

از الّذين عندهم الّناس علّم

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# The Review of Religions

Vol. XXXIII

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ  
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّی عَلٰی رَسُوْلِهِ

In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent and the most Merciful.  
We praise Him and invoke His blessings upon  
His exalted Prophet.

"A Prophet came unto the world and the world accepted him not, but God  
shall accept him and establish his truth with mighty signs."

## ANSWERS TO SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

(Translation of an Urdu letter dictated by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II).

BY M. H. TAJ.

1

Belief in the Promised Messiah and Medhi necessary to  
being a true Muslim—Jesus born without a father—Ahmadis  
not allowed to say their prayers behind a non-Ahmadi Imam—  
Need of reciting Arabic texts in Prayer—An Ahmadi can join  
a non-Ahmadi Mussalman in lifting up hands in ordinary  
prayer—Why a Muslim ought to wear a beard—The use  
of rosary among Muslims an exotic practice—Sense in which  
the term "Holiness" is used among Muslims.

I gather from your letter that either the men  
belonging to the two schools of thought whom you  
have chanced to meet, that is, those who hold that a

non-Ahmadi Mussalman who disbelieves in the Promised Messiah is a "Kafir" and those who maintain that he is not, have failed in making their respective viewpoints clear to you, or you have not yourself been able to represent the same correctly in your letter to me. Our belief on this point, which is based on and supported alike by the teachings of the Holy Quran, the Traditions of the Holy Prophet, and the writings of the Promised Messiah, is very clear and very simple. To put it briefly, it is this: The term "Kufr" as used in the Islamic terminology has a reference not to the personality of a Prophet or heavenly messenger, but to the divine Word of which he is the bearer; in other words, a man is adjudged a "Kafir" not because he rejects a heavenly messenger in his personal capacity, but because he belies and rejects the Word of the Most High sent down to the world through that messenger.

Hence if any one talks to you on this point, the one question that you should ask him is whether he believes the Revelation received by the Promised Messiah to be the Word of God, or regards it merely as being an inspiration either from Satan or from his own subjective mind. If he takes the latter to be the case, then you will see for yourself that such a person has clearly got no connection whatever with the Promised Messiah. Can we possibly accept a man as a divine teacher and messenger and make him form an integral part of our faith who, instead of being the recipient of divine revelation, is subject to inspiration emanating from sources other than divine? But if, on the other hand, he believes it to be the revealed Word of God, then clearly it is not a question of the rejection of the personality of the Promised Messiah but of the Word of God of which



he is the recipient and bearer. To my mind, the whole matter resolves itself into this question: Can a person, notwithstanding his having rejected a divine Word continue to be a good believer? An emphatic negative is the only answer that can be returned to this question.

It is clear from all this that when we assert that a man who rejects the Promised Messiah rejects the whole of Islam, we do not mean thereby the rejection of a mere Punjabi gentleman, or of a Muslim holy man, or of a scholar deeply versed in the Islamic theology; what we mean is the renunciation of the divine Word as revealed through him. No reasonable man can for a moment regard him as being obedient to God who will accept God's Word when revealed through one man, but incontinently rejects it when revealed through another. It is perfectly legitimate to ask whether the Revelation received by Hazrat Mirza Sahib really represents the divine Word, but it is not right to ask whether, despite its being the Word, of God, it is necessary to believe in and accept it. If it is the revealed Word of God, it is beyond doubt one's bounden duty to implicitly accept it, or else one is not a believer.

Let me, however, explain it here that our definition of the term "Kufr" (disbelief) is not quite the same as that of the Common Mussalmans of the present day. They define a "Kafir" as being one who is eternally doomed to remain in Hell. We reject this idea of an everlasting punishment as utterly opposed to common sense. According to us, and our belief is supported by the Holy Quran as well as the Traditions of the Holy Prophet, no person, however wicked, degenerate and sinful, and whatever his religion,

will be made to suffer the torments of Hell for ever. Nor will all unbelievers or "Kafirs" necessarily go to Hell; only such will be cast into it who knew and realized the Truth and yet deliberately rejected it. Even in the case of these we cannot say with absolute certainty that they will inevitably go to Hell. They may or may not. God is All-Merciful and can surely forgive even such persons as these if he so chooses to do. We do not hold a dispensation over Paradise or Hell, and it does not belong to us to decide as to who shall go to Hell and who shall not. The idea of unending infernal chastisements is completely opposed to the teachings of the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran, on the contrary, leads us to believe that God's mercy will eventually extend itself even to a stark atheist; otherwise God's declaration in the Holy Quran "my mercy encompasses everything" becomes meaningless. Indeed, on the authority of this self-same verse, Mohiy-ud-Din Ibn Arabi, an eminent Muslim saint, held the belief that a day will come when even the Prince of Evil will be allowed to leave Hell and enter Paradise. Now how very strange and in what utter contrast to the above saint's view is the uncharitable belief of the present-day Muslims who deny salvation even to such of their own fellow-beings as, like the Jews and the Christians, happen to hold a different religion from their own!

