



AL-ISLAM

The Islamic Movement Journal

April-May 1977

Vol.6, No.2

Donation 35¢

'Life for Life'

On June 29, 1972, the Supreme Court declared that "the imposition and carrying out of the death penalty...constitutes cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments." Four years later in July 1976 the Supreme Court reversed its decision, despite endless arguments against capital punishment. The court justified its decision by stating, "death, as a penalty for crime, is not, in itself, a cruel and unusual punishment, it is the procedure by which someone is sentenced to die that can cause unjustifiable suffering."

This decision has been under constant attack from opponents of capital punishment and with the execution of Gary Gilmore their offensive has intensified. However, opponents of capital punishment are often an affront to the very thing they seek to defend--the sanctity and dignity of human life.

Call it compensation, or retribution, capital punishment is the legal taking of the life of another. It is an act performed by and in the name of society as a penalty for the willful, unjustified, and unextenuated murder of another human being. It is also an act sanctioned by Divine Law.

Retribution is mentioned in the Holy Quran, "O you who believe, retribution is prescribed for you in cases of murder, the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the woman for the woman." (II: 178-179) The word retribution (*qisas*) used in this verse has a different meaning than retaliation, which is equivalent almost to returning evil for evil.

Retribution implies making the punishment equal or appropriate to the crime. The Law of Retribution makes clear that whoever intentionally commits murder should be executed. However, retribution is not one's personal vendetta. Many lives cannot be taken in retaliation for the loss of one life; at most, the life of the murderer can be taken.

a commonsense view of the Death Penalty

Even then, the execution is performed by the government under strictly prescribed conditions, closing the door to personal vengeance or retaliation.

The Law of Retribution was also prescribed under the Mosaic Code in the Torah. The Holy Quran mentions this fact: "We ordained therein for them life for life, eye for eye... and wounds equal for equal. But if any remits the retribution by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by what God has revealed, they are wrong-doers. (II: 48)

This law can be found in the Old Testament: "...And he that kills a man, he shall be put to death." (Leviticus 24: 21) "Then shall you do unto him, as he had thought to do to his brother; so shall you put the evil away from among you, and those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more evil among you. Your eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth...." (Deuteronomy 19: 19-21)

The last quote from the Bible mentions two important roles that capital punishment is designed to play in society; first, to remove corrupt and evil elements from society, and secondly, to prevent other corrupt elements from growing. It is true that some murders occur under circumstances which no system of penalties can prevent. Yet, if punishment is certain, the impulse to crime is to some extent checked. If escape seems probable, the criminal impulse has freer reign.

The death penalty was never expected to completely stop violent crimes and murder. However, it does have some deterrent value. For example, there is a striking overall correlation between the use of the death penalty and the rise in violent crime. In the first three years of the 60's 145 persons were executed. During these same three years the number of people who died violently at the hands of criminals actually declined and the murder rate per 100,000 population also declined.

Beginning in 1963 the number of legal executions began to drop, until in 1968 there was none at all. In each of those years murders increased sharply both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of population. Certainly we can draw from these facts that a relaxation in the severity and certainty of punishment has some role to play in the increase of murder.

The main deterrent value of the death penalty is one of striking awe and fear into the hearts of potential murderers. The evidence in every capital punishment case should be examined and reexamined and all efforts for justice and certainty exhausted before sentencing is pronounced. Once a convicted murderer is sentenced, however, he should be promptly and publicly executed. Long terms on death row, and private executions should be abolished. The real impact of the death sentence can never be felt by conducting it behind closed doors. By having the public witness the punishment, potential murderers will see clearly the gravity of murder.

For the value of the death penalty to be really appreciated, there must be justice in the courts. Unfortunately, the American system of justice is far from perfect. The skill of one's defense attorney, or lack of skill, the prejudices of a

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jury and other factors often determine which man is sentenced to death and which man receives a lesser penalty.

The death penalty is imposed almost exclusively against racial minorities, the poor, the uneducated--persons who are victims of selective prosecution, overt discrimination in the sentencing process and who cannot afford sophisticated legal defenses.

Commenting on the unjust way in which capital punishment is applied in this country, Justice Thurgood Marshall said: "It...is evident that the burden of capital punishment falls upon the poor, the ignorant, and the underprivileged members of society. It is the poor and the members of minority groups who are least able to voice their complaints against capital punishment. Their impotence leaves them victims of a sanction that the wealthier, better represented, just-as-guilty person can escape. So long as the capital sanction is used only against the forlorn, easily forgotten members of society, legislators are content to maintain the status quo because change would draw attention to the problem and concern might develop."

These facts, however, are not arguments against capital punishment but against the racist and discriminatory nature of the criminal justice system. They are arguments for changing such a system and addressing the economic and social conditions which foster crime.

Still, there is the possibility of executing the wrong person, even where no discrimination is involved. A dead man can't be brought back to life, no matter how innocent he may later be proven to have been.

Again, this is not an argument against capital punishment, but for the utmost care and caution in its employment. However, unless there is a firm belief in God and His ultimate justice in the Hereafter this reservation will be a major stumbling block in the way of social justice.

In the end, the issue is the sanctity of human life. To say that no man must die no matter what he does is to make no distinction between depravity and decency. It is to value the murderer's life as highly as his victim's and in so doing to depreciate and debase the latter.

