

# THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM



Edited by Altaf Gauhar • Foreword by Salem Azzam

Islamic Council of Europe



المجلس الإسلامي الأوربي

# THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

Edited by  
ALTAF GAUHAR

Islamic Council of Europe



مجلس المدینة العلمیة

ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
24 Grosvenor Gardens  
London SW1W 0DH

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ISBN 0 906041 02 3 Casebound  
ISBN 0 906041 03 1 Softback

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*Produced by*  
ISLAMIC INFORMATION SERVICES LIMITED  
*Radnor House*  
*93/97 Regent Street, London W1R 7TD*

*Photoset, printed and bound*  
*in Great Britain by*  
REDWOOD BURN LIMITED  
*Trowbridge, Wiltshire*



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## Preface

There has been growing interest in the West in recent years to understand Islam as the Muslims understand it. This is a happy development. The Islamic Council of Europe is the principal institution for projecting the message of Islam in the West. It is engaged in a number of activities aimed at disseminating true knowledge about Islam and about the Muslim world. The Council hopes to promote Islamic activities amongst the Muslims of Europe on the one hand and, on the other, to establish new channels of communication, discussion and understanding between the West and the Muslim world at different levels, intellectual as well as socio-cultural.

During the year 1976 a number of exhibitions and other social programmes were organised in the United Kingdom to acquaint the West with the culture of the Islamic world. On that occasion the Islamic Council of Europe organised an International Islamic Conference, the first of its kind in recent European history, to enable the West to understand not only the cultural heritage of Islam but also its ideology and living tradition which constitute an abiding message for mankind. The theme of the Conference was "Islam and the Challenge of our Age". Over one hundred scholars and statesmen, representing some forty countries, participated in the Conference. Papers of outstanding merit were presented and discussed during the Conference identifying the issues confronting the world today.



The deliberations of the Conference produced the view that Islam presented a unique opportunity and a challenge, as much to the Muslims as to the rest of mankind, and that the world could resolve its current problems and growing difficulties by offering a constructive and united response to this challenge.

The Islamic Council of Europe would have liked to publish the proceedings of the Conference – all the papers and the record of discussions – but when the editorial board reviewed the entire record it realised that the proceedings may run into several volumes. The present resources of the Council are inadequate for the task. Inevitably a selection of papers was made, mainly on the basis of the contemporary relevance and importance of the subjects. This selection is being presented in the present volume, *The Challenge of Islam*.

The book contains eighteen of the papers arranged in three sections for the convenience of the reader.

The first section is entitled “The Faith”, and covers the doctrine and the essential message of Islam. Two outstanding Islamic thinkers, Abul A’la Maududi and Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, have presented their understanding of the fundamental principles of Islam. Abul A’la Maududi suggests that Islam should not be approached as if it were some kind of new religion, but as a final consummation of the earlier monotheistic religions. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi explains how Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Messenger of God, brought about a revolution in human society and radically transformed man’s outlook on life. The other three papers in this section by Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas, R. W. J. Austin and Ismail R. al-Faruqi respectively, present the concept of religion and the foundation of ethics and morality, the role of the Prophet of Islam and Islam and other faiths.

The second section, entitled “The Law and Institutions”, contains six papers dealing with the concept of an Islamic State, Islamic law, social justice, human rights, international law and

banking. Sadiq al-Mehdi makes the point that Islamic states can attempt a solution of their problems by evolving a general agreement on ideological commitment to the laws of Islam, while accepting the need to adapt those laws to their own circumstances. The same point is emphasised by Mouloud Kassim Nait-Belkacem when he says that old concepts have to be reinvested with new substance to meet contemporary needs. Khalid M. Ishaque recommends a measure of flexibility in the adaptation of Islamic law, and says that if it is to be revived as a significant entity it must seek new solutions and create new institutions within the framework of faith taking full cognisance of the historical experience of the community. A. K. Brohi sees the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 as an extension of the programme laid down in the Qur'an, and Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada identifies the contribution of Islamic jurists to the formation of modern international law in the West. Dr. Ahmed A. El-Naggar evaluates the working of an Islamic bank in Egypt.

The third section, entitled "The Challenge" consists of papers which examine Islam in relation to the West, and brings out the nature of the challenge of Islam to mankind as a whole, whether in the East or the West, the North or the South. I. H. Qureshi deals with Islam and the West – past, present and future. Aisha Lemu suggests that the West might learn something from an informed and objective study of woman's place in Islamic society – a balance between freedom and protection, which is totally contrary to the popular view of a combination of the Hollywood version of the Arabian Nights and a picture of deprived and repressed victims of a man's world. M. Aman Hobohm reminds us that the Islamic ideal of racial equality is still a dream for man in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Hamid Algar finds that Islam itself constitutes a serious challenge to the declining standards and values of the world. "It challenges the relative with the absolute; the limitations of material aware-

ness with its consciousness of transcendent reality". He brings out the need for Muslims to make the right choice because that alone can give reality to the ideal. Altaf Gauhar identifies the fundamental incompatibility between religion and secularism, and emphasises the need for Muslim states to enter into a treaty arrangement to establish an Islamic order. Muhammad Qutb analyses the problems of modern man and suggests that his greatest need is for a stabilising and integrated force which should restore the wholeness of life and re-define its purpose. Khurshid Ahmad examines the problem of economic development in the Muslim world.

The Council is extremely grateful to Altaf Gauhar who gave so much of his time to convert a mass of material into a highly coherent and forceful collection. He was assisted in this by his colleagues on the editorial board, Khurshid Ahmad and Muazzam Ali. The board received valuable editorial and research assistance from Judith Vidal-Hall.

I must also acknowledge the care and devotion with which Mizanur Rahman of Islamic Information Services supervised throughout the printing and publication of the book. I am confident that this book will present to non-Muslims a true picture of Islam as Muslims believe and see it; and I hope and pray that the book will, at the same time, afford the Muslims themselves a deeper understanding of their faith and culture and of the message it offers to mankind today.

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Salem Azzam  
*Secretary-General*

# Introduction

## Section I

For centuries the hostility between Christianity and Islam has been a barrier to any effort to develop better understanding between the two. It is a barrier which neither Islam, lacking a voice in the West, nor the West, secure in its own position, has been greatly concerned to penetrate.

This book contains papers written by Muslim scholars to meet what is now recognised, at least on their part, as an urgent contemporary need to acquaint the Western reader with the true message of Islam, as understood by the Muslims themselves, and to put him in touch with important currents of thought in the Muslim world. It is hoped that this may establish a basis for initiating a meaningful and open-minded discussion on the contribution which Islam can make in solving the problems facing modern society.

Individual papers examine different aspects of social, political and economic questions within the framework of the Islamic faith, though they cannot begin to cover the whole field, nor to deal exhaustively with all the topics they identify.

Despite some repetition, inevitable in a collection of this kind, the discussion is far-reaching and covers a wide spectrum of opinion. There are some bold assertions, but the approach is always sincere, and the purpose constructive. The general Western reader approaching Islam for the first time could make

a useful start with this book. He might find some of his more familiar assumptions and preconceptions about Islam challenged by what he finds in these papers; his attitude to Muslim faith and history not wholly tenable in face of the facts. Some of the Western historians, missionaries, politicians and scholars have given an interpretation of Islam which, on a little reflection, would seem to be lacking in objectivity as in sympathy.

It might well be asked why the Western reader should want to know anything about Islam. It will be suggested that the days of religion are long passed, humanity has moved forward to new planets, new environments and awareness of a new consciousness. Who has the time for God and His messengers and their revelations? Even if it is conceded that man continues to have a deep craving for identification with the ultimate why turn to Islam, why not to other more ancient religions?

There is a simple answer to both these questions. There are millions of people who believe that Islam has something to offer to the world. While mankind advances from one stage of material progress to another, under a relentless mechanical pressure, it finds happiness and peace increasingly elusive. They are convinced that the message of Islam would bring peace to a disturbed and anxious society. One may not respond to this conviction, but one can hardly refuse to listen, particularly when one has adopted a view of Islam which, according to the Muslims, is based on a distorted and erroneous interpretation of Islamic thought and history.

Muslim writers and thinkers have taken this opportunity to explain to the West what they believe in and what their faith stands for.

In the West Islam is taken as an ancient religion in the monotheistic tradition, similar in some respects to Judaism and Christianity but full of fanatical beliefs and deviations. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the messenger of God, is known to the Western reader as a tribal leader of ferocious

marauders who invaded other tribes and lands in quest of worldly goods, imposing their peculiar brand of faith by force on their hapless victims. Islam has come to occupy the position of an adversary religion for the followers of Judaism and Christianity. It would be useful to examine how this view of Islam developed in the West. Beginning with a recent publication<sup>1</sup> we find a Western scholar defining Islam's main difficulty as "the particular rigidity of its dogmatic assumptions and affirmations especially the doctrine that the Koran is the word of God." Islamic culture is seen as a classical example of an entirely "self-enclosed and in-bred culture".<sup>2</sup> Is it not strange that scholars who are prepared to examine the most primitive cultures, and some of the most abhorrent rituals and myths with sympathy and often admiration, should find it extremely distasteful to attempt an objective and dispassionate study of Islam and Islamic history?

In his *A History of Europe*,<sup>3</sup> Henri Pirenne suggests that in the whole history of the world there has been nothing comparable in the universal and immediate nature of its consequences with the expansion of Islam in the 7th century. We could take this as a helpful starting-point to discuss Islam. It is a fact of history that throughout the Middle East from the 7th century until the 16th the West knew or recognised no rival except Islam. The dramatic and radical changes which Islam brought about in human society during this period were something that the West had never considered conceivable. The West has always taken an egocentric view of history; whatever the vicissitudes of the past they had always been Western. Every change in Western civilisation had come from within, the result of her own dynamics. Now for the first time Islam appeared to disrupt with unparalleled force the traditional Western construct of history.

It was the first challenge from a rival equal, if not superior, in strength, size, scope and moral fervour, and it came from outside. Understandably, this was something which the West could not easily forget nor forgive; and though obscured, it is perhaps a

fundamental factor in rendering dispassionate discussion of Islam so difficult for so long.

And yet the traditional picture which the Western reader has of unremitting hostility between the West and Islam, spread over centuries of confrontation, is not wholly true. No Western reader would deny that he has never discounted so thoroughly any other civilisation comparable in size, distinguished past and religious significance as Islam. Why this should be so is a question which is rarely asked. It is important that we should understand the past fully and clearly, if we wish to promote a relationship of tolerance and mutual respect in the future. The historians of the West saw Islam from a position which did not emerge from the events themselves but from a view of events adopted to explain subsequent developments. Perhaps there is a need now to see the past in its own right, as nearly as may be possible through the eyes of contemporaries.

History is largely a construct of the mind. Often there is little relation between the events of the past and what we come to know as "history" of the past. Yet it is this "history" which continues to hold sway over the popular imagination. Even when fresh evidence is produced one insists on preserving the memory of the events as historically constructed and presented. Historians, politicians, missionaries and academics alike contribute to a construction of the past according to their understanding of the social and moral needs of their time. Take the historians. Here are two quotations which refer to the fall of Constantinople. The first is from a speech of Constantine, the last Emperor of Byzantium<sup>4</sup> and the second is by Sir Edwin Pears from *The Destruction of the Greek Empire and the story of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks* (London, 1903).

(i) "Shall it now be trampled on by blasphemers, shall our holy churches . . . be made shrines for (their) blasphemy . . . those who fight against us are like animals more brutal even than brute beasts, a herd of swine, blasphemers."

(ii) "No art, no literature, no handicrafts even, nothing that the World would gladly keep have come since 1453 from the Queen City. Its capture, as far as the human eye can see, has been for the world a misfortune almost without compensatory advantages."

Both these statements reflect on the same event in similar passionate tones, both are by ardent Byzantines; both view Islam in the same unfavourable light; neither sees anything but calamity in the loss and destruction of Constantinople. Here the similarity ends. There is a distance of four and a half centuries between the two statements. The first was the last utterance of a man about to lose an Empire and his life; the second is the voice of a Victorian historian speaking in full consciousness of the pride of a different empire. One can forgive Constantine, but it is difficult to understand the view of Sir Edwin Pears which led him elsewhere to talk of "six centuries of barbarism in Constantinople and the Balkans." Here we see a historian deliberately constructing a totally negative picture of the history of Islam in its relation to the West.

The fall of Constantinople is for a Western reader one of the most emotive events in the whole Western construct of Islamic history. It has become the symbol of all that Christendom appeared to have suffered at the hands of Islam. It is necessary, therefore, to investigate how this symbol entered the Western consciousness in this form. Constantinople fell twice. The first conquerors on entering St. Sophia put a whore on the Patriarch's chair and forced her to sing and dance there to entertain them. The second also made his way to St. Sophia on first entering the city. At the door of the church he paused, took a handful of dust from the ground, and sprinkled it on himself as a token of the vanity of all earthly conquests. Within, he ascended the high altar, turned to Ka'aba and prayed. The first conquerors despoiled and robbed the city, stripped even the lead from the roof of the old Sacred Palace, which they left in ruin. The second conqueror himself prevented the destruction of the city by his victorious army. Standing in



the deserted Palace, which had remained uninhabited since the earlier conquest, he mourned the decay of this queen of cities. In the words of the poet: "The spider weaves the curtains in the Palace of the Caesars; the owl calls the watches in the towers of Afrasiab." It was the second conqueror, and his successors, who restored the city to its magnificence, and brought it prosperity and happiness which it had not known for centuries. The first conquest was in 1204. Its heroes, the Christian knights of the fourth Crusade. The second was in 1453 and the name of the conqueror was Sultan Mehmet II.

The men who recorded these events at the time of their occurrence were not bigoted or partial observers. They were Byzantine chroniclers present at the fall of the city in 1453. There is no evidence that the struggle at the time was seen exclusively as Islam versus the West. Only retrospectively did it assume this character with the result that Islam more than any other religion has been presented as the great enemy of the West. Or ignored. Western children today are still taught more of the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome, Egypt, Babylon or Sumer – the foundations of the West – than of Islam, one of the greatest civilisations of the world. This is not an attempt to re-write history. But it is important to remind the reader that historical fact can be distorted to yield more than one interpretation and can be given particular constructions to perpetuate attitudes totally at variance with another, and perhaps more accurate, view of reality.

The role of some of the Christian missionaries is another example. A World Missionary Conference was held in Edinburgh in June 1910. The Conference decision to bring out a journal called *The Muslim World* had a significance beyond its relevance to specific political requirements. The attitudes revealed in the journal persist to this day – albeit in more covert terms – even amongst those from whom one might expect a less 'single-minded' vision of their mission. The journal was intended as a

common platform and a common forum of thought, not a magazine of controversy representing any faction or fraction of the Christian Church. In the first issue of the journal it was claimed, "We hope to interpret Islam as a world-wide religion in all its varied aspects and its deep needs, ethical and spiritual, to Christians; to point out and press home the true solution of the Muslim problem namely *the evangelisation of Muslims*; to be of practical help to all and toil for this end; and to awaken sympathy, love and prayer on behalf of the Muslim world until its bonds are burst, its wounds are healed, *its sorrows removed and its desires satisfied in Jesus Christ.*"<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis added). One has only to go through the issues of this journal to find out how Christian missionaries, who sponsored this journal, formulated what was called "the Muslim problem" in the early part of the present century, and how they proposed to resolve that problem through evangelisation of Muslims. The condition of Muslims in different countries was carefully studied by scholars who contributed to the journal from time to time. It was noted<sup>6</sup> that in Russia the Muslims had, as a result of the manifesto of April 17, 1905 which gave them religious liberty, started Islamic propaganda and "the result was that the aborigines who had become Muslims in the latter half of the 19th century, but who were not allowed to profess their religion openly, and continued to be counted as Christians, were now formally and officially recognised as Mohamedans. Of these there were about 40,000." The grant of religious liberty was seen by the missionaries as doubly harmful; it enabled the Muslims openly to proclaim their faith and reduced the official count of those who were treated as Christians. S. Bobrovnikoff of St. Petersburg thought at the time that "the strength of the Muslims lies in their fanaticism and unity." The position of Muslims in China and Japan was similarly kept under constant review. Marshall Broomhall<sup>7</sup> found it remarkable that Islam "which deprecates the translation of the Koran into other languages has prospered so much as it has in China where its

tenets have not been propagated by the sword or by much political influence . . .” What was the threat of Islam as seen by this group of missionaries in the 20th century? In a paper presented in a conference called “The German National Colonial Conference on Islam”,<sup>8</sup> held between 6–8 October 1910, the Rev. K. Axenfield said, “We are realising more vividly every year the danger imminent to the fruits of German culture in our African possessions. Since the beginning of European colonisation in Africa, Islam no longer spreads by fire and sword, yet its propaganda among the pagan tribes has not been diminished: the new conditions of life, and the opening up of the country for free intercourse and commerce prepare new channels for the diffusion of Islam. The commercial development of the country attracts hundreds of Mohammedan Indians; the colonial troops and the machinery of administration have provided a position of authority for thousands of Mohammedans. So in Africa it is now the general rule: wherever the European settles there Islam spreads too. Islam is welcome to the Negro in his need of new inner strongholds under the changing conditions . . . it will soon be decided whether Christianity or Islam will be paramount in Africa . . . A victory of Islam would be disastrous for German culture . . . The Mohammedan always in his heart will be hostile to the Christian rule . . . The East African Mohammedans feel they are part of the great world of Islam whose fanaticism only waits for an opportunity to lift up the banner of revolt against the Christians.”<sup>9</sup> Another priest, P. Hubert Hanson, said in the Conference, “As by far the greater part of Germany is Christian our colonial government should feel constrained to take a strong and decisive stand against the propagation of Islam as it means an imminent danger for the sound development and even for the sure maintenance of our colonies. Slavery, commercial impoverishment, disorderly polygamy, de-population, race hatred, opposition to civilising influence by principle prove modern Islam to be a dangerous parasite and even an irreconcilable enemy

of German colonisation.”<sup>10</sup> He advocated that there should be a “general acknowledgement that total Islamisation is the greatest danger imminent to our German possessions.” In April 1911 the editor of the journal wrote, “Islam is in a sense the only anti-Christian religion. Other creeds and philosophies are non-Christian or frankly un-Christian. This world-wide faith joins issue with everything that is vital in the Christian religion and stands or falls by its attitude toward the Christ.”<sup>11</sup> This is how Islam was presented to the Western reader – as an adversary, the only anti-Christian religion.

Nor are the historians and the missionaries (acting perhaps as an instrument of the politicians) alone in fostering and perpetuating this view. Academics too have found it difficult to interpret and present the message of Islam in a fair and objective manner. Elsewhere I have examined some of the statements made by Professor Montgomery Watt in his *Islamic Political Thought*.<sup>12</sup> In Professor Watt’s analysis of “The Constitution of Madina” the emphasis on the unity of mankind was understood by him as nothing but an extension of the tribal tradition of solidarity which was prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. Taking his stand on this formulation he analysed the Islamic concept of *Ummah* and suggested that the Islamic *Ummah* was essentially “a federation of tribes.” He completely missed the pivotal role of the *Ummah* (*Ummatan Wasata*) in organising society in accordance with Islamic principles. The establishment of a model Islamic State in Madinah was explained by Professor Watt as a supra-tribal structure. The early period of Prophet Muhammad’s mission in Madinah is seen by him as a period characterised by lack of understanding and direction. Professor Watt suggests<sup>13</sup> that since Prophet Muhammad did not know what his people would do in Madinah, he must have considered various possibilities of finding an occupation for them and “perhaps he envisaged raiding.” He adds, as an afterthought, that perhaps he undertook the first raids “in sheer boredom.” Why does Professor Watt

adopt this amusing thesis? Does it make any sense that a small group of defenceless people in exile should expose themselves to the risk of certain death out of “sheer boredom”? He takes this position because he would not see any religious significance in the mission of Prophet Muhammad and his followers. Even the Qur’anic injunction for striving in the way of God, and enduring hardships and persecution, means nothing to him but “normal trading operations.”<sup>14</sup> Professor Watt sees the early battles as an instrument of expansion and rejects the suggestion that religion had anything whatever to do with *Jihad*: “Booty was the primary aim of most of the participants in the conquests.” He does not care to explain how this love for booty disappeared as soon as the Muslims had acquired sufficient strength and a sense of security, though he concedes that by the early ninth century few Muslims were willing to undertake any conquests for the purpose of personal gains. He also recognises that Muslim soldiers “were not allowed to settle on the land and had no individual allocations.”<sup>15</sup> He omits to mention that all moveable and immoveable properties acquired in the conquests were fully accounted for and only a clearly prescribed portion was available for distribution among the soldiers (who were not mercenaries but willing and dedicated volunteers), the rest going directly to the community fund. Professor Watt takes considerable pains to develop the improbable version that suffering in the way of God had nothing to do with the activities of the early Muslims. Martyrdom, he suggests, was for the feeble-minded: “Some of them were certainly pious Muslims to whom it meant something that they were fighting in the way of God. More of them probably believed that if they die in the fighting they would be reckoned as martyrs and would go to paradise.” But he declared, “There was no thought of spreading the religion of Islam.”<sup>16</sup>

One could continue with a detailed refutation of Professor Watt’s formulation of the basic concepts of Islam, but my intention is not to engage in a polemical exercise. I mean only to

show that in the presentation of Islam to the Western reader the politician, the teacher and the missionary have each played a certain role in the creation of profound misunderstanding not only about the nature of Islamic thought, but about the Muslims as a community.

## **Section II**

The Western reader deserves an opportunity to study Islam in its true light. The papers in this book are primarily meant for him. The theme of the Conference in which these papers were read and the results of the deliberations of the Conference are explained in the two statements which were submitted to the Conference by the Secretary-General of the Islamic Council of Europe, Mr. Salem Azzam.<sup>17</sup>

A study of these papers should help the reader to identify the essential principles and concepts embodied in the Islamic message. Misconceptions apart, there will be, inevitably, many ideas that the Western reader will find unfamiliar. But there is one which occurs repeatedly, and which he will not only find unfamiliar but difficult to accept. This is the concept of the unity of life in Islam. Muslims stress the oneness of God in unequivocal terms and believe in the unity of His total creation in a real rather than a metaphysical sense, which goes beyond the normally accepted framework of monotheism as understood in the West. It is a concept with far-reaching implications. If all things are contained within the unity of God – both nature in its multiplicity and man in his many aspects – there can be nothing, whether it be on the individual level or in the functioning of society, which is not embraced by it. There cannot be a spiritual sphere as distinct from a temporal sphere. There can be no division between secular and religious, sacred and profane, lay and ecclesiastic, public and private, national and international – all the dichotomies which Islam has steadfastly refused to countenance.

Prophet Muhammad presented in its final form the divine

message which was communicated to mankind by the prophets of God who preceded him. He communicated the message not in words alone but through a life of action. His mission was to transform human society in accordance with the divine mandate and this he proceeded to do through faith, suffering, sacrifice, patience and unwavering determination. In his life and mission words and deeds were fused into a single supreme entity, an infinite and glorious moment of perfection. A model State was established reflecting unity of thought and purpose in which the same laws and principles governed all facets of life. The unity of God embraced all other unities, and this is what constitutes the uniqueness of the message of Islam. Christianity was born into a large and powerful State – the Roman Empire. The early Christians had first to survive, and finally to co-exist within an established social order and a well-defined political structure. The Church was “established” in an Empire under Constantine in 312 A.D. but it was never more than a partner, and an unequal one, in the State which was its protector. Both Tertullian and Augustine were forced to acknowledge the exigencies of the situation, saw the need to proclaim the benefits of such a relationship and justified, therefore, the part played by the State in the divine plan. The Church and the State were two separate entities though both had a part to play in bringing about the “City of God” on earth i.e., the ideal Christian society. Their relationship might be summed up by saying that they were visualised as being of “mutual society, help and comfort, the one to the other: the State to protect, the Church to support.” This distinction of roles led to the demarcation of the two spheres of influence and activity. The Church was to attend to those aspects of man’s life deemed spiritual; the State would govern man’s temporal concerns. The Church was within society as a leaven to raise its spiritual and moral functioning, but had no final say in the conduct of political, social or economic affairs. As the Church grew in size and strength she challenged the limitations of the

spiritual role assigned to her. The balance of power between the Church and the State fluctuated but each confrontation delimited the spiritual zone more narrowly, and progressively marked the irrevocable separation of the two. The State became more aggressively secular, the Church despite her protestations, more religious with each fresh delimitation. This division had far-reaching consequences in that man was divided in his loyalty and torn between two duties. Islam emphasised the fundamental unity of life, and it is this idea, more than any other, which distinguishes Islamic thought from any other ideologies. Man bears witness to the unity of God with Whom he associates no other God in any form. He owes allegiance to Him and to Him alone. He seeks guidance and support from Him, and from none other than Him. And he sees life as a unity incapable of division into segments or compartments. The same principles run through man's life and govern all his activities regardless of whether they may be labelled as temporal or spiritual, public or private. The West has found this idea unacceptable. Rather than acknowledge its influence as a powerful integrating force in their society, sociologists and political scientists continue to attribute the present lack of progress in Muslim countries mainly to the inability of the Muslims to distinguish between the secular and the religious aspects of life.

Nor is it easy for the West to appreciate fully the role played by Prophet Muhammad, the messenger of God. Except in terms of archaic images the West has lost any concept of the prophetic role. There is no sense of the prophet as the mover and shaper of society. This makes it difficult to evaluate the extent and significance of the historical contribution of the Prophet of Islam. As to his life and person, there has been little clear or rational assessment in the West. The significance of his message and his mission can be seen best by looking at the contemporary setting. What was the state of Arabia and the surrounding world at the time of Prophet Muhammad (570 A.D.)? Arabia was a



nomadic and a tribal society in which there had grown up a number of trading centres for the caravans which travelled throughout the Middle East. Trading and tribal warfare were the chief occupations of this society. The main bond of society was kinship within the family or tribe. The world around Arabia was in disarray. In the East and the West there was nothing but disorder. Two great Empires, Persia and Byzantium, were impoverished and exhausted by their protracted struggles to gain ascendancy in the region. Islam moved into a situation of total chaos created by the collapse of these great Empires. By the end of the seventh century almost three quarters of the Mediterranean Littoral, the old centres of the Roman Empire, had come into the fold of Islam, whilst in the East the Muslims dominated Byzantine, Syria, Palestine and Egypt and both Persia and Mesopotamia were under their command. Islam spread from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic. The speed with which the message was carried from one end of the world to the other was equalled only by the rapidity with which the followers of Islam settled down in their new purpose to build a new society. Wherever the Muslims went they propagated their faith. "Everything was transformed, from top to bottom in accordance with the principles of the Koran. Of the entire administration – justice, finance, the army – nothing was left. Qadis and Emirs replaced the Exarchs of the country. The Musalman law replaced the Roman law and the Greek and Latin tongues . . . were ousted in their turn by the Arabic tongue."<sup>18</sup> Religion and State were combined in an inalienable unit in Islam. Compared with this the Empire founded by Charlemagne in the north of Europe appears insignificant and ephemeral. Much of Europe, particularly those areas which had remained outside Roman influence, were still pagan. The Church was concerned primarily with the preservation of its existence from within and had neither the moral nor the physical strength for missionary activity. It was only in 596 A.D. that St. Augustine landed on the coast of Kent to begin the conversion

of the English. Only in the Celtic Church of Ireland and in the missionary activities of its members was there any sign of the future strength of the Church in the West. And this six centuries after Christ and three after the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire of Constantine. Against this we must set Islam's influence and progress over an Empire more extensive than the world had yet seen. A religion which is still followed by over 700 million people and a living civilisation of world significance cannot be discounted or ignored.

It is often suggested that Islam benefited from the decay and disintegration of the ancient world. As a criticism it is meaningless amounting to no more than an acknowledgement that Islam made a timely appearance on the scene. Prophet Muhammad's achievement is not minimised by the admission: on the contrary, his mission was fulfilled in spite of the chaos and confusion on all sides. His consummate skill as statesman, administrator, social reformer and leader of men established for mankind a model of leadership which remains the ideal for all Muslims. For the Muslims Prophet Muhammad was the final messenger of God. All his work and achievements were part of his divine mission. His was not the "voice crying in the wilderness", reproaching society but without affecting it in any profound sense. Prophet Muhammad's role was a radical one, played out within the framework of society. He dealt with questions which are central to the existence of man, and which have been asked since time immemorial. To these questions an answer was provided in the message which Muhammad conveyed to mankind and which helped man to rise to a higher plane than he had touched before. A new relation between man and society beyond the strictly defined limits of the family or tribe was established and a new purpose was given to human existence. By communicating the divine message Prophet Muhammad bridged the gulf between the reality within him and the reality around him. He brought a vision which was outside man's ordinary experience. Through

his experience of truth he presented a new reality until he was able to transform the world into his vision, a vision of freedom in which the past, the present and the future were woven into a single unity.

The reader may catch a glimpse of the vision somewhere in these papers which may encourage him to go to the final source—the Qur'an—a book of truth and guidance, of compassion and mercy, and above all of eternal promise and hope.

London,  
3rd January, 1978.

Altaf Gauhar

## Inaugural Address

*His Royal Highness Prince MUHAMMAD AL-FAISAL, Chief Guest and Personal Representative of His Majesty King Khalid bin Abdul Aziz at the Inaugural Session of the International Islamic Conference at the Royal Albert Hall, London, Saturday 3rd April, 1976.*

Brother Salem Azzam, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters,

I deem it a great honour and a privilege to be amongst you this evening. We are meeting on an historic occasion. It is for the first time in contemporary history that the West has begun to show some real interest in the world of Islam. The Islamic Council of Europe deserves to be congratulated for the pioneering initiative it has taken in focusing the attention of the western world on the real world of Islam – for the real world of Islam consists of its message – its ideals, values and principles and not merely certain manifestations of our culture, however beautiful and charming and overpowering they may be. Islam's tremendous impact on world history is a fact beyond any shadow of doubt. That Islam has produced a glorious culture and made unique contributions in the fields of learning, education, art, science and technology are facts acknowledged by friends and foes alike. The interest that the West has now begun to show in these facets of Islamic history and culture deserves to be welcomed. But what is important at this critical juncture is that the real focus of attention should be on the message of Islam, on the vision of man and society that Islam gives, for all aspects of Islamic culture are but manifestations of this reality.

You have been kind enough to refer to my illustrious father, the late King Faisal Rahemahullah. He has set a noble example of sincere and dedicated service to the cause of Islam. We hope and pray that Allah will enable us to continue to work in the same direction with firm commitment and ever-increasing dedication. Brothers and Sisters,

I have come to this historic Conference and am speaking to you this evening from the deepest recesses of my heart simply in one capacity – that of a Muslim. I am an Arab and a Saudi and I sincerely thank Allah for these blessings, but I am speaking to you neither as an Arab, nor as a Saudi but simply as a Muslim – as a member of that universal community of faith that knows no geographic boundaries or barriers of colour, race or language. Islam is neither of the East nor of the West – it is the Message of God, the Lord of the Universe, Lord of the East and Lord of the West, a message sent to the whole of mankind through all the prophets of God and finally through the Prophet Muhammad who was sent as a mercy towards the universe. Islam addresses itself to man as such – whatever be his background, his country, his colour, his race or his language, and invites him to become conscious of his real position in the world – which is neither that of an abject slave nor that of an absolute master – he is the representative, the vicegerent, the deputy of God on earth, he is a custodian and a trustee of whatever lies within the bowels of the earth or over it.

Everything is for him and he is in the service of Truth, for God. Brothers and Sisters,

What is the real challenge of the modern age? Without going into details, I would like to suggest that man is faced with a bewildering situation today: on one hand he has achieved tremendous material progress – he has harnessed the forces of nature to his service and created a technological and industrial society unparalleled in its magnitude, grandeur and technical efficiency, but on the other hand, he has failed to control his own

baser passions and build human relations on the foundations of love, sacrifice, trust, piety and service. The institution of family is disintegrating. Social relations are at a low ebb. Economic exploitation is rampant. Political aggrandizement is the order of the day. International rivalries are on the increase. Cultural tensions are splitting human society apart. Social injustice is tearing the soul of man. Man is proud that he has made a new world; man is ashamed, for this new world has failed to make his soul happy. After reaching the heights of technological progress he finds his very existence is threatened by the forces of his own creation. He has learned to control his environment but not himself. He has lost direction and his sense of proportion.

If this is the challenge of the modern age then the answer to it lies in rediscovering the principles of balance and proportion, in rediscovering man's mission in life, in rediscovering the principles of control in human affairs; in short in rediscovering his relation with God. There is nothing wrong with material progress as such, but once material progress becomes dissociated with moral progress and spiritual discipline it loses its relationship with reality and is exposed to the danger of becoming an instrument of destruction. Man left alone swings to extremes – crass materialism or ascetic spiritualism. Divine guidance leads to the path of balance, the straight path, symbolized in the prayer that God has taught man to pray.

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً

*Our Lord, Give us the best in  
this world and the best in the hereafter.*

Islam is Divine Guidance, God in His infinite mercy, has not left man alone. He has endowed him with the guidance of the right path. This guidance was revealed through all the prophets of God, from Adam, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus to Muhammad (peace be upon them all). The message of Muhammad

is not a new message; it is the message of all prophets of God, a message that man has again and again forgotten or changed and distorted. This message was presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him) in its original purity and in its divine perfection. This is Islam.

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا  
 أُوْحِيَٰ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ○

*“Say: We believe in God and that which is revealed to us and which was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes and which Moses and Jesus received and which other prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit.”*  
 (Al-Qur’an II: 136)

The Qur’an invites all those people who belong to the family of the Prophet Abraham to join hands for the achievement of the common goal of enabling mankind to live in peace with God by submitting to His will.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا  
 وَلَا يَلْبَسُنَّ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَعُوذُوا بِمَا كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ○

*“Say: People of the Book let us rally to common terms to be binding on both us and you: that we shall worship none but God alone and associate nothing else with Him or shall any of us take others as lords in place of God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that to Him we Submit”.*  
 (Al-Qur’an III: 64)

Islam invites man to commit himself exclusively to his Creator, to harmonize his will with the Will of God and to recreate the world with this noble commitment.

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا  
أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۝

*“Say: My prayer and my devotions, life and death are all for God, Lord of the universe; no partner has He, with that I am commanded and I am the first of the Muslims”.*

*(Al-Qur’an VI: 162-163)*

Islam stands for one loyalty only – man’s loyalty to his God – loyalty to truth and virtue. It establishes the principle that all human beings are equal and it is unjust to discriminate between them on the basis of colour, race or territory – there is only one valid and universal principle of nobility – all those who are true to God, who fulfil their commitment to Truth, who prove trustworthy, who are pious and virtuous and heedful of God are noble and those who fail on this criterion are those who fall down. -

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ

*“Mankind. We have created you male and female and set you up as nations and tribes so that you may know one another.*

*The noblest among you in the sight of God are the most pious and heedful of you.”*

*(Al-Qur’an XLIX: 13)*

And the mission towards which Islam invites man is to harness all material and human resources for the promotion of virtue and justice and peace. Material progress, yes – but not for the sake of material progress but for the creation of a noble and serene and just society and to seek man’s salvation in this world and in the hereafter.



كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ النُّكْرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

*“You are the best community which has been raised up for mankind. You command what is proper and forbid what is improper and you believe in God”.*

*(Al-Qur’an III: 110)*

Brothers and Sisters,

I have said what I wanted to say. You are witness to the state of affairs with which man is confronted today. Please do not judge Islam in the light of the failings of the Muslims. We may not be the best specimens of Islam. But then Islam is not the property of any one group of human beings. It is the message of God and is meant for all human beings. I urge you to try to understand Islam in the light of the original teachings of the Qur’an and *Sunnah*. To this I invite all – Muslims and non-Muslims. This Conference provides you with an opportunity to examine more closely what Islam has to offer to meet the challenge of the modern age. Technology has brought us to a stage at which man, in order to survive, needs an ideology which is based on truth, which is universally applicable and which provides an effective control mechanism, a moral and spiritual discipline for man. Let us examine the message of Islam with openness and without prejudice. If Islam has nothing to offer, why worry about it; if it has something life-giving to offer, why deny it to ourselves.

This submission of mine is directed towards all human beings; if the Muslims respond to it they will become better Muslims and truer representatives of Islam, and if non-Muslims pay heed to it new horizons can be opened before them, at least of better understanding of a faith that has influenced history over the last fourteen centuries – the religion of over eight hundred million fellow human beings today.

In the end I would like to once again thank the Islamic Council of Europe for the great opportunity it has provided to all of us to

meet and particularly for me to be the guest on this occasion. I look forward to the Islamic Council of Europe playing an illustrious role in promoting the Islamic cause in Europe. I would also like to especially thank the Muslim Community in the United Kingdom and our non-Muslim friends who have so enthusiastically participated in this Conference. Your love and your interest have deeply impressed me and I hope and pray God will enable us all to play one's rightful role in the promotion of truth and justice and peace in this trouble-afflicted world.

وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

*We conclude by saying Praise be to Allah  
Lord of all the worlds.*

## Contributors

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PART ONE

## **The Faith**

## What Islam Stands for

*Abul A'la Maududi*

*Islam is not a new religion, but the culmination of the earlier monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity. Islam – complete submission before God – is the ‘one and only faith consistently revealed by God to mankind from the beginning’. Through Muhammad the final prophet it was reiterated in its pure form, and is distinguished by the authenticity of the Qur’an and the complete historical verbatim record of the teachings of the Prophet. The author here identifies the fundamental principles of Islam, defines the role of a prophet in relation to God and man with particular reference to Muhammad’s fulfilment of his mission, and stresses the unity and integrity of Islam as a complete way of life embracing all spheres of human thought and conduct.*

## I What Islam Stands for

Islam is not the name of some unique faith presented for the first time by Muhammad who should not, for this reason, be called the founder of Islam. The Qur'an makes it abundantly clear that Islam – the complete submission of man before God – is the one and only faith consistently revealed by God to mankind from the very beginning. Noah, Ibrahim, Moses and Christ – prophets who appeared at different times and places – all propagated the same faith. They were not founders of faiths to be named after them: each reiterated the faith of his predecessor.<sup>1</sup>

What then distinguishes Muhammad from the other prophets? He was the last Prophet of God. God revived through him the same genuine faith which had been conveyed by all the former prophets. This original message had been corrupted, and split into various religions by people of different ages, who indulged in interpolations and admixture. These alien elements were eliminated by God, and Islam in its pure and original form was transmitted to mankind through Muhammad. Since there was to be no messenger after Muhammad, the Book revealed to him was preserved word for word<sup>2</sup> so that it should be a source of guidance for all times.<sup>3</sup>

The life of Muhammad, and the manner in which he conducted himself, was also recorded in a unique manner by his companions and by later compilers of the Traditions. A more complete and



authentic account of the life, sayings, and actions, of any prophet or historical personage has never been compiled.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the Qur'an and the authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet together became a reliable source for precise knowledge of what Islam is, what it stands for, what guidance it provides, and what obligations it places upon us.

As Muslims, we believe in all the prophets who preceded Muhammad – not only those who are mentioned in the Qur'an, but also those who are not so mentioned<sup>5</sup> – and this is such an integral part of our faith that if we were to abandon it we should cease to be Muslims.<sup>6</sup> But for instruction we turn to Prophet Muhammad alone, not on account of any prejudice, but because as the last of God's prophets he brought us the latest divine dispensation. The Word of God which reached us through Muhammad is pure divine language, free of human admixtures, and preserved in its original form. Its language is a living language, spoken, written and understood by millions of people, whose grammar, vocabulary, idiom, pronunciation, and script have remained unchanged from the time of revelation till today. Finally, as mentioned earlier, we have a complete historical record of the life, character, conduct, sayings, and action of the Prophet Muhammad, preserved with meticulous care, accuracy and detail. Since this cannot be said of other prophets, we can believe in them but we cannot emulate them.

There are substantial reasons for our belief that Muhammad's mission was for the world as a whole, and for all times. Its universality has been clearly confirmed by the Qur'an<sup>7</sup>; it is a logical consequence of the finality of his prophethood. A prophet, after whom there was to be no other, had to be a guide and leader for all men and for all ages. God has provided through him the complete code which man needs to follow the right path,<sup>8</sup> and this in itself supports the concept of finality, since without completeness the need for other prophets would remain. During the last 1400 years no man has arisen whose life and work bears

even the slightest resemblance to that of a prophet. Nor has anyone presented a book which could be remotely considered as divine communication. Still less has there been a man to claim authority as a law-giver for mankind.

We must try now to understand why the need arose for God to communicate with man through His prophets. This has to be examined in the context of the sources of human knowledge. At the preliminary stage we gain knowledge through empirical observation. At higher levels comes deductive reasoning accompanied by scientific investigation. Man is sufficiently well equipped in these fields not to require direct divine assistance – though there is an ever present divine will helping man in his research and innovative endeavours, and revealing to him progressively the mysteries of His creation. Some gifted individuals achieve in moments of rare inspiration new insights, or discover new laws of nature. But there is another type of knowledge which is beyond the reach of our senses or scientific study. This sphere of knowledge does not submit to any instrument of scientific examination. Philosophy and science can only speculate about it. Human theories about ultimate realities based on reason never achieve the level of certainty, and their authors, conscious of their limitations, do not present them as conclusively proved. In respect of these realities man is dependent on whatever knowledge is communicated to him by God. How is this knowledge conveyed? Certainly not through the operations of some publishing house where books are printed and handed over to each man with instructions to read them, and to discover the truth about himself, about the universe, and about the manner in which he should organise his life. To convey this knowledge to mankind, God chooses prophets as His messengers. He reveals the truth to them and they communicate it to the people.

The work of a prophet is not limited to communication of this knowledge alone. He has to explain, in accordance with what is revealed to him, the relationship between God and man,

and man and man, as it is, and as it should be. He has to prescribe a moral code, enunciate the principles of culture and civilization, lay down the mode of worship, establish a framework of belief, and define the moral imperatives which must govern our life. The prophet determines the rules which should form the basis of social and cultural relationship, economic, judicial, and political dealings, matters of war and peace, and international affairs. The prophet does not transmit merely a code of rituals commonly regarded as 'religion'. He brings with him a whole system of thought and action which in Islamic terminology is called *al-Din* (a complete way of life).

The mission of a prophet does not end with the announcement of this way of life to the world at large. He has to guide the people who follow him, explaining to them the implications of the Islamic creed, the moral code, the divine injunctions and commandments and the form of worship that sustains the whole system. He has to demonstrate by practice the faith he preaches, and his life should be a model which people can follow in organising their own lives. He must give training for individuals and for Muslim society as a whole to prepare them for practical participation in the evolution of Islamic culture and civilization. Under his guidance believers must grow into an organised community engaged in establishing the Islamic system of life in which God's word should prevail over all others. Not all the prophets were wholly successful in this mission. Many failed, not through any personal fault or inadequacy, but because of the prejudice and intolerance of the people, or because circumstances were not favourable. Yet though every prophet had the same mission, it was given to Muhammad alone to succeed in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in the heavens.

From the very outset the audience of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad was the whole of mankind. Those who accepted the Word acquired the status of believers without any distinction. At no time was the invitation of the Qur'an limited to

the people of any particular area, race, tribe, colour or language. The Qur'an always calls upon the 'progeny of Adam' or 'mankind' to accept Islam. Its specific instructions and injunctions are meant for those who have come to believe in Islam and they are always addressed as 'those who believe'. As such they acquire equal rights and status as believers, regardless of all differences of origin. The Qur'an says, '*the believers are all like brothers*'.<sup>9</sup> The Prophet said:

*"Those who subscribe to our beliefs, and adopt the Islamic way of life, have the same rights and the same obligations as we have."*<sup>10</sup>

He also announced:

*"Listen! you have one God as you have one father (Adam). There is no distinction between an Arab and a non-Arab. There is no preference for the black over the fair, or the fair over the black. There is distinction only in submission to God. The most virtuous among you is the most honourable in the eyes of God."*<sup>11</sup>

Among the fundamentals of Islam, the most important is belief in one God; not just the conviction that He exists or that He is one, but that He alone is the Creator, Master, Ruler, and Controller (Lord) of all that exists.<sup>12</sup> The universe exists because God wills it to exist; it functions because God wills it to function; God provides the sustenance and the energy which everything in the universe requires for its existence and growth.<sup>13</sup> All the attributes of Sovereignty reside in God alone and no one else shares them in the slightest degree.<sup>14</sup> He alone possesses all the attributes of Divinity, and no-one other than God possesses any of those attributes.<sup>15</sup> He views the whole universe, and all that it contains, in a single instantaneous glance. He has direct knowledge of the universe, and all that there is in the universe. He knows not only its present, but its past, and its future. This omnipresence and omniscience is an attribute of God alone and

of no other.<sup>16</sup> With him there is no 'before' nor 'after'. He has been there always and will be there always – eternal and abiding. All else is transient. He alone is eternally living and present.<sup>17</sup> He is no one's progeny and He has no progeny. Whatever exists besides Him is His own creation, and no other can identify himself in any manner with the Lord of the universe, or claim to be his son or daughter.<sup>18</sup> He is man's sole Deity. To associate anyone in His worship is as great a sin as it is an act of infidelity. He responds to man's prayers and He alone has the power to accept or reject them. Not to ask of him is senseless arrogance, and to turn to others is sheer ignorance. To petition others is to associate equals with him.<sup>19</sup>

The sovereignty of God in Islam is not just a supernatural phenomenon. It covers all aspects of political and legal sovereignty also, and in these too no-one other than God has any share. To God alone belongs the rightful authority to exercise power on this earth over those whom God has created in it. No monarch, no royal family, no elite class, no leader of any religious group, no democracy vested in the sovereignty of the people, can participate in God's sovereignty. Whoever claims such a position is a rebel, as are those who leave God and turn to other people in obedience. Similarly, any institution or individual attempting to assume political and legal sovereignty, seeking to restrict thereby the jurisdiction of God to spheres of personal law or religious duties, is a usurper and a rebel. The truth is that no one can claim to be a law-giver save under God; no one can challenge the supreme authority of God almighty in any sphere.<sup>20</sup>

Certain consequences flow naturally from this Islamic concept of God. God is the Master of man's destiny and no one else can interfere with the fate of others or with his own fate. Man's hopes and fears must, therefore, be directed only to God. No one else should be an object of fear or source of favour. God is the creator of the world and He alone has complete and direct knowledge of the reality of man and of the world. Only He can

guide man through the complicated course of life, and instruct him regarding good and evil. Since God alone is the Creator and the Master he has exclusive authority over the universe and man. It is an act of blasphemy for man to claim independence or authority over other men. For man to become his own law-giver or to accept the authority of any other individual or institution as such is equally blasphemous. The ultimate Law-giver and Master of His creation on this earth is no other than God, and His Law has the status of the Supreme Law. Man can legislate subject to His Supreme Law. Beyond that he has no legislative authority.

We come now to our second most important belief – belief in Muhammad’s prophethood. God conveyed His message to man through Muhammad. This took two forms – the Qur’an which God revealed to the Prophet in his own language, and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet which is an unerring guide to man in respect of all that is permissible and all that is prohibited in the eyes of God. Without this belief in the Prophet, belief in God would become a mere theoretical proposition. It is the example of practical leadership, and the ideological guidance provided by the Prophet, which transforms belief in God into a culture and a civilization, and enables man to evolve a way of life. Through the Prophet we get not only rules of guidance, but a complete scheme of values and a practical code of conduct. No one can be a practising Muslim unless he believes in the Prophet as he believes in God.<sup>21</sup> The position of the Prophet has been so clearly defined in Islam that we know exactly what he was and what he was not. The Prophet is no more than a servant of God. He was to make people servants of God and not servants of himself.<sup>22</sup> At least seventeen times a day Muslims recite in their prayers: “I bear witness that Muhammad is a servant of God and is his Prophet”.<sup>23</sup> The Qur’an leaves no doubt that the Prophet is but a human being and has no share whatever in Divinity.<sup>24</sup> The Prophet is neither super-human nor is he free of human weaknesses. He owns no

treasure of God, nor does he possess knowledge of the unknown that he should become all-knowing like God Almighty.<sup>25</sup> The Prophet can no more harm or benefit others than himself.<sup>26</sup>

The precise task of the Prophet is to communicate the message of God. He has no powers to make people righteous and faithful; he cannot call to account those who refuse to believe; nor has he power to punish them for their disbelief.<sup>27</sup> Should the Prophet himself choose to defy God, or fabricate things on behalf of God, or make any change in the message revealed to him, he will incur divine displeasure and punishment.<sup>28</sup> Muhammad is one of the prophets of God, and above that he has no status<sup>29</sup> He cannot by himself prohibit or permit anything. Without a mandate from God he cannot legislate for the people.<sup>30</sup> He has to conform strictly to Divine commandments.<sup>31</sup> Islam ensured that the believers should not turn the Prophet into a demi-god. Some of the earlier prophets suffered this fate at the hands of their followers who attributed all kinds of supernatural powers to their leaders and made them into God's equals or progeny or incarnation. By discouraging such exaggeration Islam has established the true role of the prophet in relation to God and man.

No one can claim to be a believer without believing in the Prophet.<sup>32</sup> He who obeys the Prophet, in fact, obeys God. God has not designated any prophet except to be obeyed according to His will.<sup>33</sup> The path of the Prophet is the path of divine guidance.<sup>34</sup> Whatever the Prophet ordains must be accepted, and whatever he instructs to avoid, must be avoided.<sup>35</sup> The Prophet clarified this when he said:

*"I am a mortal like you. In matters revealed to me by God, you must obey my instructions. But you know more about your own worldly affairs than I do. So my advice in these matters is not binding."*<sup>36</sup>

The *Sunnah* of Muhammad is an exposition of the purpose of the Qur'an, and this exposition too was conveyed to the Prophet

by God Himself, as the Author of the Qur'an. The Prophet's explanation of the Qur'an enjoys divine sanction,<sup>37</sup> and no one else can interpret the Qur'an in a way which may be in conflict with, or repugnant to, the explanation given by the Prophet. God declared the life of Muhammad as a model life.<sup>38</sup> No one can be a true believer unless he accepts the decision of the Prophet.<sup>39</sup> Muslims do not have an independent position in a matter determined by the Prophet.<sup>40</sup> Before deciding any matter Muslims must first ascertain whether any analogous matter was decided earlier by God and his Prophet, and if a precedent exists they must follow it.<sup>41</sup> God conveyed, through the Prophet to mankind, not only a supreme law but also a permanent scheme of values. Those values are absolute. That which is good, according to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, is good for all times; that which is evil, shall remain evil forever. That which is enjoined as duty, in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, shall always be a duty. What is declared permissible is permissible for ever; what is prohibited is prohibited for all times. No amendment, deletion, addition, or abrogation, is possible in this law unless some person or community decides to renounce Islam. So long as Muslims remain Muslims, it is impossible in their social and legal system that something which was evil yesterday should turn into good today, and revert to evil tomorrow.

The third fundamental creed of Islam is belief in the hereafter – *Akhirah*. Denial of the hereafter is the denial of Islam even though one may have belief in God, in the Prophet, and in the Qur'an.<sup>42</sup> In its detailed form, this belief is composed of the following essential elements. Man has not been unleashed on the earth as an irresponsible savage. He is accountable to God for his actions. Today's life is only a test and an examination. At the end we will all be called upon to render a complete account of our acts of commission and omission to God.<sup>43</sup> The time for accountability is fixed by God. The tenure allotted to mankind on this earth shall terminate on doomsday, when the present order will be



annihilated and replaced by another. The whole human race will rise once again in the new world.<sup>44</sup> Then they will appear before God Almighty, and every individual will face the consequences of his personal acts.<sup>45</sup> Judgement will rest not on God's own knowledge alone. The requirements of due process of justice will be fully observed. A complete record of the actions of every individual, without the slightest alteration, will be put in open court, and evidence of different categories will be presented to prove what was done by man in private or in public. His motives too will be examined.<sup>46</sup> There will be no undue intercession. Neither bribery, nor advocacy against the truth will be tolerated. No one will be able to shift his burden to another. Even the closest relations, friends, leaders, religious guides, or self-styled deities, will not be able to offer any help to anyone. Man will stand by himself – helpless and alone – to render his account, and await the pronouncement of judgement, which shall be in the power of God alone.<sup>47</sup> Judgement will rest on one question: did man conduct himself, in submission to God, in strict conformity with the truth revealed to the prophets, and with the conviction that he would be held responsible for his conduct in life on the day of judgement? If the answer is in the affirmative, the reward will be paradise; if in the negative, the punishment will be hell.<sup>48</sup>

Belief in the hereafter divides people into three distinct categories. First, there are those who do not believe in the hereafter and regard life on this earth as the only life. They judge good and evil by the results which manifest themselves in this world. An action is judged solely by the result it produces. If it produces beneficial results it is good; if it brings about harmful results it is evil. The end justifies the means and the same action can be quite differently regarded. Second, those people who do not deny the hereafter, but who depend on the intercession or atonement of someone to absolve them of their sins. Among these, there are some who regard themselves as God's chosen

people, and believe they will receive only nominal punishment, however grave their sins. This deprives them of the moral advantage which they could have derived from their belief in the hereafter. As a result their position is very like that of those who deny the hereafter. Third, are those people who believe in the hereafter in the form in which Islam presents it. They do not delude themselves that they have any special relationship with God, or that anyone can intercede on their behalf.<sup>49</sup> They know that they alone are responsible for their actions. For them the belief in the hereafter becomes a powerful moral constraint. A person who has the conviction that he is fully accountable for all his actions finds a permanent guard stationed within himself, who cautions him and admonishes him whenever he deviates from the right path. There may be no court to summon him, no policeman to apprehend him, no witnesses to accuse him, and no public opinion to press him, but the guard within him is ever on the alert, ready to seize him whenever he transgresses. The consciousness of this inner presence makes man fear God even when he is alone. He discharges his duties honestly, and refrains from doing anything which is prohibited. Should he succumb to temptation and violate the law of God, he is ever ready to offer sincere regrets, and to enter into a firm contract with the future that he will not repeat the mistake. There can be no greater instrument of moral reformation nor any better method to help man to develop a sound and stable character. It is the belief in the hereafter which helps man, under all circumstances, to conform to God's scheme of permanent values. It is for this reason that Islam attaches great importance to belief in the hereafter. Without it even belief in God and the Prophet is not sufficient for man's guidance.

Earlier, we noted that Islam represents a whole civilization, a complete culture, and a comprehensive world order. It provides moral guidance in all walks of life. This is why Islamic values are not solely for the ascetic who renounces the world, but for

him who actively participates in different spheres of life, and works within them. The moral values which people look for in convents, monasteries, and cloisters, are placed by Islam right in the mainstream of life. Heads of governments, governors of states, judges, members of the armed forces and police services, elected representatives of the people in parliaments, leaders of finance, trade and industry, college and university teachers, and students alike receive guidance to organise their lives in accordance with the principles of Islam. There is no distinction in Islam between private and public conduct. The same moral code which one observes at home, applies to one's conduct in public. This is true of every institution of society and every department of Government; all must conform to the laws of Islam. Politics must be based on truth and justice. Nations should deal with one another on the basis of mutual recognition of rights and due discharge of obligations. Even if there has to be war, those engaged in it should conduct themselves not as barbarians, but as civilized human beings. When man decides to submit to the will of God, and accepts His law as the supreme law, and organises his life in accordance with the revealed moral code on the principle of accountability to God, the quality and character of his life cannot be limited to the precincts of church, chapel, masjid or temple. It must extend itself to every sphere of his work as a man of God: there is a complete integrity in the life of Islam.

Briefly this is what Islam stands for. This is no dream or Utopia. The Prophet of Islam and his companions developed and established a complete model of Islam on this earth for mankind to follow.



## **Islam: The Most Suitable Religion for Mankind**

*Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi*

*The role of the Prophet Muhammad and the revealed message which he communicated to mankind were revolutionary; they brought about a radical transformation in society. Man was freed from slavery to innumerable nameless and arbitrary forces into the service of One God. He was raised from an abject position to one of supremacy second only to God. He learned of the dignity of man, and the universal brotherhood and equality of all men before God. He was given a new purpose in life, and with the gift of his own free will became master of his destiny as never before. It is difficult to imagine a more fundamental revolution nor one whose dynamic has continued for so long. The forces which transformed men in the seventh century still have the power to inspire him today.*

## **2 Islam: The Most Suitable Religion for Mankind**

The liberal and revolutionary aspects of Islam and its Prophet Muhammad, which transformed society in the seventh century, are still today amongst the most potent forces at work for the betterment of humanity. They brought not only a new ideology, but inspired the energy and confidence which so radically altered man and the society in which he lived. They provided the impetus for a new age of culture and civilization, arts and learning, material and spiritual progress.

What was the nature of the service rendered to mankind? What were the gifts of the Prophet that so profoundly affected man and society as he found it? First and foremost he proclaimed belief in the Oneness of God. No more revolutionary, more life-giving and more profitable creed could have been vouchsafed to humanity. Man had been proud and presumptuous, boastful of his creations. He took pride in enslaving other countries and nations, often arrogating to himself even the position of God; yet at the same time he demeaned himself by bowing his head before idols, inanimate, lifeless objects, artifacts of his own creation. He subjected himself to the elemental forces of nature and war, a slave to credulous belief and irrational fears of demons and devils. His life was spent in fear of the unknown and helpless belief in nameless powers, which could not but foster confusion, cowardice, doubt and indecision. By removing the fear of all

else save God alone, the Prophet of Islam made him a self-reliant, courageous, rational believing being. It was through Muhammad that man came to recognise his Creator as the Supreme Power, the sole Enricher and Destroyer of life. By submitting only to the will of the one true God, man was freed from servility to all other powers. He was enabled to see the unity of Cause in the multiplicity of phenomena; he was reassured of his pivotal position in the scheme of creation; he became aware of his worth and dignity. In short, by accepting the role of servant to the One and only God, he became master of every other created being and object. For the first time man became aware of the exalted position allotted to him by God in the scheme of things.

Unity of Godhead came to be recognised, thanks to the last Prophet, as the guiding principle for all schools of thought. The power of his message undermined the polytheistic religions of the day. Pagan belief and practice, though it persisted, suffered a blow from which it never recovered. Man was released from slavery to creation. Could there be a greater gift to humanity than this?

The second great favour conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was the concept of the equality and brotherhood of all mankind. Before him the world was divided into innumerable castes and creeds, tribes and nations, some claiming nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of serfs and chattels. It was from Muhammad that the world first heard the revolutionary message of human equality.

*“O Mankind, Your God is one and you have but one father. You are all progeny of Adam, and Adam was made of clay. Lo! the noblest among you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over a non-Arab save by his piety.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Prophet made this declaration on the occasion of his last Haj before a congregation of one hundred and twenty four

thousand persons. His announcement put the seal on the twin principles of the Unity of God and the Unity of Mankind. These are the two natural foundations for raising any edifice of peace and progress, friendship and cooperation between different peoples and nations. Together they create a bond of brotherhood between human beings – that of One Lord and one father for them all. Oneness of God is the spiritual principle of human equality; common lineage of high and low, white and coloured, places all men on the same plane of humanity.

So radical a message was not well received. The world was in no mind to listen to a message which struck so sharply at the roots of existing social relationships and economic and political order. Its cataclysmic consequences threw the world into confusion. This was a time when numerous clans and families claimed their descent from the sun or moon. The Pharaohs of Egypt had believed themselves to be the re-incarnation of the sun-god, while in India several ruling families claimed their descent from the sun and moon. The Emperors of Iran called themselves *Kasra* or *Chosroes* implying that Divine blood flowed in their veins. The Chinese rulers too, deemed themselves to be the sons of Heaven. According to the Qur'an even:

*“The Jews and the Christians say that they are the children of God and those whom He loves”.* (V.18).

Even amongst the Arabs things were little better. So proud were they of their language that every other nation besides their own was an *Ajami* or dumb to them. Further, the Quraish of Mecca, being extremely conscious of maintaining their superiority, claimed a position of privilege even in the performance of *Haj*. This was the shape of things all over the world, when the Qur'an heralded that all human beings were equal.

*“O Mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have*



*made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware."* (XLIX. 13).

In the opening *Surah* of the Qur'an, Allah is invoked as:

*"Lord of the Worlds"*. (I.1).

Man had been accustomed to associate nobility with those who claimed themselves to be the progeny of gods and demi-gods. In order that the honour of the common man was not usurped again by the selected few, the Prophet announced:

*"The whole of mankind is the family of God and he amongst His family, is dearest to Him, who does good to others."*<sup>2</sup>

Today we find the principle of human equality enshrined in the constitutions of different countries and proclaimed from the forum of the United Nations Organisation in the shape of the Charter of Human Rights. Yet long before the days of UN Charters, it was in Islam that the concept of equality was first proclaimed as a human right. The indefatigable efforts of Muhammad and his followers to create a truly egalitarian Muslim society established the principle later adopted as the basis for human existence throughout the world.

The third great gift bestowed by the Prophet of Islam is the concept of human dignity. During the age of darkness when Islam made its appearance, none was more ignoble and humiliated than man. Without realisation of his worth, he had no sense of human dignity. A sacred tree or animal, dedicated to some religious belief or practice, enjoyed a more coveted place than man himself. Human sacrifice on the altars of countless deities was a common spectacle. It was solely through Muhammad the Prophet that men came to appreciate the fact that human beings,

the glorious creation of God, were entitled to much more loving regard, respect and honour than any other creature. The rank accorded to man was next only to God, for God had Himself heralded the purpose of man's creation in words of lasting beauty:

*"He it is who created for you all that is in the earth"*. (II.29).

Man was declared as the best of creations, the ruler of the world and all that existed in it:

*"Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment"*. (XVII. 70).

A celestial Tradition of the Prophet alludes to the deep concern of God for the welfare of human beings:

*God will ask (someone) on the Day of Judgement: "I fell ill but thou did not pay a visit to Me"*.

*The man will reply:*

*"How could I have paid a visit to Thee? Thou art the Lord of the worlds"*.

*But God will say:*

*"Did thou not know that one of my slaves was ill? Had thou gone to see him, thou would have found Me by his side"*.

*Then God will again ask:*

*"O Son of Adam, I asked thee to feed Me, but thou refused it to Me."*

*The man will submit:*

*"How could I have fed Thee? Thou art the Lord of the worlds"*.

*But the reply of God will be:*

*"Did thou not know that one of My slaves had asked for food from Thee? Did'st thou not know that if thou had given him food, thou would have found it with Me?"*

God will again ask:

*“O son of Adam, I asked thee water to drink but thou refused it to Me”.*

The man will say in reply:

*“O Lord, How could have I given water to Thee? Thou art the Lord of the worlds”.*

But the reply given by God will be:

*“Did thou not recollect that one of My slaves asked for water from thee, but thou refused? Did thou not know that if thou had given him water, thou would have found it with Me?”<sup>3</sup>*

Islam preaches unalloyed and absolute unity of God and rejects every form of anthropomorphism. Even so, it can employ this analogy to drive home the rank and dignity of man in the eyes of God. Has any other religion or philosophical thought accorded a nobler place to human beings than Islam?

The Prophet of Islam stressed the importance of right actions in attracting the blessings of God. Most praiseworthy were kindness and consideration from one man to another.

*“The Most Compassionate (God) is kind to those who are kind to others. If you would show kindness to those who live on the earth, He who lives in the Heaven shall shower His blessings on you.”<sup>4</sup>*

The condition of mankind when this powerful voice was raised in the world was pitiable. Human life was of little account. Rulers dined with the lives of their subjects as they chose: a man was subject to his master's whim. For centuries the world had been one vast battlefield where kings and emperors fought for supremacy with the lives of their subjects. The entire population of a conquered land could be put to the sword at the hand of the victor.

In addition a profound sense of pessimism springing from the worthlessness of human nature and hopelessness of divine succour filled the air. The ancient religions of the East and the perverted form of Christianity in the West, both had a share in producing a

climate of despair. The philosophy of re-incarnation preached by the ancient religion of India assigned no place to the will and decision of man in shaping his destiny. This present life was but a form of retribution for his actions during his previous life. The Christian doctrines of Original Sin and Atonement had joined hands to shake man's confidence all over the world in the determination and accountability of human actions. Mankind had lost faith in the mercy of God. His eternal and immutable decrees seemed to condemn man to a pre-determined destiny in which his own conduct, good or bad, was of little consequence. But Muhammad affirmed that Man was born with a clean slate and perfect freedom of action. He was, declared the Prophet, the author of his actions, both good and evil. As such he was solely responsible for his deeds, and would earn reward or punishment according to his deserts. Discarding the theory of vicarious atonement, the Qur'an established the principle, once for all, that every man was his own redeemer.

*“And that man hath only that for which he maketh effort. And that his effort will be seen”.* (LII. 39-40).

This was the message of salvation which gave man a new confidence as master of his own destiny. He could apply himself with renewed vigour, confidence and determination to shaping his own life and re-forming the future of humanity.

The doctrine of forgiveness of sins was one of the most bounteous gifts of Islam to mankind. The Prophet declared that sins were but temporary deviations from the right path inherent in the nature of man, and were brought about by ignorance, mistake, man's own desire and the promptings of the devil. But man's deeper desire was to regret his mistakes and seek pardon of God with a contrite heart. To be broken in spirit by a sense of guilt and to seek forgiveness of God showed the innate goodness of human nature and attracted the mercy of God. This

gospel of hope and good tidings was a revolutionary message to despondent humanity condemned for ever by the guilt of original sin and past misdeeds. How profound a change it wrought on the prevailing atmosphere of gloom and depression is illustrated by the fact that the Prophet came to be known as the 'Apostle of Repentance'. Repentance, he said, did not involve faint-heartedness, nor did it arise from fear of disapprobation, but was a bold and daring step taken by the first man Adam, which showed the innate nobility of his nature. Repentance was sanctified as one of the acts of devotion due to God. So forcefully did the Prophet preach the virtue of repentance, that even those who seemed irredeemably sunk in sin turned in repentance to God and attained a sublimity of spirit that was envied by others.

Describing the clemency of God which is ever willing to forgive sinners, the Qur'an speaks with such alluring charm that one wonders whether God loves best those who seek His forgiveness after deviating from the path of virtue. God's magnanimity to those who turn to Him for forgiveness, is endless; He is long suffering and of great mercy. In the words of the Qur'an:

*"Say: O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, who forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful". (XXXIX. 53).*

Other verses in the Qur'an exhort believers to acquire positive merit and win everlasting Bliss:

*"And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (evil);*

*"Those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; Allah loveth the good;*

*"And those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves,*

*remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins – Who forgiveth sins, save Allah only? – and will not knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did.*

*“The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever – a bountiful reward for workers!” (III. 133–136).*

Among the characteristics of the true believer enumerated in another verse, repentance takes precedence over all others.

*“(Triumphant) are those who turn repentant (to Allah) those who serve (Him), those who praise (Him), those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate (in worship), those who enjoin the right and who forbid the wrong and those who keep the limits (ordained) of Allah – And give glad tidings to believers?” (IX. 112).*

The place of honour accorded to those who repent of their sins is further illustrated by those verses of the Qur’an revealed on the occasion of the forgiveness of three companions<sup>5</sup> of the holy Prophet, who had been excluded from other followers for their failure to accompany him on the expedition to Tabuk. Before the verses alluding to the mistake of these companions being condoned by God, the Qur’an mentions the Prophet and the *Ansar* and *Muhajir* companions in order that no stigma may remain attached to them after their mistake had been pardoned. The Qur’an in this way, teaches all believers who take the companions of the Prophet as models of virtue, that no ignominy attaches to a man after a genuine change of heart.

*“Allah hath turned in mercy to the Prophet, and to the Muhajirin and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. After the hearts of a party of them had almost swerved aside, then turned He unto them in mercy. Lo! He is Full of pity, Merciful for them.*

*“And to the three also (did He turn in mercy) who were left behind,*

*when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them, and their own souls were straitened for them till they bethought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him. Then turned He unto them in mercy that they (too) might turn (repentant unto Him). Lo! Allah! He is the Relenting, the Merciful!"* (IX. 117-118).

Remission of sin leads us to one of the chief attributes of the Divine Being – His mercy and compassion. The bounty of God's mercy is the constant theme of the Qur'an. Says God: "My mercy embraces all things" (VII. 156), while a celestial Tradition of the Prophet tells us: "Verily my Mercy overcomes My anger". To despair of God's mercy was made a cardinal sin. Quoting Jacob and Ibrahim, two great Prophets of God, the Qur'an announces:

*"Verily none despair of the comfort of Allah except a people disbelieving".* (XII. 87).

and:

*"Who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?"* (XV. 56).

According to the Jewish and Christian doctrines, the misery and suffering of humanity on earth was but a feeble image of the never ending agony which awaited them in the future world. The mediaeval monastic orders developed this doctrine with appalling vividness and in graphic detail. Humanity, scared by these ghastly visions and glimpses of eternal suffering, was relieved by the Prophet's emphasis on God's all-embracing mercy and the efficacy of repentance which could wipe clean the slate of even the most vicious among the castaways of society.

There is yet another gift of the prophethood of Muhammad

still more far-reaching, more beneficial to humanity at large. This is the concept of the unity of spirit and matter: the harmony of the sacred and the profane. He taught that the dichotomy between the two was superficial, more apparent than real. Every one of man's actions, his behaviour and morality, is guided by his motive, which, in the terminology of religion, is known as *niyat* or intention. No religious belief is entirely divorced from the realities of human experience in its manifold practical aspects. The intention or purpose with which any act is done is the criterion of its moral worth. The Qur'an does not recognise any division between the temporal and the spiritual since man's desire to propitiate God and follow His commands permeates every fibre of human activity, no matter whether it is the art of government or war; availing oneself of one's earthly possessions or satisfaction of one's natural desires; earning one's living or leading a satisfactory married life. If the intention is good even the most mundane act is turned into a virtuous deed, and becomes a means of bringing man nearer to God. On the contrary, no merit whatsoever attaches to right acts – like devotion to God or fighting in His cause – if the sincere desire to attain the will and pleasure of God is absent.

