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CONTEMPORARY FIQH
MATTERS OF NEW
MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

حول نوازل المسلمين
الجدد في الغرب

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Conference Topics

Contemporary Issues Related to New Muslims

First Topic: Contemporary Issues of a Creedal Nature

The steps to deal with one who has learned Islam via a heretical or extremely deviant understanding (the theological and ideological struggles that are transplanted onto a new Muslim) Contemporary Issues of a Dawah Nature

Second topic: Contemporary Issues of a Dawah Nature

1. The manner in which the person's Islam is declared, to what extent are witnesses required, is it necessary to state the statement of faith in Arabic
 - Is it necessary to declare one's Islam in a mosque or in front of a group of people?
 - Is it necessary to state the declaration of faith in Arabic for the one who does not know Arabic or is it sufficient to translate it into the language that the convert is proficient in?
 - Is it necessary to declare the humanness of Jesus and that he is a servant of Allah in order to affirm one's Islam?
 - Is it a must to have witnesses to one's acceptance of Islam?
2. Conveying Islam in a step-by-step fashion in relation to the person's ability and capability to perform the actions.
 - What is obligatory to be conveyed to the new Muslim upon his entering into Islam?
 - Is it permissible for the Muslim caller to Islam to temporarily feign ignorance of certain issues that a new Muslim asks about due to the Muslim not being able or capable of implementing them?
 - Is there a specific timeframe that one should adhere to in completing the conveying of the faith?
3. The peculiarity of the new Muslim when it comes to Fatwaas and Islamic rulings.
4. Protecting the New Muslim from extremist and liberal movements
5. The Dialectics of the Relationship between Culture and Religion (Dress, relationship between the sexes, manners of visiting and communicating, social events and occasions)

Third Topic: Contemporary Issues related to Ritual Acts of Worship

1. Regulations related to ghusl, removing hairs, circumcision, changing one's name and removing tattoos upon embracing Islam
2. Concealing one's Islam from one's family and society, and to what extent is this allowed, not performing some of the rituals or performing them not in their prescribed manners

3. Exemptions related to the prayers for the new Muslims:

- For the one who cannot recite al-Faatihah in Arabic.
- For the one who cannot recite the supplications in Arabic.
- For the one who cannot recite the tashahud in Arabic.
- Reading from a translation of the Quran during the prayer or while following along with the Imam.
- Performing the prayers silently or in places that are not pure.
- Unknowingly violating the requirements of purification and praying in that state for a lengthy period.
- Unknowingly violating the requirements of the prayers.

4. Unknowingly not paying the Zakaat for a number of years.

Fourth Topic: Contemporary Issues related to Family and Society

1. The one who discovers that his wife is pregnant from another man after he had wed her
2. Marriage to a woman who has her own children and they are forced to reside with his children in one house (the interaction and seclusion among step relatives)
3. Marriage to an extremist or liberal or to one who one thought was a Muslim
4. Not providing the proper customary amount of dower when marrying a new Muslimah
5. The relationship of the new Muslim with his old society
6. The relationship between the new Muslim and his spouse, children and relatives (with respect to paternity, maintenance, inheritance and bequests)

Fifth Topic: Contemporary Issues related to Wealth

1. Wrongful wealth and rights and mixed wrongful wealth earned before Islam
2. Distinguishing between what occurred in the past and what is currently occurring.
3. Taking care of a new Muslim with zakaat money due to need or to bring him closer to Islam
4. Zakaat on wealth attained through forbidden mean.
5. The relationship between the new Muslim and employment issues
6. When is it mandatory upon him to leave his forbidden type of work.
7. How can partnership and other contracts be made sound



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Contemporary Issues of a Creedal Nature

By
Dr. Ahsan Hanif (PhD)

Introduction

The struggle new Muslims face upon entering into their new religion of choice, Islam, are many and varied. Often, new Muslims are subject to pressures ranging from financial to familial, and at times, psychological due to this new choice. This is in addition to the bombardment of new information, rituals and processes they must now learn and in which they must immerse themselves.

Thus, the need to address the issues which confront them are of paramount importance so that their transition to Islam is well-founded. One of the most dangerous issues new Muslims face, especially in modern times, is the influence of extreme and heretical understandings, cults and groups. A new Muslim, in the vulnerable stage of recently finding Islam and being unsure of what Islam entails, is more susceptible to this influence and learning and practising Islam incorrectly. The process of then deconstructing this ideology and replacing it with sound and correct Islamic beliefs is one of critical importance.

After identifying the potential dangers that exist, this paper will look at two issues vis-à-vis the particular area of research. Firstly, the need and methods of preventing such ideologies becoming imbedded in the first place. Secondly, if they do become imbedded, how to deconstruct such ideology and replace it with sound beliefs. The paper will conclude by presenting a number of recommendations to the American Muslim Jurists Assembly Imams Conference.

The papers remit is to look at how to protect new Muslims from all heretical and extremely deviant ideologies. However, for the sake of clarity and focus, it will take terrorism and violent extremism as a case study. Many of the dangers and solutions can be copied and pasted to suit other forms of extremism, and the readers of this paper can extrapolate from what is mentioned herein.

Defining Extremism

There is not a single agreed upon definition for the word 'extremism'. In fact, it is often defined in the context in which it is used. For example, the UK government defines it as, 'vocal or active opposition to British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs...'⁽¹⁾ The problem with this definition is that the term 'British values' is fluid and not comprehensively agreed upon. Who determines these values and must we accept each one?

