continually during the four hundred years which have elapsed since it came into existence. Annual fairs and gatherings have also been always held in connection with it, and the coverings that have been offered from time to time by Rajas and Raises are a standing testimony to the honour in which the *Chola* has always been held by people of all classes among the followers of Nanak. This evidence shows clearly that Nanak did not hang between 'Hinduism and Islam, but that he was a Muslim in the true sense of the word.

The other testimony of Nanak's complete adherence to Islam is his *chilla*. *Chilla* is a religious practice resorted to by Muslim *Sufis*, and the religious exercises which must be performed in the course of the *chilla* are strictly Muslim, as they include saying of prayers and fasting and other devotions. Sirsa is a small town in the Punjab some distance from Panipat, but it is famous for having once been the seat of reputed Muslim saints or *pirs*. Here the famous *Dargah* (mausoleum) of Abdul Shakur Salmi, a well-known saint, and in the three sides of the yard of this mausoleum, situated near to each other, are five closets, known as the *chillas* of the five saints who performed their *chillas* in these places. These five *chillas* are respectively the *chilla* of Shaikh Bahawal Haq, the *chilla* of Shaikh Farid, the *chilla* of Bawa Nanak, the *chilla* of Lal Shahbaz and the *chilla* of Syed Jalal. The reader would at once see that Shaikh Farid whose *chilla* is met with here along with the *chilla* of Nanak was the trusted companion and intimate friend of Nanak, in whose company Nanak passed twelve years of his life. The discovery of the *chilla* of Nanak shows clearly and conclusively like the discovery of his *chola*, that Nanak was a thorough Muslim who passed his time in the company of Muslim

saints and *pirs* and went through all the religious ceremonies and devotional exercises which were practised by those Muhammadan saints.

In the *chola* and the *chilla* of Nanak we have, therefore, clear evidence which places the fact of his complete conversion to Islam beyond the shadow of a doubt, and, therefore, even the theory that Nanak's religion was a compromise between Hinduism and Islam must be given up. How such a great departure has been made by his followers from his true principles requires a separate treatment and the subject has to a certain extent been ably discussed in Hugh's Dictionary of Islam, but we would add, before bringing this article to a close, that very few Muslims would have sought to go to Nanak as there was an abundance of other and more well-known Muslim saints at the time, and the cult of Nanak thus gradually came to be monopolized by converts from Hinduism who by and by reverted back to their old faith, the process being facilitated by the open conflict between the Sikh Gurus and Muhammadan monarchs which arose from political causes and ended in the religious separation of the Sikhs.

### Sayings of Muhammad (Peace be on him)

The Lord doth not regard a prayer in which the heart doth not accompany the body.

The love of the world is the root of all evils.

All actions are judged by the motives prompting them.

Do not speak ill of the dead.

The most excellent Jihad (Striving in the way of God) is that for the conquest of self.

Kill not your hearts with excess of eating and drinking.

Strive always to excel in virtue and truth.

All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most beloved God who trieth to do most good to God's creatures.

Be persistent in good actions.

Humility and courtesy are acts of piety.

## Focus on the Shroud

(Dr. Hussain M. Sajid)

[the substance of a letter addressed to the Editor of the *Biblical Archaeological Review*]

The article "New Evidence May Explain Image on Shroud of Turin" by Joseph A. Kohlbeck and Eugenia L. Nitowski, in *BAR* July/August 1986 is thought-provoking. It is another significant step towards establishing the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin to be the burial cloth of Jesus. The authors have intelligently formalised their theory, based upon the scientific evidence about the formation of the image on the shroud. I agree with the authors that the body-heat and mercerization was instrumental in producing these images, but, I disagree with the source of this body-heat, as proposed by the authors.

The events surrounding the Passion and Resurrection has been an enigma for centuries. This enigma of the crucifixion of Jesus was solved by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, ninety years ago when he convincingly expounded his original thesis in his well-known work, 'Jesus in India' and stated that though Jesus was put on the cross, suffered the trauma of crucifixion, went through the agony of dehydration, lack of sleep and extreme physical exertion which produced sweating but Jesus did not die on the cross. He was taken down from the cross in a semi-conscious state, his heart still beating and causing the blood to extravasate around the edges of the wounds. STURP Scientists also believe that the stains around 'wound' images on the shroud are serum, the thin liquid that separates out from blood during coagulation. The coagulation of the blood is a specific property of the living blood and ceases to be after death.

Dr. Pierre Barbet's observations at Dachau that the prisoners hung by their hands produced a profuse sweat all over the body falls short of the observation as to this process of sweating continued or not, after the prisoners were pronounced dead. It is feasible that the sweating occurred during the state of agony and stopped when the prisoner died.

The study of heat-stroke victims clearly indicates that heat-stroke is not a universally fatal disease as the evidence quoted states that nine deaths

occurred in a group of thirty-six patients, a mortality rate of twenty-five percent. Jesus too survived death by heat-stroke and when he was taken down by his friends and tended to, he revived. He was wrapped in the shroud, laid upon the cold stone bench in the tomb and the body-heat produced the image on the shroud by the interaction with the mildly alkaline cloth, by the living body by the mercerisation process.

The authors further propose that the body was in rigor mortis. This claim is not supported by any medical evidence. After the rigor-mortis sets in, the body becomes stiff and cold and thus could not have produced the images by mercerization. The images of the shroud clearly show that the arms of the body are placed in the lap over the lower abdomen, one upon another, a position which would have been impossible had the rigor-mortis set in before the body was wrapped in the shroud. If Jesus had died on the cross the position of the arms would have corresponded to the position on the cross, i.e., arms abducted to ninety degree or more, and an external force of considerable degree would have been necessary to keep the arms down and folded on to the abdomen. There is not an iota of evidence that any rope or cord of any sort was used to sustain this position. Father Wilde, in BAR Vol. X No. 5 Sept/Oct criticises the advocates of rigor-mortis and poses another question: "The hands of Jesus on the Shroud are not bound or fastened with cloth or with a cord so as to hold them in place. Apparently rigor-mortis is taken to be the sole agent retaining the body in what Dr. Jackson tells us was a quite unnatural and relaxed position. A very convenient type of *Rigor-Mortis*, I would note, not yet so advanced as to prevent those who were burying Jesus from arranging his hands and arms freely in this fashion but just enough, supposedly, to permit Jesus's body to retain this awkward and strained posture once placed in it.

Since Jesus's burial attendants knew as well as we do . . . it is puzzling that they none-the-less made no effort to bind Jesus's wrists so that they might remain in the desired position."

