

# ENCOUNTERS

JOURNAL OF INTER-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES



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## Editorial

The study of Islam and its relation to other religious traditions and beliefs, its relation with the West both in the past and in the present, as well as the study of Islamic resurgence and its varied manifestations provides the integrated core and focus of this Journal. The decision to produce a journal of such scope and interrelated variance was not, however, taken without proper thought and reflection.

*Encounters* aims to promote a stimulating discussion on inter-religious issues. The intention being to examine, in depth, the Islamic position on other religious traditions – ranging from the confessional stand of believers, to areas of mutual trust and mistrust accumulated over the years and to the existential reality of living together in today's pluralist world.

Interaction between Islam and the West dates from the Prophet's time. The encounter with the Byzantine Empire began in Madina where the Prophet Muḥammad received emissaries from them and reciprocated in like manner. Furthermore, Muslims entered Spain, through North Africa, in 711 and ruled there until 1492. This was a period of great intellectual vitality and strength. Muslims in Spain produced a brilliant civilization and not only initiated but fostered and patronized cross-cultural and inter-faith debate, dialogue and discussion. Similarly, Eastern Europe has been under Muslim influence directly as well as via Turkey for almost a millennium. It was from Turkey, i.e. from Europe, that the *Uthmāniyya Khilāfa* ruled over much of the Muslim world. The legacy of that rule plays an important part in the political, social and psychological crisis of the Balkans in particular and of Europe in general.

Muslims today constitute a large proportion of the European and North American population. These 'new arrivals', mostly from the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and Turkey, now form an integral part of Western culture. Islamic culture has added a new dimension to that already existing in the West, both in forms of what these 'immigrants' have brought with them and the new phenomenon of indigenous populations coming to Islam in considerable numbers. The result in some ways is a challenge to Western culture. Furthermore, however, the ability or otherwise of Muslims to adjust in the West has not been an easy task. More often than not they will have left a country where Muslims

constitute an overwhelming majority; in the West they are in the minority and so their responses to the situation they find themselves in inevitably vary. Additionally the younger generation of such 'immigrants' have little comprehension of their parents' Islam overwhelmingly defined in a cultural milieu and this further compounds the problem for Muslims living in the West. All Muslims, furthermore, must deal with a Western culture whose monolithic understanding of 'self' and its ethnocentric world-view allows little room for others to define themselves and exist side by side.

The 'Islamic resurgence', commonly referred to in the West as 'fundamentalism', is another important area of our study. A picture of a small house converted into a mosque, overflowing with Friday worshippers in Paris or in Lyon can easily attract a caption of 'Muslim fundamentalist . . .' or 'the growing Muslim fundamentalism . . .' This reflects the shallow perception of 'Islamic resurgence' in the West and the media's sensationalization of an act of worship. A clear misunderstanding exists, and there is a real need for proper dialogue between the Islamic and Western world-views. In our view, there is a need, to examine in greater detail, the nature and growth of Islamic resurgence, its background, impact and its encounter with the West. This journal seeks to provide a forum for discussion and a critical look at the theory and practice, the problems, prospects, hopes and aspirations of Islamic resurgence and the *Encounters* between the two world-views – Islamic and Western.

# Concept of Sovereignty in Contemporary Islamic Movements

*Bustami Muhammad Khir*

The purpose of this study is to analyze modern trends among Muslims concerning the problem of sovereignty. There have been remarkable attempts by modern Muslim scholars to express Islamic theories of rulership, including sovereignty, in contemporary terms. However, owing to the great impact Western notions of sovereignty have had on modern Muslim attitudes, especially since the nineteenth century, it is advisable to start this study with an examination of the origins of those Western theories. In Europe, sovereignty emerged as an important political concept after the religious wars of the sixteenth century and as a result of the creation of the territorial nation state. Though sovereignty is generally an accepted working assumption up to the present time, it is nevertheless an ambiguous term and lends itself to a variety of interpretations. In fact, it has been given differing forms in a number of theories all of which are surrounded by much controversy. Nonetheless, all states of the modern world, including Muslim countries, have been founded on the basis of these Western theories. After examining Western sources, the study goes on to look at the early Islamic ideas of rulership from which Muslims derive their inspiration. Thereafter, the modern Muslim view is provided in coverage of thinkers from Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, with special reference to contemporary movements of Islamic reform.

## 1. Origins of the Concept in the West

The question of the definition of sovereignty in the West, the existence or non-existence of the concept in ancient or modern communities, and where it can

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be located is basically a problem of terminology. Controversy over it appears to originate from the ambiguity of the meaning surrounding the word sovereignty; essentially, there are a great variety of senses attached to it. With respect to the more general meaning of sovereignty, however, there appears to be no real difference in opinion: the necessity for a superior power within any community to maintain law and order has been expressed in both ancient and modern thought. In political thought, intensive studies have been made about the proper qualities of the holder of 'supreme power' and his primary functions. It is only in the circumstances that prevailed in Europe at the beginning of the early modern period, however, that the concept of sovereignty took on a definite formula. Two specific factors had a great impact on the shape of the modern theory of sovereignty in its formative period in France; they are, the emergence of the secular territorial nation state and the adoption of a positive concept of law.

### *Etymology of Sovereignty*

The etymology of the word sovereignty in English shows that it is derived through the old French *soverainéte*, from medieval Latin *supremtas*, or *suprema potestas*, which is loosely taken to mean 'supreme power'.<sup>1</sup> Modern usage of the word may be traced back to Roman law and the feudal system pertaining in Europe during the Middle Ages. In feudalism, authority, like land tenure, was organized hierarchically with the King at the apex of the system. Each member of the nobility – the barons, dukes, and counts – possessed full authority in his domain. The term sovereignty was used to describe the lordships of the nobles and it indicated a finality in authority. It was stated, as a medieval thinker wrote, that 'each baron is sovereign in his barony', but above all 'the king is sovereign and has the right of general control over the kingdom'.<sup>2</sup> This feudal notion of sovereignty was intertwined with Roman ideas of public power. In the course of the development of the Roman Empire, the Emperor came to possess public lordship, the *imperium*, which meant a right to command inherent in his character and his will had the force of law. This concept of public lordship, which was originally universal, was narrowed down to a territorial scope with the appearance of the nation state and was fused with connotations of feudal lordship to form the modern concept of sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

### *Definition*

The first modern definition of sovereignty was phrased by the French jurist Jean Bodin during the sixteenth century. Both implicitly and explicitly his definition embodied the claims of the French monarchy:

Sovereignty is the most high, absolute and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonweal, . . . that is to say, the greatest power to command.<sup>4</sup>

As a product of peculiar historical conditions, sovereignty in Bodin's definition meant an absolute, indivisible, inalienable, and unlimited right of command placed in the national King's hands. The commands of the King established the law while he himself was regarded as above the law.<sup>5</sup> These attributes of sovereignty, as a recent thinker observed, were analogous to the qualities of God. Theologians, in speaking of the sovereignty of God, ascribed to Him absolute supremacy and plenteous power with the implication that man is completely subject to God. In applying the same sense to the political context, he concluded, 'the theological concept of sovereignty has been secularised.'<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, these attributes were further confirmed by later theorists who reasoned under a similar historical environment. Perhaps the most important of these were Thomas Hobbes,<sup>7</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau<sup>8</sup> and John Austin. It may suffice for the present discussion to quote the definition offered by Austin as much credit is given to it for its clearness and preciseness. Austin expresses the notion of sovereignty thus:

If a determinate human superior, not in a habit of obedience to a like superior, receives habitual obedience from the bulk of a given society, that determinate superior is sovereign in that society, and the society (including the superior) is a society political and independent.<sup>9</sup>

In the main, these thinkers were in agreement on the attributes and nature of sovereignty. They differed only on the person or body of persons who possessed or ought to possess sovereignty. While Hobbes continued to vest it in a personal ruler, Rousseau shifted it to the ruled, that is to say, the whole people and Austin placed it in the hands of their representatives. To them, respectively, were attributed the notions of the sovereignty of the state, popular sovereignty and of the parliament.<sup>10</sup>

### Criticism

As long as the circumstances that led to the formulation of the theory of sovereignty, namely the establishment of the nation state and its right of law-making, still survive, many still hold it to be a valid concept. Yet, there are some voices which argue that the classical doctrine of sovereignty is inadequate as it is unable to account for a number of new developments such as federalism, international law and modern democracy. Moreover, in the light of new understandings of the nature and character of the state and law, traditional ideas of sovereignty have been given new interpretations. It is very difficult, according to critics of the theory, to accurately decide the location of absolute sovereignty in a federal state since authority is shared between central and local governments. Sovereignty, with its despotic connotations, appears as anti-democratic. In the international sphere, where states are regarded as equals, it is not practical to grant any one of them absolute freedom and total independence. Leon Duguit, a French lawyer, in his attempt to reject the absolute notion of sovereignty, dwelt on the concept of a welfare state whose main function was to provide public services.<sup>11</sup> Among other critics of sovereignty was the English political scientist Harold Laski who viewed the state as one organization among others in society and, therefore, denied its monopoly of power under the name of sovereignty. The historical origins of the concept of sovereignty, maintained Laski, represented 'not an absolute but a historical logic'.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, on the basis of the assumption that there exists a number of kinds of power in any society which operate at the same time, many types of sovereignty have been claimed to be discovered. These include political, legal, coercive, influential, *de jure*, *de facto*, internal, external, positive, negative, absolute and relative. In other words, it is maintained that there are a number of bodies in which sovereignty exists, each of which is found to be fully supreme, but only within its proper sphere. This view, however, also faces problems not least because it shows sovereignty as a 'protean' word with no fixed meaning.<sup>13</sup> One of the advocates of this standpoint admits that:

The dilemma with which we are faced, therefore, if we wish to retain the concept of sovereignty, is very great. If we preserve the traditional simplicity of the concept, it is too ambiguous to be of service, but if we draw the distinctions necessary to avoid these ambiguities, the analysis of the concept becomes so complicated that its use is no longer helpful.<sup>14</sup>

### *Location of Sovereignty*

This dilemma concerning the nature of sovereignty has its effect on the question of who bears or ought to bear the sovereign rights and how to justify the claim to hold them. Similarly, this enquiry seems to be something of a puzzle. The entities in which, according to various Western theories, sovereignty does reside or should reside comprise the monarchy, the people, the state, the parliament, the electorate, the constitution, coercive institutions such as the army and the police and influential bodies such as pressure groups. Perhaps, the most objectionable attribute of sovereignty when determining its location within human boundaries is its absoluteness since all human authority is necessarily relative and conditional. Here we are faced with the basic defect in the original Western theory of sovereignty. When Bodin conceived the sovereign prince as an image of God,<sup>15</sup> he actually embodied this notion in his attributes of the sovereign. However, the complexities of the problem are reduced if claims to absolute, illimitable and indivisible power are excluded. If sovereignty is understood to mean the highest, greatest, final and most general human power in society it is possible to find a germ of truth in it. Since the unique function of any political power is to maintain legal order it is not possible to fulfil such a function if these qualities are not possessed. The criterion which determines where the highest, greatest and final power can be located is the phenomenon of obedience. It seems to be commonly believed that obedience is a functional constituent of sovereignty and from its existence power is established. It is argued that 'sovereignty in any sense is constituted by the development of the habit of obedience and by nothing else'.<sup>16</sup> Sovereignty which is not rendered *de jure* or *de facto* obedience does not exist. Whoever is obeyed as the highest and final authority is sovereign in the sphere in which he is obeyed. The fact that it is possible to attribute obedience to different entities, that is by obeying each body in its proper sphere, allows for the existence of more than one relative sovereign in society. By consideration of historical conditions, it can be decided who is obeyed in a particular case and at a particular time. As for the question as to who ought to be sovereign it should be remembered that any system of rule embodies an ideology and, therefore, the answer to that question should be sought within that ideology. Apparently, each ideology constructs its own theory of sovereignty.

## 2. The Muslim Viewpoint

### i. Pre-Modern Muslims

#### *Mulk*

Pre-modern Muslim thinkers made outstanding endeavours to analyze the nature of political power in human civilization and to which they commonly applied the term *mulk*. It will suffice here to refer to Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) who expounded such views with great precision. *Mulk*, he stated, was essential for human association (*ijtimāʿ*). Its essence was its competence that there should be no one stronger and higher to effect real subjection of the people in order to enable it to carry out the various functions of rule. According to Ibn Khaldūn, it was possible to classify *mulk* into three types depending on the kind of laws (*qawānīn*) enforced. Firstly, there was arbitrary *mulk* which had no established set of rules except the bigoted desires of the ruler. Secondly, the secular type of *mulk* which was based on laws established solely by human reason. The third kind of *mulk* was the one founded on divine laws revealed by God to a Prophet. God in this system was considered the only law-giver and *mulk*, whose basic function was the enforcement of divine laws, belonged originally to the Prophets who received God's revelation. After them, it was passed to successors called caliphs (*khulafāʾ*) in Islamic phraseology.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Khilāfa*

The above analysis throws some light on the term caliphate (*khilāfa*) which, besides other terms such as imamate (*imāma*) and imarate (*imāra*), signifies Muslim rulership. In most standard definitions, the caliph was viewed as a successor to the Prophet for the enforcement of divine laws and the maintenance of order and material welfare.<sup>18</sup> This definition is significant especially in reflecting the relation between the caliphate and the laws of the *Sharīʿa*. It shows that the caliphate was not the primary source of law, yet its essential function was to use its power to execute the *Sharīʿa* laws. In this respect, Muslim scholars maintained that no one should be acknowledged to have the right to set laws which were not in conformity with the laws of God, to which the jurist Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) coined the term *sharʿ mubdal*. Such acknowledgement, he affirmed, would be a contradiction of the belief in the Lordship of God (*rubūbiyya*).<sup>19</sup>

Most Muslim scholars did not accept the idea that the caliph is God's vicegerent,<sup>20</sup> but he was, however, described as a shadow of God. Ibn Taymiyya's statement of the reasons why the caliph was an image of God on earth stands out as a remarkable explanation. He said:

Definitely the sultan is a servant of God, created by Him, always in need of Him, and cannot dispense with Him. But there are some qualities possessed by the sultan like ability, authority, protection, support and other attributes of mastery (*su'dad*) and lordship (*ṣamadiyya*) on which rests the control and welfare of the people. That is the reason why he resembles the shadow of God on earth; besides he is the most effective cause to put the affairs of the people in order. If the one who is possessed with power is good, then the affairs of the people will be set in a right state. If he is corrupt there exist pandemonium and injustice in accordance with the extent of his corruption though the people will not be in a state of complete disorder in every aspect. There must exist some benefit as long as the sultan exists, because he is the shadow of God. But shadow may sometimes be completely dark and sheltering from any kind of harm and sometimes it protects only partially. However, if there is no shadow there will be complete disorder. That is a case similar to the situation if God does not exist, because God is the One who sustains all mankind.<sup>21</sup>

Various thinkers attached to the caliphate a number of attributes such as most superior (*'uzmā*), most general (*'amma*) and independent. In fact those qualities, as some thinkers argued, were important connotations of the terms *imāma* and *imāra* which were designated to the office of the caliphate. Ibn Ḥazm, for example, explained the generality embodied in the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* by stressing that it was a reference to the person who possessed command over all the affairs of the whole Muslim community.<sup>22</sup> The caliphate was also conceived as an authority assigned to a determinate definite person by which it was meant that it did not belong to all the people though it was in their power to elect or depose the caliph and supervise his actions.<sup>23</sup> That the caliphate was an elective office was also one of its characteristics, at least according to the Sunnī view. They held that it should be based on consultation (*shūrā*) in both its formation and in its administration of governmental affairs. However, political realities compelled the Sunnīs to legitimize rule gained by force (*shawka*) and not by consent provided that it maintained the supremacy of the *Shari'a* laws.<sup>24</sup>

### *Mulk and Sovereignty*

In the final analysis, there appears to be certain similarities between the concept of *mulk* as understood by pre-modern Muslim thinkers and the Western notion of sovereignty as well as significant distinctions. If sovereignty is taken to mean simply the highest, greatest, final and most general political power it comes very close to *mulk*. Muslims associated *mulk* with supremacy, generality, and competence, but they never thought of it as absolute or illimitable. But the distinction between *mulk* and sovereignty is not only found in the attributes attached to them but also in their nature. Owing to the peculiar conditions which shaped Western concepts, sovereignty has essentially become national and secular. One of the important marks of sovereignty is its legal aspect, that is to say, it creates laws besides its other function of subjecting people to obey them. Without being the source of law-making, sovereignty in the Western concept does not exist. Sovereignty is only found if law is positively made and not given. *Mulk*, on the other hand, exists regardless of whether it possesses the authority to make laws or not. The basic function of *mulk* is the enforcement of law and not law-making. Laws can be made either by the wilful wishes of the ruler, the decisions of the political elite of the state, or they can be given by God. *Mulk* is only Islamic if the law it enforces is given by God and not made by men. This is the basic difference between sovereignty and *mulk*.

#### **ii. Modern Muslims**

By 1924, the last form of the Muslim caliphate was abolished and in its place the secular nation state system of the West was adopted. This was the culmination of a long process of secularization in Turkey which was developed in a similar way in other parts of the Muslim world. By reason of many historical and geographical factors, Westernization was a very forceful feature in Turkey, Egypt and India and these countries became the scene for encounters between Islam and Western ideas. The political thought of secular intellectuals which accompanied the development of secularism in Muslim countries was, generally, mere imitation of the West. Western concepts of sovereignty were echoed and in most cases enacted in constitutions without any prior critical evaluation. Under the impact of the French Revolution and other influences, democratic ideas, especially the concept of sovereignty of the people, spread widely.

In the course of the decisive struggle between Islam and secularism, the traditional intellectual Muslim leaders, the '*ulamā*', remained stagnant and over-protective towards the old order of the past. They failed to adapt their thought to the new changes and to initiate solutions to the new problems. In particular, they were unable to grasp modern political and legal concepts or to express Islamic principles in the language of today. Consequently, secular politicians won the battle and captured power even in Pakistan which was established as a separate state chiefly to enable the Muslims to maintain their Islamic identity. Not only was the political and legal authority of Islam disestablished in many Muslim countries but most of the Islamic way of life was uprooted. Those successive blows to the position of Islam brought about a new movement of Islamic reform. Amongst the tasks of this reform was the requirement to define Islamic principles and to express them in modern terms. Therefore, it was only natural that the reform movement addressed itself to the problem of sovereignty as an important political and legal concept.

### *Two Trends*

With respect to the problem of sovereignty, two trends dominated the thought of Islamic reformists. The first laid emphasis on democratic ideas to combat despotism, seen as one of the chief causes of the degeneration of Muslim life. The second focused on the campaign against secularism, which had completely done away with Islam, and required the ultimate supremacy of the Islamic scheme of life including its political and legal systems. Both trends borrowed from Western concepts of sovereignty and attempted to interpret them from an Islamic point of view. The former approach used the notion of popular sovereignty to denote the participation of the Muslim populace in governmental affairs. The latter denied that sovereignty can be attached to any human being and reserved it only for God or to His divine laws, the *Sharī'a*.