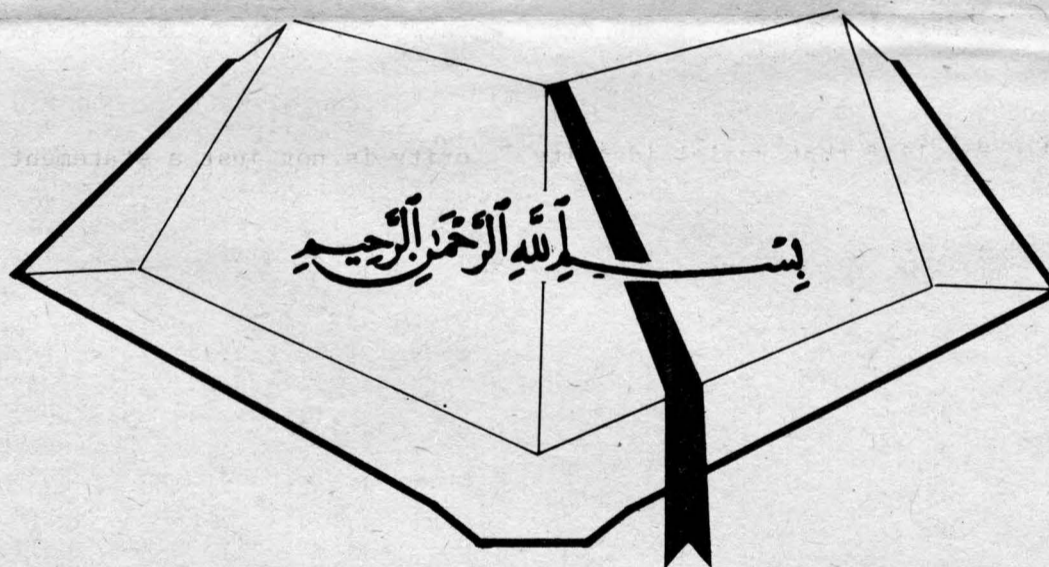
From this standpoint, the greater good of society is served when those who break its supreme moral law are required to pay the supreme penalty--this is the real justification for capital punishment.

Message from the Holy Quran

CHAPTER 2: VERSE 177

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your relatives, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which you have made, and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.



AL-ISLAM, THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT JOURNAL

April-May 1977 Volume 6, Number 2

Published by ISLAMIC PARTY PUBLICATIONS under the auspices and advice of Y. Muzaffaruddin Hamid, Amir (leader) of The Islamic Party in North America.

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Requests for reprinting material from *Al-Islam* should be sent to the Director of Islamic Party Publications, 770 Park Road, Northwest, Washington, D.C. 20010.

"...We hurl the Truth against Falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, Falsehood doth perish!" (Holy Quran, XXI: 18)

Defining Racism

and its Zionist Interpretation

In the last issue of *Al-Islam Journal* we gave a report on the National Conference on Zionism and Racism sponsored by The Islamic Party's Oppressed Peoples' Affairs Committee. In this issue we focus on the lecture of Dr. Fayez A. Sayegh, one of the guest speakers at the conference and the United Nations representative from Kuwait. The topic of Dr. Sayegh's lecture was "The Cardinal Principles of Racism." The following article discusses Zionism as a form of racism using the principles outlined by Dr. Sayegh.

This is an attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of racism--not just a definition of racial discrimination--in a manner that will apply to all the varieties of racism that our history has known. In particular, we want to examine Zionism to see how it fits within our definition of racism.

Racism as a doctrine exists wherever there is a belief (and action upon that belief) that a person's racial identity is the decisive factor about his personality, attitudes, status, rights, and privileges. Hence, wherever you find the belief that racial identity is the decisive element effecting a group's life and destiny, there you have the foundation of racism.

Under this broad and abstract definition of racism, there are six main principles flowing from it. Two of these six principles are implicit or unspoken assumptions; two are articles of belief; and, the last two are precepts or rules for practice. Let us briefly outline these six principles.

The first implicit assumption of racism is that mankind is divided permanently into racial or ethnic groups which retain their identity over history and which are always distinguishable from one another. Racial identity, according to this principle, is not an accident. We belong to one race or another because all mankind is divided into distinct and separate races.

The second implicit assumption of racism is that racial identity determines the aptitude of each person belonging to a particular race, defines his qualities as well as his capabilities, and therefore defines the rights and privileges to which he should be entitled. Most racists go throughout their lives making these assumptions without necessarily being aware that they are doing so.

Now we come to the two important principles of racism which may be called articles of belief. They form the essential components of racism as a doctrine. The first principle is that some races are superior to others. Its corollary, naturally, is that some races are inferior to others. In extreme forms of racism, one race is considered superior to all others and all others are inferior to this one race, even though among them there may be gradations of superiority and inferiority.

The belief in racial superiority is not just a statement of alleged fact. The racist does not merely claim that his race is superior to all the others; instead, he draws inferences and conclusions from this claim. He says that the superior race is entitled to superior status; superiority of aptitude entitles the superior race to special privileges; the superior race cannot be judged by the same standards as the other races.

The belief in racial superiority, with its corollary of racial inferiority and with its consequences of privileged status for the so-called superior race, constitute the doctrinal principle without which racism cannot exist. Unless a movement begins with a proclamation of the superiority of its own racial group, it cannot be a full-fledged movement of racism.

The second article of belief is that races cannot harmoniously co-exist. According to this principle, interracial peace and good will are impossible. Instead, the norm is interracial hostility.

Let us now move to the last two principles of racism--the precepts or rules of practice--which are integral to any racist policy. These are racial segregation and racial discrimination. If some races are superior and others inferior, and

if they cannot live in harmony with each other, then the races must be separated, even by force if necessary. And as a result of being subordinated by the so-called superior race, the so-called inferior race will suffer racial discrimination.

If we take these six elements together, they would jointly constitute the essential components of racism in general. In light of these six points the definition of racism is clearer: racism exists wherever there is a belief that one's racial identity is the decisive factor about one's destiny.

How, then does Zionism as a form of racism interpret and apply these principles? Let's first take the concept of racial superiority. What does Zionism say about its alleged race? The doctrine of "the chosen people" is the basis for the Zionist belief in Jewish superiority. It is God's choice that makes the Zionists superior over others.

Of course, some of you will say that the concept of "the chosen people" is a Biblical concept. Yes, that's true. But Zionism in all its operations has followed the practice of isolating certain Biblical concepts, taking them from their immediate context, and using them in a totally new context. Concepts which originated in a spiritual context are despiritualized and politicized by Zionists.