To me, the modern science has not deepened, rather it has allayed the mystery and has strengthened my belief that Jesus did not die on the cross. It is a simple answer to the riddle, simple and easy which is going to make millions uneasy but it demands consideration without any pre-conceived ideas. The evidence that Jesus was alive when taken down from the cross has been shrouded by faith in mystery for centuries and the shroud is unfolding it gradually and convincingly.

Yours truly,

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## **Some Misconceptions about Islam in the West**

**(Mustafa Yusaf McDermott)**

Myths are weeds that grow in the garden of the mind; unless they are removed truth will never grow. On the subject of Muslim women and Islamic marriage, these myths have grown into a virtual jungle of distortion and misconception. The Muslim world has often been projected by the West as a Disneyland of Arabian Nights and Turkish Delight, in which dark-eyed Sheikhs on Arab stallions charged across the desert carrying off reluctant maidens to exotic harems. Even in these petro-dollar days, there are some highly intelligent Europeans who seriously believe that Muslim women are denied their human rights and are regarded by Muslim men as unintelligent and inferior. Even in Britain there is a startling number of people who really believe that most Muslim men have four wives hidden away in domestic subservience, restricted to a life of toil and unceasing satisfaction of their master's carnal lusts.

Making such contemporary generalizations from historical exceptions may help to provide a television fantasy world into which we can escape from facing reality and confirm our prejudices, but it is seriously detrimental to the promotion of tolerance, understanding and rapport in the plural society of Britain. The propagation of myths serves only to divide us.

The three most outstanding misconceptions, derived from the indiscriminate mass media projection of myth and fantasy, concerning Islam in general and Muslim women in particular revolve around the following inexactitudes and distortions:

- (a) Arabia is Islam! — Islam is Arabia!
- (b) Polygamy is the common form of Islamic marriage. (i.e. all Muslims have four wives).
- (c) Muslim women have no rights! ("Women are the servants of men").

### **Islam is Arabia!**

It is from this popular misconception that most other myths about Muslims are derived.



Islam, a comprehensive spiritual guidance and complete social system, is the Divine path revealed by God for all mankind. The believers of this unique faith are spread throughout the whole of the civilised world and represent every ethnic group and language of the five continents.

Islam, in its final stage, was revealed by God through the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) in Arabia and in the Arabic language, over a period of twenty-three years in the seventh century after the Prophet Jesus (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). From the time, Islam continued to spread with amazing speed, incredible success and with a far reaching influence on all aspects of life, leaving an indelible imprint on the development of science, art and social development in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies. The focal point of Islam to which every Muslim turns to pray is the *Ka'bah* in Makka (Arabia) which was built by the Prophet Abraham (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) about 4,000 years ago, at the command of God, as an inviolable place of worship to which millions of Muslims make an annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*).

Of the nearly one billion Muslims dispersed throughout the world, the combined population of all the Arab-speaking countries is only about 130 million (roughly 15%); Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Emirates, about which there are so many current legends, account for less than 13 million; the whole of North Africa (47 million) and Egypt (33 million), with which Europeans appear to be best acquainted, total approximately 80 million. It is significant that the combined Muslim population of Indonesia (125 million +) and Malaysia (6 million +) is greater, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India account for a further 131 million. In Turkey (38 million) and Iran (32 million) there are 70 millions Muslims. The total Muslim population of China incidentally, exceeds the total population of Saudi Arabia. The combined population of Muslims in the communist countries or Europe and the Soviet Union is 81 million and in the non-Arabic speaking countries of Central and South Africa, there are more than 87 million.<sup>1</sup>

From this brief outline of the global spread of Islam, the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Islam becomes clearly apparent.

Although the Muslim community is inalienably coherent by a commonly shared and actively expressed structure of norms and values, we find within it many variations in customs, traditions and folklore relating to dress, diet, temperament, attitudes, art, occupations, etc., obviously influenced by varied environments. Nevertheless, in respect of modesty, free intermingling of the sexes, family, marriage and morality, this polyglot of nations more or

1. For full details of the population of the Muslim world, see M. M. Ahsan, *Islam: Faith and Practice*, Islamic Foundation 1976, Section: Appendix. See also *World Muslim Gazetteer*, Umma Publishing House, Karachi, 1975.

less follow the teachings of the Qur'ān and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and do their best to conform to Islamic injunctions and prohibition without contravention, and within this framework of cultural diversity.

To project contemporary Christianity to the Muslim world in terms of the diabolical activities of some of the Borgia family of Italy, the marital record of Henry VIII, and the European involvement in the African slave trade to America in the eighteenth century would be ludicrous and totally unjust. To accept the equally absurd projection of Islam in Western mass media and literature is similarly irrational and contrary to the successful establishment of economic, social and cultural exchange which prevailing circumstances in the world necessitate.

### **Polygamy**

Polygamy, in Islam, is not an imposed and universal form of marriage. It is a Divine concession to the distressing reality of social circumstances such as war, and the surplus of women it creates, childlessness and the chronic sickness of the first wife which can make it necessary and practicable as a prevention and solution of social problems which these unfortunate circumstances would otherwise create. Individuals may face circumstances such as have made extra-marital sex a common occurrence in many societies. Polygamy is socially more secure for women, infinitely fairer to children, legally binding and morally preferable to bigamy, prostitution, mistresses and other similarly permissive patterns of sexual behaviour which appear to threaten the stability and dignity of family life. It certainly reduces the pressures leading to divorce and separation and assures the children a stable family life. However, in the whole of contemporary Islamic society, monogamy is the norm; polygamy is the exception.

In Arabia, Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan, etc., polygamy is very rarely practised by Muslims and most certainly there is little evidence, even as the exception to the rule, that it is prevalent among the settled Muslim community in Britain. Polygamy functions in Islam when the circumstances it was meant to contain prevail; when these circumstances, such as prolonged war etc. do not exist, polygamy ceases to flourish and monogamy is, as now, the norm. The majority of Muslim men are quite content with one wife and the almost negligible number who do practise polygamy do so for the legitimate reasons outlined above, and not from insatiable sexual appetite and for status symbols as legend and myth would have us believe.

### **The Rights of Muslim Women**

“Muslim women have no freedom, they are slaves to their husbands”

declared an English mother as she quickly packed processed food into her shopping bag during a lunchtime break from the factory. "Freedom from what?" asked the young Muslim student in her break from college, "Freedom to share her earnings and wealth with her husband; freedom to share responsibility for keeping the children, freedom to leave the children to roam the streets; freedom to go home and cook and wash and clean after a day at the factory, and still be a friendly and a loving wife?"<sup>2</sup>

### **Equality of the Sexes — Within the Family**

The position of men and women in the internal organization of the Muslim family, within the Islamic community in Britain as elsewhere, is clearly defined in the Qur'ān and there is little possibility of role conflict between husband and wife and other adult males and females in this extended family structure. Role obligations and rights naturally conform to the obvious physical differences between men and women and take into account innate abilities and aptitudes. For equality will be a hoax if women have to be on a par with men in every sphere of life and still bear and rear children. In industrial management, it would be called "rational deployment of manpower resources". In the Muslim family it is simply the right person for the right job.