### *First Expressions*

Perhaps, the first definite and systematic modern expression of the Muslim view of sovereignty is found in the ideas of the Young Ottomans who made their appearance in the mid-nineteenth century. Their main objective was the introduction of a constitution in Turkey as an important vehicle of reform. After

seeing the failure of the Westernizing reforms which had been adopted, they searched for a synthesis allowing borrowing from Europe without abandoning their Islamic tradition. By and large, the thought of the Young Ottomans being half European and half Islamic represented an early pattern of modernism in the Muslim world.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most distinguished Young Ottoman intellectuals was Namik Kemal (1840–88) whose views on popular sovereignty were the first best discussion on the theme. He was vigorously opposed to the absolute rule of the Ottoman Sultan and believed that a good government should be chosen by the people. Kemal supported his view by stressing that the right of the community to choose its *imām* (leader) is one of the bases of Islamic rule. Accordingly, Kemal assumed that 'the right of sovereignty belongs to all' and that the Islamic state was, in principle, 'a kind of republic'. However, he did not favour a republican regime in Turkey. Instead, he suggested, like most other liberals of his day even in Europe, a constitutional monarchy. To achieve that, Turkey had to import a constitution and a parliamentary system from Europe. To him, that importation was not an undesirable innovation, *bid'a*. It was no more *bid'a* than steamships. In spite of such clear Western influences on Kemal's ideas, there were notable differences between his concept of popular sovereignty and that of the West. Kemal rejected that the source of law could be the will of all the community, the general will as termed by Rousseau. He conceived of popular sovereignty and the will of the community as working within the limits of Islamic law, the *Shari'a*. Its main function was to maintain the laws of justice as determined by the *Shari'a*, not to create them. To him, 'an unjust act is an unjust and unlawful event if it were sanctioned and carried out by the whole population'.<sup>26</sup>

It may be apparent that Kemal reconciled the Western concept of popular sovereignty with Islamic principles of consultation, *shūrā*. Nevertheless, Kemal's popular sovereignty found a counter argument in his contemporary and rival Ali Suavi, also a member of the Young Ottomans.<sup>27</sup> Suavi opposed Kemal's attempts to establish that the concept of popular sovereignty had always been part of Islamic political theory. Suavi reasoned that the term was not only meaningless according to the political theology of Islam, but that it also appeared to be fallacious from the point of view of European political philosophy.<sup>28</sup> In his discussion he defended the view that sovereignty, in its true sense, belonged only to God. It is also noteworthy that this notion that sovereignty is God's forms an important political belief of

leading Islamic reform movements today. We now find powerful expressions by a number of intellectuals who most probably have not heard about Sauvi's exposition. As a matter of fact, Suavi appears to be the first Muslim to produce a modern statement on the thesis of divine sovereignty in response to European theories. His ideas appeared in 1869 in a Turkish journal, published by him in Paris, in a short article entitled 'al-Ḥākīm Huw-Allāh' (Sovereign Power is God's). He wrote:

There exists a term which has gained considerable notoriety nowadays, 'popular sovereignty', as the expression goes. This term is a translation from the French. Its original reads '*souverainete' du peuple*'. Now let us inquire into the meaning of these French words. What does '*souverainete*' mean? This word is originally from Latin '*spreos*' which means 'does what he desires', sole master of himself (*ḥākīm-i binnefs*), absolute authority (*amīr-i mutlak*), free in his actions (*fa'īl-i mukhtār*). Well, what is it in fact, that rules by itself and has absolute power over things? Something which cannot be qualified with any attribute other than that of Divinity. Thus, in this sense, there does not exist a single human being who possesses '*souverainete*'.<sup>29</sup>

The term coined by the Ottomans for sovereignty was *Ḥākimiyyat* which had its origins in Arabic from the root *ḥakam* and which we shall later discuss. Significantly, the word was introduced from Turkish into Persian, Urdu and, later, Arabic to denote sovereignty. Besides, we find patterns of thought in other parts of the Muslim world similar to those expressed by the young Ottomans. It is these which we shall now consider.

### *Popular Sovereignty*

#### (a) Rashīd Riḍā

An outstanding advocate of the emphasis placed on the role of the Muslim community in relation to its ruler was Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā who explicitly used the term *sulṭat al-umma* (sovereignty of the people) in its modern political sense to express his ideas. His views are best summarized in the following extract from the introduction to his book *al-Khilāfa*:

Islam is a spiritual guidance as well as a social and a civil system. As for the latter, Islam has founded its basis and fundamentals and entitled the

Muslim community to make its own judgements and *ijtihād* concerning its detail since these change with times and places and develop with advancements in civilization and in scientific disciplines. Among these fundamentals is that the community possesses sovereignty, its affairs are decided through consultation *shūrā*, its government is like a republic and its ruler, who is in place of its Prophet, is only an executive enforcing the *Shari'ah* laws and the community opinion without himself being above the law but equal to any other subject. Moreover the government is administering religious affairs and temporal interests, combining moral virtues and material benefits and pursuing the universalization of human brotherhood by uniting the different nations inwardly and outwardly. But, when the Muslims became weak they failed to attain these fundamentals and to practice these ideals. Had they established them they would have set up applications of them suitable for the requirements of any age.<sup>30</sup>

His arguments for *sulṭat al-umma* (sovereignty of the people) were drawn heavily from Islamic sources and history. He based his conviction on three grounds: the idea of *shūrā* (consultation), the doctrine of *ijmā'* (consensus) and the concept of *ulū al-amr* (possessors of the right of command) concluding that these Islamic principles clearly indicated that sovereignty belonged to the community. As for *shūrā* he stressed its importance as a base for Islamic government. The Qur'an directed the Prophet, in place of the ruler, to consult the community in general affairs. More significantly, the community itself was described as taking heed of *shūrā* in their decision-making process. As such *shūrā* became a foundation of rule and Riḍā showed how it was exercised during the era of the Prophet and the Khulafā' Rāshidūn by quoting numerous historical events. When the Umayyads took over power they abolished *shūrā* and established their dominion over the community by force. From then on Muslim rulers assigned to themselves autocratic power, so much so that Islam was mistakenly considered to approve of despotism. The truth of the matter was that the corruption of the caliphate was essentially a result of its deviation from Islamic principles such as *shūrā*.<sup>31</sup>

The other mark of the authority of the community, Riḍā maintained, was the binding nature of a decision reached through consensus, *ijmā'*. He quoted, in this respect the assertion of the Prophet that all members of the community would not be completely unanimous in an error of judgement. Following al-Ṭabarī (d.923), he defined the term *jamā'ah* (community) as being identical to a body politic. If the

people reached an agreement to choose a ruler and be under his single government, they would thereupon form a *jamā'a* whose decision would be enforced on all. This obligatory nature of a political resolution was a vivid aspect of the sovereignty of the community.<sup>32</sup>

As for the concept of *ūlū al-amr* (holders of the right of command), Riḍā paid more attention to it and dwelt on it in demonstrating his idea of sovereignty. The Qur'ān had evidently stated that obedience should be rendered to God, His Messenger and *ūlū al-amr*.<sup>33</sup> In answer to the question who were *ūlū al-amr*, Riḍā accepted al-Rāzī's view that they were *ahl al-'aqd wa'l-ḥall* (the people who bind and loose) i.e. the people to whom was attributed the power of election and deposition of the ruler, and who required consultation in governmental decisions, and definition of the law. He further supported this view by quoting another occurrence of *ūlū al-amr* in the Qur'ān which reads: 'when they hear any rumour about safety or fear they at once spread it whereas if they reported it to the Messenger and to *ūlū al-amr* they would properly investigate it'.<sup>34</sup> To him, this was a clear indication that *ūlū al-amr* were those whose authority included the determination of strategic issues of war and peace. Besides, Riḍā once more referred to al-Rāzī who explicitly mentioned that sovereignty or right of leadership, *haqq al-ri'āsa*, belonged to the community (*umma*) represented by *ahl al-'aqd wa'l-ḥall*.<sup>35</sup> An important mark of the authority of *ahl al-'aqd wa'l-ḥall* in Riḍā's view was their competence to derive the law. He denoted this ability to deduce or make the law by the term *ishtirā'*, meaning legislation in its modern sense, which he saw as identical to the traditional words *ijtihād* and *istinbāt* (inference). Legislation in Islam, he argued, was not only based on Qur'ānic and Prophetic text (*naṣṣ*) but also on public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) and was not confined to religious aspects (*'ibādāt*) but also comprised civil, criminal, administrative and military laws (*mu'āmalāt*). As the Qur'ānic and Prophetic text was limited, there was a wide area of permissibility for man-made laws based on utility and which were changeable and adaptable to the times. This legislative authority, he concluded, belonged to the community (*umma*) represented in *ahl al-'aqd wa'l-ḥall*.<sup>36</sup> The assumption of legislative power by the community, he maintained, was not in contradiction to the principle that God was the Sole Legislator to Whom alone judgement belonged and which formed a cardinal constituent part of the belief in the Oneness of Godship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*). The right of the community to legislate was legitimate because God Himself had permitted it.<sup>37</sup>

There remained, however, one important question. Namely, who specifically were *ahl al-‘aqd wa’l-ḥall*? Riḍā, in his attempt to answer it, first cited the early definition that they were composed of the ‘*ulamā*’, the chiefs and the notables who, by virtue of their rank, were influential, and could easily affect the rest of the community to follow them. Then he embarked on a historical review to identify them in the early period of Islam. During the time of the Prophet and the Khulafā’ Rāshidūn, they were easily distinguished because of their prominence and association with the Prophet and were normally situated in Madina. The Umayyads depended on tribal solidarity (‘*ṣabiyya*) and made consultation of *ahl al-‘aqd wa’l-ḥall* inoperative. Thus, the *shūrā* system was not given the chance to develop and institutionalize itself. As for the identification of *ahl al-‘aqd wa’l-ḥall* in the modern age it would be possible, according to him, to adopt the present-day method of election. But he insisted that elections should be free if they were to be accepted in Islam.<sup>38</sup> The elected body would have the powers of election and deposition of the executive, supervision over its actions, and legislation. In many ways it would be identical to a modern legislative assembly.<sup>39</sup> Though there were similarities between the Islamic and European applications of the principle of sovereignty of the community, there were also vital distinctions. In the first place, the Muslim community was not above the *Sharī‘a* and, therefore, it was not free to legislate anything which was not in accordance with it.<sup>40</sup> Riḍā laid the blame for the Muslims’ loss of unity, independence, and cultural identity on their wholesale adoption of foreign laws, i.e. without any modifications. As the rules of grammar in one language cannot be used to govern the structure of another language, so he argued, foreign laws are not suitable to rule a society unless they are adapted to its beliefs and needs.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the sovereignty of the Muslim community was not based on nationalism. Riḍā argued strongly against Ibn Khaldūn’s idea that the caliphate was founded on national group feeling (‘*aṣbiyya*) since Islam is anti racism.<sup>42</sup> Pursuing the same point, he attacked the national trend in Turkey towards Turkeyism. The Turks had associated their concept of popular sovereignty (*al-ḥākimiyya al-milliyya*) with nationalism and secularism, and for this reason he was totally opposed to it. From this it may appear that Riḍā conceived sovereignty of the community to be different from its European formula adopted in Turkey.<sup>43</sup>

## (b) Ḥasan al-Bannā

Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–49), the founder of the Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwān al-Muṣlimūn*) was in agreement with Riḍā in his usage of the concept *suḷṭat al-umma* (sovereignty of the people) and its applications and reproduced the latter's thesis in his writings. In a number of his pamphlets he stated that Islam acknowledged the modern constitutional principle known as *suḷṭat al-umma*. At one place he wrote:

Islam has established sovereignty of the community and emphasized it. It directed every Muslim to supervise fully the actions of his government by providing it with counsel and assistance and by bringing it to account. While it has instructed the ruler to fulfil the interests of the ruled by means of instituting good and eradicating evil, it has also ordered the ruled to render obedience to the ruler as long as he carries out that function. If he becomes corrupt it is their duty to put him right, ensure that he abides by the law and bring him back to follow the course of justice.<sup>44</sup>

Speaking generally about constitutional principles, in another place he stated:

The principles of constitutional rule, which could be summarized in maintaining individual freedoms, consultation and locating sovereignty with the community, responsibility of the rulers to the people and their accountability to the public for their actions and definition of the prerogatives of state powers – these principles, if thoroughly studied, will be found to be identical with the teachings of Islam and its basis and regulations of its ruling system.<sup>45</sup>

In a separate book, *Niẓām al-Ḥukm* (System of Government), he clarified in more detail what he conceived to be the basis of an Islamic state. The whole framework of government, in Islam, he explained, was founded on a set of established rules. These essentially include the responsibility of the ruler to the people, unity of the community and respect for its will. As for the responsibility of the ruler, Islam had surpassed Rousseau's theory of social contract by stating that the origin of the authority of the ruler was a contract between him and the community. According to this contract, the community hired the ruler to work for its interests and, therefore, he was responsible and accountable to them.<sup>46</sup> In applying this principle to the constitutional system of Egypt at that time, he observed that it was full of obscurities in this regard. He demanded the formation

of a responsible cabinet with clearly-defined powers and responsibility either attached directly to the head of state, the King, or to a prime minister.<sup>47</sup> Pursuing the second rule, the unity of the nation, he required the dissolution of all political parties in Egypt which he claimed produced nothing but antagonism and corruption.<sup>48</sup> In application of the third rule, the superiority of the will of the community, he approved the adoption of a parliamentary system in general but asked for basic reforms. As an alternative to political parties, only independent candidates should be allowed to compete in the elections. These candidates should possess high qualities, well-defined by law, and have clear programmes. A strict code of conduct should be prescribed to govern election campaigns and so prevent undue propaganda, to prohibit gerrymandering and to lay down severe punishments for counterfeiting.<sup>49</sup> If these and similar reforms were brought about, the election system would yield a real representation of the will of the community.

However, after Ḥasan al-Bannā there was a gradual shift in the views of the Muslim Brothers. Undoubtedly, al-Bannā himself in demanding an Islamic state had vigorously opposed the adoption of secular laws in place of the *Sharī'a*. He regarded them as contrary to Islam and to the Egyptian constitution which stated that Islam was the state-established religion. Inflicting such secular laws upon the Muslims created a major conflict as they were now torn between obeying them or obeying God.<sup>50</sup> But, al-Bannā did not denote the obligation to derive all laws from the *Sharī'a* by any specific expression such as *ḥākimiyya* which was later and invariably used by his followers, nor did he mention that sovereignty belonged to God.

### *Divine Sovereignty*

Perhaps, the most important of the other group of Islamists who emphasized the supremacy of God's laws, the *Sharī'a*, and preferred to assign sovereignty directly to it or to God, include the Turkish Prince Sa'īd Ḥalīm Pāshā (1863–1921), Abū'l-A'lā Mawdūdī (1903–79) of Pakistan and Sayyid Quṭb (1906–66) of Egypt. Sa'īd appears to have been the first to use the phrase 'sovereignty of the *Sharī'a*' to express the Muslim belief in the obligation and supremacy of the divine laws, the *Sharī'a*, in contrast to the concept of national sovereignty which was employed by secularists to disestablish Islam. He was convinced that 'the whole social framework of Islam rests upon the fundamental principle of the sovereignty of the *Sharī'a*.'<sup>51</sup> He also furnished new arguments to

justify the truth of the *Shari'a*'s sovereignty and the falsehood of national sovereignty. Man, he argued, was not competent enough to discover social laws to govern his life even though he had found scientific laws in the physical and natural spheres. Therefore, law, which was the basis of order in society, could only be derived from the one incontestable source, God. By reason of this fact, Sa'id maintained that the principle of national sovereignty was a false imaginary right which produced only injustice.<sup>52</sup>

(a) Abū'l-A'lā Mawdūdī

Mawdūdī, who began his writings after Sa'id, followed a similar line of thought but in place of the *Shari'a* he vested sovereignty in God Himself. Sayyid Qutb's contribution, on the other hand, was mainly an elaboration and explanation of the ideas of Mawdūdī. Mawdūdī expressly acknowledged, like Riḍā and al-Bannā before him, that he borrowed the word sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) from the terminology of modern political science. He understood it to mean 'absolute overlordship or complete suzerainty' which entitled its holder to an unquestionable right to impose his orders on all the subjects of the state without himself being subjected to any limitations or restrictions on his power to rule except by his own will. Laws were enacted by means of his absolute will which was the only criterion of right and wrong and good and evil and all subjects were under an obligation to obey them.<sup>53</sup> It is clear, therefore, that his concept of sovereignty was identical with the original notion developed by the early Western theorists up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Assuming this sense of sovereignty, he argued that no human being could possess it or be justified in holding it. Like Sa'id, he claimed that the myth of investing anything with it would only produce injustice. As he equated sovereignty with the Arabic terms *ulūhiyya* (godship) and *rubūbiyya* (lordship), he reserved it to God alone. He wrote:

The belief in the Unity and the Sovereignty of Allāh is the foundation of the social and moral system propounded by the Prophets. It is the very starting point of Islamic political philosophy. The basic principle of Islam is that human beings must, individually and collectively, surrender all rights of overlordship, legislation and the exercising of authority over others. No one should be allowed to pass orders or make commands in his own right and no one ought to accept the obligation to carry out such commands and obey such orders. None is entitled to make laws on

his own authority and none is obliged to abide by them. This right rests in Allāh alone.<sup>54</sup> According to this theory, sovereignty belongs to Allāh. He alone is the Law-giver. No man, even he be a prophet has the right to order others in his own right to do or not to do certain things. The Prophet himself is subject to God's commands. Other people are required to obey the Prophet because he enunciates not his own but God's commands.<sup>55</sup>

Thus the main characteristics of an Islamic state that can be deduced from the express statements of the Holy Qur'an are as follows:

(1) No person, class or group, not even the entire population of the state as a whole, can lay claim to sovereignty. God alone is the real sovereign, all others are merely His subjects;

(2) God is the real Law-giver and the authority of absolute legislation rests in Him. The believers cannot resort to totally independent legislation nor can they modify any law which God has laid down, even if the desire to effect such legislation or change in divine law is unanimous; and

(3) An Islamic state must, in all respects, be founded upon the law laid down by God through His Prophet. The government which runs such a state will be entitled to obedience in its capacity as a political agency set to enforce the laws of God and only in so far as it acts in that capacity. If it disregards the law revealed by God, its command will not be binding on the believers.<sup>56</sup>

#### (b) Sayyid Quṭb

Similarly, Quṭb detailed further those ideas and associated absolute sovereignty, for which he used the word *ḥākimiyya*, with God only as depicted in the supremacy of the divine law, the *Shari'a*. Quṭb gave an intensive explanation of his concept of *ḥākimiyya* especially in his later works. The following extract from his voluminous commentary on the Qur'an will briefly introduce his views. He said:

*Hukm*, authority to judge, belongs to no other than God. It is only by virtue of His godship since *ḥākimiyya* (judgeship or sovereignty) is a characteristic of the Divinity. Therefore, whoever claims to possess it will in fact be denying God one of His fundamental divine rights. This is true whether the possession of this right is claimed to belong to an individual, a class, a party, an assembly, a nation or even all mankind

represented in one international organization. Now, the truth of the matter is that denying God this fundamental right and claiming its possession is clear apostasy beyond any doubt. The undue assumption of this right, which will result in giving up faith in the true religion and the denial of a fundamental divine quality, does not necessarily take one form. It must not necessarily be by saying, as Pharaoh openly said, 'you have no other god that I know except myself' or 'I am your supreme Lord'. The claim to this right and its dissociation from God can merely be by dislodging divine law from sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) and deriving law from another source. It can merely be by declaring that the seat of sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*), that is the source of power, is any other than God whether it be the whole nation or all mankind.<sup>57</sup>

Apparently, Quṭb used the word *ḥākimiyya*, as in the above quotation, to mean the source of legislation, that is to say, the supreme power that possessed the right to make laws which would determine the various systems of society and its form of government.<sup>58</sup> But Quṭb did not confine the concept of sovereignty, *ḥākimiyya*, to the narrow legal sense. He explained it in a wider sense as the source of beliefs, concepts, morals, values, culture and knowledge beside laws and governmental rules.<sup>59</sup> It is to be recalled that the word *ḥākimiyya* was already in use, especially in Turkish, to mean sovereignty and some reference to it in the same sense was to be found in some modern Arabic sources.<sup>60</sup> But there is no evidence to show that Quṭb was borrowing usage of the word from these origins. In fact, when he was asked, during his trial to explain the meaning of the word *ḥākimiyya* and its origin, he replied that he meant by it the source of legislation and claimed that he coined the word from his studies of Islam.<sup>61</sup> However it was evident, as he also admitted, that this concept of *ḥākimiyya* was influenced, if not directly adopted from, the ideas of the contemporary Pakistani thinker Mawdūdī which we have reviewed above.<sup>62</sup>

Quṭb asserted that *ḥākimiyya* was a divine quality which should be associated with none but God. This was not, he affirmed, his own subjective opinion or the suggestion of any other. It was what the Qur'ānic text had literally said. There were clear statements in the Qur'ān that God was not only sovereign over the universe and heaven but also over human affairs and their system of life.<sup>63</sup> To support his argument he depended on many citations from the Qur'ān. The following quotations are intended only as examples of the same.

