

THE MUSLIM STANDARD

Number 30

May 1978/ Jamadi-uth-Thani 1398

25 cents Monthly

In an interesting and useful study* on the 'phenomenon of conversion' to Islam in the United States, most of the 25 persons (14 men, and 11 women) who were questioned admitted to having very little knowledge of, or an indifferent or hostile attitude to Islam before they eventually became Muslims.

The lack of knowledge brings to mind a rhetorical question posed by the late Malcolm X during a speech in London shortly before he was assassinated. 'Do you think,' he asked, 'that it is an accident that in this modern, mechanised, highly competitive society that America is—do you think that it is an accident that I was a grown man of 25 before I ever heard of Islam?' It also brings to mind an admission from Andrew Young, US ambassador to the UN, who in a recent BBC profile spoke of his lack of knowledge of Islam and Muslim civilization, a knowledge which he felt was essential for understanding the people and problems of the Middle East and Africa which he now had to deal with directly.

Of hostility to Islam one person in the sample said: 'My attitude toward Islam was what I had learned from my school and other books. I thought of the Muslims as thieves, crooks, murderers, etc. They were magic makers, worshipped snakes, and flew around on magic carpets, and put fear in the hearts of humanity.' It is astonishing that a person who held such notions could eventually adopt Islam and accept Muslims as 'brothers'.

The ages of the persons interviewed ranged from 20 to 41 years and they had been Muslims from 3 months to 12 years. The average age at which they accepted Islam was in their early twenties with women accepting Islam earlier than men did.

The questions put to the interviewees concerned their previous religion, how they first came in contact with Islam, their main attraction to Islam, the change on their lives effected by Islam and whether they found Islam more difficult to practise than their previous religion.

The majority came from a Christian background. It is perhaps significant that

Why Did They Change?

Abdul Wahid Hamid

the smallest number were Catholics and Presbyterians who have a more organised, some would say rigid, church structure. It is often said that 'Catholics are hard nuts to crack.' Women had a stronger faith in their previous religion as compared to men, 50% of whom confessed to having little or no faith in their previous religion which seemed to bear out the loose generalization that 'women are more religious than men'.

Contrary to a common assumption that women embrace Islam only in order to marry or after marrying a Muslim man, the study shows that only one of the 11 women accepted Islam through her husband. Other data suggests that more attention needs to be given to the needs of women. A major role in introducing Islam is played by Muslim students and individuals; organised Islamic activity (meetings and classes) seemed to play an important but secondary role. The 'Autobiography of Malcolm X' was responsible for the conversion of 8 % of the sample which corroborates experiences of newcomers to Islam in Britain and elsewhere.

The reasons given for accepting Islam were very diverse ranging from its simplicity and practicality, its logical

and realistic approach to man's problems, to its emphasis on morality and the oneness of God and its impact on the lives of individuals—the wonderful quality of certain persons met'. A dissatisfaction with previous religious tenets and practices was pronounced—the Christian doctrine of atonement, trinity, the question of the authenticity of the Bible, and the religious-secular dichotomy.

It is significant to note that the majority of men found it easier to practise Islam than their previous religion. Some of the reasons given for this were: the absence of 'mental pressures that went along with the stigma of being a sinner' in Christianity 'it is easy to do what your heart yearns for'; 'Islam is a simple religion—it is what you yourself do'; 'Islam is natural'.

For those who thought it was harder to practise, some of the reasons given were: 'Islam requires a great deal of discipline particularly for a westerner who is not used to limitations on his behaviour'. 'Discipline for prayers is a constant effort, and social restrictions are demanding...difficult in a non-Muslim culture'; 'the full Islamic dress was the most difficult thing to do' for a woman.

A key observation was made: 'the more Islam is practised the more one is integrated into the Muslim society, the more satisfying it is'. This could be an important truism which, for example, so-called 'crypto-Muslims' (those who at heart have accepted Islam but through family, professional or other reasons do not feel strong enough to proclaim their Islam) could benefit from, as indeed could all Muslims—especially those who live in the impersonal and at times very lonely urban environments of the West.

The results of the survey showed that there was a strong motivation among converts to learn as much as possible about Islam, some reading more than a hundred books. But the fact that there were about 20% whose knowledge of Islam remained small seems to suggest either backsliding or that there is not enough concern or followup work being

(Continued on page 3)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

ARE WOMEN INFERIOR TO MEN ACCORDING TO ISLAM?

"Inferior" means "of less value" or "of poorer quality". To say that women are "inferior" to men is like saying that a spoon is "inferior" to a knife. They were made with different purposes in mind. Woman is not a kind of "imitation" man, of poorer quality. She is a separate sex, and fulfils a different role in life. Therefore she has been made with certain physical and psychological differences which help her in what she has to do, just as men are fitted for the work they have to do. To complain that a woman cannot or does not do everything a man can do is like complaining that a spoon cannot cut meat. One can well complain that a knife cannot scoop up milk.

The spoon and the knife have different functions, but both co-operate in getting food into our mouths. In the same way, man is naturally fitted to a role as provider and protector, and woman to a role as home-maker and preserver. Both are necessary to the maintenance of a happy home, and each helps towards the peace of mind and happiness of the other. As the Qur'an says:

"They (wives) are your garments and you are their garments."
(Qur'an 2:187).

In other words they give each other comfort and protection.

The fact that they have some differences does not mean that men and women are totally unlike. There are many interests and activities that they may have in common.

However, when they combine in marriage and become a family, it is clear that one or other must be head of the family. Since the man has the responsibility of providing for the family and maintaining them, he is taken to be its head.

Women's physical and psychological differences from men do not make them mentally less able than men. Indeed on many occasions when women compete freely with men in various professions, they have proven themselves to have the same mental capacity as men. However, although they are often able to do men's jobs as bread-winners, it does not follow that it is socially desirable for them to drop their responsibilities as wives and mothers to go and compete with men.

In Islam a woman and a man are

spiritually equal. The only thing which determines a Muslim's superiority in the eyes of God is not his or her sex or race or social position, but devotion to God. As the Qur'an puts it:

"The best among you is the one who has more taqwa."
(Qur'an 49:13).

The matter is spelled out in full in the Qur'an Chapter 33:35.

"Surely, the men who submit themselves to God and the women who submit themselves to Him; the believing men and the believing women; the truthful men and the truthful women; the patient men and the patient women; the humble men and the humble women; the men who give alms and the women who give alms; the fasting men and the fasting women; the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity; the men who remember God much and the women who remember God much—for all of them God has prepared forgiveness and a great reward."

Nor should anyone be misled by a traditional belief in some areas that a wife will follow her husband, whether to Paradise or Hell. The Qur'an says that no soul can bear the burden of another. On the Day of Judgment, each of us will stand alone. Only wives who have done good will join their good husbands in Paradise (Qur'an 40:8) and by the same token only husbands who have done good will join their good wives there.

Certain passages of the Qur'an have been taken by non-Muslim critics of Islam and even by some Muslims, as evidence that Islam considers women "inferior" to men. If we examine these we find that this is due to either: (a) failure to relate the phrase or sentence to the context of the passage; (b) failure to relate it to other passages of the Qur'an dealing with the same subject which throw light on its meaning; or (c) failure to give sufficient thought to the purpose of the verse, and consequently its misinterpretation.

For instance, under Islamic laws of inheritance, a female inherits half the share of a male. This is not a sign of her inferiority. It is a recognition of the fact that men are expected to be the maintainers of women and children, whereas women have no duty to maintain even themselves. Therefore they have far less need of the money or property inherited. Whatever they inherit is therefore pocket-money.