The husband's major responsibility is that of earning all the economic and material needs of the family, thus, in effect, fulfilling his wife's clearly defined right to this provision, without being in any way compelled to contribute financially herself, however independently wealthy she may be. The husband is the head of the family and this, in Islamic terms, quite rightly imposes upon him more obligations than rights. He is more suitable for this obligation, but not the superior member of the team, and his functions are matched to this strength, aptitude, natural inclination and disposition. Many of his responsibilities lie outside the family and, in addition to employment in the community, he has to look after the relations of the family with the rest of society, education, employment, health, social services, housing etc. The father is mainly responsible for the internal discipline of the family, but mostly the power remains delegated to the mother.

The wife's major responsibility is primarily, but not exclusively, concerned with the internal organization of the family; training and educating the children in an atmosphere of affection and commitment to the spiritual and social values of Islam. The father may supply the materials and general plan of action, but it is the mother who fashions and develops the minds and personalities of the children, creates a home and provides an Islamic refuge of belongingness, security and loyalty for the father and offspring. The mother is

2. From an actual conversation reported by a student, in a classroom discussion.

indisputably the central pivot around which the whole gamut of family relations revolve and hers is unquestionably a vital and important role which is beyond the natural capabilities and inclinations of men. Children, too, have defined roles and clear responsibilities, and in addition to learning their adult roles without confusion they act (particularly in the Muslim community of Britain) as interpreters and links between two cultures — it is indeed their striving to overcome the difficulties they share that binds them together.

Muslim women in the Islamic community in Britain appear to enjoy their role which, while it is different from that of their husbands, is equally essential. They do not underestimate the importance of their contribution to family stability; they are proud of their status and secure in the knowledge of their many rights. Muslim women meet with each other regularly, informally and formally, and in this way they too make a contribution to linking the family with its focal point — the community, coherent in the common religion which they share and in which they have equality in the eyes of God and men.

### **Specific Rights of Muslim Women**

Contrary to popular opinion in the West, women in Islam have an extensive range of specific rights encompassing: (a) the spiritual; (b) intellectual; (c) social; (d) economic; and (e) political aspects of life. These rights are bestowed on women by God, safeguarded by the infallibility and unique wisdom of the Qur'ān and perpetuated by the sublime example of the Prophet (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). These rights were granted to women fourteen hundred years ago; they were not grudging concessions to the demands of womens' liberation movements nor a reaction to the heroic, but nevertheless undignified, protestations made by Emily Pankhurst and her dedicated supporters. The most basic right of a woman in Islam is to be accepted as having rights for which she never needs to fight.

### **Spiritual**

Islam does not subscribe to the idea of original sin; and woman, according to the Qur'ān, is not held responsible for Adam's first mistake; both were jointly wrong in their disobedience to God, both repented and both were forgiven. In terms of religious obligations — daily prayers (*Ṣalāh*), fasting (*Ṣawm*), poor dues (*Zakāh*) and pilgrimage (*Hajj*) — women have the same duties and are promised the same rewards for carrying them out. However, with compassionate regard to certain physiological situations peculiar to females, women are exempted from prayer and fasting during menstrual periods and forty days after childbirth.

### **Intellectual**

Not only have women a right to full intellectual development but, along

with men, they have an obligation to seek knowledge, as the Prophet (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) said: "It is a duty for every Muslim, male and female, to seek knowledge".

Islam credits women, as also men, with the capacity for learning, understanding, teaching and intellectual development. The knowledge it creates is necessary in the vital process of becoming more conscious of God and for performing the roles that have been assigned, maternal or paternal, domestic or economic. There is nothing at all in Islamic teaching that could be interpreted to mean that Muslim girls or women have less right than Muslim boys or men to an education related to their intelligence, ability, natural inclinations and aptitude; from play school to university, from "O" levels to a doctorate degree.

Within the Muslim community in Britain a high percentage of Muslim girls continue their studies beyond "O" levels and are certainly encouraged to study at "A" level and prepare for University, College and professional/vocational training courses. There is no significant evidence to indicate that Muslim parents in Britain attach more importance to the education of their sons, rather than their daughters and to both they appear to give equal freedom of choice in careers, with due regard to the equality important but essentially different primary roles they will play in adult life.

### Social

Islamic teaching specifically protects women in all stages of development. However, the most common misconceptions relating to women in the social area are marriage and divorce.

### *Marriage*

Contrary to popular myth, but strictly according to Muslim law, Muslim women cannot be forced to marry without their personal consent and without being consulted at an early stage in the negotiations. The fantasy image of a beautiful young maiden being forced to marry some cruel but rich old man, chosen by her parents, is the "plot" for a fairy story. It is, however, quite true, and according to Islamic teaching, that parents should look for a suitable partner for their children and thus seek to influence them towards a wise decision. In any event, the final decision remains with the boy and girl, because Islamically no marriage can be contracted without the consent of the bride and groom; moreover Islam emphasizes that the marriage partners should see one another before making a final decision. After discussion and negotiation between both sets of parents and agreement about the prospective bride's dowry,<sup>3</sup> meetings and discussions concerning the

3. Dowry (*mahr*) in Islam is not, as in certain other cultures, a bride price of symbolic gesture. It is a gift given by the husband to his wife for her exclusive use at the beginning of their married life. It can take the form of money, property or jewellery, etc., and is given strictly according to the husband's means.

proposed marriage may take place between the young man and woman. It is important to realize that when a boy or girl gets married they are marrying into an entire extended family — common agreement of both parents and the young couple eliminates the tensions and conflicts commonly associated with “in-laws” in Western society, and contributes to the social cohesion of the Islamic community. The privacy of young married couples is assured, their isolation and independence is never enforced or even encouraged. Marriage in Islam extends a family; it does not fragment it.

### *Divorce*

Islamic teaching strongly disapproves of divorce, but recognizes the existence of marital situations that are irreconcilable and in such cases stipulates provisions for divorce which protect the wife and do least harm to the family as a whole. The initiative for divorce lies in the hands of the husband, but the wife can obtain divorce from a court, even on the plea of dislike of the husband. Also a woman can obtain the right to divorce her husband, without going through legal process, if the marriage contract which binds them has made specific allowance for this contingency.

In all cases the emphasis is on reconciliation which involves the representatives of the two extended families. It is significant that this framework of reconciliation and procedure for divorce has endured in Islamic society for fourteen centuries. Divorce in Islam is a family affair; free from complicated legal procedures and unwarranted publicity, it is not likely to lead to local scandal or national upheaval as is so often the distressing case in Western society.

