

Restoring the Balance

Restoring the Balance:

*Using the Qur'an and the Sunnah
to Guide a Return to the
Prophet's Islam*

By

John Andrew Morrow

Foreword by Barbara Castleton

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*I am a stranger in Your country
And lonely among Your worshippers:
This is the substance of my complaint.*

—Rabi‘ah al-Adawiyyah

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FOREWORD

BY BARBARA CASTLETON

While this volume is certainly intended for an audience of scholars and Muslims of both Shiite and Sunni persuasions, it has topics that will inform the curious readers' general understanding of Islam. It is successful in this last motivation in that the short informative articles consist of subjects close to Muslim experience and concerns. Perhaps Dr. Morrow was channeling a weekly "Everything You Wanted to Know..." column as he constructed this body of opinion, advice, and scholarly rebuttal.

A greater call here, though, is for Muslims to look mindfully at their belief system, observe how the intent of Qur'anic instruction, the wisdom of the hadith literature, and the preaching of early religious and spiritual leaders may have been bent, distorted, or diametrically altered to suit a political or other agenda. Included, as well, are logical and well-documented statements on how modern life and scientific advances are in accord with the basic teachings of Islam.

It was not whimsy, I think, that led Morrow to begin this volume with a discussion of extraterrestrials. Whether prodded by recent advances in astronomy, astrophysics, or the waning years of NASA, religions with ages-old doctrines are trying to pick their way through the seeming mine field of the divine versus Dr. Who. This doctor, using quotes from the Qur'an and an elegantly decipherable analysis, attempts to dispel the paradox and pave the way, perhaps, for a revival of science in the broader Islamic Ummah or Community.

Of riveting interest further on is the monograph on the topic of race in relation to Jesus, Muhammad, and a variety of other towers of religious focus. The issue of Allah himself is not widely bruited about given that those who have read the Qur'an carefully realize that if you are seeking a form for Allah, that is not Allah; if you are trying to ascribe a coloration or shape to Allah, that is not Allah either; and if you are attempting to identify, quantify, or design Him, you will miss the mark because Allah is beyond the scope of human language, perception, or conception. That being the case, some clerics, out of their zeal to enhance their own membership in a certain racial group, are trying to recruit as equal

members, Jesus, Adam, and others.

The irony of this campaign is touched by a regrettable poignancy as well since an essential aspect of Islam, one lauded by even its critics, is the undeniable diversity and equality among believers. America's own Malcolm X was transformed during his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he ate, slept, befriended and was befriended by people of every color, national background, political affiliation, and ethnicity. Dr. Morrow reiterates that color or race is a non-issue for Muslims and to attempt to introduce it by assigning race to revered historical figures is to taint its very precepts.

Having lived in Kuwait for many years, I took for granted that the extreme expressions of devotion, such as self-flagellation, were, if not obligatory on the occasion of Ashura, at least a legitimate declaration of piety. Morrow dispels that notion, as he does with many other widely accepted ideas about the roots and practice of Islam, in an essay provocatively called "The Barbarity of Blood-Letting." Just as WMDs somehow wormed their way into our standard of "what is true" before the war in Iraq, so too has the habit of causing injury to self when honoring Imam Husayn taken on a legitimacy that has no grounding in Islam whatsoever, according to Morrow and respected experts, as well as Qur'anic sources. The discussion makes very clear how problematic it is to dissuade a vested population from retaining a false, but long held belief, or from performing a customary practice, however contraindicated it may be by the facts or doctrines. It is notable that, when explaining the background or current status of such issues, Dr. Morrow details respected religious clerics, listing the Ayatullahs like a mantra of veracity. As a non-Muslim, and one who practices a laity-based religion, this repertoire of expert commentators is fascinating.

In the section on "Shiism in China" we learn that 20-100 million people in that nation are Muslim. Yet, there is an unknown factor of 80 million people in between the two statistics. Can 80 million people be lost or unaccounted for? Not in America to be sure. We are driven here by numbers and verifiable data. And although we all know that they can lie, demographic statistics here have yet to lose 80 million people. To be sure, in a country of nearly 2 billion people, 80 million is a relatively small number, but I was interested to read Morrow's account of their background and current situation. He does not offer a solution to the distinction between the two possible population levels of Muslims in China, but his explanation of the history and recent circumstances hints at a level of suppression that could be reflected in that numerical gap.

