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A Note on Ibaadah-Related Practices and the Muslim Convert

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Introduction

It is universally accepted that after someone embraces Islam, he is expected to live as a Muslim. Living as a Muslim requires that one perform a number of acts of worship. This inevitably leads to the question as to whether there are acts of worship that one must specifically perform as part of or related to the process of conversion. In particular, there are a few deeds that are often associated with the act of declaring one's faith. These are (1) a complete bathing (*ghusl*), (2) removing all of one's hairs from pre-Islamic days and (3) circumcision. The question of changing one's name is often brought up very early on in one's Islam as well. The new Muslim will be expected to pray as well. This will inevitably bring up some important questions as, most likely, the convert will not be familiar with how to recite soorah al-Faatihah. It is these questions, therefore, that the author will discuss in this paper.⁽¹⁾

A Complete Bathing (al-Ghusl)

One common practice is to have the convert make *ghusl* (complete bathing) for the occasion of embracing Islam. The first question that comes to mind is: What is the purpose of this bathing: Is this bathing for the sake of entering into Islam or for the sake of purification? A second question is: Is this bathing a requirement or a recommendation? The answers to these questions have numerous ramifications to it.

Although this can be broken down in to further subsets, one can say that there are four opinions among the scholars concerning the complete bathing in connection with embracing Islam.⁽²⁾ These views may be summarized as follows: One view is that the bathing is obligatory upon anyone who embraces Islam. This is one opinion found in the Maliki school and is the well-known opinion of the Hanbali school. Another view is that this bathing is not obligatory under any circumstances. This is also a view held by some of the Hanbali school. A third view is that this bathing is recommended for anyone who embraces Islam. This is one of the views of the Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali schools. A final view holds that this bathing is only recommended, unless an individual is in a state of sexual defilement or a woman has previously experienced menstruation or post-partum bleeding—in which case it becomes obligatory. In these cases, the bathing is required for the state of ritual purity required for the prayer.

The various opinions with their evidence shall be discussed separately.

First Opinion: The Ghusl is Obligatory Under all Circumstances when an Individual Embraces Islam

According to this opinion, it is obligatory upon the convert to make *ghusl* as an act related to the conversion itself. This is a view ascribed to both Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad. It is the best known opinion in the Hanbali school. It was the view of Abdul-Razzaaq, Abu Dawood, ibn Khuzaimah, Abu Thaur, ibn al-Mundhir, ibn al-Jauzi and ibn Taimiyyah.⁽³⁾ Ibn Taimiyyah wrote, while presenting the dominant Hanbali view, "Whenever a disbeliever embraces Islam,

(1) It should be noted that this author has written a work entitled, A Guide for the New Muslim (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2007) and also has a CD series with the same name (Denver, CO: Al-Basheer Publications, 2007). That book and series discuss the points raised in this paper but in a very summarized and less technical fashion. The book is available from any of the below web addresses:

<http://www.islamguiden.com/arkiv/guideforthenewMuslim.pdf>

<https://islamhouse.com/en/books/193813/>

<https://islamfuture.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/a-guide-for-the-new-muslim/>

(2) For more details on this issue, see Dubyaan al-Dubyaan, Ahkaam al-Tahaarah: al-Ghusl (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Rushd, 2004), pp. 113-128. Yahya al-Nawawi, Al-Majmoo Sharh al-Muhadhib, (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr, 1997), vol. 2, p. 153-154; Abdullah Ibn Qudaamah, al-Mughni (Beirut: Daar al-Fikr. 1405 A.H.), vol. 1, pp. 350f; Saalim Madani, Ahkaam al-Daakhil fi al-Islaam (Ph.D. Thesis, Umm al-Quraa University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 517-564.

(3) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, pp. 520-1.

he must make ghusl regardless of whether he was originally a disbeliever or he was an apostate, regardless of whether he was in a state of sexual defilement or not, regardless of whether he made ghusl before embracing Islam due to sexual defilement or when intending to embrace or Islam or he did not do so."⁽¹⁾

The evidence for this view includes the following:

The Hadith of Qais ibn Aasim

Abu Dawood records:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ كَثِيرٍ الْعَبْدِيُّ، أَخْبَرَنَا سُفْيَانُ، حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَرُ، عَنْ خَلِيفَةَ بْنِ حُصَيْنٍ، عَنْ
جَدِّهِ قَيْسِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ قَالَ: «أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ أُرِيدُ الْإِسْلَامَ فَأَمَرَنِي أَنْ أَغْتَسِلَ بِمَاءٍ وَبِسِدْرٍ»

Narrated Qays ibn Asim: I came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" with the intention of embracing Islam. He commanded me to take a bath with water (boiled with) the leaves of the lote-tree.⁽²⁾

This hadith has been narrated with slight variations in wording with the chain Sufyaan al-Thauri from al-Aghar ibn al-Sabaah on the authority of Khaleefah ibn Husain from his grandfather Qais ibn Aasim by Abdul Razzaaq, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Khuzaimah, al-Nasaaee, ibn Hibban, Abu Dawood, al-Tabaraani, al-Baihaqi and Abu Nuaim in *al-Hilyah*. Its chain is considered *sahih* by many scholars, including Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani⁽³⁾ and Shuaib al-Arnaaoot.⁽⁴⁾

One controversy has arisen.⁽⁵⁾ The well-known erudite scholar Wakee has narrated this hadith from Sufyaan through the same chain but stating Khaleefah ibn Hussain from his father from his grandfather. (Recorded by Ahmad.) This makes it problematic because Khaleefah's father is unknown and, additionally, it would imply that *tadlees* has occurred in the earlier mentioned chain.

In narrating it in this fashion, though, Wakee has contradicted a large number of scholars who narrated this hadith from Sufyaan, including Abdul Rahman ibn Mahdi,⁽⁶⁾ Yahya ibn Saeed al-Qattaan, Abdul Razzaaq and others. He is supported in his manner of narration only by Qabeesah ibn Uqbah al-Koofi. Besides contradicting scholars who are considered stronger, it has also been established that Qabeesah was considered not strong in the hadith of Sufyan in particular because he studied with him while he was young.⁽⁷⁾ Finally, it has also been narrated from Wakee himself that he narrated this

(1) Ahmad ibn Taimiyyah, *Sharh al-Umdah fi al-Fiqh: Kitaab al-Tahaarah* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Maktabah al-Ubaikaan, 1412 A.H.), p. 348.

(2) Yasir Qadhi, trans., *Sunan Abu Dawud* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar-us-Salam, 2008), vol. 1, p. 227.

(3) Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Saheeh Abi Dawood: Al-Umm* (Kuwait: Muassasah Gharaas li-l-Nashr wa al-Tauzee, 2002), vol. 2, p. 193.

(4) Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, et al., eds. *Sunan Abi Dawood (Daar al-Risaalah al-Aalimiyyah, 2009)*, vol. 1, p. 266.

(5) Cf., Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Qattaan, *Bayaan al-Wahm wa al-Ehaam fi Kitaab al-Ahkaam* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar Taibah, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 428-430. Al-Qattaan leans towards rejecting the hadith as weak due to this controversial issue. Also see Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abi Haatim, *al-Ilal li-ibn Abi Haatim (Mutaabi al-Humaidhi, 2006)*, vol. 1, pp. 451-2, especially the footnotes provided by the editors. One should also consult the short article Naadir al-Qanneeri, *Takhreej al-Ahaadeeth al-Waaridah fi Ightisaal al-Kaafir idha Aslam* (<http://ahlalhdeth.com/vb/showthread.php?p=999063>).

(6) Besides being a great scholar of hadith, Abdul Rahmaan ibn Mahdi was also considered a specialist in the hadith of Sufyaan, according to Imam Ahmad. See Shams al-Deen Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Siyar Alaam al-Nubalaa* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1985), vol. 7, p. 566. However, in general, Yahya ibn Saeed al-Qattaan, the next scholar mentioned above, was considered by Ahmad to be stronger than both Abdul Rahmaan ibn Mahdi and Wakee. See Yoosuf al-Mizi, *Tahdheeb al-Kamaal fi Asmaa al-Rijaal* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1980), vol. 31, p. 337.

(7) Yahya ibn Maeen said about Qabeesah, "He is trustworthy in everything except the hadith of Sufyaan as

chain without this additional name in the chain.⁽¹⁾ Thus, the narration of Wakee and Qabeesah is considered an error on Wakee's and Qabeesah's part.

It is, therefore, concluded here that this is an authentic hadith. And Allah alone knows best.

This hadith, though, does not explain the reason behind the *ghusl* (purification or due to embracing Islam).