Another definition is, '...a process involving an individual or group whereby they are indoctrinated to a set of beliefs that support acts of terrorism, that can be manifested in one's behaviour and attitudes.'⁽²⁾ A third definition says, 'It is the ideological or behavioural move to the extreme right or left.'⁽³⁾

Dr Salah al-Sawy in his work on religious extremism defines it as, "going to excess in acts of worship, or conflicting with the opinions of others in issues of ijtihād or exceeding the shar'ī boundaries in dealing with opponents..."⁽⁴⁾ Thus, Islam is a religion of balance in all affairs and extremism is much wider and more comprehensive in Islam than violent terrorism. However, for the purposes of this paper, the case study is of

(1) Tackling Extremism in the UK; HM Government, Dec 2013.

(2) Riyad Rahimullah et al; Understanding Violent Radicalization amongst Muslims in Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Science; Vol, 1, No. 1, Dec 2013.

(3) Sa'īd al-Wādi'i; Countering the Rise of Extremism Leading to Terrorism; Riyadh; 2012.

(4) Salah al-Sawy; Religious Extremism: The Other View; Awqāf al-Duwalīyah lil-'Ilām.

violent extremism. The International Fiqh Council defines this as, "Unjust aggression towards individuals, groups and states..."⁽¹⁾

The Ruling of Fighting Extremism

It is an obligation upon Muslims to enjoin goodness and prevent harm. The Prophet (ﷺ) gave the example in this regard of the occupants of a ship. Those on the lower decks decide to make holes in the hull of the vessel rather than climb to the upper decks to seek water. If those on the upper deck do not stop them they will all drown. If, however, they stop their harm, they will all be saved.⁽²⁾ Ibn Ḥazm declared *ijmā'* or consensus of the scholars on the obligation of enjoining goodness and preventing harm.⁽³⁾

In addition to this, there are numerous narrations which warn us of the evils and harms of extremism. One such example is the narration of Ibn 'Abbās wherein the Prophet (ﷺ) was asking for pebbles to stone the pillars in Minā, he commented, "Yes, like this size. Beware of extremism in the religion, for indeed those who came before you were only destroyed due to extremism in the religion."⁽⁴⁾

Identifying Potential Dangers

It is undoubtedly the case that there is a small yet existent group amongst Muslim communities in the West that have veered towards the path of extremism. For example, in the UK, 1,792 people were arrested under the UK Terrorism Act 2000. 656 of these people were prosecuted, and 542 were convicted at a conviction rate of 83%.⁽⁵⁾ It is true that this is a very small percentage of the millions of Muslims residing in the UK, but efforts must be made to protect our communities further from this dangerous ideology.

While reverts are not the biggest segment of the Muslim community, some research suggests that they are considerably overrepresented when it comes to extremism.⁽⁶⁾ Therefore, we must first attempt to identify these dangers before we discuss how to tackle them. The below are general dangers which have been identified in numerous researches on this topic. Although they may not all be specific to extremism vis-à-vis new Muslims initially, revert Muslims may encounter them gradually.

Awareness of these dangers will help mosques, Islamic centres and their imams and leaders to be better equipped to tackle them. Until and unless the leaders of the Muslim community can understand some of the root causes of where these extreme ideas emanate from, they will be unable to effectively tackle them. Below, three of the main dangers that have been identified by researchers are mentioned.

1- Religious Knowledge and Information

A number of researchers identified religion as playing a central motivating role in Muslims falling into extremism and terrorism.⁽⁷⁾ This means that such Muslims believed it to be their religious duty to carry out and perpetrate acts of extremism and encourage others to do likewise. Islam does not cause terrorism; even non-Muslim researchers acknowledge this fact, and clearly the statistics show that the vast Muslim

(1) International Fiqh Council, 16th Session, Makkah, 2002.

(2) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; no. 2493.

(3) Ibn Ḥazm, Al-Muḥallā, Dār al-Fikr, vol. 9, p. 361.

(4) Muhammad Nasir al-Albani; Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah, no. 2473.

(5) Benjamin Politowski; Terrorism in Great Britain: The Statistics; House of Commons Library; 9 June 2016.

(6) Bart Schuurman et al; Converts and Islamist Terrorism; International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, June 2016.

(7) Ibrahim S; Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s in Third World Quarterly, 1988. Thackrah J; Dictionary of Terrorism, 2nd edition, London, Routledge, 2004.

majority the world over are not terrorists.⁽¹⁾ As Muslims, we know that there is no correct religious basis for these beliefs and acts, yet we also cannot deny, that there are others who espouse such teachings.

One of the major dangers therefore for a new Muslim is their lack of Islamic knowledge.⁽²⁾ New Muslims are in effect a blank canvas, and may be more willing to accept any and all information that seems 'Islamic'. They have yet to understand core principles of the religion such as where and how divine knowledge is taken, and how to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic knowledge.

Another significant danger which then follows on from the first is the exposure to incorrect Islamic knowledge and information. The pitfalls of YouTube, social media and other online platforms in this regard are well known.⁽³⁾ The thirst of new Muslims for knowledge about their newfound religion may lead them to unwittingly access dangerous and incorrect information. Overzealousness can then lead such people to believe that this is Islam and no other interpretation is acceptable or valid.

Linked closely to this, is the influence of newfound friends that a revert may make; the people who will take this individual under their wing. Often such people simply give them the 'Islam' which they were taught, whether cultural or otherwise.⁽⁴⁾ Yet at times, reverts may be targeted as recruits to extreme views and ideologies.