In the chapter on "Syrian-Lebanese Settlers in the Dakotas," we trace

the immigration patterns, contributions, and influence of Arabs, generally from the Levant, on the history of North and South Dakota. The refrain of ignorance--“why doesn’t anyone know this?”--is one which rings a familiar, and, as Morrow says, ethnocentric chime. The concept of forefathers, of ancestors who laid a path we continue to follow, orbits almost exclusively around the English and western Europeans. Yet, the fact that these settlers from Syria and Lebanon are not well remembered says something for both their ability to “blend in” and the local community’s acceptance of them over time.

The discussion of veracity and authentication in “The Stylistic Analysis of Prophetic Arabic” deals with the “was told to” tradition in relation to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. The Christian Bible, in Matthew, Genesis, the Chronicles, and others, contains a variety of “begat” chains as a demonstration of continuity and blood heritage. The words of the Prophet Muhammad, in order to be considered reliable, must likewise have a traceable lineage. Although the Qur’an is the ultimate source of information on Islam, the hadith, or teachings of the Prophet, are powerful sources for understanding as well. Thus, their legitimacy needs to be verified. The new field of forensic linguistics, which can analyze phrases and passages based on a person’s unique idiolect, is just one of the strategies Islamic scholars can use.

Further on, in Chapter 17--“Will the Real Sunnis Please Stand Up?” -- Dr. Morrow points to legitimacy of another kind, but one with threads throughout the book. “Real,” meaning genuine, authentic, and true, among other synonyms, is at the heart of every argument about this versus that in the realm of religion. When a person chooses a religion--his or her connection to the infinite, the divine, or merely the connection between humans and everything else--it is natural to want that ideology to be verifiable; namely, to be an accurate expression of the original teachings.

Attracted to Islam for reasons both personal and intellectual, Morrow first came to understand the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad on his own. It was only after that he was well-versed in the primary sources of Islam that he began to look for the group that best expressed those teachings. He describes with some chagrin his early associations with Muslims who claimed to be Sunni but whose attitudes and practices mirrored nothing so much as ignorance and intolerance. In time, he found a more accepting home among traditional Sunni, Shiite and Sufi Muslims, who better reflected the Islam of the Prophet versus, as he would say, the Saudi princes. The so-called Sunnis he encountered early on were in reality Salafi, Wahhabi, and Takfiri extremists and fundamentalists. Ironically, it was the Shiites and the Sufis who taught him

the true meaning of the Sunnah. In fact, it would take him years to actually come across bona fide Sunnis, namely, true, traditional Muslims who rejected extremism, essentialism, radical Islamism, sectarianism, and Takfirism. Today, as always, Dr. Morrow remains a proponent and practitioner of traditional Islam who accepts the Muslim faith in its totality and who analyzes any issue from a myriad of traditions: Sunni, Shii, and Sufi, among others.

Unfortunately, I fear his paeon to rationality with regard to “true teachings” will be lost in a chorus of similar tunes. And yet, it was heartening to read in the chapters that follow how the author observed, analyzed, and reached his own conclusions about the different sects in Islam and how there are those who would classify themselves in one way and take action and practice in another. Perhaps the lesson here is to not only “question authority,” but also to hold that authority to the principles it professes to espouse. Morrow’s goal seems to be to return Islam to its roots in unification, acceptance, and tolerance by erasing the contrived barriers between sects and the demonization of one group for another within Islam itself.

Through this set of essays, Dr. Morrow moves from the position of castigator, a Dr. No if you will, to that of messenger, a Dr. Know. This second distinction is evident in the study on the Nation of Islam, Chapter 20. In my own experience, I have found many international Muslims seemingly unaware of the exact nature of the Nation of Islam’s doctrine. They relate the Nation of Islam to Malcolm X, who was one of its early leaders and teachers, and that is where their knowledge and understanding stops. They do not know that those of the Nation pay tribute to a newly minted prophet, one who appeared in the 20th century, a manifestation in clear violation of the *shahadah*, the testimony of faith, with which every Muslim declares submission and allegiance, “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger.” From the 1930s on, Elijah Muhammad portrayed himself as the final messenger of Islam and spun a new web of ideology that may have had its roots in Islam, but which diverged so drastically that it raised another in the place of the Prophet Muhammad. Global Muslims seem so overjoyed to hear of the spread of their religion that they do not question the fine print in this nouveau spiritual contract.