In addition, the default ruling concerning the imperative is that of obligation. It should only be interpreted otherwise if there is some evidence indicating a change. When a commanded act is conjoined with an act that is clearly not obligatory, it is taken as a sign that the original command meant recommendation and not obligation. In this hadith, the *ghusl* is to be performed with water containing the leaves of a lote-tree. This part is clearly not obligatory and, some argue, it is an indication that the entire act is only recommended.⁽²⁾ It should be noted, though, that it is not necessarily the case that conjoining of acts implies that they all have the same ruling.

The Hadith of Thumaamah

Thumaamah ibn Uthaal is a member of the tribe of Banu Haneefah who the Companions captured and had him fastened to one of the pillars of the mosque. (His full story is presented below.) According to a narration in *Musnad Ahmad*, when he decided to embrace Islam, the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" instructed him to make *ghusl*:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ
ثُمَّامَةَ بْنَ أُتَالٍ أَوْ أُتَالََةَ أَسْلَمَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «اذْهَبُوا بِهِ إِلَى حَائِطِ بَنِي فَلَانٍ، فَمُرُّوهُ
أَنْ يَغْتَسِلَ».

Abu Hurairah narrated that when Thumaamah ibn Uthaal embraced Islam, the Messenger of Allah "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said, "Take him to the garden of the Tribe of so and so and order him to make *ghusl*." This narration states an explicit command for the individual to make *ghusl* after his acceptance of Islam. However, this narration must be considered *shaadh* (contradicting of stronger sources) as in its chain is Abdullah ibn Umar ibn Hafs al-Umari, who is a slightly weak narrator.⁽³⁾

The authentic narrations of this incident recount this incident in a different fashion. Here, for example, is the text from *Sahih al-Bukhari*,

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَبَا
هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ بَعَثَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ خَيْلًا قِبَلَ نَجْدٍ، فَجَاءَتْ بِرَجُلٍ مِنْ بَنِي

then he is not that strong due to him hearing from [Sufyaan] when he was a youngster." See al-Dhahabi, *Siyar*, vol. 10, p. 131.

(1) See al-Qanneeri.

(2) See Madani, vol. 2, p. 529.

(3) For a complete discussion of his qualities as a narrator, see al-Dhahabi, *Siyar*, vol. 7, pp. 339-341.

حَنِيفَةً يُقَالُ لَهُ ثُمَامَةٌ بِنُ أُنْثَالٍ، فَرَبَطُوهُ بِسَارِيَةِ مِنْ سَوَارِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَخَرَجَ إِلَيْهِ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةٌ». فَقَالَ عِنْدِي خَيْرٌ يَا مُحَمَّدُ، إِنْ تَقْتُلْنِي تَقْتُلُ ذَا دَمٍ، وَإِنْ تُنْعِمَ تُنْعِمَ عَلَيَّ شَاكِرٍ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تُرِيدُ الْمَالَ فَسَلْ مِنْهُ مَا شِئْتَ. حَتَّى كَانَ الْعُدْتُمْ قَالَ لَهُ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةٌ». قَالَ مَا قُلْتُ لَكَ إِنْ تُنْعِمَ تُنْعِمَ عَلَيَّ شَاكِرٍ. فَتَرَكَهُ حَتَّى كَانَ بَعْدَ الْعَدِ، فَقَالَ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةٌ». فَقَالَ عِنْدِي مَا قُلْتُ لَكَ. فَقَالَ: «أَطْلِقُوا ثُمَامَةَ»، فَانْطَلَقَ إِلَى نَخْلٍ قَرِيبٍ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ فَاغْتَسَلَ ثُمَّ دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ فَقَالَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، يَا مُحَمَّدُ وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضُ وَجْهٌ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ وَجْهِكَ، فَقَدْ أَصْبَحَ وَجْهَكَ أَحَبَّ الْوُجُوهِ إِلَيَّ، وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ مِنْ دِينٍ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ دِينِكَ، فَأَصْبَحَ دِينَكَ أَحَبَّ الدِّينِ إِلَيَّ، وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ مِنْ بَلَدٍ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ بَلَدِكَ، فَأَصْبَحَ بَلَدُكَ أَحَبَّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَيَّ، وَإِنَّ خَيْلِكَ أَخَذْتَنِي وَأَنَا أُرِيدُ الْعُمْرَةَ، فَمَاذَا تَرَى فَبَشِّرْهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَمْرُهُ أَنْ يَعْتَمِرَ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمَ مَكَّةَ قَالَ لَهُ قَائِلٌ صَبَوْتَ. قَالَ لَا، وَلَكِنْ أَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ مُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَلَا وَاللَّهِ لَا يَأْتِيكُمْ مِنَ الْيَمَامَةِ حَبَّةٌ حِنْطَةٍ حَتَّى يَأْذَنَ فِيهَا النَّبِيُّ ﷺ.

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" sent some cavalry towards Najd and they brought a man from the tribe of Banu Hanifa who was called Thumama bin Uthal. They fastened him to one of the pillars of the Mosque. The Prophet went to him and said, "What have you got, O Thumama?" He replied, "I have got a good thought, O Muhammad! If you should kill me, you would kill a person who has already killed somebody, and if you should set me free, you would do a favor to one who is grateful, and if you want property, then ask me whatever wealth you want." He was left till the next day when the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said to him, "What have you got, Thumama? He said, "What I told you, i.e. if you set me free, you would do a favor to one who is grateful." The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" left him till the day after, when he said, "What have you got, O Thumama?" He said, "I have got what I told you. "On that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said, "Release Thumama." So he (i.e. Thumama) went to a garden of date-palm trees near to the Mosque, took a bath and then entered the Mosque and said, "I testify that None has the right

to be worshipped except Allah, and also testify that Muhammad is His Apostle! By Allah, O Muhammad! There was no face on the surface of the earth most disliked by me than yours, but now your face has become the most beloved face to me. By Allah, there was no religion most disliked by me than yours, but now it is the most beloved religion to me. By Allah, there was no town most disliked by me than your town, but now it is the most beloved town to me. Your cavalry arrested me (at the time) when I was intending to perform the `Umra. And now what do you think?" The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" gave him good tidings (congratulated him) and ordered him to perform the `Umra. So when he came to Mecca, someone said to him, "You have become a Sabian?" Thumama replied, "No! By Allah, I have embraced Islam with Muhammad, Apostle of Allah. No, by Allah! Not a single grain of wheat will come to you from Yamamah unless the Prophet gives his permission."⁽¹⁾

In the authentic narrations there is no explicit command from the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" to have Thumaamah make *ghusl*.⁽²⁾ Instead, it seems that he did it on his own initiative. One could argue that perhaps the *ghusl* for embracing Islam was well-known and that is why Thumaamah did it. However, Thumaamah was from a place distant from Madinah and it would have been surprising for him to have known that practice. And Allah alone knows best.

Other Relevant but Weak Hadith

In a passage in *al-Talkhees al-Habeer*, Ibn Hajar points to three other narrations concerning Waathilah, Qataadah al-Ruhaawi⁽³⁾ and Aqeel ibn Abi Taalib where the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" ordered the *ghusl* for a new Muslim. Ibn Hajar only states that their chains are weak without providing any more details concerning the quality of their chains.⁽⁴⁾

Without going into too much detail, the narration of Waathilah is found in al-Tabaraani's *al-Mujam al-Kabeer* and al-Haakim's *al-Mustadrak*. Both of their chains have a string of weak narrators in them.⁽⁵⁾ The hadith of Qataadah can be found in al-Tabaraani's *al-Mujam al-Kabeer* and ibn Abi Aasim's *al-Ahaad wa al-Mathaani*.⁽⁶⁾ Its chain is weak, as shall be discussed later. As for the narration of Aqeel, ibn Hajar states that it is found in al-Haakim's *Tareekh al-Naisaaboer*. Unfortunately, this author has not been able to locate that narration.

Additionally, ibn Daqeeq al-Eid, in *al-Imaam fi Marifah Ahaadeeth al-Ahkaam*, states that both ibn Umar and al-Baraa narrated that the Messenger of Allah "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" ordered a new convert to make *ghusl*. Al-Dubyaan

(1) The translation above is from Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), vol. 5, pp. 401-402.

(2) For a more detailed discussion of some of the authentic narrations, see Madani, vol. 2, pp. 527-528; Dubyaan, pp. 117-121.

(3) Details concerning the narrations of Waathilah and Qataadah will be presented in the section on removing hairs upon converting to Islam.

(4) Ahmad ibn Hajar al-Asqalaani, *al-Talkhees al-Habeer fi Takhreej al-Rafiee al-Kabeer* (Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1989), vol. 2, p. 168.