- (1) 'His is the creation, His is the command.'<sup>64</sup>
- (2) 'The authority to judge is for none but God, He ordered that you worship none but Him.'<sup>65</sup>
- (3) 'Have they partners who have made lawful to them in the system of life what God has not allowed.'<sup>66</sup>
- (4) 'They take their rabbis and monks as Lords beside God.'<sup>67</sup>
- (5) 'Have you not considered those who though claiming that they believe in the revelations that have come to you and to others before you, yet they seek the judgement of a false god despite having been ordered to reject him.'<sup>68</sup>
- (6) 'Those who do not judge in accordance with God's revelations are "unbelievers", "transgressors" and "wrong-doers".'<sup>69</sup>

We can now attempt to summarize briefly his argument drawn from the above verses. As God was the creator of the universe and there was no partner beside Him in its creation, He ought to be the only one entitled to possess the command in determining its affairs including man's way of life which was but a part of that universal system. Since there is no one who partnered God in His creation, there can be no partnership with Him in legislating for mankind, that is to say, in sovereignty. In fact, no one possesses the necessary knowledge and qualifications to make laws except God. Therefore, it was not only a great mischief to associate sovereignty to a human being, but was also a form of polytheism. The Qur'ān is very clear with regard to this point. Anyone who submitted to man-made laws was described as a polytheist even though he believed in God and rendered Him other religious forms of worship. The Jews and Christians took their rabbis and priests as Lords in the religious and political sense of the word 'lord'. By following their legislation which was not in accordance with God's laws, they were actually worshipping these 'lords' though they never attributed to them godship over the universe. Likewise, if Muslims enforced man-made laws or accepted their implementation they then ceased to be Muslims.

Having said all this, it will not be difficult to understand the following far-reaching conclusions which were probably the main reason for Qutb being sentenced to death. He wrote:

Whenever the supreme sovereignty in any society is associated with God alone as depicted in the supremacy of His divine *Shari'a*, this will be the only state in which man gains real and complete freedom from

servitude to human whims and slavery to other men. This will be the only form of Islamic civilization in God's judgement. Since the civilization which God designed for mankind is founded on the respect and liberty of every individual, as a basic rule, respect and liberty is never attained when there is servitude of man to man. There is no liberty and respect in a society in which some men become lords entitled to legislate and hold the right of supreme sovereignty and the others become slaves submissive and obedient to these lords. Legislation is not only confined to legal judgements since values, standards, morals and customs are all part of legislation to which men are subjected with or without awareness. If the previous conditions prevail in any society it is to be considered as reactionary and backward, or, in Islamic terminology, as polytheistic and part of *jāhiliyya*.<sup>70</sup>

*Jāhiliyya* is a state and a condition and not a temporal historical period. Today, it prevails all over the world among people of all creeds, ideologies, systems and practices. It is based primarily on the principle of sovereignty of human beings over each other and the rejection of the absolute sovereignty of God over men. In it human inclinations in all shapes essentially made an arbitrary god and God's revealed code is denied legal application. It may take different forms and appearances, show different signs and features, have different names and qualities or establish different sects and systems. Yet, it always stems from its distinctive principle which defines its nature and reality.

Mankind is divided into various *jāhiliyya* societies.

There is the atheistic society which originally denies the existence of God. The case of these atheists may be self-evident and needs no further explanation.

There is the pagan society which recognizes the existence of God but partnered with Him many false gods and lords as is the case in India, Central Africa and various other parts of the world.

Also, as a *jahili* society there is the *ahl al-kitāb*, the Jews and the Christians. In the past these people attributed associates to God by relating a son to Him and by taking their rabbis and monks as lords beside God since they accepted their claim for sovereign rights and followed their canons even though they did not make prayers to them. At present they have driven completely the sovereignty of God out of their life and established for themselves systems such as the so-called capitalism and socialism and forms of government such as democracy and dictatorship. In that way they departed from the principle laid down in God's religion and adopted a *jāhiliyya* similar to that of the Greeks and the Romans by manufacturing systems and ways of life according to their opinion.

Likewise, the society that claims itself to be Muslim is in fact a

*jāhiliyya* one. It adopts the above method of the *ahl al-kitāb* and follows in their footsteps by deserting God's religion for a man-made religion.<sup>71</sup>

With regard to the question of the role of the community in a system in which God is the only sovereign, Mawdūdī and Quṭb offered slightly different answers. Generally, Quṭb seems to have paid more attention to the question of sovereignty of God than its relationship to the community. No doubt he spoke about the function of the Muslim community in the political system and its right of consultation (*shūrā*) and legislation within the limits of the *Sharī'a*. But it is not possible to find an elaborate explanation of the place of the community in relation to God's sovereignty except his reference to the position of man as a vicegerent (*khalīfa*) of God. In only one place he hinted that there was a difference between the source of authority and the exercise of it. He explained:

In Islam, the people elect the ruler and legitimate him to exercise the authority to enforce the laws of God. However, they are not the source of sovereignty which lends legitimacy to the law. The source of sovereignty is God only. Many, including Muslim scholars, seem to confuse the exercise of authority with its source. Humans in their totality do not possess the right of sovereignty. It is God Who is entitled to it. But men exercise the authority of application of what God legislated by virtue of His sovereignty.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, Mawdūdī dwelt on his concept of vicegerency for God to define the role of the Muslim community in relation to God's sovereignty. Every Muslim was a vicegerent of God and all Muslims possessed what he called 'popular vicegerency'. This popular vicegerency entitled the Muslim community to conduct all collective affairs by mutual consultation (*shūrā*); for example, the appointment of the head of state, the management of all governmental matters and the function of legislation in conformity with the explicit and implicit directives of the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* and the general spirit of Islam. He uncommonly denoted this authority of the people by the phrase 'limited popular sovereignty under the suzerainty of God'. In light of this discussion it may be assumed that Mawdūdī most probably used the two terms, *khalīfa* (vicegerency) and 'limited popular sovereignty under the suzerainty of God' to mean the same thing.<sup>73</sup> To verify this point further we need only to examine the following statement by Mawdūdī as he compares Islam, democracy and theocracy:

If I were permitted to coin a new term, I would describe this system of government as a 'theo-democracy', that is to say a divine democratic government, because under this the Muslims have been given a limited popular sovereignty under the suzerainty of God. The executive under this system of government is constituted by the general will of the Muslims who also have the right to depose it. All administrative matters and all questions about which no explicit injunction is to be found in the *Shari'a* are settled by the consensus of opinion among the Muslims. Every Muslim who is capable and qualified to give a sound opinion on matters of Islamic law, is entitled to interpret the law of God when such interpretation becomes necessary. In this sense, the Islamic polity is a democracy. But it is a theocracy in the sense that where an explicit command of God or His Prophet already exists, no Muslim leader or legislature, or any religious scholar can form an independent judgement, not even all the Muslims of the world put together, have any right to make the least alteration in it.<sup>74</sup>

This statement reveals that Mawdūdī found that his doctrine of divine sovereignty was inadequate to account for the Muslim political phenomenon unless it was aided by a doctrine of 'popular vicegerency' or 'limited popular sovereignty'. Apparently, Quṭb faced the same difficulty when he attempted to make a distinction between the source of sovereignty and the exercise of it. However, both attempts to resolve the difficulty appear to be unsatisfactory. On the one hand, how can an entity exercise a right which it does not hold? On the other hand, Mawdūdī's concept of popular vicegerency which assumed that every Muslim is a caliph of God could hardly be defended in light of use of the word *khalīfa* in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*.<sup>75</sup>

### iii. Criticism and Restatement

#### *Impropriety of the Term 'Sovereignty'*

Taking into account the difficulties faced by modern Muslim attempts to borrow the Western concept of sovereignty to express Islamic ideas of rulership, it should by now be clear that they were inadequate. The basic reason for this may be the impropriety of the term 'sovereignty' in its Western usage to accurately convey Islamic principles. In the West, sovereignty is understood to mean an authority to

make laws and to enforce them. Those Western thinkers who have believed in a monistic sovereignty hold these two constituents of it to be inseparable. Modern Muslim thinkers have also believed in a monistic sovereignty but they have found it difficult to associate its two elements of making and enforcing the law with one entity. It is difficult to vest the authority of enacting and implementing the law in a Muslim community since the real law-giver in Muslim belief is God. It is equally difficult to assign to God a coercive power which compels men to obey the law. There is no doubt that the necessary coercion to impose the law is left to a human power. Therefore, sovereignty in its Western sense is neither applicable to God nor to the Muslim community. Modern Muslims who have used the word sovereignty to express Islamic ideas have found themselves compelled to adapt its senses to suit their purposes. They no longer use it in its original Western sense. Hence, Mawdūdī, for instance, understood sovereignty in its Western classical sense to mean an absolute overlordship with unlimited right to make laws, impose order and subject the people to his will. Therefore, he equated sovereignty with *ulūhiyya* and reserved it to God. Even though he adjusted its proper sense, which denotes a human power working within the human society, he was additionally forced to recognize a human 'limited popular' sovereignty. Quṭb mainly used the word sovereignty (*hākimiyya*) to mean law-giving (*tashrī*). Assumingly, he ignored its other element of enforcing the law. On the other hand, those who placed sovereignty within the Muslim community have modified its sense by excluding from it the aspect of law-making. When Rashīd Riḍā and Ḥasan al-Bannā incorporated popular sovereignty (*sulṭat al-umma*) into Islamic ideals of government, they never meant that the people possessed a free legislative power as understood in Western terms. They, undoubtedly, held a strong conviction in the supremacy of the revealed laws, the *Sharī'a*.

In spite of disagreements about the meaning and location of sovereignty, it should be remembered that there is no real difference of opinion as regards the basic outlines of the Islamic political system. Muslim scholars, generally, are in agreement concerning the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* laws, the rights of the ruler and the powers of the Muslim community in relation to its government. Therefore, it is only a problem of terminology which made some scholars assign sovereignty to God and others associate it with the community. In the final analysis, there is common consent regarding original Islamic principles.

### *Islamic Phraseology*

Since borrowing the word sovereignty in its Western sense to convey Islamic principles has proved to be rather confusing, if not incorrect, it may be more proper to use the original Islamic phraseology. Firstly, there is the term *Ulūhiyya* (Godship), which certainly implies the right of command over the creation and legislation of mankind, and it clearly belongs exclusively to God. No doubt, the term *ulūhiyya* comprises all the meanings which those who assigned sovereignty to God wanted to attribute to Him. The term *mulk* suffices to denote human political power. It is also advantageous as it can account, as Ibn Khaldūn attempted, for the nature of political power in different civilizations. *Mulk* can equally exist in Muslim and non-Muslim societies. But Islamic *mulk*, which is properly termed *khilāfa*, must meet at least two conditions. It must, in the first place, recognize the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* laws and abide by them in accordance with the doctrine of *ulūhiyya*. Its power and competence (*shawka*) must also originally be derived from the consent of the governed people, that is to say, they must be consulted in all collective decisions including the formation of the government and the definition of law. If *mulk* is established by force instead of by consent of the people it is still possible to describe it as Islamic as long as it abides by the *Sharī'a* laws. But it is nevertheless seriously defective according to Islamic norms of the *khilāfa* system. For *mulk* is un-Islamic if the *Sharī'a* laws are not maintained regardless of whether it is in the hands of Muslims or not. A Muslim ceases to be a Muslim if he rejects belief in the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* laws as this would imply a rejection of the doctrine of *ulūhiyya*. To sum up, the terms *ulūhiyya* and *mulk* are very useful in describing the nature and location of legal and political authority in Islam.

### *The Original Meaning of Ḥākimiyya*

The word *ḥākimiyya* has been used by many modern Muslim thinkers as an equivalent to sovereignty in its Western origins. In the above discussion it has been shown how inappropriate it is to borrow this Western concept of sovereignty to describe the nature of political authority in Islam and we have further suggested adhering to the original Islamic phraseology. We shall now proceed to study the original meaning of the word *ḥākimiyya*. The word *ḥākimiyya* seems to be a modern derivative of the root *ḥakam* and as such we are not likely to come across any references to it in the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. However, we should take a close

look at the root *ḥ-k-m* and how it is used in the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* to denote authority and power. The verb *ḥakam* primarily means to restrain from doing that which is desired. A derivative of it, *ḥakama*, is a kind of bridle for a horse, so called because it renders it manageable or submissive to the rider, and prevents it from being refractory and the like. Hence, the word *ḥakam* mainly signifies to judge and the connotations of judgement, such as to decide, to order, to exercise authority, to rule and to govern.<sup>76</sup> In these general and original senses, the word and its derivatives, have occurred in the Qur'ānic text in many places, approximately one hundred.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the word is found in the *Ḥadīth* in its most usual senses. A thorough study of these usages reveals that the same words, *ḥakam* and its derivatives, have been commonly associated with God and human beings to denote judgement and command. In spite of this common application, a distinction is made between different levels or types of decision-making. While certain kinds of authority (*ḥukm*) are clearly being reserved to God alone, others are being assigned to human beings. Below is an attempt to classify these usages and to examine whom they are applied to.

1. *God*: Several senses of *ḥakam* and its derivatives have been used in association with God. *Ḥakam*, *Ḥakīm*, and *Ḥākīm* are all attributes of God and they are of close meanings.<sup>78</sup> They signify that *ḥukm* (judgement and its connotations) belong to Him. *Ḥukm* is the prevention of disorder, and when applied to God it refers to His qualities as a Sustainer of the Universe, a Law-giver to mankind, and a Judge with special reference to the Hereafter. The belief that God rules the world in the sense that His Will determines and causes all the happenings in the universe is, perhaps, well-known and need not detain us with further elaboration. Equally, the doctrine that God is the sole Judge on the Day of Judgement is a valid belief in Islam. Possibly, the most relevant principle to this study is the one that God is a Law-giver. One meaning of the word *ḥakam*, which coincides with connotations of the word *shar'*, is to prescribe or command an ordinance or a Law.<sup>79</sup> Here are some citations in which *ḥakam* and its derivatives are used to mean law-making.

(a) After ordering the fulfilment of all obligations, and allowing some kinds of food and prohibiting others, it is concluded that 'Verily God ordains (*yaḥkum*) what He wills.'<sup>80</sup> Qurṭubi, in his comments on this verse, remarks that the rules laid down in it differed from pre-Islam Arab traditions. In order to support the new

changes, it has been asserted that: 'God ordains (*yaḥkum*) what He wills', meaning that it is He Who legislates what He desires, in the way that pleases Him.<sup>81</sup>

(b) A number of regulations concerning the marriage relations between Muslims and non-Muslims end with the statement that: 'Such is the ordinance (*ḥukm*) of God Who judges between you, as God is knowing and wise.'<sup>82</sup>

(c) *Hukm*, in this respect is also used to denote the final decision to settle all disputes and to define what is right and what is wrong. It is said: 'And whatever the subject of your disputes, with God its decision (*ḥukm*) rests.'<sup>83</sup>

(d) In the pre-Islamic period, the word *ḥukm* was also used to refer to the arbitration made by the chief of a tribe, a soothsayer (*kāhin*) or a notable to settle disputes. In connection with this kind of arbitration, the Qur'ān raised the question: 'Is it the judgement (*ḥukm*) of the times of ignorance that they desire? But what better can there be than that of God?'<sup>84</sup>

(e) The *ḥukm* (judgement) of God is described as being the highest, final, conclusive and independent judgement in the following verses:

- (i) 'Is not God *aḥkam al-ḥākimīn*? (the most conclusive of Judges, the most just).'<sup>85</sup>
- (ii) 'When God commands (*yaḥkum*), there is none to reverse His command (*ḥukm*).'<sup>86</sup>
- (iii) 'And none may share part in His order (*ḥukm*).'<sup>87</sup>
- (iv) '*Hukm* (command, decision, judgement) belongs only to God.'<sup>88</sup>

In relation to this usage it is reported that the Prophet disliked referring to a man, who had been an arbitrator in the pre-Islamic period, by the name of *ḥakam* as God only is the *Ḥakam*, and *ḥukm* belongs to Him only.<sup>89</sup>

(f) Sometimes, the term *ḥukm*, instead of being attributed directly to God, is related to His Book which is considered to contain the truth that judges between mankind in all disputed matters.<sup>90</sup>

2. *Men*: On many occasions in the Qur'ān men are referred to as the real holders of power to perform *ḥukm*, i.e. to judge and to rule. For instance, the Torah, the Law given to Moses, is described as the code by which the Prophets, the rabbis and the doctors *yaḥkum* (rule and judge) the Jews.<sup>91</sup> David is addressed: 'O, David, we have made you a caliph on earth, to *taḥkum* (judge or rule) between men justly.'<sup>92</sup> The authority of *ḥukm* is also stated to be in the hands of

Muḥammad. The Qur'ān says: 'No, by your Lord, they will not believe until they make you judge (*yuhakimūk*) in all disputes between them.'<sup>93</sup> In another place it says: 'Verily we have sent down to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge (*tahkum*) between men.'<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the Qur'ān clearly states that *ḥukm*, in this sense, is not only performed by Prophets. According to the Qur'ān, men, even those who do not necessarily hold high positions, could carry out its responsibilities. One of the resolutions to marriage disputes involves the appointment of an arbiter from the husband's side and one from the wife's side, in an effort to bring back harmony to the family and so reach agreement. Such an arbiter, who could be any person, is called *ḥakam* in the Qur'ān.<sup>95</sup> The word *yahkum* is also used to refer to the judgement of two just persons who are called upon to estimate the equivalent compensation to be given when one kills game while on pilgrimage.<sup>96</sup>

In light of the above discussion, it seems that the Qur'ān uses the word *ḥukm* and its derivatives to denote decision-making which is performed at different levels and on various matters. Apparently, some senses of the word *ḥukm* are only to be assigned to God and others are applicable to men. When *ḥukm* stands for the ultimate authority to define beliefs, norms, values, laws and what is right and wrong, it is undoubtedly attributed to God. This fact is clearly expressed by the Qur'ān in statements such as: 'Verily, *ḥukm* (command, decision, judgement) belongs only to God.'<sup>97</sup> However, these statements are apparently very general and should be understood and interpreted within the context of other Islamic principles of rule. If they are singled out and viewed separately, they are bound to result in misunderstandings. Balanced connotations are to be inferred to them.

## Conclusion

1. In defining the nature of Islamic political and legal authority, it may be more proper to use the original Islamic phraseology. Among these, is the term *Ulūhiyya* (Godship) or *Rubūbiyya* (Lordship) which denotes, besides its various other rich connotations, the absolute right to command and to define beliefs, norms, laws and right and wrong. It exclusively belongs to God, Allah. The term used to represent human political power in Muslim and non-Muslim societies is *Mulk*. *Mulk* is regarded as Islamic, and properly termed *Khilāfa*, when it fulfils at

least two requirements: (a) it must acknowledge the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* laws and abide by them, (b) it must refer all collective decisions, including the formation of government and legislation, to the people and gain their consent. *Mulk* suffers a great defectiveness if it is established by force and does not depend on the people's consent though it may still be labelled Islamic as long as it enforces the *Sharī'a* laws.