Thus there is a fundamental difference between our belief regarding "Kufr" and the belief of the common Mussalmans of our own day, which must always be borne in mind while studying this question. From the point of view of the non-Ahmadi Mussalmans' definition of "Kufr," we do not regard any one to be a "Kafir" at all, whatever his religion,

much less a man who at least theoretically professes to recite the Kalima, the basic Formula of Muslim Faith.

2

It is given in the Holy Quran, though only impliedly and not stated in so many words, that Jesus was born without a father. The Promised Messiah held the same view, as he states in his book the *Mawahiburrehman*, on page 70: "I believe that Jesus, the son of Mary, and Prophet Yahya, may blessings of Allah be upon them! were both born preternaturally without a father."

3

Ahmidis are not prohibited to say their prayers in congregation with non-Ahmadi Mussalmans; I myself have done so many times. When, during my pilgrimage, I was at Mecca, I often went to say my prayers in the Kaaba, and scores of non-Ahmidis used to say their prayers behind me. In the same way here at Qadian, during our Annual Meeting, hundreds of non-Ahmidis do the same. What is forbidden an Ahmadi to do is to offer his prayers in the leadership of a non-Ahmadi Imam. And this prohibition has been made in accordance with the injunction of the Holy Prophet himself, for he said that when the Promised Messiah had come, those who believed in him must not say their prayers except behind Imams from among themselves. This means that it is not permissible for Ahmadis to say their prayers behind a non-Ahmadi Imam. No reasonable objection can be taken to this. On the contrary, every one who really loves the Holy Prophet ought to appreciate the act of the Ahmadis in this matter, and rather than feel displeased with them for doing so, he should look

with disfavour upon such Ahmadis as might be found to be lax in obeying the above command of the Holy Prophet. Surely you would never like that merely for the sake of pleasing you we should act contrary to the Holy Prophet's injunctions.

Likewise, I do not think it to be true that God hears the prayers of every one of us. How can God answer the prayers of those who act disobediently to Him and oppose those whom He sends down for the regeneration of mankind? Did not the Meccans, who opposed the Holy Prophet, for example, daily offer prayers for success against him? Do you think God granted their prayers?

In the course of your prayers you can always make a request to God about anything you like in your own words; but where the Arabic texts are required to be recited, it is not permissible to substitute them by their translation in your own vernacular. Why it is not allowed to do so is a lengthy question involving philosophical discussion. Without going much into all these lengthy details, it will suffice for the present purpose to give the following two or three points:

(a) The Holy Quran is the most comprehensive of books and most pregnant with meaning, so that it is absolutely impossible to express the full sense of any of its verses in any other language. As a practical proof of this fact, let any one who likes, come forward and try to translate one single verse, which I will set him out of the Holy Quran. It is with a view to providing us with an opportunity, for our moral and spiritual improvement, to ponder these verses and understand their hidden shades of meanings that we are required to recite them in Arabic in our prescribed prayers. If

their translations had been allowed to be used, we could have only one meaning of the verses before us, and consequently no contemplation would have been possible.

(b) God wishes to unite the entire human family into one common brotherhood, and this can be effected only through the ties of a common language. Arabic, by reason of the fact that it is the religious language of the Muslims scattered throughout the world, possesses a great unifying influence and serves that purpose well.

5

As regards an Ahmadi's lifting up his hands in prayer with a non-Ahmadi Mussalman, there is, I think, no harm in doing so. During my short stay in England, on several occasions, I offered up such prayers in common with the Englishmen there. There is, however, one form of prayer, called the *Fatiah* prayer, which non-Ahmadi Mussalmans generally offer, for their dead, in which we do not like to join with them, as, finding no sanction for it in the practice of the Holy Prophet, we look upon it as an entirely unwarranted innovation and avoid it. In all matters we consider it most essential to conform to the practice of the Holy Prophet.

6

The beard, though in itself only a few hairs growing on the face, involves a vital principle, the principle of obedience to the commandments of the Holy Prophet of Islam. What you have said of the beard may equally well be extended to many other things. For instance why do we always face to the Kaaba at our prayers? What would be the harm if we some-

times faced to the east, or to the north, or to the south ? The offering of prayers five-times-a-day being the underlying idea, the question of direction is an immaterial point and should have been dispensed with. Then again, instead of offering two obligatory rakats at the morning prayer and four rakats at the Zuhar prayer, why may we not do the other way round, making four rakats at the morning prayer and two at the Zuhar prayer ? The total number of the rakats in either case would remain the same, that is six, and to outward seeming that is after all the thing that matters. Again, regarding fasts, what would be the harm if, instead of taking our meals before dawn and terminating our fast at sunset, we began our fast at 8 or 9 in the morning and brought it to a close at nine or ten at night ? After all it is apparently the duration of the fast that ought to matter. Such instances can be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The same reply that you return in all these cases must also hold good in regard to the beard.