Again the Qur'an says that if a

legal contract is being signed and witnessed, the witnesses should be either two men or a man and two women (Qur'an 2:282). The reason for this is clearly stated in the same verse. It is "so if one of the two errs, the one may remind the other." This does not therefore mean that a woman is considered intellectually inferior or less truthful. It is simply that since the world of business and official proceedings are usually in the hands of men, women could not generally be expected to be as familiar with legal documents as men. There should therefore be two, as a check against error or deception.

It should be borne in mind that there are certain other legal matters on which, under Islamic Law, the evidence of one woman only is fully accepted, and not the evidence of a man. Such matters, for example, would be those concerning a woman's menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, etc. about which a woman is expected to have good knowledge.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF JIHAD?

Jihad has generally been translated as meaning "holy war" and has consequently not been fully understood. The word "jihad" occurs frequently in the Makkan surahs (Qur'an 25:52; 29:6; 16:110) before there were any religious wars, and refers to "striving hard" or "exerting oneself" in the way of God. Therefore every attempt to preserve and spread the Truth, (by preaching, teaching, remaining faithful under persecution and so on) is a jihad. It was only when the small Muslim community was in danger of destruction in Medinah that jihad came to include fighting in defence of religion. That was one kind of striving for the Truth that was required at the time. It is therefore incorrect to think that jihad means only fighting.

According to Hadith, the Prophet said:

"The true jihad is the jihad against one's soul and the true Hijrah is the flight from one's passions."

Muslims do not therefore have to wait till they hear a cry of "holy war" before they think of doing anything to help their religion. Jihad is something for Muslims every day.

It should be clear that even if the striving for the Truth does involve fighting, Muslims should not be aggressors, for Muslims are told in the Qur'an:

"And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

do not begin the hostilities. Surely God loves not the aggressors."

(Qur'an 2:190)

The Prophet did not fight until the Makkans persecuted the Muslims, driven them from their homes and sought to destroy Islam everywhere and by all means.

If the Muslims do fight there are certain rules of humane conduct ordered by the Prophet which are binding on them in any war. When entering conquered territory, mercy must be shown to civilian inhabitants. The lives of women, children and old people should be spared and they should be taken to a safe place. Livestock and farm animals must not be killed. Crops should not be destroyed nor trees cut down, unless failure to do so would cause serious danger to the Muslim army—only under military necessity, not for wanton destruction.

To summarise, therefore, one can say that Jihad is not an aggressive war in an attempt to force conversion, but a striving for the faith which may take many forms—one of which is fighting for the defence of Islam when necessary.

WHY DID THEY CHANGE?

done. The survey obviously needs to be extended and the analysis of the results needs to be detailed further.

Although it was not presented as such, the study has an important relevance for those engaged in da'wah, in the process of dispelling the ignorant, indifferent or hostile attitudes towards Islam which are often regarded as an essential ingredient of the western ethos and in the process of creating an enlightened atmosphere for disseminating knowledge of Islam and 'inviting people to the straight path'. Indirectly the study emphasizes the need to have a competent knowledge not only of Islam but of the society as a whole in which one operates and the background and needs of individuals. It shows that the personal example of individual Muslims is by far the most effective means of 'presenting' Islam. It also shows that despite the ignorance of Islam among born Muslims which converts took to be the main factor responsible for the former's deviation, there are people prepared to study and examine Islam on its merits and not simply by the image of Islam that may be projected by the majority of Muslims.

*A study on Conversion' by Mrs Nafees-El-Batool Khan, Al-Ittihad, Vol. 14:3-4

AWAKENED By The Call

It was around 2.00 a.m. on Friday morning when Omar unlocked the front door to his one-room apartment and stepped inside. He slammed the door behind him as he fumbled with the light switch on the wall. He walked towards his bed and dropped heavily on it. He was 'tight'. He had been out with the boys and as usual burned away a couple 'sticks'.

His eyes were heavy and painful. He tossed this way and that creasing the sheets below him. He could not sleep. "What is wrong with me?" He said to himself. "My day was a normal one and I am in bed at my usual time."

He sat up in bed, rubbed his eyes vigorously, groped for his eyewash he remembered he had bought some time ago and was somewhere on the table near his bed. He found it, applied some to his eyes and very gently lay on the bed again. While planning his exploits for the next day he fell asleep.

ALLAHU AKBAR ALLAHU AKBAR, ALLAHU AKBAR ALLAHU AKBAR, ASHADU ANLA ILAHA ILLALLAH It was the Adhan (the call to prayer), a call Omar was very familiar with. His parents were Muslims and as a little boy he went to the Masjid with them. Now he was grown up. He had left his parents' home and way of life. He was renting an apartment for himself, a stone's throw from the local Masjid. The Muadhdhin (one who calls the Adhan) would stand on an elevated spot and would call the Adhan at the top of his voice.

In the peace and quiet of that Friday morning, once more the Muadhdhin proclaimed the Adhan in his sweet, melodious voice inviting the Muslims to the morning prayer. As usual, Omar was awakened by it, annoyed, he blurted out: "Why don't that man shut his mouth!"

A feeling of uneasiness and discomfort had pervaded his whole being since he came home last night. His head was clearing from the effects of the 'joints' he had smoked earlier in the night. He began to think about himself: his life, his ambitions and his future. He went about preparing breakfast deep in thought. He was very pensive. He had

problems - many of them. He could not find solutions. They seemed insurmountable. He turned to 'liming' and smoking weed as an escape. Now his job was threatened because of his regular absence from work and he was suspended for a couple of days.

After a cool bath and a hot breakfast he went back to bed and slept soundly. ALLAHU AKBAR ALLAHU AKBAR It was the Adhan again waking him up. This time, in fact the only time since he had been living there, he felt no aversion to it. Perhaps because he had a long sleep before being awakened or maybe because of man's natural inclination towards goodness, he refrained from erupting in a volley of expletives. Whatever the reason, this Adhan was different. He felt inclined to responding to it. He knew the meaning of it. He knew it summoned the Believers to worship. He knew it was Friday and therefore it was time for the Jummah (Congregational) prayer. Almost mechanically he got off the bed, dressed and proceeded in robot-like fashion towards the Masjid - a building he had seen so often, only from the outside, a structure he forgot even existed, except on mornings when he was awakened by the Adhan.

As he entered the Masjid compounds he stopped, looked around him and proceeded cautiously along the pathway that led to the entrance of the Masjid. He suddenly became frightened. The hair on his body stood on edge. There were butterflies in his stomach. He mustered some courage and paced up to the porch that led into the Masjid proper. On the porch an array of shoes stared at him. They seemed to make faces at him, taunting and deriding him. He gulped, stood well away from them all and regaining his composure, somewhat calmly slipped off his sandals. He ventured into the Masjid or attempted to at least by putting his left foot in, which he withdrew in a flash. He remembered the scolding he received from his father for not entering with his right foot first. Having duly entered with his right foot first, he edged himself to the wall nearest the exit and sat down. It was so quiet. It

(Continued on page 4)

was so peaceful. He looked at the worshippers and admired the grace and almost ease with which they made their bowing and prostrating. He remembered it was not so long ago that he and his father made those movements together. He wanted to do them once more and was debating it in his mind.