The very concept of "people," which the Bible attaches to the Jews, was spoken of in the Bible in terms of a spiritual community. Zionism uses the word "people" in a political connotation and derives from it political rights which Biblical authors couldn't have had in mind. Zionism uses the word "people" in the twentieth-century context where peoplehood presupposes the right to self-determination.

The Bible spoke of the "chosenness" of the Jews as a burden of responsibility in a moral and spiritual sense. The Zionists prostitute the term by making it a badge of superiority and the grounds for a claim of special privileges--privileges that no one else is entitled to.

Regarding the concept of incompatibility between the races, Zionism has a theory which can be defined as the permanence and inevitability of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism in its relationship with Zionism is not something accidental. Rather, according to the Zionists anti-Semitism is a permanent feature of history resulting from the inborn

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Carrying on the Struggle

We sent aforetime Our Apostles with clear signs and arguments and sent down with them the Book and the balance of right and wrong, that man may stand forth in justice. (LVII: 25) It is He who has sent His Apostle with guidance and the religion of Truth to proclaim it over all religions. Even though the pagans may detest it. (IX: 33)

These verses from the Holy Quran show that the objective of a Messenger of God is to make the guidance and way of life he has brought dominant over all other ways. From the beginning of his mission Prophet Muhammad directed his energies toward establishing the system of Islam. He did not merely concern himself with preaching idealistic principles without considering the state of his listeners--what influenced their thinking, what principles determined their actions, and what forces commanded their attention.

He did not simply go about his religious duties forgetting about the state of the society--its practices, habits, customs, and values. He did not seek to change one area of man's life and leave the other areas unchanged. He took into ac-

count all circumstances in his plan to bring about a complete revolutionary change in society.

Prophet Muhammad had a unique awareness of the social and political conditions in society. He moved with insight and political consciousness when confronting the corrupt leadership of society. Knowing the full ramifications of his mission, he trained his followers to act in an organized and disciplined manner. He exemplified, by his words and actions the difference between a religion and a way of life, mere preaching and a revolutionary call, individual purity and revolutionary movement.

Allah chose Muhammad, prepared him, and gave him strength to lead a movement marked by pain and suffering. Muhammad did not receive such brutal opposition and persecution because of the way he worshipped, dressed, or grew his beard. Nor did he bring about the complete change that he brought by simply working an eight-hour job and going home. Both he and his followers understood their purpose and mission, which required going beyond the ordinary and doing more than the minimum.

Prophet Muhammad stood strong in the most dangerous situations. He left this spirit of struggle for

us to mold into our lives, in accordance with his practice and choice of priorities. Many of us take interest in the Prophet's life merely for the sake of reward in the hereafter. It is indeed virtuous to get close to Prophet Muhammad, however, the best way to do this is by reforming ourselves in accordance with his example, by doing so we will not only gain reward in the next life but in the present one as well.

We as Muslims must realize that Prophet Muhammad's life cannot enter our hearts and become a part of us by any means other than firm determination and dedication to his work and ideal. He is the ideal of our lives, the moving spirit of our movement. The titles, "witnesses over men," and "the balanced community," were given to us as a trust so that--as followers of the Prophet--we should perform the task of reforming humanity. The Prophet and his companions fulfilled their roles in this context and were assured a just reward. Let us step forward and assume our rightful place alongside them.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was adapted from an address delivered at a commemorative program in observance of Prophet Muhammad's birthday at the Community Mosque (Washington, D.C.) on March 2.

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hostility of the Gentiles to the Jews. Anti-Semitism is not something that can be cured, says the Zionists, and Zionism is the only answer to anti-Semitism.

The practice of segregation in Zionism is somewhat complex. Zionism inherited a situation where Jews were spread throughout the world, and the coveted "homeland" had hardly any Jews in it. In order to change this condition to one in which all Jews would be totally segregated and assembled in a separate *Judenstaat* or "State of Jews," Zionism had to perform two operations. It had to collect all the Jews from all over the world under the assumption that they are one nation, that they are all targets of anti-Semitism, and that they all needed to protect themselves by moving to one "homeland." At the same time, the Zionists had to drive away from the "homeland" the inhabitants who were non-Jews in order to make room for the imported Jews.

Just as in a heartbeat there are two rhythmic operations, pumping out and pumping in, so too the

heart of Zionism could not beat unless the non-Jews were pumped out of Palestine and the Jews were pumped into Palestine. These two operations in their rhythmic interplay constitute Zionism's interpretation of racial segregation.

Racial discrimination, in the case of Zionism, is not something that individuals practice without legal sanction. Racial discrimination, rather, is something built into the very Law of the land. For example, the Law of Return says that every Jew has a right to come to the country as an immigrant. Of course the implicit fact of the Law of Return is that the Palestinian Arab who was exiled from his land has no right to return. Hence, a Russian Jew whose forefathers never set foot on Palestinian soil has a right to come to Palestine, but the expelled Palestinian Arab who was born in Palestine and whose forefathers lived there has no right to return to it.

We can also cite the Nationality Law under which a Jew automatically becomes a citizen, but the non-Jew has to satisfy five requirements before he can qualify for citizenship. Then there is the Land Ownership Law under which land confiscated from the Palestinian Arabs

becomes the property of the Jewish people forever under the Jewish National Fund and can never be leased or sold to a non-Jew. There are also legal forms of discrimination in economic and educational opportunities against non-Jews.

From this discussion, we can see how Zionism both in its theoretical aspects and its practical aspects, fits quite neatly into our definition of racism. Therefore, the United Nations General Assembly was more than justified in declaring Zionism a form of racism and racial discrimination.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like to refer you to two booklets for a more detailed study of the racist character of Zionism. The first is "Zionism: A Form of Racism and Racial Discrimination" by Fayez A. Sayegh, Ph.D., and is published by the Office of the Permanent Observer of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the United Nations, 103 Park Ave, Suite 701, New York, New York 10017. The second is "Zionism and Racism" by Abdeen Jabara, and is published by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., P.O. Box 7391, North End Station, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

Digging for ROOTS

of an African Islamic Heritage

Since the publication of Alex Haley's best-selling book *Roots*, increasing numbers of Afro-Americans are digging for their African roots, searching for remnants of their ancestral heritage. Most will certainly not be able to trace their ancestry with the accuracy of Alex Haley, but if they could, many would probably discover that their forefathers were Muslims, like Kunta Kinte.