2. The Arabic word *ḥukm* signifies judgement, command, authority, power and dominion. When the Qur'ān assigns it to God, for instance in the statement '*in al-ḥukm illā li-Allāh*' (command belongs only to God), it demonstrates that God is the real law-giver and that His revealed law, the *Sharī'a*, is binding on mankind. On the other hand, the Qur'ān also attributes *ḥukm* to human beings since the application and interpretation of the *Sharī'a* is necessarily a human action. Hence, the fact that *ḥukm* belongs only to God should not be singled out and viewed separately from other principles of Islamic rule. The other side of the coin is that men have also been attributed with *ḥukm*. *Ḥukm* that belongs to God is distinctive from *ḥukm* that belongs to men. Each of these facts should be understood in its proper context and none of them should be overlooked to avoid serious misunderstandings. There is no doubt that human beings who set laws which are not in conformity with the laws of God and those who obey them are both blameworthy according to Islam. If those who set laws to displace the *Sharī'a* are acknowledged with the right to do so and the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* is rejected, this would be regarded as unmistakable apostasy by Islam because it contradicts belief in *Ulūhiyya*. It may only be a sin that does not amount to apostasy when belief in the supremacy of the *Sharī'a* remains unshakeable despite the fact that its displacement is imposed and complied with.

3. The attempts of modern Muslim thinkers to borrow the Western concept of sovereignty to express Islamic rulership are, perhaps, improper. In the West, sovereignty is understood to mean an authority to enact laws and to coerce people to submit to them. In Islam, God is the absolute true Law-giver and Muslims are entrusted with the coercive power to enforce His divine laws. Therefore, sovereignty in its strict modern political sense is neither applicable to God nor to the Muslim community. Moreover, it also appears to be inappropriate to use the word *ḥākimiyya* as an equivalent to sovereignty. Sovereignty stands for the highest level in the process of decision-making undertaken by an authority within human society. The Arabic word *ḥukm* (or *ḥākimiyya*) appears to have a

wider meaning than sovereignty as it denotes decision-making performed at different levels and on various matters. Therefore, perhaps only in loose usage or in very general terms, can the two words be regarded as equivalents to each other.

4. However, if it is required that the word sovereignty should signify Islamic legal and political authorities it may be more consistent to give it two senses: one equivalent to *ulūhiyya* and the other to *mulk*. *Ulūhiyya* implies an absolute sovereignty and *mulk* implies a limited relative sovereignty. In other words, there is more than one sovereign in Islam, namely, God and human political power, *mulk*, which comprises both the ruler and the people. In the first place, this agrees with the recent tendency in Western thought which splits sovereignty into distinctive types each fully sovereign in its proper sphere. What is termed legal sovereignty in the West, which deals with law-giving, can be assigned to God or to His divine laws, the *Sharī'a*, as they are definitely binding upon the Muslim community. Political sovereignty, which chiefly means the power to enforce the law, can be vested in the Muslim ruler who enjoys wide powers of administration in Islam. The people, who possess the right to elect the ruler, and to depose him, and to participate in making collective decisions, can be considered to hold ultimate political sovereignty and the ruler immediate sovereignty.

The fact that there is more than one sovereign in a Muslim society can be further verified if we apply the criterion of obedience which detects the existence of sovereignty in any society. It is evident that the Muslim community ought to render obedience to God, His Prophet and *ulū al-amr* as it is stated in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān said: 'O you who believe, obey Allāh and obey His Messenger and those from among you who hold authority (*ulū al-amr*).'<sup>98</sup> Two objects of obedience stand out from this verse: God or His divine law as contained in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna* and human authority as denoted by the term *ulū al-amr* which indicates both the ruler and the persons who are qualified to decide the collective affairs of the Muslim community.

## NOTES

- 1 Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary to the English Language* (Oxford, 1882), p. 576; W.J. Stankiewicz, 'Sovereignty', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1981), 17, p. 309. The years 1290 and 1297 are suggested for the first usage of the term in English. In other European languages, it also emerged from the same origin, and, at first, other equivalents were used to denote the same meaning of sovereignty.
- 2 La Coutume de Beauvoisis, quoted in Leon Duguit, *Law in Modern State*. Trans. Frida and Harold Laski (London, 1921), pp. 8–9.
- 3 Paul W. Ward, *Sovereignty* (London, 1928), pp. 3–4, 23–6; Duguit, op. cit., pp. 5–9.
- 4 J. Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République* (1576). Trans. Richard Knolles as: *The Six Books of Commonwealth*, ed. Kenneth D. McRae (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), Book 1, ch. 8, p. 84.
- 5 See Bodin, op. cit., Book 1, chs. 8 and 10.
- 6 George Schwarzenberger, 'The Forms of Sovereignty', in W.J. Stankiewicz, *In Defence of Sovereignty* (New York, 1969), p. 165.
- 7 The enquiry of Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century English philosopher, into the problem of sovereignty is contained in his book *Leviathan* published in 1651. A new print of it is edited by C.B. Macpherson (Middlesex, 1986).
- 8 See J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*. Trans. G.D.H. Cole, ed. J. Brumfitt and J. Hall (London, 1983). The French Revolution, in large measure, depended on Rousseau's ideas.
- 9 John Austin, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* (London, 1832), p. 200
- 10 See Francis Harry Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 149–55
- 11 Cf. Duguit, op. cit., pp. 20–2.
- 12 Harold Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (London, 1925), p. 48.
- 13 See Stanley Benn, 'The Uses of Sovereignty', *Political Studies*, III, No. 2 (June, 1955), pp. 109–22. Reprinted in Stankiewicz (ed.), *In Defence of Sovereignty*, pp. 67–85.
- 14 W.J. Rees, 'The Theory of Sovereignty Restated', in Stankiewicz (ed.), *In Defence of Sovereignty*, p. 221.
- 15 See Jacques Maritain, 'The Concept of Sovereignty', in Stankiewicz (ed.), *In Defence of Sovereignty*, p. 47.
- 16 G.C. Field, *Political Theory* (Strand, 1963), p. 75.
- 17 See 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, ed. 'Ali 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfī, 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1980), II, pp. 574–8. *Al-Muqaddima* is translated into English by Franz Rosenthal, 3 volumes (London, 1958).
- 18 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* (Cairo, 1973), p. 5.
- 19 Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā* (al-Ribat, n.d.), 35, pp. 361–6, 408; 7, pp. 376–88; 28, pp. 384–6; 10, pp. 470–1.
- 20 Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qalaqshandī, *al-Ināfa fi Ma'ālim al-Khilāfa* (Kuwait, 1964), p. 15.
- 21 Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Fatāwā* (al-Ribat, n.d.), 35, p. 46.

- 22 Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-Mīlal wa al-Ahwa’ wa al-Niḥal* (Beirut, n.d.), IV, p. 210. See also Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī, *al-Ghiyāthī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Dīb (Cairo, 1410 AH), p. 210. Al-Juwaynī described the *imām* as though all Muslims have become one person embodied in his person, because he has undertaken responsibility for managing their affairs and thus he is a representative of the whole of them. Moreover, al-Juwaynī discussed the qualities of superiority and independence (*istiqlāl*) as main features of the *imām* who, in his capacity as a leader, should be followed and not be subordinate to anyone. See al-Juwaynī, *op. cit.*, pp. 84–90.
- 23 This feature was pointed out by al-Rāzī (1149–1209). According to him, the people (the *umma*) or their representatives (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*) possess some kind of authority but it is not the authority of the *imāma al-‘uẓmā* which belongs only to one definite person. Al-Rāzī’s view is quoted in Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa* (Cairo, 1988), p. 17.
- 24 Cf. Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya* (n.p., n.d.), I, pp. 189–95.
- 25 A good study of the thought of the Young Ottomans can be found in Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, 1962).
- 26 Mardin, *op. cit.*, pp. 283–336.
- 27 For his life and thought see Mardin, *op. cit.*, pp. 360–84.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 366
- 29 *Ulum*, 1 August 1869, p. 18, quoted in Mardin, *op. cit.*, p. 376.
- 30 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa aw al-Imāma al-‘Uẓmā* (Cairo, 1923, rep. 1988), p. 9.
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 39–41, 51–5; *Idem.*, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (Cairo, 1328 AH), IV, pp. 198–205, V, pp. 195–8.
- 32 Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, pp. 21–2.
- 33 Qur’ān, 4: 58.
- 34 Qur’ān 4: 83.
- 35 Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, p. 22; *idem.*, *Tafsīr*, V, pp. 180–6.
- 36 Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, pp. 101–8.
- 37 Riḍā, *Tafsīr*, V, pp. 87–8.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 195–201.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 187
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- 41 Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, pp. 1–2.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 152–4.
- 44 Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Fī Mu’tamar Ṭalabat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, in *Majmū’at al-Rasā’il* (Beirut, 1981), pp. 160–1.
- 45 al-Bannā, *Risālat al-Mu’tamar al-Khāmīs*, in *Majmū’at al-Rasā’il*, p. 138.
- 46 al-Bannā, *Niẓām al-Ḥukm*, in *Majmū’at al-Rasā’il*, p. 318.
- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 322–4.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 325–7.

- 49 Ibid., pp. 328–30.
- 50 al-Bannā, *Risālat al-Mu'tamar al-Khāmis*, in *Majmū'at al-Rasā'il*, pp. 139–40.
- 51 Sa'īd Ḥalīm Pāshā, 'The Reform of Muslim Society'. English trans. Muḥammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *Islamic Culture*, I, No. 1 (January, 1927), p. 101.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 115–16.
- 53 Mawdūdī, *The Islamic Law and Constitution*. Trans. Khurshid Ahmad, 7th ed. (Lahore, 1980), pp. 212–14.
- 54 Mawdūdī quoted the following Qur'ānic verses: 12: 40, 3: 154, 16: 116 and 5: 44.
- 55 The following verses of the Qur'ān are quoted: 4: 64, 6: 50, 6: 90 and 3: 97.
- 56 Mawdūdī, op. cit., pp. 136–8.
- 57 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 7th ed. (Beirut, 1971), VII, p. 725 (comments on verse 12: 40).
- 58 Cf. Quṭb, *Muqawimāt al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī* (Cairo, 1986), p. 133.
- 59 Cf. Quṭb, *Ma'ālim fī-al-Tarīq* (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 123–4.
- 60 Cf. Riḍā, *al-Khilāfa*, p. 153.
- 61 Sāmī Jawhar, *al-Mawṭā yatakallamūn* (Cairo, 1977), p. 135, quoted in Ṣalāḥ al-Khālidī, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān fī-al-Mizān* (Jeddah, 1986), p. 185.
- 62 Ibid., p. 135.
- 63 Quṭb, *Muqawimāt*, p. 147.
- 64 Qur'ān 7: 54; cf. Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, III, pp. 524–6.
- 65 Qur'ān 9: 40; cf. Ibid., IV, pp. 725–7.
- 66 Qur'ān 42: 21; cf. Ibid., VII, p. 281.
- 67 Qur'ān 9: 31. This was a reference to the Jews and Christians who followed their leaders in legislating what was contrary to the laws of God. Cf. Ibid., IV, pp. 202–5.
- 68 Qur'ān 4: 59; cf. Ibid., II, pp. 421–2.
- 69 Qur'ān 5: 44, 45, 47; cf. Ibid., pp. 724–53.
- 70 *Jāhiliyya*, derived from *jahl* (ignorance) is originally the name given to the pre-Islamic period.
- 71 Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, III, pp. 461–3 (comments on verse 7: 2).
- 72 Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, comments on verse 9: 40.
- 73 Mawdūdī, op. cit., pp. 138–52, 218–19.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 139–40.
- 75 See Jafar Sheikh, Idris, 'Is Man the Vicegerent of God?', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 99–110.
- 76 Muḥammad Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1300 AH), XV, pp. 30–2; Edward W. Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon* (London, 1863), pp. 616–17.
- 77 See Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-'l-Fāz al-Qur'ān* (Istanbul, 1984), pp. 212–13.
- 78 Ibn Manzūr, op. cit., XV, p. 30.
- 79 See Qur'ān 42: 13, 42: 21, 5: 48, 45: 18.

- 80 Qur'ān 5: 2.
- 81 See Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1966), VI, p. 216.
- 82 Qur'ān 60: 10.
- 83 Qur'ān 42: 10.
- 84 Qur'ān 5: 53. Qurṭubī, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 36.
- 85 Qur'ān 95: 8 and 11: 45.
- 86 Qur'ān 13: 41.
- 87 Qur'ān 18: 26.
- 88 Qur'ān 6: 57, 12: 40.
- 89 Transmitted by Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī in Ibn Athir, *Jami-'l-'Uṣul*, I, p. 373.
- 90 Qur'ān 2: 213, 3: 23.
- 91 Qur'ān 5: 44.
- 92 Qur'ān 38: 26; see also 21: 78, 79.
- 93 Qur'ān 4: 65.
- 94 Qur'ān 4: 105; see also 5: 43, 48, 49.
- 95 Qur'ān 4: 35. It is to be recalled that the Prophet disliked calling a man a *ḥakam*.
- 96 Qur'ān 5: 95.
- 97 Qur'ān 6: 57, 12: 40.
- 98 Qur'ān 4: 59.

# Man and the Future of Civilization: An Islamic Perspective

*Khurshid Ahmad*

Man has conquered the seas and the skies; man has harnessed the forces of nature to his service; man has created vast and complex institutions and organizations to administer his affairs; man seems to have reached the pinnacle of material progress!

Man also claims to have reflected deeply upon his position in the universe. He has begun to interpret reality with the sole use of his reason and the knowledge yielded by his senses and experiences. With a new-found confidence in his own reasoning power and the powers of science and technology, he has jettisoned his link with tradition, with revealed truth, with the transcendent dimension, indeed with every form of guidance from beyond himself.

From this elevated position he seeks to mould the world according to his ideas, whims and fancies. But the 'brave new world' he has created drives more and more men and women into profound disillusionment. In spite of unprecedented technological advancement and overall material development, the condition of man remains highly unsettled. He sees the powerful subjugating the weak, the rich dominating the poor, the 'have-nots' arrayed against the 'haves'; he sees injustice and exploitation at national and international levels; he sees disintegration of the family, alienation of individuals from society and its institutions, even from himself; and he sees the abuse of trust and authority in all spheres of human life and activity. Although he has shown his ability to fly in the air like the birds, and to swim in the oceans like the fish, he has failed to show his ability to live on the earth as a good human being. His failure here brings into doubt his capability to conduct his affairs in society without clear-cut guidelines for human action.

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Man finds himself in a dilemma. He believes that he has reached the apex of civilization. However, on reaching the apex he faces a new and greater void. He finds himself and the civilization he has built threatened by forces of his own creation. He searches frantically for remedies to rid his life of those portents of destruction which threaten to deprive him of his cherished dream of ultimate bliss. He finds that his world-view lacks definitive criteria to help him judge between right and wrong; he finds that his learning and expertise fail to give him universal criteria to distinguish between good and bad; he finds that change and the pace of change have swept him off his feet and thrown him into a morass of relativism – nothing tangible and lasting remains as the basis of morality, individual and social. Increasingly man becomes dubious about the direction in which he is heading. His inability to conceive a way out of this dilemma plunges him into despair and gloom. Man becomes increasingly selfish and unmindful of other human beings, of his own kith and kin as much as of humanity's collective needs. Man becomes aware of a choice: either he relinquishes all pretence to be anything other than an animal and sadly pronounces himself as the 'naked ape' or he strives further to regain and retain his sanity and search for a new paradigm for man and society.

### **The Crisis of Civilization**

This is the predicament of man in the last decade of the twentieth century. All major philosophers of history of the present century from Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*)<sup>1</sup> to Arnold Toynbee (*A Study of History*)<sup>2</sup> and Pitirim Sorokin (*Social and Cultural Dynamics* and *The Crisis of Our Age*)<sup>3</sup> are of the view that the dominant secular-humanistic civilization of the West, despite its material affluence and military prowess, is in the throes of a serious crisis. The forces that led to the rise and predominance of this civilization have lost their rallying power. The forces of disintegration and decay are now overtaking the forces of strength and consolidation. The moorings that secured the ship are collapsing; values that held people together are in disarray. The malaise is no longer confined to one or a few areas; the whole river of life has become polluted.

Joseph A. Camilleri, a perceptive analyst of contemporary history, describes this crisis of our times brilliantly:

✓ The contemporary human crisis is so profound and pervasive that the very attempt to analyze it – let alone resolve it – seems to defy the power of human reason and imagination. The battle for survival is currently being waged by millions of men whose precarious existence is one of poverty, squalor and even hunger. Man's predicament impinges on the future of entire nations that are threatened by external attack or internal disintegration. It dominates the vast network of international relations so delicately poised on the dangerous and ultimately unstable 'balance of terror' . . .

✓ Traditional conceptions of time, space and movement have been overthrown by the technological revolution and the shift to an exploitative, power-centered culture. The ensuing social and psychological discontinuity and moral vacuum have produced a severe crisis of conscience and a large-scale flight from reality . . .

✓ The crisis which confronts twentieth century man is truly global, not simply by virtue of countless men and women, but in the more far-reaching sense that it permeates and vitiates the whole fabric of human relations and human institutions, and is now distorting man's entire relationship with the natural order . . . No human community, no individual, no corner of the globe, however remote or isolated, however powerful or well endowed, can now escape from the disorder which affects the entire planet . . . Perhaps we can best describe the global crisis in terms of a fundamental disequilibrium which severely limits and may ultimately destroy man's capacity for biological and cultural adaptation to his environment.