In chapter 26, “The Misguided and the Madrasa,” Morrow cries out from his teacher/scholar heart in setting the record straight about the function and purpose of madrasas or Islamic schools. In literature easily accessible, we can find ample evidence that one of the reasons for European colonial powers to close or prohibit madrasas was because they were so democratic and because they provided a valuable education to not

only aristocratic children but the offspring of the masses as well. They were not the first, nor, alas, the last, to feel that an educated populace was a dangerous thing.

The final chapters are particularly poignant. In “The State of Our Ummah,” Morrow provides a sobering analysis of the crisis of Islam while in subsequent chapters he champions the Covenants of the Prophet as an essential tool in intrafaith and interfaith relations. In Chapter 36, “Nightmares in Takfiristan,” he relates some of the hilarious but also heart-rending experiences he endured after he embraced Islam. The last chapter recounts Morrow’s cautious return to the Muslim community after decades of exile. Although titled “Hope” it ends with a question mark, suggesting that Morrow remains wary and worried about the future of the Muslim Ummah or Community.

Merging the conceptual with the practical, the work concludes with four appendices: The Covenants Initiative, which calls upon Muslims to abide by the Covenants of the Messenger of Allah; the Genocide Initiative, which seeks to hold Takfiri terrorists accountable for the atrocities they commit; and the Edict against ISIS which delegitimizes violent extremists by placing them outside the fold of orthodox Islam. The final appendix, “What Should Muslims Say to Donald Trump?” challenges the propaganda and proposals made by Islamophobes and calls upon all Muslims to renew their pledge of allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad.

In sum, this is a book of passionate pleas to reason, and it raises ideas that are at once unpopular and urgent. Dr. Morrow’s own teachers would no doubt be much pleased.

PREFACE

For many decades, I have devoted myself to the jihad or sacred struggle of the pen in the firm belief that the ink of a scholar is more precious than the blood of a martyr. This does not suggest that I view myself as a living martyr or intellectual warrior: it simply means that I made a conscious choice to pick the pen over the pistol, a decision that I wish more misguided “Muslim” militants would make.

If my journalism is directed towards students and intellectuals, my peer-reviewed articles and books are aimed at scholars and academics. Unlike my previous books, which were written in dialogue with specialists, this work is aimed at a much broader audience that consists of both educators and educated readers. The motto, which I have observed in most instances, has been “short and sweet.” As such, I have provided over thirty opinion pieces on a wide range of topics. In order for this book to be more readable, I have kept my style and vocabulary as accessible and concise as possible and limited most entries to two to three pages. For the sake of variety, however, I have included some lengthier and more detailed studies for readers who seek greater depth.

Following standard journalistic conventions, I have excluded specific details concerning citations as well as burdensome bibliographical references. The lay-person does not require detailed references and any expert in the field can easily identify and locate the sources of my citations. The lack of bibliographical information does not mean that I do not acknowledge my sources. I do so indicating sources in brackets after citations. I simply do not include page numbers or a separate bibliography. For Qur’anic citations, I always indicate chapter and verse. For books of prophetic traditions, I merely mention the source, such as Bukhari, Muslim or Majlisi, all of which are easily accessible in digital format.

Besides citing the source of quotations, I also make every attempt to distinguish my voice and opinions from those of others. I treat history and science as facts that do not require references. This should never be construed as an attempt on my part to pass off the ideas and works of others as my own. While authors own their original ideas, findings, and the precise language in which they express them, they do not own information. Knowledge is public property. Whether it was researching race and genetics or the flagellations of Ashura, I drew upon numerous

sources, and synthesized the facts they contained. For the latter, I am indebted to the works of Yitzhak Nakash, Volker Adam, and Tatbir.org which are repositories of information on the history and evolution of the sanguinary side of Muharram mourning rituals.