Islam was widespread in West Africa, the region from which the majority of slaves taken to America were captured. Although Alex Haley's story makes broad references to Islam and shows how Kunta Kinte's belief in Allah kept his dream of freedom and human dignity alive and nurtured his soul after being robbed of family and village, *Roots* does not show the direct and often dominating role that Islam had in shaping the history of West Africa.

The book, *Topics in West African History* by the African historian, Adu Boaden, shows how Islam functioned as an actual way of thinking and living, being reflected in all institutions of the African society. What we find is that wherever there was a sincere attachment to Islamic beliefs and an earnest effort to implement Islamic laws and practices, there was also efficient government, social justice, physical safety, economic prosperity, and widespread education.

For example, consider the ancient Mali Empire under the leadership of Mansa Musa who reigned from 1307 to 1337 and "succeeded in establishing peace and order in Mali, in promoting trade and commerce and above all in making the name of Mali known throughout the world."

One of the main things for which Mansa Musa became famous was his work in the religious field. He was not only concerned with the political and material welfare of his people but also with their spiritual well-being. He himself was a very pious man and a great lover of virtue. ...It is not surprising then that he devoted a great deal of his time to purifying, strengthening, and spreading Islam in

Mali, especially after his famous pilgrimage to Mecca...Mansa Musa also started the practice of sending students to Morocco for studies and he laid the foundation of what Timbuctu later became--the commercial and educational center of the western Sudan.

During the reign of Mansa Sulayman, Mansa Musa's brother, the celebrated Arab scholar Ibn Battuta was sent by the Sultan of Morocco to Mali in 1352. "Struck by the order and racial tolerance that prevailed, and the care with which the people observed prayer," he left an eyewitness account of the empire.

The Negroes (that is, the people of Mali) are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. Their Sultan shows no mercy to anyone guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence.

Islam acted as a stabilizing force and as an initiator of social development. Similar is the case of the Songhai Empire under the leadership of Mohammed Askia from 1493-1528.

...From the time of his return from the Hajj till his death, Mohammed Askia did everything in his power to see that Islam was purified and education and learning were promoted. For the purification of Islam, he attacked illiteracy among the malams, saw to it that the ritual prayers and other duties such as fastings and alms-giving were observed, and insisted that women should go about veiled, making his own family set the example, according to one of the chroniclers.

He also ensured that his officials imposed no illegal taxes, and that judges give judgement according to the laws of the Holy Quran and the Shariah. All the chroniclers agree that Islam was greatly strengthened and purified during the reign of Mohammed Askia. To quote them, "He eliminated all the innovations, forbidden practices and blood-shedding characteristic of the Shi (i.e. Sunni Ali) and established Islam upon sure foundation."

Equally memorable and successful was his encouragement of higher education. Scholars and professors attracted by the peace and order of the Empire as well as the generosity of Mohammed Askia, flocked into Timbuctu which became, during his reign, not only a commercial but also a great educational metropolis. There were as many as 150 Quranic schools in that city alone and university education was provided in the mosque of Sankore.

Mahmoud Kati, one of the great historians produced by the University of Sankore, had this to say of the life in his town Timbuctu: "In those days Timbuctu did not have its equal...from the province of Mali to the extreme limits of the region of the Maghrib for the solidity of its institutions, its political liberties, the purity of its morals, the security of persons, its consideration and compassion towards foreigners, its courtesy towards students and men of learning and the financial assistance which it provided for the latter; the scholars of this period were the most respected among the believers for their generosity, force of character and their discretion."

One might be inclined to say that the greatness of the Mali and Songhai Empires was due to the personal abilities of their rulers. However, one must understand that these men were motivated by faith in Islam, and it was the Islamic system of life which they established. Then, too, Islam charges the ruler or head of state with the responsibility of seeing that the society develops along Islamic lines in all

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DIGGING FOR ROOTS (from p.5)

areas--social, economic, and political as well as moral and spiritual.

A system of life which cannot renew itself with spiritual and moral vigor will degenerate and produce corruption and injustice, which can only be removed by the victory of another group over it with a different system of values. This is what happened in those West African states in which Islam was only a superficial element in the society's life or in which the people began to neglect and disobey Islamic laws and practices.

But Islam also has within it a mechanism for renewing and sustaining its ideals. This mechanism is explained in the following Quranic verse: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong." (III: 104) An example of this principle in operation can be seen in the history of the Hausa States which occupied the area where modern Nigeria is located.

The introduction and spread of Islam affected the growth of the Hausa states in a number of ways....It introduced a new system of taxation and above all a statecraft which most of the Hausa rulers adopted.... It introduced literacy and new administrative techniques. Finally, Islam put some of the rulers in touch with the great Muslim scholars and philosophers abroad from whom the Hausa kings could seek advice on political and social problems....

However, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, all the Hausa states were wiped off the political map of central Sudan, and in their place was established a single Fulani Empire. This almost incredible political change was the outcome of a political revolution organized by the Fulani under the leadership and inspiration of Usuman dan Fodio....

The revolt...was touched off by a clash between Usuman dan Fodio and the kings of Gobir, and there is absolutely no doubt

that Usuman's main concern was the purification and expansion of Islam, the elimination of all unorthodox practices, and government by god-fearing kings in accordance with the precepts of Islam, all of which were lacking in Hausaland by the end of the eighteenth century.

Islam was by then certainly in decline, administration of justice was corrupt, taxes were oppressive, many non-Muslim practices were rampant both at the courts and among the ordinary people.

...The revolution brought about a great revival and spread of Islam and gave a really great stimulus to education and learning in Hausaland....At least the first generation of emirs...were sincere religious devotees and saw to the establishment of true Islamic judicial, political and social institutions....