2- Social Influences

A number of researchers identify social influences as the cause of extremism.⁽⁵⁾ The pre-existing issues one may have about their own self-identity and the society in which they live may be a cause for radicalisation.⁽⁶⁾ We are all products of our societies and cultures and they inevitably shape the way we think and behave. This is true also of new Muslims.

New Muslims not only deal with baggage that they may have from before Islam in terms of issues that all people deal with, they must now also face the challenge of reframing their identity and the way others see and perceive them. Thus, a potent danger in this regard is being alienated or marginalised. The psychological need to belong to groups may lead such people to accept extremism simply because of the need to 'belong'.⁽⁷⁾

One of the biggest challenges new Muslims face is how their family, friends and colleagues may respond. Will they be viewed with suspicion or resentment? New Muslims are then also immediately expected to become spokespeople for every global event involving Muslims and having justify Islam to others. Their parents and families may respond in an adverse or even confrontational manner.⁽⁸⁾ There are stories and incidents of new Muslims being expelled from home or abandoned by their spouses and families.⁽⁹⁾

(1) Githens-Mazer J, Causes of Jihadi Terrorism in Criminal Justice Matters, 73, 2008, pp. 26-28.

(2) M Uhlmann; European Converts to Terrorism in Middle East Quarterly 15. 2007.

(3) Ines von Behr, Anais Reding et al; Radicalisation in the Digital Era, RAND Europe, 2013.

(4) Yasir Suleiman; Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain Female Perspectives, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, 2013.

(5) Sageman M, Understanding Terror Networks, 2004, University of Philadelphia. Stern J, Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill, New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 2003.

(6) Monika Bartoszewicz; Controversies of Conversions: The Potential Terrorist Threat of European Converts to Islam; PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2013.

(7) Randy Borum; Psychology of Terrorism, University of South Florida, Jan 2004.

(8) Suleiman, 2013.

(9) Islamwise Centre for New Muslims, Birmingham, UK, December 2016.

Discrimination can also become a cause of frustration. If the marginalised feel discriminated against, they may be more receptive to radical ideologies.⁽¹⁾ Muslims are often alienated and attacked within the media and by some politicians.⁽²⁾ According to statistics in the UK, the second largest defined ethnic group to be stopped and searched under the Terrorism Act 2000 were British Asian, referring to people from the Indian subcontinent.⁽³⁾

All of the above may lead a revert to joining a group based on the sole important factor to them; their new identity.⁽⁴⁾ The process of befriending the wrong people may then lead them wanting to become part of a wider group or fraternity. Often, radicalised members undergo a period of intense social interaction with a small group of people with whom they develop a strong bond and friendship.⁽⁵⁾

3- The Need to Make a Difference

The concept of unity and the 'ummah' are important Islamic principles. Yet the correct understanding of these principles, and especially in terms of the oppression and hurt suffered by many parts of the 'ummah' are not always known. How to balance helplessness with the hurt we feel for other Muslims? How to understand the concepts of al-walā wal-barā and Western citizenship? This is true of the majority of Muslims and not just reverts.

Thus, as the new Muslim becomes introduced to these concepts, they must be correctly taught or else they are at risk of misunderstanding true Islam and being susceptible to incorrect ideologies. Extremism will often take the above sentiments and use them as a means for political revenge.⁽⁶⁾ This feeling can be compounded if someone suffers from low self-esteem, or has low social and economic prospects, leading to a sense of apathy.

The prospect then of being able to make a difference and do 'good', change the world and at the same time be rewarded can be attractive.

Preventing Extremist Ideologies

The proverb, 'prevention is better than cure' or 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' is relevant to the discussion at hand. To prevent our new Muslim brothers and sisters from becoming imbedded with extreme ideologies and views, is far easier than curing them after the fact. This is something every Muslim centre should be focusing upon for their community in general, but particular attention should also be paid to revert Muslims and their particular circumstances.

Below are listed a number of important and practical preventative measures that should be adopted by mosques and Islamic centres in the West.

1- The need for a dedicated revert Muslim care service

Too often new Muslims are left to their own devices. The image is a familiar one. We have a new Muslim in the mosque, the community rejoices, s/he take their shahādah

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- (1) Silke A, Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalisation, in European Journal of Criminology, 2008, pp. 99-123.
 - (2) Spalek B, Muslim communities, Counter-terrorism and Deradicalisation in International Journal of Law, 2008, pp. 257-270.
 - (3) UK Home office, 2011.
 - (4) Juergenmeyer M, Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, 2nd edition, London, University of California Press, 2003.
 - (5) Husain E, The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I saw & Why I Left, London, Penguin Books, 2007. Silke, 2008.
 - (6) Schmind A, Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Databases and Literature, Amsterdam, 1988.

on the microphone and then they are often forgotten. Perhaps they are given literature, or told how to pray or pointed towards some YouTube videos, but there is no dedicated aftercare for them. Yet this service in every mosque, or in a community spread amongst a number of mosques, would do much to provide a new Muslim with the sense of welcome, belonging and correct information dispensed in a wise manner that they need.

Resources and specialists are available to help in this regard. A number of well-known revert Muslims and organisations can be contacted and their help sought. New Muslim Academy is one such example with an online platform.⁽¹⁾ This initiative requires resolve from the Muslim community and its leadership, and the willingness to invest money, resources and people into this area.

2- A holistic approach

Helping the revert community is not only about teaching them and giving them knowledge. Many new Muslims face a range of issues and challenges from family issues, to health problems and financial difficulties. Thus, the approach to new Muslims and the help offered to them must be as holistic and comprehensive as possible. Many of the dangers identified above in the social influences section can be mitigated by implementing this point and the one before.