ALLAHU AKBAR ALLAHU AKBAR.....; It was the second Adhan indicating the commencement of the Khutbah (Sermon). The Khatib (one who delivers the Khutbah) rose and smilingly greeted the congregation. Omar could hear himself saying "Wa alaikumus salam" in reply. To him these Arabic words, strangely enough, sounded like music. He rehearsed them in his mind. "Oh! That felt good!" He repeated it to himself several times, each time serving to alleviate some of the tension that had built up within him.

The Khatib rattled off something in Arabic, a language Omar could not understand, after which he paused. He looked intently at his congregation and said in a stentorian voice: "What is the matter with you that you do not believe in Allah....." Omar didn't hear anymore. He was jolted; utterly shaken. His stomach felt funny. He felt his heart pounding against his rib cage.

These words kept reverberating in his head. He thought the roof would come crashing down on him.. He felt weak and feverish. He was nervous. He was trembling. He was perspiring profusely. He was frightened. His whole life had been based on the rejection of Allah. The details of his iniquitous way of life bombarded him. He knew very well the way of life he was following was strongly condemned by Allah. He had to make a decision. He had to choose between Islam - the way of

life Allah intended for mankind or rejection of that way - the way he had been following since his early teens; a way he defended and propagated with gusto.

Through the maze and stupor in which he was entangled he clearly heard the last few sentences of the Khutbah; "Allah is your God. Islam is the only acceptable way of life before Allah. The Qur'an is your guide and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is your exemplar. My dear brothers, do not reject Allah; follow Islam. It is the way of life Allah has ordained for you. If you follow it Allah will be pleased with you and you will be rewarded handsomely. If you err seek Allah's forgiveness for your sins. Remember, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful

Omar felt reassured by the last sentence. He had made his decision. He was going to follow Islam. He sought forgiveness from Allah and vowed never to return to his infamous ways again. He thanked Allah for guiding him to the Masjid, and for helping him to make his decision. He prayed for mercy and guidance and glorified Allah for igniting the spark of Iman (Faith) in his heart. He began to feel at ease, at peace with himself; at peace with everything. His heart was reconciled.

ALLAHU AKBAR ALLAHU AKBAR.....; It was the Iqamah indicating the beginning of the Fard (compulsory) prayer after the Khutbah. Omar quickly stood in line with the other worshippers. The recitation of the Qur'an by the Imam (one who leads the Prayer) calmed his exasperated nerves, soothed his pounding heart and created an atmosphere of peace, humility and submission - a feeling Omar had never experienced and would never have experienced outside of Islam.

The Editorial Committee of the Muslim Standard would like to see more persons writing and making use themselves of the columns of the paper. A person may choose to send a letter for publication or an item of news, he or she may deal with aspects of Trinidad and West Indian life or anything of interest and importance to Muslims in particular and the wider society and the Islamization process in general. That should give ample scope!

Words Of Wisdom

"The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of God is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. God gives manifold increase to whom He pleases. And God cares for all and He knows all things." *Qur'an 2:261.*

The parable of those who reject their Lord is that their works are as ashes, on which the wind blows furiously on a tempestuous day: No power have they over aught that they have earned: That is the straying far, far (from the goal). *Qur'an 14:18.*

"The strong man is not he who can wrestle, but the strong man is he who can control himself at the time of anger." *Muhammad (peace be upon him).*

"The signs of a hypocrite are these: when he talks, he speaks falsehood; when he promises he breaks it and when he is entrusted he commits treachery." *Muhammad (peace be upon him).*

'Islam regards sins and vices as bonds and fetters which imprison the human soul, weigh it down and drag it into the abyss. It counts release from the ties of base desires as true liberation, and its entire moral system is based on this foundation.'

Sayyid Qutb.

"If you are desirous of the Hereafter, seeking salvation and running away from eternal damnation, pursue the science of the soul's diseases and their remedies... which will lead you to the praiseworthy 'stations'.....because no sooner is the soul purged from what is blameworthy than it is filled with that which is praiseworthy just as the soil where all kinds of plants and flowers would grow as soon as the grass is weeded out- unless the weeds are removed neither plants nor flowers would grow."

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali.

"There are three sections of people; the first (section) resembles food; that is, no man can live without it; their co-operation is very necessary; the second (section) resembles medicine or doses that are not often wanted; i.e. their occasional co-operation is quite sufficient in life; and thirdly, there are people who resemble disease, whom other people do not want, as it is injurious and infectious.

Imam Ali

If you have read
THE MUSLIM STANDARD
and have benefitted from it
then why not
INTRODUCE IT TO A FRIEND

Annual Subscription Rates

Inland	TT\$3.00 (Postage Free)
Caribbean	\$6.00
Americas	\$7.00
Europe, Africa, Asia	\$9.00

SUBSCRIBE NOW

IN THE SHADE OF THE QUR'AN

SECRETS BROUGHT OUT

By the snorting coursers. By the strikers of fire. By the dawn raiders. Blazing a trail of dust. Cleaving into the centre (of the enemy). Surely man is ungrateful to his Lord. And surely he is a witness unto that. Verily he is passionate in his love for wealth. Knows he not when the contents of the graves are! overthrown. And that which is in the breast is brought out. Surely on that day their Lord will be in perfect knowledge concerning them.

This surah is presented in the form of rapid, violent and moving touches. The text moves swiftly from one scene to the other. With the last verse everything settles down: the verbal expressions, the connotations, the subject matter and rhythm in a manner similar to that of a courser reaching the finishing point.

The surah starts with the scene of warhorses running, snorting, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching a raid at dawn and blazing a trail of dust cleaving suddenly into the centre of the enemies, taking them by surprise; striking terror and fear in their hearts.

Then follows the scene of the human self: a scene of ingratitude, thanklessness, ignobleness, greed and extreme miserliness. Immediately after that a description of uprooted graves with their contents thrown out and lay scattered and the secrets of the hearts pulled out. Finally the trail of dust, ingratitude and miserliness, the contents of the graves and the pulled out secrets all come to the same terminus. They come to Allah and settle down.

"Surely on that Day their Lord will be in perfect knowledge concerning them"

The rhythm of the surah is robust and thunderous and thus fits well with the dusty and clamorous atmosphere generated by the upturned graves and the secrets violently pulled off the breasts. These characteristics of the rhythm are also appropriate to the picture of ingratitude, thanklessness and extreme miserliness. A framework for this picture (of ungrateful and greedy hearts and of the upturned graves) is provided by a dusty and tumultuous atmosphere of horses racing and thundering, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, staging surprise raids at dawn, blazing a trail of dust, bursting unexpectedly into the centre of the enemy. Thus the frame and the picture are in perfect harmony with each other.

"By the snorting coursers. By the strikers of fire. By the dawn raiders. Blazing a trail of dust. Cleaving into the centre (of the enemy). Surely man is

ungrateful to His Lord. And surely he is a witness unto that. Surely he is passionate in his love for wealth."

Allah, praised be He, swears by the warhorses and describes their movement one after the other; running, snorting and neighing. They strike their hoofs against rocks producing sparks of fire. They wage their attack early at dawn in order to take the enemy by surprise. Producing a trail of dust during the unexpected battle, they pierce swiftly the enemy ranks creating disorder and confusion amongst them. These successive stages were well known to those who were first addressed by the Quran. The fact that Allah swears by the horses provides an emphatic suggestion that the movement portrayed is a lovable one and men should respond to it actively.

Added to all this is the harmony between this scene and the scenes which are the subject of the oath.

The subject of the oath of Allah is the state of human soul when it is devoid of faith and its impetus. The Quran draws man's attention to this state in order that he may gather all his will power to combat it. For Allah is perfectly aware of how deeply it is ingrained in man and what great pressure it has upon him.