The ancient world had divided life into two compartments – the religious and the secular. As a result a wedge had been driven between those who selected one or other of these modes of life. Frequently the two groups were at loggerheads with one another, for the 'world' and 'religion' were to them incompatible spheres of human life. Every man was forced to choose one or the other, since no-one could be expected to travel in two boats at the same time. The prevalent view was that the path of salvation lay not through the rough and tumble of life, but only in isolation from the social, economic and political problems of worldly pursuits. No concept of religion which barred the gates to material progress and acquisition of power, riches and fame, could be of interest to intelligent, capable and ambitious persons. Forced by



this dichotomy to choose between the world and religion, large numbers of the most able people dissociated themselves from the rigours and constraints of religious and ascetic life. By withdrawing themselves from the pursuit of virtue, such men frustrated any integration of secular and religious affairs. Morality appeared to vanish from the conduct of public affairs. The State eventually revolted against the Church and made itself free from all obligations to it. This hideous schizophrenia not only divorced what was called worldly from the benefit of spiritual wisdom, but also gave birth to the faithlessness and agnosticism of modern Europe, which is now threatening, because of its political and cultural supremacy, to inundate the entire world. The present wave of gross materialism, loss of faith and moral debasement can be seen as a direct consequence of the division between spirit and matter effected by the older civilizations. It was left to the Prophet to re-integrate the spiritual and temporal spheres of life: to persuade men of religion and men of the world to unite in bringing about God's kingdom on earth.

It would be difficult to conceive a more complete transformation of life than the one brought about by the fusion of the secular and the sacred. Let us leave the last word with Iqbal, one of Islam's great poets:

*“On monastic order was laid the foundation of Church,  
How could mendicity contain royalty in its confines?  
The conflict was deep between hermit and king,  
One was triumphant, the other subdued.  
Politics got rid of religion,  
Helpless was the high priest.  
When the world and religion parted ways,  
Avarice was Ruler, King and Vizier.  
Dualism was the doom of mind and matter,  
Dualism made civilization blind.  
This is the miracle of the dweller of the desert,*

*Whose warnings reflected the tidings glad;  
That humanity's only refuge was this –  
That the mystic Junaid unite with Ardsher  
the King”.*

Yet another radical change brought about by the Prophet of Islam in the life of man was to make him conscious of the ultimate end of existence. Unaware of any ultimate purpose, man had for long fixed his eyes on trivial and ephemeral ends. He directed his whole intelligence and labour to the acquisition of material wealth, fame or power. The only virtue lay in the pursuit of pleasure: happiness became identified with the satisfaction of worldly desires. But Muhammad told man that the business of mankind was to exert itself in striving to attain perfect knowledge of God; to contemplate His nature and attributes; to bring his soul nearer to God through awareness of the infinite; to seek unity in the diversity of nature; to seek fulfilment in virtuous acts. He told man that these were the objectives whose achievement conferred on him a rank envied by the angels of God.

The prophethood of Muhammad made a clean sweep of the existing order of things in the world. The desire and longing of man was now centred on a new objective. Love of God took possession of his being; the pleasure of God became the everlasting thirst of the human heart; mercy and kindness to God's creatures became the prime object of his endeavours. It was only after the advent of the Prophet that the countries who submitted to Islam adopted the pursuit of spiritual values as a way of life. In Arabia and Iran, Syria and Egypt, Turkestan and Iraq, North Africa and Spain, thousands of souls undertook the search for higher and tender virtues. During this period we find innumerable men of God preaching to all mankind love of the Lord, kindness and compassion, the merits of virtuous living, the acquisition of Divine knowledge, the rejection of cruelty and indecency, and the grace of humility and modesty. They taught the lessons of human

dignity and the brotherhood of man and sought to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

Could we today look into the hearts of these supreme examples of mankind, we would witness the depth and purity of their innermost being. We would see how they were ever willing to put their own life at stake for others, made their own children and family suffer for the good of all, compelled autocrat kings and potentates to do justice to the weak and the poor, and dispensed true justice even to their enemies. Had historians and biographers not preserved a faithful record of their lives, the truth of their deeds would be beyond belief. This revolutionary change in the manners and morals of people was indeed a miracle worked by the holy Prophet of Islam; the sum of his great gifts to mankind.



# **Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality**

*Syed Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas*

*No understanding of the totality of Islam as a way of life can be apprehended without an examination of the concept of 'din'. Here the Arabic term is analysed in some detail, exploring its many elaborations and subtleties in an attempt to convey the all embracing and integrating nature of this concept, central to the teaching of Islam. Al-Attas examines the nature of man's Covenant with God, and the related concepts of justice, virtue and brotherhood. He stresses the importance of knowledge as the basis for all right practice of religion, ethics and morality. He defines the role and character of the individual and society; of the Self or soul and its journey to God. The Islamic vision of reality is presented as the philosophical core of Islam determining its world view. Finally, the authority of the Qur'an and the perfect model of the Prophet are presented as the constant source of guidance to the Muslim seeking to fulfil his identity and destiny through right conduct.*

### 3 Islam: The Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality

The concept couched in the term *din*, which is generally understood to mean *religion*, is not the same as the concept *religion* as interpreted and understood throughout Western religious history. When we speak of Islam and refer to it in English as a 'religion', we mean and understand by it the *din*, in which all the basic connotations inherent in the term *din*<sup>1</sup> are conceived as gathered into a single unity of coherent meaning as reflected in the Holy Qur'an and in the Arabic language to which it belongs.

The word *din* derived from the Arabic root DYN has many primary significations which although seemingly contrary to one another are yet all conceptually interconnected, so that the ultimate meaning derived from them all presents itself as a clarified unity of the whole. By 'the whole' I mean that which is described as the Religion of Islam, which contains within itself all the relevant possibilities of meaning inherent in the concept of *din*. Since we are dealing with an Islamic concept which is translated into a living reality intimately and profoundly *lived* in human experience, the apparent contrariness in its basic meanings is indeed not due to vagueness; it is, rather, due to the contrariness inherent in human nature itself, which they faithfully reflect. And their power to reflect human nature faithfully is itself clear demonstration of their lucidity and veracity and authenticity in conveying truth.

The primary significations of the term *din* can be reduced to four: (1) *indebtedness*; (2) *submissiveness*; (3) *judicious power*; (4) *natural inclination or tendency*. In what presently follows, I shall attempt to explain them briefly and place them in their relevant contexts, drawing forth the coherent ultimate meaning intended, which denotes the faith, beliefs and practices and teachings adhered to by the Muslims individually and collectively as a Community and manifesting itself altogether as an objective whole as the Religion called Islam.

The verb *dana* which derives from *din* conveys the meaning of *being indebted*, including various other meanings connected with *debts*, some of them contraries. In the state in which one finds oneself being in debt – that is to say, a *da'in* – it follows that one subjects oneself, in the sense of *yielding* and *obeying*, to law and ordinances governing debts, and also, in a way, to the creditor, who is likewise designated as a *da'in*.<sup>2</sup> There is also conveyed in the situation described the fact that one in debt is under *obligation*, or *dayn*. Being in debt and under obligation naturally involves *judgement: daynunah*, and *conviction: idanah*, as the case may be. All the above significations including their contraries inherent in *dana* are practicable possibilities only in organized societies involved in commercial life in *towns* and *cities*, denoted by *mudun* or *mada'in*. A town or city, a *madinah*, has a *judge, ruler*, or *governor* – a *dayyan*. Thus already here, in the various applications of the verb *dana* alone, we see rising before our mind's eye a picture of civilized living; of societal life of law and order and justice and authority.<sup>3</sup> It is, conceptually at least, connected intimately with another verb *maddana*<sup>4</sup> which means: to *build* or to *found cities*: to *civilize*, to *refine* and to *humanize*; from which is derived another term: *tamaddun*, meaning *civilization* and *refinement in social culture*. Thus we derive from the primary signification of being in a state of debt other correlated significations, such as: to *abase oneself*, to *serve* (a master), to *become enslaved*; and from another such signification of *judge, ruler* and *governor* is

derived meanings which denote the *becoming mighty, powerful and strong*; a *master, one elevated in rank, and glorious*; and yet further, the meanings: *judgement, requital or reckoning* (at some appointed time). Now the very notion of law and order and justice and authority and social cultural refinement inherent in all these significations derived from the concept *din* must surely presuppose the existence of a *mode or manner of acting* consistent with what is reflected in the law, the order, the justice, the authority and social cultural refinement – a mode or manner of acting, or a *state of being* considered as *normal* in relation to them; so that this *state of being* is a state that is *customary or habitual*. From here, then, we can see the logic behind the derivation of the other primary signification of the concept *din* as *custom, habit, disposition or natural tendency*. At this juncture it becomes increasingly clear that the concept *din* in its most basic form indeed reflects in true testimony the natural tendency of man to form societies and obey laws and seek just government. The idea of a kingdom, a cosmopolis, inherent in the concept *din* that rises before our vision is most important in helping us attain a more profound understanding of it, and needs be reiterated here, for we shall have recourse to it again when we deal with the religious and spiritual aspects of man's existential experience.

I have thus far explained only in cursory manner the basic concept of *din*, reducing the various connotations to four primary significations and showing their mutual actual and conceptual connections, in the context of human 'secular' relations. In the religious context, that of the relationship between man and God, and what God approves of man's relations with his fellow-men, the primary significations, while maintaining their basic meanings, nevertheless undergo profound synthesis and intensification at once true to the experience described and to the description of the Religion of Islam as the objective faith, beliefs and practices and teachings experienced and lived by each and



every member of the Muslim Community as well as by the Community as a whole.

How can the concept of *being indebted* be explained in the religious and spiritual context? – one may ask; what is the nature of the debt? and to whom is the debt owed? We answer that man is indebted to God, his Creator and Provider, for bringing him into existence and maintaining him in his existence. Man was once nothing and did not exist, and now he is:

*'Man We did create from a quintessence of clay;  
Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a place of rest,  
firmly fixed;  
Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that  
clot We made a lump; then We made out of that lump bones and  
clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another  
creature. So blessed be God, the Best to create!'*<sup>5</sup>

The man who ponders seriously his origin will realize that a few decades ago he did not exist, and the whole of mankind now existing neither existed nor knew of their possible present existence. The same truth applies to all ages of man from the beginning of his existence in time. So naturally he who ponders thus sincerely knows intuitively that his sense of being indebted for his creation and existence cannot really be directed to his parents, for he knows equally well that his parents too are subject to the same process by the same Creator and Provider. Man does not himself cause his own growth and development from the state of a clot of congealed blood to the one that now stands mature and perfect. He knows that even in his mature and perfect state he is not able to create for himself his sense of sight or hearing or other – and let alone move himself in conscious growth and development in his helpless embryonic stage. Then again:

*'When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord?" – they said: "Yea! we do testify!"'*<sup>6</sup>

The rightly guided man realizes that his very self, his soul, has already acknowledged God as his Lord, even before his existence as a man, so that such a man recognizes his Creator and Cherisher and Sustainer. The nature of the debt of creation and existence is so tremendously total that man, the moment he is created and given existence, is *already* in a state of utter loss, for he possesses really nothing himself, seeing that everything about him and in him and from him is what the Creator owns Who owns everything. And this is the purport of the words in the Holy Qur'an:

*'Verily man is in loss (khusrin).'*<sup>7</sup>

Seeing that he owns absolutely nothing to 'repay' his debt, *except his own consciousness* of the fact that he is himself the very substance of the debt, so must he 'repay' with himself, so must he 'return' himself to Him Who owns him absolutely. He is himself the debt to be returned to the Owner, and 'returning the debt' means to *give himself up in service*, or *khidmah*, to his Lord and Master; to *abase himself* before Him – and so the rightly guided man sincerely and consciously *enslaves himself* for the sake of God in order to fulfill His Commands and Prohibitions and Ordinances, and thus to live out the dictates of His Law. The concept of 'return' alluded to above is also evident in the conceptual structure of *din*, for it can and does indeed mean, as I will elaborate in due course, a 'return to man's inherent nature', the concept 'nature' referring to the spiritual and not altogether the physical aspect of man's being.<sup>8</sup> It must also be pointed out that in the words of the Holy Qur'an:

*'By the heaven that hath rain',*<sup>9</sup>

the word interpreted as 'rain' is *raj'*, which means literally 'return'.<sup>10</sup> It is interpreted as rain because God *returns* it time and again, and it refers to *good return* in the sense of *benefit*, *profit*, and *gain*. *Raj'* is therefore used synonymously in this sense with *rabah*, meaning *gain*,<sup>11</sup> which is the opposite or contrary of *khusr*, loss, to which reference has already been made above. Now it is appropriate to mention here that one of the basic meanings of *din* which has not been explained above is *recurrent rain*, rain that returns again and again; and hence we perceive that *din* here, like such a rain, alludes to benefit and gain (*rabah*). When we say that in order to 'repay' his debt man must 'return' himself to God, his Owner, his 'returning himself' is, like the returning rain,<sup>12</sup> a gain unto him. And this is the meaning of the saying:

*'He who enslaves himself gains.'*<sup>13</sup>

The expression 'enslaves himself' (*dana nafsahu*) means 'gives himself up' (in service), and hence also 'returns himself' (to his Owner) as explained.<sup>14</sup> The same meaning is expressed in the words of the Holy Prophet, may God bless and give him Peace!:

*'The intelligent one is he who enslaves himself (dana nafsahu) and works for that which shall be after death.'*<sup>15</sup>

'That which shall be after death' is that which shall be reckoned good, the requital, the good return. By 'returning himself' to his Lord and Master, by loyally and truly following and obeying God's Commands and Prohibitions and Ordinances and Law, the man thus acting will be requited and will receive his good return multiplied many times over, as God says in the Holy Qur'an:

*'Who is he who will loan (yuqridu) to God a beautiful loan (qardan*

hasanan) which God will double to his credit and multiply many times?’<sup>16</sup>

Notice here that the verb used to signify ‘loan’ (*yuqridu*), from *qarada*, *qard* has not the same connotation as that which is termed as ‘debt’ (*dayn*), for the latter term is applicable to man only. The ‘loan’ here meant is ‘the return of that which is owned originally by the One Who now asks for it, and which is to be returned to Him.’ Man is God’s property and his existence is only ‘lent’ him for a time. On the other hand the expression ‘goodly loan’ (*qardan hasanan*) as applied to man has a metaphorical significance, in that it is his ‘service to God’, his ‘good works’ that is meant, for these can indeed be said to *belong* to him, and for the offering of which he will be required in abundance. God is the Requiter, the Supreme Judge: *al-dayyan*. He is the King, *malik* of the Day of Judgement and Requital *yawm al-din*, also called the Day of Reckoning, *yawm al-hisab*.<sup>17</sup> The fact that God is referred to as King, and everything else as the Kingdom over which He exercises Absolute Power and Authority, *malakut*, shows again that man is His *mamluk*, His *slave*. So *din* in the religious context also refers to the state of being a slave.<sup>18</sup> We referred a while ago to man’s ‘returning himself’ as meaning ‘giving himself up in service’ (*khidmah*) to God. We now say that in effect what is truly meant is not ‘service’ in the sense of *any* service, or the kind offered to another man or human institution. The concept of *khidmah* implies that the one who gives such service is ‘free’, is not a bondman, but is ‘his own master’ in respect of himself. The concept *mamluk*, however, conveys the implicit fact of ownership by the one who takes his service. The *mamluk* is possessed by the *malik*. So we do not say of one who serves God that he is a *khadim*, meaning servant, but that he is God’s ‘*abid*, and he is in truth God’s ‘*abd*, meaning also servant or slave, which term has the connotation of ‘being owned’ by Him Whom he serves. In the religious context, therefore, ‘*abd* is the correct term

of reference to one who, in the realization that he is indebted absolutely to God, abases himself in service to Him; and hence the act of service appropriate for him is called '*ibadah*' and the service is '*ibadat*', which refers to all conscious and willing acts of service for the sake of God alone and approved by Him, including such as are prescribed worship. By worshipping God in such manner of service the man is fulfilling the purpose for his creation and existence, as God says in the Holy Qur'an:

*'I have only created the Jinn and Man that they may serve Me (ya 'buduni).'*<sup>19</sup>

When we say that such a man is fulfilling the purpose for his creation and existence, it is obvious that that man's obligation to serve God is felt by him as normal because it comes as a natural inclination on the man's part to do so. This natural tendency in the man to serve and worship God is also referred to as *din*, as we have observed in the beginning in connection with its connotation as *custom*, *habit*, and *disposition*. However, here in the religious context it has a more specific signification of the *natural state of being* called *fitrah*. In fact *din* does also mean *fitrah*.<sup>20</sup> *Fitrah* is the pattern according to which God has created all things. It is God's manner of creating, *sunnat Allah*, and everything fits each into its pattern created for it and set in its proper place. It is the Law of God. Submission to it brings harmony, for it means realization of what is inherent in one's true nature; opposition to it brings discord, for it means realization of what is extraneous to one's true nature. It is cosmos as opposed to chaos; justice as opposed to injustice. When God said: "Am I not your Lord?", and man's true self, testifying for itself, answered: "Yea!" in acknowledgement of the truth of God's Lordship, it has sealed a Covenant with God. Thus when man is manifested as man in this worldly life he will, if rightly guided, remember his Covenant and act accordingly as outlined

above, so that his worship, his acts of piety, his life and death is lived out for the sake of God alone. One of the meanings of *fitrah* as *din* refers to the realization of this Covenant by man.<sup>21</sup> Submission in the sense described above means conscious, *willing* submission, and this submission does not entail loss of 'freedom' for him, since freedom in fact means to act as his true nature demands. The man who submits to God in this way is living out the *din*.

Submission, we say again, refers to conscious and willing submission, for were it neither conscious nor willing it cannot then mean *real* submission. The concept of submission is perhaps common to all religions, just as belief or faith is the core of all religions, but we maintain that not all religions enact real submission. Neither is the submission meant the kind that is momentary or erratic, for real submission is a continuous act lived throughout the entire span of one's ethical life; nor is it the kind that operates only within the realm of the heart without manifesting itself outwardly in the action of the body as works performed in obedience to God's Law. Submission to God's Will means also obedience to His Law. The word denoting this sense of submission is *aslama*, as is evident in the Holy Qur'an where God says:

*'Who can be better in religion (din) than one who submits (aslama) his face (i.e. his whole self) to God . . .?'*<sup>22</sup>

The *din* referred to is none other than Islam. There are, no doubt, other forms of *din*, but the one in which is enacted total submission (*istislam*) to God alone is the best, and this one is the only *din* acceptable to God, as He says in the Holy Qur'an:

*'If anyone desires a religion (din) other than Islam (al-Islam), never will it be accepted of him . . .'*<sup>23</sup>

and again:

'*Verily the Religion (al-din) in the sight of God is Islam (al-Islam)*'.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Holy Qur'an, man cannot escape being in the state of living a *din*, since all submit (*aslama*) to God's Will. Hence the term *din* is also used to denote religions other than Islam. However, what makes Islam different from the other religions is that the submission according to Islam is *sincere* and *total* submission to God's Will, and this is enacted *willingly* as absolute obedience to the Law revealed by Him. This idea is implicitly expressed in the Holy Qur'an, for example, in the following passage:

'*Do they seek for other than the religion (din) of God? – while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, submitted (aslama) to His Will, and to Him shall they all be returned.*'<sup>25</sup>

The form in which submission is enacted or expressed is the form of the *din*, and it is here that diversity occurs between one *din* and another.<sup>26</sup> This form, which is the manner of institution of belief and faith, the manner of expression of the law, the manner of religious attitude and ethical and moral conduct – the manner in which submission to God is enacted in our life, is expressed by the concept *millah*. Islam follows the *millah* of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), which is also the *millah* of the other Prophets after him (Peace be upon them all!). Their *millah* altogether is considered to be the *form* of the right religion *din al-qayyim*, because of all other *milal*, their *millah* alone inclined perfectly, *hanifan*, towards the true Religion (*al-Islam*). They thus anticipate Islam in religious faith and belief and law and practice and hence are called also Muslims, even though the Religion of Islam as such reached its perfect crystallization only in the form externalized by the Holy Prophet, may God bless and give him Peace! Other religions have *evolved* their own systems or forms of submission based upon their own cultural traditions which do

not necessarily derive from the *millah* of the Prophet Ibrahim (upon whom be Peace!) and yet some others, such as the *din* of the *Ahlu'l-Kitab* – People of the Book – have evolved a mixture of their own cultural traditions with traditions based upon Revelation. It is to these various systems or forms of submission that, to return to the passage just quoted, the “unwilling” type of submission refers.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of *din* in the sense of true obedience and real submission such as is here described in brief outline is manifested in living reality in the Religion of Islam. It is in Islam that true and perfect *din* is realized, for in Islam alone is its self-expression fulfilled completely. Islam emulates the pattern or form according to which God governs His Kingdom; it is an imitation of the cosmic order manifested here in this worldly life as a social as well as political order. The social order of Islam encompasses all aspects of man’s physical and material and spiritual existence in a way which, here and now, does justice to the individual as well as the society; and to the individual as a physical being as well as the individual as spirit, so that a Muslim is at once himself and his Community, and his Community is also he, since every other single member strives, like him, to realize the same purpose in life and to achieve the same goal. The social order of Islam is the Kingdom of God on earth, for in that order God, and not man, is *still* the King, the Supreme Sovereign Whose Will and Law and Ordinances and Commands and Prohibitions hold absolute sway. Man is only His vicegerent or *khalifah* who is given the trust of government, the *amanah*, to rule according to God’s Will and His Pleasure. When we say “rule”, we do not simply mean to refer to the socio-political sense of ‘ruling’, for we mean by it also – indeed far more fundamentally so – the rule of one’s self by itself, since the trust refers to responsibility and freedom of the self to do justice to itself. Of this last statement we shall have recourse to elaborate presently, since what is meant reveals the very principle of Islamic ethics and



morality. Islam, we say again, is a social order, but in that order every individual, each according to his latent capacity and power bestowed upon him by God to fulfill and realize his responsibility and freedom, strives to achieve and realize the ideal for himself in the Way<sup>28</sup> manifested by the Revealed Law<sup>29</sup> obeyed by all members of the Community. Thus then, just as every Muslim is a *khalifah* of God on earth, so is every Muslim also His slave, His 'abd, striving by himself to perfect his service and devotion, his 'ibadah, in the manner approved by God, his Absolute Master. And since every individual in this social order is answerable to God alone, so even in that social order each individual is personally directing his true and real loyalty, *ta'ah* to God alone, his Real King.

We have already said that the concept *din* reflects the idea of a kingdom – a cosmopolis. Commerce and trade are the life-blood of the cosmopolis, and such activity together with its various implications is indeed inherent in the concept *din* as we have thus far described. It is no wonder then that in the Holy Qur'an worldly life is depicted so persistently in the apt metaphors of commercial enterprise. In the cosmopolis or kingdom reflected in the concept *din*, there is depicted the bustling activities of the traffic of trade. Man is inexorably engaged in the trade: *al-tijarah*, in which he is himself the subject as well as object of his trade. He is his own capital, and his loss and gain depend upon his own sense of responsibility and exercise of freedom. He carries out the trust of buying and selling, of *bay'ah*, and bartering: *ishtara*, and it is his self that he buys or sells or barter; and depending upon his own inclination towards the exercise of his will and deeds his trade will either prosper: *rabiha'l-tijarah*, or suffer loss: *ma rabiha'l-tijarah*. In the situation that rises before our vision we must see that the man so engaged realizes the utter seriousness of the trading venture he has willingly undertaken.<sup>30</sup> He is not simply an animal that eats and drinks and sleeps and disports after sensual pleasures<sup>31</sup> – no savage nor

barbarian he who thus transcends himself in the realization of his weighty responsibility and consciousness of his freedom to fulfil and redeem himself of the burden of existence. It is of such as he who barter his self for his true self that God refers to when He says in the Holy Qur'an:

*'Verily God has purchased of the Believers their selves -'.<sup>32</sup>*

The concept *din* with reference to the man of Islam<sup>33</sup> presupposes the emergence in him of the higher type of man capable of lofty aspirations towards self-improvement – the self-improvement that is no less than the actualization of his latent power and capacity to become a perfect man. The man of Islam as a city dweller, a cosmopolitan, living a civilized life according to clearly defined foundations of social order and codes of conduct is he to whom obedience to Divine Law, endeavour towards realizing true justice and striving after right knowledge are cardinal virtues. The motive of conduct of such a man is eternal blessedness, entrance into a state of supreme peace which he might even here perchance foretaste, but which shall be vouchsafed to him when he enters the threshold of that other City and becomes a dweller, a citizen of that other Kingdom wherein his ultimate bliss shall be the beholding of the Glorious Countenance of the King.

While Islam is the epitome of the Divine cosmic order, the man of Islam who is conscious of his destiny realizes that he is himself, as physical being, also an epitome of the cosmos, a microcosmic representation, '*alam saghir*, of the Macrocosmos, *al-'alam al-kabir*. Hence in the manner that Islam is like a kingdom, a social order, so the man of Islam knows that he is a kingdom in miniature, for in him, as in all mankind, is manifested the Attributes of the Creator, without the reverse being the case, since "God created man in His Own Image." Now man is both soul and body, he is at once physical being and spirit, and his soul

governs his body as God governs the Universe. Man also has two souls analogous to his dual nature: the higher, rational soul: *al-nafs al-natiqah*; and the lower, animal or carnal soul: *al-nafs al-hayawaniyyah*. Within the conceptual framework of the concept *din* applied here as a subjective, personal, individual affair, man's rational soul is king and must exert its power and rule over the animal soul which is subject to it and which must be rendered submissive to it. The effective power and rule exercised by the rational soul over the animal soul, and the subjugation and total submission of the latter to the former can indeed be interpreted as *din*, or as *islam* in the subjective, personal, individual sense of the relationship thus established. In this context it is the animal soul that enslaves itself in submission and service and so 'returns' itself to the power and authority of the rational soul. When the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!) said:

'*Die before ye die.*' –

it is the same as saying: "Return before ye *actually* return"; and this refers to the subjugation of one's self by one's real self, one's animal soul by one's rational soul; and it is pertaining to knowledge of this Self that he means when he says:

'*He who knoweth his Self knowest his Lord.*'

Further, when God proclaimed His Lordship to Adam's progeny it is the rational soul of man that He addressed, so that every soul has heard the "Am I not your Lord?" and answered "Yea!" and testified thus unto itself. So the man of Islam who is rightly guided acts accordingly as befits the true servant of God, His '*abd*. We referred earlier to the purpose for man's creation and existence, saying that it is to serve God; and we said that the act of service on the man's part is called '*ibadah* and the service as such '*ibadat*, which refers to all conscious and willing

acts of service for the sake of God alone and approved by Him, including such as are prescribed worship. In point of fact, we now say further that to the man of Islam his whole ethical life is one continuous *'ibadah*, for Islam itself is a complete way of life. When the man has, by means of *'ibadat*, succeeded in curbing his animal and carnal passions and has thereby rendered submissive his animal soul, making it subject to the rational soul, the man thus described has attained to freedom in that he has fulfilled the purpose for his creation and existence; he has achieved supreme peace<sup>34</sup> and his soul is pacified, being set at liberty, as it were, free from the fetters of inexorable fate and the noisy strife and hell of human vices. His rational soul in this spiritual station is called in the Holy Qur'an the 'pacified' or 'tranquil' soul: *al-nafs al-mutma'innah*. This is the soul that 'returns' itself willingly to its Lord, and to it will God address His Words:

*'O thou soul at peace! Return thou to thy Lord, – well-pleased (thyself) and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, then, among My servants! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!'*<sup>35</sup>

This is the soul of the servant who has fulfilled in constant affirmation his Covenant with his Lord, and since none *knows* his Lord better than the true and loyal servant, who by reason of such service gains *intimacy* with his Lord and Master, so *'ibadah* means in its final, advanced stages knowledge: *ma'rifah*.

I have traced in bare outline the fundamental core of the Religion of Islam and have shown in a general way which can, albeit, be elaborated to its minutest logical details its all-encompassing nature which pervades the life of the individual as well as the society. I have said that Islam is the subjective, personal religion of the individual as well as the objective pervading self-same religion of the Community – that it operates as the same religion in the individual as a single entity as well as the society

composed collectively of such entities.<sup>36</sup> It is implicit in our exposition that Islam is both belief and faith (*iman*) as well as submission in service (*islam*); it is both assent of the heart (*qalb*) and mind (*'aql*) confirmed by the tongue (*lisan*) as well as deed and work (*'amal*)<sup>37</sup>; it is the harmonious relationship established between both the soul and the body; it is obedience and loyalty (*ta'ah*) both to God as well as to the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!); it is accepting wholeheartedly the truth of the Testimony (*kalimah shahadah*) that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah – Islam is the unity of all these, together with what they entail, in belief and in practice, in the person of the Muslim as well as in the Community as a whole. There can be no separation, nor division, nor dichotomy between the harmoniously integrated parts of the unity thus established, so that there can be, for Islam, no true believer nor faithful one (*Mu'min*) without such a one being also submissive in service (*Muslim*); no real assent of heart and mind confirmed by tongue without deed and work; no genuine obedience and loyalty to God without obedience and loyalty to His Messenger; nor can there be true acceptance of the Testimony that there is no God but Allah without also accepting Muhammad as His Messenger, who in fact first made manifest the Formula of Unity (*al-kalimah al-tawhid*). I have also pointed out the fundamental nature of the Qur'anic revelation of the soul's Covenant with God in respect of His Lordship and the concept of *din* as reflecting the cosmos, as God's government of the realm of Creation, and I have drawn a comparison in respect of that concept of *din* and the concept of the macrocosm and its analogous relationship with man as a microcosm in which his rational soul governs his animal soul and body as God governs His Kingdom. The soul's Covenant with God and the nature of the relationship revealed in that Covenant indeed occupies a central position in the concept of *din* and is a fundamental basis of Islam, as I will reveal yet further. The Covenant

was made to all souls of Adam's progeny and God addressed them both collectively as well as individually, so that it was a covenant made at once by every individual soul as well as all of them collectively to acknowledge God as their Lord. To acknowledge God as Lord (*rabb*) means to acknowledge Him as Absolute King (syn. *malik*), Possessor and Owner (syn. *sahib*), Ruler, Governor, Master, Creator, Cherisher, Sustainer – since all these meanings denote the connotations inherent in the concept of *Lord*. All the souls have the same status in relation to their Lord: that of being subject, possessed, owned, ruled, governed, enslaved, created, cherished and sustained. And since the Covenant pertained at once to the individual soul as well as to the souls collectively, so we see that here when manifested as man within the fold of Islam the same souls are united in their endeavour to fulfil the Covenant collectively as society and Community (*ummah*) as well as individually in such wise that Islam is, as we have said, both personal and subjective as well as social and communal and objective;<sup>38</sup> it is the harmonious blending of both the individual as well as the society. That which unites one Muslim individual to another in a wondrous and unique bond of brotherhood which transcends the restricting limitations of race and nation and space and time and is much stronger than even the familial bond of kinship is none other than this Covenant, for those souls that here as man abide by that Covenant recognize each other as brothers, as kindred souls. They were akin to one another in yonder place and here they are brethren who love one another for God's sake. Though one be in the East and the other in the West, yet they feel joy and comfort in each other's talk, and one who lives in a later generation than the other is instructed and consoled by the words of his brother. They were brothers involved in the same destiny long before they appeared as earthly brothers, and they were true kith and kin before they were born in earthly kinship. So here we see that the same Covenant is the very basis of Islamic

brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*). It is this real feeling of brotherhood among Muslims based upon such firm spiritual foundations which no earthly power can rend asunder that unite the individual to the society in Islam without the individual having to suffer loss of individuality and personality, nor the society its polity and authority.

In the Islamic political and social organization – be it in one form or another – the same Covenant becomes their very foundation. The man of Islam is not bound by the social contract, nor does he espouse the doctrine of the Social Contract. Indeed, though he lives and works within the bounds of social polity and authority and contributes his share towards the social good, and though he behaves *as if* a social contract were in force, his is, nevertheless, an *individual contract* reflecting the Covenant his soul has sealed with God; for the Covenant is in reality made for *each and every individual* soul. The purpose and end of ethics in Islam is ultimately for the individual; what the man of Islam does here he does in the way he believes to be good only because God and His Messenger say so and he trusts that his actions will find favour with God. Neither the state nor the society are for him real and true objects of his loyalty and obedience, for to him they are not the prerogatives of state and society to the extent that such conduct is due to them as their right; and if he in an Islamic state and society lives and strives for the good of the state and the society, it is only because the society composed of individual men of Islam and the state organized by them set the same Islamic end and purpose as their goal – otherwise he is obliged to oppose the state and strive to correct the errant society and remind them of their true aim in life. We know that in the ultimate analysis man's quest for 'happiness' – as they say in philosophy in connection with ethics – is always for the individual self. It is not the 'happiness' of the collective entity that matters so much more than individual happiness; and every man in reality must indeed think and act for his own salvation,

for no other man can be made responsible for his actions since every man bears his own burden of responsibility.<sup>39</sup> 'Happiness' refers not to the physical entity in man, not to the animal soul and body of man; nor is it a state of mind – it has to do with certainty of the ultimate Truth and fulfilment of action in conformity with that certainty; and certainty is a permanent condition referring to what is permanent in man and perceived by his spiritual organ known as the heart (*al-qalb*). It is peace and security and tranquillity of the heart; it is knowledge, and knowledge is belief; it is knowing one's rightful, and hence proper, place in the realm of Creation and one's proper relationship with the Creator: it is a condition known as '*adl* or justice.