3- Providing authentic knowledge

New Muslims need to learn their religion, but they need to do so in a structured and wise manner, which simplifies for them the information. The need to focus is not only upon the basics of Islam such as wuḍū' and prayer, but also issues of imān and strengthening their spiritual relationship with Allah. They need to learn and understand the beauty of Islam and how it is a force for positive good.

Having a dedicated and structured program for reverts is a vital service. Teaching them the importance of authentic knowledge, and the correct sources from which to find this knowledge is imperative. The face to face contact between the imam and the revert community will build a relationship of trust and confidence. Reverts must be guided to qualified and balanced speakers on YouTube, and warned against those who hold extreme views.

Additionally, imams and the people who run such services and programs must be trained in dealing with the needs of the revert community.

4- A mentorship program

One of the dangers listed above was that of bad influences and friendships. Having a mentorship program where revert Muslims are surrounded by good and grounded Muslims counters this threat. It also gives a revert one to one contact with someone who can help with the individual issues with which they are dealing. Sometimes, it may be as simple as having an ear willing to listen, and at other times, it may require the mentor enlisting the help of others such as the imam.

Additionally, reverts may benefit from the experience of other reverts who went through similar challenges. Holding regular revert gatherings and retreats, especially around Eid when everyone is busy with their families, will help to lift some of the isolation they may feel.

5- Being open about extremism and its threat

New Muslims need to be openly told and warned about the extremist views out there. They need to understand that they may be targeted by others. Solutions to this

(1) <http://newmuslimacademy.org/>

must be presented to them. When they have doubts or fail to understand something, they must be given the confidence and told it is ok to approach their local imam with such queries and questions.

6- Patience and perseverance

The process of helping someone progress from a new Muslim who knows next to nothing about their religion to a confident and grounded Muslim requires time and effort, and therefore requires patience. This is not a service or process which is completed in days or weeks, but rather one which takes months if not years.

Removing Extreme Ideology

Changing a person's deep and long held beliefs requires time, expertise and perseverance. Often this requires dismantling the existing false ideology, rebutting it and then replacing it with the correct and sound ideology. Amongst researchers there is a debate as to the merits of disengagement vis-à-vis deradicalisation. Deradicalisation is the process of moderating one's beliefs whereas disengagement is the process of changing one's behaviour by refraining from violence, whilst the underlying beliefs may still remain.⁽¹⁾

From an Islamic legal perspective, the only option is deradicalisation as disengagement is maintaining the same beliefs but choosing not to act on them. If the beliefs are in and of themselves incorrect from a shar'i point of view, then these views must be rebutted and replaced. The issue of a Muslim's 'aqidah and creed is of paramount importance, especially when the creed may lead them to committing ḥarām.

Below are listed a number of important and practical preventative measures that should be adopted by mosques and Islamic centres in the West.

1- The need for specialists

In order to effectively counter and combat the ideology of extremism, there is a need for specialists who understand the theological arguments used by the ideologues of these views and how to rebut them. It is naïve to assume that every imam or student of knowledge can sufficiently respond to these arguments without specialised study. Furthermore, this paper recommends that such specialists hold high qualifications and impeccable scholarly pedigree as extremists often dismiss their opponents as unqualified.

2- Answering the theological doubts

The proponents of extremist views often use the Qur'an and Sunnah as their sources. They will use quotes of famous scholars of the past and will frequently reference from their works. They will use verses of the Qur'an and justifying them with ambiguity, such as the statement of Allah, "And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty. And Allah is Seeing of what you do."⁽²⁾ They will make statements such as, "As Muslims, we should be happy with the actions of ISIS, even if we do not agree with them. To be unhappy or oppose them is a sign of hypocrisy."

These doubts and use of spiritual texts require one to understand them correctly and in their proper context. The correct understanding must then be clarified to someone who already holds preconceived views. In the case of some reverts as with born Muslims, this may be more difficult as they will have little to no shar'i background with

(1) Angel Rabasa et al; Deradicalizing Islamic Extremists; RAND Europe, 2010.

(2) Qur'an 8:72.

which to judge between these contrary opinions. In addition to this, the means of attaining correct and authentic knowledge should also be highlighted.

Thus, this process is one which is lengthy and requires patience. However, just the simple process of planting the idea in the minds and hearts of such people, that perhaps their ideas are incorrect, and moreover, displeasing to Allah is a big step in the right direction.

3- Offering an alternative

Many Muslims, including reverts who hold extreme ideas must be given a correct alternative to replace their existing beliefs. Using the same Qur'anic verses with their correct interpretations from works of tafsir, showing example from the Sunnah and sirah of how the Prophet (ﷺ) dealt with similar challenges to those which we face, examples of how the Companions lived with and co-existed with peoples of other faiths, the correct context for the views of past scholars; all help in offering a real alternative which is correct.

4- Other means of support

As identified in the first two parts of this research paper, some of the external factors which may lead a person to extremism, and particularly reverts, include social factors or feelings of isolation and discrimination. Thus, the Muslim community and mosques must also look to see if there are other factors which need addressing. This support may be in the form of finding employment, counselling and so on. In addition, if the individual is surrounded by people of a similar mindset, an alternative group of friends need to be available for them.

5- Doing good in the community

People with extreme views may justify it to themselves as doing good or being a moral force of change. These same emotions and desires can be channelled in an alternate positive way. Helping people of the local community, from the elderly to the youth, the poor and orphans are all accessible avenues of doing good and making a difference. Food banks, social care programs, youth initiatives and educational support are just some examples of what can be offered. Political activism is a way of promoting change within the confines of the law.