## **Economic**

### *Ownership*

One of the most fundamental rights of Muslim women is the right to independent ownership. In Islamic law, a woman's right to her own money, land, property and other negotiable assets is indisputably acknowledged and is not subject to change by marriage. This right is equally applied to the property and wealth she has before marriage and any other possessions she requires subsequently.

### *Transactions*

Legally Muslim women are absolutely free to buy, sell, exchange, mortgage or lease the whole or part of their property.

### *Income*

The whole of a woman's private income, from profits, rents, capital

appreciation and earnings etc., belong entirely to her and unless it is her own personal wish, cannot be “absorbed” into the housekeeping or used for general expenses related to the husband’s sole responsibility to provide a home, education and welfare for his wife and children. Obviously, in an Islamic marriage, based on love, a rich wife would be inclined to use her wealth, if the husband agreed, to generally raise the quality of life for the whole family. The important thing is that she has the right to decide about this and the husband has *no* right in law to his wife’s property, nor in any but the most exceptional cases can he take back gifts, however substantial, that he has made to her; they are absorbed into her own private wealth.

### *Inheritance*

A woman’s right to inherit, like her right to property is similarly undisputed, safeguarded and determined in quite minute detail in Islamic law (*Sharī‘ah*). A woman’s share is, by common practice, about one half of the man’s share and, far from implying that a woman is worth only half a man (a popular, yet gross misinterpretation circulated in the West), this division of the parental estate quite justly allocates inherited economic resources in direct relation to economic responsibilities. A woman’s wealth, as already stated, is unquestionably her own to spend or accumulate as she wishes. The man in Islamic society is totally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children and may also have economic responsibilities relating to needy relatives, particularly the females — widows, unmarried sisters, etc.

### **Employment**

There is no decree in Islam which forbids a woman from accepting employment in the community, particularly as doctors, nurses, teachers, and other occupations which are compatible with her distinct nature, aptitude and abilities and in no way at variance with the respect and dignity accorded to women in Islam. However, the whole question of employment for Muslim women can only be coherently discussed in relation to the acceptance of women’s primary social role in the community as a wife and mother, regarded in Islam as vital and sacred.

Islam recognizes that there are situations in which employment for a woman may be necessary and family circumstances in which the employment of a mother is practicable and not likely to jeopardise family stability. In these cases, Islam encourages women to make their many talents available for the good of the community.

### **Political**

Recorded in history and supported by Islamic teaching, Muslim women

have equality with men in political rights. A woman has the right to vote and to be nominated for various political offices and to participate in public affairs at local and national level. What is very important to realize is that Muslim women, who have always had these rights, certainly take advantage of them, and did not have to fight for them. In Islam, many famous women have figured prominently in the affairs of state.

In Britain, within the Muslim community itself and British society as a whole, Muslim women are increasingly taking part in public life and in addition to the Muslim Women's Association in London and many other such societies representing women's interests and opinions etc., they attend, alongside men, public lectures conferences, seminars, schools and act as magistrates and sit on juries etc. The extent to which Muslim women vote in British elections is determined (as it is for men) by their ability to comprehend the propaganda presented to them.

### Conclusions

The rights of Muslim women are entrenched in Islamic history, enshrined in the Qur'ān and made real in life by the obligations imposed on Muslim men as Gamal Badwi concludes:

- (a) The history of Muslims is rich with women of great achievements in all walks of life from as early as the seventh century.
- (b) It is impossible for anyone to justify any mistreatment of women by any decree or rule embodied in the Islamic law, nor could anyone dare to cancel, reduce or distort the clear-cut legal rights of women in Islamic law.
- (c) Throughout history the reputation, chastity and maternal role of Muslim women were objects of admiration by impartial observers.



# **Human Rights and Freedom of Conscience in Religion**

**(Symposium of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, Winnipeg, Canada)**

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, the up-holder of human rights and freedom of conscience in religion, organised a symposium on 28th of September 1986 at the University of Winnipeg, Canada. The guest speaker was Professor Terence P. Day of the Department of Religion, University of Manitoba. The theme of his lecture was "Persecution and Suppression: The Plight of Religious Minorities in Period of Rapid Social Transformation." Some relevant excerpts from his brilliant and thought provoking speech are quoted below for the benefit of the readers.

Violation of human rights is the primary cause of current restlessness and absence of peace in the world. The Professor admits this point and says:

"Among all the contemporary concerns for world peace and economic co-operation between nations and peoples, one of the most grievous issues is the violation of human rights, particularly of ethnic and religious minorities in lands which have hostile religious majorities. Behind all the conferences, meetings, declarations, and legal enactments of human rights, there is the fundamental philosophical assumption that individuals have rights which ought to be protected by legalisation and practical implementations. Unfortunately, it is evident that many countries which have religious minorities view religious rights and freedoms in partisan ways which usually affect those minorities adversely. On account of them successive such commissions of the United Nations on the prevention of religious discrimination and the persecution of religious minorities have been brought to the commissions' attention. Such representations and condemnations have implicitly rejected the religious absolutism which justifies the repression of religious minorities and their religious beliefs and practices by branding them as "heretics, apostates, satanic deceivers, and enemies of the faith."

Deliberating upon the blood-sacrifices and sufferings of religious martyrs who steadfastly stuck to the use of God-given freedom of conscience in

religion and drawing a painful and pathetic picture of such persecutions by different religious groups at different times on the canvas of history the Professor says:

"Yet not only non Muslim minorities, but muslim minorities also are experiencing today the lessons of genocidal suppression and religious persecution. Jean Pelleren drew attention in an article dated July/August 1985 to the persistent rivalries between the Sunnite majority Shi'aite minorities both in the ancient and the contemporary Islamic Worlds. In Iran today, the mountain-dwelling Kurds and the urbane and sophisticated Bahā'is are undergoing the fiery trials and tribulations of genocidal persecutions. In Syria, recently, President Asad supported an Ālawite minority by exterminating 10,000 Syrian Sunnite Muslims and thereby created a scandal throughout the Islamic world. In Pakistan, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim sect have been denied the right to be called 'Muslims' to regard their prayer-places as 'Mosques,' and to recite the 'Quran,' even though this movement has been the most prominent of the missionary societies carrying Islam into the western world."

"In this connection, Pelleren admits, that it is more unfortunate to belong to a Muslim minority in the Islamic world today than to belong to a non-Muslim religious group. For there can be no greater lesson than to be condemned as an 'heretical' or as an 'apostate' sect by a Muslim majority; for this is sufficient to place the minority in the front line of destruction in the 'holy war' of the Islamic 'Jihad' against the enemies of Islam."