"Surely man is ungrateful to his Lord, and surely he is a witness unto that. Verily he is passionate in his love for wealth."

It is a fact that man reacts with ingratitude to all the bounties of his Lord. He denies the favours which Allah confers upon him. His thanklessness and ingratitude is reflected in a host of actions and verbal statements, which will serve as witness against him. Indeed it is man who is witness against himself through his deeds. Or perhaps, on the Day of Judgment, he may testify against his thanklessness and his gratitude:

"And surely he is a witness unto that." For, on the Day of Judgment he will speak the truth against himself with any contentions.

"Verily he is passionate in his love for wealth"

Man is a passionate self-lover; he loves what is good for himself. But he loves only what he imagines to be good: wealth, power and the pleasures of this world. This is his nature unless he has faith which changes his concepts, values and even his concerns. Faith reverts his ingratitude to benediction, thanklessness to thankfulness. It changes his greed and

miserliness to benevolence and compassion. It makes him aware of the proper values which are worth ambition, competition and hard seeking. Indeed these are much more exalted than money, power and mundane pleasures.

Man without faith is an ignoble creature having only trivial ambitions and petty concerns. However big his desires, however strong his ambitions and his objectives may seem, he remains, sunk in the cesspool of this earth, confined within the limits of this life, imprisoned in self. He cannot be freed or elevated except by an attachment to a world superior to this earth extending beyond this life; a world which originates from Allah who is the First (without beginning) and returning to Allah the Eternal: a world into which this life and the life hereafter converge and which has no end.

Hence the final verse in the surah provides the cure for thanklessness, ingratitude, greed and miserliness.

"Knows he not when the contents of the graves are overthrown. And that which is in the breasts brought out."

It is a violent and frightening scene: the 'overthrowing' of the contents of the graves; 'overthrowing' is an exceedingly violent expression. Moreover the secrets of the hearts which were closely guarded, kept away from everyone, are brought forth. Again the Arabic term used here for pulling out the secrets is very forceful. Thus, suggesting a dusty atmosphere of violence and force.

Does he not know when this will take place? And does he not remember what he knows? The mere awareness of all this is enough to inspire man to seek an answer and explore every avenue in search for it while at the same time discerning all that may result from these wild movements. These nimble and agile movements finally come to where every matter and destiny is settled:

"Surely on that day their Lord will be in perfect knowledge concerning them"

So to their Lord is the end. He 'then' knows them and all their affairs and secrets. Allah certainly knows everything at all times and at all conditions but the knowledge of 'that day' has some effects which draw their attention. It is a knowledge which necessitates the reckoning and reward.

—Adapted from Fi Zilal Al Qur'an by Sayyid Qutb.

The fifth article of Islamic Faith is belief in life after death. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has directed us to believe in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgment. The essential ingredients of this belief are as follows:

That the life of this world and all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. Everything will be annihilated. That day is called *Qayamah* (the Last Day).

That all the human beings who had lived in the world since its inception will then be restored to life and will be presented before God Who will sit in court on that day. This is called *Hashr* (Resurrection).

That the entire record of every man and woman—of all their actions, good and bad—will be presented before God for final judgment.

That God shall finally judge the reward of every person. He shall weigh everyone's good and bad deeds. One who excels in goodness will be rewarded a goodly reward; one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his good deeds, will be punished.

That the reward and punishment will be administered judiciously. Those who emerge successful in this judgment will go to Paradise and the doors of eternal bliss will be opened upon them; those who are condemned and deserve punishment will be sent to Hell—the abode of fire and torture.

NEED FOR THIS BELIEF

Belief in the life after death has always been a part of the teachings of the Prophets. Every Prophet asked his followers to believe in it, in the same way as the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (Peace be upon him), has asked us to do. This has always been an essential condition of being a Muslim. All Prophets have categorically declared that one who disbelieves in it, or cast doubts on it, is a *kafir* (disbeliever). This is so, because denial of life after death makes all other beliefs meaningless. This denial also destroys the very sanction for good life and man is driven to a life of ignorance and disbelief. A little reflection would make this quite clear.

In your everyday life, whenever you are asked to do anything, you immediately think: what is the utility of doing it and what harm is involved in not doing it. This is the very nature of man. He instinctively regards a useless action as totally unnecessary. You will never be willing to waste your time and energy in useless, wasteful, and unproductive jobs. Similarly, you won't be very eager to

avoid a thing that is harmless. And the general rule is that the deeper your conviction about the utility of a thing, the firmer would be your response to it; and the more doubtful you are about its efficacy, the more wavering and shaky would be your attitude. After all why does a child put his hand in fire? —Because he is not sure that fire burns. Why does he evade studying? —Because he does not fully grasp the importance and benefits of education and does not believe in what his elders try to impress upon his mind.

Now think of the man who does not believe in the Day of Judgment. Would he not consider belief in God and a life in accordance with His code of no consequence? What value will he attach to a life in pursuit of His pleasure? To him neither obedience to God is of any harm. How, then, would it be possible for him to scrupulously follow the injunctions of God, His Prophet, and His Book? What incentive would remain there for him to undergo trials and sacrifices and to avoid worldly pleasures? And if a man does not follow the code of God and lives according to his own likes and dislikes, of what use is his belief in the existence of God, if any such belief he has?

That is not all. If you reflect still deeper, you will come to the conclusion that belief in life after death is the greatest deciding factor in the life of a man. Its acceptance or rejection determines the very course of his life and behaviour.

A man who has in view the success or failure of this world alone will be concerned with the benefits and harms that accrue to him in this life only. He will not be prepared to undertake any good act if he has no hope of gaining thereby some worldly interest, nor will he be keen to avoid any wrong act if that is not injurious to his interests in this world.

But a man who believes in the next world as well and has a firm conviction of the final consequence of his acts would look upon all worldly gains and losses as temporary and transitory and would not stake his eternal bliss for a transitory gain. He will look upon things in their wider perspective and will always keep the everlasting benefit or harm in view. He will do the good, however injurious it may be to his immediate interests; and he will avoid the wrong, however charming it may look. He will judge the things from the viewpoint of their eternal consequences and would not submit to his whims and caprices.

Thus there is a radical difference between the beliefs, approaches, and lives of the two persons. One's idea of a good

act is limited to its beneficence in this brief temporary life as a gain in the shape of money, property, public applause and similar other things which give him position, power, reputation, and worldly happiness. Such things become his objectives in life. Fulfilment of his own wishes and self-aggrandizement become the be-all and end-all of his life. And he does not deter even from cruel and unjust means in their achievement. Similarly, his conception of a wrong act is that which may involve a risk or injury to his interests in this world like loss of

OUR DES

property and life, spoiling of health, besmirching of reputation, or some other unpleasant consequence. In contrast to this man, the believer's concept of good and evil would be quite different. To him all that pleases God is good and all that invokes His displeasure and wrath is evil. A good act, according to him, will remain good even if it brings no benefit to him in this world, or even entails loss of some worldly possession or injury to his personal interests. He will be confident that God will reward him in the eternal life and that would be the real success. Similarly, he will not fall a prey to evil deeds merely for some worldly gain, for he knows that even if he escapes punishment in his short worldly life, in the end he would be the loser and would not be able to escape punishment from God. He does not believe in the relativity to morals but sticks to the absolute standards revealed by God and lives according to them irrespective of gain or injury in this world.