In Islam – because for it religion encompasses life in its entirety – all virtue is religious; it has to do with the freedom of the rational soul, which freedom means the power to do justice to itself; and this in turn refers to exercise of its rule and supremacy and guidance and maintenance over the animal soul and body. The power to do justice to itself alludes to its constant affirmation and fulfilment of the Covenant it has sealed with God. Justice in Islam is not a concept referring to a state of affairs which can operate only within a two-person-relation or dual-relation situation, such as: between one man and another; or between the society and the state; or between the ruler and the ruled; or between the king and his subjects. To the question: "Can one be unjust to one's self?" other religions or philosophies have not given a consistent clear-cut answer. Indeed in Western civilization, for example, though it is true that a man who commits suicide may be considered as committing an unjust act; but this is considered as such insofar only because his suicide deprives the state of the services of a useful citizen, so that his injustice is not to himself, but to the state and society. We have several times alluded to the concept that justice means a harmonious condition or state of affairs whereby everything is in its right and proper place – such as the cosmos; or similarly,



a state of equilibrium, whether it refers to things or living beings. With respect to man, we say that justice means basically a condition and situation whereby he is in his right and proper place. 'Place' here refers not only to his total situation in relation to others, but also to his condition in relation to his self. So the concept of justice in Islam does not only refer to relational situations of harmony and equilibrium existing between one person and another, or between the society and the state, or between the ruler and the ruled, or between the king and his subjects, but far more profoundly and fundamentally so it refers in a primary way to the harmonious and rightly-balanced relationship existing between the man and his self, and in a secondary way only to such as exists between him and another or others, between him and his fellow-men and ruler and king and state and society. Thus to the question: "Can one be unjust to one's self?" we answer in the affirmative, and add further that justice and injustice indeed *begins* and *ends* with the self. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly stresses the point that man, when he does wrong, is being unjust (*zalim*) to himself, and that injustice (*zulm*) is a condition wrought by man upon his self. To understand this we have to refer once again to the soul's Covenant with God and to the belief that man has a dual nature in respect of his two souls and body. The real man can only in fact be his rational soul. If in his existence as a human being he allows his animal or carnal soul to get the better of him and consequently commits acts prohibited by God and displeasing to Him, or if he denies belief in God altogether, then he has thereby repudiated his own affirmation of God's Lordship which he as rational soul has covenanted with God. He does violence to his own Covenant, his individual contract with God. So just as in the case of one who violates his own contract brings calamity upon himself, in the same way he who does wrong or evil, who disobeys or denies God, violates the contract his soul has made with God, thereby being unjust to his soul.

He has also thereby 'lied' – *kadhaba*, another apt Qur'anic expression – against his own self (soul). It is important in the light of this brief explanation to understand why the belief in the resurrection of bodies is fundamental in Islam, for the soul reconstituted with its former body will not be able to deny what its body had done, for its very eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet or limbs – the organs of ethical and moral conduct – will testify against its acts of injustice to itself.<sup>40</sup> Though in Islam injustice ostensibly applies between man and God, and between man and man, and between man and his self, in reality, however, injustice is ultimately applicable – even in the two former cases – to man's self alone; in the Islamic world-view and spiritual vision, whether a man disbelieves or disobeys God, or whether he does wrong to another man, it is really to his own self that he does wrong. Injustice, being the opposite of justice, is the putting a thing in a place not its own; it is to misplace a thing; it is to misuse or to wrong; it is to exceed or fall short of the mean or limit; it is to suffer loss; it is deviation from the right course; it is disbelief of what is true, or lying about what is true knowing it to be true. Thus when a man does an act of injustice, it means that he has wronged his own soul, for he has put his soul in a place not its own; he has misused it; he has made it to exceed or fall short of its real nature; he has caused it to deviate from what is right and to repudiate the truth and to suffer loss. All that he has thus done – in one way or another – entails a violation of his Covenant with God. It is clear from what we say about injustice that justice implies *knowledge* of the right and proper place for a thing or a being to be; of right as against wrong; of the mean or limit; of spiritual gain as against loss; of truth as against falsehood. This is why knowledge (*al-'ilm: ma'rifah: 'ilm*) occupies a most important position in Islam, where in the Holy Qur'an alone we find more than eight hundred references to knowledge. And even in the case of knowledge, man has to do justice to it, that is, to know its

limit of usefulness and not to exceed or fall short of it; to know its various orders of priority in relation to its usefulness to one's self; to know where to stop and to know what can be gained and what cannot, what is true knowledge and what is learned guess and theory – in sum, to put every datum of knowledge in its right place in relation to the knowing one in such wise that what is known produces harmony in the one who knows. To know how to put what knowledge in which place is wisdom (*hikmah*). Otherwise, knowledge without order and seeking it without discipline does lead to confusion and hence to injustice to one's self.<sup>41</sup>

Knowledge, as we understand it, is of two kinds: that given by God to man; and that acquired by man by means of his own effort of rational enquiry based upon experience and observation. The first kind can only be received by man through his acts of worship and devotion, his acts of service to God (*'ibadat*) which, depending upon God's grace and his own latent spiritual power and capacity created by God to receive it, the man receives by direct insight or spiritual savouring (*dhawq*) and unveiling to his spiritual vision (*kashf*). This knowledge (*ma'rifah*) pertains to his self or soul, and such knowledge – as we have touched upon cursorily in our comparison of the analogous relationship obtained between the macrocosm and the microcosm – gives insight into knowledge of God, and for that reason is the highest knowledge. Since such knowledge ultimately depends upon God's grace and because it entails deeds and works of service to God as prerequisites to its possible attainment, it follows that for it knowledge of the prerequisites becomes necessary, and this includes knowledge of the essentials of Islam (*arkan al-islam* and *arkan al-iman*), their meanings and purpose and correct understanding and implementation in everyday life and practice: every Muslim must have knowledge of these prerequisites, must understand the basic essentials of Islam and the Unity of God (*tawhid*), and practise the knowledge (*al-'ilm*) in deeds and works of

service to God so that every man of Islam is in fact already in the initial stage of that first knowledge; he is set ready on the Straight Path (*sirat al-mustaqim*) leading to God. His further progress on the pilgrim's path depends upon his own performance and sincerity of purpose, so that some serve God as though they see Him, and others serve Him as though He sees them; and the pilgrim's progress to the former way from the latter is what constitutes virtue (*ihsan*). The second kind of knowledge (*'ilm*) is acquired through experience and observation; it is discursive and deductive and it refers to objects of pragmatical value. As an illustration of the distinction between the two kinds of knowledge we might suppose a man and his neighbour who has just moved into his neighbourhood. At first he knows his new neighbour only by acquaintance; he might know the other's general appearance and be able to recognize him when meeting in the street; he might learn his name, his marital status, the number of his children and many other such details of information which he can obtain by observation. Then he might, through inquiries from others he knows and private investigation, discover his neighbour's occupation and place of work and appointment, and he might even find out, through further discreet investigation, how much he earns. He might go on investigating in this way without coming into direct contact with his neighbour and accumulate other data about him, and yet his knowledge of him would still be on the level of acquaintance and not of intimacy, for no matter how many more details he might add on to the knowledge about his neighbour thus acquired, there will be many more important personal details which he will never be able to know, such as the other's loves and fears and hopes and beliefs, his thoughts on life and death, his secret thoughts and feelings, his good qualities and other details such as these. Now let us suppose that he decides to know the man directly and introduces himself to him; he visits him often and eats and drinks and sports with him. Then

after long years of faithful friendship and sincere companionship and devotion he might perchance receive by direct and spontaneous revelation from his friend and companion some of the many personal details and secret thoughts and feelings that are now in a flash revealed in a way which he will not be able to obtain in a lifetime of investigation and observation and research. Even this knowledge, given as a result of intimacy, is never complete, for we know that no matter how close the intimate relationship between the man and his friend – or brother, or wife and children, or parents, or lover – there will always be for him that veil of mystery that ever envelops the one to be known like an infinite series of Chinese spherical ivory carving within carving, only to be unveiled for him by direct revelation from the other. And the other too will know by contemplating his self the infinite nature of that self that ever eludes his cognitive quest, so that even he is not able to reveal except only that which he knows. Every man is like an island set in a fathomless sea enveloped by darkness, and the loneliness his self knows is so utterly absolute because even *he* knows not his self completely. From this illustration we may derive certain basic conditions analogous to the first kind of knowledge. First, the desire by the one who gives knowledge about himself to be known. Second, the giving of such knowledge pertains to the same level of being, and this is because communication of ideas and feelings is possible and can be understood. Third, to be allowed to approach and know him, the one who seeks to know must abide by rules of propriety and codes of conduct and behaviour acceptable to the one who desires to be known. Fourth, his giving knowledge about himself is based on trust after a considerable period of testing of the other's sincerity and loyalty and devotion and capacity to receive – a period in which is established a firm bond of intimacy between the two. In like manner and even more so, then, is the case with knowledge given by God. In respect of the first condition, He says in the

Holy Qur'an that He has created man only that man may serve Him, and service in its profoundest sense ultimately means knowledge (*ma'rifah*), so that His purpose of creation is for the creature to know Him, as He says in a Holy Tradition (*Hadith Qudsiyy*):

*'I was a Hidden Treasure, and I desired to be known, so I created Creation that I might be known.'*

Thus God reveals Himself to the rational soul, which possesses organs of spiritual communication and cognition such as the heart (*al-qalb*), which knows Him; the spirit (*al-ruh*), which loves Him; and the secret or inmost ground of the soul (*al-sirr*), which contemplates Him. Though the rational soul is not of the same level of being as God, there is yet in it that spark of Divine origin which makes it possible for it to receive communication from above and to have cognition of what is received; and from this we derive analogy for the second condition. In the case of the third condition, we say that man approaches God by sincere submission to His Will and absolute obedience to His Law; by conscientious realization in himself of His Commands and Prohibitions and Ordinances, and by performance of acts of devotion and supererogatory worship approved by Him and pleasing unto Him, until such a man attains to the station in which His trust and friendship may be conferred upon him by means of knowledge given as a gift of grace to him for whom He has created the capacity to receive corresponding to the knowledge given. Thus His words in a Holy Tradition:

*'My servant ceases not to draw nigh unto Me by supererogatory worship until I love him; and when I love him I am his ear, so that he hears by Me, and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand, so that he takes by Me.'*

As to the fourth condition of trust, it is part of the third, and this is in itself already clear. We see then that such knowledge, by virtue of its very nature, imparts truth and certainty of a higher order than that obtained in knowledge of the second kind; and because of this, and of the fact that it pertains to the soul or self of man and its fulfilment of the Covenant made with God, knowledge of its prerequisites, which is in fact based on this given knowledge, is inextricably bound up with Islamic ethics and morality. By means of such knowledge and the practice it entails we guide and govern ourselves in daily conduct and set our values in life and ourselves aright. The first knowledge unveils the mystery of Being and Existence and reveals the true relationship between man's self and his Lord, and since for man such knowledge pertains to the ultimate purpose for knowing, it follows that knowledge of its prerequisites becomes the basis and essential foundation for knowledge of the second kind, for knowledge of the latter alone, without the guiding spirit of the former, cannot truly lead man in his life, but only confuses and confounds him and enmeshes him in the labyrinth of endless and purposeless seeking. We also perceive that there is a limit for man even to the first and highest knowledge; whereas no such limit obtains in the second kind, so that the possibility of perpetual wandering spurred on by intellectual deception and self-delusion in constant doubt and curiosity is always real. The individual man has no time to waste in his momentary sojourn on earth, and the rightly guided one knows that his individual quest for knowledge of the second kind must needs be limited to his own practical needs and suited to his nature and capacity, so that he may set both the knowledge and himself in their right places in relation to his real self and thus maintain a condition of justice. For this reason and in order to achieve justice as the end, Islam distinguishes the quest for the two kinds of knowledge, making the one for the attainment of knowledge of the prerequisites of the first obligatory to all

Muslims (*fard 'ayn*), and that of the other obligatory to some Muslims only (*fard kifayah*), and the obligation for the latter can indeed be transferred to the former category in the case of those who deem themselves duty-bound to seek it for their self-improvement. The division in the obligatory quest for knowledge into two categories is itself a procedure of doing justice to knowledge and to the man who seeks it, for *all* of the knowledge of the prerequisites of the first knowledge is good for man, whereas *not all* of the knowledge of the second kind is good for him, for the man who seeks that latter knowledge, which would bear considerable influence in determining his secular role and position as a citizen, might not necessarily be a *good* man. In Western civilization generally, because its conception of justice is based on secular foundations, it follows that its conception of knowledge is also based upon similar foundations, or complimentary foundations emphasizing man as a physical entity and a rational animal being, to the extent that it admits of what we have referred to as the second kind of knowledge as the only valid 'knowledge' possible. Consequently, the purpose of seeking knowledge from the lower to the high levels is, for Western civilization, to produce in the seeker a good citizen. Islam, however, differs in this in that for it the purpose of seeking knowledge is to produce in the seeker a good man. We maintain that it is more fundamental to produce a good man than to produce a good citizen, for the good man will no doubt also be a good citizen, but the good citizen will not necessarily also be a good man. In a sense we say that Islam too maintains that the purpose of seeking knowledge is to produce in the seeker a good citizen, only that we mean by 'citizen' a Citizen of that other Kingdom, so that he acts as such even here and now as a good man. The concept of a 'good man' in Islam connotes not only that he must be 'good' in the general social sense understood, but that he must also first be good to his self, and not be unjust to it in the way we have explained, for if he were



unjust to his self, how can he really be just to others? Thus we see that, already in this most fundamental concept in life – the concept of knowledge – Islam is at variance with Western civilization, in that for Islam (a) knowledge includes faith and belief (*iman*); and that (b) the purpose for seeking knowledge is to inculcate goodness or justice in man as man and individual self, and not merely in man as citizen or integral part of society: it is man's value as real man, as spirit, that is stressed, rather than his value as a physical entity measured in terms of the pragmatic or utilitarian sense of his usefulness to state and society and the world.

I have been describing what constitutes the very core of the Religion of Islam, and in this description have explained in brief but simple and succinct manner the fundamental concept of *din* and of faith and belief in Islam. I have touched upon the Islamic world-view and have stressed the paramount importance of the Qur'anic concept of man's Covenant with God, showing how this Covenant is of an essential nature; it is the starting point in the Islamic concept of religion, and is the dominant element in all other Islamic concepts bound up with it, such as those of freedom and responsibility, of justice, of knowledge, of virtue, of brotherhood; of the role and character of the individual and the society and of their mutual identity in the framework of the state and of collective life. I have in this description also emphasized the role of the individual, and of the individual the self, or soul, and its journey of return to God. It now behoves me to describe in outline the Islamic vision of Reality, which is no other than the philosophical core of Islam which determines its world-view. Islam focusses its religious and philosophical vision (*shuhud*) of Reality and its world-view on Being, and distinguishes between Being (*wujud*) and Existence (*mawjud*); between Unity (*wahdah*) and Multiplicity (*kathrah*); between Subsistence (*baqa'*) and Evanescence (*fana'*). This vision of Reality is based upon revealed knowledge through religious

experience, and embraces both the objective, metaphysical and ontological reality as well as the subjective, mystical and psychological experience of that reality. Phenomenologically Islam, in confirmation of its vision of Reality, affirms 'being' rather than 'becoming' or 'coming-into-being', for the Object of its vision is clear, established, permanent and unchanging. This confirmation and affirmation is absolute because it springs from the certainty (*yaqin*) of revealed knowledge; and since its Object is clear and established and permanent and unchanging, so likewise is Islam, together with its way of life and method of practice and values, an absolute reflection of the mode of the Object. Thus Islam itself is like its Object in that it emulates its ontological nature as subsisting and unchanging – as being; and hence affirms itself to be complete and perfect as confirmed by God's words in the Holy Qur'an,<sup>42</sup> and it denies the possibility of ever being in need of completion or evolution towards perfection; and such concepts as *development* and *progress* and *perfection* when applied to man's life and history and destiny must indeed refer, in Islam, ultimately to the spiritual and real nature of man. If this were not so, then it can never really mean, for Islam, *true* development and progress and perfection, as it would mean only the development and progress and perfection of the animal in man; and that would not be his true evolution unless such evolution realizes in him his true nature as spirit.

*Change, development* and *progress*, according to the Islamic viewpoint, refer to the return to the genuine Islam enunciated and practised by the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!) and his noble Companions and their Followers (blessings and peace be upon them all!) and the faith and practice of genuine Muslims after them; and they also refer to the self and mean its return to its original nature and religion (Islam). These concepts pertain to presupposed situations in which Muslims find themselves going astray and steeped in ignorance of Islam and are confused and unjust to their selves. In such situations,

their endeavour to direct their selves back onto the Straight and True Path and to return to the condition of genuine Islam – such endeavour, which entails change, is development; and such return, which consists in development, is progress. Thus, for Islam, the process of movement towards genuine Islam by Muslims who have strayed away from it is development; and such development is the only one that can truly be termed as progress. Progress is neither ‘becoming’ or ‘coming-into-being’, nor movement towards that which is ‘coming-into-being’ and never becomes ‘being’ for the notion of ‘something aimed at’, or the ‘goal’ inherent in the concept ‘progress’ can only contain real meaning when it refers to that which is already *clear* and permanently *established*, already *being*. Hence what is already clear and established, already in the state of being, cannot suffer change, nor is it subject to constant slipping from the grasp of achievement, nor constantly receding beyond attainment. The term ‘progress’ reflects a *definite direction* that is aligned to a *final purpose* that is meant to be achieved in life; if the direction sought is still vague, still coming-into-being, as it were, and the purpose aligned to it is not final, then how can involvement in it truly mean progress? Those who grope in the dark cannot be referred to as progressing, and they who say such people are progressing have merely uttered a lie against the true meaning and purpose of progress, and they have lied unto their selves!

*‘Their similitude is that of a man  
 Who can build a fire;  
 When it lighted all around him,  
 God took away their light  
 And left them in utter darkness.  
 So they could not see,  
 Deaf, dumb, and blind,  
 They will not return (to the past).  
 Or (another similitude)*

*Is that of a rain-laden cloud  
 From the sky: in it are zones  
 Of darkness, thunder and lightning:  
 They pressed their fingers in their ears  
 To keep out the stunning thunder-clap,  
 The while they are in terror of death.  
 But God is ever around  
 The rejecters of faith!  
 The lightning all but snatches away  
 Their sight; every time the light  
 (Helps) them, they walk therein,  
 And when the darkness grows on them,  
 They stand still.  
 And if God willed, He could take away  
 Their faculty of hearing and seeing;  
 For God hath power over all things.<sup>43</sup>*

The Islamic world-view is not to be construed as a dualism, for although two elements are involved, yet the one is independent and subsistent while the other is dependent upon it; the one is absolute and the other relative; the one is real and the other a manifestation of that reality. So there is only One Reality and Truth, and all Islamic values pertain ultimately to It alone, so that to the Muslim, individually and collectively, all endeavour towards change and development and progress and perfection is invariably determined by the world-view that projects the vision of the One Reality and confirms the affirmation of the same Truth. In this way in practice Muslims have been able to live their lives in accordance with the belief without suffering any change to be wrought that would disrupt the harmony of Islam and of their own selves; without succumbing to the devastating touch of time, nor to the attendant challenges in the vicissitudes of wordly existence. The man of Islam has with him the Holy Qur'an which is itself unchanged, unchanging and

unchangeable; it is the Word of God revealed in complete and final form to His Chosen Messenger and Last Prophet Muhammad (may God bless and give him Peace!). It is the clear Guidance which he carries with him everywhere, not merely literally so, but more in his tongue and mind and heart, so that it becomes the very vital force that moves his human frame. I have said earlier, when referring to man's contemplation of his self, how every man is like an island set in isolation in a fathomless sea enveloped by darkness, saying that the loneliness his self knows is so utterly absolute because even *he* knows not his self completely. I must add that such utter loneliness basically springs from man's inability to answer his own persistent, ageless inner question to himself: "Who am I?" and "What is my ultimate destiny?" We say that such experience of utter loneliness, however, assails only the heart of the man who denies God, or doubts Him, or repudiates his soul's Covenant with God; for it is, again, recognition and affirmation of that same Covenant that established for man his identity in the order of Being and Existence. The man of Islam – he who confirms and affirms the Covenant within his self – is never lonely for even when contemplating his self he knows intuitively, through acts of *'ibadah* that include constant recitation and reflection and contemplation of the words of God in the Holy Qur'an, how close that self is with God, his Creator and Lord, Whom he ever contemplates in remembrance (*dhikr*) and with Whom he has intimate converse. Such a man has identified his self to himself and knows his ultimate destiny, and he is secure within his self and free from the terrifying echoes of absolute loneliness and the breathless grip of silent fear. In affirmation of Being, the Holy Qur'an, the source of Islam and projector of the Islamic worldview and the vision of the One Reality and Truth, is the expression of the finality and perfection of 'being' just as Islam is the phenomenological affirmation of 'being'; and he who conveyed the Holy Qur'an to mankind himself represents the finality and

perfection of 'being' in man. The Holy Prophet, upon whom be God's blessings and Peace!, is the Seal of the Prophets,<sup>44</sup> the universal and final Messenger of God to mankind,<sup>45</sup> whom he leads from darkness to light;<sup>46</sup> who is himself the Lamp spreading Light;<sup>47</sup> he is God's Mercy to all creatures,<sup>48</sup> and His favour to those who believe in him and in what he brought<sup>49</sup> and he is God's favour even to the People of the Book,<sup>50</sup> who may yet come to believe in him. He is man whom God has created with a character exalted as the standard for mankind;<sup>51</sup> he is the Perfect Man and Exemplar *par excellence*.<sup>52</sup> He it is who even God and His Angels honour and bless as the greatest of men,<sup>53</sup> and all true Believers, in compliance with God's Command, and in emulation of His Angels, do likewise, and have done and will do so in this world and the next for as long as God wills; and in the Hereafter to him will God vouchsafe the Lauded Station.<sup>54</sup> Muhammad, the Messenger of God, is he whose very name is a miracle of fulfilment for he alone among all mankind is constantly praised in every age and generation after him without end, so that even taking into account the ages and generations before him he still would be the only man to whom such praise is due. We praise him out of sincere love and respect and gratitude for having led us out of darkness into light, and he is loved above all other human beings including our selves. Our love and respect for him is such that neither time nor memory could dull, for he is in our selves in every age and generation – nay, he is closer than our selves,<sup>55</sup> and we emulate his words (*qawl*) and model actions (*fi'l*) and silent confirmation (*taqrir*) of usages known to him, so that next to the Holy Qur'an he is our most excellent and perfect guide and exemplar in life. He is the perfect model for every Muslim male and female; adolescent, middle-aged and old, in such wise that Muslims do not suffer from the crises of identity. Because of him the external structure or pattern of Muslim society is not divided by the gap of generations such as we find prevalent in Western society. Western

civilization is constantly changing and 'becoming' without ever achieving 'being', except that its 'being' is and always has been a 'becoming'. This is and has been so by virtue of the fact that it acknowledges no single, established Reality to fix its vision on; no single, valid Scripture to confirm and affirm in life; no single, human Guide whose words and deeds and actions and entire mode of life can serve as model to emulate in life, but that each and every individual must find for himself and herself each one's identity and meaning of life and destiny. Western civilization affirms the evanescent (*fana'*) aspect of reality, and its values pertain to the secular, material and physical realities of existence. Western society is thus divided by gaps between the three generations: the youth, the middle-aged, and the old. Each separate generation moves within the confines of its own attempts at finding a meaning for its own self and life in an ageless search for the answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "What is my destiny?" Islamic society is not beset by such condition. The individuals within the generations that comprise it, whether male or female, have already established their identity and recognized their ultimate destiny; the former through recognition and confirmation of the Covenant, and the latter through affirmation and realization of that Covenant by means of sincere submission to God's Will and obedience to His Law such as enacted as Islam. The man who brought to us the Holy Qur'an as it was revealed to him by God, who thus brought to us the Knowledge of our identity and destiny, whose own life is the most excellent and perfect interpretation of the Holy Qur'an so that his life becomes for us the focus of emulation and true guiding spirit, is the Holy Prophet, may God bless and give him Peace! By his teaching and example he has shown us the right and true practice of Islam and of Islamic virtues; he is the perfect model not merely for one generation, but for all generations; not merely for a time, but for all time. Indeed, we say that the concept 'perfect model' can fulfil its true meaning only if he who is thus

described, such as Muhammad alone is, embodies within his self all the permanent human and spiritual values necessary for man's guidance in life, whose validity is such that they serve man not only for the span of his individual lifetime, but for as long as man lives in this world. So every generation of Muslims, emulating his example, passes on the way of life he patterned to the next in such wise that no gaps nor crises of identity occur between them, but that each preceding generation guides the next by confirming and affirming his example in their lives.



# The Prophet of Islam

R. W. J. Austin

*As the final religion, Islam draws together many strands of truth expressed earlier in the Judaic and Christian traditions, creating from the synthesis the complete and final form of God's religion, so the life of its prophet Muhammad unites in one man the differing truths about man revealed in these religions. The two phases of the Prophet's mission – the Meccan and the Medinan – symbolize respectively the Judaic emphasis on law and community, and the Christian emphasis on the devotion of the individual soul to God. In his life he combines the dual roles of man as solitary and social being, as slave and vicegerent of God, as servant and messenger, prophet and king. He is the archetype or norm of humanity par excellence in whom all aspects of being unite at the centre in perfect harmony and balance.*

## 4 The Prophet of Islam

It is the claim of Islam that its Prophet Muhammad is the last of the messengers sent by God to mankind, and that Islam itself is therefore the final religion. Implicit in this claim is the notion that Islam, being the last religion, draws together in itself all the essential aspects of truth about God and man that were variously expressed in earlier religions, and that it is thus a final synthesis of divinely revealed truth. Similarly, Muhammad, as the last, or seal of the Prophets, draws together in his humanity all truth about man in his various modes. He is the whole true man in whom all human virtues and aspects are in perfect balance. Islam may be said to synthesise and give final expression to the divine truths expressed in different ways by the two preceding religions of Judaism and Christianity, and Muhammad to sum up in his person the truths about man which those two religions taught.

In order better to understand the nature of the Prophet's role in this respect, we must examine briefly the different emphasis and perspective which Judaism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, place on the concepts of God and Man. In the Judaic concept of God the emphasis is upon God as the Divine Lawgiver and Judge of His people, while man is regarded primarily as a collectivity and community, rather than as man the individual. God utters His Divine Will to His chosen people by the Sacred Word or Book on the tongue of His appointed

spokesman, the Prophet. The objects of His verbally expressed Will are the activities and aspirations of communal man in his day to day relationships, both with the universe around him and, more particularly, with one another within the group. It is for the individual to conform to God's Will as expressed through the norms of the community, or as appointed prophet faithfully to transmit God's word to His people. There is in Judaism a tendency to regard God as completely transcendent, the Supreme Ruler of His people, and to regard man mostly from the standpoint of his external conformity to the Law of Israel. With this perspective on God and Man Judaism has, traditionally, provided less scope for the more individual approach to God as personal Lord: the more intimate aspects of the Divine-human relationship which flower in the intense aspirations of the mystic were not an important feature of Jewish life until Hellenistic times.

Christianity, on the other hand, began its career as an intensely individual mystical religion. In Christianity God is regarded primarily not as Lawgiver to the community, but rather as the loving Lord and Father of his servant and child. Christ, as represented by Christian teaching, addresses himself to the individual soul seeking salvation. He does not seek to legislate for or guide the group in its involvement in the affairs of the world. The teachings of Christ as expressed in the Gospels take little account of the needs and limitations of communal man. It is for this reason that despite the Church's assumption of temporal and political power after Constantine, it has never been happy in dealing with the affairs and aspirations of man in society, whether in government or commerce. Indeed, for the most part, effective legislation in these fields has been formed by influence outside the Christian sphere. On the contrary, Christianity has flourished best in the great monastic institutions, and has found its finest expression in the intensely devotional writing of its greatest saints and mystics. This results from a fundamental aspect of Christian teaching which stresses the immanence of God within the human

soul rather than His transcendence. This is pre-figured in the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the divine son in the womb of Mary, who is, traditionally, the archetype of the human soul's relationship with God.

In this picture Judaism and Christianity represent, as it were, two distinct aspects of the God-man relationship; the one stressing the aspect of community, law and justice, the other the aspect of individual soul, devotion and love. It remained for Islam and the Prophet Muhammad to draw together these two strands into a single synthetic whole, in which God speaks to both communal and individual man, and in which man relates both to God as Ruler of men and as personal Lord.

The first part of the Muslim Creed, or *Shahadah* as it is called, states "There is no god but God (Allah)". The statement expresses the uniqueness and supremacy of God. The second part states that "Muhammad is the Messenger of God". In its fuller form this part of the *Shahadah* reads, "Muhammad is the servant of God and His Messenger." What is said here of one man, the Prophet Muhammad, expresses the truth about man in his relationship with God and the universe. Muhammad symbolizes the archetypal true man, representing in his life and person the human norm or *sunnah*. This human norm involves both the aspects of servanthood towards God as representative of creation in its utter dependence upon the Creator, and of messengership towards creation as representative of God in the universe. The Prophet Muhammad is both vicegerent or *khalifah* of God vis-à-vis creation in general and communal man in particular, and also servant or *abd*, the individual representative of creatures vis-à-vis God.

Both these aspects of the human norm are evident in the teachings of the two preceding religions, but each had a tendency to emphasise one at the expense of the other. The coming together of these aspects in equilibrium in the life of the Prophet Muhammad is beautifully symbolized by the two distinct phases

of the Prophet's mission, each pointing a special emphasis, each re-expressing in a particular way the truths of Judaism and Christianity, conjoined in the life and mission of a single man.

The first phase of the Prophet's life or mission is that manifested in Mecca; the second that in Medina. The two phases are clearly separated by that crucial event in the history of Muhammad and Islam – the *Hijrah* or emigration from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

The first phase at Mecca is marked above all by Muhammad's receipt of divine revelation. It is further marked by its emphasis on an individual relationship with God; by an intensity of personal awareness of God; by isolation from the community; by alienation from the world and its values; by prolonged prayer, fasting and vigil. The revelations of this time are characterised by a feeling of urgency and immediacy in the relationship of the human soul of Muhammad with God. In this phase there is no preoccupation with community, legislation, and the ordering of the world's affairs, but rather with human salvation and God's approval and acceptance. Here we have a re-statement of the human truth emphasised in Christianity; not that God becomes man, but that individual man is able to receive into himself, and into his heart, the saving, living and eternal Word of God. It is possible to draw an interesting parallel here between the role of the Prophet in this respect, and that of the virgin Mary. Though perhaps unfamiliar to Muslims and Christians alike, the analogy is revealing in the attempt to appreciate this phase of the Prophet's life and his experience of God. A proper understanding of the parallels between the two is most important for a true recognition of the role and place of the Prophet in the Islamic scheme of things.

Non-Muslims, especially those in the West, are not alone in comparing Muhammad with Christ, and the Qur'an with the Bible. Many Muslims make the same mistake. Such a comparison wholly fails to grasp the real significance of either the Prophet or

the Qur'an within Islam. The equivalent of the Qur'an in Christianity is Christ himself as the Living Word (logos) of God. If Christ is the Word made flesh, the Qur'an is the Word made Book. Accordingly, the medium or vehicle through whom the Word is given to men is, in the case of Islam, Muhammad, and in the case of Christianity, Mary. Both receive the Word from Gabriel, to whose command both submit as servants of God, and from both the Word is uttered in human form; from the mouth of the Prophet as human sounds, and from the womb of Mary as human substance. Both are traditionally regarded as pure or purified vehicles of revelation, the Prophet as being unlettered, free from the taint of worldly learning, and Mary as immaculate – free from the taint of human desire. Both Muhammad and Mary are in their respective religions the focus of much pious affection and devoted emulation as the closest of human beings to God; both have tended to become regarded as intercessors with God. It would be as difficult to separate Muslim supplicatory prayer from the name of Muhammad as it would be to find orthodox Catholic Christian devotions devoid of reference to Mary. Both are held up as the human norm, as the archetypes of man's relationship with God. Both are regarded as chosen especially by God as the best of creatures worthy to be vehicles of the Divine Word. Should the comparisons here offend orthodox Muslim views, it should be noted that the Qur'an itself says of Mary more than once, "God has chosen you above all the women of the world". The word used here for chosen is *istafa*, and a common title for the Prophet is *al-Mustafa*, the Chosen One.

As recipient of the Divine Word, as the poor outcast from society, as the solitary communer with God, as the individual soul stricken with grief at the indifference and sin of the world, the Prophet Muhammad expresses in the Meccan phase of his mission the truth of the reality and intensity of the individual human relationship with God, a truth also stressed in Christian teaching. As a human being he had also experienced what is

perennially the lot of humankind. He too was persecuted and oppressed, despised and rejected of men, a voice crying in the wilderness, a fugitive with his little band of followers from the wrath, hatred and contempt of godless and profane men. Though Muhammad is in no sense to be considered divine, his mission at this time bears a striking resemblance to that of Jesus in the Christian tradition. Each appear as the simple preacher exhorting his fellow men to repent and turn to God, to save themselves from the illusion of this world's life and to recognise the urgency of God's overwhelming claim on them. In so doing each incurred the suspicion, enmity and persecution of his people. In a very real way, Muhammad in his Meccan days succinctly manifests the two truths about man represented in Christianity by Mary and Jesus; namely the possibility of a special and individual relationship with God as the chosen vehicle of Divine Revelation, and the isolation and loneliness of the servant who dares to attack and denounce the evil in men in God's Name.

The Meccan phase of the Prophet's life is also highly significant as an inspiration for the intense inner life of the spirit which has played so important a role in the life of Islam down the centuries, side by side with the more external aspect of Sacred Law. The model set by the Prophet at this time has been adopted by succeeding generations of Muslim mystics to keep alive within the body politic of Islam, not only the assent of collective man to God's will, but also that intimate and innate individual awareness of the omni-presence of God at the deepest centre as well as on the horizons. The image of the solitary guide and teacher surrounded by his faithful companions is repeated endlessly down the pages of Islamic history in the Sufi Sheikhs and their disciples, whose finest contribution to Islam has been to reiterate constantly the central theme of Islam -- the remembrance of God. It was at this time that he devoted himself to lonely communion with God, by night and in the desert, in long fasting and frequent meditation, all of which have served again as models for the

methods and practices of the spiritual heroes of Islam. It would be true to say that this first period of the Prophet Muhammad's mission and the important truths it expresses for the notion of Muslim man have often been forgotten by many in Islam who have been far more involved in trying to realise the lessons of the second phase, that of Medina. One suspects also that it is easy for non-Muslims to lose sight of the spirit and mood of the earlier period in the more familiar picture of the Prophet as triumphant ruler of the first Muslim state – the Sacred Law in one hand, the sword in the other.

The Meccan phase of the Prophet's life is clearly divided from the Medinan period by the last-minute flight of the Prophet Muhammad with the faithful Abu Bakr, during which both men took refuge from their pursuers in a cave. This is the second cave in Muhammad's life, the first being the cave of Revelation at Hira. Both caves symbolize a transition, the first from ordinary men to the chosen vehicle of God's Word, the second from the messenger of individual salvation to the founder of the sacred community of men.

As the Prophet Muhammad rode into Medina on his camel, he moved from the realm of intensity into that of extensity. From now until his death his mission was to be directed primarily not at the individual soul, but at man in human society. Now that the inner man was purged and filled with divine grace it was time to turn the light of salvation upon the outer man, in his dealings with his neighbour and all created beings. The light of his human example now shone outwards to order and tame the lusts, appetites and ambitions of natural man, to create out of the teeming cauldron of social and political man a communal whole dedicated to and forged in the image of the Creator's will. The Qur'anic revelation, the Word of God, was to be the sculptor, and the Prophet Muhammad, as God's agent or *Khalifah*, was to be the chisel. In this new arena the raw materials were of a different kind, rougher and less easily shaped, less sensitive to the divine



touch and with different criteria. The problems of the human individual in his relations with God were here multiplied an hundredfold and rendered the more complex by their constant interplay and conflict. Here the Law-bringer had to take into account the realities of man as society and tribe; his inter-relation with all the facets of a complex and varied life; work, livelihood, commerce, profit, dispute, war, punishment, reward, procreation, marriage, divorce, vengeance, diplomacy and truce. In facing this situation the Prophet had also to apply the Divine Law in such a way that it might serve as a guide for succeeding generations of Muslims in very different times and places.