✓ Among the most common forms of pathological behaviour in modern industrial society, one would include the preoccupation with having and acquiring, rather than with being or becoming; the obsession with the power to dominate rather than liberate; the profound sense of alienation from rather than participation in the wider social reality; the attitude towards work and leisure as means of killing time rather than creatively living in time; the predisposition to an in-group rather than an out-group psychology which discriminates on the basis of sex, race, creed or nationality; the tendency to resolve conflicts through the use or threat of force . . . What distinguishes the super-industrial system – and the global spread of its empire – is the high degree with which social pathology has been institutionalized through the pyramidal stratification of wealth, power and knowledge, but above all through the growing monopoly of industrial production over the satisfaction of human wants . . . the institutional integration of pathological behaviour has now reached such proportions that it is not merely the quality but the very survival of human life which is at risk . . . If this is an accurate diagnosis of the serious and deteriorating condition of our civilization,

then no piece-meal, provisional, or parochial remedy is likely to prove efficacious. It would appear that in order to sustain the organic evolution of the human species it will be necessary to develop perspectives and responses that are both radical and global in inspiration.<sup>4</sup>

The latest Report by the Council of the Club of Rome, *The First Global Revolution* (1991), which has appeared as a follow-up to the earlier report published in 1972, *The Limits to Growth*, is not only the most recent index of this crisis; it is also an eloquent plea to search for a way out of the crisis by going back to the basic essentials. The report starts with the succinct observation:

Human kind seems to be gripped by a *fin de siècle* attitude of uncertainty at the threshold of the new century, but the end of a millennium brings a still deeper mystique with its sense of widespread rapid change and the uncertainty accompanying it.<sup>5</sup>

The report acknowledges that despite unprecedented economic development about 1.3 billion people, more than 20 per cent of the world's population are seriously sick or malnourished. It records as 'an indisputable fact', 'the world economic discrepancies, the flagrant inequalities, the vast and extreme poverty facing an excess of wealth', 'all sorts of tensions and conflicts which are showing up here and there in the most diverse geographic zones'. The report focuses on 'the contemporary situation' as 'an increasing awareness that the human race, in pursuit of material gain by exploitation of nature is racing towards destruction of the planet itself'. Focusing on 'the human malaise' the report observes:

The shock waves produced by the drastic changes of the first global revolution are sparing no region and no society. The upheaval has broken up relationships and belief systems inherited from the past without giving guidelines for the future. There are so many reasons for doubts and despairs: the disappearance of values and references; the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the world and the difficulty of understanding the new global society; unsolved problems such as continuing environmental deterioration and extreme poverty and underdevelopment in the Southern countries; the impact of mass media, often operating as a magnifying glass for a crushing reality and a throbbing song of calamity.<sup>6</sup>

Delineating the nature and extent of the challenge, the report says:

Never in the course of history has mankind been faced with so many threats and dangers: catapulted unprepared into a world where time and distance have been abolished, man is sucked into a planetary cyclone swirling with seemingly unrelated factors, the causes and consequences of which form an inextricable maze . . . at this coming turn of the century, mankind is overwhelmed by the scope of the phenomenon coming at it from all sides, overwhelmed – and the word is not too strong – because traditional structures and institutions can no longer manage the problems in their present dimension. To make things worse, the archaic and unsuitable structures are set in a true moral crisis. The disappearance of value systems, the questioning of traditions, the collapse of ideologies, the absence of a global vision, the limits of the current practices of democracy confirm the void confronting societies. Individuals feel helpless, caught, as it were, between the rise of previously unknown perils on the one hand, and, on the other, an incapacity to answer the complex problems in time and to attack the roots of evil, not just its consequences.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting and instructive to note that the report, while assessing this *problematique*, invites humankind to reflect upon *Sūrah* 103: 2–3 of the Qurʾān:

Indeed, man is in distress! Except for those who believe and do good deeds, and command love among themselves, and command patient endeavour among themselves.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Islamic Alternative**

Any objective analysis of the contemporary crisis of civilization is bound to suggest that mankind stands at a critical juncture. More of the same is a recipe for disaster. Survival depends on a fresh start – on a rediscovery of the moral moorings of humankind and the affirmation of a vision of humans and society based on a moral understanding of the world, humankind and its destiny.

At this stage, humans need to discover the Word of God. It informs them of their Creator, informs them of the purpose of their creation, informs them of their place as the ‘best of creation’, provides them with guidance to lead a fulfilling and rewarding life, tells them of the Hereafter, teaches them the value of their fellow beings, makes everything else subservient to the criterion of truth and justice – in

short, it enables them to be at peace with themselves, the whole of creation and the Creator.<sup>9</sup>

In the face of this real challenge to humankind today, all men and women of faith must state with all the force at their command that the real issue is not simply one of a new economic order or a new political arrangement, but of a new world order, based on a new concept of the human person and a different vision of society and the destiny of the human community. Any effort at reform under the inspiration of the world faiths in general and Islam in particular must start by correcting this perspective for understanding the human predicament and the way out.

The real need is not to seek concessions here and there to bring about some changes in the superstructures. It is rather to re-examine the foundations on which the entire structure of society and the economy is built and the ideals which the culture aspires to achieve. The crisis in economic, political and social relations is the natural outcome of those ideals and the structures which have been built to realize them. Islam, therefore, suggests that it is only through inviting humankind to have a new vision of humans and society that its house can be set in order. This calls for a basic change in our approach.

The methodology and strategy of change, as developed and practised in the contemporary West, has assumed that a radical transformation of humans can be brought about only by changing the environment and institutions. That is why emphasis has always been placed on external restructuring. The failure of this method lies in ignoring people as its real focus – their beliefs, motives, values and commitments. It has ignored the need to bring about change within men and women themselves and has concentrated more on change in the outside world. What is needed, however, is a total change – *within people themselves as well as in their socio-economic environment*. The problem is not merely structural, although structural arrangements would also have to be remodelled. The starting point must be the hearts and souls of men and women, their perception of reality, and their own place and mission in life.

The Islamic approach to social change takes cognizance of all these elements:

- 1 ✓ Social change is not a result of totally predetermined historical forces. Although the existence of a number of obstacles and constraints is a fact of life and history, there is no historical determinism. Change has to be planned and

engineered. And this change should be purposeful, that is, a movement towards the ideal.

✓2. People are the active agent of change. All other forces have been subordinated to them in their capacity as God's vicegerent and deputy (*khalifa*) on the earth. Within the framework of the divine arrangement of this universe and its laws, it is the humans themselves who are responsible for making or marring their destiny.

✓3. There needs to be change not only in the environment but also within the hearts and souls of men and women – their attitudes, motivation, commitment, and their resolve to mobilize all that is within them and around them for the fulfilment of their objectives.

✓4. Life is a network of interrelationships. Change means some disruption in some relationships somewhere. So there is a danger of change becoming an instrument of disequilibrium within men and women and in society. Islamically-oriented social change would cause the least friction and disequilibria, with planned and co-ordinated movement from one state of equilibrium to a higher one, or from a state of disequilibrium towards equilibrium. Hence, change has to be balanced, gradual and evolutionary. Innovation is to be coupled with integration. It is this unique Islamic approach which leads to revolutionary changes along an evolutionary trajectory.

These basic changes, if implemented, will transform our methods of dealing with the problems of a new world order.

The religion of Islam embodies the final and most complete Word of God. It is the embodiment of the code of life which God, the Creator and the Lord of the Universe, has revealed for the guidance of the human race. Islam integrates humans with God and His Creation in such a way that the humans move in co-operation with all that exists. Neglect of this dimension has impoverished human life and has made most of humankind's material conquests meaningless. Over-secularization has deprived human life of its spiritual significance. However, spiritual greatness cannot be achieved by a simple swing of the pendulum to the other extreme. Harmony and equilibrium can be attained only by the integration of the material with the spiritual. This is the way advocated by Islam. It makes the whole of the domain of existence spiritual and religious. It stands for the harmonization of the human will with the Divine Will: this is how peace is

achieved in human life. It is through peace with God that people attain peace and human order, and also peace with nature, outside as well as within them.

Humans and nature are not at war with each other; they are partners engaged in a common effort to achieve the divine mission. There is no place for neglect of the ecological dimension in this integrated approach. In our search for a new world order today, Islam emphasizes that we must aspire to a new paradigm for life, which could tackle human problems differently, not merely from the perspective of limited national or regional interest, but also from the perspective of what is right and wrong, and how best we can strive to evolve a just and humane world order at different levels of our existence, individual, national and international.

That the present order is characterized by injustice and exploitation has been proved beyond any shadow of a doubt. Islam suggests that the present order fails because it is based upon a wrong concept of human beings and their relationship with other humans, society, nature and the world. The search for a new order brings us to the need for a new concept of human beings and their role. From the viewpoint of world religions in general, and Islam in particular, the focus of the discussion must be shifted to a new vision of the person and society, to an effort to bring about change at the level of human consciousness and values, leading to a new cultural transformation.

Islam is a movement for social change. It gives not only a clear concept of society and the *modus vivendi* of bringing about the coveted change in history, but also clear guidelines for socio-economic policy, for some of the key institutions that guarantee the implementation of that policy, and an organized social effort under disciplined leadership to see that these objectives are achieved in space and time.

Muslims have this movement-oriented approach to religion. This model operates at three levels: that of the individual, society and the world. First, unless individuals have a new faith, a new consciousness and a new perception of their own role, the required changes cannot be brought about. Second is the level of society. Initially it may be at the national level, though later the whole world may be included. The Islamic strategy is that it starts with creating a new consciousness in the individual, who imbibes its values and strives for the establishment of a just life, not on the basis of expediency or primarily to seek personal or group interests, but to do what is right and just. The Qur'an shows us how an individual problem

has to be dealt with at the universal level when it says that if one person is unjustly killed, this is tantamount to killing the entire human race, and that whoever saves one single life saves the whole race.<sup>10</sup> This is how an individual incident is transformed into a world problem, how an event opens up the realm of values.

Islam is not a defence of the status quo. Instead, it is a critique of human life, including the lives of Muslims and the organization of Muslim society. Present-day Muslim society falls far short of Islamic standards. Thus we believe that Muslim society has to be reformed and restructured in order to establish those social, economic and political norms and institutions which would establish justice in human relations. Islam wants to bring political power under the control of its moral ideals. Such a society and state would be established as a result of a social movement directed towards Islamic revival. Thus Muslims would be in a position to play their ideological role in the world, by first setting their own house in order, making their own resources available to build a model society where they have political power, and then by sharing it with others in the interests of justice, acting on the same principle followed by the Prophet when he helped the famine-stricken people of Makka although they were politically at war with him.

The Islamic State has never been at war with human beings as such; its confrontation is with the institutions which represent belligerent political power. This may help lead humankind towards the model of a new world order where justice will be done to all, friend and foe alike, and where wealth will be shared with the needy not because it is expedient but because this is just.

The basic values on which this world order is established are as follows:

#### 1. *Tawhīd (God's Unity and Sovereignty)*

This is the foundation on which Islam's world-view and its scheme of life is based. It lays down the rules of the God-human and human-human relationships. *Tawhīd* is not merely a metaphysical doctrine. The human approach to social reality is an inextricable part of this belief. The establishment of justice in human relations is a demand of this faith. Belief in God's Unity and His Sovereignty means that all human beings are equal, and that their rights (*Ḥuqūq al-'ibād*) are a natural extension of God's rights (*Ḥuqūq Allah*). The Qur'ān says:

Have you observed him who denies the *dīn*? [the faith and religion, the divine law; the principle of accountability; the Day of Judgement]  
 He is the one who spurns the orphan,  
 Does not urge the feeding of the needy,  
 Bitter grief to worshippers  
 Who are neglectful of their prayers;  
 Who would be seen in prostration  
 Yet refuse kindnesses and charity.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. *Khilāfa (Vicegerency)*

Islam defines human beings' status in the world as that of God's vicegerents – His deputies and representatives. Everything that exists is at the disposal of humans for the fulfilment of this roll. All resources, physical and otherwise, are in the nature of a trust in our hands. This means that we are not the masters, we are God's agents and our primary concern should be the fulfilment of the Will of the Lord. We are in the position of trustees in respect of everything in the universe, our personal faculties and all our possessions and belongings. All authority is to be exercised within the framework of this trust and we are accountable for what we do. This principle stipulates our active participation in the affairs of the world, to seek life-fulfilment. This invites us to treat the whole of creation not as foe, but as partner and friend, made to fulfil the same objectives. The Islamic concept of the equality and brotherhood of human beings and the creation of the ideological kinship of the *umma* (the community of faith) are essential elements of this principle of *khilāfa*, human trusteeship and stewardship.

## 3. *Establishment of Justice Among Human Beings*

The establishment of justice among human beings is one of the basic objectives for which God raised His Prophets and sent down His guidance.<sup>12</sup> All human beings have rights to all that God has provided and thus God's bounties are to be shared equitably.<sup>13</sup> The poor and the needy have a right to the wealth of the rich and society.<sup>14</sup> They must be helped and enabled to acquire skills so as to earn their livings with dignity.

#### 4. *Political and Economic Power are not Evil*

It is a part of our religious mission to harness political and economic power for the fulfilment of moral objectives. Instead of remaining instruments of oppression and exploitation, they must be made to serve the ends of justice, to promote good and virtue and to forbid evil and vice.<sup>15</sup>

#### 5. *There are no Intermediaries Between God and Humans*

God's guidance is available in the form of His Book, the Qur'ān and the life-example of His Prophet, the *Sunna*. They clearly state the ideals, values and principles that we need to build our individual and collective lives on truth and justice and there exists in this guidance a built-in mechanism to meet the demands of changing times. Evolution and growth take place within this framework. Only the divine law is eternal, all human expedients are temporary and time-bound. Adherence to the divine law is the greatest guarantee against human arbitrariness and relapse into injustice.

These are the basic principles on which Islam wants to rebuild the world order. The first contribution that Islam wants to make is to the way in which this problem is viewed. Islam adopts an all-embracing approach based on a spiritual appreciation of reality. It regards men and women from the aspect of their total existence in relation to their Creator and His entire creation. It admits of no dichotomy either between matter and spirit, or between the physical and the moral. It welds the religious with the secular and treats life as one integrated and harmonious whole. It is also free from any gender complex. It treats men and women equally as God's vicegerents and subject to the same criterion for success, here and in the Hereafter.<sup>16</sup>

Islam stands for total change, as against all contemporary ideologies and some religious systems which are content with partial change. It purifies the individual and reconstructs society, making both the individual and society achieve a still higher ideal: fulfilment of the Divine Will, through the establishment of justice among humans.

The Islamic way is based on values and not on the demands of expediency, personal or national. Its outlook is positive and constructive and not just negative or destructive. It seeks the person's total welfare – moral, social and economic. It stands for the realization of justice in all aspects of human living. It upholds the

principle of universal good and justice and invites the entire human community to work for its establishment. It affirms the integrity of individuals and the sanctity of their human rights as rights guaranteed by the Creator, and tries to establish a social order wherein peace, dignity and justice prevail.

Islam's strategy for the establishment of such a world order consists in inviting all human beings to take this path, irrespective of their colour, race, language, nationality, ethnic or historical origin. It does not speak the language of the interests of the east or the west, of the north or the south, of the developed or the underdeveloped. It wants the new order to be established for all human beings in all parts of the world. Through this universal approach Islam wants to bring about a new consciousness of the ideals and principles on which the house of humanity should be rebuilt, and invites humankind to spell out its implications for the reconstruction of human thought and policy.

Islam also launches a social movement, an international movement requiring all those who accept these ideals and values to establish the new order. Islam is eager to establish the new model in any part of the world. If it reconstructs its social order on these principles, the Muslim world could be the living example of it. However, the present reality of the Muslims is far removed from the ideal. Once this model is established somewhere in the world, the experiment can be shared with everyone else, just as sunshine is shared by all. Its prospects depend very much upon the Islamic movement that is trying to spearhead this social effort for the establishment of a new world order.

## **The Islamic Resurgence and the New World Order**

Contemporary Islamic resurgence is unique in the universality of its character and the richness of its depth. Political ideologies have struggled to achieve similar unity, yet all have failed after brief, cosmetic success. Jamal Abdel Nasser's Arab Nationalism, after deluding the Arab world, proved to be a failure. The Syrian and Iraqi Ba'athī regimes are operative owing only to the extremely repressive measures they impose. Communism's farce has been discredited in all parts of the world – Russia, Eastern Europe, Latin and Central America, and Africa. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of Soviet Russia are an epitaph to Socialism which is fading into the background of history. Yet Islam has unified ethnic and culturally diverse peoples across continents. It leaves no room for 'Arab Islam',

'Pakistani Islam', 'Iranian Islam' or 'Turkish Islam': there is only Islam. Thus, within Islamic universalism there is unity but no uniformity.

Muslims in general, and particularly many leaders of the current resurgence, are as self-critical as they are ethnically diverse. This willingness to re-examine symbols that have been embodied in religious tradition aims to reconstruct certain conceptions of Islam: the spiritual, social, political and economic. Thus the spirit of the Islamic resurgence can conceivably be defined as a return to the roots of Islamic idiom.

This return to the 'sources' is seen by Muslims as a liberating force, yet it is labelled by secular elites and the West as 'fundamentalism'. Reviving the faith and establishment of a *dīn*, the essential premise upon which Islamic life is based, is not akin to a 'fundamentalism' that has become bogged down in retrogressive, violent, historical wishful thinking. Rather, it brings a freshness of approach, a new commitment, dynamism, flexibility and an ability to face current challenges. Many people are rediscovering Islam as a source of civilization and culture, and a necessary factor in shaping society.

The current phase of Islamic resurgence entails moving away from a slavish imitation of Western models, and adopting a selective outlook on what should and should not be adopted from external civilization. Although Islamic society can benefit from the Western experience in a number of ways, it has no intention of perpetuating the imposition of alien cultures at the expense of its own.

Observers often pose the question: Can Muslim countries afford to reject certain choices *vis-à-vis* development, technology and so on? Simply put, they do not aim at rejection. The real question is: What type of development is on offer and what are its objectives? Muslims fear that what is being offered to their nations are modern interpretations of Europe's white man's burden – a 'civilizing' force that will not promote but actually infringe upon economic, social, moral and ideological development. Furthermore, Muslims are deeply concerned about the future of ties between Islamic states, the prospects of greater economic and political cooperation and integration. Will Islamic countries, geographically defined by colonialism, be deconstructed and redrawn or will they continue as nation-states?

Realistically, one cannot put history into reverse gear. Muslims must progress more creatively than their predecessors. The nation-state is acceptable as a starting point, although it is not an Islamic ideal. It is a geo-political reality which,

if arbitrarily dismantled, will create a political vacuum, inevitably to be filled with chaos. Therefore, a sense of unity must be fostered within the *umma* or Muslim community, and greater co-operation and integration between Islamic states must be encouraged. Islamic idealism dictates that each nation-state will eventually evolve into an ideological state, thus creating the framework of a commonwealth of Islamic regions. Either this concept is sensed by the West and therefore, mistakenly, feared, or, more short-sightedly, the West deems the current phase in the Islamization of Muslim states as a dangerous prelude to a chaos which must be stopped.

The West, in general, has failed to recognize the strength and potential of the Islamic resurgence. It has labelled members of Islamic movements fundamentalist, radical, extremist, fanatic, terrorist, anti-Western, anachronistic and so on. Obviously, such limited, disparaging definitions will not promote mutual understanding. The West is committing mistakes similar to those of its colonial predecessors, i.e., it is defining a political spectrum according to its own terms of reference, disregarding the socio-political diversity of other civilizations.

This selective viewpoint does great injustice not only to Muslims, but also to humanity in general. It promotes misconceptions among Western scholars, policy-makers and civilians alike. The Islamic resurgence is going through a period in its history which its proponents recognize as tumultuous, yet these discrepancies do not define the Islamic revival or the phoenix that will arise out of the current flames of corruption and debauchery in much of the Islamic world.

Muslims understand their current predicament to consist of more than their socio-political and economic ills. Their perception goes deeper than material deficiencies in their lives and tackles the underlying problems they face: moral decay and warped values. Some express this cognizance profoundly, others in less palpable ways. Nevertheless, these elements are sadly deficient from Western analyses of the Islamic revival. The spiritual dimension is often excluded, when in fact it is the core, as far as Muslims are concerned, of the problem. Instead, the Islamic resurgence is simplistically attributed completely to the people's frustration with the lack of progress, and their hope for economic and technological development in the guise of Islam. Such one-dimensional analyses show an ignorance of Muslim society's ethos.

Similarly erroneous is the reduction of the Islamic resurgence to merely the angry reaction of under-privileged Muslims against Western affluence. While

reaction to the legacy of imperialism certainly plays a part, more than political fury is being expressed. A far more prominent cause of turmoil is the dissatisfaction with Western ideals and values imported by elite cliques and imposed on the masses. The elites that run the institutions and systems of government force alien laws and regulations upon the people. Furthermore, Muslims are by and large disaffected with most of their governments, which they see as promoting Western interests (by imposing Western secular values and models of development) and ignoring their own.

The Islamic resurgence, therefore, is a critique of both the status quo in Muslim societies and the secular Westernization of these communities. This critical analysis stems from a point of reference not seen in contemporary history. While many Muslim governments have invoked Islamic symbols for legitimacy, few have sought wholehearted implementation of Islamic policy. The Islamic movements of today express a depth of sincerity and conviction in the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad's *Sunna* or teachings, not previously evinced by most political establishments in the region. What some observers have tried to disparage as the 'awakening Islamic monster', is in fact the reawakening of the Islamic faith and destiny. Muslim spirituality and idealism have generated in Muslims a new sense of direction and an unwavering commitment to reconstruct their world, regardless of personal sacrifice.