During these hectic times, in which centuries have become decades, decades have become years, years have become months, months have become weeks, weeks have become days, days have become hours, hours have become minutes, and minutes have become seconds, it has become decidedly more difficult for readers to find the time to study scholarly monographs. It is with this realization in mind that I have authored this less formal work which I hope will appeal to youth, of both high school and university age, educated working adults, as well as scholars of the field who seek food for thought before calling it quits for the night.

JAM

CHAPTER ONE

ISLAM AND EXTRATERRESTRIALS

“Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds,” commences the first chapter of the Holy Qur’an. Rather than refer to the world in singular, Almighty Allah refers to “worlds,” plural, on 46 different occasions. Although the word in question refers to different physical realms of existence on our planet, applying collectively to the various plant and animal worlds, as well as to various spiritual spheres, the term also refers to the 70 sextillion visible stars found in the universe as well as the planets and satellites which orbit around a myriad of them. Thus, besides confirming the existence of other worlds, the Qur’an acknowledges the existence of other earth-like planets. As we read in the Muslim Scripture, “Allah is He who has created seven heavens and of the Earth a similar number” (65:12). Although the existence of other worlds and other planets is not evidence of life, the Qur’an specifies that Almighty Allah has indeed created life on other planets. As we read in the Muslim Scripture, “Among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the Earth, and the living creatures that He has scattered through them” (42:29). According to the Qur’an, everything in existence worships Almighty Allah: “And to Allah doth obeisance all that is in the heavens and Earth, whether living creatures or the angels” (16:49). In Arabic, the word *dabbatun* or “living creatures” denotes sentient, corporeal beings which are capable of movement in contrast to incorporeal, spiritual beings, like the angels and the jinn, which are interdimensional beings. When asked whether life existed on other planets, Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq responded:

Each star is a small universe within the great universe. It is a collection of heavenly bodies. They are in perpetual motion so that they may not fall down and break up. If their movement stops, the universe will come to an end. It is perpetual motion which creates life. In other words, perpetual motion itself is life. If the motion stops, life would cease to exist. (qtd. Yazdi)

Manifestly, the existence of life on other planets does not prove the presence of intelligent, rational, beings. According to the Qur’an, however,

we are not the only humans to have been created by Allah. As we read in the Muslim Scripture:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vice-regent on Earth.' They said: 'Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy Name?' He said: 'I know what ye know not.' (2:30)

In all evidence, Adam was not the first conscious, soul-bearing, being created by Allah. As the angels implicitly attested, other beings had existed prior to Adam. They spread corruption on Earth and, for all intents and purposes, were destroyed by their Creator. Since angels do not know the future, how could they have known that the sons of Adam would spread mischief throughout the land and shed blood? They could only have based their judgment on past experience.

As the Imams from *Ahl al-Bayt*, the Household of the Prophet, have explained, there have been many Adams, the Adam referred to in the Bible and the Qur'an being the most recent of them all. When asked who came before Adam, Imam 'Ali replied: "Adam." When asked who came before that Adam, he replied, "Adam." When asked who came before that Adam, he responded: "Thousands of Adams" (Ibn Babawayh). In other words, different species of humans have existed before us in this world as well as other worlds, the exact number of which is only known to Allah. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq has explained, "Perhaps you think that Allah has not created humans other than you. No! I swear to Allah that He has created thousands upon thousands of human species and that you are the last among them" (Majlisi). As Imam Muhammad al-Baqir has elucidated,

Since this world was created, Allah, the Exalted, has created seven human species none of which were of the race of Adam. He created them from the surface of the Earth, and set each species of beings, one after another, with its kind upon the Earth. Then he created Adam, the father of humankind, and brought his children into being from him. (Majlisi)

It should be stressed that the number 7 has the symbolic meaning of "many" or a "multitude" in Semitic languages. Hence, when the Imam says that seven species of humans were created, he is simply expressing that a vast number of human species existed prior to *Homo sapiens*. Based on the Qur'an, there does not appear to be a missing link between *Homo sapiens* and other human species which preceded them. They all appear to have been separate creations and not part of a single evolutionary process. Otherwise, we would have to face the possibility of polygenesis as

opposed to monogenesis.

