

By ABDUL B. NAEEM

... The recent U.S. press campaign directed against the "Black Muslims" in this country and their leader and teacher, Mr. Elijah Muhammad, is not a new development as such. In reality, it reflects the sudden deterioration of an old affliction prevalent in most American writers—bias against Islam.

And if these writers were unkind to our Religion of Peace, Temperance and Beauty when it was regarded as an "alien" faith, how can we expect them to love it now—when the age-old cry of "Allah-u Akbar" (meaning "Only Allah is the Greatest") has begun to rise from the midst of every major city and town in the United States?

#### SO-CALLED "ORTHODOX"

Inexcusable indeed, on the other hand, is the uncalled for criticism of the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad by the (so-called) "orthodox" Muslims, especially the citizens of Muslim countries in Asia and Africa, that occasionally crops up in the U.S. newspapers and magazines.

Why?

First of all, it does not behoove a Muslim to look down upon another, much less become a party to unbelievers' attempt at belittling and discrediting Islam. In times of stress, particularly, the two should stand together, cognizant not only of their common Creed but also of the immense good that both can derive from such harmony and unity between them.

#### IGNORANT OF HISTORY

Second, the unfavorable remarks of these Muslims, based usually on hearsay and fantasy and not on facts, often reveal a total ignorance on their part of the roots of the race conflict as well as the history of Islam in America!

Another deplorable aspect of the "orthodox" Muslims' criticism, as appearing in print, is the apparent insincerity of motives that prompt it. Most of the writers seem to write as they do, in my opinion, to please someone—maybe a superior at the job, a business associate or, in the case of overseas Muslims, a "sponsor" or "host."

#### WHAT IS GOAL?

What, then, is the truth about Mr. Elijah Muhammad? And what, in reality, is the nature and ultimate aim of his mission?

In my opinion, Mr. Elijah Muhammad, affectionately called by his faithful flock as the "Messenger" of Allah, is a true, sincere and selfless leader of his people whose one and only aim in life is to "take the Message of Islam to each and everyone of the more than twenty million men, women and children of my race and kind in the wilderness of North America."

#### GOD-INSPIRED

I am also convinced that Mr. Elijah Muhammad's mission is God-inspired: I doubt that he could have said and done all that is rightfully attributed to him without the blessings of His Keeper. It takes a man of great valor and tremendous courage to challenge a powerful adversary; Mr. Elijah Muhammad can be said to dwell right in the lion's den.

Equally convincing, to me, is proof of the Islamic nature of his mission and work: If alleviating the plight and misery of a community long considered hopelessly-stricken with innumerable ills and providing its members the basis of a NEW LIFE—not after death, in Heaven, but HERE and NOW—cannot be con-

sidered as Islamic act, I must, in that case, confess my own ignorance as to what Islam is!

"But what of the Hate aspect of Mr. Muhammad's teachings?"

Responding bluntly, I need only state: So what of it? It is



ABDUL B. NAEEM

an established fact that, hate being an emotion of reaction, an individual utters expressions of displeasure, spite, contempt, vengeance, etc., etc., only when compelled or "caused" to do so. We can therefore be sure that if Mr. Elijah Muhammad utters a single word of hate, he must have his reasons for it—as he indeed does!

Allah, moreover, it may be pointed out, does not permit a Muslim to "love" his enemy or forget and forgive the evil deeds of an unrepenting, unrelenting aggressor. I, for one, cannot therefore expect Mr. Elijah Muhammad to remain silent or stand idly by, while the enemy continues to harass and harm the Muslims.

"But how can Mr. Muhammad, whose followers number only a few thousand, take it upon himself to speak for ALL the Negroes," you might ask.

Mr. Elijah Muhammad's relationship to his community parallels that of an eye to the human body. Whenever a limb—any limb—becomes injured, the eye alone most effectively reflects the resultant pain. Thus it is that Mr. Elijah Muhammad cries out for the sufferings of his people regardless of who or where they might be.

"But Islam permits no color barriers. Don't you, therefore, find the race element in Mr. Muhammad's teachings embarrassing?"

I believe I can best answer this question by stating that while Islam itself recognizes no race or color bars within its ranks, Muslims in many lands of Asia and Africa have often been compelled to live with this phenomenon and to accept and respect the color-consciousness of other (i.e., European) countries.

The Europeans' attitude towards them, again, must be held responsible for the seemingly ir-repressible urge in most Asians and Africans and black people everywhere on this Planet to look upon the whites—ALL whites—with intense resentment and contempt.