After describing the ruthfulness of some of the Muslim rulers against the spirit of Islam, the learned Professor honestly defends the peaceful teachings and spirit of Islamic tolerance. He says:

"On the other hand, the present plight of the Muslim minorities does not mean that Islam itself is a persecuting power. For many centuries following the dramatic creation of the Islamic world imperial power, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians enjoyed freedom of conscience in religion and also the dignity of being respected by Muslim rulers and leaders as 'People of the Book.' Only from the 13th century following the destruction of the capital city of Baghdad and the violent partition and fragmentation of the Islamic empire did the negative forces of the persecution of non-Muslim religious minorities start to break out."

The Professor concludes his scholarly treatise by giving a golden piece of advice to the Muslim world in the words of Marshall G. Hodgeson:

"Marshall G. Hodgeson, the most renowned of western historians of Islam, has recognised within the stresses and conflicts within the Islamic world the aspiration toward an urgently needed larger vision of the

character and world mission of Islam. At present time, the Islamic world has every cause to be sure of itself and confident of its world mission but, there is need for more stable and magnanimous expressions of this victorious emancipation particularly in regard to the Christian and Muslim religious minorities in its midst. The world cause of Islam is not well served by its oppression and persecution of religious minorities, but rather by the magnitude of its generosity toward the wards that are in its care. For the *duty* to practice, to propagate, and to defend Islam, implies also the *right* of Muslims to follow it according to their conscience, and the right of non Muslims to differ from it without disrespect to Islam, and not least, the *obligation* of Muslim powers and authorities to uphold the religious rights of others as well as of themselves.”

President Zia of Pakistan should heed the world opinion and take the advice.

### A Divine Decree

There is a Divine Decree which issues concerning the men of God and that is that they are never bereaved of Allah's help. They live in full certainty that they have committed everything to God and that God also has committed everything to them. Whatever is theirs has become God's, and whatever is God's has become theirs. Who can defeat a people who are supported by Allah's power and by Allah's decree of their supremacy? Such a people live in that perfect certainty, and that certainty has always proved well-founded. From Adam down to the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, and in this age of your own history, is there any instance that God should have deserted His weak servants? When has God permitted that the worldly ones should defeat the weaponless dervishes of God? It has never happened before and it will never happen in the future.

(Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad)

## Son of God

(B. M. Mirza, Ph.D.)

The phrase *son of God* is used in numerous places in the Bible. Usually, it applies to one whose office specially represents God among men. The same epithet, when applied to Jesus (peace be on him), is taken to mean a physical relationship with God.

Where did this new meaning come from? There is no place in the Bible where Jesus referred to this new meaning of the phrase. A careful study of the Bible, in fact, does not lend any support to this different meaning as applied to Jesus.

Let us review some passages from the Old and New Testaments which include the phrase *son of God*.

In the book of Luke, the genealogy of Jesus is described in detail. This description goes all the way to Adam. We read:

“ . . . Which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.”

(Luke 3:38).

Adam, according to this description, had to be the first son of God. We can all agree, however, that no literal physical relationship was alluded to and this phrase is explained in Genesis thus:

“This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.”

(Genesis 5:1).

Around the time of Noah, this phrase is again used in the same sense:

“ . . . when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives . . . when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.”

(Genesis 6:1-4).

Adam was not actually referred to as the firstborn son of God, but some of the prophets long after Adam are referred to as the firstborn sons of God:

“And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus sayeth the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn”.  
(Exodus 4:22).

“I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.” (Jeremiah 31:9)

In addition of Israel and Ephraim being referred to as the firstborn sons of God, David is also given the same distinction:

“I have found David my servant . . . He shall cry unto me, thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.”

(Psalm 89:20-7).

In addition to all these “firstborn” sons of God, many others are given the distinction of being called the “son of God” in the Bible. For instance, Solomon is called the son of God.

“Behold a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest . . . for his name shall be Solomon . . . and he shall be my son, and I will be his father . . . Now, my son, the Lord be with thee . . .”

(1 Chronicles 22:9-11).

The same phrase *son of God* is used in many more places. First we give some further quotes from the Old Testament.

“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee:”

(Psalms 2:17).

“I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

(II Samuel 7:14).

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord . . .”

(Job 1:6).

“When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

(Job 38:7).

“Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me

of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me."

(Isaiah 45:11).

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea . . . it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God."

(Hosea 1:10).

And here are some quotes from the New Testament:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name."

(John 1:12).

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

(The Acts 17:29).

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

(Romans 8:14).

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

(Romans 8:19).

"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

(II Corinthians 6:18).

"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

(Philippians 2:15).

"Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

(Matt. 5:9).

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

(1 John 3:1,2).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

(Revelation 21:7).

Not only is the phrase "son of God" used for the chosen ones of God, sometimes they are called God also.

"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most high."  
(Psalms 82:6).

"Unto us a child is born . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

(Isaiah 9:6).

In a similar fashion, God is referred to as Father in numerous places. Here are a few examples:

"A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."

(Psalms 68:5).

"Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledges us not: Thou O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer."

(Isaiah 63:16).

"But now, O Lord, thou art our Father, we are the clay and Thou our potter . . ."

(Isaiah 64:8)

"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?"

(Malachi 2:10).

"And he said unto them, whey ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

(Luke 11:2).

We have quoted both the Old and the New Testaments above. It should be quite clear to our readers that the use of the term *son of God* and *Father* are purely theocratic, implying no physical relationship.

### Son of Man

The phrase 'son of man' is used extensively in the Old and New Testament. In the book of Ezekiel, for instance, it is used 90 times — and always to denote a prophet of God. It is repeated 80 times in the New Testament. Jesus used this phrase for himself 61 times in the New Testament. Since the phrase is used without any explanations, it must bear the same meanings which are historically accepted for its use in The Old Testament, namely, a prophet of God.

Compared to this, Jesus used the phrase "Son of god" only a very few times. Nowhere in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) has Jesus ever used it for himself. Only in John, the phrase is ascribed to him and only on four occasions (John 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:04). If this particular application

meant any different relationship, it needed an explanation. Jesus applies this term to himself without any new explanation which certainly was necessary if it was intended to convey any other meaning than the historical sense with which the people of his time were familiar.

The use of the epithet son of man 80 times in the New Testament conveys to us a clear meaning that Jesus referred to himself as a prophet of God. Three of the canonical Bibles have no mention of Jesus calling himself "Son of God". Only one writer — John — ascribes it to Jesus only 4 times. Since no special explanation is given anywhere, it can only mean the same it always meant throughout the Old Testament (and we have quoted numerous passages); namely, a chosen one of God, a prophet of God.