The underlying principle that we follow in all matters is to obey the commandments of the Holy Prophet and do what he enjoins us to do. We know by sound reasons and arguments that he was sent by God, and so, whether we understand the reason of any given order or not, it is our duty implicitly to carry out that order. It is neither a wise nor safe rule of conduct to refuse to do all that you do not understand. Even in your every-day life, if you write out your money-order on an ordinary blank piece of paper instead of on the form prescribed by the postal department for that purpose, do you think they will accept it at the post office ? The ordinary British soldier does not want to know why he is required to make his

military salute by carrying his hand to one side of his forehead in a particular manner instead of letting him do it by extending his hand outwards. Yet both these forms of salute in themselves are as meaningless as the wearing of a beard is. But while the British soldier implicitly obeys his orders the soldier of the Prophet of God grumbles at the orders given to him by his spiritual general, and wants to know the why and wherefore of everything he is told to do !

The beard may have no connection with our spirituality but with obedience to the commandments of the Holy Prophet it certainly has.

## 7

The use of the rosary is an exotic practice, which the later generations of Muslims have borrowed from the Jews and imported into their religion, and as such it may well be avoided.

As regards the kissing of hands it is good or bad according to the motives with which you do so. To kiss the hands of a holy man as a mark of love and esteem is a good thing, the companions of the Holy Prophet used to kiss his hands ; but to kiss hands in the belief that the act will purify you and absolve your sins is a rank heresy and is to be strongly deprecated.

## 8

The word " Holiness " as used for holy or pious men in Islam is no doubt done in imitation of its use among the Christians. But there is a difference in sense. The Christians use it for the Pope in the sense of his being Infallible, which use is unlawful in Islam. But among the Muslims it is used in its literal sense,

for a prophet to mark his supreme Innocence, and for a Caliph to mark his minor Innocence, that is, his being under the protection of God, who watches over him and guides him in all matters, so that in their cumulative effect all his actions conduce to the preservation and advancement of Islam ; and who keeps him from committing such blunders in the discharge of his duties as a Caliph as may be likely to prove disastrous to the general welfare of the Muslim community and of Islam. In this sense it is perfectly allowable to use this word.

This subject has been treated in the Surah Noor, in the Holy Quran.

**"THE CLAIMS OF ISLAM"***(By A. R. Dard)*

Abraham is a Prophet who forms a link of affection between Judaism, Christianity and Islam and his name can therefore be made a means of bridging the gulf of misunderstanding and illwill which at present separates these great world religions from each other. He is the one prophet whom all these three religions look upon as sacred and holy, but it is a pity the spirit of Christian aggression has not so far allowed this common bond to develop. Jesus Christ, who was born without a father, is said to be descended from Isaac, the son of Abraham ; therefore, according to devout Christians, all glory and grandeur must go to Isaac and Sarah his mother. So far no one can have a grievance against Christians. They can look upon Christ as God and attribute greatness to Sarah and Isaac as much as they like, but this should not give them a right to speak slightly of other religions. Muslims look upon Mohammad, Peace and the blessings of God be upon him! as the chosen one of God and he is descended from Ismael, son of Abraham and Hajira (the other wife of Abraham). But there is a tendency amongst Christians to treat Hajira with contempt. They emphasize the point that she was a bondwoman and, therefore, her status as the wife of Abraham was far inferior to that of Sarah. They see her with their earthly eyes and cannot go beyond their materialistic outlook. Then they allege that Ismael, the son of Hajira, did not share the blessings promised to Abraham. Not satisfied with this, they assert further that Mohammad was not even a des-

cendant of Ismael who, they allege, never came to Arabia.

According to Islam, the righteous men of God, wherever they might appear in the whole world, belong to the entire human race and are not the monopoly of any particular country or nation; therefore, we Muslims look upon the founders of all the great religions of the world as holy men; Moses, Jesus Christ, Isaac were all prophets of God and we must respect and revere them as we do the other prophets. It is impossible for a Muslim, therefore, to speak disparagingly of Jesus Christ or Moses or Abraham and his wife Sarah in any way. Besides, the defects of one are not a proof of the excellence of another. Each prophet has his own merit and status. Islam is a religion of Peace; as a matter of fact it means, literally, Peace. Hence a Muslim always seeks and emphasizes good points. He cannot be spiteful because Islam inculcates a true spirit of appreciation and it is only by emphasizing the good points of one another that peace and goodwill can be established in the world.

But it is a matter of great regret that Christian Missionaries, in spite of their apparent gentleness of spirit, are never slow in seizing or even creating an opportunity for causing bad blood. Muslims from all parts of the world flock every year to Mecca and pay homage to Abraham, Ismael and Hajira. They still experience the pain that Ismael and Hajira felt thousands of years ago. They have done so for centuries but our Christian Missionaries tell us it is all mere pretence, with no reality in it. No wonder there have arisen people amongst the Christians themselves who look upon Jesus Christ also as a myth.