(5) Also see al-Dubyaan's discussion, pp. 121-122.

(6) Also see al-Dubyaan's discussion, pp. 122-123.

notes that ibn Daqeeq al-Eid does not present the complete chains for these reports and the portion of the chains that he does present are weak.⁽¹⁾

Soorah al-Baqarah verse 138

﴿صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ﴾

“[And say, ‘Ours is] the religion of Allah. And who is better than Allah in [ordaining] religion? And we are worshippers of Him.”⁽²⁾

The word in the verse, *sibghah*, translated above as “the religion,” has been interpreted in many ways. In his Quranic commentary, al-Qurtubi states that it has been said that *sibghah* here refers to the *ghusl* for anyone who wishes to embrace Islam, as a replacement for the Christian baptism. He says that al-Maawardi mentions this view. Al-Qurtubi then goes on to present the other evidence indicating that such *ghusl* is obligatory upon entering into Islam.⁽³⁾ However, this is probably not the strongest interpretation of the word *sibghah*. Ibn Katheer notes that the word means, “religion,” as has been narrated from ibn Abbaas, Mujaahid, Abu al-Aaliyah, Ikrimah, Ibraaheem, al-Hasan, Qataadah, al-Dhahhaak and others.⁽⁴⁾

Rational Arguments

Those of this view also present a number of rational arguments.⁽⁵⁾ From among the more convincing of their arguments is:

(1) *Ghusl* is one of the prerequisites for the soundness of the prayer.

(2) A disbeliever, in general, is not going to be free of being sexually defiled or having impurities. In the same way that sleep is considered a proxy for the lesser defilements, disbelief may be considered a proxy for the major defilements.

The Second Opinion: The Ghusl is Recommended Only Under all Circumstances when an Individual Embraces Islam

The second opinion states that under all circumstances of an individual embracing Islam, the *ghusl* is only recommended and not an obligation. This is the view of many Hanafis, Malikis and Shafiees. In fact, ibn al-Jauzi attributes this view to al-Shafiee himself.⁽⁶⁾ Another opinion among the Hanbalis is that the *ghusl* is neither obligatory or recommended.⁽⁷⁾ Their evidence is similar to what is discussed below with the difference being in the last paragraph.”

This group argues that by embracing Islam an individual virtually wipes away all of his preceding actions. Allah says,

﴿قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَتَّخِذُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ﴾

“Say to those who have disbelieved [that] if they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them” (al-Taubah 38).

The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" also said,

(1) Al-Dubyaan, pp. 123-124.

(2) All Quranic translations are from the Sahih International translation. Based on the different interpretations of this verse, there are a number of ways in which one may need to translate it into English. Pickthall has translated it as, “We take our colour from Allah.” Abdullah Yusuf Ali has, “(Our religion is) the Baptism of Allah: And who can baptize better than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship.” <https://quran.com/2/138>

(3) Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Qurtubi, al-Jaami li-Ahkaam al-Quraan (Cairo: Daar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1964), vol. 2, p. 145.

(4) Ismaaeel ibn Katheer, Tafseer al-Quran al-Adheem (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar Taibah, 1999), vol. 1, p. 450.

(5) See Madani, vol. 2, pp. 529-531.

(6) Madani, vol. 2, p. 532.

(7) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, p. 113.

إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يُحِبُّ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ

“Verily, Islam wipes away what precedes it.”⁽¹⁾

The argument from this hadith is that there is no call to requiring a disbeliever to make ghusl upon embracing Islam because the state that he was in was “wiped away” by his conversion. Thus, his state of sexual defilement was wiped away like sins were wiped away. This, though, seems to be a very weak argument. Ibn Abdul-Barr, for example, notes that ablution will still be binding on the individual even if they did nothing to invalidate his ablution. Thus, ghusl should also be binding upon him as he should be commanded to perform the ghusl in the same manner that he is commanded to perform the ablution.⁽²⁾ In addition, it should be noted that the same hadith alluded to above is narrated with a stronger chain having the wording:

يَا عَمْرُو أَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يُحِبُّ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهُ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ

“O Amr, do you not know that Islam wipes away what precedes it of sin.”⁽³⁾

This stronger narration makes it clear that the statement is only in reference to sins and not inclusive of all acts. The verse quoted above is also in relation to sins only, as it speaks about forgiveness. Thus, for example, it is agreed that if the individual were to face the law of retribution, that punishment would not be dropped due to his embracing of Islam.⁽⁴⁾

Perhaps a stronger argument is the fact that when the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" sent Muaadh ibn Jabal to Yemen to propagate Islam, he told Muaadh what to teach the people but he never mentioned *ghusl*.⁽⁵⁾ If *ghusl* were the first obligation after embracing Islam, he should have mentioned it to Muaadh. In response, one could argue that it is clear that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" did not mention any of the details of the law to Muaadh and that could be why he made no mention of *ghusl*.

A stronger argument is that numerous people embraced Islam during the time of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and yet there is no record of him ordering all of them to make *ghusl*.⁽⁶⁾ If *ghusl* had been obligatory, it should have been reported via numerous means but there are no such reports, except for the possibility of a few individual cases.

In addition to that, one can argue, as al-Dubyaan does, that there is no explicit, authentic hadith obliging *ghusl* upon a new Muslim. Shareeah rulings can only be

(1) Recorded by Ahmad. Graded sahih by al-Albaani. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, Irwaa al-Ghaleel fi Takhreej Ahaadeeth Manaar al-Sabeel (Beirut, Lebanon: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1985), vol. 5, p. 121.

(2) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, pp. 533-534.

(3) The reader can compare the difference in the quality of the chains reporting these two narrations in Shuaib al-Arnaoot, et al., footnotes to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad al-Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (Beirut, Lebanon: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 2001), vol. 29, p. 315 vis-à-vis vol. 29, p. 360.

(4) Cf., Yahya al-Nawawi, Al-Majmoo Sharh al-Muhadhib (Daar al-Fikr, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 153.

(5) The wording of that hadith as found in Sahih al-Bukhari is: Narrated Ibn `Abbas: Allah's Messenger "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said to Mu`adh bin Jabal when he sent him to Yemen. "You will come to the people of Scripture, and when you reach them, invite them to testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is His Apostle. And if they obey you in that, then tell them that Allah has enjoined on them five prayers to be performed every day and night. And if they obey you in that, then tell them that Allah has enjoined on them Zakat to be taken from the rich amongst them and given to the poor amongst them. And if they obey you in that, then be cautious! Don't take their best properties (as Zakat) and be afraid of the curse of an oppressed person as there is no screen between his invocation and Allah."

(6) Al-Nawawi, vol. 2, p. 152.

confirmed via sound evidence. Al-Dubyaan states, "We have seen in our analysis of the proofs for those who say that it is obligatory that their evidence is weak."⁽¹⁾ It must be noted, though, that when al-Dubyaan discussed the hadith of Qais ibn Aasim he concluded that the chain is broken⁽²⁾ and did not conclude, as this author did, that the correct narration is that of a complete chain.

One also needs to refer to the debated question of whether disbelievers are addressed by the details of the Shareeah.⁽³⁾ Those who argue that disbelievers are under no legal obligation with respect to the details of the Shareeah would say that the command of *ghusl* due to sexual defilement or female bleeding prior to their Islam has no significance whatsoever. (Those who argue that they are obligated by the commands of the Shareeah would say that they are in a state of defilement and *ghusl* was and is obligated upon them. This point shall be discussed again later.)

If one concludes that there is no evidence for the performing of *ghusl*, how can one then make the argument that it is *mustahabb* ("recommended"), which is a Shareeah ruling requiring proof? This could be by referring to the hadith of Qais ibn Aasim, which earlier was concluded to be *sahih*. The order in that hadith is understood to be for recommendation and not obligation, as it is not affirmed in any other reports that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" ordered *ghusl* for converts, which should have been the case had the act been obligatory.⁽⁴⁾

The Third Opinion: The *Ghusl* is Obligatory only if the Individual is in a State of Defilement and It is Recommended Otherwise

Madani states that it is narrated that Imam Malik said, "*Ghusl* is obligatory upon the one who embraces Islam if he were in a state of sexual defilement while a non-Muslim." According to Madani, most Malikis take this statement as explaining Malik's view that the *ghusl* is obligatory. They say that the person must make the *ghusl* with the intention of removing a sexual defilement. However, if he simply intends by it to enter into Islam, they say that that will suffice as he intends to purify himself from everything that existed in his state of disbelief. But if the person simply intended to physically clean himself, then the *ghusl* would not suffice.⁽⁵⁾

Imam al-Shaafiee stated, "If a polytheists embraces Islam, I prefer for him to make *ghusl* and remove his hairs. If he does not do so and he was not in a state of sexual defilement, it is sufficient simply to make ablution and pray."⁽⁶⁾ This is the view of the Shafiees and one opinion among the Hanbalis.⁽⁷⁾

The scholars of this view cite the hadith of Qais ibn Aasim and Thumaamah (in its weaker version) as evidence. Al-Nawawi states that some argue that in their particular cases the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" knew that they were sexually defiled because they had children and he told them to make *ghusl* for purification and not for entering Islam.⁽⁸⁾ But, again, many people embraced Islam

(1) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, p. 125.