If Almighty Allah created various waves of humans on Earth, there is no reason why He would have failed to create other beings, both similar and different, on other planets which are capable of sustaining life. As Ayatullah Pooya Yazdi has explained in *The Essence of the Holy Qur'an*, Imam 'Ali believed that the luminous heavenly bodies that we see in the sky contained cities connected with columns of light. These cities, according to the Imam, were populated by conscious beings who worshipped the Creator, and who had never heard about our Adam and his progeny (244).

When Ibn 'Abbas, the cousin and companion of the Prophet Muhammad, was asked to interpret the Qur'anic verse regarding the seven earths (65:12), he explained that "In each of those earths there is a Prophet like your Prophet, an Adam like your Adam, a Noah like your Noah, an Abraham like your Abraham, and a Jesus like your Jesus" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Hakim, Bayhaqi, Ibn Hajar, Ibn Kathir, and Dhahabi). Great scholars, like Imam al-Ghazali, also believed that there were people on other planets, that they had learned how to travel through space, and that they had the technology to communicate with other celestial civilizations.

When asked whether there were human beings on other planets, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq was more cautious, responding that: "I cannot say that there are human beings in other worlds, but I can say that there are living beings that we cannot see because of the great distance between us" (*Maghz-e Mutafakker Jehan Shi'ah*). While the Imam could not confirm that *Homo sapiens* existed on other planets, he did believe in the existence of extraterrestrial beings which, instead of having a science-fiction overtone, merely means "off planet Earth."

Far from being Earth-centered, the Holy Qur'an encourages human beings to explore the universe. As Almighty Allah says,

O ye assembly of Jinn and men! If it be you can pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the Earth, pass ye! Not without authority will ye be able to pass! Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny? (55:33-34).

As the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah have established, we are not alone in the universe, nor are we unique. We are the most recent in a long line of beings created by the Creator. As Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq has eloquently expressed,

Do not think that after the passing away of the affair of this world and the Day of Judgment and the placing of the virtuous in heaven and the

evil in hell there will no longer be anyone to worship God. No, never! Rather, again God will create servants without the marriage of the male and the female to know His Oneness and to worship Him. (Majlisi)

CHAPTER TWO

RACISM IN THE SHIITE SEMINARY

Claims that the Shiite seminary in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, discriminate against non-Persians have been circulating for several decades. Although this allegation is often made by Orientalists and outsiders, it is also spread by a small cohort of disgruntled Arabs and non-Arabs who appear to be embittered because Persians have dominated Shiite Islam for centuries, often eclipsing others in scholarly, academic, and spiritual eminence. That Persians are at the center of Shiism, there can be no question. The claim that Persian scholars discriminate against non-Persian scholars, however, is unfounded and can be disproven by a simple survey of current, and recent, Grand Ayatullahs.

Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Shahroudi and Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Modarresi are both Arabs as were Grand Ayatullah Sadiq al-Sadr, Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah, and Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Husayn Najafi and Grand Ayatullah Bashir Najafi are both of Indo-Pakistani origin, as was Sayyid 'Ali Naqi Naqvi. Grand Ayatullah Asif Muhsini, an ethnic Tajik, Grand Ayatullah Muhammad Ishaq Fayyad, an ethnic Hazara, and Grand Ayatullah Qorban Ali Kabuli, are all Afghans. Grand Ayatullah 'Ali Khamene'i, Grand Ayatullah Musavi Ardabili, Grand Ayatullah Musa Shubayr Zanjani, Grand Ayatullah Javad Gharavi Aliari, Grand Ayatullah Moslem Malakouti, and Grand Ayatullah Husayn Musavi Tabrizi are all ethnic Azeris, as were Grand Ayatullah Kazem Shariatmadari, Grand Ayatullah Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, 'Allamah Tatababai, and Grand Ayatullah Fazel Lankarani, as well as Grand Ayatullah Javad Tabrizi, and Ayatullah 'Ali Meshkini.

While many Ayatullahs and Sources of Emulation are ethnic Persians, the upper hierarchy of the *hawzah* is a body well-represented by Arabs, Indians, Pakistanis, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Azeris, while the middle to lower echelons include individuals from every imaginable global ethnicity. Scores of students from around the globe have been trained in the Shiite seminary in Qum since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Some have reached the level of *muballaghun* or missionaries. Some have

reached the level of ulama or scholars. Some have reached the intermediate level of *Hujjat al-Islam* or Proof of Islam. And some have even reached the level of *ijtihad*, independent interpretation of Islamic sources, becoming Ayatullahs or Signs of Allah in their own right. Considering that there are thousands of advanced students completing *dars al-kharij* or graduate studies in the *hawzah*, including individuals originating from Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia, the Shiite scholarly establishment has the potential of soon producing and nominating its first European, African, or Latin American Source of Emulation.