I shall, however, show that Ismael is equally, if not more, blessed than Isaac, even according to the Bible. As he was the son of Abraham, he shares all the promises of blessings given to Abraham. In (Genesis ch. 12, v. 7) God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's children "Unto thy seed will I give this land". Again in (Genesis ch. 15, v. 5) God promised Abraham that He would multiply his children exceedingly. "Look now toward Heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto them. So shall thy seed be". Again in (Genesis ch. 17, v. 6-8) God promised that He would make great nations of his progeny and that there would be Kings amongst them. Again, "And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and Kings shall come out of thee". Facts of history amply show that the land of Canaan was given not only to the sons of Isaac but also to the sons of Ismael. Both became the progenitors of great nations and Kings. Hence in the light of the actual fulfilment of the Divine Promises it would be absolutely wrong to suppose that only one of the sons of Abraham was the child of promise.

Now I will show from the Bible that Hajira and Sarah, Ismael and Isaac are all equally blessed according to the Bible. In (Genesis ch. 16, v. 10,) God says to Hajira "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered of the multitude". Again in (ch. 17, v. 16) God says with respect to Sarah "She shall be a mother of nations". In (Genesis ch. 17, v. 20) God says "And as for Ismael, I have heard thee, behold I have blessed him". In (Genesis ch. 25, v. 11) we read "God blessed his son Isaac". Again Ismael and Isaac are equally the seed of

Abraham. In (Genesis ch. 21, v. 12) we read, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" and in the next verse referring to Ismael God says that He will make of him "a nation because he is thy seed". In (Genesis ch. 26, v. 24) God says to Isaac, "I am with thee" and in (Genesis ch. 21, v. 20) God says referring to Ismael "And God was with the lad". The names of Ismael and Isaac were given to them by God Himself. In (Genesis ch. 16, v. 11) God says : "And shalt call his name Ismael" and in (ch. 17, v. 19) God says "And thou shalt call his name Isaac". In (Genesis ch. 17, v. 16) God says, referring to the mother of Isaac "Kings of people shall be of her". Then in verse 20 of the same chapter referring to Ismael God says : "Twelve princes shall he beget". In the presence of these clear words of the Bible it is nothing less than a travesty of facts to say that Isaac or Sarah was in any way more blessed than Ismael or Hajira.

I may remark here in passing that in (Genesis ch. 16, v. 12) Ismael is called "A wild man" which is exactly the translation of the word "Arab". It was really a sign of the fact that he and his descendants would settle in Arabia. But it is a pity the ignorance and fanaticism of Christian Missionaries does not allow them to see facts as they are. They take pleasure in calling Ismael a wild ass.

J. D. Bate, a Baptist Missionary, in his book "The claims of Ishmael", published in 1884, has the amazing hardihood to assert that there is no trace of evidence in the Quran in support of the fact that Mohammad was of the descents of Ishmael. It appears that this worthy Missionary must have proceeded to make this statement without as much as reading The Holy Quran even once, for in chapter

Haj v. 9 of the Holy Quran we read, "the religion of your father, Abraham, who gave you the name of Muslims before this". Abraham is clearly called the father of Mohammad and the Arabs. Forster in his book, "Historical Geography of Arabia" 1, page 248, says "Mahomet, in the Quran, upheld his claims to the princely and priestly honours of his race on this very ground as an Ishmaelite of the stock of Kedar.

Christian Missionaries always try to show that Ishmael and Hajira never came to Arabia. I will show that it is against the Bible itself. In Isaiah ch. 21, the children of Kedar, the son of Ishmael, are shown in Arabia. Then we read in the Bible (Genesis ch. 21, v. 21) that Ishmael dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; Christians say that this Paran is situated to the South of Palestine but the Arab Geographers are unanimous that it is the name of a hill in Hedjaz. If you ask the flower sellers of Mecca as to wherefrom they bring the flowers, even the children in the streets will tell you "from the wilderness of Faran". The very meaning of the word Paran is "a wilderness, a barren tract of land" and this is exactly the description of Mecca which has been given in the Holy Quran and which is also true to facts. With regard to the residence of the sons of Ishmael the Bible says: (Genesis ch. 25 v. 18). "And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur". John Eadie, D.D., LL. D. explaining this phrase "from Havilah unto Shur" writes in the Biblical Cyclopaedia published in London 1862, that it designates "the opposite extremes of Arabia". It may be mentioned here that there are in the world three Parans, one in Hedjaz, one near Sinai, and a third in Samarkand but, as shewn above the Paran where Ishmael lived in no other than that of Arabia. There exist no traditions, oral or written,

in the history of any other country which can possibly connect the life of Ishmael with any other Paran. St. Paul also seems to support the Muslim view. He says in Galatians (ch. 4, v. 24-25) : " For these are the two covenants, the one from the mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." " For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia ". If Hajira had no connection with Arabia, there was no reason at all why St. Paul should have mentioned Arabia in relation to Hajira.

Kedar is described in the above Cyclopaedia as : . " A son of Ishmael whose descendants settled in the Southern part of Arabia. Probably Kedar's posterity were the most numerous and powerful of the family of Ishmael, whence the whole of that country is sometimes called Kedar ".

In short, it is proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the Ishmaelites lived in Arabia. Inscriptions have been found which prove that Kedar is a synonym of Arabia. Pliny and Forster are convinced of the same.

