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In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

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# Monkey Business

A greedy and hungry monkey found a glass bottle with cherries in it. Passing his hand into the neck of the bottle he grabbed a few cherries and closed his fist. When he wanted to take the cherries out, he could not withdraw his hand.

The hunter who had set the trap stood at a distance.

A mouse was also watching the whole scene. When he saw the hunter, he came near the monkey and whispered, "You better run for your life; the hunter is going to catch you soon." The monkey replied:

"Shut up, you little stupid mouse. Mind your own business. I have got the cherries in my hand."

The mouse left the monkey to his fate. It was no use giving advice to the monkey when he was so stubborn and sure what he was doing was the right thing.

The monkey was trying hard to get the cherries and his hand out of the bottle at the same time. Never mind about the hunter, he said to himself, at least I have cherries in my hand.

At that moment the hunter gave him a sharp tap on the elbow. The monkey's hand opened and came out of the bottle. The hunter now had the cherries, the bottle and the monkey. ■

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## Compassion

CRUSH NOT YON ANT, WHO STORES THE GOLDEN GRAIN:  
HE LIVES WITH PLEASURE, AND WILL DIE WITH PAIN:  
LEARN FROM HIM RATHER TO SECURE THE SPOIL  
OF PATIENT CARES AND PERSEVERING TOIL.

Sa'di of Shiraz (1184?-1292) ■

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EDITOR: S. MUHAMMAD TUFAIL

Associate Editors: M.KEMAL HYDAL DR M.A.AZIZ WAHID OMARDEEN  
Assistant Editor: M.A.AZIZ  
Manager Subscription Department: M.HAROUN

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## Faith and Scepticism

FAITH means belief, trust, confidence or that which produces belief, evidence, token or pledge. It is also observance of trust and fidelity. Faith thus can be defined as the act or state of wholeheartedly and steadfastly believing in the existence, power and benevolence of a Supreme Being, or having confidence in His providential care, and of being loyal to His will as believed in or revealed.

SCEPTICISM in the realm of philosophy is the doctrine of the Sceptics; the opinion that real knowledge of any kind is unattainable. Sceptic, generally speaking, is a person who doubts without absolutely denying the truth; an inquirer who has not yet arrived at definite conclusions. This means that the sceptic never affirms nor denies any position, but has his doubts.

To a MUSLIM scepticism is the foundation of FAITH.

The statement may sound strange, nevertheless, the fact is that faith grows out of the sceptical attitude of mind at one stage or another. If a person is not a seeker after truth, how can he discover truth? If he is not an inquirer, how can he arrive at a solution? If he has not taken the risk of going out and travelling, how could he reach his destination?

Faith is the journeying of the soul in the valley of scepticism.

Faith and credulity are not the same thing. Credulity is believing in anything which is told to us. Faith is an acceptance of something after proper exercise of human reason. It is just not agreeing to something but committing oneself to this agreement wholeheartedly. When a Muslim says in the language of the Qur'an:

"Surely! I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists" (6:80)

he indeed commits his whole personality, including his reason, will and emotion to God, his Creator and Sustainer. This faith must accompany righteous deeds and should make a person faithworthy and trustworthy. It will then make us faithful to our Lord and to ourselves.

This small plant of faith has to be taken care of and nourished in our hearts. When we do this, FAITH will sustain and support us. And finally, it will make us free from anxiety, grief and scepticism. (SMT) ■



# SUICIDE - A SOCIAL & MORAL CRIME

FAZAR ALI

In a Chinese novel a girl commits suicide on the grave of her lover to avoid the arranged marriage with his rival. She wants to follow her lover in the next life. But the rival, seeing what she has done, thereupon takes his own life to follow her and her lover in the next world. In Japan sometimes the lovers tie themselves together and drown themselves to escape from the miserable existence on earth and to find a blissful place in the Hereafter.

People commit suicide with different motives. Some do it because of severe mental depression and some because of the complete loss of the instinct for self-preservation. No moral judgement can be passed against the actions of such persons. But when somebody intentionally murders himself there is something fundamentally wrong with his attitude towards life; he commits a moral and social crime.

All great religions have condemned such acts of wilful destruction. In Islam it is considered to be a great offence and great violation of the revealed words of God and the sayings of the Holy Prophet. The Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities . . . Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves; for verily God hath been to you Most Merciful" (4:29).

"Nor can a soul die except by God's leave" (3:145).  
(The reference here is to him who dies or is killed).

"Never should a Believer kill a Believer" (4:92).

"If a man kills a Believer intentionally, his recompense is hell, to abide therein" (4:93).

"Nor take life—which God has made sacred—except for just cause" (17:33).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

"Whoever shall kill himself shall suffer in the fire of hell and shall be excluded from heaven for ever" (Al-Bukhari).

These forbid suicide in all forms and has led a Christian writer to observe: "Suicide which is never expressly condemned in the Bible is more than once forbidden in the Qur'an" (Lecky, *History of European Morals II*, p.23).

Religion throughout the ages has been the greatest influencing factor in the control and eradication of diverse social problems, be it poverty, crime, overpopulation, idleness, the use of drugs, racial violence, the 'permissiveness' and last but not least suicide, particularly personal suicide. In the very beginning the Holy Qur'an says about God; "I Allāh am the Best Knower, therefore as Muslims we should rely on Him at all times, in times of success and in times of failures; because God knows best for all of us and to His Will we should always cheerfully and spontaneously

surrender.

Thus believers in the Holy Qur'ān are geared to face the vicissitudes of life with magnanimity. Islam exposes man to the problems of life, such as frustration, obsessions, disturbing thoughts, painful tensions, turmoil which causes confusion, resulting in the lowering of one's mental and physical activity—giving rise to feelings of worthlessness and guilt. It is not too infrequent for people under these most undesirable circumstances to commit suicide which shows the lack of will to face trials and loss of faith in the All Pervading Mercy and Wisdom of God.