6- Offering a balanced world view

Muslims the world over feel for the plight suffered by their brothers in sisters in places like Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine and other countries. We see the rise of the far right movements in the West and the increasing attacks, physical and otherwise that Muslims in the West are also suffering. Therefore, a balanced view must be presented. Rejection of terrorism does not mean that there are not alternative, legal and permissible means in which to try to bring about change and raise awareness.

7- Teaching them the beauty of Islam

Reverts will often accept Islam due to their desire to come closer to Allah and because they realise that they will be resurrected and held to account for their deeds in this world. These basic issues must be reiterated to them as they need constant reminders. They need to be reminded of the struggle involved in worshipping Allah and the traps of Satan and the whisperings of our souls. Many people engaged in extremism are not generally known for their piety or religiosity. Indeed, some of them have had their misdeeds documented. For them, they believe this is a shortcut to Paradise. This notion must be corrected. The ideals of struggle, fluctuating imān, repentance and fighting Satan must all be restated.

Examples of Deconstructing False Arguments

In this section of the paper, I will give three brief examples of commonly used justifications by extreme ideologues and the response to them.

ONE: TAKFİR (CASTING SOMEONE OUTSIDE OF ISLAM) & KILLING

One of the main justifications that extremists use in perpetrating killings and massacres is that the people they kill are non-Muslims or Muslims who are now apostates and thus killing them is permissible. They will consider certain actions to be sufficient as causes of apostasy, and then wholesale label segments of the Muslim community as apostates. They may even assert that for Muslims to be displeased with their actions and killings is a sign of hypocrisy and disbelief.

The response to this is to understand a few issues when it comes to takfīr:

1. The shari'ah differentiates between acts of disbelief and labelling individuals as disbelievers. The application of the ruling upon individuals is a matter for scholars or Muslim judges, and must be done via a due process.
2. In order for the application of this ruling to take place, the person accused of disbelief must be spoken to and his actions understood in their proper context. It is also not allowed to apply the ruling in actions where there is a difference of opinion amongst Muslim scholars. For example, it is reported that the Companion Qudāmah ibn Maẓ'ūn used to drink alcohol during the time of 'Umar because he misunderstood the verse, "There is not upon those who believe and do righteousness [any] blame concerning what they have eaten if they fear Allah and believe and do righteous deeds..."⁽¹⁾ He was therefore punished by 'Umar.⁽²⁾ Thus, although this Companion drank alcohol believing it to be permissible, he was punished for 'Umar but not cast outside of Islam because of his misunderstanding.
3. A person who commits a sin in Islam is still a Muslim, even if it is a major sin, and the default position is that we advise and help him or her overcome this weakness. The Prophet (ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said concerning a Companion who had consumed alcohol and who was belittled by some others, "Do not help Satan overpower your brother, but say, 'O Allah, forgive him and have mercy upon him.'"⁽³⁾
4. Killing is a major sin and forbidden unless for a due right and with due process by a legal system.

TWO: JIHĀD

Jihād is the legitimate concept which means to struggle and strive for the sake of Allah.⁽⁴⁾ It is a comprehensive term through which the Muslim must first learn to struggle against one's own desires and bad characteristics, as well as temptations and the whisperings of Satan.⁽⁵⁾ It also includes the physical form of Jihād which is what is often meant when the term is used.⁽⁶⁾ This concept is widely misunderstood and misused by proponents of extreme ideologies.

(1) Qur'an, 5:93.

(2) Muṣannaf 'Abdur-Razzāq, no. 16558.

(3) Ṣaḥīḥ Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ, no. 3548.

(4) Muḥammad ibn Rushd, Al-Muqaddimāt al-Mumhidāt, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1408 AH, vol. 1, p. 341.

(5) Muḥammad ibn 'Isā al-Qurṭubī, known as Ibn Manāṣif, Al-Ittiḥād fī Abwāb al-Jihād, edited by Mashūr Ḥasan, 1425 AH, vol. 1, p. 10.

(6) 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Kāsānī, Badā'ī al-Ṣanā'ī, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1402 AH, vol. 7, p. 97.

The following are common mistakes made in the understanding of Jihād:

1. Jihād is not the goal in and of itself. The goal of Islam is to spread the true message of Islam and for Muslims to achieve happiness in both this life and the next by following the commandments of Allah.
2. Physical Jihād is called for by Muslim leaders and governments, and not individuals or groups. The Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “The leader is a barrier. Fighting is under his leadership.”⁽¹⁾
3. The pretence often employed that what they do is to help the weak and oppressed Muslims around the world. They will use verses such as, “And if they seek your help for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty...”⁽²⁾ However, their use of this verse is incorrect as this verse pertains to the rulers, and their people must follow them in this regard. The proof for this is the incident of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah. Once the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) had signed the treaty, he refused to help Abu Jandal despite his apparent weakness and oppressed state.⁽³⁾
4. Jihād has many rulings and conditions attached to it. For example, the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) forbade the killing of women and children.⁽⁴⁾

THREE: AL-WALĀ’ WAL-BARĀ’

This concept is often loosely translated as loving and hating for the sake of Allah. Once again it is misinterpreted and then used to advance the agenda of extreme groups.