The significance of the foregoing discussion is not so much to document the Islamic roots of many Afro-Americans, but to say that a genuine search to reclaim ones roots--a search that goes beyond names and places--will invariably mean a reclamation of Allah and the African Islamic heritage.

This is not to say that Afro-Americans should embrace Islam because many of their ancestors were Muslims. Rather, if they are digging in the past for something more than folk heroes, if they are digging for an ideology, a system of life that strengthens and guides them as they face the challenges of today and tomorrow, then they are looking for Islam.

The roots of Islam are not dead but are ever living, and the same humanizing impact that birthed great empires in West Africa is still available to civilize the country in which we live by encouraging moral responsibility social cohesion, and stable values, by curbing business and governmental excesses, by enforcing a unitary system of justice, and most of all, by integrating all areas of life under an umbrella of service to humanity and obedience to Allah (God).

Reason and Guidance in Allah's Plan

The Quran appeals again and again to the faculty of reason in man and asks him to observe the signs in nature and the lessons of history. The Quran encourages man to search for wisdom and for truth, to use his intellect, and to apply reason. If man would study nature, he would see in it signs of Allah's creative power and would worship Allah as the Creator.

"He has created the heavens and the earth for just ends. Far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him. He has created man from a drop of sperm; yet behold, man becomes an open disputer. And cattle He has created for you; from them you derive warmth and other numerous benefits, and of their meat you eat....And He has created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and use for show....And unto Allah leads straight the way, but there are ways that turn aside. If Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you.

"It is He who sends down rain from the sky. From it you drink, and out of it grows the vegetation on which you feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind

of fruit. Verily, in these are signs for those who give thought. And He has subjected to you the night and the day; the sun and the moon are in subjection by His command. Verily, in these are signs for those who understand.

"It is He who has made the sea subject that you may eat of flesh that is fresh and tender, and that you may extract therefrom ornaments to wear; and you see the ships plow the ways that you may seek the bounty of Allah and that you may be grateful. And He has set upon the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and roads that you may guide yourselves....Is He who creates like one that creates not? Will you not receive admonition?" (XVI: 3-17)

Thus we find in the Quran references to all aspects of the universe, the earth and the sea, the mountains and the valleys, the heat of the day and the cold of the night; they are not merely poetic statements but are always referred to as signs of Allah's creative power for those who wish to understand.

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"MOHAMMAD, Messenger of God"

a movie to be seen, discussed, understood

The movie "Mohammad, Messenger of God" was pushed into the national spotlight when 12 gunmen held 134 people hostage in Washington, D.C. on March 9. The gunmen claimed that the movie was a "mockery" and a "sacrilege" to Islam, and they demanded that its showing be halted. Although their demand drew attention to a personal cause which was unrelated to the movie itself, the incident has given the movie widespread publicity.

The Islamic Party strongly endorses the movie and welcomes its release in the United States. The Islamic Party's chairman and two senior members saw "Mohammad, Messenger of God" last July at a special screening during an international conference in Tripoli, Libya. In an interview with the editor of *Al-Islam Journal*, Chairman Y. Muzaffaruddin Hamid gave his views about the movie and the controversy surrounding it.

EDITOR: Where did the idea originate for the movie "Mohammad, Messenger of God," and who financed its production?

CHAIRMAN: It is my understanding that the idea for the movie originated with the producer-director himself, Moustapha Akkad, a Syrian-born Muslim who was educated in the United States at UCLA and USC. Naturally, as a professional in the cinema arts he was fully cognizant of the tremendous influence that the media have in general, and the cinema in particular, over peoples' minds.

The movie industry in general has done a great dis-service to Islam throughout the years by fostering misrepresentations and distortions about the faith and about Prophet Muhammad himself. Muslims have often been depicted as war-

mongering, women-chasing, barbarian infidels. So Moustapha Akkad thought that it was his responsibility as a Muslim who was qualified in the production of films to utilize his talent to produce a monumental and historic film that would clear up the distortions and misrepresentations.

As far as the \$17 million cost of the movie is concerned, the necessary funds were made available primarily through the cooperation of the Libyan government with some assistance from the state of Kuwait.

EDITOR: In films on the lives of other prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, the emphasis seemed to have been on the personalities of these great men and the "supernatural" aspects of their missions. How does "Mohammad, Messenger of God" differ in this respect?

CHAIRMAN: One of the strong points of the film is that no one portrays Prophet Muhammad or even imitates his voice. By de-emphasizing the physical presence of the

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'MOHAMMAD, MESSENGER OF GOD'

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Prophet, the plot of the movie is free to focus on the message of the Prophet and the effect that it had on the world. The emphasis on the message rather than the personality also helps to drive home the fact that although Muslims hold Muhammad in high esteem, they do not worship or assign divine qualities to him. Hence, a viewer can leave the theatre with a new awareness about the meaning of Islam as a mission to establish the unity of Godhead and wipe away idolatry, a mission to establish the unity of mankind and wipe away racism, a mission to establish a socio-political system where people can be free and live in harmony.

EDITOR: Some religious scholars from Muslim countries have opposed the movie because they say it is offensive to the sentiments of Muslims and violates principles of Islamic Law. Is there any validity to these charges?

CHAIRMAN: First, let me say that in Islam we have no "Pope" or upper echelon of clergymen who determine what Islam is and what it is not. This is determined by the original sources of Islam--the divine word of Allah which is embodied in the Holy Quran, and the established practice of the Prophet.

There has been opposition to this film from the time the plans to produce it were announced, opposition coming primarily from the Muslim World League of Saudi Arabia and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs of Egypt. The opposition to the film in religious terms is based on an archaic understanding of contemporary photographic technology. The opponents argue that when actors address Prophet Muhammad, who is not shown in the film, the camera becomes a "symbolic representation of the Prophet" and projects "an image as a ghost" instead of his person. This, they claim, is Islamically prohibited.

They also say that when movies dramatizing "the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad" are shown in theatres "originally set up for fun and amusement," the "sanctity" of his personality "will be adversely affected." The same mentality in 1966 declared the world to be flat, and a few decades earlier, said that the telephone was forbidden because only evil spirits could make voices travel through wire cables.