While tribalism, nationalism, and ethnic chauvinism exist to some extent among the lower echelons of the Shiite seminary, there is little to no evidence that such considerations have tainted the process of professional promotion in the clerical hierarchy. Clearly, if an individual has risen to the rank of *'alim*, *mujtahid* or *marja*, scholar, jurist or Source of Emulation, it has not been on the basis of race, ethnicity or nationality. In the best of cases, it has been exclusively on the basis of academic aptitude and piety. In the worst of cases, it has been the product of ego, agenda, and ambition. Still, race does not appear to play a prominent role in the process. As the Prophet Muhammad said in his "Final Sermon," "An Arab is not superior to a non-Arab nor is a non-Arab superior to an Arab. A black is not superior to a white nor is a white superior to a black." Such is the standard to which the Shiite seminary aspires.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCERNING THE COLOR OF ADAM, THE PROPHETS, AND THE IMAMS

According to Eurocentrists, Adam was white. According to Afrocentrists, Adam was black. While such ideas are understandable among anthropomorphists, who believe that God literally created human beings in His Corporeal Image, they have no place within the monotheistic mindset of Islam. It is therefore regrettable that some black Muslims from the West remain obsessed about racial matters, echoing the racial doctrines of Marcus Garvey, Noble Drew Ali, Wallace Dodd Fard, Elijah Muhammad, and Louis Farrakhan. While nobody enters the Shiite seminary in a state of ideological purity, it is disturbing to see some black Shiite scholars spread such racist ideas after having spent ten, fifteen or twenty years studying in the *hawzah*. With their scholarly robes and turbans, some of these newly trained Shiite scholars give credence to racist ideas that are rejected by Islam.

For the overwhelming majority of Muslims, the color of Adam, the Prophets, and the Imams, is not an issue. As believers who embrace the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind, Muslims view themselves as the children of Adam and consider any differences in color, language, or culture, to be blessings from Almighty Allah, and a means to bring them together, as oppose to divide them. In short, they embrace the words of Almighty Allah which state,

O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (49:13)

In a misguided effort to fortify their self-esteem, which was shattered and soiled through centuries of slavery, segregation, and discrimination, some believers of African origin or ancestry insist that Adam was black. In reality, they are merely responding to centuries of European Christian

indoctrination which insisted that Adam was white, Abraham was white, Moses was white, Jesus was white, and Almighty God, the Father, in Heaven, was white. In Islam, however, we do not fight fire with fire. We fight fire with water. Though counter-intuitive, the most appropriate response to Christian claims that Adam was white is not to affirm that Adam was black. The appropriate response to Christian claims that God is white is not to affirm that God is black. Instead, the appropriate response is the Islamic response. God does not have a body. As such, God does not have a color. We are all the children of Adam and Adam's color is irrelevant. After all, as the Bible teaches, God "made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). This is a fact that Malcolm X came to realize as a result of his pilgrimage to Mecca. As he expressed in a letter dated April 20th, 1964:

Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people *of all colors and races* here in this ancient holy land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad, and all the other Prophets of the holy scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people *of all colors*...

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were *of all colors*, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white--but the white attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to rearrange much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.

During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept on the same rug--while praying to the same God--with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the words and in the deeds of the white Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan, and Ghana.

We were truly all the same (brothers)--because their belief in one God had removed the white from their minds, the white from their behavior, and the white from their attitude...

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.

As Malcolm X makes patently clear, the vast majority of Muslims could not care less whether Adam was white, black, brown, red or green. The issue does not even occur to them. The only Muslims who insist on Adam's color tend to be racially insecure black converts from the Western world, the very same individuals who insist that Moses was black, Jesus was black, Muhammad was black, the Imams were black, and that the "real" Arabs and Berbers were black. Despite the pseudo-scholarly arguments that they advance to defend their claims, the only thing they demonstrate is their ignorance of Islam and their own poorly-veiled prejudices. Since when have Muslims asserted that Adam, the Prophets, and the Imams were white, brown or yellow? On the contrary, Muslims of all colors have been comforted by the fact that prophets and messengers were sent to all tribes and nations. As Almighty Allah says, "To every people (was sent) a messenger" (10:47). And again, "We assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger" (16:36). As far as Muslims are concerned, the color of any prophet is irrelevant. As the Qur'an teaches, "We make no distinction between one another of his apostles" (2:285).