It is now that we see the Prophet draw together in his single life and person two strands of human truth prefigured in Judaism; those of Prophet in the Old Testament sense, and king or ruler. Just as with respect to Christianity he had combined in his person the truth of Mary and Jesus, so here at Medina he begins to manifest the truth of Moses and David.

The new Muslim Community which the Prophet was to establish and nurture in Medina was to be, as the Qur'an says of it, "The best community established for men". The forging of such a community required for Muhammad the man, not merely that he should convey to the people the revealed Law of God and impose it by main force of will or arms, but rather that he should exert in large measure that essential quality of the ruler and judge which is summed up in the single Arabic word *hilm*, a word so full of meaning as to be virtually untranslatable into a single word in English. It denotes among other things a fine balance between rigour and mercy, between rigidity of principle and flexibility of practice, between communal necessity and individual understanding.

In applying the continually revealed Law of God to the new community of men, the Prophet was dealing not with a 'tabula rasa', but with men who had ancient traditions of tribal custom and practice, who already had their own ways of dealing with

the whole spectrum of human situations. Thus the application of the new dispensation required much persuasion, counsel, advice and consent. It required of the Prophet a keen understanding of local custom and a subtle insight into the possible adaptability and cooperation of tribal man. It demanded that he judge continually what it was useful and appropriate to preserve from amongst the traditions of the past in imposing what was newly come from Heaven. To complicate matters, the community which Muhammad found at Medina was not that of a single tribe, nor even of a single people, but rather of various tribes with both Arab and Jewish communities. In addition to building up a new Muslim community of the Arab elements in that city, the Prophet had also to ensure that Arab and Jewish sections of the community might live together in peace and harmony. Here immediately was the first test of Muslim tolerance and the ability of Islam to live with and accommodate a significant non-Muslim minority. Despite later troubles, the Prophet's diplomacy and statesmanship in the early Medinan period was to set the seal on Muslim attitudes towards non-Muslim minorities. The pattern established by the Prophet in his famous *Ummah* document, and the spirit of tolerance which it expressed, was to characterise, for the most part, the policies of succeeding generations of Muslim rulers down the ages.

The importance therefore, not only of the primary legislation of the Divine Law, but also of the attitudes and methods with which the Prophet applied it, is of cardinal importance for the whole future development of Islam as a community and as a state. This again highlights the role of the Prophet in Islam as the norm, as the yardstick of human behaviour and practice, not here as man the solitary individual, but as man the leaven of society. The significance of this role is enshrined in Islam in the concept of *Sunnah*, meaning practice, norm, tradition. In the context of Islam it signifies the way in which man, as epitomised by the Prophet, may bring together in his insight and practice

the ways of Earth and the Will of Heaven. Although the *sunnah* of Islam has been fixed in many respects, it is still, in a very real way, a continuous process of adapting the immediate situation, event or need to the revealed will of God. In an Islamic context all such adaptations are referred and attributed to the man *par excellence*, and judged worthy or unworthy by his measure.

We referred at the beginning to the finality and therefore the synthetic nature of Islam as being that religion which draws together in itself many strands of truth in a state of equilibrium; truths which had been separately expressed by previous faiths. In this connection it is interesting to hear the Qur'an speak of the Muslim Community as the middle or balanced community *ummatah wasatan*, the community which links two others, Judaism and Christianity, uniting their different perspectives into a balanced and complete truth about God and man. Historically, too, Islam is a middle community in another sense. It was the only one of the three Western religions to establish a long and decisive presence in the lands of Hinduism and Buddhism, thus forming, however tenuously, a link between the Eastern and Western worlds.

However, though Islam combines in itself both the Judaic perspective of law and community, and the Christian perspective of devotion and the individual soul, it is, in its particular expression of these, significantly different from either. Unlike Judaism, the Islamic Community and the Sacred Law are not restricted to a particular people bound together by blood relationship, but apply to all peoples of whatever tribe, colour, language or place. The Judaic notion of Divine Law and human community are universalized in Islam. At the very beginning of the Qur'an is the verse, "Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds". As to the Christian concept of the individual human relationship with God as personal Lord, Islam brings the two face to face without the interposition of a divine-human redeemer whose sacrifice is necessary to make possible God's acceptance of His servant.

Most significantly, however, Islam and the mission of the Prophet Muhammad differ from Judaism and Christianity in that they accord equal worth and importance to both aspects of man's experience of God. In the life of the Prophet, the first Meccan phase is only slightly longer than the Medinan phase. While at Mecca, Muhammad the preacher is already potentially Muhammad the Law-bringer; at Medina, the Law-bringer is still inwardly the lowly servant of his personal Lord. Each phase contains the seed of the other. This balance is reflected in the whole inner and outer experience of Islam throughout its history. The needs of the community have co-existed with the piety and aspirations of the individual with surprising ease. The God of Law and the personal Lord are united in the worship of the true Muslim as they were in that of His Prophet.

The Prophet Muhammad is regarded within Islam as the norm of true humanity manifesting the truth of individual and communal man in equilibrium. The whole reality of man is that intimate centre of the heart in which both aspects or poles of human nature meet in perfect union. Man himself is already a centre, a middle point, in that his predicament, glory and agony is to be at the crossroads of Heaven and Earth: to be connected with the Absolute and the Infinite, but, being neither, to be relative and finite. It is that man who holds together all aspects of human truth in union at the centre who is the *Man par excellence*, at once servant and divine agent, the beloved of God, and the eye by which God contemplates His creation.

An important clue to this human perfection and wholeness as typified by the Prophet Muhammad is to be found, as already indicated, in the full version of the second part of the *Shahadah* or Muslim Creed which states, "and Muhammad is His servant and Messenger". Here the bipolar nature of each man and all men, as slave of God and vicegerent of God, is expressed. Muhammad as man is the pure slave of God, representative of creation in its dependence upon and its aspirations towards

God's light. He is at the same time the chosen anointed regent of God: His representative in His ordering and governance of the Cosmos. What all men are potentially, Muhammad is actually, neither ignorant animal, nor the Knowing God: neither purely natural nor divine, but man, the heart, the link. Again and again in considering the nature of man and his relationship with God and the universe within an Islamic context, we meet this notion of centrality and linking, focusing and uniting, equilibrium and harmony.

This theme is again evident if we consider finally the Prophet Muhamad's function as Seal of Prophets: as the bringer of the final revelation of God to mankind. The very notion of the finality of the Prophet's mission is one which suggests unacceptable fears to the modern mind, cultivated as it is in the notion that the process of evolution will only serve to make man better and better, into an indefinitely expanding future. What is the meaning of finality for such a viewpoint? The Islamic view of man's destiny is not so optimistic. It sees not an indefinitely brighter future for mankind, but rather an inevitable deterioration of man, culminating in the coming of the Hour, the Last Day, the Day of Judgement, of which the Qur'an, echoing the finality of the Prophet's mission, announces ominously, "Its conditions are already present". There is in the Qur'an, and especially in the Meccan chapters, an imminent presentiment of the End, and the teachings of the Sufis are permeated by what Martin Lings has aptly described as a nostalgia for the Hour, the ebb which will carry us all back to Him from Whom we came, "and to Him is the inevitable becoming."

For the end is always in a sense a return, or rather a recapitulation of the beginning, and this is equally true of the Prophet's mission and Islam which, in being the final message, has in it not only the fragrance of the End, but also that of the Beginning. The Prophet and the Message he brought constitute yet another link – that between the beginning and the end. The Qur'an

speaks of Adam as the first man and first messenger, but the beginning we are here speaking of really starts for Islam with the Prophet Ibrahim who was, as the Qur'an puts it, "neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a monotheist *hanif*". It is with Ibrahim that the family of Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike traditionally begins, and it is with the Prophet Muhammad that it comes to its close. In Ibrahim's seed are all the experience and development of monotheistic religion prefigured; in the Community of Islam the pure uncomplicated faith in the One God of Ibrahim re-emerges. As bringer of God's final message there is manifest in Muhammad and his community the resolution of all those things which were potential in Ibrahim's bosom, and of all those things which in Judaism and Christianity grew, blossomed and decayed in giving expression to the multiple needs and aspirations of man before God.

## Islam and Other Faiths

*Ismail R. al-Faruqi*

*Mankind is acutely conscious of the necessity of living together in peaceful co-existence. The practical realisation of such an objective demands a common conceptual foundation acceptable to all on which a humane and universal system of world relations might be built. Islam believes that it can offer such a foundation, basing its conviction on certain fundamental tenets, in particular its tolerance of and identification with other faiths, notably Judaism and Christianity; its recognition of the sense of God or 'natural religion' inherent in all men; its faith in man which represents a new humanism. Islam provides a platform for constructive dialogue in the hope that this will produce a concerted effort to formulate and harness man's awareness for the creation of a new world order in the service of God and humanity.*

## 5 Islam and Other Faiths

### THE WORLD'S NEED FOR HUMANE UNIVERSALISM

This century, the fourteenth A.H. and twentieth A.D., has witnessed the growth among humans of a new awareness, namely, that mankind must live together, every group of it interdependent with all the others. The old clichés of inter-human relationships which dominated the last half millennium – master-subject, faithful-heathen, *colon-indigène*, home-overseas, we natives-they foreigners – have broken down and are being constantly elbowed out by the new. The unity of mankind is being felt with ever-growing intensity around the globe. The almost universal self-identification of the world with the Algerians and Vietnamese in their past struggle, and with the Palestinians in their continuing struggle, for human dignity, is positive evidence of this new awareness. Violation of the human rights of the Algerians, Vietnamese and Palestinians has itself stirred up as well as confirmed these rights in the consciousness of mankind.

This new awareness is practical, oriented toward cases of violation and fulfilment, but it has no clear ideational base, no system of first principles which everybody can call his own. The lack is in our contemporary human consciousness. Once upon a time the Western world recognized such a base in the Enlightenment. Nineteenth century Romanticism, and Western failure of nerve in defending the rationalist universal ideal against its attackers allowed the gains to be dissipated. A temporary revival



was brought about by the world's fight against fascism in World War II. It gave us the forgotten Atlantic Charter, the United Nations Charter and the Bill of Human Rights, to which many nations of the World still pay little more than lip service. Colonialism's last battles, neo-colonialism, the cold war and the epidemic spread of nationalist particularism combined to neutralize the recent gains and the voices calling for one humane world-order were muted by the strongest wave of scepticism and cynicism since the last days of Athens and Rome. Fortunately all these forces including the mightiest, namely modern scepticism, have not dissuaded modern man from recognizing humanity in all men, and defending its rights on behalf of them; this in spite of the fact that scepticism denied all principles on the basis of which this humane universalism was founded in the past and affirmed no new idea in its stead. Analytical philosophizing and positivism stood at the ready to destroy any system of ideas capable of supporting any humane universalism. And while existentialism hesitates between nihilism and another round of Germanic idealism, Christian theologians continue to spend their energies on accommodating Christian dogma to the intellectual vicissitudes or fashions of the various schools of the day.

There is in consequence an emptiness in the world calling for the highest intellectual vision. Mankind's practical awareness needs to be articulated and given permanent place in man's system of evident truths. If we are to appropriate the new truth, teach it in our schools and prevent our children from having to acquire the vision through tragic experience as our generation did, and if we are to convince the billions of its validity and timeliness, we have to give it some creative thinking. Fortunately Islam presents us with an excellent base, rational and critical, as well as tested by fourteen centuries of history. Wherever the Muslims have followed and applied its principles, their success has been spectacular. Nothing in mankind's religious history is comparable to it. Our need for a sure and promising foundation on which to

build a world-order of human relations at once humane and universalist, obliges us to listen, to consider and to learn from Islam.

## THE LESSON OF ISLAM

### THE ESSENCE

Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience. This essence is critically knowable. It is not the subject of 'paradox', nor of 'continuing revelation', nor the object of construction or reconstruction by Muslims. It is crystallized in the Holy Qur'an for all men to read. It is as clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to those of Arabia in the Prophet's day (570-632 A.D.) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'anic text, and those of Arabic consciousness embedded in the Arabic language, have not changed through the centuries. This phenomenon is indeed unique for Arabic is the only language which has remained the same for nearly two millennia, the last fourteen centuries of which are certainly due to the Holy Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> Nobody has denied that Islam has a recognizable essence, readable in the Holy Qur'an.<sup>2</sup> For Muslims this essence has been on every lip and in every mind every hour of every day.

The essence of Islam is *tawhid*, the witnessing that there is no God but God. Brief as it is, this witness packs into itself four principles which constitute the whole essence and ultimate foundation of the religion.

First, that there is no God but God means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation, and a transcendent realm, the Creator. This principle distinguishes Islam from Ancient Egypt and Greece where reality was taken to be monophysite, consisting of one realm, nature or creation, parts or all of which were apotheosized. Greek and Egyptian gods

were projections of various components of nature idealized beyond their created empirical creaturely naturalness. *Tawhid* distinguishes Islam from the religions of India where reality is also monophysite, but where the natural realm is taken to be the transcendent realm itself but in a state of ephemeral objectification or individuation. Finally, *tawhid* distinguishes Islam from trinitarian Christianity where the dualism of creator and creature is maintained but where it is combined with a divine immanentism in human nature in justification of the incarnation. For *tawhid* requires that neither nature be apotheosized nor transcendent God be objectified, the two realities ever remaining ontologically disparate.

Second, that the one and only God is God means that He is related to what is not God as its God; that is, as its Creator or ultimate cause, its master or ultimate end. Creator and creature, therefore, *tawhid* asserts, are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparateness which is not affected by the relation. The transcendent Creator, being cause and final end of the natural creature, is the ultimate Master Whose will is the religious and moral imperative. The Divine Will is commandment and law, the ought of all that is, knowable by the direct means of revelation, or the indirect means of rational and/or empirical analysis of what is. Without a knowable content, the Divine Will would not be normative or imperative, and hence would not be the final end of the natural; for if the transcendent Creator is not the final end of His own creature, creation must be not the purposive event consonant with Divine nature but a meaningless happening to Him, a threat to His own ultimacy and transcendence.

Thirdly, *tawhid* or, as we have seen, that God is the final end of the creature, means that man is capable of action, that creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action, and that human action on malleable nature, resulting in a transformed creation, is the moral end of religion. Contrary to the claims of

other religions, nature is not fallen, evil, a sort of *Untergang* of the absolute, nor is the absolute an apotheosis of it. Both are real, and both are good; the Creator being the *summum bonum* or supreme good, and the creature being intrinsically good and potentially better as it is transformed by human action into the pattern the Creator has willed for it. We have already seen that knowledge of the Divine Will is possible for man, and that through revelation and science such knowledge is actual. The prerequisites of the transformation of creation into the likeness of the Divine pattern are hence all, but for human resolve and execution, fulfilled and complete.

Fourthly, *tawhid* means that man, alone among all the creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act. This freedom vests him with a distinguishing quality, namely responsibility. It casts upon his action its moral character, for the moral is precisely that action which is done in freedom, that is, done by an agent who is capable of doing as well as of not doing it. This kind of action, moral action, is the greater portion of the Divine Will. Being alone capable of it, man is a higher creature, endowed with the cosmic significance of that through whose agency alone is the greater part of the Divine Will to be actualized in space-time. Man's life on earth, therefore, is especially meaningful and cosmically significant. As Allah has put it in the Holy Qur'an, man is God's *khalifah*, or vicegerent on earth.<sup>3</sup> It is of the nature of moral action that its fulfilment be not equivalent to its non-fulfilment, that man's exercise of his freedom in actualizing the divine imperative be not without difference. Hence, another principle is necessary, whereby successful moral action would meet with happiness and its opposite with unhappiness. Otherwise it would be all one for man whether he acted, or did not act, morally. Indeed, this consideration makes judgement necessary, in which the total effect of one's lifetime activity is assessed and its contribution to the total value of the cosmos is acknowledged, imbalances in the individual's life are redressed, and his achieve-

ment is distinguished from the non-achievement of others. This is what 'The Day of Judgement' and 'Paradise and Hell' are meant to express in religious language.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER FAITHS

*Tawhid*, the essence of religious experience in Islam, carries a number of implications for the theory of God, the theory of revelation, the theory of man, the theory of society. Every one of these carries in turn implications for the place of other faiths in Islam's consideration.

#### **Theory of God**

Islam's insistence on the absolute unity and transcendence of God is an affirmation of God's lordship over all men. To hold God as Creator means that all men are His creatures. The measure of His absoluteness as Creator is at once the measure of the creatureliness of all creatures. In being creaturely, they are all one though they may be distinguished one from another. But *vis-à-vis* God, they are all one and the same.

As human creatures, therefore, all men are God's vicegerents on earth. All men stand absolutely on a par under the obligation to fulfil the Divine Will and are judged on a scale of justice that is absolute and one for all. God's transcendence does not allow discrimination between the creatures as such. Therefore, God could not have given any special status to any person or group. His love, providence, care for and judgement of all men must be one if His transcendence is not to be compromised. Certainly, men receive differing judgements because their individual merit and demerit are different, and these in turn are different because their endeavours, capacities, and achievements are different. But God will not have with any human being a relationship to which every other human being does not stand equally entitled. Thus Islam knows no theory of election, not even an election of Muslims, such as Judaism teaches for the Jews, under which the

Jew remains God's elect even if he goes astray, indeed even if he apostacizes.<sup>4</sup> In Islam, all men, Muslims and non-Muslims, stand to God in identically the same relation, i.e., they fall under the same imperative and are judged indiscriminately by the same law.<sup>5</sup> God's covenant is one and the same with all men. It is not a 'Promise' but a two-way contract in which man obeys and God rewards, or man disobeys and God punishes. Because Allah is absolutely One and Transcendent, the non-Muslim is not a 'gentile, a 'goy,' an 'estranged' or 'lesser' human being in any way, but a being who is as much the object of divine concern as the Muslim, as much *mukallaf* or subject of moral responsibility as the Muslim.

### Theory of Revelation

In Islam the Divine Will, the ought or content of the religious and moral imperative, is knowable directly through revelation or indirectly through science. Revelation is not a privilege peculiar to the Muslims, but a blessing granted to all mankind. This is not to argue that the content of prophecy is aimed at mankind which is especially true in the case of Muhammad, but that the phenomenon of prophecy is common to and present in every people and nation. Allah has said, "There is no people unto whom We have not sent a prophet-warner,"<sup>6</sup> and "We have sent no Prophet but that We have revealed to him that men should worship and serve Allah and avoid all evil ways."<sup>7</sup> Revelation, therefore, is a common prerogative of mankind, and so is its content, the Divine Will, the ought or religious and moral imperative, though this does not preclude Allah's revelation of messages addressed to some people alone, in their own language and for their own peculiar benefit.<sup>8</sup> The non-Muslim is hence not underprivileged by comparison to the Muslim in this regard. He has been as much the object and subject of revelation as the Muslim, though, unlike the Muslim, he may have dissipated, lost, tampered with or confused what has been revealed to him.

Universalism of prophecy follows from God's transcendence.<sup>9</sup> Revelation being an act of mercy, necessary for certain knowledge of the Divine Will, it would not be consonant with divine transcendence to give it to some and to deny it to others. Instead of being the forsaken who benefits from what has been gifted to others, the non-Muslim is the proud partner who is as much the benefactor of this divine gift as the Muslim.

As to science, the indirect way of learning the Divine Will, its prerequisites are the senses, intellectual curiosity and the will to research and discovery, the availability of data and communicability of experience, memory and the preservation of knowledge, reason and understanding or the capacity to grasp, synthesize and develop knowledge. All these prerequisites are indiscriminately gifted to all mankind. No people or group may lay exclusive claim to them. Great in God's eye are those who seek, promote, keep and distribute knowledge of the truth.<sup>10</sup> Education is one of the greatest Islamic duties, and knowledge of the truth one of the greatest virtues. Every Muslim stands under the obligation to develop his own faculties as well as those of humanity, to gather all existent knowledge regardless of source and to disseminate such knowledge to all mankind. Every piece of knowledge achieved and established becomes the property of mankind. No one has exclusive title to it.

The content of science is the pattern God has implanted in creation. It is His will in so far as it is relevant to the creature in question. The Divine Will in nature is natural law. It is the pattern of being peculiar to each creature, which realizes itself necessarily, thus constituting natural law.<sup>11</sup> The human psyche, human consciousness and personality, the human group and the patterns of its political, economic, sociological and cultural behaviour are all equally subject of this comprehensive 'science'. So is moral knowledge also discernible, knowledgeable through a 'scientific' – that is, rational – analysis of moral phenomena. Such knowledge is wisdom. Its acquisition is especially meritorious; its

dissemination as free counsel and advice for the sake of God earns for its author no less than Paradise.

Here, as in the science of nature, the non-Muslim stands absolutely on a par with the Muslim. Each is by nature equally capable of it, equally obliged to honour it and equally deserving if he offers it to all men. The only differences allowed are those which pertain to personal aptitudes which may vary from subject to subject as widely among Muslims as among non-Muslims. Also legitimate are differences in the personal zeal and application of the pursuer of wisdom, the personal purity of motive and intention in its acquisition and dissemination, but of these, the Muslim is, again by nature, as capable as the non-Muslim. In themselves, these differences have nothing to do with adherence or otherwise to the Islamic faith, though such adherence may consolidate the wisdom and add to the merit of the subject. Universal egalitarianism in men's capacity to discover and recognize God's Will in creation is a consequence of God's Will itself. For a Divine Will that is beyond human grasp and understanding will either remain ignored or be followed in puppet-like fashion. In either case, the requirements of morality would not be met and, in consequence, the Divine Will would not be adequately realised. Indeed, the most important part of it, namely the moral, would remain unrealised. A frustrated God would not be God.<sup>12</sup>

An atheist may ask, "May not the good – whether as moral norm, or as natural law – be discovered, pursued and observed for its own sake, rather than as Divine Will?" Certainly, we may answer, for man's innate capacity for science and wisdom may be developed and successfully exercised without the realisation that the truth and the good being discovered are the will of God. That is why God has implanted in all men yet another faculty, one especially designed to recognize God as transcendent Creator of all that is. This is the *sensus numinis*, the faculty by which man apprehends the sacred quality or dimension of reality. Its insights are the raw material, the data *sui generis*, on which the mind can



build the system of ideas known as religious knowledge. It is an innate faculty, a natural endowment by which man knows or comes to know God. The Holy Qur'an asserts that there is no creature but that in its own peculiar way, recognizes its Creator and serves Him.<sup>13</sup> Recognition of God and awareness of His existence, of His transcendent creatorship, is therefore the prerogative of all men. It is a universal birthright, guaranteeing man's consciousness of God to all. Here too, the Muslim stands at no advantage when compared with the non-Muslim. Both are equally endowed and equally capable since religion itself is rooted in their innate capacity to sense the holy.

### **Theory of Man**

*Man's Innate 'Perfections.'* – *Tawhid*, or the essence of religious experience in Islam, means that man is a creature upon whom falls the obligation to worship or serve God, that is, to actualize the Divine Will. This is man's *raison d'être*.<sup>14</sup> He was created for no other purpose than to serve God. It follows from this that God would create a capable servant if He is not to be frustrated, or to work in vain. That is why God has implanted in man a *sensus numinis*, a moral faculty and a theoretical mind, endowed him with purposive, causal efficacy, and placed him in a theatre – the cosmos – capable of receiving his action, of being remoulded in accordance with His plan.

From this it follows that man is not fallen, but innocent; that far from creating him hopelessly impotent to fulfil His will and thus to achieve salvation, God has created him in the best of forms and endowed him with all the favourable prerogatives above-mentioned.<sup>15</sup> Man stands in no predicament except that of serving God, and this demands of him positive, affirmative action designed to remould himself and creation. Far from beginning his life on earth with a minus, man starts his life with a definite and significant plus. Islam entertains no idea of fall, of original sin, or of a predicament from which man may not

extricate himself by his own effort.<sup>16</sup> Allah says in His Holy Book: “We have created man in perfect form and breathed into him of Our Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> The Muslim, therefore, does not look upon the non-Muslim as a *massa peccata*, a fallen, hopeless creature, but as a perfect man capable by himself of achieving the highest righteousness. He recognizes in Him, as non-Muslim, not an incompletely human being, but a perfect one, possessing high dignity which belongs to him as man.

*Ur-Religion* or *Religio Naturalis* – Coupled with this dignity is another of even greater importance, namely, that the non-Muslim possesses what Islam calls *din al fitrah* or natural religion.<sup>18</sup> This consists of the unerring discoveries of the *sensus numinis* by which man recognizes God as transcendent and holy, and hence worthy of adoration. This is not a repetition of man’s natural capacity to know through science. It is a new knowledge, a knowledge of the Holy, of the numinous, of God. This natural vision of God, or *din al fitrah*, stands to be enriched by man’s other natural knowledge, that is the discoveries of his theoretical and axiological consciousness. Man’s reason and sense of value stand at the ready to enlighten his service to God. Both faculties, the numinous and the theoretical-axiological, belong to man by virtue of his humanity. As he grows older, the cumulative products of science and morals are his as shortcuts to the truth, just as previous revelations are equally his as shortcuts to certainty of what the Divine imperative is.<sup>19</sup> Islam reminds him, however, that *din al fitrah*, or *religio naturalis*, which Muslims and non-Muslims possess by birth, is always to be kept distinct from the religious traditions of history. This distinction makes it possible for him to approach his or any religious tradition critically, yet religiously, and it constitutes a permanent source of reform and creative dynamism for the historical religion. What God has implanted in human nature – the recognition of His transcendence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness – is prior to any tradition. Hence *din al fitrah* is, properly speaking, *Ur-Religion*, or original

religion. Its possession by every man, regardless of the religious tradition or culture in which he was born or nursed, defines his humanity and casts upon him a very special dignity. It entitles him to full membership in the religious community of man, the universal brotherhood under God.

Islam calls this *din al fitrah* or *Ur-Religion*, 'Islam.' It identifies itself completely with it,<sup>20</sup> subjects itself totally to its principles and dictates. In Islam's view, the historical religions are outgrowths of *din al fitrah*, containing within them differing amounts or degrees of it.<sup>21</sup> It explains their differences from *din al fitrah* as the accumulations, figurizations, interpretations or transformations of history, that is of place, time, culture, leadership and other particular conditions.<sup>22</sup> Islam therefore agrees that all religions are religions of God, issuing from and based upon *din al fitrah*, and representing varying degrees of acculturation or attunement with history.<sup>23</sup> In a moment of high vision, the Prophet Muhammad said, "All men are born Muslims (in the sense in which Islam is equated with *din al fitrah*); it is his parents that Christianize or Judaize him."<sup>24</sup> In the same sense, the Holy Qur'an named the adherents of *din al fitrah*, *hanifs* and declared the ancient prophets of God to be *hunafa'* (pl. of *hanif*), in that they were recipients of revelation from God confirming their natural religion or *din al fitrah*.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the dignity conferred upon him by his reason, moral sense, and the *sensus numinis*, all of which he shares equally with the Muslim, the non-Muslim enjoys the Muslim's respect as carrier of *din al fitrah*, the religion of God, as well as carrier of his own religious tradition as one based on *din al fitrah*. His Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism is hence, to the Muslim, *de jure* – legitimate religion despite its divergence from traditional Islam. Indeed, the Muslim welcomes the non-Muslim as his brother in faith, in *din al fitrah*, which is the more basic and the more important. The Muslim as well as the non-Muslim are hence members of one family, and their religious differences

are domestic, in other words they are referrable to, and corrigible in terms of, a common parental origin which is *din al fitrah*.

*Innate World-Ecumenism* – Islam’s discovery of *din al fitrah* and its vision of it as base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in interreligious relations. For the first time it has become possible for an adherent of one religion to tell an adherent of another religion, “We are both equal members of a universal religious brotherhood. Both of our traditional religions are *de jure*, for they have both issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He has implanted equally in both of us, upon *din al fitrah*.<sup>26</sup> Rather than seek to find out how much your religion agrees with mine, if at all, let us both see how far both our religious traditions agree with *din al fitrah*, the original and first religion. Rather than assume that each of our religions is divine as it stands today, let us both, co-operatively wherever possible, try to trace the historical development of our religions and determine precisely how and when and where each has followed and fulfilled, or transcended and deviated from, *din al fitrah*. Let us look into our holy writ and other religious texts and try to discover what change has befallen them, or been reflected in them, in history.” Islam’s breakthrough is thus the first call to scholarship in religion, to critical analysis of religious texts, of the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of ‘history of religion’ because it was the first to assume that religion had a history, that each religion has undergone a development which constitutes that history.

Islam puts the lowest premium on the ‘act of faith,’ or self-identification with a religious tradition. Unlike Augustinian and Lutheran Christianity which makes salvation a function of faith and assigns little or no value to works, Islam assigns to the confession of faith the value of a condition, only a condition. Unlike the act of faith in Christianity, which is personal and secret,<sup>27</sup> works are public. Islam not only acclaims the good works

wherever and by whomever they are done, it regards them as the only justification in the eye of God and warns that not an iota of good work or of mischief will be lost on the Day of Reckoning. The non-Muslim therefore has the public record of works he has done to justify him in Muslim eyes; to establish him as a man of great piety and saintliness. For in Islam, works earn merit with God regardless of the religious adherence of their authors.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, salvation consists of nothing more than such merit as the good works earn. The act of faith is itself a work which is added and whose inclusion affects the whole. But the *hanif*, who has never heard of the revelation of Muhammad, but who has observed *din al fitrah* and done the good works, is as much saved and the occupant of Paradise as the one who did, who believed and achieved identically the same record of good works.<sup>29</sup> Finally, it must be remarked that the nature of meritorious work in Islam has nothing to do with sacraments since Islam has none, or with secret personal acts of devotion since all of Islam's devotions are public and communal.<sup>30</sup> Islam's ethic being totally world-affirming, positive, of-the-world and governed by public law, the non-Muslim has as much potential and room for meritorious works as the Muslim. No religion allows its adherent to call the non-adherent a better adherent to itself than the professed adherent, and do so religiously, except Islam and, perhaps, philosophical Buddhism, which has relatively few adherents and no religious community anyway.

### **Theory of Society**

Islam has defined the will of God, the norms of human conduct and ends of human desire, in terms of values which are societal. The *ummah*, or Islamic society, is therefore a *conditio sine qua non*, necessary and indispensable if the Muslim is to achieve the Divine imperative.<sup>31</sup> This necessity of society derives partly from Islam's world-affirmation, and partly from its insistence that ethics is concerned with action rather than intention. Both of

these considerations require the Muslim to engage himself in the warp and weft of the web of society and discourage – nay, condemn – individualism and isolationism.<sup>32</sup> Islam condemned monasticism as an unfortunate invention of some Christians, not commanded by God.<sup>33</sup> Islam demanded that Islamic life take place in the midst of the rough and tumble of village, city, state and community. The *ummah*, furthermore, is not a mystical body, but a concrete, real and political body, membership in which cannot be exercised except in the open and under the vigilant eye of public laws and institutions. This being the case, one would think that the non-Muslim is a ‘gentile’ or ‘goy’ who has no shadow of a chance for admission and with whom no co-operation with the *ummah* is possible. In fact, the opposite is the case. We have already seen that divine transcendence implies that all men are equally creaturely, and hence, that nothing differentiates them from one another except personal achievement. All men are thus equally the object of the Muslim’s attention, care and actual work of salvation. The Muslim cannot rest until all men have achieved the Divine Will to the full extent of their personal abilities; until every inch of ground in creation has been transformed by his effort into the fullest possible actualization of the Divine pattern. The Muslim is thus a world-missionary, a world-scout, a world-guardian and a world-worker. He not only calls men to God but carries them there if they are lethargic, for his life-purpose is to get them there. Only strategy decides the priorities of his conduct, the nearest being always first entitled to his energies, but the most distant being finally just as entitled to those energies as the nearest. Umar ibn al-Khattab used to worry that he, personally, would have no excuse before God on the Day of Judgement that an unrepaired pothole in the pavement of the farthest village road might have caused a beast of burden to fall and injure itself. Knowing human nature for what it is, Islam stressed the importance of the relative, the neighbour, the compatriot, and com-

manded the Muslim never to forsake him but to give him the first and most tender loving care.<sup>34</sup> It even legislated that care by fixing inheritance and alimony rights to the proven relative regardless of real distance in space, or of biological descent as long as he established absence of a supporter nearer to him in either respect than the defendant. The reality of the forces of nepotism, tribalism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism in human conduct is recognized, and a place in the general scheme is given them. Thus they are brought under the law and are not allowed to dominate. Their worth is a deduction from the general relevance of all men in the Muslim's scheme of action. Indeed, Allah has condemned to eternal fire the person who stops his concern and work at the frontier of neighbour, relative, tribesman, or compatriot. God's transcendence implies the equality of all men; His Divine mastery or lordship implies that all men be the object of the Muslim's love, concern and action.<sup>35</sup>

While it is morally proper that nature everywhere be the object of the Muslim's remoulding and transformation, it is morally insufficient that all men be the object of that care. Certainly, a vast proportion of humanity would benefit most by no more involvement in the cosmic process than by being the object of the loving energies of the Muslim cosmic worker. But the moral sense of man and the Divine Will will never be satisfied by such involvement alone. Man is a moral subject. As such, whatever happens to him is of no moral worth, despite its utilitarian worth, unless it happens by his own personal and free decision. *Dar al Islam* (The House of Islam) will therefore seek to envelop the world and to transform it and mankind into a perfect actualization of the Divine pattern or Will. But it will be morally of little value unless mankind is called to the task and convinced of its moral and utilitarian value; unless mankind freely decides to have the job done and participate in it, each man to the full extent of his capacities. This requirement implies that the non-Muslim become an active participant in the engagement of the Muslim in cosmic work.

The first condition Islam lays down for such participation is that it involve no coercion or compulsion. To be itself, it ought to be free. *“No coercion in religion. Virtue and wisdom are manifestly different from vice and misguidance. Whoever believes does so for his own good; whoever rejects faith does so at his own peril.”*<sup>36</sup> A responsible decision from every non-Muslim in favour of such participation in cosmic engagement and co-operation with the Muslim in the work is an absolute requirement. Its violation is capital sin, besides being Islamically worthless, and earns for its perpetrator eternal punishment.<sup>37</sup> No Muslim, therefore, may spread his faith or bring non-Muslims to join in his enterprise by force.