(2) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, pp. 114-117.

(3) A discussion of that question is well beyond the scope of this paper. The interested reader should consult Khaalid Aabid, Takleef al-Kuffaar bi-Ahkaam al-Shariyyah al-Islaamiyyah (Master's Thesis, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, Umm al-Quraa University), passim.

(4) Cf., al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, pp. 126-127. Al-Dubyaan says that this interpretation is good if the hadith of Qais ibn Aasim were *sahih*, which is what this author had concluded.

(5) Madani, vol. 2, p. 536-7.

(6) Muhammad ibn Idrees al-Shaafiee, al-Umm (Beirut: Daar al-Marifah, 1990), vol. 1, p. 54.

(7) Madani, vol. 2, p. 537.

(8) Al-Nawawi, vol. 2, p. 154.

having had children beforehand and there is no record of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" giving a general command for this *ghusl*.

Additionally, Allah says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

“O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Haram after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise” (al-Taubah 28).

Al-Qurtubi records that Qataadah and others have stated that the polytheists are described as impure because they are sexually defiled.⁽¹⁾ If that is the case, they would need to make *ghusl* after embracing Islam to remove that sexual defilement from themselves. However, as al-Qurtubi also records, ibn Abbaas and others state that it is polytheism itself that makes them impure.⁽²⁾ That is the stronger or more widely accepted interpretation of the verse.

The scholars of this view also make an analogy between ablution and *ghusl*. There is no disagreement that if a disbeliever urinates, for example, while in a state of disbelief and then becomes a Muslim that he must make ablution if he intends to pray.⁽³⁾ If that is the case, then if he were sexually defiled, by analogy, he must make *ghusl*. The person will make only one *ghusl* and this would not be a hardship upon him. It should also be noted that there is no explicit evidence that the new Muslim was commanded to perform ablution, although that is something agreed upon by the scholars. Perhaps the ruling for both were well-known and established and it did not require a separate injunction. In other words, everyone knows that one must be free of both minor and major impurities in order to pray. Hence, that does not require a special command for the new Muslim.

The Fourth Opinion: Ghusl is Obligatory only due to Previous Sexual Defilement; Otherwise, it is Simply Recommended

The Hanafis distinguish between previous menses or post-partum bleeding and sexual defilement.⁽⁴⁾ Their argument is that sexual defilement is a state that remains with the person, even after embracing Islam, while feminine bleeding is considered a temporary state that does not continue with the individual. They say, for example, that after a woman finishes her menses she is no longer referred to as “a menstruating woman.”⁽⁵⁾ It is the stopping of the blood, they further say, that requires the *ghusl* and there is no stopping of the blood in this case.

The distinguishing between feminine bleeding and sexual defilement seems to be unwarranted. In the *fiqh*, both of them require *ghusl*. The burden of proof would be upon the Hanafis to clearly demonstrate a difference in this case. In this author’s view, they have not

(1) Al-Qurtubi, vol. 8, p. 103.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, p. 127 makes mention of this agreement.

(4) This is a view that one finds in numerous Hanafi texts. For references, see Madani, vol. 2, p. 540.

(5) One can actually refer to any adult woman as “a menstruating woman,” that is, one who experiences menstruation. One finds in the hadith recorded by Ahmad, Abu Dawood and others, “Allah does not accept the prayers of the menstruating woman except while wearing a headcovering.” Here “menstruating woman” clearly means “adult woman,” as it is known that menstruating women are exempted from the prayer.

presented a strong case that would override the well-established rule that both sexual defilement and feminine bleeding require ghusl. And Allah alone knows best.

The Fifth Opinion: The Convert is to Perform Two Ghusls

There is an opinion among the Shafiees and Hanbalis that a convert should make two *ghusls*: One for sexual defilement and the other for entering into Islam.⁽¹⁾ Some state that one of them is obligatory and the other is recommended. This opinion, as far as this author could find, has no support among the earliest generations of Islam, which is a sign that it is baseless.

Conclusion

Among the contemporary researchers, Madani⁽²⁾ concluded that *ghusl* is obligatory upon the convert when he embraces Islam—due to the narrations of Qais and Thumaamah wherein the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" ordered the *ghusl*—while al-Dubyaan⁽³⁾ concludes that the *ghusl* is not obligatory due to the lack of any evidence indicating its obligation.

In this author's view, there is a lack of strong evidence to indicate that *ghusl* is either required or recommended simply for the act of embracing Islam.⁽⁴⁾ If that were the case, given the number of converts that there were in the time of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him", it should have become something well-known and established. At the same time, though, the requirements of purification for the prayer are well-known and established and need not be reiterated specifically for the case of a convert. Hence, if the convert had previously experienced sexually defilement or feminine bleeding, *ghusl* becomes obligatory upon them before they can pray. This author has concluded that the hadith of Qais is authentic. That hadith is consistent with the conclusion made here because there is nothing in that hadith that states that it is specifically for embracing Islam as opposed to it being for the sake of purification. Finally, with respect to the prayer, this is a safer approach than the opinion that states that the *ghusl* is neither recommended or obligatory. And Allah alone knows best.

The Timing of the Ghusl

There are three views among the scholars concerning when this *ghusl* is to take place. The three views are the following:⁽⁵⁾

(1) The *ghusl* must be after the pronouncement of faith and is not sound beforehand. This is the view held by some Shafiees, Hanbalis and Malikis. Their argument is that the intention must be sound before the *ghusl* and this could not be proper while the person is in a state of disbelief.

(2) It is acceptable to make the *ghusl* before the pronouncement of faith. This is a view held found in the Shafiee school but considered weak by them. This is the view of ibn al-Hummaam of the Hanafis. They use the hadith of Thumaamah as evidence for this view.

(3) It is permissible to make the *ghusl* before the pronouncement of faith if the person has already resolved to become a Muslim. This is a view held among the Malikis. Their argument is that once a person has made a true resolve to embrace Islam, they are considered Muslim because faith is first an action of the heart and the

(1) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, p. 542.

(2) Madani, vol. 2, p. 543.

(3) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, p. 128.

(4) Embracing Islam would be a very important event in a person's life. In many cultures, it would not be unusual for someone to get spruced up and cleaned before such an important event. Such a washing for the sake of cleaning is definitely permissible and an acceptable act but it would not carry the same weight as *ghusl* for purification.

(5) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, pp. 544-549.

pronouncement of the testimony of faith is neither a prerequisite for faith nor a condition for it. The Maliki ibn Abdul Barr has refuted this view, saying that it is both logically weak and contradicting of the texts. He says that no one has ever been treated as a Muslim simply due to intention without stating the faith. Therefore, he will not be considered Muslim until he states the testimony and, as such, he will not purify himself or pray until he pronounces the testimony of faith.⁽¹⁾

Since it was concluded above that the *ghusl* is for the sake of purification for the prayer, it requires the proper intention⁽²⁾ and hence must be done after the person embraces Islam. Note that this would also mean that a woman who embraces Islam while experiencing her menses will not make *ghusl* until after her menses finish.

Removing All of One's Hairs from Pre-Islamic Days

Another practice known in relation to embracing Islam is the removal of hairs from one's pre-Islamic days. The juristic opinion on this issue is as follows:

The Shafiees and Hanbalis are of the view that male Muslims should shave off the hair upon embracing Islam. Such was stated by Imam al-Shaafiee himself.⁽³⁾ A second view among the Shafiees is that women converts should also do the same, based on the generality of the hadith discussed below. A third view, also held by some Shafiees, is that males should shave off their hair and women should trim their hair, as in the Hajj.