Thus it is the belief or disbelief in life after death which makes man adopt different courses in life. For one who does not believe in the Day of Judgment it is absolutely impossible to fashion his life as suggested by Islam. Islam says: "In the way of God give zakat (compulsory tax) to the poor." His answer is, "No, zakat will lessen my wealth; I will, instead, take interest on my money." And in its collection he would not hesitate to get attached each and everything belonging to the debtors

(Space courtesy Mic)

though they be poor or hunger-stricken. Islam says: "Always speak the truth and shun lying, though, you may gain ever so much by lying and lose ever so much by speaking the truth." But his reply would be: "Well, what shall I do with a truth which is of no use to me here, and which instead brings loss to me; and why should I avoid lying where it can bring benefit to me without any risk, even, that of a bad name?" He visits a lonely place and finds a precious metal lying there; in such a situation Islam says: "This is not your property,

FINAL TINY

do not take it"; but he would say: "This is a thing I have come by without any cost or trouble; why should I not have it? There is no one to see this pick-up, who might report it to the police or give evidence against me in a court of law, or give me a bad name among the people. Why should I not make use of this valuable? Someone secretly keeps a deposit with this man, and after that he dies. Islam says: "Be honest with the property deposited with you and give it over to the heirs of the deceased." He says: "Why? There is no evidence of his property being with me; his children also have no knowledge about it. When I can appropriate it without any difficulty, without any fear of legal claim, or stain on my reputation, why should I not do so?" In short, at every step in life, Islam will direct him to walk in a certain direction and adopt a certain attitude and course of behaviour; but he will take recourse to the opposite direction. For Islam measures and values everything from the viewpoint of its everlasting consequence; while such a person always has in view only the immediate and earthly outcome. Now, you can understand why a man cannot be a Muslim without belief in the Day of Judgment.

LIFE AFTER DEATH: A RATIONAL VINDICATION

So far we have discussed the need and importance of belief in the Day of

Judgment. Now let us consider how far the constituents of the belief are rationally understandable. The fact is that whatever Muhammad (peace be upon him) has told us about life after death is clearly borne out by reason. Although our belief in that Day is based upon our implicit trust in the Messenger of God, rational reflection not only confirms this belief but also reveals that Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings in this respect are much more reasonable and understandable than all other viewpoints about life after death.

About life after death the following viewpoints are found in the world:

1. A section of the people says that there is nothing left of man after death, and that after this life-ending event, there is no other life. According to these people, this belief has no reality. They say that there is no possibility of it and such a belief, is quite unscientific. This is the view of the atheists who also claim to be scientific in their approach and bring in Western science in their support.

2. Another section of the people maintains that man, in order to bear the consequences of his deeds, is repeatedly regenerated in this very world. If he lives a bad life, in the next generation he will assume the shape of an animal, like a dog or a cat, etc., or some tree or some lower kind of man. If his acts have been good, he will be reborn as a man into a higher class. This viewpoint is found in some Eastern religions.

3. There is a third viewpoint which calls for belief in the Day of Judgment, the Resurrection, man's presence in the Divine Court, and the administration of reward and punishment. This is the common belief of all the Prophets.

Now let us consider these viewpoints one by one.

The first section, which arrogates to itself the authority and support of science, alleges that there is no reality in life after death. They say that they have never seen anybody coming back after his death. There is not a single case of revival. We see that after death a man is reduced to dust. Therefore death is the end of life and there is no life after death. But just think over this reasoning: is this really a scientific argument? Is the claim really founded on reason? If they have not seen any case of revival after death, they can only say that they do not know what will happen after death. But, instead of remaining within this limit, they declare that nothing will happen after death at the same time alleging that they speak out of knowledge! In fact they merely generalise

on ignorance. Science tells us nothing—negative or positive—in this respect and their assertion that life after death has no existence is totally unfounded. Their claim is not dissimilar to the claim of an ignoramus who has not seen an aeroplane and on that "knowledge" proclaims that aeroplanes have no existence at all! If anybody has not seen a thing, it does not mean that that thing has no existence. No man, not even the entire humanity, if it has not seen a thing, can claim that such a thing does not, or cannot, exist. This claim is illusionary and is out and out unscientific. No reasonable man can give it any weight.

Now look to the belief of the second group. According to them, a human being is a human being because in his previous animal form he had done good deeds; and an animal is an animal because previously as a human being he had behaved badly. In other words, to be a man or an animal is the consequence of one's deeds in one's former form. One may well ask: "Which of them existed first, man or animal?" If they say man preceded animal, then they will have to accept that he must have been an animal before that, and was given a human form for its good deeds. If they say it was animal they will have to concede that there must have been a man before that who was transformed into an animal for his bad deeds. This puts us into a vicious circle and the advocates of this belief cannot settle any form for the first creature, for every generation implies a preceding generation so that the succeeding generation may be considered as the consequence of the former. This is simply absurd.

Now consider the third viewpoint. Its first proposition is: "This world will one day come to an end. God will destroy and annihilate the universe, and in its place will evolve another higher and far superior cosmos."

This statement is undeniably true. No doubt can be cast upon its veracity. The more we reflect on the nature of the cosmos, the more clearly it is proved that the existing system is not permanent and everlasting, for all the forces working in it are limited in their nature, and it becomes a certainty that one day they will be completely exhausted. That is why the scientists agree that one day the sun will become cold and will give up all its energy, the stars will collide with one another, and the whole system of the universe will be upset and destroyed. Moreover, if evolution is true in the case of the constituents of this universe, why it may not be true for the whole of

(Continued on page 8)

it? To think of the universe becoming totally non-existent is more improbable than that it will pass into another evolutionary stage and another order of things will emerge in a much more improved and ideal order.

The second proposition of this belief that 'Man will again be given life'. It is possible? If so, how did the present life of man become possible?

It is evident that God Who created man in this world can do so in the next. Not only is it a possibility, it is also a positive necessity, as will be shown later.

The third proposition is that "the record of all the actions of man in this world is preserved and will be presented on the Day of Resurrection." The proof of the truth of this proposition is provided here in these days by science itself. It was first understood that the sounds which we make produce slight waves in the air and die out. Now, it has been discovered that the sound leaves its impression on surrounding objects and can be reproduced. Gramophone records are made on the same principle. From this it can be understood that the record of every movement of man is being impressed on all things which come into contact with the waves produced by the movements. This shows that the record of all our deeds is completely preserved and can be reproduced.

The fourth proposition is that 'on the Day of Resurrection, God will hold His Court and, with just judgment, reward or punish man for his good and bad deeds.' What is unreasonable about it? Reason itself demands that God should hold His Court and pronounce just judgment. We see here that a man does a good deed and thereby gains nothing in this world. We see another man who does a bad deed and does not suffer for it here. Not only this, we see thousands of cases of a good act bringing trouble on the doer, and of a bad deed resulting in the happiness and gratification of the guilty person. When we notice these events happening every day, our reason and sense of justice demand that a time must come when the man who does good must be rewarded and the one who does evil must be punished. The present order of things, as you can see yourself, is subject to physical law, according to which it is quite natural that a man who has got the means to do evil can do so if he chooses and it is not necessary that its evil consequences should react upon him wholly or partly. If you have a tin of petrol and a match-box you can set fire to the house of your opponent, and you can escape every consequence of

this deed if the worldly forces are in your favour. Does it mean that such an offence has got no consequence at all? Certainly not! It means only that its physical result has appeared, and the moral result is reserved. Do you really think it reasonable that it should never appear? If you say it should, the question is, where? Certainly not in this world, because in this physical world only physical consequences of actions manifest themselves fully, while rational and moral consequences do not come forth. Results and consequences do not come forth. Results and consequences of this higher category can appear only if there comes into existence another order of things wherein rational and moral laws reign supreme and occupy the governing position and where the physical laws are made subject to them. That is the next world which is the next evolutionary stage of the universe. It is evolutionary in this sense that it will be governed by moral laws rather than by physical laws. The rational consequences of man's actions, which are reserved wholly or partly in this world will appear therein. Man's status will be determined by his rational and moral worth judged in accordance with his conduct in this life of test and trial. There you will not find a worthy man serving under a fool, or a morally superior man in a position inferior to a wretch, as is the case in this world.