Jesus himself explains the meaning of the title "Son of God" in one of the four instances he is reported to have called himself Son of God. The Jews accused him of calling himself God:

"... For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being man, makest thyself God."

(John 10:31).

Now, we must accept the answer given by Jesus himself if we profess to believe in him. Did he imply any physical relationship between himself and God? We read:

"Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (This is a reference to Psalms 82:6) If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say yet of him, whom the Father has sanctified and sent unto the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

(John 10:34-6).

This explanation, offered by Jesus himself, makes it quite clear that the expression "Son of God" as applied to Jesus by himself meant no more in his case than it had meant historically. Thus, Jesus claimed to be the son of God in a theocratic sense, not as God, the Son, as is now claimed. Other expressions used by Jesus, e.g., "the Father is in me and I in him." (John 10:39), and "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30) do not put any special meaning either. Similar expressions are used for the disciples also. We read:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hath sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;"

(John 17:21-3).



"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

(Ephesians 4:6).

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him;"

(I Corinthians 8:56).

### Jesus Disclaimed Godhead

The fact is that Jesus did not claim to be God or a physical Son of God. If anything, one finds a repudiation by Jesus himself of the notion that he is God himself or God, the Son. The following quotations from the Bible make it obvious:

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good things shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."

(Matthew 9:16-17).

"And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

(Matthew 20:23).

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

(Mark 13:32).

"If you loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

(John 14:28).

### Only One God

If Jesus was God the Son, a part of the Trinity preached by the Church of today, he most certainly would have said so very clearly and emphatically. The Jews of his time believed in One God. He should have clearly laid down that this was not so. The above quotations prove that he, in fact, denied being a deity: Not only that, he in fact preached that there was only one God: We read:

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

“And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: . . .

“And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he.”

(Mark 12:28-32).

Here Jesus is repeating the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 6:4:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:”

(Deut. 6:4).

Again we read:

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

(Ephesians 4:5-6).

In recent times, there has been a growing awareness on the part of theologians that the picture of Jesus as God or the physical Son of God cannot stand any scrutiny. Albert Schweitzer, in his well known book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, summarizes his book as follows:

“The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, *never had any existence*. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.

This image has now been destroyed from without, it has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another, and . . . refused to be planed down to fit the design on which the Jesus of the theology of the last hundred and thirty years had been constructed, . . .”

(p. 398).

The Gospel of St. Mark begins with the following verse:

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

(Mark 1:1).

The title “Son of God” does not appear in many of the old manuscripts. Codex Sinaiticus, a manuscript of the 4th century does not have it. Tischendorf and Westcott & Hort have this title on the margin and not in the main text. It was much later that the expression became a part of the main text in the revised version.

In the *International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, prepared by the New York Theological Seminary, we read the following explanation of the title "Son of God":

"This term, Son of God, like the title Messiah, is applied to the Messianic King in the uncanonical Jewish literature. But its use is purely theocratic and official, corresponding to the O.T. (Old Testament) use to denote any one whose office specially represents God among men, such as kings and judges (John 10:36). Its use to denote the relation to God springing from the miraculous conception is confined to Luke (1:35), and its application to Jesus' metaphysical relation to God is not found in the Synoptics. The term is applied by Jesus to himself in his discourse without any explanation, whereas it would require explanation if it was intended to convey any other meaning than the historical sense with which the people were familiar . . . In fact, there is nowhere in the Synoptics any indication that the title is used so as to involve any departure from the current theocratic sense; and indications, such as the above, are not wanting that the title does retain its common meaning at the time. When we get outside of these historical books, we come upon the metaphysical sonship as possibly the prevalent meaning of the term. *Son of God* means here, then, that the Messianic kingdom is a theocracy, in which God is the real ruler, and the Messianic king represents God." (pp. 3-4).

Charles C. Anderson, in his book, *Critical Quests of Jesus*, reviews a number of books on this subject. Reviewing the works of Harnack (*What is Christianity*, 1901), Klausner (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 1925), Case (*Jesus: A New Biography*, 1927), Mackinnon (*The Historical Jesus*, 1931), and Goguel (*The Life of Jesus*, 1933), the author concludes:

"Here the writers are agreed both by direct statement and by implication that Jesus was not the metaphysical Son of God or deity. . . .

"If then we are to attempt to estimate the significance of Jesus, it must be from the point of view of his excellence as a man."

(p. 53).

In a recent book, *The Myth of God Incarnate*, edited by Rev. John Hick, we read the following:

"The writers of this book are convinced that another major theological development is called for in this last part of the twentieth century. The need arises from growing knowledge of Christian origins, and involves a recognition that Jesus was (and he is presented in Acts 2:21) 'a man approved of God' for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us."

(p. ix).

We agree with the seven well known theologians who authored the book *The Myth of God Incarnate*, that Christianity is under great pressure, due the new knowledge about the life and times of Christ available to us today, "to go on adapting itself into something which can be believed."

There is still a lot of emphasis in the Christian literature on the physical Sonship of Jesus Christ. If Christ himself did not mean it and those present in his lifetime did not take it that way, by what authority can anyone else change the meaning of the title "The Son of God"? It is high time we face the realities and say out aloud what most of us must recognize deep down in our hearts.

### Promised Messiah's Love for the Quran

"You should therefore leave aside all other books and stick to this wonderful book of Allah. He who neglects this book and leans on other books shall exhibit his weakness in faith. It is therefore incumbent upon my followers to ponder over the Holy Quran and make it their guiding light. . . . If you take hold of the Holy Quran as a weapon you shall have ensured your victory. No darkness shall be able to stand against this Light".

(Malfoozat, Vol. 2, p. 122)

"The Holy Quran is a unique glittering jewel, a sun resplendent—so much so that the light from it and its splendours have become patent not in one or two ways but in a thousand different ways. The more the detractors of the Great Faith try to extinguish the Divine Light the more vigorously does it shine, the more does its beauty and its charm attract those who will observe and think. The eternal light of the Holy Quran furnishes its own proof; proof from every point of view—this is the Book revealed by Allah".

(Minan-al-Rahnan, p. 1)

# Holy Scriptures Examined

(K. Mahmud)

In his most illuminating and informative article "Islam and Science: concordance or conflict" published in the *Review of Religions*, Professor Abdus Salam our first Nobel Prize Laureate (Physics, 1979) had occasion to refer to what he called "the perceptive essay on The Bible, the Quran and Science" written by Maurice Bucaille [First French edition, Paris: Publishers Seghers, 1976. English editions translated by Alastair D. Pannell. Cotonou (Benin Republic): Editions Silva (1977) and Aligarh (India): Crescent Publishing Company, 1980]. This work emphasises the principle that interest in religion should be substantiated with basic and factual information. Origins of beliefs and practices should be known historically and not merely accepted without question. In matters of religion, it is important that reason should not be denied its due importance.