Apart from all historical and Geographical considerations a Christian cannot escape from this conclusion. If the Bible is an inspired book its prophecies cannot go wrong. It clearly says that Ishmael was going to be a great nation. God says, regarding Ishmael, " I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly ; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation ". Now the question is, if Ishmael was not in Arabia where is the great nation that was made of him according to this prophecy ? Which is the great nation that recognizes Ishmael as their progenitor ? Either the prophecy is wrong or it must be admitted

that Ishmael settled in Arabia which is really the fact.

Abraham had two wives, Sarah and Hajira. Hajira gave birth to Ishmael and Sarah to Isaac. Ishmael was still a child when his step-mother, Sarah, having been upset over something, asked Abraham to turn out Hajira and her son Ishmael. Abraham was very much grieved at this " and the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight ". And God said unto Abraham " Let it not be grievous in thy sight, in all that Sarah has said unto thee, hearken unto her voice ". God said that He wanted to make a nation of Ishmael. In accordance with the Divine Command, therefore Abraham undertook the arduous journey and brought Hajira and Ishmael unto the valley of Bakka in Hedjaz, where Mecca is now situated. This place Bakka is mentioned in the Bible. Psalms 84 v. 6 " WHO passing through the valley of Bacca make it a well ; the rain also filleth the pools ".

This place was a barren tract of land. Abraham left them both in this valley near the Hills of Safa and Marva with a little provision. Hajira followed him a little distance and asked him as to why he was leaving them there alone in this manner. Abraham replied " It is in obedience to the Command of God " at which Hajira said, " If it is the Will of God, I bow to it. You may go, God will not let us perish ".

The Holy Quran refers to this fact in the words " O Lord, lo, I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy Holy House, O Lord, that they may establish proper worship ; so incline hearts of men that they may yearn towards them and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful, " (Abraham, v. 37).

It is said that Hajira was very much worried for her son when there was nothing left for them to eat or drink. She ran to and fro in that wilderness in search of water but could not find it. The child was extremely thirsty and his mother could no longer bear the sight of his suffering. She rose up and turned her eyes towards heaven. She cried and wept and ran up to the hill of *Safa* to look for water. Then she ran down and went up the other hill of *Marva* and she kept running to and fro from one hill to the other, seven times. She could neither find any trace of water, nor of anything human. When her prayers to God in her extreme distress and affliction reached the limit, she heard the voice of an angel, saying "O, Hajira, God has heard thy voice and the cry of the lad. Arise and see the lad". There she saw by him a well of water and gave the lad drink. All Muslim Pilgrims run from *Safa* to *Marva* and back seven times in commemoration of Hajira. This well is known as *Zam Zam*.

It is said that Abraham visited this place a second time. Ishmael had grown up by that time. Both of them built a House of God. It may have been an old place of worship which Abraham re-built. Ishmael helped his father in the construction of this House of God. Abraham placed a black stone in one of the corners from where the circuit of the pilgrimage should begin. It was an uncovered enclosure and is now known as the "Kaaba" or the "Holy of Holies".

The Holy Quran refers to the building of the Kaaba in the words:—"Verily, the first House which was built for the people is the same which is at Bakka". And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House Abraham prayed, "O Lord, accept from us; Lord, Thou

and only Thou art the Hearer and Knower. O Lord and make us submissive and show us our ways of worship and relent towards us; Lord, Thou and only Thou art the relenting and merciful. O Lord and raise up in our midst a messenger from among them who shall recite Thy revelations and, shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Thou, only Thou art the mighty and wise".

After the House was completed, Abraham was ordered by God, as follows :

"Purify my House for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves and proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot on every lean camel. They will come from every deep ravine". (Haj. v. 26, 27). Since then Mecca has been the cynosure of all Muslims.

Thousands of people flock to Mecca from all parts of the world and they have done so for centuries every year. The old and the aged undertake the pious journey from distant lands simply to die in Mecca or on the way to Mecca, and those who are unable to go there feel a strong yearning for it and envy the pilgrims. There is no material attraction in Mecca, there are no comforts and there is not much to gain by way of any business. The climate is often most uncomfortable, but there is a ceaseless flow of humanity in this direction every year. Why is all this? There is no force or compulsion, people go their of their own accord. It is the fulfilment of a prayer, the prayer of Abraham. "My Lord, make this land safe, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols.

Our Lord, Verily, I have made some of my seed dwell in an uncultivable valley by Thy Sacred House, Our Lord, that they may establish proper prayer; and make the hearts of men yearn towards them and provide them with fruits that they may be thankful" (Abraham). It is this prayer which draws men to Mecca. What a wonderful fulfilment of a mighty prophecy.

Islam is a universal religion. To make its appeal as wide as possible it has chosen Abraham, the great patriarch of the world, to be the meeting point of the world. Islam has devised a means for uniting mankind and appeals every year to all the great religions of the world in the name of Abraham who is equally respected by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The followers of these three ruling religions make about half of the population of the world and taking into consideration the fact that the Mongolian race has also had its origin in Central Asia, Abraham really becomes the common point of contact between a major portion of humanity.