The basis for this action are the following hadith. Abu Dawood records:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ قَالَ: أَخْبَرْتُ عَنْ عَثِيمِ بْنِ كَثِيبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ، أَنَّهُ جَاءَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: قَدْ أَسْلَمْتُ فَقَالَ لَهُ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «أَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعْرَ الْكُفْرِ» يَقُولُ: اخْلُقِ قَالَ: وَأَخْبَرَنِي آخِرُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ لِأَخْرَمَ مَعَهُ: «أَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعْرَ الْكُفْرِ وَاخْتَتِنِ»

Muhammad ibn Khaalid narrated to us saying: Abdul Razzaaq narrated to us saying: Ibn Jurajj narrated to us that he was informed that 'Uthaim ibn Kulaib reported from his father (Kuthair) on the authority of his grandfather (Kulaib) that he came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and said, "I have embraced Islam." The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said to him, "Remove from yourself the hair that grew during of unbelief," saying "shave them". He further says that another person (other than the grandfather of 'Uthaim) reported to him that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said to another person who accompanied him, "Remove from yourself the hair that grew during the period of unbelief and get yourself circumcised." This hadith is recorded by Ahmad, Abdul Razzaaq, Abu Dawood and others. This hadith is very weak. First, ibn Jurajj's source is not mentioned in this chain. Ibn Adi was able

(1) See Madani, vol. 2, p. 547.

(2) It is a well-known disputed issue as to whether intention is actually a requirement for *ghusl*. As is obvious above, this author follows the view that intention is a requirement for *ghusl*.

(3) Al-Shaafiee, vol. 1, p. 54.

to trace his source as being Ibraaheem ibn Abi Yahya, who is a rejected (matrook) narrator. Uthaim in this chain is Uthaim ibn Katheer ibn Kulaib. Uthaim is a weak narrator as well. Both Uthaim and his father Katheer have been declared by Ibn Hajar to be "unknown" (majhool). Ibn al-Qattaan, a strict grader, has declared this chain utmost in its weakness. Thus, the chain for this hadith is very weak, as al-Dubyaan stated.⁽¹⁾

The hadith of Uthaim is not the only narration that mentions the removing of hairs for a convert. Al-Tabaraani and others record.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِدْرِيسَ بْنِ مُطَيْبِ الْمِصْبِيِّ قَالَ: ثنا سُلَيْمُ بْنُ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ، ثنا أَبِي،
عَنْ مَعْرُوفِ أَبِي الْحَطَّابِ، عَنْ وَائِلَةَ بْنِ الْأَسْعَدِ قَالَ: لَمَّا أَسْلَمْتُ أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ، فَقَالَ
لِي: «اذْهَبْ فَاغْتَسِلْ بِمَاءِ وَبِسِدْرٍ وَأَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعَرَ الْكُفْرِ»

Waathilah ibn al-Ashqa said, "When I embraced Islam, I came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and he said to me, 'Go and wash with water soaked with lote-tree leaves and remove from yourself the hairs from [the days of] disbelief.'" The chain for this report is very weak as well. It has a string of weak narrators in it. It is only known from Mansoor ibn Ammaar, who is weak. Ibn Adi has included it among the reports of Mansoor that are not supported and are to be rejected.

Another relevant hadith is the narration of Qataadah al-Ruhaawi, recorded by al-Tabaraani and ibn Abi Aasim:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ النَّصْرِ الْأَزْدِيُّ، ثنا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ وَاقِدِ الْحَرَّانِيِّ، ثنا قَتَادَةُ بْنُ
الْفُضْلِ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، حَدَّثَنِي عَمُّ أَبِي هَاشِمِ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ،
قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَأَسْلَمْتُ، فَقَالَ لِي: «يَا قَتَادَةُ اغْتَسِلْ بِمَاءِ وَبِسِدْرٍ، وَاحْلِقْ عَنْكَ
شَعَرَ الْكُفْرِ»، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَأْمُرُ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ أَنْ يُحْتَسِنَ، وَكَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَّانٍ سَنَةً⁽²⁾.

Qataadah al-Ruhaawi stated, "I came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and embraced Islam. He said to me, 'O Qataadah, make ghusl with water soaked in lote-tree leaves and remove from yourself the hairs from [the time of] disbelief.'" The Messenger of Allah "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him"

(1) Dubyaan al-Dubyaan, Mausooah Ahkaam al-Tahaarah: Sunan al-Fitrah (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Maktabah al-Rushd, 2005), vol. 3, p. 105.

(2) In the published edition of al-Tabaraani, the narration ends with these words, "كَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَّانٍ سَنَةً" which brings up the question as to who is saying those words. However, in the published edition of ibn Abi Aasim's al-Ahaad wa al-Mathaani, it states, "وَإِنْ كَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَّانٍ" which has a clearer meaning and is used for the translation above. See Abu al-Qaasim Sulaimaan al-Tabaraani, al-Mujam al-Kabeer (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah ibn Taimiyyah, n.d.), vol. 19, p. 14; Ibn Abi Aasim, al-Ahaad wa al-Mathaani (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Raayah, 1991), vol. 5, p. 77.

would order those who embraced Islam to get circumcised even if the person were eighty years old.

The hadith of Qataadah can be found in al-Tabaraani's *al-Mujam al-Kabeer* and ibn Abi Aasim's *al-Ahaad wa al-Mathaani*.⁽¹⁾ Its chain is weak. Qataadah ibn al-Fadhl⁽²⁾ is not a prolific narrator. Ibn Hajar has described him as "acceptable," meaning in the presence of supporting evidence. However, al-Arnaaoot and Maroof disagree with this judgment and say that he is, *sadooq hasan al-hadith* (honesty, hadith of hasan quality), perhaps based on ibn Abi Haatim's entry.⁽³⁾ Based on al-Bukhari's and ibn Hibban's entries on Qataadah, ibn Hajar's judgment seems more proper. However, ibn Abi Haatim seems to provide more information although this author was not able to verify it in any reports.⁽⁴⁾ Qataadah's father, al-Fudhail or al-Fadhl, is definitely *majhool* or "unknown" from a hadith narration perspective.⁽⁵⁾ Hishaam (or Haashim) in the chain is a son of a Companion but he himself is also not known as a hadith transmitter (*majhool*).⁽⁶⁾ In sum, the chain definitely has to be considered weak.

In conclusion, the hadith related to removing the hairs from pre-Islamic times has been declared weak by al-Mundhiri, al-Mubaarakfoori, al-Adheemabaadi, al-Dubyaan and numerous others.⁽⁷⁾ That is this author's conclusion as well.

(1) Also see al-Dubyaan's discussion, pp. 122-123.

(2) Both of the published editions containing this hadith have the name as al-Fadhl while ibn Hajar has the name as al-Fudhail. The correct view seems to be that it is al-Fudhail.

(3) Bashaar Maroof and Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, *Tahreer Taqreeb al-Tahdheeb* (Beirut, Lebanon: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1997), vol. 3, p. 179.

(4) Cf., Muhammad ibn Ismaaeel al-Bukhaari, *al-Tareekh al-Kabeer* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah, n.d.), vol. 7, p. 187; Abu Muhammad Abdul Rahmaan ibn Abi Haatim, *al-Jarh wa al-Tadeel* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah, 1952), vol. 7, p. 135; Muhammad ibn Hibbaan al-Busti, *al-Thiqaat* (Hyderabad, India: Daairah al-Maarif al-Uthmaaniyyah), vol. 9, p. 22.

(5) See ibn Hibbaan, *al-Thiqaat*, vol. 7, p. 317. It is not unusual for ibn Hibbaan to include *majhool* narrators in his collection of trustworthy narrators.

(6) See al-Bukhari's entry, vol. 9, p. 68 and ibn Hibban's entry, vol. 7, p. 569.