In reality, the racial doctrine that Adam was black is as ridiculous as the racial doctrine that Adam was white. The belief that the "original man" was black is as fallacious as the belief that the "original man" was white. While many blacks have attempted to Africanize Adam, the Prophets, and the Imams, no such attempt has ever been made by white Muslims. No white Muslim has ever presented Allah, Adam, the Prophet, and the Imams as white. It was W.D. Fard, the mysterious man who appeared in Detroit on July 4th, 1930, and his follower, Elijah Muhammad, who disseminated the belief that Allah, the Prophets, and the Imams were black. The fact that W.D. Fard was actually a white man who associated with white supremacists is reason enough to seriously question any assertions that he made. His teachings, namely, that the black man is God

and the white man is the devil, have had a profound impact on certain groups in the African American community. Imagine, instead, the outrage that would arise if a white Muslim claimed what is presented in the following hypothetical quote which is an inversion of Black Muslim doctrine:

Almighty Allah is a white man. He appeared to the oppressed white working class of Detroit on July 4th, 1930 in the form of W.D. Fard, a Caucasian man from Greece. The white Wallace Fard Muhammad founded the Aryan Nation of Islam. He taught that Adam, the Prophet, and the Imams, all belonged to the white master race. He taught that whites were gods and that blacks were devils. As the Master instructed us, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim teachings all confirm that Ham was punished by God for having sexual intercourse in the sanctuary of the Ark of the Covenant. As Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, al-Ya'qubi, and al-Tabari explain, Ham's complexion was changed to black by the curse of God. In fact, he was smitten in his semen, assuring the perpetuity of his curse among his descendants. As Master Fard said, "Once you go black, you don't come back! You a nigga for life!" Rather than evolve from apes, the Aryan Allah explained that degenerate black people devolved into primates through a genetic mutation triggered by Yakub, a mad scientist.

To demonstrate the demonic nature of blacks, Fard, the White Deity, quoted the Prophet Muhammad who said that "There is no good in black people; when they are hungry, they steal, and when their stomachs are full, they fornicate and commit adultery" (Tabarani). He also taught us that when Allah created Adam, he tapped him on the right shoulder, and out came the white race, and he tapped him on the left shoulder, and out came the black race. Allah then told the white race, "To heaven for all of you," and told the black race, "To hell with all of you" (Ahmad). As the Qur'an confirms, the people of Hell have darkened faces (10:27). As the Prophet pointed out, however, the skin of the women of Paradise is so fair that it is transparent (Tirmidhi).

To demonstrate that blacks can never be true Muslims, the white incarnation of Allah cited Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq who said that black Muslims were hypocrites. As W.D. Fard taught us, it was a black man who killed Hamzah, the Lion of the White Race, and it was another black man who martyred Imam Husayn, the Lord of Whiteness. The murderer of Hamzah, of course, was Wahshi, an Ethiopian, who was appropriately named "The Animal." The murderer of Husayn, of course, was Shimr, the "House Nigger of the Umayyads."

W.D. Fard, the white savior, shared with us the true nature of blacks or

Zinjis through the writings of Muqaddasi, Ibn Khaldun, Jahiz, Mas'udi, Biruni, Hamadani, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and Ibn Qutaybah. Most importantly, W.D. Fard, the White Allah, preached the supremacy of the Original White Asiatic Man, the Caucasian, who was made from the quintessence of clay (23:12). Since porcelain, which is the purest of clay, is white and even translucent, Wallace Fard Muhammad proved that Adam was the whitest of white men, as were his progeny, the Prophets, and the Imams. Since Adam was white, only white people can go to heaven, for as the Prophet said, "Any person who will enter Paradise will resemble Adam" (Bukhari).