The last proposition of this belief is the existence of Paradise and Hell, which is also not impossible. If God can make the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth, why should He not be able to make Paradise and Hell? When He holds His Court and pronounces just judgments, rewarding the meritorious and punishing the guilty, there must be a place where the meritorious might enjoy their reward—honour, happiness and gratification of all kinds—and another place where the condemned might feel debasement, pain and misery.

After considering all these questions, no reasonable person can escape the conclusion that the belief in life after death is the most acceptable to reason and common sense, and that there is nothing in it which can be said to be unreasonable or impossible. Moreover, when a true Prophet like Muhammad (peace be upon him) has stated this to be a fact, and it involves nothing but what is good for us, wisdom lies in believing in it implicitly and not in rejecting it without any sound reasons.

Source: Towards Understanding Islam
Abul A'la Maududi

العربية

Considered from the point of view of philology as well as general human culture, the Arabic language is one of the most important languages of the world. Next to English and Spanish, it is the third most widely spoken language of the globe in the extent of its geographical distribution. The Arab conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries and the subsequent Arabic-Islamic cultural influences carried the Arabic language to the most distant countries outside Arabia; and in one form or another it is spoken (sometimes along the other minor languages) in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Malta, North Africa, and in certain districts further south, e.g., in the Sudan, Nigeria, the Western Sahara and Zanzibar. In most of these lands, Arabic is the language of religion, literature, administration and commerce. Arabic was formerly spoken in Spain, which made very important contributions to Arabic literature, in the Balearic islands and Sicily, in the island of Pantelleria and in Madagascar.

It is true that even in Arabia itself, the Arabic language shows dialectic differences; and such variations are still more marked in countries remote from the land of its origin; but the written language, the language of literature and journalism, has invariably conformed to the old standard type, which has been conveniently called the Classical Arabic, characterized by an extraordinary richness of vocabulary and the logical, systematic character of its grammatical structure. Although Classical Arabic has passed through various stages of development, and its vocabulary and forms of expression have undergone considerable modifications, in accordance with the demands of a progressive civilization and the special needs of different branches of knowledge, it would still be correct to say that the grammatical structure of the language, as written by educated persons in the Arabic world to-day, is essentially the same as that of the language of the Qur'an and the ancient Arab poets. It will thus be seen that whereas its rich literature places the Arabic language among the principal literary languages of the world, it is at the same time an important living language of mankind, living not only in its influence on the minds of men but as a widely spoken

WHY WE NEED TO LEARN ARABIC?

language, which is in use, in one form or another, over a large part of the world, from the banks of the Tigris to the shores of the Atlantic.

ARABIC AS THE LANGUAGE OF THE MUSLIMS

Arabic is of supreme importance as the language of the Muslims, who constitute about one-sixth of the human race. The Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet, which are the two main fountain-heads of the religious and cultural life of Islam, are in Arabic. The same remark applies to their numerous satellite disciplines. Translations into other languages, however painstaking and accurate, cannot be of much use in a first-hand study of Islamic faith and civilization. Any serious student of religious history who desires to specialize in the study of Islam and wants to understand the religious character of the Muslim society must learn Arabic. Religion enters into the daily life of the Muslims to such a great extent that even those peoples, with whom Arabic is not the mother-tongue, become more or less familiar with the Arabic language through religious usages and ceremonial. Again and again in the Qur'an emphasis is laid on the fact that the Word of God has been revealed in the Arabic language; and from one end of the Muslim world to the other, whatever may be the living speech of the people—whether it be Berber, Hausa, Pashto, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Javanese or Malay—prayers are everywhere repeated five times a day in Arabic; the faithful greet one another in familiar Arabic phrases; and the sacred text, though translated into many other languages, is read in the original Arabic. The Arabic words of the Islamic creed (*La ilaha ill' Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah*) are whispered in the ears of the new-born babe; these are among the first sentences the growing child is taught to utter; and these should be the last words on the lips of the dying. In every city, town and village throughout the Muslim world, the silence of the early dawn is broken by the solemn and melodious chanting of the Arabic adhan, with which the mu'adhdhin calls the Faithful to the morning prayers. Thus, the first words which fall upon the ears of the Believers every morning are those of the Arabic language. In non-Arabic countries, Arabic may be a foreign tongue; but it is studied by all the learned, and from them the unlettered multitudes derive their knowledge of their faith and, incidentally, some familiarity with the language which is indissolubly associated with the faith.

The knowledge of the Arabic language is also indispensable for any serious student of religious history, who desires to make a special study of Islam, wants to understand properly the religious basis of the Muslim society and fathom its motive-springs. Not only its religious code (the Qur'an) and the Traditions (Hadith) are in Arabic; but the numerous auxiliary religious sciences also were at first redacted in that language. Translations into other languages, however painstaking and accurate, cannot be of much use in a first-hand study of the Islamic faith and of the society that it nurtured on it. The religion of Islam claims to speak with authority in the domain of law, politics and social organization as much as in the sphere of theology and ethics so that religious considerations enter into the individual and corporate life of the Muslim to a greater extent than is perhaps the case with any other community on the surface of the earth. Islam has, accordingly, been justly described as a Church-State, (that is, a state whose very constitution is ecclesiastical) in which the Church comes first and the State rests upon it. And here comes Arabic, Islam would be only imperfectly intelligible. For any understanding of the thoughts that sway the lives of the Muslims, of the beliefs they hold most sacred and the principles of theology and ethics in which they are brought up, we must have recourse to Arabic, which is the original and main repository of all the religious sciences of Islam.

ARABIC AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

Besides the religious aspect of the importance of Arabic, the written language is also of the utmost value to the Muslims of the world as a great cultural link and medium of communication among them. Islam gives to every Believer the sense of common fellowship in its universal brotherhood. Next in importance to the faith of Islam comes Arabic as an instrument, as well as a symbol and expression of whatever measure of unity and corporate feeling at present exists among the far-flung Muslim populations of the world. This kinship of spirit and community of culture could not have been achieved without a common language. And here comes in the importance of Arabic, which has supplied the requisite medium of communication between the various Muslim peoples of the world. Thus the growth of Islamic culture, which holds within its embrace peoples of diverse

racess and regions, has been promoted by the use of Arabic as the common language of religion and learning. Arabic has exercised an influence second only to that of Islam itself in bringing about that solidarity of sentiment which is so conspicuous in the Muslim world. Arabic is studied more or less extensively in all the Muslim lands, and it lies with the Muslims themselves to strengthen this bond of union by promoting the study of Arabic among them with greater zeal than is the case at present. The international character and position of Arabic is a fact that is, indeed, pregnant with great possibilities, only if the Muslims realize it and seize the opportunities that lie in this direction.