(7) Abu al-Alaa al-Mubaarakfoori, *Tuhfah al-Ahwadhi bi-Sharh Jaami al-Tirmidhi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah), vol. 3, p. 183; Muhammad Ashraf al-Adheemabaadi, *Aun al-Mabood Sharh Sunan Abi Dawood* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1415 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 16. Shuaib al-Arnaaoot mentions the three narrations and at no time does he say that the hadith reaches the level of hasan. See al-Arnaaoot, et al., *Musnad*, vol. 24, pp. 163-164. It is true that Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani concludes that this hadith is hasan. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Saheehah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Maaarif), vol. 6, p. 476. Al-Albaani, though, does not present any chains other than those discussed above. In a somewhat odd fashion, he is anchoring his acceptance of the hadith on the fact that ibn Taimiyyah accepted it and ruled according to it. It is true that ibn Taimiyyah accepted this hadith but in his works available today, he nowhere explains why he accepted this hadith. [Ibn Taimiyyah's use of the hadith is found in Ahmad ibn Taimiyyah, *al-Fataawaa al-Kubraa* (Daar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1987), vol. 1, p. 275, and Ahmad ibn Taimiyyah, *Majmoo al-Fataawaa ibn Taimiyyah* (Madinah: Majma Malik Fahd), vol. 21, p. 121.] This hadith been one of those hadith that al-Albaani was critiqued for accepting by Ahmad Khaleel, *Mustadrak al-Taleel ala Irwaa al-Ghaleel* (al-Damaam, Saudi Arabia: Daar ibn al-Jauzi, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 53-56. Abu al-Ainain wrote a book responding to many of the criticisms of Khaleel, but on this particular hadith he agreed with Khaleel's assessment and not al-Albaani's. See Ahmad Abu al-Ainain, *Iqaamah al-Daleel ala Uluwi Ratabah Irwaa al-Ghaleel wa al-Radd ala Mustadrak al-Taleel* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah ibn Abbaas, 2011), pp. 47-49. There is another work in defense of al-Albaani's *Irwaa*, Abdullah al-Ubailaan, *Radd al-Jameel fi al-Dhibb an Irwaa al-Ghaleel wa Huwa Radd ala Kitaab Mustadrak al-Taleel* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Lulu, 2010). He discusses the hadith in question on pp. 112-117 and tries to support al-Albaani's conclusion that the hadith is hasan. However, his discussion is not convincing for many reasons. For example, he spends a good deal of time establishing that Hishaam is one of the Followers, which, he implies, means that he should not be dealt with like other "unknown" narrators. He even claims (p. 113) that Muslim records his hadith in his *Sahih* while that definitely does not seem to be true. This author did not find him in Muslim nor did anyone else mention this. That explains why he is not found in any of the works based on al-Kamaal fi Asmaa al-Rijaal. With respect to the narrator Mansoor ibn Ammaar, he presents a very selective discussion of what the scholars of jarh wa tadeel have said about him. He does the same with respect to Ibraaheem ibn Muhammad ibn Yahya. And Allah alone knows best.

Even if the hadith were accepted as authentic, this was not a practice that was known to be widespread during the time of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" or afterwards. Thus, some scholars understand this hadith as applying only to those people who grew their hair for a religious purpose. In that case, they should remove that hair upon becoming a Muslim.⁽¹⁾ For example, in contemporary times, it is well-known that Sikhs do not remove any hairs from their head or body as a part of their faith. However, there is nothing explicit in the text that would support this interpretation. Hence, once again, either the hadith is weak or if it is accepted, it may be understood to be a recommended but not a required act. As with the case of the bathing, it is an act by which one removes the remnants of his pre-Islamic life in order to set about on his new life as a Muslim and servant of God.

Circumcision

The ruling concerning circumcision-whether it is an obligation or a recommendation-is well beyond the scope of this paper. This paper will focus only on the question of whether there is evidence that a convert is expected to be circumcised as a part of the process of conversion to Islam.

The hadith of Qataadah that was just discussed is relevant for this question as well. Again, this hadith is recorded by al-Tabaraani and ibn Abi Aasim:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ النَّضْرِ الْأَزْدِيُّ، ثنا أحمد بن عبد الملك بن واقد الحَرَّانِيُّ، ثنا قتادة بن
الْفَضْلِ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، حَدَّثَنِي عَمُّ أَبِي هَاشِمٍ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ،
قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَأَسْلَمْتُ، فَقَالَ لِي: «يَا قَتَادَةُ اغْتَسِلْ بِبَاءِ وَسِدْرٍ، وَاحْلِقْ عَنْكَ
شَعَرَ الْكُفْرِ»، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَأْمُرُ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ أَنْ يُحْتَنَ، وَكَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَانِينَ سَنَةً.

Qataadah al-Ruhaawi stated, "I came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and embraced Islam. He said to me, 'O Qataadah, make ghusl with water soaked in lote-tree leaves and remove from yourself the hairs from [the time of] disbelief.'" The Messenger of Allah "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" would order those who embraced Islam to get circumcised even if the person were eighty years old.

As described earlier, though, this is a weak hadith.

There is a report from al-Zuhri in which he stated that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said, "Whoever embraces Islam should get circumcised, even if he is elderly."⁽²⁾ This was mentioned by ibn Hajar as a mural report from al-Zuhri—that is, a report that is missing its links between al-Zuhri and the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him". Although al-Zuhri was a great scholar, it is well-known in the sciences of hadith that his mural reports are considered very weak. At the same time, though, al-Bukhari records in al-Adab al-Mufrad a statement of al-Zuhri—not a hadith of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him"—in which he said, "Whenever a man converted to Islam, they would order for him to be circumcised, even if he were older." The chain for this

(1) Such explanations have been given by al-Adheemabaadi and al-Mubaarakfooti. Cf., al-Adheemabaadi, vol. 2, p. 15; al-Mubaarakfoori, vol. 3, p. 183.

(2) Ibn Hajar, Talkhees, vol. 4, p.223.

report is sound, as al-Albaani noted.⁽¹⁾ It is not, technically speaking, an authoritative statement. That could have been the practice at al-Zuhri's time but that does not make it mandatory, required to be followed.

In al-Baihaqi's *Sunan al-Kubraa* one can find the following reported attributed to Ali ibn Abi Taalib,

وَجَدْنَا فِي قَائِمِ سَيْفِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي الصَّحِيفَةِ: "إِنَّ الْأَقْلَفَ لَا يُتْرَكُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ حَتَّى يُحْتَسَنَ وَكُلُّهُ بَلَغَ ثَمَانِينَ سَنَةً".

"We found written in a parchment in the staff of the Prophet's sword, 'The non-circumcised person is not to be left [after entering] into Islam until he is circumcised, even if he reached eighty years old.'" The chain of this report has clear liars or fabricators. Hence, al-Albaani has declared it a fabrication.⁽²⁾

Al-Bukhari records in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*: It is reported that al-Hasan said, "Are you not astonished by this man (i.e. Malik ibn al-Mundhir)? He went to some of the old people of Kaskar who had become Muslim and examined them and then commanded that they be circumcised although it was winter. I heard that some of them died. Greeks and Abyssinians became Muslim with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and they were not examined at all."⁽³⁾ This report states that it was never the case that people were examined in the time of the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him", implying that such is not to be done. However, ibn al-Qayyim has responded to this by saying that both the Arabs and the Jews were already practicing circumcision, and as for the Christians, some of them would and some of them would not practice it. Hence, ibn al-Qayyim is arguing, there is no implication that one can get from this report. He then said that the people knew that circumcision was one of the signs of Islam and hence they would rush to do it after converting in the same way that they would rush to offer the *ghusl* after converting.⁽⁴⁾ Although that sounds like a sound logical argument, it must be noted that the last part is nothing but conjecture on ibn al-Qayyim's part and definitely seems to contradict with the sound narration quoted from al-Hasan, where Malik ibn al-Mundhir is dealing with people who are not rushing to do that act.

In sum, there is no question that circumcision is an established practice of Islam.⁽⁵⁾ It is an obligatory or an emphasized recommended act.⁽⁶⁾ However, the evidence is lacking to prove that one must immediately fulfill this act upon becoming a Muslim. There are some exceptions that excuse a person from performing this act. In the past, scholars mentioned an adult who embraces Islam and fears negative consequences via the process of circumcision.⁽⁷⁾ Of course, in contemporary times, this possibility has been reduced, as circumcision is now a precise and safe medical procedure. At the same time, though, it is costly in some parts of the world, especially if it is considered an elective procedure. This financial burden could be more

(1) Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Sahih al-Adab al-Mufrad* (Daar al-Sideeq, 1997), p. 484.

(2) Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Dhaeefah wa al-Maudhoohah* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Maarif, 1992), vol. 6, p. 567.

(3) Graded sahih by al-Albaani. Al-Albaani, *Saheeh al-Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 483.

(4) Quoted in al-Dubyaan, *Sunan al-Fitraa*, p. 102.

(5) Although most of the narrations related to it are not authentic.

(6) For a lengthy discussion of this issue, see Dubyaan al-Dubyaan, *Ahkaam al-Tahaaraah: Sunan al-Fitrah* (2000), pp. 91-110.

(7) Cf., Al-Dubyaan, *Ahkaam al-Tahaaraah: Sunan al-Fitrah*, p. 137.

than what some converts could afford to bear, in which case they can delay the procedure until they are able to afford it.

