

Critical Eastern Muslim Finally 'Gets the Message'

By Abdul Basit Naeem

One day last week I suddenly found myself being subjected to a bit of ridicule by a brother-Muslim from an Eastern country. Like myself, he is at present a resident of New York City. He had read something in a recent issue of this newspaper that apparently "annoyed and irritated" him. Aware of the fact that for many years I have been associated with the Nation of Islam in North America (and "thus should know something about it") and that I frequently contributed to the columns of its official organ, "Muhammad Speaks," he had decided to call me and ask me a few "straight" questions.

Reluctant to engage in important conversation over the telephone — to avoid being heard by our forever-curious and unwelcome "party-line" — I suggested that I visit with him instead. When I reached his office, I discovered that a seemingly endless barrage of questions awaited me.

"Now . . . do you really believe that he (the Honorable Elijah Muhammad) is God's Messenger? . . . How did he get his 'Message'? . . . In a dream or a vision? Or has he been visited by an Angel? . . . And what of this race business? You ought to know that Allah does not permit that . . ."

Knowing the mental disposition and temperament of our people, I decided, in the face of my brother's hostile attitude, not to answer him directly and instead use a bit of diplomacy in dealing with him. I, therefore, asked him if he would be good enough to first enlighten me with his own views on Islam and its teachings.

The Answer
"Why, Islam is the youngest of the three great Semitic religions, the other two being Judaism and Christianity, and it is akin to both. It was founded by our illustrious Prophet Mohammed (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) who graced this planet nearly 1400 years ago . . . And his teachings consist, in the main, of the well-known 'Five Pillars': Belief in the Oneness of God; five-times-a-day prayers; "zakaat" or alms-giving; fasting during the month of Ramadan; and 'hadji' or once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca . . ."

My Eastern brother's interpretation of Islam, inadequate indeed though it was, did not come as a surprise to me. I knew that a good many years ago — before I had given up reliance on European scholars' writings on Islam for my own information — I would have answered the question in just about the same way.

I ventured to ask him,

"But isn't it true that the Holy Qur-an speaks of Islam as the Religion of God Himself?"

"That's true," he acknowledged.

I further enquired, "Wasn't Islam also the faith of Abraham, Allah's Prophet of the Ancient Ages? And isn't it a fact that in each of our daily prayers we remember Abraham simultaneously with remembrance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) . . . ?"

Agreement

"Sure," he quickly replied. " . . . And am I not correct in stating that selfless service to our fellowman—that is to say, tending the sick, providing food to the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and even aiding the cause of education and advancement of scientific knowledge—constitutes, in the eyes of Allah, an act of greater piety than regular performance of prayers and other rituals?"

"Well . . . in a way . . . yes!"

"Doesn't this, then, contradict what you said a little earlier . . . as being the essence or spirit of Islam . . . ?"

While nodding in obvious agreement, my brother, whose brow still exhibited small signs of displeasure, suddenly turned to another point: "But what of this racial angle? How can Mr. Elijah Muhammad possibly justify his teaching of that?"

This was a delicate question. But, remembering at that moment that I had answered this type of question on a number of occasions in the past, I felt secure that Allah would enable me, once again, to dispose of it in a satisfactory manner.

Of course, I could have started off by narrating the history of the European "race," pointing out its countless hideous sins and crimes against the innocent peoples of Africa and Asia—thus reflecting on the Europeans' innate "evil" nature. Or I could have reminded my brother from the East of the 400 long years of slavery in the U.S.A. — the background against which Islam is being offered to the (so-called) "Negroes" of this country as the "only means of regaining their lost identity, cultural heritage, pow-

er and glory." I also could have given him a set of my own published writings on the subject, which can indeed satisfy the curiosity of most enlightened Eastern Muslims in regard to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's mission and work. But, somehow, I decided up-

From the West Coast

Why All Black Americans Can Support Economic Plan

By John Shabazz

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad's 3-Year Savings Plan is tangible evidence of his statement that, "Islam is as broad in its conception as humanity itself." This economic program, by being open to all black people, refutes the charges by Messenger Muhammad's enemies that he is the purveyor of a "narrow, conservative doctrine" that keeps his followers in a "straitjacket."