As I have already pointed out, classical Arabic is the language of business, literature, education and journalism in all the Arabic-speaking countries, from Iraq in the east to Morocco in the west; and despite a few minor local peculiarities, it serves the purpose of a common language throughout the Arab world. It also serves as an international language throughout the various lands of Islam, where it is studied more or less widely, chiefly from religious motives. The peoples of the various Arabic countries, however, make use of different dialects of Arabic in their everyday conversation. Whether any of these dialects will succeed in developing an independent literature of its own, seems highly improbable. Attempts have been made on behalf of Egyptian Arabic for more than a century; but they have been of a sporadic nature. A few enthusiasts have been frowned upon by the learned, and have received little encouragement from those for whom they were intended. Certain European Orientalists have also sought to persuade the Arabs to develop these dialects into literary languages in place of the Classical Arabic.

These suggestions have not been received with favour, since such a development is fraught with grave danger to the literary and cultural unity of the Arabic world. Speaking at the International Congress of Orientalists held at Athens in 1912, an Egyptian representative strongly disapproved of such a regional development, saying: "You Westerners try to facilitate your mutual relations with the aid of artificial auxiliary languages, such as Volapuk, Esperanto and Ido; and you ask us to throw away a magnificent and perfect instrument for the exchange of thought that is already serving 200 million individuals! We shall show that we are better advised."

Source: Why We Need To Learn Arabic?
Shaikh Inayatullah.

WITH CHILDREN IN MIND

Down south of Mesopotamia, a country now called Iraq, Almighty God gave the great honour of His choice to a man called Ibrahim. He became the Prophet of the people who lived in the area. Many of them lived in a bad way and they did many evil things. They were not as good as the people before them, and they did not worship Almighty God. In the days of Prophet Ibrahim most people were worshipping the stars and the sun, and they used to think that those things were their gods. Many of them prayed also to idols, which they made out of stones, in many ugly shapes. They worshipped those stones and made many offerings and sacrifices for them. Just imagine!

Oh yes, they had many, many priests, and the priests enjoyed their important positions and the goodly comfort they were in. Of course the priests enjoyed being respected and being paid well. The poor people listened well when they gave orders and judgments about their problems.

Most people were poor, though they worked very hard and they also were badly ruled by their chiefs. Many of them suffered a lot because of the cruelty that was around them. But most of all they suffered from ignorance. I mean the ignorance of not knowing about God and the goodness that the religion of God can offer. You see, as you know by now, God cares about our welfare which means that He wants us to be good and decent, to be nice and kind, to be helpful and considerate, and to follow His law.

WHAT DID PROPHET IBRAHIM DO?

Prophet Ibrahim began to receive the message of God from Angel Jibreel (Gabriel). So, gradually and step by step, Prophet Ibrahim began to learn more and more about God and His religion. He was then given the order to start preaching and teaching those people around him.

Prophet Ibrahim was a strong man in his will and determination, and he worked very hard. He kept talking to this person or that, always telling the people about the great and wonderful religion of God and its beautiful and good ways.

Only a few people did believe in him, the rest of them did insist on their ways. They insisted on worshipping the twinkling stars or the shiny moon or the ugly idols that couldn't talk or see. Of course, the priests of the people kept encouraging the people to disbelieve in Ibrahim. Those priests were afraid that

STORY OF IBRAHIM

they might lose their priesthood if the people would start to believe in the message of Prophet Ibrahim.

As a matter of fact, even the king in that area thought himself to be god, just imagine! The king's name was Nemrude, and he had a big castle and many soldiers. One day, this king who was so nasty and proud of himself, wanted to argue with Prophet Ibrahim. This is because Prophet Ibrahim was beginning to gain more and more converts.

DID THEY ARGUE THEN?

Oh yes, sure they did. The king was sitting on his throne, surrounded by the guards and the nobility, he was face to face with Prophet Ibrahim. Prophet Ibrahim was brave and he was not afraid of the King, because Prophet Ibrahim had complete faith in Allah, and he knew that Allah would save him.

The King looked at Ibrahim mockingly for a while. He then said, "What is this thing you are calling the people for? Why do you want them to worship a God that no one can see?"

Prophet Ibrahim then answered bravely, "My God is the one who gives and takes away life."

Nemrude answered arrogantly, "But I do that too," meaning he could kill people too.

Prophet Ibrahim then asked a clever question that caught everyone by surprise. He said, "My God lets the sun come out from the east, can you make the sun come out from the west?" With this the King was silenced because he knew well that no man could do that, and that he the King was no more than an ordinary man. See how smart Prophet Ibrahim was, and how he won his argument! Do you think a man can make the sun come out from the west? Of course not.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

Prophet Ibrahim kept preaching and teaching the people about God and calling them to believe in the religion of God. He succeeded in having only a few followers. Most other people were either too afraid to follow Ibrahim or they were not interested, or they simply preferred to keep their evil way of living.

But Prophet Ibrahim was a very strong man in his will and determination and he kept on doing his work tirelessly. He even argued with his father so many times because his father was one of those ignorant people who wanted to worship and pray to the stones.

A day came when a special event took place. It was time for a big celebration when just about everyone in town would go out and celebrate. It was a cool evening, with a gentle breeze and the moon shined in a silvery manner. The people started to gather, the women were talking constantly about this or that, some music was in the air, and the people sat down to eat and drink.

As we said before, most of those people were not good, and they were evil doers. They drank a lot of liquor and they lived a sinful life. This party in particular was especially noisy and wild, and many people became drunk and they could hardly think straight. Many of them could hardly walk right and they were losing not only their balance, but also their mind, because most of them were very drunk. It was quite a hustle and bustle, and almost everyone from town was there including the priests. That is except of course Prophet Ibrahim and a few others.

WHAT HAPPENED TO PROPHET IBRAHIM?

Prophet Ibrahim had a special plan, and he didn't want to have anything to do with such an affair. Prophet Ibrahim walked cautiously looking here and there making sure no one was seeing him. You see, he was going through the town directly to the biggest temple. The town was quiet and there was no noise except the noise of the music from far away where the party was going wild.

Prophet Ibrahim was in the temple at last and no one could see him at all. The temple was big, with thick carpets on the floor and many stone idols were standing around. In the centre of the temple stood the biggest 'idol', motionless and helpless.

Prophet Ibrahim lifted his heavy axe and wham he hit one idol, then the other. The idols fell to the ground with a big thud, motionless, this one losing his ears, that one losing his head, others losing their arms and legs. The floor was loaded with noses, ears, heads, arms and legs, all coming from the idols that fell. The whole temple would shake as the idols fell down, because they were so heavy and it made such a noise. Prophet Ibrahim was so happy he was doing that.

Prophet Ibrahim left the biggest idol where it was and he didn't give it a wham with his axe. He had certain plans for it, and we will see to that later. When the job was finished, Prophet Ibrahim left the temple cautiously and he went home.

making sure no one would see him. He went home to have a good night sleep.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

When the party was over, the people and their dogs were leaving in groups, all going towards town. Some were hardly able to move because they were so tired and drunk. Slowly, but gradually, they came to town, each wanting to go home. The priests were going towards the temple as usual and some people were with them talking noisily.

When the priests entered the temple, they could hardly believe their eyes! They saw the idols all smashed to pieces, the floors littered with stones and only the chief idol was standing in the middle. The priests started to scream and they were as mad as could be, the people rushed towards the temple to see what was going on. There resulted a noisy confusion that could be heard from a long distance, and most people rushed to the temple.

Everyone wanted to know who had dared do this trouble to the idols. Everyone wanted revenge. Everyone was in an ugly mood. Then someone said it may have been Ibrahim who did it, he always hated our gods.

