

Blind obedience to clergy excluded by Islam

by Dr. Jamal Badawi

It should be emphasized first that the term "Allah" has no connotation at all of a tribal god, an Arabian or even a Muslim god. The term "allah" in Arabic simply means the One and Only True, Universal God of all.

The Qur'an repeatedly makes it clear that Allah is beyond our limited perception. "There is nothing whatever comparable unto Him." (al-Shura; 42:11) "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision." (al-An'am; 6:103) A Muslim never thinks of God as having any particular image, whether physical, human, material or

otherwise. Such attributes as "The Perfectly-Knowing," "The Eternal," "The Omnipotent," "The Omnipresent," "The Just," and "The Sovereign" also emphasize transcendence. But this does not mean in any way that for the Muslim Allah is a mere philosophical concept or a deity far removed. Indeed, alongside this emphasis on the transcendence of Allah, the Qur'an also talks about Allah as a "personal" God who is close, easily approachable, Loving, Forgiving and Merciful. The very first passage in the Qur'an, which is repeated dozens of times, is "In the name of Allah, most Gra-

acious, Most Merciful . . ." The Qur'an tells us when Allah created the first human "He breathed into him something of His spirit," (al-Sadjah; 32:9) and that "Allah is closer to the human than his jugular vein." In another beautiful and moving passage were are told, "When my servants ask you (O Muhammad) concerning me, then surely I am near to them. I listen to every suppliant who called on Me. Let them respond to My call and obey My command that they may be led aright."

For the Muslim, monotheism does not mean simply the unity

of God, because there can be different persons in unity. Monotheism in Islam is the absolute Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah, which precludes the notion of persons sharing in Godhead. The opposite of monotheism in Islam is called in Arabic "shirk", association of others with Allah. This includes

not only polytheism, but also dualism (believing in one God for good or light and another for evil or darkness). The concept of "shirk" also includes pantheism, the idea that God is in every-

thing. All forms of God-incarnate philosophies are excluded by Islam's monotheism, as is blind obedience to dictators, to clergy, or to one's own whims and desires.

Indeed, the special role played by Muhammad as the seal and last of all the prophets puts the Muslims in the position whereby honoring Muhammad implies honoring those who

came before him as well. Muslims are warned not to make fanatical or parochial distinctions between prophets (al-Baqarah; 2:285). But the Qur'an also says Allah has favored some prophets with more significant gifts or roles than others (al-Isra'; 17:55). All are brothers, although the only prophet with the universal mission to all humankind is Muhammad, peace be upon him (al-Furqaan; 25:11). The Muslim believes not only that Muhammad is a brother to Jesus, Moses, Abraham and other prophets, but the Qur'an states in clear terms that the advent of Muhammad was foretold by previous prophets, including Moses and Jesus, peace be upon them (al-Araf; 7:157, al-Saff; 61:6). Even the Bible in its present form clearly foretells the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (e.g. Genesis 21:13, 18, Deuteronomy 18:18 and 33:1-3, Isaiah 11:1-4, 21:13-17, 42:1-13 and others).

For the Muslim, the Qur'an contains the words of Allah

directly and verbatim revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. Many confuse the Qur'an with the "Hadith", or sayings, of the Prophet. The Hadith is quite separate from the Qur'an. The latter was dictated to Muhammad word for word through the Angel Gabriel and immediately memorized and put down in writing. It is important to emphasize that the Qur'an was neither written nor composed by Muhammad, peace be upon him.

The fact that there are similarities between the Qur'an and previous scriptures is simply explained by the fact that He Who spoke through those earlier prophets is He Who revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, the one and only true God, Allah. However, the Qur'an is the last revealed Holy Book, which supersedes previous scriptures and is the only still available in the exact words and language uttered by Prophet Muhammad.

Baha'i Faith

Appeals to all

by Said Yazdanmehr

The Baha'i faith stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. It recognizes the unity of God and of his Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search for truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand in hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and a progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education and the elimination of

extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of a universal auxiliary international language, and adumbrates the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.

The purpose of the Association for Baha'i Studies is to study the teachings, history and philosophy of the Baha'i Faith, and to explore their application to the present world by sponsoring such activities as lectures, conferences, and formal gatherings. Membership of the Association is open to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of their families, irrespective of race, colour, class, nationality, or religion.

The Newman Society

Christian community

by Dale A. Rissesco

The first Newman society was founded in 1893 at the University of Pennsylvania by Timothy L. Harrington. While at another university, Harrington had been involved in a Roman Catholic students' club. In Philadelphia, he saw the need to continue to integrate his Christian beliefs with his academic pursuits, so under the direction of a chaplain, the first Newman society was formed.

The Dalhousie Newman society is above all else a Eucharistic community united in Holy Communion around its risen Lord. We also bear witness to (1) the presence of the risen Christ among his people, (2) the work of the Holy Spirit in and among all human beings of good will, (3) the possibility of integrating in a human life a true relationship with God as revealed through his Son, the Lord Jesus, and the truths discovered in the work of modern science and art, and (4) a spirit of cooperation among all people of faith and especially among Christian communities and churches.

The Dalhousie Newman

society has four student committees: a Liturgy committee that meets to plan the Sunday liturgy, the Social Justice committee which supports the Indian Family Helper program and this year is helping to support the sponsorship of Thu Nguyen as a refugee to Canada, the Radio Program committee which puts together a 15-minute radio program once a month, and the Right to Life committee which supports the struggle to respect and nurture all human life in our society. This committee also promotes liaison with others involved in such a project.

For more information, contact one of the co-chairpersons, Cathy Holt at 421-9043 or Truman Matheson at 423-2481, or the Chaplain's office.



Yahweh, I Am

by Jerel Sute

Which God should men worship?

When God called Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses sought a fuller revelation of Who his God is. In answer, God (One is essence yet existing in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit) distinguished himself as **Lord, Lord** or **Yahweh** is from the Hebrew verb 'to be', meaning "the **I Am**, the holy, just, eternally existent One".

In Moses' time, the Egyptians worshipped false gods such as the Nile river, cats, dogs — whatever. Likewise today, all people worship (love and serve) something or someone. They may look to unnamed false gods of

materialism and humanism. However, the Lord says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). So when God revealed himself as **Yahweh**, he was actually stating that every other existence is dependent upon himself — **I Am**, the only uncaused cause, the only provider of salvation. Essentially there is none other! Case closed!

As the Scriptures unfold, we find Jesus Christ in John 8:58 stating that He too is **I Am**. Believing in anyone or anything for salvation is the worship of a false god. We must turn from our sin and believe in Him as the only God. May we not be guilty of loving or serving the wrong god, but rather may we confess Jesus as Lord and choose for ourselves the only God worthy of our trust.

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