This is one of the most interesting, enlightening and topical books to appear on this subject in recent times. It should be read by all serious-minded persons interested in religion and science. It represents the results of a great number of years of independent research by the author, a French doctor and surgeon and member of the French National Academy of Medicine, who has approached his topic wholly from a scientific point of view.

This work is intended as an examination of the Quranic and Biblical scriptures in the light of modern scientific knowledge and in terms of their own historical backgrounds. He considers this to be of particular importance today when there is wider interaction between the followers of the Old and New Testaments and the Quran (Jews, Christians and Muslims) and especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council's decisions for greater dialogue between Christians and Muslims. He states that the Vatican document proceeds to "recognise the past injustice towards the Muslims for which the West, with its Christian education is to blame." Although little publicity has been given to the exchange of visits which took place between the Vatican and the Grand Ulama of Saudi Arabia in 1974, the author feels that "far too many Christians, brought up in a spirit of open hostility, are against any reflection about Islam on principle." In order, therefore, to

combat this attitude, it is better that they see both the Islamic and Christian scriptures in a more historical and scientific light.

In beginning his study, the author starts with the origins of the Bible and a historical account of the sources of the present texts of the Old and New Testaments. He states:

“The majority of Christians believe that the Gospels were written by direct witnesses of the life of Jesus and therefore constitute unquestionable evidence concerning the events high-lighting his life and preaching . . .”

Proceeding further, he then states:

“Modern studies on the beginnings of Christianity show that this way of presenting things hardly corresponds to reality . . .”.

He then continues in great and interesting detail to trace the history of the books of the Bible through their various recensions and translated texts. A single text of the Old Testament being established from three earlier texts during the first century before Christ and later being translated into Greek to form the Codex Vaticanus located in the Vatican and the Codex Sinaiticus now in the British Museum. By the fifth century Saint Jerome produced the Latin text known as the Vulgate. Later editions and translations of the Bible, the King James Version, the New Revised Version, the Revised Standard Version, the Douay Version (Roman Catholic edition) and others are all to be traced back to these earlier recensions. The new Ecumenical Translation of the Old Testament is to be a work of unification attempting to resolve many of the differences existing in the various texts and translations and is now being written by numerous Catholic and Protestant experts. It will result in a process of synthesis. It is then hoped that all the Christian Churches will be able to accept and read one version of the Bible.

The author then continues his critical discussion of the Old and New Testaments, quoting many of the latest studies by Christian scholars of the scriptures such as Father Benoit and Boisnard, Prof. O. Culmann's work on the New Testament, Father Roquet's Initiation to the Gospels and the writings of Father Kannengiesser. He mentions the sources of the Gospels and many of the Apocryphal Gospels such as the Gospel of the Nazarenes, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Barnabas and many others, which he states were suppressed by the Church and condemned as being heretical during the first three centuries of the Church's formation.

In fact, in spite of the stand of the church that “Our Holy Mother, the church, has firmly maintained and still maintains with the greatest constancy, that these four Gospels, which it unhesitatingly confirms are historically authentic . . .” He indicates that the commentators of the Ecumenical

Translation of the Bible describe the writing of the Gospels as "not to be taken literally," they are "writings suited to an occasion" and their authors "are writing down the traditions of their own community concerning Jesus." They are texts "suitable for various circles," and "the evangelists, each according to his own outlook, have collected and recorded in writing the material given to them by the oral tradition." He further shows that much in the texts shows itself to be inconsistent and often incompatible with modern scientific data.

Turning to the Holy Quran, author states "there is hope today, however, because religions are no longer as inward-looking as they were and many of them are seeking for mutual understanding."

Referring to the Second Vatican Council and the new office for Non-Christian Affairs' booklet entitled "Orientations for a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims," he calls attention to some prejudices and misconceptions still held by Christians toward Islam. For example he states that some people repeatedly use the term "Allah" to mean the God of Muslims, as if Muslims believed in a God different from the Christians. The Vatican pamphlet states: "It would seem pointless to maintain that Allah is not really God, as do certain people in the West! . . . There is no better way of illustrating Islamic faith in God than quoting the following extracts of Lumen Gentile (also produced by the Second Vatican Council): "The Muslims profess the faith of Abraham and worship with us the sole merciful God, who is the future judge of men on the Day of Reckoning . . ."

Discussing his own ignorance of Islam in his youth, the French doctor and author of this work indicates how working amongst Muslims led to his curiosity about their beliefs and to a greater understanding of the religion of Islam. He was surprised how this religion was generally distorted and misunderstood by the average person in the West. He then discusses the Quran and confirms that its text, which has been preserved in the original language of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be on him) is of undisputed authenticity. Moreover, although it has "an absolutely basic religious objective," yet it has much to say about certain laws governing the universe.

Beginning with the very first revelation to the Prophet which called attention to the importance of the pen and reading as a means to human knowledge, the Qu'ran goes on to speak on many topics. Reference is continually being made to the order in natural phenomenon and the reader is continually being requested to think of and contemplate these phenomenon so as to know that there is a Creator behind them and that this creation is not in vain. The author states, "what initially strikes the reader confronted for the first time with a text of this kind is the sheer abundance of subjects discussed: the creation, astronomy, the explanation of certain matters concerning the earth, and the animal and vegetable kingdoms, human reproduction."

He then proceeds to discuss these topics as found in the Qu'ran and occasionally to compare and contrast the approach of this work with the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. It is not possible in this brief review to give in detail all the important points mentioned by the author in his critique. However, some of the more important points of the Qu'ran to which he draws attention are references in chapter 21 verse 33 and chapter 36 verse 40 to the orbits of the sun and moon; references in chapter 51 verse 47 to the continuous expansion of the universe. References to the creation of life from water in chapter 24 verse 45 and other references which cause the author to state that "whether it deals therefore with the origins of life in general, or the element that gives birth to plants in the soil or the seed of animals, all the statements contained in the Qu'ran on the origin of life are strictly in accordance with modern scientific data. None of the myths on the origins of life which abounded at the time the Qu'ran appeared are mentioned in the text."

All these references to physical phenomena, including references to the existence of animal communities, statements concerning bees, spiders, ants and birds, and remarks on the sources of the constituents of animal milk lead the author to exclaim: "I consider that the existence in the Qur'an of the verse(s) referring to these concepts can have no human explanation on account of the period in which they were formulated. As is known, today, "when specialists on the nervous system wish to provide striking examples of the prodigious organisation directing animal behaviour, possibly the most referred to animals are bees, spiders and birds (especially migratory birds). Whatever the case there is no doubt that these three groups constitute a model of highly evolved organisation. The fact that the text of the Qur'an refers to this exemplary trio in the animal kingdom is in absolute keeping with the exceptionally interesting character that each of these animals has from a scientific point of view."