The Holy Qur'ān constantly reminds its followers that they should expect in this life, pain and suffering, trials and tribulations, loss of life and property, hunger, fear and grief:

"And certainly We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, loss of property and lives and fruits - give good news to the patient" (2:155).

The Qur'ān wants to bring the faithful to perfection through suffering. Truly speaking our life and death should be in the hand of God; pleasure, pain and suffering should be considered as part and parcel of our existence.

God has created us to serve him as long as we live. We do not have the right to arbitrarily put an end to our lives. It is a great sin involving terrible chastisement in the life Hereafter—when every man and woman will have to give an account of themselves to God. The preservation of life is so sacred that even in cases of extreme hunger were enjoined upon partaking which in normal circumstances is haraam (forbidden) in the Islamic law. In cases of incurable illness a believer is required to bear his afflictions with fortitude. Patience, faith in God—faith in His Knowledge and Wisdom must be hallmark of a believer; he should never despair of His mercy and should never, for a moment, think of ending his life with his own hand. ■

## TO BE OR NOT TO BE

"When all the blandishment of life are gone,  
The coward sneaks to death, the brave live on" —Martial.

"The divinity who rules within us forbids us to quit this world without his command" —Cicero.

The life's a fort committed to my trust,  
which I must not yield up till it be forced:  
Nor will I. He's not valiant that dares die,  
But he that boldly bears calamity" —Massinger.

"If you suffer, thank God!—it is a sure sign that you are alive" —Elbert Hubbard. ■



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# REFLECTIONS

IT IS THE HUSH OF NIGHT,  
 THAT TIME WHEN SLUMBER PERVADES,  
 BUT SLEEP, MYSELF IT EVADES.  
 MY MIND WANDERS AND LINGERS AS IT CAREFULLY REFLECTS.  
 I THANK YOU ALLAH, FOR TRULY I HAVE ONLY FEW REGRETS.

I REFLECT ON PEOPLE  
 SOME I HAVE LOVED SO DEEPLY  
 AND THOSE WHO MAY HAVE LOVED ME,  
 WITH WHOM I HAVE LEFT A PART OF ME, MY LIFE WAS THUS  
 ENHANCED.  
 I THANK YOU ALLAH, FOR GROWTH OF MY BEING IN THIS WAY  
 ADVANCED.

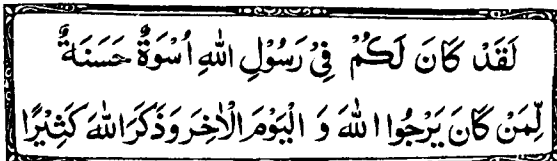
I REFLECT ON MY EXPERIENCES  
 ALL THE PLACES I HAVE BEEN  
 AND ALL THE THINGS I HAVE SEEN,  
 GREAT DEEDS I MAY HAVE DONE, BUT MORE SO ANY LITTLE  
 UNIMPORTANT ONE,  
 I THANK YOU ALLAH, FOR THESE WITH LOVE AND KINDNESS  
 I HAVE DONE.

I REFLECT ON MY WRONGS  
 SOME OF WHICH I AM AWARE  
 FOR I AM WEAK, MY LORD, I FEAR,  
 ADVERSE ATTRACTIONS ARE STRONG, SO I HAVE HELPLESSLY  
 GIVEN IN,  
 I THANK YOU ALLAH, FOR THE TEMPTATIONS OUTWEIGH MY SIN.

I REFLECT ON MY DREAMS  
 ONLY SOME HAVE COME TRUE  
 BUT SOME WERE IMPOSSIBLE TOO,  
 SOME AMBITIONS WERE FULFILLED, YET THERE IS STILL ALL THE  
 REST,  
 I THANK YOU ALLAH, I KNOW YOU GRANT FOR ME ONLY WHAT IS  
 BEST.

Gasparillo, Trinidad

SOHAILA OMARDEEN



"Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allāh, an excellent example for him who hopes in Allāh and the latter day, and remembers Allāh much" (The Qur'an 33:21)

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# Synthesis of Christian and Muslim Mysticism in Spain

by MICHAEL McCLAIN

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## ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Santiago de Compostela  
Spain

I believe it can be safely said that Spain has produced more mystics than any other country west of Persia (Iran), perhaps west of India. One may speculate as to why this should be so. Here I only wish to note that Spain has certain geographical, ethnic and historical parallels with another land of mysticism - Persia. It should also be noted that Spain has produced mystics of three religions, Christian, Muslim and Jewish. The great ibn al-Arabi, whom many sufis call "the greatest shaikh" was a Spaniard from Murcia who received his training in Seville. The *ZOHAR*, masterpiece of Jewish mysticism, is supposedly the work of Moses de Leon (d. 1305), also a Spaniard from Granada. Perhaps the most widely read and celebrated of all Christian mystics are St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila (known in Spain as "St. Teresa of Jesus"). Both were Spanish.

Like most Spanish Christian mystics, St. John of the Cross was of Old Castile. He was born in 1542 in the village of Fontiveros, not very far from Avila, the city of mysticism par excellence. Unlike St. Teresa of Avila and Friar Luis de Leon, two other great Castilian mystics of the 16th Century, St. John of the Cross was not of Jewish origin. Born Juan de Yepes, he was of an aristocratic "Old Christian" family whose roots were firmly planted in the soil of Old Castile, which means that he was Celtic and Visigothic stock.

After finishing his studies in Salamanca, Friar Juan returned to Medina del Campo. At that time a Carmelite nun from Avila, a woman of great beauty, energy and character, was initiating a reform of the Carmelite Order. This pious nun was Mother Teresa of Jesus, now known as St. Teresa of Jesus in Spain, St. Teresa of Avila in the rest of the world. The idea of reforming the Carmelite Order along lines which his mystical studies suggested appealed very much to Friar Juan. Inspired by the the work of Mother Teresa in the female branch of the Order, Friar Juan and two others began a campaign to reform the masculine branch. In effect they were the founders of the Order of Descalced Carmelites. On the founding of the new order, Friar Juan took the name "Friar Juan de la Cruz". As such he would be known from that time forward, and after his death would be known as "Sanctus Joanhem a Cruce", "San Juan de la Cruz" in his native Spanish, "St. John of the Cross" in English.