The question facing us is very simple: Can any evidence from the primary sources of Islam--the Holy Quran and the Prophet's sayings and

practice--be presented in opposition to this film. It is my belief that this cannot be done, and it *has not* been done. The larger practical question is whether or not the cinema can be used to present Islamic subjects. I believe that not only can films be used but *should* be used. The more we use modern technological means to expose people to Islam, the greater will be the response to the faith.

EDITOR: Although Prophet Muhammad is not portrayed in the movie "Mohammad, Messenger of God," some of his companions are. Another argument against the film is that portrayal of the companions is also sacrilegious and that it is wrong to have non-Muslim actors playing these roles.

CHAIRMAN: The band of workers who accompanied the Prophet in the Islamic struggle were ordinary human beings like ourselves, for there are no "saints" in Islam. They were, at most, truthful and righteous examples. Hence, their portrayal in a movie is neither sacrilegious nor repugnant to the faith. In fact, to see a portrayal of the Prophet's companions, which succeeds in showing how they carried out the Islamic mission, can be nothing but inspiring.

The objection to non-Muslim actors playing the role of Muslim characters is trivial and baseless. By playing the roles of Muslim characters, perhaps non-Muslim actors will develop a new appreciation of Islam. It was reported to me that this is just what happened during the filming of "Mohammad, Messenger of God" with some of the actors. However, the majority of the actors were Muslims.

What we should keep in mind is that this is merely a film reflecting an aspect of the most significant movement in the history of humanity. It does not claim to be an historical documentary or a complete story. In this context, what *is* significant is how well the actors are able to express the message of the film, and this they have done admirably.

EDITOR: From the comments that you have made, there appears to be no clear religious basis for opposition to the movie. Do you think there is some other motive?

CHAIRMAN: In my view, much of the opposition to the movie stems from politics. As you know, the political situation in the Middle East is very delicate and there are intense differences. On one side are the governments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On the other is the government of Libya. As I said earlier, Libya helped to finance "Mohammad, Messenger of God," and much of the

filming was done in this country. Consequently, the movie seems to have gotten involved in the politics of these countries.

Those organizations and individuals who oppose the movie are either working consciously to stop the mass *dawah* (call to Islam) which the movie can provide, or they are being ignorantly misled by forces whose political objectives conflict with the *dawah*.

EDITOR: What can Muslims in the United States do to support the Movie?

CHAIRMAN: Unfortunately, many of the Muslim organizations in this country lack ideological independence and are being influenced by the propaganda against the film from overseas. But from the standpoint of clearing up distortions about Islam, Muslims can support the movie by refuting the baseless opposition against it, going to see the movie themselves, taking their families to see it, and encouraging their non-Muslim friends and relatives to see it.

The movie can be a part of the whole *dawah* mission (spreading the call of Islam) in this country. For example, if the movie goes to a particular city, the Muslims in that area can distribute Islamic literature outside the theatre. They can invite viewers to visit the local mosque for more information about Islam, or they can organize discussion groups on the movie itself.

EDITOR: Is it true that, even before the incident in Washington, the producer had difficulty getting theatres to book the movie?

CHAIRMAN: Yes, that's true. The theatre industry, which usually handles the distribution of movies, refused to handle "Mohammed, Messenger of God." Only independent theatre owners were willing to show the movie, and even then, financial guarantees had to be given. The message of the movie seems to clash with the political and ideological interests of those who control the theatre industry.

For the first time in the history of the cinema, potentially, every American can go to a local theatre and be introduced to Islam on the basis of human interest. Someone, apparently, doesn't want this to happen.

It was impossible for Moustapha Akkad to produce a movie about Prophet Muhammad without also reflecting to some degree the revolutionary spirit of Islam when it comes to social change. No doubt, this represents an obstacle to the distribution of the film.

BOOKREVIEW

Ending Mis-education of the Oppressed

(CONCLUSION - from last issue)

Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1970. pp. 186. Softback. \$3.95

Utilization of the banking concept of education is by no means confined to the classroom. Schools are not the only institutions guilty of perpetuating this form of oppression, and teachers are not the only individuals guilty of adopting the dehumanizing "know-it-all" role. Any individual, group, or institution which either consciously or unconsciously prevents people from thinking critically is by definition dehumanizing and oppressive. It is man's fundamental right to make decisions. To strip man of this right is to strip him of his humanity, thereby stagnating his creative development and reducing him to the animal state of being and consciousness.

Representatively, we shall limit the discussion to the case of organizational institutions and leaders. These particular cases are singled out because, excluding schools and school teachers, they have maximum influence over the oppressed in particular and over society in general. Further, it is well known that oppressed people all over the world look to leaders and organizations for direction and enlightenment.

Freire insists that, traditionally organizations and leaders have utilized the banking concept to keep people in their passive, oppressed state. The organization or leader plays the role of the teacher or "depositor," while the masses play the role of the students or receptacles. There is no dialogue; there is no meaningful communication. Regardless of whether the banking system is employed consciously or unconsciously the result is the same. The people are capacitated and prevented from developing critical consciousness, and are thereby dehumanized and oppressed.

Freire offers insight into the many ways in which organizations and their leaders both subtly and overtly utilize elements of the banking system. Further, he cautions the would-be revolutionary leaders and organizations against falling into the trap of attempting to utilize banking methods to aid in the liberation of the oppressed. Warns Freire, revolutionaries in the pursuit of liberation must not employ the

methods of dehumanization. The correct method lies in dialogue. "The people are already depersonalized by oppression--if the revolutionary leaders manipulate them...the very objective of organization (i.e. liberation) is negated. For the revolutionary leaders, organization means organizing themselves *with* the people."

The man who proclaims devotion to the cause of liberation and yet is unable to enter into communion with the people, whom he continues to regard as totally ignorant, is grievously self-deceived. Freire emphasizes that an organization and obviously its leader, jointly as well as separately, must dialogue with patience and humility. "...Dialogue cannot exist without humility. How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own...men who lack humility (or have lost it) cannot be their partners in naming the world."