## ISLAM'S MAGNETISM

(By Abdulla R. Scott)

There is some miraculous power connected with the Islamic religion, which so attracts those who embrace it in all sincerity, that they are ready to sacrifice all those near and dear to them and even life itself for the sake of their beloved Faith.

What is the cause of this most powerful attraction, which drew into its folds the heathen hordes of Arabia, who, at one time, neither feared nor respected God or Man, were raised from the lowest depths of ignorance and degradation to the highest pinnacles of civilisation and morality ?

What power was it that kept the early Muslims from relinquishing their newly-found Faith in spite of being dragged naked through burning sands ? In fact, every imaginable torture was brought into force and every means was exerted to try and make them revert to their former beliefs, but in each case the punishment was borne with a stout heart and the victim would die cheerfully with the words, "Wahid, Wahid," *i.e.*, One, One, meaning One God.

Now from the beginning of time, the oneness of the Almighty has been taught by all the great Founders of the different religions now existing, but no other religion has shown so great a power of attraction as that of Islam. Again I ask, what is the reason of this great attachment of the Muslims to their Faith ?

The only answer to these questions is the beauty,

simplicity and naturalness of the tenets of Islam which are applicable to all classes of people in any age.

Islam is the only religion which stands unchallenged for its tolerance and broadmindedness. It teaches its followers to respect and believe in the Divine Prophets of all other Faiths. Regarding this, the Holy Quran says, "And among every people have We raised a Messenger" XVI : 37. "There is no nation but there has passed amongst them a Warner." XXXV : 22.

Islam even goes further than this by admonishing its followers not to speak with disrespect about the gods or idols of other creeds. This is most natural, because by abusing or speaking disrespectfully of the object of worship of others, one becomes instrumental in drawing abuse from the mouths of these worshippers upon the sacred name of Almighty God. This warning is found in Ch. VI : 108 of the Holy Quran in which it is stated "Revile not those who they call on beside Allah, lest they in their ignorance, despitefully revile Him." This strikes at the root of all religious friction.

Another very strong attraction is, that Islam observes no colour or caste bar. All men are equal, no matter whether he be a Negro from the heart of Africa or the whitest man from Europe. In any Muslim country, you will find the lowest peasant standing shoulder to shoulder with his monarch in their common worship of the Almighty Creator, or you may find him dining off the same table as a noble man and in some cases you may even find the noble man waiting upon him.

During the time of the early Muslims, noble men

have been known to serve under brother Muslims who had been slaves prior to the advent of Islam.

It is well known to those who have read Indian history, that the slave Balban rose from the menial position of water-carrier to eminence, married a Princess of Royal blood and eventually succeeded to the throne. What a vast difference to the treatment meted out to the untouchables of the Hindu religion by their so-called brethren.

Again Islam has laid down the basis of a Universal brotherhood in the following words of the Holy Quran: "O Ye Men, Verily we created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is he who is most pious." XLIX: 13. How beautiful, simple and full of meaning these few words are! According to this all mankind are members of one and the same family and as such should treat each person as a brother or sister and to each should be given equality of rights. Only he or she who is most pious will be considered to be on a higher status in the sight of Almighty God.

The next thing in Islam which appeals to one is its simple formula of the Kalima, "La ilaha il-Allaho Muhammad Abdohoo wa Rasooloh" *i.e.*, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger". In these few simple words we are told that there is none worshipable but God. We are not asked to divide our devotion amongst separate deities or to believe in a plurality of gods, but simply to submit all our faculties to the Supreme Being, the Source of all purity. Then we are told that Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of God be on him !) is the Messenger of

this Perfect Being, and as such, is a pure and perfect Model for humanity. In every mode of life, as a shepherd, king, fugitive, conqueror, statesman, general, bachelor and in wedlock, he thoroughly proved himself to be such a model, and verified his title of Master Prophet. Therefore by taking him as an example we will be enabled to attain to a state of purity which will finally bring us face to face with our beloved Creator.

The word Islam means complete submission to the will of God, or to make Peace. The follower of Islam is known as a Muslim, *i.e.*, one who has submitted himself to God's will, or who has made peace with God and man. One Muslim greets another with the words "Peace be on you," which is replied to with the words "on you be peace and the mercy of God".

The Holy Quran says, "Peace shall also be the salutation of those in Paradise" (10 : 10). "They shall hear therein no vain words nor sinful discourse, but they shall hear only the words Peace, Peace," (56 : 56).

Again the Holy Quran describes the final goal of Islam in the following words "and Allah invites to the abode of Peace" (10 : 25). From this, one can easily understand that the quintessence of Islam consists of Peace alone and that a sincere Muslim is blessed with an ever-contented frame of mind.

In Islam there is no such thing as an everlasting punishment or an eternal Hell. God being All-Merciful His Mercy surpasses all else. Hell is not intended to be a place where Almighty God will revenge Himself on His Creatures, by eternally punishing them without end. It is only a means to gradually purify the sinners and unbelievers of their dross, to enable them to take part in the onward march to the final goal of perfection.