Friar Juan and Mother Teresa found themselves in difficulties, because in their reforms of the Carmelite Order they had not always been careful to seek the permission of their superiors. Both were, in effect, imprisoned, but not, as some believe,

by the Inquisition nor for heresy; it was a punishment for disobedience to their superiors of the Order.

Freed from prison, Friar Juan for the first time left his native Castile on the road to Andalusia, the South which still conserves in its name the memory of "al-Andalus", Muslim Spain, land of Sufism. First he was sent to Ubeda, then to Baeza, and finally to Granada, where two Descalced Carmelite monasteries had been founded, one for men and one for women. For six years Friar Juan lived in Granada. If these were the happiest years of his life there is really no way to know, but they were certainly the most fruitful, because it was in Granada that he wrote all, or nearly all, his great works. In many ways St. John of the Cross is the synthesis of Spanish Mysticism, both Christian and Muslim. Like virtually all Spanish Christian mystics, he was of Old Castile, and a sober, austere Castilian he remained all his life. Yet he did his finest work in Andalusia while living among the monuments of, and in an atmosphere highly charged with, the memories of Muslim Spain, indeed in an atmosphere more Muslim than Christian. We shall have more to say of this later.

On December 13, 1591, Friar Juan died. He was not yet 50 years old. Friar Juan de la Cruz died but San Juan de la Cruz, St. John of the Cross, is immortal.

#### ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS AS A MYSTIC

What is the position of St. John of the Cross in the history of Christian mysticism and the more ample spectrum of universal mysticism? Firstly, as has been mentioned before, St. John of the Cross was the brain and the soul of the Carmelite reform. He was in effect the founder of the Carmelite school of Christian mysticism, and it is thanks to him that the Descalced Carmelites are the most purely spiritual and mystical of all Roman Catholic orders. Even in our own day the spirit of St. John of the Cross animates Descalced Carmelites, because the said order continues to produce a mystical and spiritual harvest unrivalled in Christendom. In general ever since the 6th Century the Roman Catholic monastic orders have followed the pattern set by St. Benedict, that is, severely regimented and disciplined. The great Byzantine general Belisarius knew St. Benedict, and he is supposed to have said:

"The Empire lost a fine soldier when Benedict became a monk."

To the west of the Adriatic, the Benedictine Rule gradually displaced the monasticism on the Eastern pattern and the old Celtic or Irish monasticism. These last, compared with the Benedictine Rule, were less regimented and disciplined, but more individualistic, ascetic, contemplative and mystical. In a great many ways the Descalced Carmelites are a return to the old Eastern and Celtic monasticism.

Two great Roman Catholic orders are distinctly Castilian in character. One is the Dominican Order, founded by the Castilian Domingo de Guzman (St. Dominic). The Dominican Order retains its Castilian characteristics in its austerity, erudition, severity and uncompromising, at times heroic, fidelity

to its principles. The other is the Descalced Carmelite Order, which retains its Castilian characteristics in its austerity, individualism, asceticism and its profound inclination toward mysticism.

The name "Carmelite" is of course derived from Mount Carmel in the Holy Land; this is remembered by St. John of the Cross in his great work ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL. But in Spain the Carmelite Order is commonly known as "of the Carmen", and is associated with "Our Lady of the Carmen". The peculiar Spanishness or Castilianness of this is remembered in the Carlist quatrain:

*Adonda vas Virgen del Carmen  
Con la vela encendida?  
En busca del rey don Carlos  
Que la Patria esta perdida.*

(Where do you go, Our Lady of the Carmen, With the Lighted candle? In search of king don Carlos. Because the Patria is lost.)

It is generally believed that the word "carmen" comes from the Arabic "al-qarm", which means "vineyard". To this day in Granada a flower garden is called a "carmen".

This is, however, difficult to express, but in all great religions there are mystics who are simply followers of their respective creeds who happen to be mystics, and there are mystics who are mystics first, last and always. Since we are primarily speaking of Christian mysticism at the moment, there are Christians who happen to be mystics, and there are mystics who happen to be Christians. As the Abbot John Chapman said: "St John of the Cross is a sponge filled with Christianity; you can squeeze it out and the full mystical theory remains." This is not, of course, unique in Christian mysticism; to give only two examples, the masters of St. John of the Cross, Dionysius the Pseudoareopagite and St. Gregory of Nyssa were "sponges" in the same sense. This is not to put in doubt the sincerity of the Christian Faith of any of the above mentioned; to do so would be sheer slander and madness. Nevertheless it is true that this quality makes St. John of the Cross particularly attractive to non-Christians of mystical inclination and is also the reason that some Christians do not like him. Those Christians who do not like him in general tend to be intolerant and sectarian, perhaps legalistic, and accuse him of being a "Hindu" or "Buddhist". Even the Abbot Chapman admits that for a long time he hated St. John of the Cross and called him a Buddhist, though the Abbot later repented of his error. Others who do not like St. John of the Cross are "progressives" infected with the Marxist plague who hate mysticism in principle. The present Pope deserves much credit for his efforts to cleanse the church of this plague. Of course there are mystics in all religious traditions who are "sponges" in the sense of St. John of the Cross, and who are, as he was, of very tolerant and ecumenical temper. The example of Rumi and ibn al-Arabi in Sufism and of Ramananda, Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo in Hinduism show this quite clearly, not to mention the mystic Kabeer, claimed by both Islam and Hinduism, Gurū Nānak, founder of Sikhism, and Dārā Shikoh,

son of the Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan. There are some things which transcend sectarian distinctions.