The colonial paradigm of leadership was one constructed strictly on self-interest. This legacy infected the Muslim world, making society virtually devoid of moral values and rife with corruption. Exploitation has become the norm in this region. Muslims have their own weaknesses which caused the decline of their civilization. Yet the degree of corruption rampant in their midst today is a new phenomenon. Muslims associate this degradation with the impact of secular Westernization.

Some Muslim interpretations of modernism spearheaded the drive to secularize Muslim society, attempting to superimpose Western liberalism on Islamic sensibilities – an explosive combination! Thus, morality was compromised and subverted, leaving a vacuum. Personal aggrandizement and socio-economic exploitation have taken advantage of this vacuity in the name of economic development and material progress.

The Islamic resurgence is a rebellion against such destructive trends. Ideally, it seeks reaffirmation of Islamic morality and a redirection of the *umma's* resources – material and human – towards social justice and self-reliance.

The Islamic resurgence is a positive, ideological movement by Muslims which is concerned with the reconstruction of the Muslim world's socio-economic order based on the values of Islam. It has no expansionist tendencies. It is bound to cross paths with members of the international community, and have disagreements with some of them. While the colonial legacy is relevant to popular unrest in the region, it is not going to remain the most decisive factor in provoking Islamic reaction.

However, Muslim criticism of Western civilization is not an exercise in political confrontation and should not be defined as such. The relationship is one of competitiveness between two civilizations: one based on Islamic values, the other founded on materialism, nationalism and liberalism. It creates a choice between the Divine Principle and the Secular Materialist Culture. The emphasis here is on choice. Secularism, whether it is capitalist or socialist, does not possess a monopoly over appropriate ideology. The presence of the Islamic resurgence gives many an avenue of escape from the worldly shackles of materialism. It widens humanity's choice. This should be looked upon as a blessing and an opportunity, not a threat.

## NOTES

- 1 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*. Authorized translation with notes by Charles Atkinson (London: G. Allen, 1922) in two volumes.
- 2 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, published under the auspices of Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1934).
- 3 Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (New York: American Book Company, 1937); *The Crisis of Our Age: Its Social and Cultural Outlook* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946).
- 4 Joseph A. Camilleri, *Civilization in Crisis: Human Prospects in a Changing World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 1–2, 5, 9, 11, 179–80.
- 5 Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, *The First Global Revolution*, a report of the Council of the Club of Rome (London: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. xv.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 95–6.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- 9 *Islam*, literally the way of submission and peace, is derived from the root *SLM* which stands for (a) submission, i.e. submission to God, the Creator, and (b) peace, i.e. it is by submission to the Will of God that peace within and peace without can be attained.
- 10 Qur'ān, 5: 32.

- 11 Qur'ān, 107: 1–7.
- 12 Qur'ān, 57: 25.
- 13 Qur'ān, 14: 33–4.
- 14 Qur'ān, 51: 19.
- 15 Qur'ān, 2: 143; 3: 110; 17: 80–1. See also, Khurshid Ahmad, *Islamic Approach to Development* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1994).
- 16 Ibid. See also, Khurshid Ahmad, *Family Life in Islam* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1981).

# Unavoidable Dialogue in a Pluralist World: A Personal Account

Mohamed Talbi

Born in 1921 in a 'Protectorate' – Tunisia – I experienced the suffering of being a second-class citizen in my own land. At that time, we were called 'indigènes' (natives). The dignity of being a nation, with an old and valuable civilization was denied to us. We had to be civilized afresh. Among our protectors it was commonly felt, both sincerely and offensively at the same time, that this was a sacred duty which a superior civilization owed to less advanced populations. In 1927, a distinguished scholar of Algiers University, E.F. Gautier, published, in Paris, his famous book, *The Islamization of North Africa: The Dark Ages of the Maghreb (L'Islamisation de l'Afrique du Nord. Les siècles obscurs du Maghreb)*. Basically, it was very evident that the Islamic civilization was much appreciated. Is it overweening to add that little has changed since?

Our world continues to be divided into two parts: developed and underdeveloped. Furthermore, Muslims are always placed into the second category. The success of the Islamic movements – invariably and improperly called integrist, fundamentalism, revivalism and so on – proceeds from the failure of the 'modernists' or the 'secularists' – President Bourguiba, the former ruler of Tunisia being one of the most prominent figures among them – to cope with the wants of their people not only for basic sustenance but for dignity too. Consciously or unconsciously, the image that we have of our past calls on us to be up to the mark and to take up the challenge of our time.

I am the eldest of ten children – five boys, five girls. I was raised in a traditional home, a large, white house centred on a spacious courtyard where the windows do not open to the outside. Instead, all of them look out onto the courtyard, the

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physical lung and spiritual heart of the house. There, children of a large family living together, we would play, and there during the summer months all the members of the family would pray. The tradition was to follow *ṣalāt* (the ritual worship performed five times daily) with a *du‘ā* (invocation). Very often, while the whole family was gathered together, grandfather, in the middle, would pray (*du‘ā*) on behalf of all present. There was something majestic about it, and till now this image remains firm in my memory. So from the very beginning of my life, I have been deeply rooted in the practice of Islam. I have neither lost the faith nor do I need to be converted afresh.

My first cousin, Ahmed, was sent by his devout father to a traditional school (*kuttāb*). There he learnt the whole of the Qur‘ān by heart, and afterwards he attended al-Zaytūna, the old and famous University of Theology closed after independence. I too learnt a large part of the Qur‘ān by heart, but my father, who was younger, had chosen to send me to French primary and secondary schools. Abruptly, I was immersed among mostly Christian and some Jewish children. Consequently, over time, I became what is called ‘a Western educated scholar’. The fork in the road was now apparent. On the one hand, there was Islam which had oriented my whole life since the early and formative years of my childhood. On the other hand, there was contact with Christians and Jews on the benches of my primary and secondary schools, and later through my academic studies.

Daily, on my way to school, I would pass a shop window where a number of books written in Arabic showing parallel passages from the Bible and the Qur‘ān were displayed. Inside, at his desk, sat a clergyman: the missionary. And when I left Madīna, the old Arab town with its narrow and tangled streets to enter the clean and new ‘European town’, inevitably I passed the majestic statue – removed after independence – of Cardinal Lavigerie (1825–92), with his Bible in one hand and a Cross in the other. A clear message and an unambiguous programme! This image too remains forever planted on my memory. In fact, Cardinal Lavigerie’s statue was not majestic at all, nor beautiful, but I remember quite well that as a child it impressed me and seemed truly majestic. On 8 May 1930, the International Eucharistic Congress of Carthage was held in Tunis. This was openly described as a new crusade, the ninth! Strangely, this event left no trace on my memory. And what hurt it caused the Islamic conscience of our country. I was only nine years old. It was many years later that I read about it and realized its pain.

In my French school I entered a pluralistic world, Jews, Christians and

Muslims alike, each easily able to break those barriers of faith and society. The school was really one large melting-pot, and I do not recall having really suffered from my status as a 'protected native' even though 'natives' attending French schools were few in number.

Even now, I remember with emotion and gratitude my teachers who contributed much in making me what I am, particularly Messrs. Loubet and Test from the primary school; and the Firmin and Bouissou ladies in secondary school. My teachers discovered that I was not without some skills and consequently I drew their attention and interest. One day I was asked to give an account of the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941) – a French philosopher and convert from Judaism to Catholicism, and who was then at the height of his glory, due mainly to the success of his book, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Madame Bouissou invited me to her flat to give me what assistance she could, and I still remember how kind and helpful she was. Mrs. Bouissou, who died prematurely in an accident, did not preach her faith, but nor did she seem to lack faith. Instead, she seemed imbued with the idea that her professional duty commanded her to be strictly neutral in her teaching. This was not the case with Madame Firmin. She was a devout Catholic and made no secret of it. She taught French literature. The French school was undoubtedly *laïc*. But classical French literature was surely not. How to understand Corneille's (1606–84) *Polyeucte* or Pascal's (1623–62) *Pensées (Thoughts)*, without being more or less familiar with the notions of trinity, grace, incarnation, redemption, crucifixion and so on?

So, after World War II, when I crossed the sea to pursue my studies in Paris, I was not ignorant of basic Christian doctrines. Anyhow, in Paris, I found myself for the first time abruptly and dramatically immersed in a completely different society, largely pluralistic and secularized, far away from my own family. Communism, with its atheistic and materialistic ideology, was then at its zenith, and, with its promised paradise of justice, wealth and equality for all, was most attractive to a 'protected native' out of his milieu. After lodging 'rue de la Harpe' in the students' quarter (Quartier Latin) in a hotel, which was used too as a 'passing house', I found finally, through a student organization, more suitable shelter in an old widow's flat. The elderly and single, mainly women, at that time would rent rooms in their flats to students.

One day, my landlady showed me one of Voltaire's (the famous free thinker of the eighteenth century) books. She had transformed it into a box where she put

her rosary and crucifix. 'I converted him', she said to me with a smile. She was very kind. In her company, I attended for the first time in my life Dominical Mass and, from this moment onwards, I discovered in Paris, in France and elsewhere, the beauty and majesty of the cathedrals which I had never before visited in Tunisia. By the way, Tunis Cathedral is far from beautiful, and does not invite the passer-by to visit it. I discovered, too, that Western society cannot be reduced, as we used to think, to the twinkling and glittering façades of the public bars and dancing-halls. More than ever before it appeared to me that the true 'followers of the Book' – as we call Christians and Jews – are really pious, seeking salvation, and striving sincerely in the way of God, moved by values of charity and love of their neighbours. They pray. In these conditions, how, without pain and questioning, to dedicate them to Hell! Frequently, it occurred to me that this same very distressing question, centuries earlier, had deeply concerned a famous Arab poet and thinker, al-Ma'arrī.

Meanwhile, I have been fascinated by Louis Massignon's spirituality, and profoundly impressed by the critical approach of the texts used in his teaching by Régis Blachère, an agnostic. Both of them influenced me deeply, though in opposite directions; Massignon availed me of his rich library, and Blachère regularly received me at both his home and office.

Of course, I read many books, of all kinds and shades, both before as well as after my crossing the sea to Paris. In my turn, I became a professor though not before teaching Arabic literature in secondary schools. The main body of my colleagues were then still French, and this situation was to last a long time after independence. I have never been a political militant, but all Tunisians were more or less engaged in the final battle for freedom and dignity.

After independence (March 1956), I resumed my studies and researches in Tunisia, and published my first two books. One dealt with Ibn Sīda's dictionary *al-Mukhassas* and the other with Turtūshi's *al-Ḥawādith*, examining the Islamic subject of *bid'ā* (blameworthy innovations). Influenced by Régis Blachère and Louis Massignon, I hesitated between the science of language and studies related to Islamic thought in its historical surroundings. Finally I chose history, and this was undoubtedly partly the result of listening to Ḥasan Ḥusnī Abdul-Wahhāb (d. 1968), the last prominent figure of our traditional civilization. He possessed the most important private library in our country – bequeathed after his death to the National Library – and he had the habit, once a week, of gathering round him

friends and scholars, Tunisians and Frenchmen, who shared his love of the Islamic civilization and history.

Once more I crossed the sea, this time by plane. I taught in Paris, and meanwhile I married a German girl. A bookish life. I was engaged in the study of the history of my country during the third to the ninth centuries. Ruled by the Aghlabids, Tunisia, then called Ifrīqiyyā, resumed the armed *jihād*, inaugurated a policy of overseas expansion, poured its turbulent and undesirable warriors into Sicily and South Italy, and, among other deeds, proceeded to sack Rome and St. Peter's Basilica. In the beginning, my work was supervised by the late Evarist Lévi-Provençal, a well-known historian of Islamic Spain, then my studies were brought to a head under the direction of Robert Brunschvig. I secured my doctorate and went on to become a professional historian.

History is the hardest and most distressful school of life. I found myself profoundly hurt by the way people of one faith, or different faiths, have always fought *urbi et orbi* each other in the name of God, for God and/or guided by God. What is still more tragic, is that this fighting was performed by sincere people, people who could hate, kill and destroy in the name of God. I have been, in the depths of my heart, violently hurt by all this. For example, Mālik (d. 179/795), an undoubtedly devout man and founder of Mālikism, which is even now one of the four most important schools of theology in Sunnī Islam, rendered a *fatwā*<sup>1</sup> authorizing the killing of the Khārijites and the Mu'tazilites who were considered heretics, just because they disagreed with him on some controversial points. There would be no difficulty at all in quoting a long list of similar cases throughout the world, both inside and outside our own frontiers, from the remotest ages to the present. Our common history has the colour of blood, our blood. I pondered and tried to understand, all without great success. Of course it is possible to explain most things, but to explain is not to justify. I have been brought up as a Muslim, and have been confronted, as a historian, with the scandal of evil, but still I have not lost faith. Is it conceivable for me, as a Muslim, to condemn and hate others just because they disagree with me? Will this make me a better Muslim, more authentic? To accept this premise is wrong. It is quite inconceivable to imagine that God would inspire man to hate His creatures. He who says: 'Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!' (Qur'ān XLI: 34; trans. A. Yusuf Ali). And in the *Ḥadīth*, the tradition emphasizes: 'The whole of mankind is God's family, and

among you the most loved by God is he who is the most helpful for His Family.’

I taught history for many years. In 1965, I was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of Tunis University, and I remained head of this institution until 1969. I travelled and lectured in many universities, towns and countries, in Africa, Europe, America and Asia, participating in many conferences and everywhere meeting a great many people, and scholars, of all kinds and shades of faith and militant ideology, all of them striving with confidence and sincerity in the way of God or for their ideals. After such an experience you are no more the same, you can no more consider anything without a certain humility.

Through direct and concrete experience I became more and more convinced that our world is quickly changing and, under the unavoidable and overwhelming pressure of all kinds of media, unceasingly shrinking. Curiously enough, a Tunisian minister and reformer of the last century, General Khereddine who died in 1890, expressed the same view. He wrote in his political treatise, *The Surest Path* published in 1284/1867: ‘If we consider the many ways which have been created in these times to bring men and ideas closer together, we will not hesitate to visualize the world as a single, united country peopled by various nations who surely need each other. The general benefit to be derived from the experience of each nation, even when it is pursuing its own personal interests, suffices to make it sought after by the rest of mankind’.<sup>2</sup> In a word, today more than in any time before, our world, even with its conflicts and bloodshed, is in fact no more than an aggregate village where every man is really the neighbour of every other man. In your armchair you can hear and watch, in colour, on the screen of your television, what is going on everywhere in the world! Simultaneously, you can see and hear Clinton and Saddam Hussein. The language may be pleasant or unpleasant for you. But you cannot avoid what you see and hear! Henceforth and irrevocably, we are condemned to know, to exchange and to communicate.

In the field that is of our concern here, the dialogue with all men of all kinds of faiths and ideologies is from now and onwards strictly and irreversibly unavoidable. Man has never lived in isolation, and man’s history may be considered as an irreversible process of an unceasingly extending communication. Man’s fulfilment is in community and relationship. And this is written in the Qur’ān: ‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know (be friendly towards) each

other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge, and is well acquainted with all things' (XLIX: 13, trans. A. Yusuf Ali).

This was the shape of my thoughts when, in November 1971, I was invited to Rome by what is now known as The Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica (PISAI) to lecture the students there on the history of the medieval Islamic civilization. Spontaneously, I chose the theme 'Islam and Dialogue: Some Reflections on a Current Topic'. I spoke without a written text, almost without notes. In fact I was badly in need of clarifying my own ideas and almost unconsciously I grasped the opportunity that presented itself to me in Rome. In that very town that had earlier challenged and destroyed Carthage, that in its turn had been sacked (August–November 846) by my Aghlabid ancestors, and where some years earlier, the promising Council of Vatican II had been held. It was some months later that my lecture received its written form and appeared in print in Tunis. Thereafter many other papers dealing with the same preoccupying concern followed. My lecture though had not passed unnoticed. It was published in French, and has since been translated into Arabic and other European languages.

First and foremost, without concessions at the expense of what is for me 'The Truth', my purpose was, and still is, to introduce, in my modern environment, coherence both inside my own thoughts and my person, so as to live brotherly, in peace and harmony with others, others who do not share my convictions, in a world which has been and always will be, if not forever, at least for a long and unforeseeable time, a pluralistic world. That is the question. How to reverse, if this is supposedly possible, the course of history, and to substitute – mainly among the 'Followers of the Book' who have, beyond their insuperable differences, many values in common – centuries of hostilities for a new era of cooperation and confidence? How to substitute the 'logic of war' for the logic of peace, at least in the realm of faith, and to accept that we should live together with our consciously assumed differences, in an assumed brotherly and pluralistic world? In short, and first and foremost for my own sake, how to found my faith on the basis of theological diversity? For the peace of my soul and the sincerity of my belief this ought to be done, of course without anathema, but also without syncretism, and above all without relativism. It goes without saying that if I speak always as a full Muslim, I never speak on behalf of Islam. Nobody has received a mandate to be

‘The Speaker of Islam’. Furthermore each one of us has the duty to strive to avoid the *taqlīd*, which is mere imitation, in order to assume his/her faith, as far as possible, in full knowledge and clear conscience.

I found in the Qur’ān more resources than one may at first expect, and from these, in all my writings, I tried to build, or to enforce, a coherent theology of diversity, without dropping the central idea that Islam is *The Way of Salvation* for the whole of mankind. The Qur’ān states clearly: ‘If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers’<sup>3</sup> (III: 85). To accept diversity, and to found it on a sound theological basis, without cheating or compromising with one’s conscience, is an absolute prerequisite of living on an equal footing with others. In my efforts I have been helped by sound authoritative theologians, al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) in ancient times, Abduh (d. 1905) and Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the late Rector of the famous al-Azhar University of Cairo. With them I have been drawn to the conclusion that some certain parameters have been drawn, it is not impossible to admit the plurality of the paths of salvation, both in and outside the Islamic tradition providing people are both sincere and righteous.

If this can be admitted, and theologically assumed, we can think of the whole of mankind as a brotherly ‘Community of communities’<sup>4</sup> – or *God’s Family* as the *Ḥadīth* states – in which everyone has the right to be different, to be accepted, and fully respected in his chosen differences. To respect others in their chosen and assumed differences – not just to tolerate them on point of pain – is finally to respect God’s Will Who willingly created man free to choose what he likes to be and to build with true liberty his own destiny. Even by love – and love can be variously interpreted in light of Freud’s and others’ philosophies – I have no right to enforce my faith on another because, in any case, my love for my brother cannot be greater than the Creator’s love for His creatures: ‘Thou wilt not guide the one whom thou lovest; but God guides those whom He will. And He knows best those who are truly guided’ (Qur’ān XXVIII: 56).

God has sent His Guidance to the whole of mankind. But God respects His creature’s freedom, for freedom is the foundation and the base of man’s special dignity. It would have been very easy for God to overpower His creatures. He willingly refrained from acting in this way: ‘If it had been thy Lord’s Will, they would all have believed – all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!’ (Qur’ān X: 99). So diversity and pluralism are part of

our human condition and dignity, and they are the unavoidable result of our true liberty. It is up to us to make the best of our liberty . . . and of our differences: 'To each is a goal to which he turns. Then race together towards all that is good! Wheresoever ye are, God will bring you, all of you. For God hath power over all things' (Qur'an II: 148). 'If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people. But He wanted to test you in what He hath given to you. So strive as in a race in all virtues. You will, all of you, return to God. Then will He inform you of that wherein you differed' (Qur'an V: 51). Our human duty is to be sincere and righteous, and, in the last resort, it is up to The Merciful to judge, 'He Who hath inscribed for Himself the rule of Mercy' (Qur'an VI: 12).