Knowing the trickery of interhuman relationship and the wide possibilities of brainwashing, of influencing decision, and pressuring human conduct, the Holy Qur'an specified the means of persuasion to be used by the Muslim. *“And call men forth unto the path of our Lord by wisdom and argument yet more sound. Argue the cause with them (the non-Muslim) but with the more comely arguments.”*<sup>38</sup> If they are not convinced by these methods, Allah commanded the Muslim to leave the non-Muslims alone.<sup>39</sup> Certainly, the Muslim is to try again and never give up that Allah may guide the non-Muslim to the truth. If he is to change his tactics at all, it is for the better; the better in wisdom, in truthfulness. The example of his own life, his personal embodiment of the truths and values he professes, should constitute his final argument. If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to strive after better embodiment of Islamic truth and value in his own life and leave the rest to God.

By God's commandment and under His sanctioning authority, the Muslim is to bring about world-order through the free, responsible and comely interchange of ideas. The world is to be turned into a seminar of global scale, and the best idea, the soundest argument, the noblest exemplification, are to win the hearts and minds of men. This new world-order is not to be a monolithic unity, even if Islam, as the best idea, did win over the



majority. The majority, no matter how large or overwhelming, has no right to coerce even a single deviationist in religion. If that single non-Muslim adamantly refuses to accept the position of the majority, the latter is bound by Islamic law to honour his judgement and to enable him to exercise his convictions, to practise his faith, in freedom and dignity.

Much as the Muslim hopes to win mankind for Islam, he knows that many non-Muslims will continue to resist. As long as this resistance is ideational, the Muslim is bound to respect it. Once the resistance puts obstacles in the way of preaching, that is, once it interferes in the free and responsible interchange of ideas to obstruct, subvert or stop it, then Islam prescribes that the obstacle be removed by force. If religious resistance picks up the sword, then Islam prescribes that it be fought with the same. Armed resistance, it should be noted, is not merely resistance to religious proposing which should not be countered except by counter-proposing and, if possible, a better argument. Here, armed resistance means forceful opposition to the proposal that religious differences be solved by argument, through persuasion and dissuasion. It is the sword drawn in answer to a proposal of "let the best argument win." Certainly it deserves to be stopped and broken by the sword. But the action should never have for its purpose the coercion of the resistance into Islam.<sup>40</sup> Its aim is no more and no less than stopping the violent action taken by the non-Muslims. It should stop immediately upon the cessation of their violence. The recourse to violence is justified only to put an end to the violent obstruction, never to coerce the non-Muslims into conversion to Islam. No power may convert him to Islam except himself.<sup>41</sup>

Islam prescribes the most tolerant *modus vivendi* for the Muslims and non-Muslims living under its aegis. Where the Muslims are the dominant majority, or where the state is an Islamic state, the non-Muslims who agree to live with the Muslims in peace constitute an *ummah*, alongside the Muslims. This term *ummah*

used by the Prophet Muhammad in the covenant of Medina with regard to its Jewish minority population, means a society governed by its own law, carrying its own political, economic, educational, judicial, cultural and religious institutions.<sup>42</sup> Allah, the Prophet, the Islamic state and the whole world-*ummah* of Islam are their guarantors and protectors.<sup>43</sup> Their defence against external attack as well as any internal encroachment whether by Muslims, non-Muslims, or by their own members, is a duty imposed by God upon the Muslims. They are supposed to render the *jizya*, a poll tax that is a far lesser economic and financial burden than the *zakat* imposed upon Muslims, and are to live in virtual independence from the Muslims except in matters of security and prosperity of *Dar al Islam* as a whole. Most important, however, is the recognition not only that the non-Muslim is not to be coerced or subversively influenced to conversion, but that he is fully entitled to pursue his non-Muslimness and pass it on to his descendants. From the view of any religion or -ism whose stand is not one of scepticism, this is indeed the supreme and ultimate demand that the foreigner can make. Islam fulfils it beautifully.

#### THE HISTORY

The above-mentioned lesson we learn from the essence of Islam is not a fanciful projection of a daydreamer, of a man wishing for felicitous inter-religious relationship. It is, rather, the vision which has been translated into directives for daily living and action, crystallized permanently into law (*shari'ah*), actually observed by millions of people across fourteen centuries, in areas covering a wide and long belt of the surface of the earth.

In Mecca, before the existence of the Islamic state, indeed before the formation of the Muslims into an organic *ummah*, Islam declared itself a confirmation of all previous revelations and identified itself with Judaism and Christianity.<sup>44</sup> But noticing the

baffling array of doctrines, creeds and practices of Jews and Christians, Islam distinguished between these phenomena of history and the original Judaism and Christianity which God gave to His prophets.<sup>45</sup> By its criticism of the discrepancies and contradictions, it initiated objective study of the history of the two religions, critical study of their scriptures, the Torah and the New Testament. It recognized the Divine base of both and ascribed the historical growth to human effort, whether well or ill-meaning. It identified itself with the religion of Ibrahim, Moses and Jesus and, before them, with the religion of Adam and Noah. It rehabilitated the whole of mankind religiously by recognizing a *religio naturalis* innate in all men, and related to them all without exception by claiming for itself no more than the content of that primal, original, *Ur-Religion*, or gift of God to every human being.

When Meccan persecution became unbearable for many of his followers, the Prophet ordered them to seek refuge in Ethiopia, the Christian Kingdom, confident that the followers of Jesus Christ were moral, charitable and friendly, promoters of the worship of God.<sup>46</sup> His high regard for them was well justified. Their Christian emperor rejected Mecca's demand for extradition of the Muslim refugees and acclaimed the Qur'anic recognition of the prophethood of Jesus, the innocence of his mother and the Oneness of God.<sup>47</sup>

Upon arrival in Medina, where the Prophet founded the first Islamic state, the Jews were recognized as an autonomous *ummah* within the Islamic state.<sup>48</sup> Henceforth, Jewish law, religion and institutions became a sacrosanct trust whose protection, safe keeping and perpetuation became a Muslim responsibility imposed by the religion of Islam itself. Only questions of external war and peace fell outside the jurisdiction of the sovereign Jewish *ummah*, and even on this level the Islamic state was not to act without *shura* (consultation) with all its constituents including the non-Muslims. Likewise, the Christian Arabs of Najran came

to Medina following the Prophet's launching of the new Islamic state, to negotiate their own place in the emerging society. The Prophet himself called them to Islam and argued with them at length with all the eloquence at his disposal. Some of them converted; the majority did not. Muhammad nonetheless granted them the same autonomous status accorded to the Jews, loaded them with gifts, and sent them home under protection of a Muslim bodyguard and a Muslim statesman, Mu'adh ibn Jabal to organise their affairs, solve their problems and serve their interests.<sup>49</sup>

As the Muslims fanned out of Arabia into Byzantium, Persia and India, large numbers of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists came under their dominion. The same recognition granted to the Jews and Christians by the Prophet personally was granted to every non-Muslim religious community on the one condition of their keeping the peace.<sup>50</sup> The case of Jerusalem was the *typos* of this Muslim tolerance and goodwill on the religious level as well as on the social and cultural. The brief but illustrious charter reads:

*“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This charter is granted by Umar, Servant of Allah and Prince of the Believers, to the people of Aelia. He grants them security for their persons and their properties, for their churches and their crosses, the little and the great, and for adherents of the Christian religion. Neither shall their churches be dispossessed nor will they be destroyed, nor their substances or areas, nor their crosses or any of their properties, be reduced in any manner. They shall not be coerced in any matter pertaining to their religion, and they shall not be harmed. Nor will any Jews be permitted to live with them in Aelia. Upon the people of Aelia falls the obligation to pay the jizya, just as the people of Mada'in (Persia) do, as well as to evict from their midst the Byzantine army and the thieves. Whoever of these leaves Aelia will be granted security of person and property until he reaches his destination. Whoever decides to stay in Aelia will also be granted same, and share with the people of Aelia in their rights*

*and the jizya. The same applies to the people of Aelia as well as to any other person. Anyone can march with the Byzantines, stay in Aelia or return to his home country, and has until the harvesting of the crops to decide. Allah attests to the contents of this treaty, and so do His Prophet, his successors and the believers.*

*Signed: Umar ibn al-Khattab.*

*Witnessed by: Khalid ibn al-Walid, 'Amr ibn al-'As, 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf and Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan.*

*Executed in the year 15 A.H.”<sup>51</sup>*

Nothing is farther from the truth and more inimical to Muslim-non-Muslim relations than the claim that Islam spread by the sword. Nothing could have been and still is more condemnable to the Muslims than to coerce a non-Muslim into Islam. As noted earlier, the Muslims have been the first to condemn such action as mortal sin. On this point, Thomas Arnold, an English missionary in the Indian Civil Service of colonial days and no friend of Islam wrote:

*“... of any organised attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Moham-medan governments towards them.”<sup>52</sup>*

Compared with the histories of other religions, the history of Islam is categorically white as far as toleration of other religions is

concerned. Fortunately, we have on record many witnesses from those days of Muslim conquest to whom we should be grateful for clearing this matter once and for all. Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, wrote in the second half of the twelfth century: "This is why the God of vengeance . . . beholding the wickedness of the Romans who, throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity – brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans."<sup>53</sup> Barhebraeus is author of an equally powerful witness in favour of Islam.<sup>54</sup> Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, a Dominican monk from Florence who visited the Muslim East about 1300 A.D., gave an equally eloquent witness of tolerance – nay, friendship – to the Christians.<sup>55</sup> And yet, if the Muslims were so tolerant, the Christian persistently asks, why did their co-religionists flock to Islam by the millions? Of these co-religionists the Arabs were the smallest minority. The rest were Hellenes, Persians, Egyptians, Cyrenaicans, Berbers, Cypriots and Caucasians. Canon Taylor once explained it beautifully at a Church Congress held at Wolverhampton. He said:

*"It is easy to understand why this reformed Judaism (sic!) spread so swiftly over Africa and Asia. The African and Syrian doctors (sic) had substituted abstruse metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ: they tried to combat the licentiousness of the age by setting forth the celestial merit of celibacy and the angelic excellence of virginity – seclusion from the world was the road of holiness, dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity – the people were practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels; the upper classes were effeminate and corrupt, the middle classes oppressed by taxation, the slaves without hope for the present or the future. As with the besom of God, Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstition. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics; it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought*

*out the fundamental dogmas of religion – the unity and greatness of God, that He is merciful and righteous, that He claims obedience to His will, resignation and faith. It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgement, and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked; and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence. It thrust aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments, and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.”<sup>56</sup>*

#### BASIS FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS CO-OPERATION: ISLAMIC HUMANISM

This brilliant theory of the other faiths presented by Islam is unmatched and unmatchable. While Vatican II has in condescending and paternalistic manner decreed, twenty centuries after Jesus, that Judaism is religiously acceptable as a *preparatio* for Christianity, and fourteen centuries after Muhammad that Islam is a tolerable approximation of Christianity, it has also asserted that outside the Roman Catholic Church no salvation is possible, thus withdrawing with one hand what it granted with the other. That no one will be saved unless he is a member of the Catholic Church of Rome consigns to eternal damnation not only the Muslims and the Jews but all the Protestant Christians as well. As to Protestantism, we have still heard nothing regarding Islam except rumours and hearsay from individuals. The World Council of Churches has so far not spoken on these issues. Indeed, it has even turned down Libya's invitation to join the Islamic-Christian dialogue of Tripoli (1976). Apparently it participates only in dialogue held under its own auspices. Previously, the W.C.C. did hold its own dialogue sessions with Islam (Bhamdun, Brummana, Hong Kong, etc.), but under its own terms and with Muslim representatives of its own choosing.

Judaism and Hinduism are ethnocentric religions by nature. In modern times, they have resurged more ethnocentric than ever. Their religious exclusivism is incompatible with dialogue with the other world religions. But their traditions are not devoid of strands favourable to ecumenism and encouraging to dialogue. An ethical monotheistic Judaism, born in the Middle Ages under the aegis of Islamic philosophy, culture, and mysticism has gained strength since the Emancipation, under the influence of the Enlightenment and of Western humanism. But it has been severely weakened in recent times by Zionism, which is the archetype of ethnocentric exclusivism. Hindus have similar recourse to an established tradition of philosophical Hinduism which provides ample room for interreligious dialogue and universalist human fellowship. Both these tendencies in Judaism and Hinduism deserve encouragement.

Islam's theory of other faiths, backed by the experience of fourteen centuries, still commands the loyalty and support of a billion Muslims around the world. It provides us with the best foundation for a religious world-ecumene in which the religions honour one another's claims without denying their own. It also provides us with the only legitimate foundation for seeking the religious unity of mankind. If inter-religious dialogue is to move beyond the exchange of information and courtesies, it has to have a religious norm in terms of which it can compose the differences between the religions. This religious norm must be common to the parties involved in the dialogue. Islam finds this norm in *din al fitrah*. It is also essential that the parties in dialogue feel a measure of freedom vis-à-vis their historical religious traditions. No idea is more conducive to such freedom than Islam's suggestion that the religious tradition is a human outgrowth from primal *din al fitrah*. It was this Islamic idea which initiated in history the academic study of religion involving a critical assessment of the historical authenticity of the religious traditions of mankind, of their holy texts, traditions and practices.



Scholarship in religion, based on critical analysis of texts and history, began in the West in the Enlightenment. Islamic scholarship in religion is a whole millennium older, and has an advantage over the most advanced scholarship of today, namely, that its stand is not one of scepticism. The sceptic may ask questions in religion; he may not answer them.

The Islamic theory is particularly strong as regards Judaism and Christianity which it treats not as 'other religions' but as itself. Its recognition of the God of Judaism and of Christianity as its God, of their prophets as its prophets, and its commitment to the divine invitation to the People of the Book to co-operate and live together under God, constitute the first and only real step towards religious unity of two world religions ever made. An Ibrahmic unity of Judaism, Christianity and Islam based on the *Hanifi* religion of Ibrahim, the *din al fitrah*, is a real possibility. It did in fact exist in the Muslim World until Western imperialism, colonialism and Zionism came to subvert it. Their effort, however, has been in vain. The Muslim will continue to believe in and work for this unity, confident that his God, Whom he knows to be one as truth is one and the moral law is one, cannot but desire one religion, to be entered into by all men freely and deliberately, because it is itself when it is the result of personal conviction, not of a blind wager *a la Pascal*, but a certainty reached after a critical weighing of all the options, of all the evidence. In following up this ideal, nothing could be more worthwhile to the Muslim than to subsidise and to promote whether in the Muslim World, or the non-Muslim World, the comparative study of religion.

The Islamic stand toward the other faiths thus combines three crucial distinctions. First, it is not only tolerant, but assumes the Holy of the other religions to be Holy, their prophets to be prophets of God and their revelations to come from God. Tolerance implies dualism and basic difference between the subject and object of tolerance. Islam does away with the basic

difference as it eliminates the dualism itself. It identifies itself with Judaism and Christianity and enjoins upon its adherents at least as much, if not more religious respect and devotion to the prophets and revelations of Judaism and Christianity. No religion preserved the shrines of another in its own base, and indeed enabled them to prosper in its midst, except Islam. And no tolerance whatever has ever reached the point of enforcing the other religions' laws in its own territory, except in Islam. Nay more, no religion has ever countenanced, or can ever countenance, teaching its own adherents as well as having them enforce the idea that it is part of their religion, and hence their religious obligation, to enforce the observance of the other religions' laws as long as their adherents live in their midst. And only in the Muslim World and under an Islamic government would it be true to say that neither Jew nor Christian is free to de-judaize or de-christianize himself in rebellion against or defiance of his own religious authority.

Secondly, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths, having brought all faiths under the single roof of *din al fitrah*, satisfies the only condition for constructive dialogue and inter-relation. Under it, all differences between the religions are domestic family squabbles. Criticism, argument and counter-argument mutually affect all the members on account of this organic relationship in which Islam has bound them to one another. Such criticism across the lines of various religions is brought forth by constituent members concerned about the total system which houses, includes and unites them. Unless the religions become conscious of and emphasize this common bond, they may never be able to meet and surmount their present difficulties. Besides this advantage, the Islamic stand furnishes the religions with the groundwork necessary for an effective purge, a creatively constructive reform of their own traditions. Given *din al fitrah* or the first presuppositions of human religiosity, any religious tradition should be able to face the strongest criticism without fear. For its ultimate concerns,

namely God, the purposiveness of existence, the real possibility of salvation and the final redressing of the balance of happiness, all these are safeguarded. Scepticism in epistemology and metaphysics, or cynicism in ethics, value-theory and religion, cannot be silenced by the religious authoritarianism of an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, or of a dogmatic assertion. Only reason and experience can do so. That is what the Islamic stand offers us. Islamic rationalism has indeed achieved what the Enlightenment and its followers in the West have failed to do, namely, to absorb the criticism of the sceptics – the empiricists and romantics of the nineteenth century – and to press forth creatively and critically for a rational authentication of the religious traditions, a rational validation of their diverse claims. Such scholarship is not an idle wish. It is a genuine hope stemming from a religious conviction which looks upon creation with the eyes of the most fastidious and critical science and exclaims: “O Lord, You have not created all this in vain, in sport!”<sup>57</sup>

Third and finally, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths constitutes a new humanism because it is founded on a new faith in man. Man’s nature is being badly abused in the world today. Having lost the battle of establishing man as a lump of sin, a *massa peccata*, Christianity has practically given up contending in the matter of the nature of man. Scepticism, ethnocentric particularism and materialism divide the field of the theory of man. While materialism defines man as little more than teeth, hands and stomach, nationalist madness declares him a Jew, or a German to the exclusion of all other men. In the meantime, scepticism stands by and mocks at man and his crucifiers. It is no wonder that the serious among Westerners are all sceptics. For scepticism is the most rational of the three stands prevalent in the West.

Islam’s *din al fitrah* is the only idea capable of pulling Western man out of his predicament and launching him on a dynamic and creative road to self-fulfilment. As it did for the ancient Mesopotamian, *din al fitrah* can do for man today; it gives him the world

to knead and remould in the service of God. To serve God is hence to create culture and civilization. But this is none other than to attain the highest possible self-fulfilment.



PART TWO

# **The Law and Institutions**

## The Concept of an Islamic State

*Sadiq al-Mehdi*

*Any attempt to formulate a basis for the establishment of an Islamic state must begin with an examination of the history and development of Islamic law – shari’ah – governing the conduct and constitution of the state. It must then face the problems caused by the impact of Europe on Islam and the reaction of Islam to this in more recent times. No useful discussion of Islamic politics in the modern world can take place without consideration of these factors. If the ancient shari’ah is not reformulated and re-applied to fit the needs of the present day it will wither away, and the opportunity it offers to create an Islamic state in its image will be lost. There is no historical precedent to support the suggestion that the shari’ah cannot be thus revitalized. The process of its interpretation in the early days of Islam demonstrates that it is not a fixed and permanent entity, but capable of change to fit new circumstances. It is this approach which must be adopted once more if Islam is to preserve its identity and attempt a solution to its own problems by the establishment of Islamic states; general agreement on ideological commitment to the laws of Islam, together with a willingness to adapt and fit them to particular national circumstances.*

## 6 The Concept of an Islamic State

We, the *Ummah*, are the trustees of the message of The Seal of the Prophets, expected to study, reflect and listen so that we may intensify our understanding of it, entrusted to extend it to the four corners of the earth, employing the richness of meaning we discover in the Qur'an, the banquet of God. Four fruits in that banquet appear irresistible to the appetite of our age. First, Islam is the eternal religion of one God and morality, innate in human nature. A succession of prophets was inspired to remind humanity of its covenant and to give it help and Day of Judgement motivation to do good and resist evil. The prophets also conveyed legislative codes tuned to national and environmental conditions. When humanity came of age and in the full light of history, a final message was revealed confirming its predecessors and terminating divine legislation by a broad based legislative code, wide enough in aspect to cater for varieties of time and place.

Second, Judaism involved a plan to create a model community which required a detailed legislative element. The model status went to the heads of the Jews; the detailed legislation created a formalistic, ritualistic, religious bureaucracy. Christianity was the corrective destined to perpetuate the same message, but emphasizing the spiritual and the moral. The Jews rejected the corrective and rallied to their heritage as a national creed, a



ghetto within which they have remained ever since. Christianity developed independently and as its emphasis was one-sided by design, Christian human genius supplied it with a body – the Church. Between St. Peter and St. Paul there was a great leap in the development of Christian thinking. An element taken from Greek philosophy conceived that the One God could not directly deal with the multiplicity of the world except through some cosmological intermediary, a role which St. Paul gave to Christ. He also modelled the structure of the Church on Roman administration. That structure evolved in the face of Roman State hostility, and since that time Christian conscience has regarded matters of state as profane affairs. Further, the creation of a spiritual monolith created the tension which forced lay human thought in Christendom to evolve its concepts of secularism, humanism, rationalism and socialism in an anti-religious context. Whether approached by revelation or not, man has employed his intellectual and intuitive powers to speculate about truth. He has left no stone unturned. Some have conceived God and creation as one whole like pantheism and monism. Some have concentrated on the evolution of codes to guide man's behaviour, neglecting issues of ultimate truths like Buddhism and Confucian philosophies in China. India, Greece and even Arabia sought truth and human happiness in spiritualism or in materialism; in individualism or in collectivism. It is observable that whichever creed emphasized behaviour, its followers supplied it with a complementary transcendental aspect: both Buddha and Confucius were deified. The one-sided philosophies have always produced a reaction in the opposite direction. Revealed religions, creeds, human speculations about truth, all have stood in need of a balancing creed, a universal equilibrator, a golden mean. This was fulfilled by the message of Islam, and to underline the divine nature of its origin, it was revealed in the most unsuspected quarters:

*“They say ‘Why was this Koran not sent down upon some man of moment in the two cities?’.”*

Third, far from degrading man, Islam honoured him and confirmed his worthiness. His intellectual capacity is recognized:

*“Even as we distinguish the signs for a people who reflect.”*

His spiritual powers are enforced:

*“. . . and He will appoint you a light whereby you shall walk.”*

His activity is not disturbed:

*“Shall I tie my camel,” the prophet was asked, “or rely on God’s will?” He replied, “Tie it and rely on God’s will.”*

In fact God’s will is regulated through man and is not arbitrary. God does not change what is in people until they change what is in themselves. That is why the scholars and statesmen who responded to the call of the Prophet bubbled with activism and determination and achieved things on a scale unprecedented in the annals of human history.

Fourth, our ancestors took the task of their trust very seriously indeed. They absorbed the meanings of Islam, internalized its dynamic character, and radiated a spiritual, moral, cultural, material, political and intellectual sun. On their own initiative they collected the holy text and defined its correct reading; on their own initiative they integrated the Qur’an and collected the *Hadith*. Uninstructed they studied the texts and formulated the legal systems of the Schools. They also studied the heritage of other civilizations. Rome succeeded in the military conquest of Greece, but the latter captivated the former culturally. The Arabs avoided that fate. However superior was the heritage they

encountered, they Islamized it and Arabized it transforming Arabic into a world language.

With these thoughts in mind, let us pose three questions, the answers to which will undoubtedly influence discussion of our subject – the Islamic state. What is the Muslim view of its own history? The Jews sanctified their history and it became a fossil. The Christians created a man-governed spiritual monolith and wrapped it with a holy history against which evolved a lay, secular, humanist, history. Some of us view our history in a way which recalls the fossil or the monolith model. In both cases we must expect Muslims to respond in terms of the same scenario. The nature of Islam does not warrant either of the two models. A critical and self-critical approach to happenings in Islam starts with the Prophet himself:

*“Indeed they were near to seducing Thee.”*

We have spoken about the meaning of the message of Islam in terms of the whole genesis of God’s relation to man and the evolution of man’s thought in history. We must now analyse our history in terms which are sociologically meaningful. Such a method was employed by Ibn Khaldun, in analysing the concepts of Arabian cohesiveness, and using it to explain matters like the Quraishi lineage qualification for the office of Khalifa, and in explaining the fortunes of regimes. His genius was adopted outside our culture and helped to evolve the science of sociology. This was the fate of many brilliant concepts. The concept of a rational basis for morality natural to the Qur’an in terms of good and bad being the accepted and the rejected, guided the genius of Qadi Abdel Gabbar (d. 1025) to found a rationalist moral philosophy. Centuries later modern European philosophy has credited itself with discovering rational moral philosophy. It was the world of Islam which discovered, developed and passed on ancient wisdom and science. It systematized the study of medicine and

natural and deductive sciences, and developed the largest world economic system ever seen before the modern age, all of which atrophied in their place of origin. The modernization which we witness today is called Western, yet its genesis involves an important contribution from the World of Islam. In the process of that evolution the phenomenon lost all or most of its spiritual and moral bearings. Today, backward and deprived, we face an economic and military giant with the moral and spiritual scruples of a flea. It is not a pleasant encounter.

The second question we must ask concerns the impact of Europe on the Muslim world. What has been the nature of this impact? The experience of Europe would be instructive for us even had we played no part in the genesis of its civilization. The moral basis for such questioning is contained in the words:

*“What, have they not journeyed in the land so that they have hearts to understand with?”*

The phenomenon of modernization which has matured in Europe can be conceived in terms of an emphasis on mechanisation in technology, on rationalism in the intellectual sphere, on universalism in the conduct of relations. It comprises a dynamic expansive economic system, institutionalization and specialization in government and administration, the development of various forms of mass appeal and of highly specialized military organizations. These were the basis of its power and domination in the world. As Ibn Khaldun observed, the conquered mimic the conquerors and so many sections of our communities became psychological captives. There is another reason for the attraction. It is true to say that in all normal societies, material benefit is sought by people with varying degrees of zeal. Whatever else Europe lacks, material superiority cannot be doubted. It was this which drove many to seek material advancement and power by following the European example.

Finally, what was the Muslim reaction to Europe? Turkey, which was the bulwark of Islam for so long, is an instructive example. The state began a mild process of Europeanization with the enactment of the *Tanzimat* of 1839–76. The young Ottomans of the time were critical of them. In the words of Ziya Pasha, “they can only be interpreted as an attempt to abrogate the whole of *Shari’at*, and in so doing to cut a fine figure in European eyes.” Ziya Golap, the young Turk, was in favour of a synthesis between modernity and tradition. The third trend, which carried the day, recommended a break with the past and a European identification. In differing degrees this pattern of response was reproduced all over the Muslim world. Thus in the Indian sub-continent, Sh. Wali-Allah and Sayed Ahmad Khan represent two poles; Iqbal represents the synthesis. In the Arab World, Azhar scholars guarded tradition. Sheikh Mohamad Abdu, and to some extent his disciple Sheikh Mohamad Rashid Rida, worked for a middle ground. From their school two trends emerged. The one primarily concerned with the Islamic aspect led to the Muslim brotherhood under Sheikh Hasan Al Banna. The other trend as represented by Sheikh Ali Abdel Razziq and Dr. Ahmad Lutfi El Sayed was more concerned with modernity and turned to complete secularization. This movement combined concepts of pan-Arabism, some of which had a partly Islamic genesis, and concepts of social radicalism and policies of anti-imperialism to produce the Arab nationalist movement. In Saudi Arabia, the *Tawhid* views of Sheikh Mohamad ibn Abdel Wahab sought an Islamic revival which rejected any European influence. In dramatic polarity two Muslim leaders, both of whom achieved state power, typify the extremes of Muslim response to Europe. President Mustafa Kamal on the North Eastern frontier of Islam where Islam was being pushed back by Europe stands for total acceptance, whereas Imam Mohamad Al-Mahdi, on the Southern frontier where Islam was expanding into Africa, stands for total break with Europe. Sayed Gamal Al Din Al-Afghani can be placed some-

where between the two. These patterns of response and the ideas they precipitated will in one way or another influence our discussion of the politics of Islam in the modern world, as will knowledge of the experience of the Muslim state and law in history.

Let us turn now to a more detailed examination of the latter in an attempt to answer our first question. Any attempt to deny that Islam has nothing to do with Government and politics denies its social content and so partially empties it. Any insistence that there is a fixed system of government and law in Islam claims rigidity for something which is capable of change, and so forces change to be administered outside the pale of Islam. From opposing ends both positions result in the same effect, namely the withering away of Islam from the social sphere. An analysis of the historical facts points to a quite different conclusion. There are some fundamental issues at stake which we shall examine under three heads.

If we look first at *Al Rashidun*, the general political principles in Islam, we see that these provide a firm basis for the general conduct and government of the state. There must be leadership, government must be just, it must provide for the weak, it must be conducted on a two way channel of rectification – the leadership consulting the citizens and the latter constructively criticizing it; both the governed and the governing must mobilize their individual powers to fight evil within themselves and mobilize a collective effort to defend the faith, the government must abide by the rules of penalties, retaliation, inheritance and what is permitted and prohibited. An exemplary system of government was established in Medina in accordance with these principles and rules, yet even during that early period it was clear that the constitutional principles were differently applied and the specific rules were linked with procedures which affected their application. For various subjective and objective reasons that first period was notable for its outstanding success up to the second half of the

*Khilafa* of Osman. The reasons contributing to that success are quite specific. The four early leaders had been companions of the Prophet and benefited from thirteen years of spiritual and moral training and ten years of political and administrative participation; the cohesion between government and governed was strong due to companionship in general and *hijra* in particular; there was a cultural homogeneity due to the Arab element; faith strengthened the quality of their actions, and confidence in the persons of the *Khalifs* enhanced their authority; they were familiar with the purposes of Qur'anic injunctions so that Omar could suspend payments to "those whose hearts are brought together", and could suspend the text on the sharing of spoils; they could go beyond the letter of *hadith* so that Abu Bakr could fight the withholders of *Zakat*; they could decide matters of legislation on the spot. From the experience of this period it is clear that though government and law have a moral basis and a divine sanction, there is no particular form of these bequeathed to us by that period, and as if to underline that fact, each of the four succeeded to power in a particular way. The sparsity of legislative verses in the Qur'an underlines the same point. Of the 6,000 verses only about 10 per cent deal with legislative affairs, and if we subtract those which regulate ritual the remainder which cover legislation proper are reduced to less than 2 per cent.

The question of *Banu Ummaya* and *Banu Abas* – who is to succeed the Prophet and what is the nature of his authority – was another matter which led to controversy. There were two principal views or interpretations of the issue. The Shia maintained that Ali was the rightful successor of the Prophet by designation, and that succession to that office must be confined to his offspring by Fatima and that those Imams had a special spiritual authority. In other words, they held a dynastic view of the *Khilafa*. The *Kharijites* took the opposite view and held that the *Khilafa* was to be appointed by the community, that he need have no genealogical qualifications and no special authority – a republican view.

In between those two views the rest of the community held that he was to be appointed by the community, that he should be a Qureshi, and that he should have discretionary authority on matters unspecified in the texts. Whatever else motivated *Banu Ummaya*, the fact that three of the four Khalifas were assassinated, prompted them to borrow a Shiite principle and seek governmental stability in a dynastic system. *Banu al Abas* leaned even more heavily on Shiite concepts, claiming that Abu Hashim (a grandson of Ali) designated Mohamad ibn Ali, the father of Al-Safah and Al-Mansur, as his successor. Both regimes adopted regal and administrative techniques from outside elements – *Banu Ummaya* whose capital was Byzantine from Byzantine precedents, and the *Banu al Abas* from Persian (Sassanid) precedents. The *Khilafa* decided matters of statecraft. Administrative, financial and trade jurisdiction was evolved and offices dealing with rights and duties in these respects were established. For instance, *hudud*, *qisas*, inheritance, marriage and all matters specified by the texts were handled by *Shari'ah* courts. The law in these matters was conditioned by certain procedures, and the details were provided by jurists and scholars working on a completely independent basis. As a result different systems emerged. At one point of time Al-Mansur was advised to put a stop to private enterprise in this sphere, and unify the efforts under state direction. He refused to do so and private systematization continued. By about the fourth century AH (tenth century AD) the community of *Sunnah* began to witness some ominous developments. Military commanders established semi-independent dynasties, as in Khurasan, Sistan and Tunisia. Following Al-Mutasim's creation of a mercenary bodyguard in AD 835, a process of military encroachment ushered in the emergence of the dynastic office of Amir Umara which in AD 945 was captured by Banu Buaih – a Shiite dynasty in Baghdad. The Fatimiun came to power in the West in AD 909 and in Egypt in AD 969, and pursued expansive policies. For the Sunnite community, these



were times of trouble. Rather than a political force emerging to deal with the situation and to evolve an appropriate system of government, we have on record the work of an anxious scholar Abul Hasan Ali Al-Marwardi (d. 1058) on the theory of the state in Islam. In his book he maintains that the *Khalifa* is appointed by the *Ummah*. He must be qualified, knowledgeable, upright, physically sound, free, male and Qureshite. He is to apply *Shari'ah* and on matters in which it is silent to use his discretion. How is he appointed? When? What happens if he does not fulfil the conditions of office? Who decides this? These are matters on which the writer is silent. In fact later scholars including Al-Ghazali concluded that whatever the rights and wrongs, whoever is strong enough to entrench himself in power should be obeyed unless he becomes an infidel. Even so the question of who decides this and when is not determined. Ibn Taimia elaborated this theory of state outlining the possibilities of statecraft. His theory exerted an influence on all writers who discussed an Islamic system of government, but its impact on the actual Muslim state was negligible. It was no more than the pious hope of pious men reacting to the threat of troubled times.

The early history of Islam shows that even the *hadith* were subject to various interpretations and application. There was no registration of *hadith* during the life of the Prophet as he prevented it. Though some of the later companions remained in Medina, others scattered and settled in different towns. Many studied the texts to formulate rules for dealing with specific issues in accordance with them. Ibn Masud settled in Kufa, and through a disciple of his there emerged a method of legal formulation whose spokesman became Al Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767. – 150 A.H.). The procedure he employed was to look for law in the texts and when he could find no regulation, he or his associates extended existing rules by the process of analogy. They used analogy in a liberal way by a process of *istihsan*, which led to a measure of preference for reasoning, earning the school the title *Ahl al-Ray*.

A group of companions in Medina became the nucleus of another school. The characteristic of this school was to formulate the law according to their knowledge of the consensus of Medina. Its spokesman was Al Imam Malik (d. 796). In Al-Mutta his method of procedure consisted of relating traditions spoken by the Prophet, comparing them to Medinan practice, and where there was discrepancy upholding the latter. This school further accommodated public interest by the device of *istislah*. They were considered more conservative in their use of opinion and earned the title *Ahl al-Hadith*.

Imam Al-Shafi (d. 819) sought to safeguard the law by defining the sources and methods of its formulation. His thesis was that the primary source, the Qur'an, commanded us to abide by the second source the *Sunnah*, so that once the *isnad* of a *hadith* was trustworthy, the *hadith* became binding. The third source was the consensus of the whole *Ummah*. The rules specified in all three sources could be extended by analogy. His specific definitions and formulations did not eliminate differences as he had expected, since scholars differed among themselves about the interpretations of the texts of the Qur'an and *Hadith*, about the strength of narrations, and about issues such as that of abrogation. His supporters formed a school in his name using analogy in the strict sense he defined, and employing the process of *istishab* whereby current rules which were not contradicted by the texts were accepted. These methods were not strict enough for Al Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 855) who insisted on a more limited use of analogy. Further to the right still was Abu Daoud Al-Zahiri who based his formulations only on the literal interpretation of texts. These constitute the main schools of *Shari'ah* among the *Sunnah* and are closely resembled by Shiite and Kharijite systems.