Even though they do not seek it and even against their own will, mystics very often acquire strange, paranormal powers, in the Christian tradition called "charismas". This is a fact, as well proven as anything can possibly be. Many miracles are attributed to St. John of the Cross. The powers of levitation of St. John of the Cross were truly prodigious. On at least one occasion he levitated not only his body but the chair also on which he was sitting.

What was the attitude of St. John of the Cross toward his very considerable charismas or paranormal powers? He did not deliberately cultivate them in any way, and they came upon him unsought. He always fled from acclaim and adulation. In all his writings there is not one single mention of these charismas. In one place he says:

"It is better to suffer for the sake of God than to work miracles".

This uncompromising renunciation of charismas became a salient feature of the Carmelite school of Christian mysticism. This is not, of course, unique but is found in many other Christian mystics and in the mystics of other religious traditions. Buddha renounced charismas as being worse than useless. In Sufism the Sadili school, of whom al-Hallāj was the founder and ibn Abbad of Ronda one of its most illustrious followers, renounces the charismas quite as emphatically as do the Carmelites. It would not perhaps be too much to say that all true mystics despise "miracle mongering", though they themselves may possess charismas.

#### ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS THE RUMI OF CASTILE - A THEOLOGIAN AND METAPHYSICIAN

St. John of the Cross is best known as a poet and guide in the Mystical Path. Many consider him to be the greatest lyric poet of the Spanish language, while students of mysticism concur that it is very difficult to find a better practical guide along the mystical path than his works in poetry and prose. Yet there is another aspect of him which is not so evident nor well known. Many eminent Christian scholars have called him the "greatest of (Christian) mystical theologians". While in all honesty I find it very difficult or impossible to place him above such great Christian mystical theologians and metaphysicians as his master Dionysius the Pseudoareopagite or Eckhart, it is most certainly true that St. John of the Cross was a great thinker and metaphysician.

St. John of the Cross was a man of great learning and intellectual curiosity, well trained in scholastic theology. Like al-Ghazali in Islam he uses scholastic vocabulary, but giving it mystical meanings. But unlike al-Ghazali, St. John of the Cross was always a mystic and nothing else. He is therefore much nearer to Jalal-ud-Din Rumi of Persia than to al-Ghazali. Also, al-Ghazali, a Persian, wrote in prose in what was for him an acquired, erudite language, Arabic. Rumi was primarily a poet and wrote in his native Persian, not the scholastic

language, Arabic; St. John of the Cross was primarily a poet who wrote in his native Spanish, not the scholastic Latin. What Sana'i and Attār were to Rumi, Dionysius and St. Gregory of Nyssa were to St. John of the Cross. Perhaps one could say that Rumi is the St. John of the Cross of Persia, and/or that St. John of the Cross is the Rumi of Castile.

Not so many years ago there was a young Polish priest named Karol Wojtyła who was of a profoundly mystical temper and who had loved the works of St. John of the Cross since boyhood, keeping a copy with him at all times and reading from it every night before falling asleep. When he went to study at the Pontifical University in Rome, he chose St. John of the Cross as the theme of his doctoral thesis. Of course, Karol Wojtyła is today Pope John Paul II. A mystic now sits on the throne of St. Peter.

The Pope, rightly I believe, came to the conclusion that the meaning which he gives to the scholastic term "fide" (roughly "fe" in Spanish, "faith" in English) is the key to St. John of the Cross as theologian and metaphysician. The title of the Pope's book, originally his doctoral thesis, in Latin is *Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce*, in English roughly *The Doctrine of Faith according to St. John of the Cross*. The Pope's book is indispensable to anyone who wishes to understand St. John of the Cross as theologian and metaphysician, and is a splendid work for anyone of whatever religious belief who is interested in the philosophy of Mysticism.

St. John of the Cross denies neither the common concept nor the scholastic definition of faith; rather he presupposes them or accepts them as axiomatic and does not dwell on them or expand them. However he gives the word or concept of faith certain matices which go beyond both the common and the scholastic concepts and definitions. Here indeed he reminds us of al-Ghazalī, using the scholastic methods and vocabulary, but giving them new meanings and matices; putting scholastic tools to mystical use.

Firstly, St. John of the Cross considers faith to be "a proper and adequate means of the understanding to unite the soul with God in love", or, more simply, "a means of union of the soul with God."

But St. John of the Cross goes further: he speaks of the "essential similarity", i.e. between God and faith. "Proper and adequate means" is a practical concept, a signpost on the mystic path, but "essential similarity" is metaphysical, as precisely ontological, and requires more explanation. According to him the two concepts, the practical and the metaphysical-ontological are complementary and necessary one to the other. Between God and the creature there is no essential similarity; the creature is spatio-temporal, limited, conditioned, and therefore the Divine Essence is infinitely distant from the essence of any creature. Therefore, in the concept of "proper and adequate means" is necessarily included a "proportion of similarity" with the Divine Essence, though all creatures considered in their own nature lack this "proportion of similarity". Faith, on the other hand, since it

possesses this proportion of similarity, is raised to a level superior to that of any created nature. Such is the ontological aspect of the Doctrine of Faith of St. John of the Cross.

There remains what the Pope calls "the dynamic dimension of faith" according to St. John of the Cross. The union with God for which faith serves as the means is a supernatural union in which God communicated His Own Divinity, and the soul participates in this Divinity by the virtue of Divine Love, the soul is enabled to rise to the transforming Union, in which it becomes "God by participation". Note at the beginning the key part which understanding or knowledge plays in this. In effect, understanding or knowledge is the starting point of the soul on the path to Union with God. Understanding is a spiritual power of the soul, and is thus open to the Infinite. Using the understanding or knowledge as starting point, the soul, by means of faith is enabled to attain Union with God as described above. However, the fact that the soul is "imprisoned" in the body puts severe limits on the understanding or knowledge; thus the understanding can only perceive the Divine Essence in a limited, imperfect manner; it may "believe", but not "see". In this life, by the aid of faith, the understanding may perceive the Divine Essence, though without clarity. Thus, the most perfect vision of the Divine Essence, and thus the most perfect Union with God, may be achieved only after death, when the soul is freed from the body, and the limit which it imposes. This "dynamic dimension of faith" according to St. John of the Cross reminds us of an almost infinite number of passages from Rumi, both from the *Masnavi* and the the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz*, for example:

"The soul is like a bright mirror: the body is dust upon it.