Also Heavens is not a place where one is meant to idle his time away, but a place where the believer will always be finding further fields of progress. After reaching one stage he will find another which will make his present one appear imperfect and will create in him a desire to attain to this more perfected status.

Finally, in Islam the door of communication with their Creator is ever open to the Muslims. It is not a dead religion of myth and wonderful tales of the past, but a religion full of life for the benefit of the present generation.

The Almighty Creator holds communion to-day with His creatures, as He did with His righteous servants of old. Through adherence to the Holy Quran and sincerely following the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of God be on him!) the righteous servants of Islam are raised to the highest pinnacles of spiritual bliss, *i. e.*, Prophethood.

Through certainty of faith and righteous deeds, they have been honoured by the Almighty who showers His favours upon them. They have heard His wonderful voice and seen His beautiful face. He dwells in them and they in Him.

God, to a true Muslim, is not only that wonderful Being Who existed thousands of years ago and has since closed the doors of access to His presence and is now mute and deaf to their prayers. The Omniscient, Omnipotent God is still very much alive to those servants who sincerely strive in His path and whom He honours by raising them to one of the four stages, *i. e.*, Nabiyyen (Prophets), Siddiqeen (Saints), Shuhdai (Martyrs) and Saliheen (Righteous).

The Muslims are taught to pray for this blessing five times daily thus "Guide Thou us in the right path, *The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings* excepting those on whom Thy wrath has descended and those who have gone astray".

Hazrat Mirza Gulam Ahmed of Qadian (Peace be on him !) was rewarded in these modern times, for his tireless striving in the path of God. Almighty God conferred upon him the highest title of prophethood and chose him as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi of the latter days. He fulfilled in his holy person all the prophecies contained in all the Holy Scriptures concerning the advent of a world teacher in the later days.

His second successor and present head of the Ahmadiyya community, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad and many of his righteous followers, have also heard that wonderful voice telling them "I AM".

It is this certainty of faith in Almighty God, which causes such a complete transformation in a true Muslim's heart and makes him ready to sacrifice all near and dear to him for the sake of this pure and perfect love which he has found in his Creator and which far excels all else.

It also proves beyond all doubt that Islam is the only living religion of the present day.

If the reader would like to learn more about this wonderful religion, I refer him to that excellent book "The Teachings of Islam by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmed obtainable from the London Mosque, 63 Melrose Road, Southfields, London. Also it may be had from Seth Abdullah-Alladin, Oxford Street, Secunderabad (Deccan), India or from the Book Depot, Qadian, Punjab, India.

## THE ZAKAT

### An Essential Principle of Islam

(Translated from Urdu by M. H. Taj)

The institution of *Zakat*, or the poor-rate, forms one of the fundamental principles of Islam, and its observance is as binding upon a Muslim as that of any other principle and its violation as sinful. Notwithstanding this, however, its importance is generally underestimated, and consequently a great deal of laxity appears to prevail regarding its observance. The Holy Prophet has said: "There are five fundamentals of Islam; namely, (1) to believe that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah; (2) to offer the Prayer five-times-a-day; (3) to give the *Zakat*; (4) to perform the pilgrimage to the Kaaba, and (5) to fast during the month of *Ramazan*" (Bokhari: the Book of the Articles of Belief).

Islam has enjoined two-fold obligations upon its followers—the obligations which one owes to one's God and those which he owes to his fellow creatures. It has laid as much stress upon the one as upon the other. Now, the institution of *Zakat* constitutes a duty which participates of the nature of both these kinds of obligations. It is at once an obligation which one owes to one's God and an obligation which he owes to his fellow-beings. Its breach is, therefore, doubly sinful.

The term *Zakat* signifies the *purifying and augmenting* of anything, and it is so called because it purifies and augments one's property. God says in

the Holy Quran: "Whatever you give by way of *Zakat*, you should give it for the sake of winning the pleasure of Allah; those who so give multiply their properties rather than diminish them." (Surah Rum: Section 4). Similarly the Holy Prophet says: "God has made the *Zakat* obligatory upon you so that it may purify your properties" (The Mishkat).

Another good which results from *Zakat* is that it powerfully contributes towards the purification of a man's inner being. God says in the Holy Quran: "O Prophet, levy the *Zakat* from the believers so that it may purify their souls" (Surah Tobah: Section 12). The *Zakat* is indeed a great purifier of the soul, for when a man, out of love for and sympathy with his fellow-beings, gives away for the benefit of the poor a portion of his own lawful earnings, he automatically learns to abstain from acquiring anything by unlawful or otherwise questionable methods. Thus, as one virtue always leads to another virtue, the giving of *Zakat* imparts to all his financial dealings a spirit of honesty and uprightness. Furthermore, it cures an individual of the selfish habit of niggardliness which is a great moral failing. On the other hand, the money on which the prescribed rate due has not been paid is rendered impure and unblessed and will ultimately lead to perdition in the life to come. The Holy Quran says: "God loves not those who are boastful and arrogant, who are themselves niggardly and recommend others to be niggardly also, and who are given to hoarding up riches secretly—for all these unbelievers Allah has prepared painful chastisements." (Sura Nisa: Section 5). And again: "Let them remember who refuse to give in the way of Allah out of what the bounty of Allah has provided them with, that their riches will in the end prove a curse to them instead of a blessing, and

that on the Day of Judgment these riches shall be forged into chains and hung round their necks" (Surah Al-i-Imran: Section 17).