On the basis of this brief survey certain observations are relevant. Since the *Hanifa* formulations are more liberal and the *Hanbali* more conservative, it is natural to assume that the *Hanbali*

is the older of the two schools. This would have been the case had the formulations been transmitted from the *Rashidun* period. However, contrary to expectation, the *Hanifa* is the earliest and the *Hanbali* the latest of the four schools, from which we may conclude that the later formulations were arrived at by pious scholars working independently and without any particular direction from the earlier period. Al-Kufa, being a mixed environment, encouraged an open-minded attitude, whereas Medina, the home of the Prophet and his successors, evolved a tradition of its own. Rules reflected the particular environmental influence. For example, in the more open society of Al-Kufa women were given by the *Hanifas* the right of consent to marriage whilst in the more protected atmosphere of Medina that right was given by the *Malikis* to her guardian. The differing attitudes of the schools influenced their formulations. Thus the *Hanifas* were more formalistic, and the *Malikis* more moralistic, about rules. Further, the schools were able to use the methods of *istihsan*, *istislah*, and *istishab* to cater for considerations of necessity, utility, public interest and other factors, thereby making the law sensitive to different circumstances. Although the *Hanbali* school was most conservative, the serious effort which its later scholars made to prove the universal applicability of *Shari'ah* forced some of them to advance views for the accommodation of change. Thus Ibn Qaim Al-Jawzia quotes Ibn Aqil approvingly when he states, “*Syasa* is an act done which brings people closer to virtue and removes them from corruption even though it is not prescribed by the prophet nor by any revealed message . . .”. Another *Hanbali* jurist Najm al Din al-Tanfi (d. 1316 A.D., 676 A.H.) expressed very radical views indeed. Commenting on the *hadith*, “Do not injure and do not return injury,” he says, “This *hadith* is the first principle in *Shari'ah* and according to it every utility is a necessity and should take precedence.” It is no argument to say the texts cater for utility, because God orders us to judge for ourselves that this procedure is to be employed in

the sphere of public affairs and not rituals (*ibadat*) for which the *Shari'ah* has its own justifications and cannot be analysed beyond correct transmission.

The dynamic process of private legal formulation through personal, individual interpretation came to a halt by the fourth century A.H. It is no mere coincidence that at about the same time the crisis in *Khilafa* integrity precipitated Al-Marwardi's theorizing. The ideological Shi'ite offensive prompted the state to adopt a counter ideology by endorsing *Asharism* promoted by the Al-Nizamia College in Baghdad. The combined strength of these threats encouraged *Sunnah* scholars and jurists to seek a bastion to protect the conscience of the community and to preserve that bastion by halting juristic fragmentation. All three processes represent different responses to threatening times. The regime of *taqlid* achieved its purpose, and salvaged something for the community in the face of colossal catastrophes including the destructive hordes of Hulaku.

Many scholars have appreciated that everything in Islamic society has a religious sanction, but different aspects operate differently. Those aspects related to creed and ritual are fixed and permanent, whereas social aspects are designed to accommodate change. Abu Gafar Al-Nagib drew on the experiences of the companions to support this distinction; Shihab al Din Al Qarafi Al-Maliki (d. 1285) referring to the uses of analogy pointed out the same distinction. The regime of *taqlid*, which was a defence mechanism for operation in troubled times, blunted that distinction and when pressures for social change mounted, they were satisfied outside the pale of Islam. The young Ottomans who criticised the *Tanzimat* blamed the inadequacy of the Islamic response to change as much as the European pressures, for the rejection of *Shari'ah*. Even radical political movements like the various currents of Arab nationalism recognize in theory the overwhelming position of Islam, but owing to their limited understanding of it, and the absence of an articulate Islamic

ideology – articulate in terms of today – they all in the end put Islam behind them, and are drawn into the orbit of one or other of the dominant world ideologies of today. In spite of the strong appeal of Islam today, its political credibility is low, its representation in the schools and universities is limited. In the majority of Muslim countries, the armies, the civil service, the main judicial systems, the main educational systems operate completely outside Islam and can operate consciously or unconsciously as a powerful force to see that Islam is properly bottled up in the form of some emotional appeal, some ritual observances, backward educational institutions and a second rate legal system. Foreign designs and inadequate response to changed circumstances have promoted a process of creeping de-Islamization.

What then are the chances of restoration in the political field? Five major considerations dominate the contemporary political scene, and no political movement which does not take them into account and meet the challenge they pose will make much headway. Various developments particularly in the field of communications, have narrowed the world's horizons, resulting in a world-wide consciousness of standards of living and technology, which have created a revolution of rising aspirations. The deprived world of which our Muslim communities are a part is open-mouthed and conscious as never before that the prosperity of the developed world has taken, and is taking, unfair advantage of them. This has resulted in a burning desire to rectify that state of affairs in favour of a world order which to some extent redresses the wrongs of the past and ushers in a state of affairs mindful of the problems of the weak. As never before in history, people's consciousness of social, political and economic injustices is leading them to a blanket demand for egalitarianism in the racial, social, economic, political and other spheres. In addressing one, two or all three of these urgent demands, world dominating ideologies are today exercising an unprecedented pull on our populations. To counter that pull with polemic on the rights and wrongs of

the situation is beside the point. "The starved eats his faith." It is true that those ideologies are one-sided, that they are motivated by the desire to dominate, that they may never deliver the goods, but this is something their victims may realise only when it is too late. So long as we do not produce Islamic answers to meet these demands, we are simply allowing ourselves to be subverted. These same issues which are today putting many established religions on the run should not take Islam unawares. Room for their satisfaction can be found implicitly or explicitly in our Islamic texts. Islam demands economic and technological endeavour which affirms the positive value of this world, regarding it as the gateway to the hereafter. Nothing should deter us from institutionalizing and planning that endeavour. Islam was the first instructor of humanity in the sphere of racial and social equality. In the sphere of economic justice it ordered a specific programme to ensure the welfare of the weak and laid down certain moral directives to carry the matter further:

*"They will question thee concerning what they should expend: Say the abundance. You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love."*

In the first phase of Islam the specific stipulations alone marked a great leap forward, and the strength of faith could be trusted with a reasonable response to the directives. Even so, when that response was inadequate some companions, Abu Dharr among them, recommended direct action. Today the issue is politicized as never before and nothing deters us from giving legislative content to moral directives. Islam could give its spiritually and morally based answers to these political urgencies, and like the serpent of Moses outdo the magic of the magicians. The revival of Islam as a political force will cater for those urgencies without one-sided mutilation, since it will satisfy all the necessary conditions for success on its own terms. The emergent world is facing

the issue of modernization with a measure of ambivalence because it is troubled by the problem of roots and identity. Ernest Gellner has said "In our time, a social order is valid under two conditions:

- (a) if it is bringing about or maintaining an affluent society;
- (b) if those in authority are co-cultural with the rest of society."

Elitist regimes which ignore the hearts and minds of their societies always end in isolation and failure. An Islamic ideology satisfies the quest for identity as well. Modern thought in Europe has developed in hostility to the church. In an anti-clerical context, the concepts of secularism, humanism, nationalism, materialism and rationalism which are all based on partial truths, became deities in their own right; one-eyed superbeings. They are responsible for the present Euro-American spiritual crisis. The partial truths in all these powerful ideas can all be satisfied by Islam. The only limitation in satisfying them is to stop short of *Shirk*. Again we are reminded of the balance which Islam maintains. Without a high degree of moral integrity, individuals and societies are shattered. In Europe and America political and economic construction was, in its formative periods, associated with a high degree of moral integrity. The Communist world, whatever else it said about morality, imposed a moral code of spartan discipline to get things done. Even a band of robbers cannot operate successfully without a private moral code. Whatever else is jeopardizing the chances of the emergent world, corruption and a sea of alcohol are ensuring its doom. An Islamic ideology would cater for our moral fabric.

Just as we are in need of a political movement which will provide an Islamic answer to our problems and so revive the political credibility of Islam, so we need a scholarly-cum-lay effort to review the whole corpus of law on the basis of the texts enlightened by the formulations of the schools, and conscious of current problems and of other legal systems, in order to prepare a contemporary Islamic legal system to act as a source for our

legislators. Only then can we expect a revival of the Islamic legislative credibility. Room for specification and definition of rules is available even in the most specific regulations of *Shari'ah* because those regulations are qualified by the conditions associated with *hudud* that leave room for endeavour. This matter is discussed elsewhere by Ahmed Fathi Bahnasi. Scholars and universities could be commissioned under lay supervision to work towards a modern formulation of *Shari'ah*. We cannot today afford the leisurely pace of 'private enterprise' in studying and developing the law. Without some such dynamic and authoritative undertaking, *Shari'ah* will wither away and we shall finally have abdicated our trust.

Once an Islamic political movement is capable of setting up a state, it should proceed without waiting for the said legal reconstruction to take place. The important thing is to make an ideological commitment and to constitute government in such a way that it abides by the broad Islamic constitutional principles of justice mentioned earlier. The precise constitutional systems for particular states can be separately formulated. Some of our societies are traditional, some modernizing and some are in full upheaval. To uphold a single system of government defeats the purpose of generality in Islamic constitutional principles, and flies in the face of our own history and of other human history which proves the notion of relativity in systems of government. We are faced with a novel situation where Muslims live in different countries and at different stages of development. We should start by examining the soil. Given this situation, how is the unity of the *Ummah* to be preserved? However various the Islamic political movements and their states may be, they should be committed to Islam in the sense that their systems of government represent particular methods of abiding by the general constitutional principles of Islam in a traditional, a modernizing or a revolutionary setting. Their legal systems must be based on *Shari'ah* in a traditional or modern formulation. Between states so



constituted there should be various institutions which foster solidarity, and open up closer relationships between their citizens. The cultural and national groupings within the *Ummah* should be recognized and harnessed to constitute bigger entities. In the non-political sphere, the *Ummah* should set up a universal organisation to work for and symbolize the brotherhood of Muslims all over the world; to work for a deeper understanding of Islam; to spread the message of Islam to the rest of humanity.

In the sphere of international relations, Islamic principles conform to current practice. It should be recalled that Islam was the first religion to recognize the rights of man and to secure justice for all men irrespective of colour or creed:

*“O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God. Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable – be equitable that is nearer to God fearing.”*

All systems which honour human beings and treat them with justice are compatible with Islamic principles. Further, Islam was the first system which provided religious sanction as a basis for both the spiritual and the social aspects of life though the two are governed by different principles. Whereas the first is fixed or permanent, the second is changeable; the first is a matter of conscience, the second a matter of form. That is why minority communities can be given religious and cultural autonomy within the large Muslim community provided they recognize state sovereignty. We must spread the word of God and defend our cause when attacked.

*“And fight in the way of God with those who fight with you, but aggress not, God loves not the aggressors.”* (Ibn Taimia).

In the view of Mohammed Ibn Al Hasan Al-Shaibani, one of the most eminent scholars of the *Hanifa* school, we are expected to

abide by any agreement which we contract, whatever the creed or ideology of the other party. If we reside in a foreign country, it is a tacit acceptance of its public law and we should therefore respect it. We should regulate our relations with other states on the basis of comprehensive and binding agreements. In the absence of agreement we should base our relations with them on reciprocity. *Jihad* is the monasticism of Islam. *Jihad* is continuous until the Day of Judgement. It is based on three pillars, namely, intensification of Islam in ourselves and eradication of evil; extension of the word of God to all the corners of the world by wisdom and advice: "*Call thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and good admonition*"; and military preparedness to repel aggression based on a spirit of total sacrifice.

Muslim states today are required to cement the solidarity of the emergent world in the pursuit of a more equitable world order. This, together with respect for agreements, is an imperative part of our foreign relations. We should be conscious whether our example and our treatment of others reflects favourably or unfavourably on Islam.

# **The Concept of Social Justice in Islam**

*Mouloud Kassim Nait-Belkacem*

*The tradition of the Prophet as well as the words of the Qur'an witness Islam's concern with social welfare from its earliest days. Its comprehensive programme for the care of the weaker members of society was far in advance of anything envisaged elsewhere until modern times. It made them the responsibility of society as a whole and tied the principle of economic justice to that of social justice to provide resources for the implementation of its programme and to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth. The state enforced both principles in ensuring the welfare of society in general. Unfortunately, present conditions in many Muslim countries are as bad as anywhere in the world. The golden age of Islam is little more than a memory, and realisation of the objectives of social welfare remote. Islam cannot condone the social injustice alien to all forms of religious and humane values now prevalent in the Muslim world. Regardless of any new name by which they may be called, the old concepts must be re-invested with new substance to meet the urgent needs of the present situation.*

## 7 The Concept of Social Justice in Islam

Justice – *'adl* – in Islam, is not only the very foundation of the true Muslim society such as it was, and such as it ought to be, nor is it only one of the five pillars of Islam as symbolized by the *zakat* – that part of income due to the State annually – nor all the related legal provisions. It is not solely one of the attributes of God revealed in the Qur'an: "He who holds the scales in balance (on the last day)". (V: 18), nor is it simply that element present in hundreds of Islamic laws concerning *ibadat* or acts of devotion, even though these acts are valid criteria. Justice in Islam is much more than the sum of all these things. It is the foundation upon which dogma – *aqida* – is built, and it is directly bound to the sphere of faith – *iman* – itself. In the Qur'an we read:

*"Hast thou observed him who belieth religion? That is he who repelleth the orphan, and urgeth not the feeding of the needy."* (CVII: 1-3).

And in a *hadith* of the Prophet:

*"No, he does not believe in God, nor in the Last Judgement, he who eats his fill at night whilst his neighbour is racked with hunger."*

It appears from this that *adl* or social justice, is brought to full completion by social solidarity, and that both are firmly attached to *iman*, the basis of *aqida* itself.

But where the bond which ties *adl* to the foundation of dogma – that is, faith – seems most apparent, is in the examination of belief in the Last Judgement. What, in fact, would this judgement day mean without faith in the resurrection, in the accounting of deeds – *hissab* – in retribution and in punishment; without faith in God, in His scriptures and in His prophets? To believe in this day of judgement, therefore, is to believe in the finality revealed to us by the scriptures and the chosen prophets, in other words, the resurrection, the Last Judgement or the accounting of deeds whereby each one shall be punished or rewarded according to his deeds, in conformity with the rules of divine justice, or even of human justice, in so far as it requires and aspires to fulfil the divine. It is for this reason that the Islamic doctrine held by distinguished scholars such as Zamakhchari and Qadi Abdel Djbbar has given the concept of free will – without which neither retribution nor the punishment of God would make any sense but would be seen rather as injustices – the name theory of justice, on the understanding that in this case it is a matter of divine justice. But since the man who repels the orphan and does not readily encourage feeding of the poor is really the negator of religion, and since the man satiated, forgetting his starving neighbour, is really denying God and the Last Judgement which itself constitutes divine justice, we can affirm that all societies calling themselves Islamic, yet which do not realise this justice, have nothing to do with Islam, and even less to do with faith, other than in name.

Having adduced this philosophical or ideological evidence by way of introduction – which in these days of ideological confrontation may not seem entirely inappropriate – let us now try to give some examples of this social justice in Islam. We shall look at it from two aspects, formal and spiritual, and also on the plane of behaviour – *suluk* – and of goals – *maqassid* – which are sought by the legislator, bearing in mind that the social justice which was the mark of Islamic civilization during its days of

splendour remains as much in the letter as in the spirit, a far off work, offering to those who wish to realise it, a vast field of theoretical moral codes and objectives yet to be attained.

Let us first recall that Islam regards the son of Adam, honoured by the Creator as his vicegerent on earth, as a being endowed not only with a body, but also with a spirit, limited certainly by certain physical constraints in the manner of other living creatures, but possessing dignity and spiritual, moral and social dimensions. It is for this reason that man cannot survive on a purely material and economic plane of life. In as far as it is possible to define it from the law, Islamic society constitutes a balanced, humane community, where each individual must feel that he forms with the others a compact and solid unity, based on fraternity, social solidarity and equality of rights and duties. This society must work towards a common objective. Its activity must be organised under the aegis of a just arbitration which can assure work to everyone according to his capability and merit, and an equal chance to all. The wealth of the *Ummah* – the Islamic community – must be evenly distributed to all members according to need, taking into account the solidarity which binds them.

Islam has fully defined matters relating to income and expenditure under various heads. It has instigated rights and duties, but it has also exhorted man to generosity in the highest sense – *badhl*, to financial sacrifice – *tadhya*, to the purification of wealth by the *zakat* – *tazkia*, all directed to the achievement of social justice. In all, it maintains a double objective – to educate souls and preserve the interests of the community – *jama'a*. But when educative methods prove ineffectual, Islam exercises coercive redress – *zair*. Further, where methods of religious persuasion no longer work on the conscience, when neither the exhortations of the preacher – *w'adh* – nor the counselling of the *murchid* – director of conscience – bear fruit, it brings forth the whip of the *Qadi* – judge – or the sword of the supreme authority of the State.

It is thus that social justice based on economic justice has in Islam been able to guarantee certain standards to all members of the *Ummah*, be they capable or incapable of performing any work, be they poor, weak, widowed or children. It includes among the weak, both Muslims and *Dhimmis* – those who live in an Islamic country but do not profess Islam. Animals too are included among the weak. However, the social justice of Islam has never approved nor encouraged poverty engendered by laziness or inertia. Islam absolutely forbids begging. The *muhtassib* – commissioner in charge of economic affairs – has the authority to command a beggar physically capable of work, to do so. If the beggar refuses, the responsible commissioner should employ coercive means until the beggar ceases to hold out his hand. Islam neither encourages parasites, malingering under the protection of *zaouias* or hospices, nor living on charity, regardless of who may be dispensing it.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR WORKERS

The Islamic principle is that man must earn his living by work. Approximately five hundred verses of the Qur'an extol the expense of energy in useful work. The Prophet has glorified labour in several of the *hadith*. It is necessary to understand by *'amal* as much the work of a man in his personal enterprise, agricultural, industrial or commercial and other forms of profit and production, as the work carried out by salaried workers such as civil servants, industrial workers and other employees. There are a number of *hadith* devoted to the protection of wages for workers, dealing with taxes, remuneration itself and the need for rapid payment. The Prophet adds to this subject: "He who willingly works and does not have shelter, must be given shelter. If he is single, then he must be given a wife. If he does not have a camel let him claim one." Shaikh Abu Zahra commenting on

this subject further states: "All this evidently is to be accounted for by the *beit-al-mal* of the Muslim State, that is to say, the public treasury." These benefits to the worker are productive of many advantages which will in the last analysis benefit the whole of the Muslim community. They imply free housing, transport and also marriage, with the costs to be borne where necessary by the State. Family allowances in the time of the Prophet and Abu Bakr were paid in favour of the husband, wife and children. Under the Caliph Omar, the amount of the allowance was augmented according to the age of the children and continued until they were of age. They were not only granted to the so-called legitimate progeny but equally to illegitimate children. This provision was perpetuated under the Caliphs Othman and Ali, and well into the succeeding period.

The spirit of Islam guarantees the well-being of workers. It guarantees the same tranquillity even to animals. The Imam Ahmad said that it is incumbent upon the *muhtassib* to forbid persons possessing animals to use them in work which they cannot accomplish. The French author Peltier, in his translation of Boukhary,<sup>1</sup> was led to examine these various aspects of solidarity and of social justice in Islam, as well as the guarantees offered to workers by our religion. He is not alone in expressing his admiration of the system. Little of this exists in the Muslim world today. Even so, as a model or ideal, the Islamic concept of social justice has a degree of perfection still to be attained even in the most highly developed non-Muslim states.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE FAMILY

All that Islam has prescribed in favour of employees and workers since the time of the Prophet, it has promised with equal guarantees to families without sufficient resources at their disposal. The Prophet said, "*He who leaves after his death dependants*



*deprived of support or very young children, his affair is my concern. I become a guardian.”* In other words, the State assumes responsibility.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE NEEDY

The domain of social justice or social solidarity is extended to the protection of several categories of the weak – *ajaza* – or needy. The aged, the *Dhimmis* – non-Muslims – are amongst those allowed the advantages of social benefits. A celebrated instance from the time of the Caliph ‘Omar illustrates this. Addressing an old Jew, he said, “We have not been fair in our treatment of you, since we have exhausted your youth and abandoned you when you aged.” Omar immediately invited him to his home, and there gave him his own food and had the Treasury bestow a pension on him to the end of his days. The same measures were passed in favour of the poor, the needy, the sick, the blind, the crippled, displaced persons and prisoners, as well as orphans, the weak and illegitimate children already mentioned. The concept of social justice was expressed further in quite unique ways. An example may be found in the *waqf* or *zabadi*, instituted to cover the damages caused by the children of slaves, so that they might avoid the pecuniary sanctions or corporal punishment that their parents or masters could otherwise inflict upon them. Provision was also made whereby the public treasury would intervene to help the insolvent debtor pay his debts, and aid was given to poor travellers who found themselves far from home. Other implementations were devoted to psychiatric hospitals where the sick were given therapy with music and popular comedy, a field where modern psychotherapy has proved the value of methods being used to great effect so many centuries ago.

Justice and social solidarity however are not confined to the material side of life. Social justice goes one step nearer to attaining

solidarity by stipulating the need for love, a necessary part of the Islamic community which must present itself as a single body, a compact edifice. It is this which embodies the idea of humanitarian justice. Though the spirit of class and race still prevails in our own days, Islam established equality between all men. This equality is proclaimed in the Qur'an:

*“The noblest among you in the sight of God are the most Godfearing.”*  
(XLVI: 13);

and in the *hadith* of the Prophet:

*“Muslims are all equal, just as the teeth of a comb.”*

We find this principle repeated in several other *hadith* or deeds of the Prophet and his companions. A brief reference to some of these will illustrate the point. On the equality of race and ethnic origin there is the example of the Prophet's rebuke to his companion Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari. Abu Dharr had mocked Bilal l'Abyssin, evoking “the colour of his mother”. The Prophet said to him, “O! Abu Dharr, you are still a man belonging to pagan (*jahilyya*) times. Lift your head and look. Then know that you are hardly superior to a man of colour, be it black or red, unless you surpass him in deeds.”

In the legal domain, it is established that the Prophet submitted himself truly voluntarily when it came to the execution of corporal punishment, as the occasion in the mosque when the Prophet was in the process of joining the ranks of the faithful for prayer. Someone claimed that the Prophet had hurt him by knocking him over. Muhammad immediately offered him the right to avenge himself upon his person if he so wished.

A somewhat similar instance was the intervention of Usama Ibn Zaid in a case concerning a theft by a woman of the Banu Makhum. The chiefs of this large and powerful tribe asked Usama

Ibn Zaid to intervene with the Prophet, who held him in great esteem, since the honour of the tribe would be at stake if the woman were to be subjected to corporal punishment. The Prophet came in, angrily admonishing, "Would you intervene in the punishments set forth by God?" Then he turned to the Muslims declaring, "What has been the downfall of nations before you is that when a thief of noble origin was caught, he was allowed to go free without punishment, whereas the thief of humble origin was submitted to punishment. I swear by all the oaths of God that if Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, committed a theft, I would have her hand cut off." It was thus that the Prophet applied the rules of justice and equality even to himself, and to his family where necessary, demonstrating the truth of the concept that there is no distinction of class or caste in Islam.

The Caliph 'Omar behaved in like manner with regard to his son Abdel Rahman when he applied the famous principle, "From where do your possessions come?" (*Min ayna laka hadha?*) He made even the greatest of the Prophet's companions submit to this law; men like Khalid Ibn al-Walid, 'Amr Ibn al'As, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, Abu Horaira and many others.

This form of justice is not limited to the conduct of Muslims only among themselves. Islam makes it an obligation for Muslims in their dealings with the faithful of other religions, and there are many instances of its practical implementation in the early history of Islam, as for example in Omar's resolution of the dispute between a Copt and the son of Amr Ibn al'As, Governor of Egypt, and his own appearance before the Qadi Choreih with a Jew. It would scarcely be possible to find a more perfect model of the just ruler than Omar II, Ibn 'Abdel 'Aziz, whether democratic or revolutionary, at any time in history.

## THE WAYS AND MEANS OF ATTAINING SOCIAL JUSTICE

### ECONOMIC JUSTICE

What are the sources of revenue sufficient to cover all the expenditure demanded by these and many other measures of social justice? To answer this we must formulate some idea of economic justice which is the pre-requisite and complement of social justice; the two cannot be separated.

Alongside charitable institutions like the *awqaf* – holy foundations – which often went as far as protecting animals, many individual contributions imposed by the religious law for the good of the community, such as maintenance for close relatives, expiation or *Kaffarat*, funds left by will and testament, or *wasiyya* and other measures designed to reinforce social solidarity, there existed the *Beit-al-mal* or public treasury. This was the chief means of financing social welfare and drew revenues from a number of sources, the most important of which was the *zakat* – purification dues.

*Zakat* is the third pillar of Islam. It constitutes the principal base upon which the social structure of Islam is built, and is neither alms nor charity, but an obligatory due. He who consciously refuses to pay this tithe is considered a renegade and runs the risk of mortal punishment. The war of the *ridda* – apostasy – when the Caliph Abu Bakr declared war on the recalcitrants who wanted the Muslims to return to the days of paganism and destroy the Islamic community, evidences the extremity of the punishment. There is an element of piety in the *zakat*, since it is an act of devotion – *ibada* – which brings the human being closer to his Creator. It is an act of solidarity with society and educates the soul, teaching it to conquer selfishness and to practise self-sacrifice and generosity. For the spirit it constitutes a source of joy and of peace, and for the conscience procures the satisfaction of having fulfilled its duty to God. For all these

reasons, the *zakat* is different from anything which may appear to have a superficial resemblance to it in the modern world. It is not simply a tax which may be avoided by cheating the government fiscal system in one way or another.

The second source of revenue which feeds the *beit-al-mal* is derived from what Ibn Hazm describes as expenditure due besides the *zakat*. In this connection, Ibn Hazm has commented upon a *hadith* stressed by Ali which states: "God makes it an obligation for the rich of a country to provide for the needs of their poor. Authority must compel them when the resources of the *zakat* are insufficient." Ibn Hazm and other jurists have proclaimed that when a man dies of starvation, the people in whose house he has died should consider themselves collectively responsible for his death and should, in consequence, pay the *diya* or price of blood.<sup>2</sup> Scholars learned in the *hadith* have indicated how the Prophet enumerated the superfluous possessions that a Muslim should give to one who has only the bare minimum. After this enumeration the companions of the Prophet began to perceive that fundamentally, no person has the right to possess anything superfluous to his needs. Caliph 'Omar in a public address also said, "If I were to live longer, I would take the possessions that the rich have in excess and give them to the poor. No man is more worthy than another to be in possession of wealth. And following this, I would raise those who are last to the ranks of the first." It emerges from this, that the just man in authority must intervene to stop arbitrariness and iniquity. He must ensure justice and equity. When he finds that there are enormous disparities in the heart of the community, and that luxury and wealth exist alongside poverty and misery, he must guarantee economic justice and therefore social justice.

The third way of realising social justice in the Islamic programme is that of public ownership, that is ownership by the *Ummah* or community. It consists in suppressing large-scale ownership in general, when it exists, by returning property to

the State. This is the situation most frequently encountered. The objective of Islamic law, though in principle it respects and protects individual ownership, is to establish justice, by preventing wealth from accumulating in the hands of an oligarchic plutocracy who live in opulence and luxury, circulating money solely among its members, whilst the majority of people exist in hunger, destitution and contempt. The poor will not be slow, in these circumstances, to form an army of malcontents capable of threatening the stability of the community, of weakening and undermining it. God has prescribed that our community be strong and flourishing. Islam abominates the fact of poor in its bosom. The Prophet said "I am in the hands of God with regard to poverty and infidelity – *Kufr*", and "Poverty is tantamount to infidelity." The Prophet sequestered – *hama* – a piece of land at Medina called Naqui' to serve as pasture land for horses belonging to the Muslims, which was to be shared by all Muslims.<sup>3</sup> For the same purpose 'Omar put aside a piece of land at Rabdha. The proprietors of this land came to him complaining, "O, Prince of Believers! This land belongs to us! We have fought for it during the *jahilyya*. It belonged to us even when we entered the Islamic religion! Why then have you sequestered it?" 'Omar, after reflecting for a moment, replied, "All goods belong to God! People are the creatures of God! If I were not obliged to do certain things to remain in the path of God, I would not have sequestered a single span of the land."<sup>4</sup> The word *hama*, to sequester, denotes the act of taking a certain area of land which was private property and making it over as a possession of the community, for the benefit of those members of the community in need. This objective seems clear and incontestable when we read the instructions given by 'Omar to the agent in charge of land sequestered at Rabdha.<sup>5</sup> He specified that the pasture be "for those who were in need" – *muhtadyin*. And we can read in several histories<sup>6</sup> that he had no wish to hear about the beasts of Ibn Affan or Ibn Awf who were wealthy, since if they were to lose

their livestock they would still have the time to go to their watering places and gather grain, whilst the wretched poor man, having lost his herd, had no recourse but to come to him with his children crying, "O Prince of Believers." To the argument that such a man in distress had the right to ask help from the State, since he had a right to part of the *beit-al-mal*, Caliph 'Omar rejoined, "Should I abandon them to their sad fate; could you anymore lose your own father? To supply them with grazing is easier for me than to give them gold or money. Yes, I know that this land belongs to its owners, that they fought for it in the *jahilyya* and that they owned it when they came into Islam. I know they think I am unjust in this matter, but it is to try to walk in the way of the Lord that I have done all this." 'Omar's action put into practice the *hadith* of the Prophet: "*Men are united by three things; water, pasture and fire.*" His conduct is consistent with the principle: "One should suffer a small ill to avoid a major harm."

There is a further example of the same kind also stemming from the Caliphate of 'Omar. It was suggested to 'Omar that he distribute the regions conquered in Iraq and Syria and give them to the people. He refused, and made these regions the property of the State justifying his action in the following words: "If we were to divide these lands, nothing would remain for those who come after you. What would they say, these Muslims, when they saw the land already distributed, inherited and possessed? The idea is unthinkable. What then would be left of these Syrian and Iraqi lands for the orphans and widows of these countries?"<sup>7</sup> The story further relates that Ibn Djabel, who with the Imam Ali was among those who agreed with 'Omar, suggested to the latter, "If you distribute these lands, their harvests will be in the hands of these particular people, but after their death all will be concentrated in the hands of a single man or a single woman."<sup>8</sup> Instead of dividing these immense areas between a limited group of the Prophet's companions and forming a new caste of big

property owners, 'Omar and certain others preferred to establish, as Al-Awzal says, a greater number of small *fellahs* and villagers in village groups, allowing them to run their own affairs, and act on their own initiative. In this way they would be enabled to till the earth profitably, and pay the taxes which would be due to the State. They were fully aware that no Muslim would be able to buy the land whether by agreement or coercion, since all agreed that the possessions thus acquired could not become an object of sale, nor of inheritance. The greatly mourned Shaikh Abu Zahra writing on this subject deduced that Omar had made his judgements on three grounds, all of them concerned to promote the general good. His intention was to prevent the creation of large landed estates, since the lands of Iraq and Syria together accounted for many thousand *feddans*, and if divided between ten thousand people they would inevitably create a class of large landowners; to benefit the state and the progress of *jihad* by the land tax – *kharadj* – these lands would bring in, both of which would be pleasing to God; to supply further state revenue for the benefit of the needy.<sup>9</sup> It is beyond question that Caliph 'Omar based his judgement on the interests of the *Ummah*, when he might very easily have taken advantage of certain other precedents of the time of the Prophet. Since in the first two instances quoted Islam put large-scale individual ownership at the disposal of common interest, and in the third prevented the development of large scale ownership after the property had actually fallen into the hands of the State, it is established beyond doubt that Islam prohibits the development of private ownership wherever the acquisition or monopoly of wealth threatens to create properties on a large scale. Commenting on this Shaikh Abu Zahra wrote:

“*The utterances of the Prophet (hadith) proving that ihtihar is unlawful (haram) are numerous. No matter what form this acquisitive aggrandisement assumes, it is unlawful since it constitutes a habs by*



*stopping the circulation of goods, whether food, clothing or other things. Ihtihar, therefore, prevents the weak from gaining access to agricultural property and from working the land. In fact, where there are great landed proprietors, it is they who buy all the land which might be put up for sale. The small farmers cannot fight against them to acquire this land. It is then the duty of authority to intervene.”<sup>10</sup>*

The uncompromising attitude of Shaikh Abu Zahra is well known: he stood by his beliefs and was never obsequious to those in power. He was not the kind of man who changed his opinion with each change in government. The lines above were not written out of opportunism or fear since he always resisted all pressures. His firm stand often caused him problems yet he did not change, and such was his position to the end of his days.

We have touched briefly on the concept of social justice in Islam, examining its literary tradition, its spirit, its finality and the way in which it was realised during the golden age of Islam. We have even examined the content of economic justice upon which it is built. Indeed, the first is conditioned by the second, since it supplies the means by which social justice is translated into concrete form.

This idea of complementarity may be compared to that of Kant, who wrote:

*“Understanding is composed of two complementary elements: concepts and sensations. The concepts without the sensations are empty. Sensations without concepts are blind: they have neither goal nor significance.”<sup>11</sup>*

In the context of our subject, social justice is the concept and economic justice its terms, its substance, the condition without which it cannot be applied. How otherwise can Islam go forward and proclaim that the right of the individual is tied to the right of the community, that general interest takes precedence over

particular interest and that the good of the *Ummah* comes before the good of each person? Our religion has realised all this without leaving the individual suffocated, harmed or crushed by the mass of society. How otherwise can it go forward and claim that Islam is at the same time a religion, a State and a perfect social order? Seyyid Qutb wrote on this subject: "According to modern terminology, Islam means a system of organisation – *nidham* – fulfilled by the idea of dogma – *aqida* – at the level of conscience, by ethics at the level of behaviour – *suluq* – and finally by that of divine law – *Shari'ah* – at the social level."<sup>12</sup> The complementary roles of social and economic justice were protected by the State, which watched over their application. They were enriched and furthered by a network of beneficent popular institutions, like an immense carpet worked by open and outstretched hands working side by side, capable of protecting each man who might be a victim of adversity or in danger of perishing. And all this was the work of a Lawgiver who persisted in efforts for its application. Has there ever existed, does there exist even today, anything to rival the conceptual order of Islam such as it was applied in times past? At the time of 'Omar Ibn 'Abdel 'Aziz, not only were there no beggars, poor or needy, but no evidence could be found of people liable to receive the benefit of the *zakat*, even though the legal definition of the *massakin* – needy – is, "those who do not have the means to feed themselves for one year". An African Governor under the same Caliph said one day:

*"We have to go from door to door to find someone who will accept the zakat."*

Can social justice, in its essence, attain a higher degree of development? Call it what you will, the essential is that it should have suppressed tyranny, exploitation and slavery; that it be general; that it guarantee the dignity and freedoms of man; that it protect spiritual values and that the religion of God should

predominate. Call it what you will, 'social justice' with Seyyid Qutb,<sup>13</sup> or 'social solidarity' with Abu Zahra,<sup>14</sup> or *ishtirakyya* – 'socialism' – with Dr. Muhammad Al-Mubarak who wrote:

*"To say that there is no socialism in Islam is to be ignorant of the nature of socialism, and to demonstrate in addition an inability to understand the teaching and objectives of Islam; to prove that one has no acquaintance with Islamic laws pertaining to the subject."*<sup>15</sup>

Call it, if you like, "the socialism of Islam", as does Moustafa Siba'i,<sup>16</sup> or 'Islamic socialism' as does Hassan Al Banna;<sup>17</sup> give it any other name you can think of, provided that the word chosen contains real substance; for without this, it would be nothing more than a slogan.