Our beauty is invisible, because we are under the dust."

Or, "Let your tears flow to lower the dust, like a passionate lover, because while we are in this dust we cannot see the Face of the Beloved."

Up to this point, in speaking of the Doctrine of Faith according to St. John of the Cross I have followed the Pope's book, cross-checked as it is by references to the original works of St. John of the Cross. Only the quotations from Rumi owe nothing to the Pope's book. Now I wish to make a few personal observations. In his doctrine of faith, which the Pope quite rightly believes to be the key to St. John of the Cross as metaphysician, note that St. John of the Cross, without for one moment denying the Transcendence of God, affirms His Immanence. This is an intuition common to all mystics: that God is both Immanent and Transcendent.

Also note well that while the doctrine of faith of St. John of the Cross is perfectly compatible with Christianity and is very much in the long tradition of Christian mysticism, it is not specifically nor peculiarly Christian. Here one sees very clearly what the Abbot Chapman meant when he said that St. John of the Cross is a "sponge". The same is true of the whole mystical theory of St. John of the Cross. The resemblance of his doctrine of faith to certain Sufi doctrines is obvious enough; we have seen how a great part of it seems to echo Rumi. Also, the resemblance to certain Hindu doctrines such as "Bhakti" and Jñana Yoga (because of the importance of "understanding" or "knowledge") is obvious enough. ■

# WHAT OUR READERS SAY

## The Iranian View

I would like to bring to your notice the following excerpt from ISLAMIC ECHO (Vol. 4 No. 5) with regard to American hostages held in Iran by Ayatullah al-Khumayni. <sup>4</sup>

Reading, U.K.

I. Sheikh

"Q. If Islam does not accept the taking of innocent people as hostages and respects the diplomatic immunity of envoys, then how can the American hostage-taking be justified?

A. Islam does not accept hostage-taking. It is bound by agreements between individuals and also respects international diplomatic agreements. But if one party to an agreement breaks part of the contract, the other party also has the right to break its obligation. In the diplomatic context all diplomats have immunity — just as we respect all other diplomats now. But if anybody turns out to be a spy under the cover of a diplomat, that is, if he breaks his obligation, then we can forgo our responsibility. And it is clear to us and to the world that those in the U.S. Embassy were spies and not diplomats. So since they broke their promise, we have the right to break our responsibility towards their immunity.

Q. But the students are not qualified to judge whether the Americans were spies or not?

A. This is correct. The students who are holding the Americans are not making judgment. They are not trying them themselves. And as the Imam has said, a special qualified tribunal will be set up.

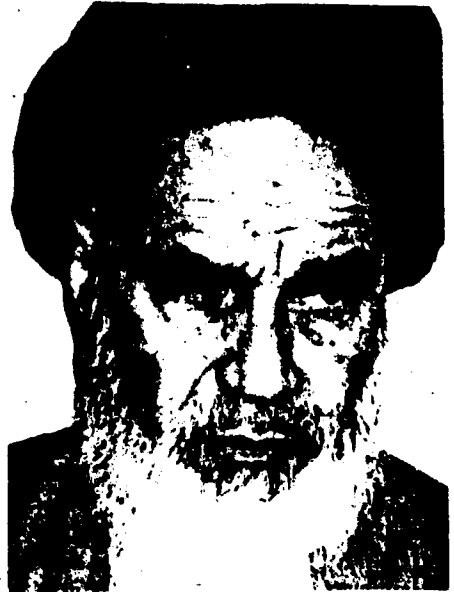
Q. So their being spies has not yet been proven?

A. Documents are available. But these people are not guilty, they are only accused. That is why they will have to be tried."

(INTERVIEW WITH THE LATE MUHAMMAD MUFATTIH by Hamid Nazari of "THE IRANIAN")

*\*The term Ayatullah (the Sign of God) is principally used in Iran; not in other countries e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan or India. Khumayni never uses this title for himself in his speeches. It is a term of respect, not necessarily of authority, and it is rarely found in Classical Shi'ite literature. The highest traditional religious authority among Shi'ahs is called mujtahid-ul-'asr (Doctor of Law of the Epoch) who at present is 'Allamah Qari of Najaf (Iraq).*

- Ed.



Ayatullah al-Khumayni

**Baked Fish in Coconut Cream**

**INGREDIENTS:** Fish (any kind). Onion. Tomato. Thin coconut cream. Salt. Pepper.

**METHOD:** Scale and clean the fish. Cut in pieces. Place in a fired dish. Add salt and pepper. Cover with layer of onions, then with a layer of tomatoes. Cover with coconut cream. Bake in a moderate oven until cooked.  
—Approximately 3/4 hour.

Pearl Dean,  
Suva, Fiji Islands ■

**Household Hints**

**LEMON AID.** Lemon is a simple but effective cleaning agent. Clear your brass and copper with a piece of lemon dipped in salt. You would be surprised to see the shiny result. To prevent stained aluminium pots, a bit of lemon peel could be added to the cooking water.

Squeeze half a lemon in a cup of freshly made tea and drink it with or without sugar. This is called Russian Tea.

**HEADACHE.** Mint tea is quite refreshing when you have a headache. Pour boiling water on to a few fresh-well washed-leaves and drink while still hot, to bring relief.

**MAGNET.** Keep a small magnet in your sewing box. It is most useful for finding those small pins you drop on to the carpet, and which are so difficult to see.

**BROKEN GLASS.** Wet newspaper will pick up small fragments of broken glass. Place it over the shattered glass area, remove carefully and you will find the glass pieces will have stuck to the paper.