1. Al-walā’ wal-barā’ is a concept which refers to religious issues. It means that Muslims cannot hold the religions of others to be superior to their own. Thus, the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) is the best of Prophets, the Qur’an is the best of the Holy Books and Islam is the best of religions. Allah says, “Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.”⁽⁵⁾
2. This concept does not mean all non-Muslims should be treated unjustly, unkindly or without respect. Rather, Allah commands the opposite, “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”⁽⁶⁾
3. In fact, sometimes Allah commands us to honour non-Muslims. For example when one has non-Muslim parents, “But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in this world with kindness...”⁽⁷⁾
4. Therefore, to love your non-Muslim parents is natural, and therefore allowed in Islam.
5. Perhaps one of the greatest ḥadīth which helps to understand this issue in perspective is the story of Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balṭa’ah. Before the Conquest of Makkah, Ḥaṭīb sent a secret letter to the Makkans forewarning them of the impending conquest. The letter was discovered by the Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam). When Ḥaṭīb was asked to justify his actions which could be considered as high

(1) Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 1841.

(2) Qur’an, 8:72.

(3) Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwūd, no. 2765.

(4) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 3014.

(5) Qur’an, 3:19.

(6) Qur’an, 60:8.

(7) Qur’an, 31:15.

treason, he replied that he only did so as he hoped they would protect his relatives there, and not out of disbelief. The Prophet (ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) pardoned him citing his attendance at the Battle of Badr.⁽¹⁾

6. Thus, this concept must also be understood correctly and within its proper context. It is not a justification for acts of mass and indiscriminate killing.

Conclusion

Islam is a religion of balance. It discusses the ideal way to live a life which is fulfilling spiritually by worship of Allah and worldly productive and constructive. Thus, as Muslims we should not be ashamed or apologetic for any aspect of our religion which is established. We must be and instil within our communities, amongst reverts and others the need to be proud Muslims who are also positive citizens and role models within their societies. We should not be defined nor allow others to define us by the acts of a few wayward Muslims.

The overwhelming majority of Muslims do not agree with extremist views or engage in any form of terrorism. However, at the same time, we must acknowledge the threat posed by such views and beliefs. In particular, revert Muslims are susceptible to such views due to their lack of knowledge and understandable inability to differentiate between authentic and weak information. Inauthentic and disreputable information, social influences and psychological attitudes may all be potential pitfalls.

Preventing these ideas from imbedding themselves within the minds and hearts of reverts is easier than replacing them. Muslim communities across the West must make a determined effort to provide the revert community with essential care and support when they enter into Islam. A holistic service with dedicated resources and people is needed. This can then be the springboard for authentic knowledge, mentorship programs, and balanced and structured study of Islam, which provides reverts with a strong and trustful relationship with their imams and the support of their local community.

Replacing extreme ideologies is significantly harder. It requires more time and patience. It requires specialists who can answer and refute the theological doubts such ideologies hold, and replace them with the correct understandings. Alternatives include other forms of support for these reverts as well as alternate outlets for their passions and desire to make a change. A correct and balanced world view, a strong Muslim identity and understanding the beauty of Islam are all integral.

Our revert brothers and sisters have an immense right upon us, and we, as the community will be collectively held responsible for this in front of Allah. And Allah knows best.

Recommendations

1. The need to establish dedicated revert services which provide a holistic approach to supporting the revert community.
2. Training people who focus on revert support and giving them the resources and money to do this effectively.
3. Sharing best practice in how to support the revert community and care for their specific needs.
4. The need to build a relationship of trust and confidence between reverts and respected imams who can then be their point of reference.

(1) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 3007 and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2494.

5. Running awareness courses and workshops on the dangers of extremism, and in particular, vis-à-vis the revert community.
 6. Training specialists who focus on deradicalisation and deconstruction of false ideologies and their main arguments.
 7. Having a written manual on extreme ideologies and how to refute them which is then distributed amongst mosques and Islamic centres in the West.
 8. Having structured and recognised courses on teaching Islam, which also safeguard the revert community from false ideologies.
 9. Having a mentorship program where the community supports the new Muslims in their midst and offers them good company and positive role models.
- ❖ Developing social projects and community outreach programs for those who wish to make a difference in their societies.



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A Note on Ibaadah-Related Practices and the Muslim Convert

By
Dr. Jamaal Zarabozo

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-Razzaq, Abu Dawood,

(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 Qudamah, 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.

ibn Khuzaimah, Abu Thaur, ibn al-Mundhir, ibn al-Jauzi and ibn Taimiyyah.⁽¹⁾ Ibn Taimiyyah wrote, while presenting the dominant Hanbali view, "Whenever a disbeliever embraces Islam, 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."⁽²⁾

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 الْأَعَزُّ، عَنْ خَلِيفَةَ بْنِ حُصَيْنٍ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ قَيْسِ بْنِ عَاصِمٍ قَالَ: «أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ أُرِيدُ الْإِسْلَامَ فَأَمَرَنِي أَنْ أَغْتَسِلَ بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ»

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.⁽³⁾

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⁽⁴⁾ and Shuaib al-Arnaaoot.⁽⁵⁾

One controversy has arisen.⁽⁶⁾ 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,⁽⁷⁾ 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

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

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

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

(4) 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.

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

(6) Cf., Abu al-Hasan ibn al-Qattaan, Bayaan al-Wahm wa al-Eehaam 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 Rahman ibn Abi Haatim, al-Illal 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>).

(7) Besides being a great scholar of hadith, Abdul Rahman 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 Rahman ibn Mahdi and Wakee. See Yoosuf al-Mizi, Tahdheeb al-Kamaal fi Asmaa al-Rijaal (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1980), vol. 31, p. 337.