Christianity too has been confronted with the same problem of salvation, and modern research is still going on in different ways. From a strictly orthodox point of view, Jesus is *The Way*, and there is no other way.<sup>5</sup> Even Pope John Paul II unceasingly stresses this orthodox doctrine.

Nevertheless, the late German Jesuit Karl Rahner (1904–84), was of the view that God is willing the salvation of everyone, and that this salvation has been made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He developed the idea that those who he calls 'the anonymous Christians' may be, within some parameters, saved by God's grace outside the confines of the 'visible church'. As far as I am personally concerned, and *mutatis mutandis* of course, I do not feel myself very far from Rahner's general frame of thought. Besides, the Sunnī Islamic Tradition, to which I belong, taking it by and large, states that we cannot, in any case, set limits on God's saving power. The Lord, in His Sovereignty, remains totally free. He is The Just and The Wise, and like Abraham we have to be confident in His justice and wisdom, even when it is scandalously difficult for us to understand: 'He cannot be questioned; but they will be questioned' (Qur'an XXI: 23).

More recently, and on a much larger scale, John Hick, who is more philosopher than theologian, questioned the uniqueness, decisiveness, and even the centrality of Jesus Christ as the single way of salvation.<sup>6</sup> But Hick is a rather controversial figure, and his Copernican Revolution, putting *God*, and not Christianity, at the centre of our universe, has little chance of prevailing. If all religions, equally and without preliminary conditions, save, we cannot avoid relativism, and relativism is the ruin of the very notion of Truth. Undoubtedly conscious of this danger, Pope John Paul II constantly emphasizes the decisiveness,

the centrality and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as The Way of Salvation.

Since this makes sense, and it is worthwhile from a missionary point of view to enter into any kind of interreligious dialogue which is not a preliminary step to mission, or at least, in one way or another, linked to it, Fr. Thomas-Michel, the pontifical secretariat's staff person responsible for Christian-Muslim relations in Asia, notes:

To those who identify the mission of the church in all ages as preaching the good news with a view to bringing the human race to baptism and incorporation into the Church, those involved in dialogue are seen as a fifth column, undermining the efforts of proselytization. Particularly in the case of Christians who consider non-Christian religions as manifestation of the domain of Satan in today's world, the battle of the church militant to bring all things under the banner of Christ is held to be seriously subverted by the dialogue movement which bases itself upon mutual respect and human equality among believers of various faiths.<sup>7</sup>

We shall see that Muslims' concerns are of another colour.<sup>8</sup> Consequently and gradually, in the years since Vatican II, the Holy See and the World Council of Churches (WCC), each one making a step inward in his proper manner and 'correcting the firing', tried to link more clearly and more tightly the Mission with the Dialogue, in order to make more explicit their intrinsic relationship, and so to ease the internal criticisms. In a document<sup>9</sup> of cardinal importance, which was discussed over a five-year period before being promulgated by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of Pentecost (10.6.1984), exactly two decades after the creation of the Secretariat Pro Non-Christianis, the dialogue is clearly and emphatically subordinated to the Mission and embodied in it. It has no role in itself as a respectful medium of peace, friendship and communication without intention to evangelize and convert. Its declared aim is, hence, to be the first step on the way of evangelization and conversion. Just a tool adapted to the intellectuals. In brief, a sophisticated equivalent of the bowl of rice and the healing pill used to attract, trap and convert the poor and the sick. I confess that when I am faced with this kind of 'dialogue', I cannot but recall the missionary of my childhood at his desk on my way to primary school, and Cardinal Lavignerie's statue that stood defying my subdued people (natives) until the independence of my country. Finally, in these conditions Dialogue is no more than a newly conceived strategy to hem in Islamic

countries after decolonization! Is it no more than adaptation to a new context where sheer evangelization is no longer easy?

Useless to underline that this dialogue, which elsewhere<sup>10</sup> I called 'a fish-hook dialogue', is not mine, and I am in no way ready to swallow the bait. I appreciate much more the frankness, that, for instance, was developed by Pastor Georges Tartar<sup>11</sup> in his writings, even when it is brutal. In a word, I like to call a spade a spade.

Nevertheless it goes without saying, and this must be strongly underlined, that to bear witness is an unquestionable human right and duty. Everyone has the right and the duty to express freely his opinions and to crusade for his faith,<sup>12</sup> beliefs, convictions or ideology. More than that! If our interest in the other, our neighbour, is sincere, and when we are true believers, we cannot help trying, or at least desiring to share with him, in a spirit of love, our more precious wealth, our faith. All right! All this is understandable, even commendable. But, even in that noble case, no one is allowed to besiege the other, and above all to take advantage of the other's weakness. It is a matter of morality and dignity. It is for these reasons that many Muslims are today more and more reticent about entering into an ambiguous dialogue, and are tempted to see in it a kind of scaffolding for mission agencies, namely 'a substitute of an apostolate that has failed', writes Louis Gardet.<sup>13</sup>

In these conditions, to avoid any kind of suspicion, mental reservation, ambiguity or hidden goal, we have, first and foremost, to make it very clear that for Muslims the Mission – or its equivalent *Da'wa* on the side of Islam – is one thing, and the Dialogue is another. There is no profit for anyone in mixing them. For the Muslims to do so is just to put the 'Mission-Pill' into the 'Dialogue-Box'. It takes in nobody. In my *Islam and Dialogue*, I have warned already against such a temptation, because it is quite impossible to avoid the harmful spirit of polemics. I wrote: 'We must be very careful then to exterminate the hydra of polemics. The surest means of making it impossible for it ever to renew the immense damage done in the past and the sins committed against reason, is to renounce any idea of using dialogue, either openly or in one's own mind, as a means of converting the person we are talking to. If, in fact, dialogue is conceived as a new form of proselytism, a means of undermining convictions and bringing about defeat or surrender, sooner or later we shall find ourselves back in the same old situation as in the Middle Ages.'<sup>14</sup>

Because I have been deeply committed to dialogue for many years, I feel it once more my duty to urge caution lest the dialogue fail. The cornerstone to avoid failure is to accept, without reservation, the unavoidable diversity of believers in our unavoidably pluralistic world. If we accept this with sincerity, we are necessarily drawn to accept the other, our brother, as he is and as he likes to be. Therefore, we should not tolerate him momentarily, just as we tolerate a pain that we are eager to cure. Instead, we must respect fully his free choice as our equal brother in full dignity and in full liberty. In a word, we have to respect the right to be different as a basic human right, without interfering in what must be considered as the most sacred matter of conscience.

It is for these reasons that in Dialogue my perspective has always been directly related to my conceptions on religious pluralism, human freedom and responsibility, and at the same time, my desire for the need of a brotherly 'Community of communities'.<sup>15</sup> For me, Dialogue is above all a mood, a spirit of openness, a disinteresting collaboration that does not challenge the presuppositions of the respective partners. We have to focus on cooperation in real and urgent issues confronting our human family, and the first step, toward peaceful co-existence and cooperation among communities of different faiths and ideologies, is to shy away from thinking in nationalistic or exclusive terms, to believing in global and universal ones. We are, all of use, embarked on the same frail boat, and, from now onwards, we can have only an interdependent future.

Despite the storms, I choose to remain obstinately optimistic, because a believer has the right not to despair. As I said in an interview to Charles A. Kimball, I remain confident, 'that intentional, institutional dialogue will play a crucial role in ushering in a new era of human history. Dialogue is going to win because there is no other way. If you eliminate dialogue what follows? Confrontation? Fighting? We have to live and co-exist together. We have to accept each other. The single way for the future is dialogue and more understanding in our world where everyone has to live in a pluralistic society . . . Fundamentalism is swimming against the current. We have to live in our own time. Dialogue is the solution for the future.'<sup>16</sup>

Dialogue is unavoidable in our pluralistic and shrinking world. Men have been created differently to know, to communicate and to exchange. And in the last resort it is up to our Lord to judge in full sovereignty. Islam is, in its very essence, to submit to God, like Abraham, with Confidence and Love. And The Golden Rule,

that must be our common rule in our earthly life, is happily, and surely not haphazard but universal: 'This is the sum of duty; do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you' (Brahmanism, *Mahabharata* 5, 1517); 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful' (Buddhism, *Udana - Varga* 5, 18); 'Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you' (Confucianism, *Analects* 15, 23); 'What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law. All the rest is commentary' (Judaism, *Talmud, Shabbat* 31 a); 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets' (Christianity, *Matthew* 7, 12); 'No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself' (Islam, a well-known *Hadīth*). Is it mere common sense? Or is it because, in each man, there is 'something of His Spirit' (Qur'ān, XXXII, 9; see also Qur'ān, XV, 29; XXXVIII, 72; and *Job* 32, 8)? Anyhow, in all our religious traditions we have, despite our differences, a common base from which to talk to each other, and to seek harmony. In our unavoidable pluralistic world Dialogue is not only inevitable, it is the only suitable way to build, gradually and patiently, the brotherly and harmonious 'Community of communities' that we are longing for. Evidently it is not easy, and surely not for tomorrow. But the believer, as I have already said, has the right not to be pessimistic, not to despair. God is Love, Mercy and Hope.

## NOTES

- 1 Mālik, *al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā* (Cairo, 1323/1905), Vol. 2, p. 47
- 2 Leon Carl Brown (ed.), *The Surest Path: The Political Treatise of a Nineteenth-Century Muslim Statesman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 71-2.
- 3 It is possible to quote similar statements from the Gospel. For instance, Jn. 14: 6; Mt. 28: 19-20; Mk. 16: 16; Acts 4: 12. Let us remind ourselves too of the traditional Catholic position that, with Origen, Cyprian and Augustine, can be summarized in the well-known formula: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* (No salvation outside of the Church); and as well for the future: *extra ecclesiam nullus propheta!* (No prophet outside of the Church). This position has been very clearly defined by the ecumenical Council of Florence in 1442: 'The Holy Church of Rome . . . believes firmly, confesses and proclaims that no one outside of the Catholic Church, neither heathen nor Jew nor unbeliever, nor one who is separated from the Church, will share in eternal life, but will perish in the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, if this person fails to join it (the Catholic Church) before death' (Henricus Denzinger (ed. Adolfus Schönmetzer), *Enchiridion symbolorum*, editio XXXIV (Freiburg: Verlag Herder KG, 1965),

- p. 342. This traditional position has recently been reinforced by Pope John Paul II in his Message of 1 January 1988 (Celebration of World Peace Day), *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, p. 5. It is also clearly expressed in the Proceedings of Vatican II: 'Dignitatis Humanae Personae' Declaration.
- 4 See M. Talbi, 'Une Communauté de Communautés. Le droit à la différence et les voies de l'harmonie', in *Islamochristiana* (Rome), No. 4 (1978), pp. 11–25.
  - 5 See note 3 above.
  - 6 See J. Hick (ed.), *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Macmillan, 1988); and *God Has Many Names* (ed.), (London: Macmillan, 1980). Hick's theses were the subject of Gavin D'Costa's doctorate, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation* (ed.), (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987). See also J. Hick and Paul Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (London: SCM, 1988). The way was opened by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (ed.), *The Meaning and End of Religion: A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).
  - 7 Quoted by Charles Anthony Kimball, *Striving Together in the Way of God: Muslim Participation in Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (Harvard University, 1987), p. 77, after Thomas Michel, 'Education for Dialogue' in *Bulletin Secretariatus Pro Non-Christianis*, XVI, No. 3 (1981), pp. 243–4.
  - 8 These concerns are more lengthily developed in Mohamed Talbi and Olivier Clément (eds.), *Un Respect Têtu* (Paris: Nouvelle Cité, 1989), pp. 88–99.
  - 9 *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions – Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*. Vatican: Secretariatus Pro Non-Christianis, 1984.
  - 10 Mohamed Talbi and Olivier Clément (eds.) *Un Respect Têtu*, op. cit., p. 95.
  - 11 He is Editor of *Bulletin Evangile – Islam* and Head of the Centre Evangélique de Démoignage et de Dialogue, 77380 Combs-la-Ville (France).
  - 12 See Mohamed Talbi, 'Liberté religieuse et transmission de la foi', in *Islamochristiana* (Rome), No. 12 (1986), pp. 27–47; German translation: 'Religiöse Freiheit und Vermittlung des Glaubens', in *Dialog mit Afrika und dem Islam* (ed. Hans Peter Rüger). (Tübingen (Germany): J.C.B. Mohr, 1987), pp. 27–69.
  - 13 Louis Gardet (ed.), *Regards Chrétiens sur l'Islam* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1988), p. 9.
  - 14 In *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes*, ed. Paul J. Griffiths (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), p. 88.
  - 15 See note 4.
  - 16 Charles A. Kimball, op. cit., p. 402.

# Documents

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent  
and Peace be upon all the prophets

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE CONFERENCE  
(Peace for All)  
8–10 October 1994  
Friendship Hall, Khartoum  
Final Communiqué

By gracious invitation from the Council for International Peoples' Friendship, the Inter-Religious Dialogue Conference was held at the Friendship Hall, Khartoum, 8–10 October 1994. The Preparatory Committee of the Conference, which was established by the Inter-Religious Dialogue Society of the Sudan, which, in turn, was established under the auspices of the International Peoples' Friendship Council, endeavoured to invite Muslim, Christian and other representatives, from both inside and outside the country, to witness the inauguration of this society. The Society has already opened branches and established sub-committees and branch committees at the grass-roots level.

Thanks and praise be to God, the invitation was accepted by representatives of the Society's Branch Committees, the Sudan Council of Churches and all the Churches affiliated to it, the Islamic '*Ulamā*' and the proponents of *dhikr* and *Da'wa*.

A select, international group of Muslims and Christians also responded favourably to this important invitation. Representatives of more than 50 churches, Islamic organizations, religious institutions and sufi leaders, from 30 countries attended. These are shown in the attached list of participants.

The participants engaged frankly and truthfully in enriched and straightforward dialogue and deliberations over the following 5 core axis:

*The First Core-Axis:*

The Historical Perspective of Religious Dialogue.

*The Second Core-Axis:*

The Problems and Issues of Dialogue, which contained the following:

- (a) The conceptual and theoretical basis of dialogue and co-existence among religions.
- (b) The common denominators among religions.
- (c) The call for peace, cooperation and co-existence.
- (d) Inter-religious cooperation in face of materialist tendencies.
- (e) Normative and moral issues in religion.
- (f) Religion, politics and the law.
- (g) Religions' stand on human issues.

*The Third Core-Axis:*

Religious Dialogue; the challenges and future visions.

*The Fourth Core-Axis:*

Religions and International Peace.

*The Fifth Core-Axis:*

The Inter-Religious Dialogue Society; the Sudanese Experience.

Within these cores, 19 papers were presented in the Conference. The opening session began with readings from the Qur'ān and recitals from the Bible. Sayed Mohamed El-Amin Khalifa, Speaker of the Transitional National Council, addressed this session, together with some leaders of the national and international religious organizations that participated in the Conference.

The dialogue was characterized by a favourable spirit and a perfect understanding of the superiority of God's word on earth, in faithfulness to His worship. Of the way to create benefits for people and develop the world in peace, tranquillity and brotherhood. Hence, the deliberations brought about very

constructive orientations that led to agreement on some cumulative principles and significant connotations that could form a basis for transfiguration of dialogue and its development at present and in the future.

It was further recognized that the origin of all religions is one and the same source. They all share the common function of making religion and its concepts a way of life, by implanting it in peoples' lives and souls and encourage the practising of spiritual and ideal values in modern life.

Dialogue also encouraged objective deliberations, and diffusion of the spirit of understanding and love among followers of the various religions. This was done through emphasis on collective ideals and by surpassing former historical complexes.

Solidarity among the adherents of religion, in face of those who deny the supremacy of spiritual values and their role in all aspects of life, can be accomplished through unification of endeavours, so as to confront all challenges that face religion.

In this way, it is of prime importance to respect freedom of religious beliefs, the practise of religious rituals, establishment of worship places, guarding the rights of religion's adherents in the socialization of their sons and the spiritual and moral formation of their families and have full respect for the various religious practices and traditions.

An important aspect that emerged was that adherents of religion should endeavour to deepen their understanding of the people for their religion, by holding tight to religious certainty and truth and to understand, correctly the other's religion.

It is right, then, for all adherents of religion to propagate their religions and preach them freely in their societies, by ways and means that promote understanding and avoid sedition and discord.

Thus, religious diversity should be seen as a factor for promoting understanding, and not as an element of dispersion that harms the unity of religion, and hampers society and the unity of the country. This requires education and information, to deepen the religious spirit and unification and comprehension among all.

This may lead to cooperation among the adherents of heavenly religions, in a way that brings human dignity and upgrades the variety of human life. This should guarantee human rights, the fulfilment of spiritual, moral and material needs and lead to good, charity and benevolence.

This also calls for continuation of the call to peace and arduous work to achieve it, in an endeavour to end the war, build confidence and heal wounds, so as to build a nation where everybody enjoys the endowments of the country.

The Conference welcomes the establishment of the Inter-Religious Dialogue Society in the Sudan. The Conference considers this to be a step towards continuous and useful dialogue. It calls upon all members of the Society and its committees in all parts of the Sudan, to seriously undertake this divine, historic task, by diffusing their message to all parts of the country.

The Conference hopes that this society will continue its endeavours, gratuitously, in collaboration with the platforms of inter-religious dialogue of the many international religious institutions. This would create an unfathomable bond amongst these bodies, orient their work towards a cure for the ills of the contemporary world and spread piety and rationalization in international relations, in a way that achieves human security, safety and progress, without discrimination, segregation or marginalization.

The Conference, hence, expresses its deep gratitude to the people and government of the Sudan both for the great care taken in preparation for this conference, and the great generosity shown to the participants. The Conference expresses its respects to His Excellency Lt. General Omar Hassan Ahmed El-Bashir, the President of the Republic, for his kindness in receiving guest-delegations to the conference, and for attending the final session.

Thanks are also due to H.E. Sayed Mohamed El-Amin Khalifa, Speaker of the Transitional National Council, for inaugurating the conference.

The Conference is pleased to note the honourable initiative that made it possible for it to convene its first meeting in Sudan. May God have mercy and bestow peace upon the soul of one of its initiators, the late Fadl El-Sid Abu Gisaisa.

The Conference would like to express its special gratitude to the Council for International Peoples' Friendship, in the persons of its Chairman, Sayed Izzel-din El-Sayed, its General Secretary, Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, and the Council's specialized committees and employees, for their kind efforts and assistance that facilitated the Conference work and deliberations.

The Conference also expresses its sincere thanks to the society's preparatory committee that so ably performed the tasks of establishing and convening this conference. Special thanks are also due to the committee that spent late nights in making preparations for the conference, and the thinkers and honourable '*ulamā*'

for their serene research that helped in the exchange of ideas and in reaching the good results presently at hand.

Gratitude and thanks go to the conference information committee and the Sudanese and foreign mass-media that ensured that the conference reached all people of the Sudan, by taking the news to all adherents of religion everywhere.

Many thanks must also go to the management of the Friendship Hall for their excellent cooperation, which helped the conference achieve all the stages of its work.

The adherents of religion in the Sudan would also like to express their pleasure and thanks to the representatives of the adherents of religions all over the world, for accepting the invitation to dialogue. Their presence was both kindly and effective, and enriched the conference deliberations greatly. Thus, all this has encouraged the Inter-Religious Dialogue Society in Sudan to continue along its path to reach its noble ends.

May God bless this timely start, help all endeavours to achieve peace in this country and preserve its unity, security and the welfare of its people. May He also make the call of this conference a true one for the supremacy of God's word on earth.