**SALT BUSINESS.** Salt crystals attract moisture from the air and there is nothing you can do to stop it except keep your salt in a screw-top jar and put only as much as you will need for one or two meals into your salt cellar. Don't use your cellar to sprinkle salt over steaming food, because the steam will clog the holes.

**BABY TALK.** At birth the human brain weighs 25% of its eventual weight. At six months, it is 50%. At three years—75%, and at five years, 90%; at ten years it is 95%. The first five years' development is unmatched for the rest of our lives.

**BLANKETS.** When your son is promoted from a cot to a bed and the four cellular blankets are left in a perfect condition corchet them together and make him a full-size blanket.

(Submitted and edited by Salma Hill)■

"SMOKING IS PROBABLY THE LARGEST SINGLE PREVENTABLE CAUSE OF ILL HEALTH IN THE WORLD" Dr H. Mahler, the Director-General of World Health Organisation, in his special message for World Health Day on 7th April 1980. ■



## Book Reviews

**THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN**, translated and explained by MUHAMMAD ASAD. Published by Dar Al-Andalus, 3 Library Ramp, Gibraltar. 1980. Price: £22.50.

A preliminary limited edition of this work, without Arabic text, comprising the first nine chapters of the Qur'ān, was published from Makkah in 1964. The present volume is the complete translation and explanation of the Qur'ān and has been dedicated to the "People who think". The Arabic text has also been provided. (For specimen page see the end of this review). The work consists of over 1000 pages. High standard of printing and binding has been maintained. The commentary is the most valuable addition to the literature which already exists on the Qur'ān in the English language and is going to influence the vast majority of the "thinking people" all over the world. If Muhammad Asad could get this work translated in some other European languages before the end of the century it will be a great service to Islam.

Some people will find Asad differing with the other classical commentators and scholars, but one should not forget that the earlier commentators differed with each other and interpreted the Qur'ān in the light of 'historical and cultural expressions which had shaped human society until their time, without any animosity, being fully aware of each other's integrity" (p.vii). However, Asad has quoted his authorities for all the views he has expressed in his foot-notes.

Apart from his life-long study of the contents of the Qur'ān one of the sources of his guidance is Muhammad Abdub of Egypt about whom he says in his Foreword:

"It may be stated without exaggeration that every single trend in contemporary Islamic thought can be traced back to the influence, direct or indirect, of this most outstanding of all modern Islamic thinkers" (Footnote p. 5).

Almost all his other references are from classical Arabic works - which he profusely quotes on every page of his commentary. It does not, however, mean that he always agrees with the authorities he quotes. At times after quoting their views he would categorically reject them "however great the names of the persons"(Footnote p.149). At the same time the author is fully aware that even his rendering does not and could not "do justice" to the Qur'ān and the layers upon layers of its meaning; for, *if all the sea were ink for my Sustainer's words, the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer's words are exhausted* (18:109) (p.viii).

Let me quote a few instances from this admirable work of deep scholarship. With reference to the change of pronoun about God, Asad gives a beautiful explanation:

"As so often in the Qur'ān, the sudden change, within one and the same sentence, from the pronoun 'We' to 'He', or from 'We' to 'God' is meant to impress upon the listener or reader of the Qur'ān the fact that God is not a 'person' but an all-embracing Power that cannot be defined or even adequately referred to within the limited range of any human language" (pp.116-117).

About the theory of abrogation in the Qur'ān (ref. 2:106) he says:

"Apart from the fancifulness of this assertion – which calls to mind the image of a human author correcting, on second thought, the proofs of his manuscript, deleting one passage and replacing it with another – there does not exist a single reliable Tradition to the effect that the Prophet ever declared a verse of the Qur'ān to have been 'abrogated'" (pp.22-23).

As to the punishment of theft, a detailed discussion will be found on p.150 which ends with the note: "To sum up, one may safely conclude that the cutting-off of a hand in punishment for theft is applicable only within the context of an already existing, fully functioning social security scheme, and in no other circumstances."

Some Muslims think, that the Islamic Law permits marrying of up to four wives and there is no limit with regard to slave girls. On this point Asad says:

"Whether they are free women or, originally, slaves, the number of wives must not exceed four.... Contrary to the popular view and the practice of many Muslims in the past centuries, neither the Qur'ān nor the life-example of the Prophet provides any sanction for sexual intercourse without marriage" (p.101).

On the subject of divorce: "Most of the great jurists hold the view that the required three pronouncements of divorce, which make it final and irrevocable (cf. first paragraph of 2:229), must be made singly, i.e., spaced over the waiting-period of three months, so as to give the husband time to reconsider his intention, and thus to prevent a hasty act which might be subsequently regretted" (p.872).

As to the controversial issue whether Jesus Christ had physically ascended to heaven or not (ref.4:157) Asad remarks:

"The Holy Qur'ān categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Qur'ān or in authentic Tradition, and stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators must be summarily rejected" (p.134, footnote 171).

In connection with verse 4:158: "nay, God exalted him unto Himself, the author says:

"Nowhere in the Qur'ān is there any warrant for the popular belief that God has 'taken up' Jesus bodily, in his life-time, into heaven. The expression God exalted him unto Himself' in the above verse denotes the elevation of Jesus to the realm of God's spiritual grace – a blessing in which all prophets partake, as is evident from 19:57" (p.135).

About the birth of Jesus Christ, ref. verse 19:21:

"In connection with the announcement of a son to Mary, the Qur'ān states in 3:47 'when He wills a thing to be, He but says into it, 'Be' – and it is': but since neither the Qur'ān nor any authentic Tradition tells us anything about the chain of causes and effects (asbāb) which God's decree 'Be' was to bring into being, all speculation as to 'how' of this event remains beyond the scope of a Qur'ān-commentary, (but see also note 87 on 21:91)" (p.459).

Let me now quote below some of the words and phrases where Asad has differed in his translation with other scholars. Within the parenthesis is the commonly adopted translation:

Ar-Raheem الرَّحِيم The Dispenser of Grace. (The Merciful).