WHAT DID THEY DO TO HIM?

The big crowd, as angry as could be, went straight to where Ibrahim lived. You could hear the angry shouts from a distance. It did not take long before the big crowd was at the door of the house of Prophet Ibrahim. They knocked hard at it as if they wanted to pull it through the walls!

Of course, Prophet Ibrahim expected the crowd to be after him. He got out of his bed and came down to open the door. The angry noise of the people was almost deafening. They shouted at him all at once and you could hardly make any sense out of what they were saying.

Slowly, the crowd became less noisy and the priests asked Ibrahim if he had destroyed all those idols. Prophet Ibrahim was silent for a while and the people stopped talking and for a change there was absolute silence. Then Ibrahim said "you go and ask the biggest idol." Ibrahim was mocking and making fun of the people because everyone knew that the idols couldn't talk, so Ibrahim was reminding the people about how stupid they were in worshipping and praying to stones. Don't you agree they were silly to do that?

Anyway, the priests didn't like to see the people go on the side of Ibrahim, and they were very afraid that what Prophet Ibrahim was doing was going

to lead to that. So they said to the large crowd right away, "What would you do to someone who had destroyed your gods?"

There was silence for a few seconds then someone said, "Burn him!" On hearing that, the crowd shouted, "Burn him, burn him, burn him!"

DID THEY BURN HIM, REALLY?

The crowd went in all directions collecting wood. A big pile of wood was collected, as high as could be. The people were all around, thousands of them, noisy, talkative, mad and curious.

Prophet Ibrahim was tied with a rope and he could hardly move. He was quite calm, never afraid, knowing that God was going to save him. He didn't even resist them, and the people were so surprised at that.

Someone came to the pile of wood and set it on fire, and they put Prophet Ibrahim in its centre. The flames of the fire were blazing and hot and they sizzled and hissed. Everyone thought that Ibrahim had burnt to death. They never heard Ibrahim shouting with pain though and they wondered why. The

flames of the fire and the smoke were high up, the smoke made a long black line going up and up and up.

Sometime later, when the fire became much smaller, and when the wood burned down, the people saw Ibrahim walking out of the fire safe, as if nothing had touched him. "Wow", they said, "How could that ever happen?"

You see, God wanted to save Ibrahim, and He made the fire nice and cool. Prophet Ibrahim never got burned. How wonderful!

The people and the priests were most amazed and they kept talking about that for a long, long time afterwards.

But in spite of this miracle, Ibrahim could not have many people following his teachings, although he tried so hard all the time. So, Almighty God gave him orders to leave the area and to go to the blessed land; what is now called "Palestine."

To be continued in the next issue Insha Allah.

Source:
Stories of some of the Prophets,
Vol. 1.
By A.S. Hashim, M.D.

LETTERS

LETTERS

LETTERS

Search: Not In Vain

Kingstown,
St Vincent.

The Editor,

Recently I was a new arrival in your country, representing the Windward Islands in the 'Benson and Hedges' Youth Cricket Tournament. While in Trinidad I wanted to put my hand on Muslim literature. I have often heard many things concerning the Muslim way of life so I had decided to look around in some of the bookshops in search of literature but my search was in vain.

However, my wish was realised when I arrived at Piarco airport on Saturday to go home. When I asked the lady behind the counter if any Muslim literature was on the market she replied with an instantaneous 'no!' Seeing that I was looking rather dissatisfied she then decided to do a thorough search. Finally she came out with a December issue of 'The Muslim Standard'.

I was very happy to have the thing in my hand but I was happier when reading it at home. It motivated me to adopt a new approach towards life. Apart from this it enabled me to see 'Jesus' from a different light, quite different from how the average orthodox Christian have him to be.

Believe me, the message was dynamic and wonderful and I was deeply impressed by the principles revealed. It is this impression of your magazine

which motivated me to write you and tell you exactly how I feel about it.

Yours respectfully,
Pathmos Richards.

A Friend From Far

Dear Brother,

I am a Muslim convert since 1962. My parents reside in Sydney, Australia but I live in Malaysia. I work for the Islamic State Council of Selangor, Malaysia as a missionary dealing mainly with converts to Islam. Apart from this I do research and other jobs related with field work.

Presently, I am at this Institute to acquire a Degree in Islamic education as required by the modern world before it considers you, even though many Muslims are aware that there are many such people with scrolls and scrolls of paper who do nothing.

Returning to the subject, I am impressed with the Muslim Standard and would like to receive a copy every month. I would like to have information on the Islamic community of your country. In return, I may offer you any services that is within my means.

Thanking you,

Yours in Islam,
Mokhtar Stork.

INJUSTICE! Who Next?

A feeling of indignation surrounds the recent departure of Hafiz Abdur-Rahman Memi. Many members of the Muslim community, particularly those in the San Juan area, feel that the case of Hafiz Memi, assistant Imam of the Nur-e-Islam Masjid, was one of injustice.

During his six years in Trinidad he gave invaluable assistance to the members of the Nur-e-Islam Jama'at. Some of his contributions included: the teaching of the Arabic script for children, teenagers and adults; leading daily Salaah (Prayer), and Tarawee Salaah during the month of Ramadan. One cannot forget also the constant advice he gave to persons individually and the influence he exerted on people to try and become better Muslims.

During his stay Hafiz Memi developed a brotherly relationship with the people in the area. He, his wife and three children (all born in Trinidad) were part of the Muslim community and considered Trinidad as their new home. They loved living here and looked forward to spending the rest of their lives here.

The Muslim community also treated them as such and took it for granted that Hafiz Memi would continue to give it guidance and instruction for a long time to come.

However, these dreams were shattered when Hafiz Memi and his family were forced to leave for his homeland, India. It was reported that his employers refused to renew his work permit. People were left aghast to know what went wrong. They were left with many questions unanswered: Why did his employers refuse to renew his work permit? When some prominent Muslims approached the immigration authorities requesting an extension, why were they turned down? Was it because the 'authorities' were already given their instructions by 'someone higher'? Why so many non-nationals, some being parasites, are allowed to stay here and a valuable contributor like Hafiz Memi had to leave?

It was alleged that Hafiz Memi was asked to sign letters 'supporting or not saying anything against' some questionable traditional practices passing as Islamic, which he rightly refused to do. It is understood that the ultimatum he was given was 'sign or leave!'

One wonders if this was the real reason for dispensing with the services of Hafiz Memi or was it because the San Juan Muslim community was becoming enlightened as to the true reality of Islam and Islamic leadership.

Many people are angry at this grave injustice. Will it continue unchecked? Who may be next? Who stood up?

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do." Qur'an 4: 135.

May Allah protect us and our community from the evil of ourselves and from Satan the accursed.

اللغة العربية

LEARN TO READ AND WRITE

ARABIC TWICE A WEEK

In response to several requests from people at work during the day

THE ISLAMIC TRUST

announces

A three-month course in the reading and writing of the Arabic script

from Tuesday 9 May — Thursday 27 July

Time : 7 pm — 9 pm

Venue : The Islamic Trust, Pundit Street, San Juan.

The course fee is \$5.00 which includes texts and learning aids and is payable to 'The Islamic Trust'.

Do not miss the first day.

On Cassette

Recitation by: Sheikh al-Husary

COMPLETE QUR'AN

22 Tapes, 90 mins. each

Price : \$TT175.00

LAST JUZ' (Para)

1 Tape, 60 mins.

Price : \$7.00

PLACE ORDERS NOW!