### *Conference Participants:*

- The Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue (Vatican)
- The World Council of Churches (Switzerland)
- The Higher Islamic Shī'a Council (Lebanon)
- The Middle East Council of Churches (Jordan)
- The Lebanese Islamic Foundation (Lebanon)
- African Council of Churches (Kenya)
- Commission on Peace & Justice of the French Catholic Church (France)
- Institute of Studies & Research on Islam, Sorbonne University (France)
- Saint Igido Group (Italy)
- Comboni Group (Italy)
- International Progress Organization (Austria)
- Swedish Church for Relief (Sweden)
- Norwegian Church Aid (Norway)
- International Islamic Council for Da'wa and Relief (Jordan)
- The Norwegian Churches' Council (Norway)

World Congress of Faiths (United Kingdom)  
Rev. Moon's Foundation in the Middle East (USA)  
Islamic Da'wa Society (G. Libya)  
Al-el-bait Foundation (Iran)  
A Muslim representative (Croatia)  
Supreme Council for Islamic Coordination (Russia)  
International Institute of Islamic Thought (USA)  
The Governing Body of the Lebanese Islamic Supreme Council (Lebanon)  
Religious and Waqf Affairs Administration (Chad)  
Muslim Brotherhood (Women's section) (Nigeria)  
Islamic Trust of Nigeria (Nigeria)  
The Southern Sudan Muslim Women's League (Sudan)  
The Muslim Communities & Organizations in Italy (Italy)  
The Bishop Aryacus Martin (Kenya)  
The International 'Bir' Organization in the Southern Sudan (Sudan)  
The 'Watan' Youth Organization (Sudan)  
The Islamic World League Friends Society (Sudan)  
Faith Research Centre (Sudan)  
Tariqqa Tiganiya (Nigeria-Senegal)  
Tariqqa Samaniya (Sudan)  
Sudanese Sufi Council (Sudan)  
Sudan Council of Churches (Sudan)  
Islamic Da'wa Organization (Sudan)  
Islamic Centre (Italy)  
International Islamic Relief Organization  
General Union of Sudanese Women (Sudan)  
Islamic 'Waqf' Organization (Nigeria)  
Presbyterian Church (Sudan)  
Council of 'Ulamā' of Nigeria (Nigeria)

Representatives of universities and institutions, individuals, academics and media and information media specialists also attended the conference.

## Book Briefs

WALID M. ABDELNASSER, *The Islamic Movement in Egypt: Perceptions of International Relations 1967–1981*, Kegan Paul International, London, 1994, 308pp., ISBN 0 7103 0469.

This book focuses on the global vision of the various components of the Islamic movement in Egypt between 1967 and 1981, presenting a detailed case study of their perceptions of foreign policy issues and the international system. The choice of 1967 as the starting period relates to the Arab defeat in that year which was perceived as a defeat for the nationalist and secularist Nāṣir and a victory for both Israel and conservative Arabs such as King Fayṣal. The author argues that since 1967 the Islamic movement has grown continuously and that the assassination of Sadat in 1981 by *al-jihād* marked the degree of Islamic strength in Egypt. The author provides a brief historical background and deals with the position of Islam, early Islamic states, jurists and movements, the role of the *umma* in international relations and its relationship with the non-Muslim world and towards the perennial problem of war and peace. He contends that early Islamic states, after the historical precedent set by the Prophet Muḥammad, have pursued pragmatic and realistic policies and as such stability and peace have been the rule in inter-state relations. The study then focuses on the ideas of important latter day Muslim intellectuals such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā and also the various Islamic movements in Egypt such as the *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, *al-Jamā'a al-Islāmiyya*, *al-jihād*, considering their positions towards specific countries, experiments and events such as those in Iran, Libya and the Sudan, which raised complex questions about the means and objectives of Islamic unity and Arab nationalism. Furthermore, he examines the relationship between the Muslim world and the West – particularly the USA – and its stance towards the evolution of the question of Palestine and Israel, and the Soviet Union and its role in Afghanistan. The book concludes with a comprehensive analysis of the world vision of the Islamic movement in Egypt including its percep-

tion of the structure of the international community and the role of the *umma* within it, basing these on the ideas of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb and Mawḍūdī.

ASSAD NIMER BUSOOL, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, American Islamic Educational Foundation, Chicago, Illinois, 1993, 32pp.

This booklet is a good, timely attempt towards an understanding and analysis of the term 'fundamentalism' as used by the West. The term is freely and abusively used against Islam, Islamic movements and Muslim regimes which do not suit the Western interest. The West, which raises the bogey of fundamentalism, has been, in fact, guilty of supporting and perpetuating intolerant and suppressive regimes all over the globe including many in Muslim countries.

The author has pinpointedly answered some of the burning questions which generally disturb Western minds. Busool touches upon questions of Islam and democracy, Islam and modernism, Islam and freedom of conscience, and Muslim and non-Muslim relationships in the light of Islamic teachings. He recalls how modernism was condemned in the Roman Catholic Church as a negation of faith. Fundamentalism, as used by the West, is unknown to Islam and the Muslim world. Moreover, the fundamentals of Islam have never contradicted or opposed the progress of thought and action. The booklet ends with an appeal to the West and the USA in particular 'to understand properly and deal rightly with the so-called Muslim fundamentalists'.

ZIAD ABU-AMR, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, 169pp., £9.99 (PB), ISBN 0 253 20866 1.

The author provides a broad picture of the Muslim Brotherhood's role in the West Bank

and Gaza. He analyzes the Brotherhood's influence both before 1967 and then after, describing the Islamic *Jihād* movement as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and demonstrating how the two movements differ. The book also analyzes the role of *intifada* as a resistance to Israeli occupation and its increasing influence among the Palestinian population. The author argues that the Islamic movement in Gaza and the occupied West Bank are in a much stronger position than ever before and he describes the conditions set by Hamas for joining the PLO – a move which the PLO desperately needs.

PATRICK D. GAFFNEY, *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 367pp., \$20.00 (PB), ISBN 0 520 08472 1.

This book is a result of the author's field research in Egypt. He focuses on the preachers and their Friday sermons, which he believes have been 'central in forming public opinion, building grass-root organizations and developing leadership cadres for the wider Islamist agenda'. The author distinguishes between three types of preachers: 'the traditional scholar and ethical teacher, the Sufi priest-magician and the militant holy warrior'. The author's field research has been narrowly focused in and around the town of Minya where he lived and co-ordinated his efforts firstly from November 1977 to August 1979, and again in 1984–85; thereafter he visited the place briefly in 1986, 1989 and again in 1991. The sermons and discussions provided reflect the upheavals surrounding those particular time periods. An appendix provides three samples of sermons by three shaikhs.

HANS KÜNG and JURGEN MOLTMANN (eds.), *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity*, SCM Press, London, 1994 (*Concilium* No.3, 1994), 163pp., ISBN 0 334 03026 9.

This issue of *Concilium* has been prepared against the background of Samuel Huntington's celebrated article 'The Clash of Civilizations'. The

editors are convinced that this presents 'only a half-truth'. They believe that civilizations and religions 'have not only a high potential for conflict but also a high potential for peace'. The Philippines, where dictatorship has been removed, and South Africa, where apartheid has been dismantled are presented as achievements. The theme of this issue is divided into four broad areas with a total of fifteen articles – The Experiences, Threats, Challenges and Perspectives on the Present and the Future. The first section begins with Smail Balić's 'Bosnia: The Tragedy of a Tolerant Islam' and concludes with Hans Küng's 'World Peace – World Religions – World Ethics' where he discusses the tragedy of former Yugoslavia.

GEORGE B. GROSE and BENJAMIN J. HUBBARD (eds.), *The Abraham Connection: A Jew, Christian and Muslim in Dialogue* (Volume VI: The Church and the World Series), Cross Cultural Publications Inc., Indiana, 1994, 243pp., ISBN 0 940121 18 2.

This book covers the proceedings of a dialogue between representatives from the three Abrahamic faiths, held during 1991 under the auspices of The Academy of Judaic, Christian and Islamic Studies. The Academy, established in 1977, has pioneered interfaith work over the last eighteen years. The dialogue participants were David Gordis (Hebrew College), George Grose (Presbyterian Church) and Muzammil Siddiqi (Islamic Society of Orange County). They discussed a diverse range of issues and topics central both to the understanding of their own faith and to their relationship with each other. The first chapter focuses on the significance of the patriarch Abraham in the three traditions and also the central figures in each faith, namely, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. Each figure was discussed with regard to the respective faith and also how they related in the other traditions. The participants tackled the difficult questions of how does Jesus fit into the Judaic perspective?; how did both Muslims and Jews come to terms with the Christian conception of Divine Sonship of Jesus?; and how is the prophethood of Muḥammad to be understood

by both Judaism and Christianity? The second chapter deals with linkages and core beliefs among the three, and includes discussions on monotheism, scriptural interpretation, contents of scripture and Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac. The all-important issue of revelation is then tackled, particularly the means by which sacred scripture becomes the repository of a religious tradition's history and experience and is the product of divine inspiration. The participants also discussed the nature and role of law and the state; and the meaning of peoplehood. The book concludes with reflections from the three participants on the effect of the dialogue in furthering understanding and promoting respect.

KENNETH CRAGG, *To Meet and to Greet: Faith with Faith*, Epworth Press, London, 1992, 216pp., ISBN 0 7162 0483 5.

Meeting and greeting people of various faiths inevitably means dismantling the fortress mentality. But in the process of meeting and greeting people one inevitably faces a number of challenges not least from the secularistic and atheistic understandings of various societies. Cragg emphasizes that in today's world, 'there must be a meeting of hands to take up obligations to society, ecology and development which no faith can now monopolise'. Cragg draws on Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Christian examples and sees the journey of believers in today's world as being together. In his exploration, Cragg is deeply rooted in Christian traditions. All nine chapters dwell on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. 'If you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others?' (Matthew 5: 47). Cragg's complexity of thought and style in this book demands the reader's full attention.

KENNETH CRAGG, *Troubled by Truth: Life Studies in Inter-Faith Concern*, The Pentland Press, Durham, 1992, 320pp., ISBN 1 872795 71 4.

Cragg explores Inter-Faith studies 'in search of the lessons it affords' and their 'on-going

significances'. Thirteen people – literary figures, rabbis, missionaries and academics are chosen. Six of these are known individually to the author, all of them, except one, belong to the twentieth century; Henry Martyn being the only 19th-century Christian missionary. Included amongst these studies are Ismā'il al-Fārūqī, Salah 'Abd al-Ṣabūr, A.A.A. Fayzee and Salman Rushdie. *The Satanic Verses* affair, the author believes, stems from Rushdie's 'inward dialogue with himself', and by writing this book, Rushdie 'deliberately' sought to incite 'Muslims to self-scrutiny'. But Cragg finds that the whole *Satanic Verses* affair only served to bolster rather than interrogate what he describes as a 'bland assumption of Western Liberalism'.

Cragg avoids in this work, a study of theologians such as Louis Massignon and Martin Buber and concentrates instead on activists and missionaries such as Henry Martyn and Constance Padwick. In his chapters on Raimundo Panikkar, Arnold Toynbee and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Cragg pays tribute to them when he refers to them as 'writers whose breadth of sympathy and acumen of mind, enable them to reach below the particularities, where less ambivalent writers rest and stay . . .'

LEONARD BOFT and VIRGIL ELIZOND (eds.), *Any Room for Christ in Asia?*, SCM Press, London, 1993, (*Concilium* No.2, 1993), 156pp., ISBN 0 334 03019 6.

The purpose of this issue of *Concilium* is to examine how deep the influence of colonialism on Christianity in Asia is. The editors identify how 'impoverished Western Christianity had become' by not allowing other cultures experiences of Christianity. The dynamism of Christianity, in the editors' view, has been overshadowed by 'Western cosmivision'. The language, philosophy and theology of Christianity were all presented in Asia in this frame of vision. The editors raise an important question: 'Can colonizing Christianity review itself from within?' Their answer is that this is not possible. Nonetheless the articles suggest some new openings. All 11 articles, divided into three broad sections – Background, Non-Christian

Perceptions of Christ, and Concrete Examples – discuss Christian experiences in a Buddhist or Hindu environment. None examine either a Muslim perception or provide examples of Christians living in a Muslim environment. This issue of *Concilium* opens up a number of the cultural aspects of Christianity in Asia *vis-à-vis* the dominant Western understanding of Christianity.

MARCUS BRAYBROOKE, *Pilgrimage of Hope: One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue*, SCM Press, London, 1992, 368pp., ISBN 0 334 02500 1.

The story of this book begins with the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. The Parliament was planned and shaped by Western Christians but, perhaps for the first time, they invited religious leaders from Asia to participate in a religious discussion in the West. This opened a flood-gate of Interfaith movements, viz. the 'International Association for Religious Freedom', followed by the 'World Congress of Faiths', the 'Temple of Understanding' and the 'World Conference on Religion and Peace'. Braybrooke examines all these organizations in detail along with many others. Referring to the Parliament of 1893, Braybrooke remarks that the 'representation of Islam at the Parliament did not do justice to the religion'. The 'chief exponent of Islam' at the Parliament was Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb, who along with other Christian scholars, gave papers on Islam. Webb, when he spoke on Islam, was greeted by cries of 'shame' when he referred to the question of polygamy and Islam as a 'universal religion'. The book provides an overview of the development of Interfaith dialogue over the last hundred years.

STUART BROWN, *The Nearest in Affection: Towards a Christian Understanding of Islam*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1994, 124pp., ISBN 2 8254 0970 7.

This book takes up a few subjects which the author believes 'deserve careful and specific' attention in both 'academic' and 'communal

contexts'. The motivation being to prepare churches throughout the world to familiarize and articulate 'a common idiom' which will enable them to face the challenges 'posed by the complexities of a plural society'. Of nine chapters, the first three discuss the basic beliefs, the traditions and roots of jurisprudence, and the various branches of Islam. Two further chapters explore points of contact in the areas of theology and philosophy and the mystical tradition. The angles of divergence, Brown points out, lie in the various understandings of law and politics. The remaining two chapters respectively discuss the modes and relationships and an agenda for affection. The book provides a sober understanding of the problem from a Christian perspective.

JOHN HICK, *Metaphor of God Incarnate*, SCM Press, London, 1993, 180pp., ISBN 0 334 02541 9.

Hick challenges, in this book, as in his previous publications, that the traditional Christian understanding of Jesus, that he was God Incarnate, is not possible, and points out alternative interpretations. He argues that this teaching did not have its origins in the teachings of Jesus. The widely believed Christian understanding of Jesus' two natures – one human and the other divine – he contends, cannot be explicated in any satisfactory way. He proposes that the idea of 'divine incarnation' should be understood metaphorically rather than literally. By doing so Christianity, he believes, will put Jesus as 'Lord' who 'made God real' to Christians. Jesus' life and teachings challenge Christians 'to live in God's presence'. A Christian based upon these principles, Hick argues, will be one among many 'responses to the ultimate transcendent reality that we call God'.

ARTHUR L. LOWRIE (ed.), *Islam, Democracy, the State and the West: A Round Table with Dr. Hasan Turabi*, Tampa, Florida, The World and Islam Studies Enterprise, 1993, 100pp., \$10.00.

This book is the result of a round-table discussion with Hasan Turabi, held at the

University of South Florida in May 1992. The one-day forum was organized by the World and Islam Studies Enterprise and the Committee for Middle Eastern Studies of the University of South Florida. The discussion was motivated by the assumption that the various world-views should serve best in mutual respect and in dialogue.

The book discusses the perception of Islamic resurgence by the West and Turabi describes his vision of an Islamic government. He further discusses the situation of minorities under an Islamic state, status of women, Sudan's relations with the world, and the economy of his country. Turabi comes across as an articulate and far-sighted thinker. The stereotype Muslim 'fundamentalist' is nowhere to be found.

IBRAHIM M. ABU-RAHIM' (ed.), *Islamic Resurgence: Challenges, Directions and Future Perspectives. A Round Table with Khurshid Ahmad* (with Introduction, footnotes and Bibliography), Tampa, Florida, World and Islamic Studies Enterprise, 1994, \$10.00, ISBN 1 884792 01 4.

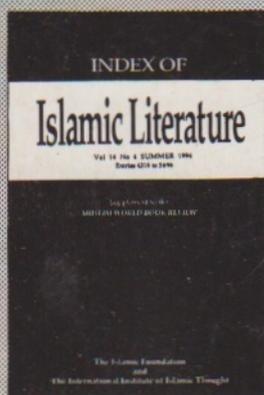
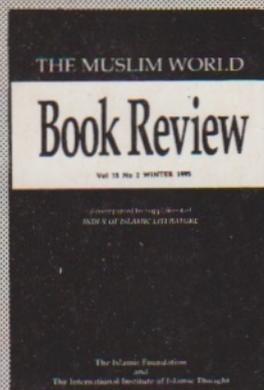
This volume contains the proceedings of a round-table discussion with Khurshid Ahmad. This is the second in the series (the first discussion was with Hasan Turabi). Khurshid Ahmad discusses Islamic Resurgence: Challenges, Directions and Future Perspectives, Islamic Concept of Economic Development and Modernization and Muslim Minorities in the Western World.

Khurshid, explaining the Islamic movement's position, emphasizes the importance of pluralism today. He urges dialogue with the West and advocates 'pro-existence'. 'There is no need to seek refuge in the house and hope that we can only exist for each other if we are secular in the street. So if we are prepared to accept others as different, that is what I mean by pro-existence.' He strongly condemns terrorism. 'In my view', Khurshid says, 'Islam does not promote, encourage or condone terrorism.' He emphasizes that state terrorism against the Islamic movement 'perpetrated by secular regimes friendly to the West' also needs to be condemned.

FATIMA MERNISSI, trans. by Mary Jo Lakeland, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*, Virago Press, London, 1993, 195pp., £7.99 (PB), ISBN 1 85381 700 7.

Fatima Mernissi, the well-known Moroccan feminist writer, examines why the concept of democracy is so feared by both 'fundamentalist' movements and the various ruling regimes in Muslim countries. Democracy is perceived as threatening the very core of what constitutes tradition, and she argues that part of the answer lies with it being seen as the source of other, no less threatening, values such as individualism, freedom, reason – all of which are said to lead to a disequilibrium in society and to its eventual breakdown. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the developments in Eastern Europe, there were great hopes in the Arab world of greater democratization and an end to authoritarianism. Yet the ensuing Gulf War shattered such optimism, and generated a feeling of vulnerability to alien threat, from the *gharib* (foreign), heightened by the modernism already prevalent in such societies. The shifting and disappearance of traditional boundaries has created dynamics of widespread effect. The author suggests that much of the fear regarding the Western emphasis on democracy has to do with the role of reason and personal opinion in the Muslim past; personal opinion has always brought violence and terror. That bloody tradition, she maintains, perpetuated ever since the Mu'tazilites and the Khārijites, when disagreement with rulers was often settled not through mediation and dialogue but through violence. Mernissi develops her thesis further by reflecting on the modern development of the media *Imām*, contrasting this with the traditional *Imām*, and also the importance of the United Nations Charter for Human Rights. The fear of democracy, she maintains, in subsequent chapters, is beyond simply that of individualism and freedom of thought, but encompasses both a fear of the past and of the boundary-less present.

# THE MUSLIM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



The Muslim World Book Review, a quarterly journal published by the Islamic Foundation, UK, in association with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, USA, provides a unique source of information for those concerned with developments in the Muslim world. Most recent publications in this field are listed and important books are reviewed by eminent scholars, critically analysing views expressed both in the West and the East on a variety of issues related to the Muslim world. Each issue of this journal is rich in information, criticism and suggestions and also includes occasional bibliographies on themes of vital interest for researchers and students of Islamic studies.

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