Rabb رَبُّ The Sustainer. (The Lord).

Al-Kitāb الْكِتَاب The Divine Writ. (The Book).

Ahl al-Kitāb اهل الكتاب Followers of earlier revelation. (The People of the Book).

Al-ghaib الْغَيْب That which is beyond the reach of human perception. (The Unseen).

Kufr كُفْر Denial of truth. (Disbelief).\*

Kāfir كَافِر One who denies the truth. (Disbeliever).\*

(About these two terms it is mentioned in the footnote: the kāfir is the "one who is bent on denying the truth or one who is deliberately resolved upon kufr" p.4 footnote 6; p.907 f.4).

Deen دِين Moral law. (Recompense; way).

Al-asbāt الْأَسْبَات Descendants. (Tribes). (2:136).

Asbāb أَسْبَاب Hopes. (Ties). (2:166).

Qisās قِسَاص Just retribution. (Retaliation). (2:178).

Khair خَيْر Much wealth. (Wealth; property). (2:180).

Šihr سِحْر Delusion. (Magic; sorcery). (28:48)(Spell bounded eloquence).

At the end of the Commentary four useful appendices have been added: Symbolism and Allegory in the Qur'ān, Al-Muqatta'āt, The term and Concept of Jinn and The Night Journey (which was a spiritual Ascension). An index would have been a welcome addition as well. Muhammad Asad's Commentary is a book of outstanding value, which I hope would help many seekers of truth to a better and deeper understanding of the Qur'ān.

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\*I may here add that disbelief (kufr) implies the intent or resolve to reject not necessarily truth but truth as well as evil, e.g., "He who rejects (من يكفر) the powers of evil" (2:256) which show that sometimes the kufr simply denotes rejection or denial, though generally it has come to signify the denial of truth.

(8) And there are people who say, "We do believe in God and the Last Day," the while they do not [really] believe. (9) They would deceive God and those who have attained to faith – the while they deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not. (10) In their hearts is disease, and so God lets their disease increase; and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying.<sup>8</sup>

(11) And when they are told, "Do not spread corruption on earth," they answer, "We are but improving things!" (12) Oh, verily, it is they, they who are spreading corruption – but they perceive it not!<sup>9</sup>

(13) And when they are told, "Believe as other people believe," they answer, "Shall we believe as the weak-minded believe?" Oh, verily, it is they, they who are weak-minded – but they know it not!

(14) And when they meet those who have attained to faith, they assert, "We believe [as you believe]"; but when they find themselves alone with their evil impulses,<sup>10</sup> they say, "Verily, we are with you; we were only mocking!"

(15) God will requite them for their mockery,<sup>11</sup> and will leave them for a while in their overweening arrogance, blindly stumbling to and fro: (16) [for] it is they who have taken error in exchange for guidance;

مَنْ يَقُولُ هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾  
يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَدِّعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ  
وَمَا يُبْشِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا  
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾ مَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ  
لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾  
أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا  
قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنزَلْنَا كِتَابًا هَدَانًا  
السَّافِهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السَّافِهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾  
وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابٍ وَإِنَّا لَكَلِمَاتٌ لِّمَنْ يَعْلَمُ  
قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُتَّبِعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ  
بِهِمْ وَيَعْلَمُ فِي لُحُومِهِمْ سَمَهُهُمُ ﴿١٦﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ  
اشْتَرَوْا الضَّلَالَتَ بِالْهُدَىٰ لَقَدْ رِجَتْ جَنَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا

God") – this "sealing" is attributed to Him: but it is obviously a consequence of man's free choice and not an act of "predestination". Similarly, the suffering which, in the life to come, is in store for those who during their life in this world have wiffolly remained deaf and blind to the truth, is a natural consequence of their free choice – just as happiness in the life to come is the natural consequence of men's endeavour to attain to righteousness and inner illumination. If it is in this sense that the Qur'anic references to God's "reward" and "punishment" must be understood.

8 I.e., before God and man – and to themselves. It is generally assumed that the people to whom this passage alludes in the first instance are the hypocrites of Medina who, during the early years after the hijrah, outwardly professed their adherence to Islam while remaining inwardly unconvinced of the truth of Muhammad's message. However, as is always the case with Qur'anic allusions to contemporary or historical events, the above and the following verses have a general, timeless import inasmuch as they refer to all people who are prone to deceive themselves in order to evade a spiritual commitment.

9 It would seem that this is an allusion to people who oppose any "intrusion" of religious considerations into the realm of practical affairs, and thus – often unwittingly, thinking that they are "but improving things" – contribute to the moral and social confusion referred to in the subsequent verse.

10 Lit., "their satans" (*shayṭān*, pl. of *shayṭān*). In accordance with ancient Arabic usage, this term often denotes people "who, through their insolent persistence in evildoing (*tamarrud*), have become like satans" (Zamakhsari): an interpretation of the above verse accepted by most of the commentators. However, the term *shayṭān* – which is derived from the verb *shatana*, "he was [or "became"] remote [from all that is good and true]" (*Lisān al-'Arab, Tāj al-'Arūs*) – is often used in the Qur'ān to describe the "satanic" (i.e., exceedingly evil) propensities in man's own soul, and especially all impulses which run counter to truth and morality (Rāghib).

11 Lit., "God will mock at them". My rendering is in conformity with the generally accepted interpretation of this phrase.

A specimen page (half-reduced) of THE MESSAGE OF THE  
QUR'ĀN (see Book Reviews).

# Calendar of Events

## TRINIDAD

An Islamic educational programme was organised over a six week period, from the end of March to mid May 1980. All the *Jama'ats* in Trinidad were invited to participate. Subjects dealt with were: Islamic leadership, Songs of Islam, Urdu language (a crash-course), Qur'ān Reading, discussion on Islamic topics of current interest, etc. The courses were conducted by Maulānā S. Muhammad Tufail, the visiting Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary from England. The visit of the Maulānā was based on a different pattern this time. About 80 persons attended the classes which were arranged at Gasparillo and Fireburn Mosque Halls. A few students came from Guyana also to attend the courses.