There always have been those among our people who



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sought to advise the Messenger of Allah to relax his religious restrictions and de-emphasize his dependence upon God for his success. In this way, they reasoned, he could attract more followers from among those who are too "sophisticated" to believe in God, and too corrupt to adhere to a high moral code.

Even hypocrites among

Messenger Muhammad's own followers began being swayed by this insidious advice, even though none of the "experts" giving such advice had ever been able to assemble in any group of followers to match those of Messenger Muhammad. These weak ones started campaigning for more "flexibility"—too blind to see that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad is the most flexible man on earth.

The Palm Tree

The palm tree is probably the most flexible tree on earth. It will always bow before the wind, no matter which direction the wind blows. It will even bow down and kiss the ground in submission to a violent wind. Yet, its roots never move a fraction of an inch. In fact, the flexibility which the palm tree demonstrates is only a God-given quality to keep it from being uprooted.

Messenger Muhammad is like this great tree. No matter how much public relations he practices, and no matter how diplomatic he becomes, at no time will he compromise his religious

on a totally different approach.

'The Reds and Blacks'

From my briefcase, I took out a handsome little book entitled "The Islamic Call." (Written by a distinguished Arab-Muslim scholar, El-sayed Mohammed M. Atta, "The Islamic Call" is a publication of the Selected Studies Committee, Cairo, United Arab Republic.) Then, turning to page No. 201, I asked my brother if he would kindly acquaint me with the deeper meaning and real significance of the

"Hadith" — a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him!) — quoted thereon in Arabic: (In literal translation, it read: "I have been sent to the Red and the Black.")

For what seemed to be a long minute, there was complete silence. Then, a mixed feeling of bewilderment and relief completely changed my Muslim brother's face. Smiling broadly, he arose from his chair, warmly shook my hands and said, "As-Salaam Alaikum, my true brother!"

our people in the lean months and years ahead.

We, the Muslims, will support this program, as we will any which our leader and teacher initiates. But since 22 million so-called Negroes will benefit from this plan, it should have the support of the entire 22 million, regardless of their religious convictions (or lack of them) or their deficiencies of character.

The Smoker, Drinker

The smoker who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day and says he cannot stop, can participate in this project no matter how tight a budget he lives on. All he has to do is cut back to 16 cigarettes a day. The four cigarettes (or five cents) a day he saves will add up, and after five days he will have smoked only four packs instead of the usual five. The price of the fifth pack (at least 25 cents) will be his contribution.

Likewise, the drinker can

participate by just omitting one shot of whiskey or highball a month (about a dollar) and he will have his contribution.

Therefore, the man who smokes a pack of cigarettes a day and also drinks can help secure his future and the future of his people by just skipping two cigarettes a day and one shot of whiskey every two months.

How flexible can you get?

principles. Thus, he was able to see, when these vipers in his bosom spoke of "flexibility," what they really were advocating was deviation, which he would never be a party to.

You cannot drink and be a Muslim. You cannot smoke and be a Muslim. You cannot commit fornication and adultery and be a Muslim. You cannot lie, steal, cheat or rob and follow the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Nothing on earth can change that.

The 3-Year Savings Plan provides a good scale upon which to weigh the sincerity of the "sympathizer" who "would come in, but . . ."

the one who "goes for everything, except . . ." and the "I'm with you, but I'm not quite ready yet" kind.

Messenger Muhammad's plan is based on the premise that if every member of the black work force would set aside five cents each work day (25 cents a week, or \$1 a month) and pool it, we could acquire the means to supply food, clothing, shelter and full employment for

'Economic War' on Africa?

ACCRA, Ghana — While South Africa, with the aid of West Germany and other Western countries, is building up arms, there now is indication that South Africa, Portugal and Southern Rhodesia now are preparing an economic war against Africa.

A recent announcement from Pretoria, South Africa, revealed the establishment of a joint Portuguese-South African commercial bank to "operate in apartheid South Africa, racist Southern Rhodesia and fascist Portuguese-

held territories of Angola and Mozambique.

To be known as the Bank of South Africa and Lisbon Ltd., the new bank, according to the Ghanaian Times is "the creation of the South African General Mining and Finance Corporation in conjunction with three Portuguese banking houses.

The bank will be headquartered in Pretoria, with branches in Johannesburg and other major South African cities, as well as Salisbury, the Rhodesia capital.