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building. Any attempt to treat men as semi-humans only dehumanizes them. When men are already dehumanized, due to the oppression they suffer, the process of their liberation must not employ dehumanizing methods. The leadership must not

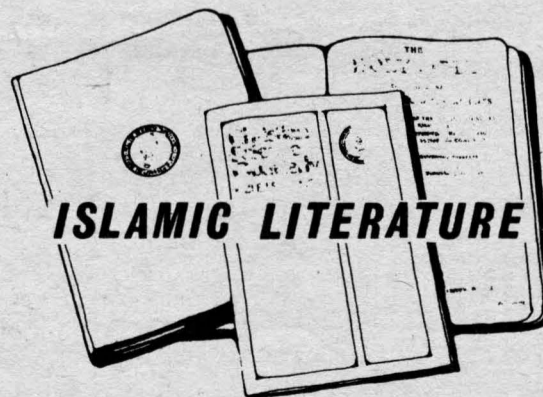
deceive itself into thinking that the issuing of occasional propaganda sheets and communiques constitutes educating the oppressed.

Notes Freire, "...the task of the humanist is surely not that of pitting their slogans against the slogans of the oppressors, with the oppressed as the testing ground." Propaganda, management, manipulation--all tools of domination--cannot be the instruments of oppressed peoples' rehumanization. Clearly, the banking system of education serves only the interests of the oppressor. The only effective instrument is a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed. The problem-posing method of education which emphasizes critical dialogue is the stimulating alternative for oppressed people of the world.

Denial of communion in the revolutionary process, avoidance of dialogue with the people under the pretext of organizing them...is really a fear of freedom. It is a fear of or lack of faith in the people. But if the people cannot be trusted, there is no need for liberation; in this case the revolution is not even carried out *for the people but by the people for the leaders*: a complete self-negation.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A more extensive study of the problem-posing method of education is offered in Paulo Freire's book *Education for Critical Consciousness* (The Seabury Press, New York, 1973).

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Myth of the Cross

The very cornerstone of the Christian faith is the belief that Jesus Christ, the alleged Son of God, was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of mankind and that his blood was shed for this purpose alone. The Crucifixion, therefore, is an accepted historical event around which the central premise of Christianity is based.

Although Muslims recognize Jesus as a Prophet of God, Islam categorically declares that Jesus was not killed on the cross. Such an idea to a Christian, no doubt, sounds absurd, for he believes that the Crucifixion story in the New Testament offers unquestionable proof that the event took place and that Jesus was killed and rose from the dead.

However, if one were to carefully investigate the Christian scriptures, one could find statements which show that Jesus was not killed on the cross. Let us then look at one such statement. According to the Book of Matthew, Jesus is reported to have given this answer to a group of scribes and Pharisees who wanted to see a sign:

An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the Prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whales' belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matt. 12: 39-40)

Christians interpret this prophecy to mean that Jesus would spend three days and three nights in the tomb after being crucified. This interpretation, however, contradicts the accounts of the Crucifixion and Resurrection as given in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These accounts all say that Jesus was in the tomb only one day and two nights (from late Friday evening until near sunrise Sunday morning).

Therefore, there must be another interpretation of the analogy of Jonah, otherwise, the statement would be a falsehood. The only other interpretation is that Jesus was in the earth in the same condition as Jonah was in the whale's belly, not in the same number of days. Jonah was *alive* in the whale's belly; hence, Jesus must have been *alive* in the tomb, which would mean that he was not killed on the cross. Naturally, Christians could never concede to this view, for it would mean the dissolution of their faith.

Nevertheless, the Crucifixion story is surrounded with mystery and confusion. The events as they have been told and the actions of the characters create doubts and unanswerable questions. For example, in the Book of John, soldiers were sent to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there blood and water." (John 19: 33-34) Something is certainly strange about this statement since blood *does not* flow from a dead body.

What does Islam have to say about these matters? Referring to the Jews, who rejected the mission of Jesus and schemed to put him to death, the Holy Quran says that "the unbelievers plotted and planned, and Allah too planned, and the best of planners is Allah." (III: 54) Then, in a series of denunciations against the Jews for their transgressions and blasphemies, the Holy Quran refuted their allegation of killing Jesus:

...They said in boast, "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the Apostle of Allah." But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. And those who differ therein are full of doubts with no certain knowledge but conjecture to follow. For of a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself, and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. (IV: 157-158)

These Quranic verses show that God did not let His servant Jesus suffer the humiliating death on the cross. Instead, God, who is the controller of all affairs, created a situation in which the onlookers thought the crucifixion was taking place. Those whose opinions differ from what has been related here have "no certain knowledge" says the Quran; they merely flounder in conjecture, for all knowledge rests with Allah, and "of a surety they killed him not."

REASON AND GUIDANCE (from p.6)

The Quran further points out that the things in nature are not a haphazard creation, but "It is He who created all things and ordained a measure for them." (XXV: 2) "And our Lord is He who gave everything its form and then guideth it to its goal." (XX: 50) In other words, Allah not only has laid down in nature certain unchangeable laws, but He also has a purpose with everything.

The universe is a universe under law and it is a universe with a purpose. Particularly, *guidance* is important; it means that things or creatures are not left to grope blindly until they accidentally stumble into a suitable mode of existence. The law of guidance is

also a universal law and it operates in all realms of matter and mind. All matter follows fixed laws or obeys laws inherent in its nature. Thus according to the Quran, everything in the heavens and on earth submits to Allah and proclaims His glory.

The type of guidance and submission varies from creature to creature and from realm to realm. Matter is guided by what we understand as physical and mechanical laws, plant life is guided by the laws of growth, and animal life is guided by instinct. Man, however, is guided by reason, but endowment of reason does not mean that divine guidance is withdrawn from him.