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.⁽¹⁾ Finally, it has also been narrated from Wakee himself that he narrated this chain without this additional name in the chain.⁽²⁾ 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.⁽³⁾ 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
ثُمَامَةَ بْنَ أُثَالٍ أَوْ أُثَالَهَ أَسْلَمَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «اذْهَبُوا بِهِ إِلَى حَائِطِ بَنِي فُلَانٍ، 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.⁽⁴⁾

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

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

(2) See al-Qanneeri.

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

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

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 حَنِيفَةَ يُقَالُ لَهُ ثُمَامَةُ بْنُ أُثَالٍ، فَرَبَطُوهُ بِسَارِيَةٍ مِنْ سَوَارِي الْمَسْجِدِ، فَخَرَجَ إِلَيْهِ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةُ». فَقَالَ عِنْدِي خَيْرٌ يَا مُحَمَّدُ، إِنْ تَقَتَّلَنِي تَقْتُلْ ذَا دَمٍ، وَإِنْ تُنْعِمَ تُنْعِمَ عَلَيَّ شَاكِرٍ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تُرِيدُ الْمَالَ فَسَلْ مِنْهُ مَا شِئْتَ. حَتَّى كَانَ الْغَدُ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةُ». قَالَ مَا قُلْتُ لَكَ إِنْ تُنْعِمَ تُنْعِمَ عَلَيَّ شَاكِرٍ. فَتَرَكَهُ حَتَّى كَانَ بَعْدَ الْغَدِ، فَقَالَ: «مَا عِنْدَكَ يَا ثُمَامَةُ». فَقَالَ عِنْدِي مَا قُلْتُ لَكَ. فَقَالَ: «أَطْلِقُوا ثُمَامَةَ»، فَأَنْطَلَقَ إِلَى نَخْلٍ قَرِيبٍ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ فَأَغْتَسَلَ ثُمَّ دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ فَقَالَ أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، يَا مُحَمَّدُ وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَجْهٌ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ وَجْهِكَ، فَقَدْ أَضْبَحَ وَجْهَكَ أَحَبَّ الْوُجُوهِ إِلَيَّ، وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ مِنْ دِينٍ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ دِينِكَ، فَأَصْبَحَ دِينُكَ أَحَبَّ الدِّينِ إِلَيَّ، وَاللَّهِ مَا كَانَ مِنْ بَلَدٍ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ بَلَدِكَ، فَأَصْبَحَ بَلَدُكَ أَحَبَّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَيَّ، وَإِنْ خِيلَكَ أَخَذْتَنِي وَأَنَا أُرِيدُ الْعُمْرَةَ، فَمَاذَا تَرَى فَبَشَّرَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَمَرَهُ 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-Naisaaboor*. Unfortunately, this author has not been able to locate that narration.

(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.

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 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,

(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.

﴿قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَتُوبُوا 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,

إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ يَجِبُ 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 يَجِبُ 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*.

(1) Recorded by Ahmad. Graded sahih by al-Albaani. See Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, Irwa' 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-Arnaout, et al., footnotes to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad al-Imam 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."

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*.⁽¹⁾ 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 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."⁽²⁾ It must be noted, though, that when al-Dubyaan discussed the hadith of Qais ibn Aasim he concluded that the chain is broken⁽³⁾ 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.⁽⁴⁾ 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.⁽⁵⁾

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.⁽⁶⁾

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

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

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

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

(4) 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.

(5) 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.

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

defilement, it is sufficient simply to make ablution and pray.”⁽¹⁾ This is the view of the Shafiees and one opinion among the Hanbalis.⁽²⁾

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.⁽³⁾ But, again, many people embraced Islam 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.⁽⁴⁾ 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.⁽⁵⁾ 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.⁽⁶⁾ 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.⁽⁷⁾ Their argument is that sexual defilement is a state that remains with the person, even after embracing Islam, while feminine bleeding is considered a

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

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

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

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

(5) Ibid.

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

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

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.”⁽¹⁾ 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 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.⁽²⁾ 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⁽³⁾ 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⁽⁴⁾ 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.⁽⁵⁾ 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:⁽⁶⁾

- (1) 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.
- (2) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, p. 542.
- (3) Madani, vol. 2, p. 543.
- (4) Al-Dubyaan, al-Ghusl, p. 128.
- (5) 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.
- (6) Cf., Madani, vol. 2, pp. 544-549.

(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 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 عُثَيْمِ بْنِ كُنَيْبٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ جَدِّهِ، أَنَّهُ جَاءَ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: قَدْ أَسْلَمْتُ فَقَالَ لَهُ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «أَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعْرَ الْكُفْرِ» يَقُولُ: اخْلُقْ قَالَ: وَأَخْبَرَنِي آخِرُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ قَالَ لِآخِرٍ مَعَهُ: «أَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعْرَ الْكُفْرِ وَاخْتَتِنْ»

Muhammad ibn Khaalid narrated to us saying: Abdul Razzaaq narrated to us saying: Ibn Juraij narrated to us that he was informed that 'Uthaim ibn Kulaib reported from his father (Kuthair)

(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.