In order to protect the racial pride of the Prophet, the White Savior reiterated the edict of Ahmad ibn Abi Sulayman, the companion of Sahnun ibn Sa'id ibn Habib al-Tanukhi, the great Maliki jurist from Qayrawan, which states that "Anyone who says that the Prophet was black should be killed."

The authenticity of the *ahadith* or traditions in question, and the inappropriate interpretations of the Qur'an which are cited, are all categorically rejected. The purpose of this piece is to give blacks with racial issues a mirror in which to view their own contentions. While there are some racist sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, they have always been rejected by Muslim scholars as they contradict the Qur'an, authentic narrations, and the very spirit of Islam.

If we cast Christian sources and their biases aside, and focus on Jewish sources, we find that the word "Adam" derives from the Hebrew root for "red." Hence, according to Judaism, Adam was a red man. He was made of red clay. When the Bible says that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7), and Job says that "I also am formed out of clay" (Job 33:6), Jewish commentators describe that clay as having been red. If Adam was indeed red, as his name indicates, then all other skin tones manifested themselves later among his descendants. From a Jewish perspective, whether we are white, black, brown or yellow, we are all descendants of the original red man. However, this does not mean that Adam was a Native American. The color red may simply symbolize the common red blood that unites all humanity. It can also represent the ruddy color of Adam's skin. In the Book of Genesis, Esau, also known as Edom (a name meaning "red" and derived, like "Adam," from the root 'dm), is described as "hairy" when compared to his brother Jacob. As such, he is the emblem of the primordial and primitive man who resists the further spiritual development of the patriarchal line represented by Jacob, his sons and his descendants, those who will eventually include the Patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, as well as the Prophet Moses.

If we rely exclusively on Islamic sources, the foremost of which is the Qur'an, we find that Allah made Adam out of clay. As we read in the Muslim Scripture, "He it is Who has created you from clay" (6:2); "We created man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape" (15:26); "I am about to create man, from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape" (15:28); "Thou didst create from sounding clay" (15:33); "Thou didst create from clay" (17:61); "Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay)" (23:12); "He began the creation of man with (nothing but) clay" (32:7); "Them have We created out of a sticky clay" (37:11); "I am about to create man from clay" (38:71); "Thou didst create me from fire; and him from clay" (38:76); and finally, "He created man from sounding clay like unto pottery" (55:14).

In a clear indication of academic and linguistic dishonesty, some scholars and translators insist that the Qur'an speaks of "black mud" and "black clay." The words used in the Qur'an include *tin*, which simply means "clay," as has been accurately conveyed by Yusuf 'Ali, Arberry, Hamidullah, Cortés, Vernet, Sarwar, and 'Ali, among others, and which has been confirmed by *Hans Wehr*, *Ibn Misr*, and *Mawrid*, as well as Spiro Socrates' *Arabic English Vocabulary*, and John Penrice's *Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran*, among others.

The other word employed in the Qur'an in relation to the creation of humankind is *salsal*, which also means "clay," and which has been correctly translated by Yusuf 'Ali, Hamidullah, Cortés, Vernet, 'Ali, Sarwar, Khalifa, and Qaribullah, but mistranslated as "black mud" or "black slime" by Asad, Pickthall, Sale, Rodwell, Shakir, Hilali/Khan, and Malik, among others, because the word is qualified by the adjective *hama'in* which they rendered as "black." Rather than rely on authoritative dictionaries, these translators turned to the *Arabic-English Lexicon* compiled by Edward William Lane, an Orientalist whose proficiency in Classical Arabic has been diligently and repeatedly proven to be sub-par, and whose translations were mechanical and devoid of subtlety.

As any scholar with a veritable mastery of Classical Arabic can confirm the words *salsal* means "clay," "dry clay," "argil," or "argillaceous earth," the word *hama'* means "mud," "mire," "sludge" or "slime," and the word *hama'in* means "dredged," "cleaned out," or "purified." If we base ourselves on *Hans Wehr*, *Mawrid*, and the *Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran*, when Allah says that He made human beings out of *salsalin min hama'in masnunin*, it means, out of "pure clay" or out of "purified mud."

While it is true that the *Lisan al-'Arab* and *al-Muhit* describe *hama'* as "black clay," Ibn Manzur (d. 1312) explains that the word has different