The Quran also shows in history the working out of Allah's purpose. Allah is a living, working God,

actively molding and forming man and history. Therefore man is admonished to contemplate history and see in history the imprint of Allah's will and His guidance. Destruction of cities or peoples are judgements of Allah's directing influence. "We never destroyed a city which had not first its warners with admonition; nor did We deal unjustly." (XXVI:209) These judgments are not caused by the arbitrary will of Allah, but rather are the result of man's refusal to take notice of Allah's warning and forbearance.

Thus the laws of nature which can be discovered and should be diligently studied, reveal the supreme reality of Allah, and the rise and fall of peoples and kingdoms reveal the plan of Allah to those who are observant.



The Nature of Our Movement

The Islamic Party in North America is an ideological party in the widest sense and is not a political party, a religious movement, or a social reform organization in the sense that these terms are commonly understood. It is based on the firm conviction that ISLAM is an all-pervading, comprehensive "order of life" which it intends to teach and translate into action in all spheres of human life. *The Islamic Party believes that the root of all man's troubles is his forgetfulness of Allah*

(God) Almighty, his disregard of Divine Guidance as revealed through the Prophets, and his unconcern for being accountable for his deeds in the Hereafter. No scheme of reform in human affairs can bear fruit unless and until obedience to Allah is sincerely and actually made the basis of the entire edifice of human life. Without this fundamental change, every attempt to reform society by materialistic concepts of justice will only result in other injustices.

AN EIGHT POINT MESSAGE

1. *Our Call is "la ilaha illallah"* --There is no god but Allah. Nothing deserves praise besides Him. He is the Creator, Owner, and Master of the universe. To Him belongs all power, sovereignty, and authority. He alone can legitimately rule and govern the life of man.

This is the most revolutionary doctrine on earth. It snatches from the hands of worldly powers their illegitimate authority to govern society, and restores dignity to all men by making them submissive to nothing but the Law of Allah and requiring them to struggle against every practice and belief contrary to that Law.

2. *We invite the people to Islam--* a practical system of belief and behavior, and a movement that frees men from servitude to other men so that they may devote themselves totally to the service of the One True God, Allah.

3. *Accept and apply the sources of Islam.* These sources are the Holy Quran (the Last Book of Allah) and the Sunnah (established practice) of the Last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah (peace and blessings be upon him). The previous scriptures from Allah (the Torah, Gospel, and others) have been corrupted and adulterated, nor were they intended as universal messages for all generations. Therefore, we have no

need to search them to ascertain Allah's will. Further, the Islamic Party represents no sect, division, or school of thought in Islam.

4. *The Islamic Nation* can only be established by a group of believers working according to the methodology of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) only. Such a group must be free of the desire for worldly gain and must possess the program and power to establish good and remove evil. Its leadership must be able to accurately apply the Prophet's established example of social change to today's situations.

5. *We make a clear distinction between an Islamic society and a Muslim country.* Even though a country may have many devoted Muslims, if its government is not based on the Shariah (Islamic Law), such a government is un-Islamic and illegal. According to the Holy Quran, "Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are unbelievers." (V: 47)

A society that is Muslim in name only will be filled with the same evils as atheistic and materialistic societies: political tyranny, economic exploitation, social injustices, and moral degeneration. This is why we say that the Islamic revolution is needed in the East as well as the West.

6. *The Muslim phenomenon in America* must be distinguished from the deceivers who are misusing and misrepresenting the noble name of Islam. Such deceiving groups are characterized by the following traits: acceptance of or identification with a false prophet, encouraging racial conceit, use of scriptures other than the Holy Quran for guidance, rejection of Prophet Muhammad's example as the criterion for practicing Islam, and giving interpretations to Islamic teachings that are contrary to the Holy Quran and explanations of Prophet Muhammad.

7. *Muslim organizations and individuals* must go directly to the Holy Quran and Sunnah to find the real purpose of Islam and how to establish it in its entirety. They must not mix the Islamic ideology with other ideas and practices, nor must they become a complacent minority in the corrupt American system.

8. *Islam wants to free the world* from oppression and injustice by forging mankind into one brotherhood built on ideological principles that transcend the barriers of race, class, and nation. Historically, the first respondents to the call of Islam have primarily been the poor and oppressed. This phenomenon has continued in this country and must be addressed accordingly.

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ISLAM: THE RELIGION OF PEACE – The word "Islam" literally means: (1) peace; (2) submission. The word signifies complete submission to the Will of Allah, The One True God.

OBJECT OF THE RELIGION – Islam provides its followers with a perfect code, whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM – Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, was, however, the last of the Prophets. Muslims, i.e., the followers of Islam, accept all such prophets of the world, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as revealed by the Will of Allah for the guidance of humanity.

THE QUR'AN – The Scripture of the Muslims is the Qur'an. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book. Inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur'an, the last Book of Allah came as a recapitulation of the former scriptures.

ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM – These are seven in number: Belief in (1) Allah; (2) Angels; (3) Books from Allah; (4) Messengers from Allah; (5) the Hereafter; (6) the Premeasurement of good and evil; (7) Resurrection after death.

PILLARS OF ISLAM – These are five in number: (1) Declaration of faith in the Oneness of Allah, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad; (2) Prayer; (3) Fasting; (4) Alms-giving; (5) Pilgrimage to the Holy Ka'aba at Mecca.

ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH – The Muslims worship One God, Allah – the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Just, the Cherisher of All the worlds, the Friend, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is indivisible in Person. He

is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

FAITH AND ACTION – Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith by itself is insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and the Hereafter. Each must bear his own burden and none can expiate for another's sin.

CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM – The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature, which, made of the best fibre, is capable of unlimited progress and development.

EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM – Islam is the religion of the Unity of Allah and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches and family honors are accidental things: virtue and the service of humanity are matters of real merit. Distinctions of color, race and creed are unknown in the Principles of Islam.

KNOWLEDGE – The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior even to angels.

SANCTITY OF LABOR – Every labor which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

CHARITY – All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from Allah for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to Allah. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.

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The Islamic Movement Journal

April-May 1977

Vol.6, No.2

Donation 35¢

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