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 Razzaq, Abu Dawood and others. This hadith is very weak. First, ibn Juraij's source is not mentioned in this chain. Ibn Adi was able 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 مُطَيْبٍ الْمِصْبِغِيُّ قَالَ: ثنا سُلَيْمٌ بْنُ مَنْصُورٍ بْنِ عَمَارٍ، ثنا أَبِي، عَنْ مَعْرُوفِ أَبِي الْحَطَّابِ، عَنْ وَائِلَةَ بْنِ الْأَسْقَعِ قَالَ: لَمَّا أَسْلَمْتُ أَتَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ، فَقَالَ لِي: «اذْهَبْ فَاعْتَسلْ بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ وَأَلْقِ عَنْكَ شَعْرَ 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 النَّضْرِ الْأَزْدِيُّ، ثنا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ وَاقِدٍ الْحَرَّانِيُّ، ثنا قَتَادَةُ بْنُ الْفَضْلِ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، حَدَّثَنِي عُمَرُ أَبِي هَاشِمٍ بْنُ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَاطِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ،

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

قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَأَسْلَمْتُ، فَقَالَ لِي: «يَا قَتَادَةُ اغْتَسِلْ بِمَاءِ وَسِدْرٍ، وَاخْلُقْ عَنْكَ شَعَرَ الْكُفْرِ»، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَأْمُرُ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ أَنْ يُحْتَنَنَ، وَكَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَالَيْنَ سَنَةً⁽¹⁾.

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.

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*.⁽²⁾ Its chain is weak. Qataadah ibn al-Fadhl⁽³⁾ 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.⁽⁴⁾ 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.⁽⁵⁾ Qataadah's father, al-Fudhail or al-Fadhl, is definitely *majhool* or "unknown" from a hadith narration perspective.⁽⁶⁾ Hishaam (or Haashim) in the chain is a son of a Companion but he himself is also not known as a hadith transmitter (*majhool*).⁽⁷⁾ 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.⁽⁸⁾ That is this author's conclusion as well.

- (1) In the published edition of al-Tabaraani, the narration ends with these words, "كَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَالَيْنَ 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 ثَمَالَيْنَ" 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.
- (2) Also see al-Dubyaan's discussion, pp. 122-123.
- (3) 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.
- (4) Bashaar Maroof and Shuaib al-Arnaaoot, *Tahreer Taqreeb al-Tahdheeb* (Beirut, Lebanon: Muassasah al-Risaalah, 1997), vol. 3, p. 179.
- (5) 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.
- (6) 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.
- (7) See al-Bukhari's entry, vol. 9, p. 68 and ibn Hibban's entry, vol. 7, p. 569.
- (8) 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

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 النَّصْرِ الْأَزْدِيُّ، ثنا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْمَلِكِ بْنِ وَاقِدٍ الْحَرَانِيُّ، ثنا قَتَادَةُ بْنُ الْفَضْلِ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَائِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، حَدَّثَنِي عَمُّ أَبِي هَاشِمٍ بْنُ قَتَادَةَ الرَّهَائِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ: أَتَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَأَسْلَمْتُ، فَقَالَ لِي: «يَا قَتَادَةُ اغْتَسِلْ بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ، وَاحْلِقْ عَنْكَ شَعَرَ الْكُفْرِ»، وَكَانُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَأْمُرُ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ أَنْ يُحْتَتِنَ، وَكَانَ ابْنُ ثَمَانٍ 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

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.

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

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."⁽¹⁾ 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 report is sound, as al-Albaani noted.⁽²⁾ 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 الْأَخْلَفَ لَا يُتْرَكُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ حَتَّى يُحْتَسَنُ وَلَوْ 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.⁽³⁾

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."⁽⁴⁾ 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

(1) Ibn Hajar, *Talkhees*, vol. 4, p.223.

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

(3) Muhammad Naasir al-Deen al-Albaani, *Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth al-Dha'eefah wa al-Mawdu'ah* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Daar al-Maarif, 1992), vol. 6, p. 567.

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

same way that they would rush to offer the *ghusl* after converting.⁽¹⁾ 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.⁽²⁾ It is an obligatory or an emphasized recommended act.⁽³⁾ 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.⁽⁴⁾ 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 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."⁽⁵⁾

Furthermore, circumcision, for example, should not be considered more important than the embracing of Islam. Thus, ibn Uthaimin, 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.⁽⁶⁾ 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."⁽⁷⁾

The Convert and Changing of One's Name

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

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

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

(4) Cf., Al-Dubyaan, Ahkaam al-Tahaaraah: Sunan al-Fitra, p. 137.

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

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

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

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 (Hazzn): The Prophet "peace and blessings of Allah be upon him" asked: What is your name? He replied: Hazzn (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), 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

(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.

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 Barrah (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 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,

﴿وَأَنزَلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٩٢) تَنَزَّلَ 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,

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

﴿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 بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ»، قَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، هَذَا اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَمَا لِي، قَالَ: «قُلْ: اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِي وَارْزُقْنِي وَعَافِنِي وَاهْدِنِي»، فَلَمَّا قَامَ قَالَ: هَكَذَا يَبْدُو 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. Warzuqni. 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⁾

(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-

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.”⁽¹⁾

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.⁽²⁾

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 in the prayer 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.”⁽³⁾ 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 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].”⁽⁴⁾ (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.⁽⁵⁾ 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.⁽⁶⁾)

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﴾

Albaani, Saheeh Abi Daawood: al-Umm, vol. 3, p. 420.

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

(2) 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.

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

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

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

(6) 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.

“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.⁽¹⁾

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.⁽²⁾ 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.⁽³⁾ 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.⁽⁴⁾ 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 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.⁽⁵⁾

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*).⁽⁶⁾ 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

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

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

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

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

(5) 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.

(6) 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.

becomes obligatory.⁽¹⁾ 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.

(1) See, for example, al-Nawawi, vol. 3, p. 374.

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