The highlights of the programme are given below:

### MARCH 1980

- Fri. 21. Arrival at Piarco, 5 pm.
- Sat. 22. Meeting with the Committee members.
- Sun. 23. Wedding ceremony, Khamal Mohammed (of Iere Village) to Zaitoon Karim (of St. James), 2 pm.  
Reception for the Maulānā at Mr & Mrs H. Mohammed's (McBean Village), 7.30 pm.
- Mon. 24. Visiting friends and members of the Executive.
- Tue. 25 to Fri. 28. Classes at Gasparillo, Fireburn and San Fernando.
- Sat. 29. Trip to Tobago (morning). Qur'ān Reading at Enayat Mohammed's, Freeport (evening).
- Sun. 30. Wedding ceremony, Firdun Mohammed (of Freeport) to Judy Yasmin Razack (of Iere Village).
- Mon. 31. Meeting with the members of Da'wat-ul-Islam at California Mosque, 6 pm. Class at Gasparillo, 7.30 pm.

### APRIL 1980

- Tue. 1 & Wed. 2. Songs of Islam classes at Gasparillo and Fireburn.
- Fri. 4 to Mon. 7. Islamic Course. Gasparillo 8.30 am to 1 pm.
- Sun. 6. *Aqeeqa* Ceremony at Mr Kayoum Mohammed's, Charlieville.
- Tue. 8 to Sat. 12. Full day Islamic Course at Gasparillo.
- Sun. 13. Wedding ceremony, Hasina and Azeem, 11 am.  
*Aqeeqa* Ceremony at Ayub Solaiman's, Fireburn, 12 pm.
- Mon. 14, Tue. 15. Islamic and Urdu classes at Fireburn.
- Wed. 16. Islamic and Urdu classes at Fireburn. Meeting Ahmadiyya Women's Movement, 4.30 pm. Qur'ān Reading at Mr Imran Farouk Mohammed's, Siparia, 7.30 pm.
- Thu. 17 and Fri. 18. Islamic and Urdu classes at Fireburn.
- Sat. 19. *Aqeeqa* Ceremony at Mr & Mrs Ashiq Hossain's, Calcutta Settlement.
- Sun. 20. Meeting of the E.C. AAI T&T at Siparia, 9 am.  
Opening of the Bazaar at Sum Sum Hill Mosque, 2 pm.
- Mon. 21. Funeral service for Mrs Rahaman (San Fernando), Sulaman Mohammed (Freeport). Urdu class, Gasparillo.
- Tue. 22. Urdu class at Gasparillo.
- Wed. 23. Gasparillo Government School, 8.30 am. Urdu class 7.30 pm.
- Thu. 24. Visit to New Grant Jama'at.
- Fri. 25. Friday Prayer and Urdu Class at Gasparillo.

- Sat. 26. Examination in Islamicics, Gasparillo and Fireburn.  
 Visit to Cumoto Jama'at.  
 Sun. 27. Qur'anic Function at Mr M. Sakir Hosain, Freeport.  
 Mon. 28. Meeting with the members of Da'wat-ul-Islam.  
 Urdu Class at Gasparillo.  
 Tue. 29, Wed. 30. Classes at Gasparillo.

The rest of the programme of classes and other functions will be carried on in the month of May. In most of the social and religious gatherings Maulānā Tufail was accompanied by Maulānā Kemal Hydal, Imam M. Rafeeq, Dr M.A. Aziz, Enayat Mohammed, Imam Zool Deen and other members of the Jama'at.

#### VISIT TO GUYANA

Maulānā Tufail, Enayat Mohammed and Mrs Sohaila Omardeen will be visiting Guyana from 5th May to 11th May and will be staying at Mr Yassin's (Georgetown), Maulvi A. Rahman's (Ledestin) and Mr Bagh Khan's (Berbice). Dr M.A. Aziz and Mr Sakoor Moham will be joining them in Berbice on 8th May, 1980. The object of their visit is to conduct some Islamic classes and solicit support for the Eighth Ahmadiyya Convention to be held in Trinidad from 22nd to 31st August.

After his return from Guyana the Maulānā will be meeting the Youth of Gasparillo on Thursday 13th May, will lead the Friday service on the 15th. The Farewell Function for him will be held at Gasparillo on the 18th May, when an Island wide Songs of Islam competition will also be held. The judges for song presentation would be Dr M.A. Aziz, Mrs Bakridan and K. Amjad Ali. Result for the examination in Islamicics will be announced and certificates and prizes will be distributed by Maulānā Kemal Hydal assisted by Miss Farisa Mohammed. The whole function will be recorded on a video film.

We wish here to record our sincere thanks to Messrs Abdul Jhangeer, Saikool, Haniff Ramjohn, Mrs Juman (Fireburn), Messrs Karamally, Sakhawat Ali, Subrati Khan, Sadica Ali (Gasparillo), Messrs Fazar Ali, Afzal Ali (San Fernando), Abid Mohammed, Imam Shah (New Grant), Kallis Amjad Ali (Claxton Bay) and many other friends in Trinidad and Guyana who invited Maulānā Tufail and his friends for tea, lunch or dinner. May Allah reward them all.

Maulānā Tufail would leave for London on 20th May at 9.30 pm. from Piarco.

Wahid Omardeen  
 President Gasparillo Mosque Board  
 5 Charles Street South  
 Gasparillo  
 Trinidad

Enayat Mohammed  
 President  
 Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishā'at-i Islam  
 Calcutta Road No.4  
 Carapichaima, Trinidad

## 8TH INTERNATIONAL AHMADIYYA CONVENTION

Theme: Islamic Renaissance

Trinidad 22-31 Aug. 1980