It is clear from all this that those who, from their innate parsimoniousness, refuse to give the *Zakat*, as enjoined by God, do a great harm to themselves. Their hoardings, instead of bringing them happiness in life, will bring them only pain and bitterness and pave their way to hell both here and hereafter. God says in the Holy Quran: "Let them who take delight in amassing gold and silver and refuse to spend aught out of them for the love of God be warned that a grievous punishment is in store for them. Let them remember that a day will come when their riches shall be heated red hot in the fire and their foreheads, their backs, and their sides shall be branded therewith and they shall be told: 'These are your riches and this is the result of your hoarding them up in life'" (Surah Tobah: Section 4). In the same way the Holy Prophet has observed: "When no *Zakat* is paid on a sum of money or on any other property on which it is payable, the whole of that money or property is corrupted and will go to ruin and destruction" (The Mishkat). It is thus a serious mistake to think and a silly delusion inspired by the Satan that by giving *Zakat* one only wastes one's competence and that if it is not paid it is so much money saved. God says in the Holy Quran: "Verily the Satan promises you poverty and urges you to unseemly conduct, while Allah promises you His forgiveness and His blessings, and Allah's knowledge is great" (Surah Bakr: Section 37).

Some people regard *Zakat* as a burdensome exaction, but as a matter of fact *Zakat* is a wise institution which offers an excellent solution of many of our

social problems, a solution which God himself has provided for us. It is an obligation laid upon the rich and the well-to-do members of society for the benefit of their poor and less fortunate brethren. The Holy Prophet has said: "Collect the *Zakat* from your rich and give it to your poor" (The Tirmzi : Chapter on *Zakat*). It is a wise and useful measure of relief which God has devised for the help of our poor brethren, and none but an utterly selfish person can begrudge extending so trifling a help to his fellow-beings and brethren-in-faith.

The Promised Messiah writes :

" What is *Zakat* ? It is a relief given by the rich to the poor. The institution of *Zakat* is based on the noblest principle of philanthropy and fellow-feeling. By taking off just a little from the affluence of one section of the Muslim Society and bestowing it upon the other, it helps to ameliorate the condition of the Muslim Community as a whole and tends to raise the general level of its prosperity. It has been made obligatory upon the rich, but even if it were not so, the feeling of love and humanity for one's fellow-beings ought to have impelled them to help the poor" (The majmua Fatawa Ahmadiyya, vol.1).

There are some among our brethren who distribute their *Zakat* money among the poor on their own account. This is also a great mistake. Ours is by the grace of God, a well-organized Community, founded by the Promised Messiah himself, and has got its own *Baitulmal* or Treasury. No Ahmadi is allowed to dispose of his *Zakat* dues in his own independent way ; he must send them here to be spent by the Khalifa-tul-Masih, the holy head of the Community, as he deems proper.

The Promised Messiah expressly states :

" My brethren ! The present is the time for the service of Islam. Let us avail ourselves of this opportunity, while it lasts, and do all in our power to advance its holy cause. Once the opportunity has gone, it will never recur. Let every one of you from whom *Zakat* is due send his *Zakat* money here. Retrench your expenditures, and cut out all useless expenses " (The Kishti Noah).

The Holy Prophet has said : " No *Zakat* is payable on anything unless it remains in your possession for one clear year." As regards gold and silver, or ornaments made thereof, and money in the form of cash, *Zakat* becomes payable on them if they remain in your possession for a period of one year from the date of their acquisition by you, and for every year you own them you have got to pay a like rate on them annually.

On cash money, in accordance with the standard monetary unit of the country, *Zakat* is payable on every sum from fifty pieces of your money upwards, and its rate of assessment is the fortieth part of that sum. For example, on fifty rupees lying in your possession for one year, you have to pay as *Zakat* the fortieth part thereof, that is Re. 1-4, or Rs. 2-8 per cent. per annum.

As regards *Zakat* on ornaments, the Promised Messiah has given the following rulings :

(1) " No *Zakat* is payable on any ornaments in constant wear.

(2) *Zakat* is payable on all such ornaments as remain lying in disuse for the most part of the year and are only occasionally worn.

(3) As regards the ornaments which are lent occasionally for use to the poor, according to some authorities no *Zakat* is payable on them.

(4) It is preferable to pay *Zakat* on all such ornaments as are not lent for use to the poor and are worn only by the owner herself. On such ornaments *Zakat* is regularly paid every year by the women in my own house-hold.

(5) All authorities are unanimous that *Zakat* is payable on all such ornaments as lie in disuse throughout the year."—(The Majmua Fatwa Ahmadiyya, vol. 1.)

NOTE.—A pamphlet on *Zakat*, giving full information regarding other articles, such as cereals, live stock, merchandise, etc., on which *Zakat* is payable will be supplied free on request.