In summing up the findings of the author we can quote his own words as they variously appear: ". . . the Qur'an deals with many subjects of interest to science, far more in fact than the Bible. There is no comparison between the limited number of Biblical statements which lead to a confrontation with science, and the profusion of subjects mentioned in the Qur'an that are of a scientific nature. None of the latter can be contested from a scientific point of view; this is the basic fact that emerges from our study." ". . . why should we be surprised at this when we know that, for Islam, religion and science have always been considered twin sisters. From the very beginning, Islam directed people to cultivate science; the application of this precept brought with it the prodigious strides in science taken during the great era of Islamic civilisation from which, before the Renaissance, the West itself benefited." "At the end of this study, a fact that stands forth very clearly is that the predominant opinion held in the West on the texts of the Holy Scriptures we possess today is hardly very realistic. We have seen the conditions, times and ways in which



the elements constituting the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Quran were collected and written down: the circumstances attendant upon the birth of the Scriptures for these three Revelations differed widely in each case, a fact which had extremely important consequences concerning the authenticity of the texts and certain aspects of their contents.” “In view of the level of knowledge in Muhammad’s day, it is inconceivable that many of the statements in the Quran which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, moreover, perfectly legitimate, not only to regard the Quran as the expression of a Revelation, but also to award it a very special place, on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statements which, when studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms.”

## A Prayer

O God, in me Thy holy love impart!  
 Enlighten, comfort and purify my heart;  
 Watch o’er my conduct and help me to do,  
 Only those things which are pleasing to You.  
 Let me be a heavenly reflection;  
 Cleansed from all satanic deflection.  
 I want to imitate the Prophet’s life  
 Dissipating darkness and sinful strife  
 I want to bring mankind to Thy throne;  
 To obey, love, and honour Thee alone.  
 I want to suckle Thy divine succour  
 Ready for death’s inevitable hour.  
 Bestow upon me the grace of prayer,  
 Always keeping me in Thy loving care.  
 Help me always to live as You require,  
 Devoted to You like a flame of fire.  
 Illumine my soul with Thy holy light;  
 Hear my prayers in the stillness of night.  
 Grant blessings to this Thy humble servant,  
 Whose prayer to You is deeply fervent  
 (Bashir Ahmad Orchard)

## **Book Review**

### **Is Christianity True?**

(By Michael T. W. Arnheim. 1984 published by Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd. London ISBN 0 7156 18806 U.K. £7.95 207pp.

This book comes hot on the heels of many attempts to explain the Gospel accounts away in “High flown jargon” as mythical or figurative representations of a transcendent and not easily intelligible set of truths. The Jewish author is a professor of classical civilisation in the University of Witwatersrand.

The idea that Jesus was the son of God originated from the special father-son relationship that was always believed to exist between God and the Jewish kings especially at the time of their coronation. The concept of God physically “begetting” a son was a pagan concept which from the Jewish point of view lowers the stature of God.

As far as Jesus’s virgin birth is concerned, the author notes that the annunciation of the birth is made to Mary in Luke while in Matthew to Joseph. Both offer different genealogies to prove Jesus’s Davidic lineage and even get Joseph’s father’s name wrong. The author concludes that they both started with the conclusion and manufactured evidence to justify the conclusions. Whereas there were a number of claimants as Messiah at the time of Jesus, the prophecies of Isaiah relate to the present unification of the Israelites. The Messiah was supposed to be an earthly king but both history and Jesus’s lineage of a dubious descent from David rule him out according to the author.

Jesus was crucified as a Roman punishment by Pontius Pilate, and naturally the Jews had little to do with either his trial or crucifixion. Jesus’s resurrection is another myth required in order to believe that Jesus was the Messiah of Hosea, because a failed and executed Messiah was seen as a contradiction in terms. The concept that Jesus will come down to earth “to judge the quick and the dead” was contrived to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah (3:13; 5:6) where it is associated with the Messianic age. Not only was Jesus not a Messiah (as he does not fulfil Biblical prophecies) he was not much of a Prophet either since his prophecy (Matthew 24:34) did not take place within the then generation.

Jesus was a Jew. His teachings were an orthodox interpretation of Judaic law. The author thus finds the impracticality of loving your enemy, the liberation of the adulterous woman, turning the other cheek and several other teachings on which Christianity claims it has an upper hand over Judaism whereas they all smack of hypocrisy. Christianity as a new ethic was initiated by Paul. It is a creed religion which found success in the conversion of Constantinople. Essential to it is that Jesus was no mere mortal but the Christ, whose death changed the course of human history forever and who continues to exist as "God the Son". It upholds the narrow and literal truth of the Bible. Judaism, on the other hand, is a communal religion which rests on no one figure, with the Biblical figures portrayed as anything but fallible, frail and highly imperfect. Because it is exclusive, it is tolerant of other faiths. Judaism is rooted in history which is its identity of culture law and life but it does not depend upon the literal truth or accuracy of any particular event or Biblical episode.

Having proven each of its main tenets as a myth or fallacy by Jewish standards, the author roundly concludes that Christianity is a "big lie".

The book contains a number of allegations which no doubt the Christians will attempt to answer. It does not mince its words and at places is even irrelevant. Because of the standards applied and the contradictions and inaccuracies of the Bible by which Jesus is so debased as to deny him even the title of Messiah, Prophet and divine teacher can be applied equally to aspects of Judaism. We trust that this brief review will prompt a Muslim reader to exalt Jesus to his true status and judge him by a much higher standard of truth which has escaped the full blast of allegations put forward by the author. Nevertheless this book provides an excellent summation of why the Jews reject Jesus and whereas we may agree with some of these arguments there is no reason why we should accept all of them.

## The REVIEW of RELIGIONS

The Review of Religions is the oldest magazine of its kind published in the English language in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent. Its first issue was published in 1902 and it has been continuously published since.

It bears the distinction that it was initiated under the direction of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah himself.

During more than eighty-three years the message of Islam has been conveyed through this magazine to hundreds of readers and many fortunate persons have recognised the truth of Islam and accepted it through studying it.

The articles published in it deal not only with the doctrines and teachings of Islam but also set forth a comparative appreciation of the teachings of other faiths.

One of its outstanding features is the refutations of the criticism of Islamic teachings by orientalists and non-muslim scholars.

It also presents solutions in the light of Islamic teachings of the problems with which the Islamic world is from time to time confronted.

A study of this magazine is indispensable for the appreciation of the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the teachings of its holy Founder.



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