Delaying One's Shahaadah Due to these Acts

It must be noted that neither the ghusl or the circumcision should lead to a delay in a person's embracing Islam. In fact, once a person has decided to embrace Islam, the event should not be postponed, for example, to a more appropriate time or a time in which more people will be witnessing and so forth. In reality, no one knows when a person may be taken by death and, therefore, whenever a person has made a conclusive decision to embrace Islam, he should embrace it at that time by making the declaration of faith. The scholars have traditionally voiced their disapproval of delaying the embracing of Islam. Many considered this either as wanting the person to remain in disbelief or as a sign of an acceptance of disbelief, which some even describe as disbelief in itself. In a strongly worded lengthy passage, al-Nawawi of the Shafiee School, starts by saying, "If a disbeliever wants to become a Muslim, one should move to that step immediately and one should not delay it for making ghusl. In fact, it is obligatory to move swiftly to have him embrace Islam and it is greatly prohibited to delay it for ghusl or other reasons."⁽¹⁾

Furthermore, circumcision, for example, should not be considered more important than the embracing of Islam. Thus, ibn Uthaimen, who was of the opinion that circumcision is obligatory, stated that it is acceptable to delay the circumcision for a new Muslim if his faith is not yet strong enough to go through with it.⁽²⁾ Similarly, on the islamqa.com website, one finds the following statement of a translation of a ruling from the Standing Committee of Scholars of Saudi Arabia: "If circumcision after converting is too difficult, because of his age, then it is OK if he does not get circumcised. Circumcision should not be insisted on, lest it turns him away from Islam."⁽³⁾

The Convert and Changing of One's Name

After conversion, often it is suggested or recommended for the convert to change his or her name. In fact, this has become a common practice among converts. Sometimes this is done so that the convert feels more attached and affiliated with the Muslim community.

Islam does place an emphasis on proper or good naming. One can find numerous examples in the Sunnah where the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" changed a person's name. One finds the following comprehensive statement in Sunan Abu Dawood,

Sa'id b. Musayyab told that his father said on the authority of his grandfather (Hazn): The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" asked: What is your name? He replied: Hazn (rugged). He said: You are Sahl (smooth). He said: No, smooth is trodden upon and disgraced. Sa'id said: I then thought that ruggedness would remain among us after it.

AbuDawud said: The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" changed the names al-'As, Aziz, Atalah, Shaytan, al-Hakam, Ghurab, Hubab, and Shihab and called him Hisham. He changed the name Harb (war) and called him Silm (peace). He changed the name al-Munba'ith (one who lies) and called him al-Mudtaji' (one who stands up). He changed the name of a land Afrah (barren) and called it Khadrah (green). He changed the name Shi'b ad-Dalalah (the mountain path of a stray), the name of a mountain path and called it Shi'b al-Huda (mountain path of guidance). He changed the name Banu az-Zinyah (children of fornication) and called them Banu ar-Rushdah (children of those who are on the right path),

(1) Al-Nawawi, al-Majmoo, vol. 2, p. 154. The same sentiment can be found in numerous other fiqh works.

(2) See ibn Uthaimen's ruling quoted at <https://islamqa.info/ar/106524>.

(3) <https://islamqa.info/en/1163>

and changed the name Banu Mughwiyah (children of a woman who allures and goes astray), and called them Banu Rushdah (children of a woman who is on the right path).

AbuDawud said: I omitted the chains of these for the sake of brevity.⁽¹⁾

The obvious question that arises is: Is this changing of the name required, recommended or simply permissible? On this point, Abdul Azeez ibn Baaz stated in response to a question he had received,

I inform you that there is no evidence in Islamic Law that requires one whom Allah has guided to Islam to change his name to an Islamic name. [The exception is if] there is an Islamic reason that requires that. For example, if a person has a name implying the worship of someone other than Allah, such as "The Servant of Jesus" and so forth, or if the person has a name that is not good to have and there are better names than that, such as the name "Grievous" can be changed to "Mild." Similar is the case with any other name that is not considered proper for one to be named. However, it is obligatory to change the name that implies worshipping other than Allah. Concerning other [repugnant] names, then it is simply preferred and recommended to change such names. Included in this second category of names are those names that are well-known to be Christian names such that if one hears them he will think that the person must be a Christian. To change one's name under those circumstances is good.⁽²⁾

Bilal Philips has some further insight into this question:

New Muslims, unaware of the Islamic naming system⁽³⁾, often adopt Arabic names in the chaotic European style... In fact, those of African descent often erase even their family names on the basis that these names are remnants from the days of slavery. That is, those of their ancestors who were slaves usually adopted the family name of their slave masters and it was the slave masters' name which was handed down from generation to generation. Hence, an individual who may have been called Clive Baron Williams while his father's name was George Herbert Williams may, upon entering Islaam, rename himself Faisal 'Umar Nkruma Mahdi. However, his name according to the Islamic naming system should have been Faisal George Williams, that is, Faisal the son of George Williams. Whether "Williams" was the name of his ancestors' plantation owner or not is of no consequence. Since his father's name was George Williams, he is, according to the Islamic naming system, the son of George Williams... The practice among new Muslims of deleting their family names has frequently created deep resentment among their non-Muslim families which could have been easily avoided if the Islamic naming system had been adopted. Actually, the new Muslim is under no obligation to change even his or her "Christian name" unless it contains an un-Islamic meaning. Thus, the given name Clive, which means cliff-dweller need not have been changed whereas "Dennis" (Fr. Denys), a variation of Dionysius which means He of Dionysus (the Greek god of wine and fertility who was worshipped with orgiastic rites), would have to be changed... However, it is perfectly acceptable for a Muslim, whether a recent convert or not, to change his or her first name. It was the Prophet's practice to change peoples first names if they were too assuming, negative or un-Islamic. One of the Prophet's wives was originally named Barraah (pious) and he changed it to Zaynab as Allaah had said in the Qur'aan, "Do not claim piety for yourselves for He knows best who is God-fearing..." However, Allaah's messenger never changed the names of people's fathers, no matter how un-Islamic they may have been... Thus, it can be concluded that erasing one's family name is against both the letter and the spirit of Islamic

(1) Qadhi, trans., Sunan Abu Dawud, vol. 5, pp. 336-337.

(2) Ali Abu Lauz, compiler, Answers to Common Questions from New Muslims (Ann Arbor, MI: IANA, 1995), pp. 22-23.

(3) The Islamic naming system that he is referring to is wherein the person is known as, "So and so the son of so and so." After that, a tribal or regional name may also be added.

law. The father's first and last name should be retained and if the father is unknown, the mother's first and last name should follow the Muslim's given or chosen name.⁽¹⁾

The Convert and the Prayers

One of the first obligations that a Muslim is likely to face is the prayers. As is known, the formal prayers in Islam are made up of readings from the Quran and other specified supplications. All of this is traditionally read in Arabic. Many converts, obviously, are not familiar with Arabic. This reality makes it difficult for them to quickly learn the words of the prayers. A number of questions therefore arise with respect to how a new convert should handle this issue. Due to space limitations, only the question of reciting *soorah al-Faatihah* shall be dealt with here.

The Quran is in Arabic

The Quran is the Speech of Allah and has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" in Arabic. Numerous verses point to the "Arabicness" of the Quran. For example, Allah says,

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَنَزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٩٢) نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ (١٩٣) عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ (١٩٤) بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ﴾

"And indeed, the Qur'an is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners - In a clear Arabic language" (al-Shuaraa 192-195);

Allah also says,

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾

"Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand" (Yoosuf 2).

A "translation" of the Quran is simply an attempt to convey its meaning into another language. No translation can ever match the eloquence and beauty of the original wording of the Quran. Thus, no translation can ever be considered a replacement for the Arabic Quran or even literally be referred to as "the Quran." In reality, no translation can ever be considered the "Speech of Allah."

Can a Convert Recite a Translation of Soorah al-Faatihah in the Prayer?

The first chapter of the Quran is known as *soorah al-Faatihah*. This chapter forms an essential portion of the prayer and is read in every unit of the prayer. As a result of the above reality, the vast majority of the jurists argue that *al-Faatihah* must be read in Arabic and Arabic alone. Obviously, it takes time for an individual to learn how to read this short chapter and to be able to memorize it. Until the convert is able to memorize this chapter, he applies the principle found in the following hadith: Abu Dawood records that Ibn Abi Aufa narrated:

جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي لَا أَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ أَخَذَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ شَيْئًا فَعَلَّمَنِي مَا يُجِزُنِي مِنْهُ، قَالَ: «قُلْ: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا

(1) Bilal Philips, Tafseer of Soorah al-Hujuraat (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 1988), pp. 120-122.

بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ»، قَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، هَذَا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَبْلِي، قَالَ: «قُل: اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِي
وَارْزُقْنِي وَعَافِنِي وَاهْدِنِي»، فَلَمَّا قَامَ قَالَ: هَكَذَا بِيَدِهِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «أَمَّا هَذَا فَقَدْ
مَلَأَ يَدَهُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ»

A man came to the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" and told him that he was not able to learn anything of the Quran and requested that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" teach him some words that would suffice him. The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" taught him to say, "Subhaanallah. Wa-l-hamdulillaah. Wa laa ilaahah illa-llah. Wallahu akbar. Wa la haula wa la quwwata illa-billaah al-Alee al-Adheem."⁽¹⁾ The individual said, "Those are [words of praise] for Allah. What can I say for myself?" The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" told him to say, "Allahumma, irhamni. Wa-rzuqni. Wa-'afani. Wa-hdini."⁽²⁾ When the man stood and left, the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" said, "He has filled his hand with goodness."⁽³⁾

Abu Dawood and al-Tirmidhi also have a different hadith on the authority of Rifaah ibn Raafi told a Bedouin-looking man who had not performed the prayer properly,

فَإِنْ كَانَ مَعَكَ قُرْآنٌ فَاقْرَأْ، وَإِلَّا فَاحْمِدِ اللَّهَ وَكَبِّرْهُ وَهَلِّلْهُ

"If you know something of the Quran, recite it. Otherwise, praise Allah, extoll His greatness and extoll His oneness."⁽⁴⁾

Putting together the different narrations of this hadith as well, it seems clear that this hadith also demonstrates that if a person does not know *soorah al-Faatihah*, he should recite those words of remembrance.⁽⁵⁾

The Hanafi Perspective

The dominant view among the Hanafis is that if a person is not able to recite *al-Faatihah* in Arabic, it is permissible to recite a translation of it. In Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibaani's *al-Asl*, it states, "Abu Haneefah said that if a person begins the prayer in Persian or recites in Persian while he has the ability to speak Arabic, it suffices. Meanwhile, Abu Yoosuf and Muhammad [the two main students of Abu Haneefah] say it only suffices if the person is not capable in Arabic."⁽⁶⁾ In the later standard work of Hanafi fiqh, *al-Hidaayah*, it still states, "If the person begins the prayer in Persian or recites in Persian or [mentions the name of Allah] in Persian during

(1) These phrases mean, respectively, "Exalted and perfect is Allah. All praise and thanks be to Allah. There is none worthy of worship except Allah. Allah is the greatest. There is no power or might except in Allah, the Exalted, the Great."

(2) These phrases mean, respectively, "O Allah, have mercy of me, provide for me, pardon me and guide me."

(3) Recorded by Abu Dawood and others. According to al-Albaani, it is hasan. Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, Saheeh Abi Daawood: al-Umm, vol. 3, p. 420.

(4) Graded sahih by al-Albaani, Ibid., vol. 4, p. 11.

(5) See, for example, Muhammad al-Wallawi, Sharh Sunan al-Nasaaee al-Musammaa Dhakheerah al-Uqba fi Sharh al-Mujtaba (Daar Ali Baroom, 2000), vol. 11, p. 210.

(6) Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaibaani, al-Asl al-Marooof bi-l-Mabsoot (Karachi, Pakistan: Idaarah al-Quraan wa al-Uloom al-Islamiyyah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 15.

slaughtering, while he is capable of saying it in Arabic, then that suffices according to Abu Haneefah but the two [students Abu Yoosuf and Muhammad] said it only suffices for the slaughtering [unless the person is not capable of saying it in Arabic].”(1) (It should be noted that some sources state that Abu Haneefah did change his view on this question and agreed with his two students that it would only be permissible to recite *al-Faatihah* in Persian if one is not able to read it in Arabic.(2) Al-Laknawi said that Abu Bakr al-Raazi has stated that Abu Haneefah changed his view and now that is the standard opinion in the school.(3)

A complete discussion of the Hanafi view of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper—as it would require a detailed discussion of the nature of the Quran itself. However, their stronger arguments presented in the Hanafi fiqh works shall be dealt with here.

Although he does not agree with the argument, the Hanafi ibn Nujaim quotes this verse as a possible proof,

﴿وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ﴾

“And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an, they would have said, ‘Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?’” (Fussilat 44).

Ibn Nujaim then says that this verse implies that the Quran would still have been called the Quran even if it were not in Arabic. Ibn Nujaim himself responds by saying that the verse is referring to “a reading,” in the indefinite, and not *the* Quran, which is in Arabic.(4)

Another argument, made by al-Sarakhsi, is that the Quran is a miracle in both its wording and its meaning. If one is not able to capture both of them, by not knowing the Arabic, then they should perform that which they are capable to perform: the meaning only without the original wording.(5) Perhaps this would have been a strong argument had it not been for the presence of the hadith quoted above that prescribe for the individual what he should read if he does not know *al-Faatihah*. Of course, such views also begs the question of what would constitute a sound or good translation of *al-Faatihah*.

Al-Sarakhsi also states that the Persians wrote to Salmaan al-Faarisi for him to send them a Persian translation of *al-Faatihah* that they could use until they learned the Arabic.(6) This claim can be found in a number of Hanafi works of fiqh. Actually, Fakhr al-Deen al-Raazi, the Shafiee Quranic commentator, states that the Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" gave Salmaan permission to recite the Quran in Persian and to pray with the translation.(7) If this were an authentic narration, no one could object to it and the issue would be settled. Unfortunately, even though the supposed event has been mentioned in a few books, the incident itself is virtually

(1) Burhaan al-Deen al-Margheenaani, *al-Hidaayah fi Sharh Bidaayah al-Mubtadi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar Ihyaa al-Turaath al-Arabi, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 48.

(2) See, for example, Zain al-Deen ibn Nujaim, *al-Bahr al-Raaqi Sharh Kanz al-Daqaaiq* (Daar al-Kitaab al-Islami), vol. 1, p. 324.

(3) Muhammad Abdul Hayy al-Laknawi, *Al-Jaami al-Sagheer wa Sharhuhu al-Naafi al-Kabeer liman Yutaali al-Jaami al-Sagheer* (Beirut, Lebanon: Aalim al-Kitaab, 1406 A.H.), p. 94.

(4) Ibn Nujaim, vol. 1, p. 324.

(5) Shams al-Aimma al-Sarakhsi, *al-Mabsoot* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar al-Marifah, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 37.

(6) Al-Sarakhsi, vol. 1, p. 37.

(7) Fakhr al-Deen al-Raazi, *Mafaateeh al-Ghaib: Tafseer al-Raazi* (Beirut, Lebanon: Daar Ihyaa al-Turaadh al-Arabi, 1420 A.H.), vol. 1, p. 185.

untraceable and has no known or discoverable chain of narration to it. A report of this nature cannot be considered a proof in Islamic law.⁽¹⁾

In sum, the strongest arguments of the Hanafi perspective, in the final analysis, are not convincing.

Conclusion on a Convert Reciting a Translation of al-Faatihah

The strongest opinion is that one is required to recite Soorah al-Faatihah in the prayer and Soorah al-Faatihah is from the well-known Arabic wording of the Quran. It is not proper to read a "translation" in the prayer. Based on the hadith quoted earlier, if a person does not know *al-Faatihah*, he simply recites some basic words of remembrance (*dhikr*).⁽²⁾ Since *al-Faatihah* is an essential obligation of the prayer, many scholars emphasize that it is obligatory upon the new Muslim to learn *soorah al-Faatihah* as quickly as feasible, as what is necessary to complete an obligatory act also becomes obligatory.⁽³⁾ Of course, Allah does not burden any soul beyond what it can bear. Thus, a Muslim should do his sincere best to fulfill this obligation.

Summary

Embracing Islam is a life changing experience-as this author can testify to from personal experience-filled with learning many new practices. When a person converts, he or she is often bombarded with commands or requests to fulfill a number of deeds. This paper has been a discussion of some of the better known deeds that a new Muslim may be asked to perform. The goal was to determine which of such deeds are truly rooted in the sound Islamic sources and, thus, something that can rightfully be expected of a sincere convert to the faith.

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- (1) Some authors reject the report both from its authenticity perspective as well as from a logical perspective. See, for example, Muhammad Abdul Adheem al-Zurqaani, *Manaahil al-Urfaan fi Uloom al-Quraan* (Matbah Isaa al-Baani al-Halabi wa Shurakaauhu), vol. 2, p. 159; Muhammad Ibraaheem al-Khafnaawi, *Diraasaat Usooliyyah fi al-Quraan al-Kareem* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah wa Matbaah al-Ishaa al-Faniyyah, 2002), p. 83.
- (2) Another important question that is beyond the scope of this paper due to space limitations is the question of using translations for other portions of the prayer. These words of *dhikr* do not constitute the same Word of Allah as the Quran, so more scholars would allow the use of their translation in the prayer.
- (3) See, for example, al-Nawawi, vol. 3, p. 374.

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