The essential is not to be found in names, or in forms, or slogans. The essential is the content, the substance. The essential is that it should actually exist, this social justice, just as it did during the golden age of Islam, and enriched now by the addition of new substance, which must, above all else, conform to the general interest, that is to the interest of the *Ummah*, without stifling the individual. It should also take into account the experiences good or bad of other nations making use of the criterion of rational effort – *ijtihad* – and its rules for amelioration and perfection. And then let this social justice be designated by whatever name one cares to choose, even that of 'socialism', since it is this name that the young prefer in our days, provided that it has conferred upon it the original meaning, and that it is anything but *shirk* – infidelity, *shirac* – stumbling blocks, or *ishrak* – idolatry. It will signify, quite simply, *el ishtirak* – a community of effort and of fruits.

In the major capitals of the developed world, there are beggars and poor wretches who can be described as beggars. In the European and American press we read that men have died on the streets from cold or hunger, or even worse evils. What makes

one stop and think is not the high number of such cases – and according to the paper they are relatively high – but the very fact of their existence at all. Does this mean to say that the situation in this respect is better in the Islamic world than in Europe or America? Sadly we are forced to admit that our situation is much worse; we cannot even establish any comparison. Even in the richest of the Muslim countries (and perhaps more so in these than elsewhere), we see the existence of the most atrocious poverty alongside the most scandalous opulence, together with all the tragedy inevitable in such a situation. In our community it is no longer just a matter of the kind of cases which surprise journalists, as in Europe and America; there is a gulf, a bottomless chasm, between the social justice defined by Islam and the situation of Muslims today. “Where justice reigns there also reigns the Law of God.” Such was the opinion of Ibn Al Qayyim Al-Jauziyya.<sup>18</sup> In the same vein Seyyid Qotb wrote:

*“In this world which is called ‘the Islamic world’, you look and then you see a social reality which is not pleasing. Then you open your eyes and ascertain that there are social institutions which do not guarantee justice.”<sup>19</sup>*

This is the same point of view as that expressed by Dr. Muhammad Faruk an-Nabhan, Professor at the Kuwaiti University of Law and Islamic Teachings, at the IXth Seminar on Islamic Thought which took place at Tlemcen, where he condensed all these reflections in a few words:

*“To begin with, we have to recognize that reality for the Islamic peoples is gloomy, dismal and a long way from the justice and even the spirit of Islam. We have to recognize that social injustice imposes itself on us in a form which contradicts all religious and humane values.”*

In conclusion, one cannot but view the future with some

apprehension. If Muslims persist in their acceptance of the absence of social justice among them, if they continue to separate worship in the mosque from the social justice to be observed in lands where the spirit of Islam is to be sown, and to separate the places of prayer from business and industry; if they uphold the hypocrisy of a worship without soul, showing themselves “mean towards those who need help”, then woe betide them in this world, and woe betide them in the hereafter, even if they are not among those whom the Qur’an says “neglect their prayers”.

May God guide us along the right path and protect the Islamic nation from an unfortunate end; the nation which is bearer of the last divine message – *erissala* – to the whole world for its good, and in the interests of the whole human race. May the Lord help us attain his goals.



# Islamic Law – Its Ideals and Principles

*Khalid M. Ishaque*

*In the contemporary secularized West, as in the socialist states, law is a creation of the human will – an instrument in the hands of those in power. Even the constitutional limitations of democracy seem to be losing their utility as defences of the individual against the expanding power of government. The perversion of the traditional role of law ‘to protect the weak against the strong’ is furthered by numerous modern developments also concentrated in the hands of government – the various forms of the mass media, and the ever growing army of bureaucracy, to name only two. Yet since the will of the community of which he is a part – in practice the legislative majority – is the only sanction for law, the individual has no recourse to higher authority, and very little redress. In Islam the higher sanction of Divine Law to which state and individual are equally answerable, not only safeguards the proper function of law, but the rights of the individual are protected since he has the right of appeal and the hope of redress from a higher authority outside the state. All institutions of government exist only as agents of this higher authority, and are pledged solely to fulfil the legal and moral code laid down by Allah. The general principles laid down in the ancient Islamic law – Shari’ah – were always intended to be interpreted in the spirit rather than the precise letter. Yet, despite a wealth of precedent to the contrary, this has been obscured by excessive loyalty to form in present interpretations. If Islamic law is to be revived as a significant entity, it is necessary to seek new solutions and create new institutions within the old framework, but based on the historical experience of the community.*

## 8 Islamic Law - Its Ideals and Principles

Any attempt to do full justice to the ideals and principles underlying Islamic law would demand an exhaustive and lengthy study beyond the scope of the present paper. It will accordingly confine its discussion to two major fields of Islamic law: namely to its role as the fundamental or constitutional law of a State, and to the principles of movement, change and development in its operation. A preliminary examination of contemporary legal theory in the field of constitutional law, in the Western and in the Socialist traditions, will set the context for discussion, and by contrast bring the distinctive features of Islamic law into clearer relief.

In the contemporary secularized West, law is a creation of human will. Any visible or identifiable roots in a transcendental moral order have been severed. It preserves its attachment to concepts of right and wrong, and of justice, but here too the right and wrong is discoverable only in terms of the 'will of the people' formalized into statute. In practice, that alone is just which the law permits to operate as law, or which it declares as such. The true meaning and scope of law is debated, but discussion is confined within narrow limits. For most, it is the formalized will of the legislatures; for some, merely what courts of law enforce. In Socialist society, law is an instrument in the hands of the class in power; an instrument which it can legitimately use to consolidate its hold and to hasten the process by which a more perfect socialist state is brought into being. For the socialist, law is not a criterion for judging the conduct of the rulers or the



ruled, but a 'fiat' of the will of the working class which must be obeyed without demur. In accordance with this, the foundation of law is either the will of the nation or its majority. In the socialist state this becomes the will of the working class. Theoretically in neither of the two alternatives do legislative agencies recognize any limits on their legislative powers. There is however one significant difference.

In what is generally identified as the free world, constitutional devices are provided to protect the individual and to prevent working majorities from over-riding certain types of individual rights. Great faith is placed in the efficacy of parliamentary and public debate; the financial control of the Executive by the Legislature; the requirement of larger majorities for constitutional changes (in contrast to simple majority for ordinary legislation); and the enforcement of fundamental rights by courts of superior jurisdiction.

But just how effective are these in practice? Even amongst leading democracies, experience seems to show that the parliamentary debate which in theory was supposed to bring out the quintessence of national wisdom has become a tedious stage play, where each speaker, bound by his party mandate, speaks freely only under that constraint. The presence of minorities is suffered only to add plausibility to a specious process.

Theoretically an informed majority in the legislature could be trusted to control national affairs by control of the purse strings, yet of late even this has proved an inadequate safeguard. The cabinet usually controls the majority; it also makes the financial proposals. Even against a recalcitrant majority, a sufficiently determined Cabinet, President or Prime Minister almost invariably gets his proposals through. The long time required for legislative control in this field to become operative often provides the executive in a fast changing economic and political panorama with an excuse to obtain powers which in substance constitute actual delegation of legislative control over the purse strings.

The third of the popular constitutional limitations is the provision of a referendum where the consensus of a larger than normal majority is necessary for the enacting of legislation on issues of major national importance. Even this protection is proving of only marginal value. When the desire for change is stirred up by constant propaganda (and this happens all too often in the contemporary Third World), the referendum itself becomes simply a self-fulfilling confirmation of the will of the party in power, rather than a genuine expression of the will of the people.

The last safeguard is the constitutional limitation provided by the recognition of fundamental human rights enforceable by superior courts of law. It would be pointless to detail the progressive erosion of human rights in so many contemporary constitutions around the world. Against the rising tide of governmental interference and despotism, they are proving like dykes of straw. Under the guise of creating a 'welfare state' or 'an egalitarian society', most rights have been deprived of all meaning or significance. In some parts of the world they are directly suspendable and often remain suspended. In states that claim socialist objectives, many of these rights are deprived of enforceability through independent courts; in some constitutions they have been made subject to so many constitutionally authorised inroads as to become devoid of all reality. Even in countries where they do not suffer from any of the above limitations, judicial interpretation has, in deference to the idea of State activism and the welfare of the people, severely limited their scope. Perhaps never before has man enjoyed so great a capacity for good and for bad as today; yet never before has an individual felt, as now, so helpless in confrontation with the power and weight of faceless governmental agencies. Power like wealth accrues in the hands of those who wield it. The constitutional limitations of the free world appear to provide little safeguard or guarantee against the continuation of this trend.

As to the socialist theory of legality, law is by definition "the

will of the ruling class as embodied in its own specific system of jurisprudence and determined by the material conditions and interest of that class . . . Socialist law is will of the people given statutory force." Such a definition demonstrates all too clearly how little defence law provides for the ruled against their rulers. Individuals may have only so much freedom as the rulers choose to give, and dissent is a costly business. In socialist politics the faceless numbers loom large under the title of 'the people', but the individual feels atomized as never before in history.

In the 'free' world the individual finds himself deprived of effective dialogue with his rulers, whilst in the socialist world he is not permitted to try. Despite – and maybe because of – constant exposure through all forms of the mass media, individuals have lost faith and trust in their leaders. There are plenty of good things around and the economic machine is humming effectively, yet most people seem to share a sense of gloom about their future. At the same time, the values of the past have lost their hold on him. Uninspired by his past, and unhopeful of his future, modern man seeks instant satisfaction here and now, since only these moments seem to contain the promise of meaningful existence. Whether he inhabits the so-called free world or the socialist state, the individual feels crushed by the leviathan of the modern welfare state. He is incapable on his own of escaping the clutches of the monster, since he has no faith in the power of time to effect changes and resents the time that such an effort would consume. He is alone in his struggle, and with increasingly little recourse to law or redress from the state.

Paradoxically, his sense of loneliness and isolation are reinforced by those very means guaranteed never to leave him a moment's privacy or reflection. In the hand of the modern ruler the intrusive new powers of the mass communication media – radio, T.V., the Press – have subjected him to manipulation on an unprecedented scale. His own role is a passive one, with no possibility of dialogue between himself and the state which

controls such powerful agencies. Nor is the power of the state in this respect restricted by any legal or moral norms.

Yet since he inhabits a secular world, the individual thus attacked has no commitment other than to the society in which he lives and to the will of his community. Since it is this alone which forms the only sanction for the legal order under which he lives, he has no redress nor recourse to higher authority. The increased powers of the state, with all the means at its disposal, seem to have changed his traditional relationship to the law – indeed to have changed the original function and purpose of law itself. And this at the very time when he has the greatest need for its protection.

For centuries it was thought that the function of law was to act as a shield of the weak against the powers that hurt or threaten him. Today it is the main instrument for the exercise of socially available power. Whilst Law is both a limit on power and a power-conferring instrument, those in power prefer the second aspect. Yet for the individual it is only the first aspect which provides the means for protecting the weak from the onslaught of the strong. Under the promise of creating an egalitarian and welfare society, governments all over the world, and particularly in the Third World, have acquired almost limitless powers. Armed with the slogan of helping the under-dog and the ill-provided masses, dictatorships, cruel oligarchies and faceless bureaucracies exercise powers which were unimaginable even fifty years back. It might justifiably be claimed that as the price for two meals a day and a roof over his head, the individual in many parts of the world has paid a very heavy price indeed; individual freedom has become almost non-existent, as has privacy. Yet all these deprivations have taken place under a plethora of laws.

Where the will of the legislature is the sole foundation of law, the enslavement of man by man is inevitable, regardless of the particular form of society in which he lives. For those inspired

by Marxism-Leninism this process is glorified, since for them freedom lies in the 'recognition of necessity', and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessary precondition of the promised freedom of a truly universal communist 'shangri-la'. For others the wisdom and will of the majority provides the complete justification. Even the constitutional safeguards of democracy, processes so avidly praised earlier and held out as guarantees against mis-government, prove progressively ineffective, as the very foundations on which they operate are rendered otiose. With the machinery of propaganda in the hands of their rulers, the formation of independent public opinion is impossible. Nor is there room for the voice of the individual. Recourse to genuine debate becomes meaningless, and he has lost yet one more safeguard of his rights. He has no access to the truth, and falsehood inspires neither commitment nor total loyalty.

The emergence of the welfare state has further aggravated the position of the individual, vis-à-vis the state. Vast armies of bureaucracy have sprung into existence to care for his welfare, but in taking over his social obligations, they have taken over his economic power. Further, since their proceedings are almost always secret, and their power unlimited, the individual is denied any effective exercise of power himself, and is cut off even more sharply from access to the true facts of government functioning. Frustrated at every turn by the ever-increasing power of government agencies, the individual has no recourse but to protest – peacefully or otherwise.

When all alternatives fail, the increased power of disruption available to dissident minorities makes ordinary legislation a poor means of social control or progress. When laws become ineffective the legislature loses its social significance. It is not insignificant that lawlessness has become, if not the major, then at least one of the major problems of the leading democratic states. Faced with this, even the State's own powers become

uncontrollable. Governments all over the non-communist world appear singularly bewildered about the means to be adopted to exercise effective control. Failure to meet this challenge has in many cases resulted in the imposition of tyrannical and repressive regimes – socialist and otherwise – wherein every deviation from the party line may well invite decimation. Such regimes, where not based on ideological principles, result more from the collapse of the rule of law than from positive choice. Men of goodwill exist in plenty, but neither the rulers nor the ruled see any alternative to some such solution of the current dilemma. The rulers are as much the prisoners of their propaganda machine as the ruled. Many seek to resolve the situation by unceasing activity. Despite their efforts, history repeats itself, and the sum total of human suffering around the world is multiplied. Does Islam have an answer to this new despotism? This is the question to which we must now devote ourselves, in the hope that some alternative does exist.

For Muslims the Qur'an represents the culmination of a long process of divine revelation for the guidance of humanity. It opens a new chapter in human history. The Qur'an bears witness to the high status of human beings in the hierarchy of creation: "*Verily, We have honoured the children of Adam.*" It further characterises Man as the carrier of great trust (XXXIII: 72) and recipient of great powers (XLV: 13; XVI: 14; XIV: 32–33). Whereas in the earlier revealed religions, the individual is not sharply differentiated from the tribe, the Qur'an carries a direct message to the individual and a promise of personal fulfilment (v: 105). It makes clear that no further Prophet would come to proclaim the truth of his mission, nor would he, like Moses, remain a constant companion and guide to his community. On completion of Muhammad's mission humanity should seek the fulfilment of its destiny by its own efforts in the light of the revealed law, and the wisdom contained in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Efforts centred on a correct relationship between Man and God (*Tawhid*) would, according to the Divine

promise reiterated in the Qur'an bring unimaginable happiness and contentment not only in the life of this world, but also in the life hereafter (VII: 96).

According to the Qur'an every man has a primordial Covenant with Allah, which he renews by acceptance of Islam in this world. His life in this world is to be applied solely to the discharge of his Covenant with Allah. His good deeds place no obligation on the one whom he helps, since as a Muslim his own salvation lies in performing his obligation under his Covenant with Allah. This is the way Allah has charted the course of his progress. The following *hadith* illustrates this beautifully:

*"Behold, God will say on the Day of Resurrection: O son of Adam! I was ill, and you did not succour Me."*

*Man will exclaim:*

*"O Lord, how could I have helped Thee, the Lord of all the worlds?"*

*And God will reply:*

*"Did you not know that such and such of My servants was ill, and you did not succour him? Did you not know that if you had done so you would indeed have found Me with him? O son of Adam! I asked you for food, but you did not feed me."*

*"O Lord, how could I have fed thee, the Lord of all the worlds?"*

*Whereupon God will say:*

*"Did you not know that such and such of My servants asked you for food, and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you had done so, you would indeed have found it (again) with Me? O son of Adam! I asked you for a drink, but you did not give me to drink."*

*Man will say thereupon:*

*"How could I have given thee, the Lord of all the worlds, to drink?"*

*But God will reply:*

*"Such and such of My servants asked you for a drink, but you did not give it to him. Did you not know that if you had given him to drink, you would have found it (again) with Me?"* (Muslim-Fuad Abdul Baqi edition, P. 1990).

It was not merely humanity in social behaviour that the Prophet was emphasizing. He has made it clear that a believer's duties extend to every aspect of social relationships. According to the Qur'an, service and protection of the individual in terms of the Qur'anic mandate is the best means of achieving salvation. Lest a people with a tribal background overlook this new theme which was to prove of central importance henceforth, the Prophet, while circumambulating the Ka'ba said:

*“How agreeable are you and how fragrant is your atmosphere; how hallowed are you and how high is your station (but) I swear by Him who has Muhammad's life in His Hand, the sacredness of a Muslim with Allah is greater than yours.”* (Ibn Majja, Hadith No. 3932)

The importance of the theme is again reflected in his celebrated sermon on his last Hajj when he said:

*“Allah says: ‘O mankind, We have created male and female, and We have made you into families and tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honourable in the sight of Allah is he who is most righteous amongst you. A coloured man has no superiority over a white man, nor a white man over a coloured man, nor an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, except for righteousness . . . . O people, your lives, your honours, and your properties are to be respected by one another till the Day of Reckoning comes. They are to be respected as you respect this day (youm al-arafa) and this month (zil-hajja) in this city.’”*

In the Qur'an, the strongly legalistic tradition of Judaism is reconciled with forgiveness so often emphasized by Christ, and a new synthesis brought about. The Qur'an unequivocally declares that doubtless there is virtue in enforcement of law, but forgiveness carries a greater reward for the individual who forgives (XLII: 40-43). It has to be so, because unlike the body



which grows on its intake, the soul develops by giving away of that which the animal in man prefers. Society, in other words, is the field of operation for both law and morality. According to the Qur'an, every person who accepts Islam is under an obligation to expend his life and all his wealth in the discharge of his covenant with Allah, whereby he is promised an immensely more beatific life in the hereafter (IX: 111). A Muslim is under an obligation to do all that he can within his power, irrespective of the conduct of others (V: 105), because his obligations take precedence over his rights. So emphatic is the Qur'an about the discharge of obligations that the question of positively articulating a Muslim's rights rarely arose. While the ideological commitment of the community to these concepts remained, the weak were protected by the social pressure within the community without need for the State's intervention.

The Covenant with Allah has other implications which should be noted. A human being as a human being is the holder of a high station in creation. On acceptance of Islam, he is obliged to carry grave responsibilities of an absolute character. These responsibilities must be discharged irrespective of the behaviour of others (V: 105). No one is permitted to transfer his responsibilities and become absolved thereof (VI: 164). As a necessary corollary of this principle, no one in a Muslim State, including the national legislature, is permitted to take away from a person his capacity to perform his obligations, nor can one group authorise the taking away of another's obligations or capacity to function in discharge thereof. In more concrete terms, this would mean that the ruling agencies cannot, on promise of providing social services, deprive people of their freedom, or economic capacity to perform their obligations. Ruling agencies for example, may aid the spread of knowledge by providing education as a public service, but they cannot for that reason take by force and without compensation all private educational institutions, or for that matter monopolise all communication media.

They cannot, on promise of providing medical aid or housing, take away private hospitals or housing, and tax away all individual economic capacity. Nor can they, on the complaint that full taxes are not being paid, assure recovery thereof by infringing the privacy of society as a whole. The above principles have far-reaching implications as far as the problems of bureaucracy are concerned.

The desire for absolute power compels rulers to promise everything to everyone. In the process they often rob people of all effective power with the promise of instant paradise. The gilded promises set afloat by the state's propaganda machinery, and the absence of effective power, together provide a ready excuse for the people to escape responsibilities without feeling guilty. It is a commonplace of human experience that be he a member of the national legislature, or a private citizen, one who has no power feels no responsibility. Lack of capacity for action breeds indifference. This coupled with the contemporary feeling of loneliness, so typical of the expanding urban world, promises an alarming future.

According to Islamic Constitutional theory total transfer of obligations is not possible, hence there are distinct limitations on what the ruling agencies can do under particular conditions.

They must secure the frontiers and maintain law and order;  
they must punish transgressions against persons, properties and honours;  
they must make provisions for realising the Qur'anic mandate of the community as a brotherhood, and ensure that its egalitarian base is not disrupted;  
they must give aid from *Zakat* – the mandatory social security tax – to those who, due to permanent or temporary incapacity, cannot generate enough resources to meet their own needs;  
they must prevent the monopoly of human or material resources;  
and they must protect the weak against the powerful.

All the above functions are undertaken to aid the individual in the performance of his obligations, but are not intended to displace him. The last two functions cut at the root of the tendency incipient in most human societies, of power creating oligarchies and classes within the social group, both of which prevent the vertical movement of talent.

The ruling agencies would, however, take up only those obligations they can effectively perform, since the power of taxation in Islamic law is strictly co-related to the performance of specified services. They can take only that amount specifically needed for a particular project or service. Clearly this represents the antithesis of the theoretical basis on which the modern welfare state operates. It is assumed of a modern welfare state that the ideal is that the State be the father, mother, teacher or almost everything to everyone, and in so far as it fails to reach this ideal it is a mere shortcoming. On the assumption that the welfare state represents all things to all men, there is, theoretically, no limit to its power of taxation and dominion over the individual.

To complete the picture, those principles relevant in determining the legality of all orders of public authorities in Islam need to be stated. According to the Qur'an the grant of *Mulk*, or the establishment of authority on earth, is a blessing from Allah to the community of believers on account of their good deeds. By the same token it is withdrawn when the community fails as a whole to maintain the requisite moral tenor (XXIV: 55). The grant of authority is to the community as a whole and not to an individual (V: 20; XXII: 41; VI: 165). Consequently the very nature of the grant involves the participation of all in the discharge of their responsibilities. Any provision made by any secular authority which destroys the capacity to discharge one's responsibilities, or which forbids or destroys the possibility of effective participation, would to that extent be unconstitutional in Islam. The purpose of the grant of authority on earth is to establish justice between people by just means (VII: 29; V: 2;

V: 8). Finally, the power to prescribe the rules belongs to Allah alone, who has set the limits and laid down the criteria. All authority within the community, whether legislative, executive, or judicial, may be exercised by the believers only in order to implement the legal and moral order prescribed by Allah. This they must do by determining and applying the best means available to them. Under their Covenant with Allah they are circumscribed in the exercise of all powers by the limits set down by Him for the furtherance of His objectives, and with due regard to the priorities fixed by Him (IX: 19; IX: III; III: 54). In other words, after the demise of the Prophet the ultimate authority within the community is of *Shari'at* and not of any man. Persons exercising authority within the community are only agents of the community.

In the constitution of the Muslim community and the State, the Qur'an gives to responsible dissent the status of a fundamental right. In exercise of their powers, therefore, neither the legislative nor the executive can demand absolute or unquestioning obedience. "*Obedience is only in that which does not involve disobedience of Allah*", is a universal dictum laid down by the Prophet. The Qur'an also states:

*"It is not (possible) for any human being unto whom Allah had given the Scripture and wisdom and the Prophethood that he should afterwards have said to mankind: Be slaves of me instead of Allah; but (what he said was): Be ye faithful servants of the Lord by virtue of your constant teaching of the Scripture and of your constant study thereof. And he commanded you not that ye should take the angels and the Prophet for lords. Would he command you to disbelieve after ye had surrendered (to Allah)?"* (III: 79-80).

The essence of slavery is the slave's absolute obligation to do the bidding of the master and to have no recourse against his command. The verses above show clearly that Allah does not

confer the status of a slave-master even on his chosen prophets, let alone on ordinary mortals. On the contrary, the Qur'an clearly entertains the possibility of disputes between the public authorities and private individuals. Let the Qur'an speak for itself as to what it requires of those who command and of those who are commanded. To those in authority in particular, and to Muslims in general, Allah says:

*“Lo! Allah commandeth that ye restore deposits to their owners, and, if ye judge between mankind, that ye judge justly. Lo! comely is this which Allah admonisheth you.”* (IV. 58).

To those who are ruled He says in the next verse:

*“O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and more seemly in the end.”* (IV: 59).

The right of dissent implies resolution of the conflict by an independent tribunal, both in regard to acts of the Legislature and the Executive, since each must function within the limits prescribed. The tribunal itself is also bound by the Higher Law of Allah. It also implies that under Islamic legal theory, the jurisdiction of judicial authorities may extend to governmental action. Placing jurisdictional obstacles, permitting governmental agencies to withhold material from the courts, or placing some persons beyond the reach of judicial authorities, are all forbidden under the *Shari'at*. Nor is it permissible to conceal from the people the facts relating to social and political affairs by direct means such as total control of the communication media, or by indirect means such as propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion. Administrative oppression of those who listen to or aid the dissent is likewise against the law. The right to dissent is, however,

predicated on the assumption that the community does not seek to be divided (IV: 159), nor does it countenance disobedience to *Shari'at*. The importance of the right to dissent becomes obvious when we recall that at the root of the contemporary malaise lies the fact that knowing or recognizing no higher law, political groups in power seek to perpetuate themselves, often by forcibly imposing their ideas through an ever-expanding bureaucracy, which universal experience shows becomes a tool of oppression quite as readily as a means of achieving social good. Because its processes of decision-making are hidden from the public as well as from its representatives in the national legislature, its correction is all the more difficult.

At the root of the right under discussion lies the principle that wisdom is not the prerogative of a person or a group or an era. The inevitable change in the socio-political setting or environment demands fresh application of the fundamental principles. Success makes people conservative. Frequent success in solving familiar problems tends to blind people to the possibility of change. The right of dissent keeps open the way to creative and progressive innovation.

Yet another restraint on political power lies in the principle of *Shura* in the field of social and political decision-making. The Prophet, even though he was the recipient of Divine revelation, was required to consult the Muslims in public affairs. Allah addressing the Prophet says:

“ . . . and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs. And . . . when thou art resolved, then put thy trust in Allah.” (III: 159).

It is reported from Ali that when asked about the meaning of *azamta* (determined) the Prophet said:

“Consultation with the well-informed and then following them.” (Suyti, *Dur al-Mansoor* Vol. II).

The word *Shura* literally means the process by which honey is extracted from the hives. In matters of governance within society it consists of a continuous dialogue between the participants till a consensus emerges. It is a more effective process, but essentially more complicated, than one of simple majority vote. Under the Western and the Socialist systems, once the majority or the law-giver decides, the decision, however oppressive, becomes the criterion, and everyone is compelled to obey, often without recourse. In Islamic political theory, the die is cast. The limits on the exercise of power have been set by Divine Law and *Shura* is mandatory (XLII: 38). The primary task of the public authorities is to encourage unity in action by extending the application of the principle of *Shura* to as many aspects of the community's life as possible (XLII: 38). In this way they protect the community against the error of transferring responsibilities and the consequent loss of their liberties. Further, they must provide protection by the shield of law to the weak against the strong (II: 279). As even the legislators under Islamic Law have no power to lay down the ultimate criteria for judging the actions of others and their own actions, they can never match the despotic powers that law-givers enjoy in a modern State. As total mobilization for social welfare is the objective of the exercise of power, and persuasion the permitted means (II: 256), the social consequences of Islamic constitutional theory are bound to be radically different from what we notice happening around the world under other systems.

Since for Muslims Islam is a complete and final code of life, and *Shari'at* in its legal aspect is also complete, the question arises whether Islamic Law allows room for change and development, and if it does, what would be its likely direction.

When the Qur'an speaks of the culmination and completion of Divine favour by the revelation of the Qur'an, it implies that all the principles necessary to regulate human conduct, and for the development and fulfilment of human personality, are given. They have been given at a time in history, and in a form,

which imply man's active participation in the process of his self-development and self-realisation. The sending of the Prophet along with the Qur'an was to show by example how these eternal principles could be implemented in time and space, within a variety of socio-political situations. An example might make this easier to understand. According to the Qur'an, *Salat* (prayer) is the corner-stone of man's spiritual integration and development. Yet the precise form and the manner in which this basic obligation is to be discharged was left for determination by the Prophet, who prescribed variously to cover the widest possible range of situations and circumstances. Whilst the believer follows his teaching and example there still remains room for further interpretation to meet particular and unspecified needs.

Every prophet, in his age, was a revolutionary. We distinguish them from ordinary reformers and secular revolutionaries by the quality and extent of change they brought about in the social order, and the moral means they adopted. It is well-known that the Prophet was known as 'the truthful and the trustworthy one' even before revelation came to him. Yet the fundamental revelation that he was seeking to bring about left his people aghast. They were willing to make him a king over them if he would only give up a part of the revelation he was seeking to bring about. To the pre-Islamic Arabs also, truthfulness, justice, kindness, generosity and charity were qualities to be respected. Yet we find that there was acute opposition to the Prophet's mission. Since he was nothing but 'mercy for mankind' not only for the Arabs but the whole of mankind, why this opposition? The reason is not far to seek. He sought to change the entire priorities within the community, and to establish a community based on egalitarian principles incomprehensible to a mind brought up in tribal traditions. Power was henceforth to be harnessed for completely novel uses. Honours were to go not to nobility of birth but of conduct (XLIX: 13), and superiority in knowledge



(XXXIX: 9). Increase in the power of an individual was now to mean only an increase in his responsibilities. The weak and the needy within the community were given a right to be protected and provided for (LI: 19). The members of the community of Islam were henceforth required to act as vanguards of an abiding international revolution in the cause of justice aimed at protection of the weak and the oppressed. Referring to this latter mission, Allah says in the Qur'an:

*“How should ye not fight for the cause of Allah and the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord! Bring us forth from out of this town of which the people are oppressors! Oh, give us from Thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!”* (IV: 75).

The Prophet in his time revolutionized the human environment within which he lived. His companions continued the mission. The revolution which during his lifetime extended only to the borders of Arabia was carried by them far beyond these borders. There are numerous instances of the stewardship of the state by Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, and Ali which demonstrate numerous innovations in the social order. The Qur'an records examples too numerous to list of the Prophet's own innovations in this sphere, and the practice was continued under the first and second Caliphs.

Whilst the principles laid down by the Qur'an remained constant, they were successively adapted and interpreted to meet specific circumstances wherever these demanded a new approach. The sharing of alms; the distribution of land acquired by conquest; punishment for theft; limitations on the law of divorce, are only a few instances where innovations were carried out in conformity with the spirit of the ruling in the Qur'an rather than in strict observance of its form.

The companions of the Prophet were never unmindful of the

Qur'anic mandate of advancing remedy, promoting virtue, and suppressing mischief (XVI: 90). At all times their concern was to preserve the internal social structure of the Muslim community in its formative period. All their decisions were taken in grave earnestness on the basis of an undying and positive loyalty to Allah and His Prophet. The message for Muslims today seems on this basis to be that when reminded of the Signs of Allah, they should not fall upon them deafly and blindly (XXV: 73), but should with the clear guidance provided in the Book itself, look at, ponder and understand its decision in the light of the Book. They should always remain aware that while discharging their obligations, their primary duty is still to advance virtue and remedy, and to suppress mischief in the way best suited to meet the challenge of each specific situation.

The Qur'an itself provides more than enough examples of this principle to remind the community that while applying the law they should not be unmindful of the object of the law.

It was unfortunate for the community that in the development of Muslim Law in the following centuries, an attempt was made to apply each decision rigidly and indiscriminately as though it were a principle. Regrettably, this led cumulatively to the creation of a situation where the community was called upon to adhere to a form irrespective of changed circumstances. The community thus became the victim of form at the expense of principle – a not uncommon fate in the history of other societies.

One result of such excessive loyalty to the form was that Muslim law became increasingly more theoretical in character and more alienated than ever from the realities of life. Many well-intentioned people were parties to such development in the mistaken hope that they were guarding the law of Allah for better times, without realising that it was their duty at all times to struggle as Abu Bakr did (with those who while accepting Islam would yet not pay the *Zakat*) in seeking the implementation of the Divine Law, irrespective of a hostile environment. The

community remains under an abiding duty to guard the Divine guidance by constantly seeking to implement it in a world of harsh realities, and so permeate this world with its truth. Putting the Divine Book in silken covers and recording long opinions about legal problems of little practical utility is no substitute.

A great deal of sophistry was necessary to maintain a semblance of a working system. But this only added to the large burden that the community was already called upon to carry. A state was reached not so long ago, when the history of the Muslims was regarded as the religion of the community, and any change in the *status quo* was considered to be interference with the faith.

The last seventy years have brought into sharp relief the dimensions of the problems that the community must face if they are to resolve the question of social conflict. The sophistry employed earlier to accomplish mild shifts of emphasis in the existing legal system, combined with claims that nothing had changed, will no longer do. Ours is an age of revolution. It is also an age of communities sickened by the handwork of spurious revolutionaries all over the world.

Change, constant change, like sheer speed, is an abiding element of the 20th-Century world. To remain constantly on the move and yet to discover and stick to an abiding frame of reference is the most challenging problem facing the contemporary world. If it wishes to fulfil its role as vanguard for humanity in the march of its destiny, the Muslim Community will have to study the Prophetic example anew and in a fresh light. We have been commanded to follow the guidance of the prophets (VI: 90). No prophet was bound by sheer history, nor felt himself to be so. He was a maker of history and not its slave. All were absolutely committed to principles which they were willing to apply vigorously and consistently to every new situation.

To strike upon a new solution is as much a *Sunnah* of the Prophet, as to conform to an old tradition. Examples of the

many new institutions adopted by the Prophet and his companions carry a message to which we must pay heed. Let us recall very clearly that Islam was given complete to the community during the lifetime of the Prophet:

*“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM.”*  
(V: 3).

His companions have left us a brilliant trail, and a fine example of how we may understand and apply the guidance provided by the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.

What then must we do now? The first step is to restate, for the benefit of humanity in general and the Muslim community in particular, what Islam has to say to modern man. The cobwebs of confusion must be removed; the challenge of secret doubts must be squarely met. In the process, we will have to make a sharp distinction between Islam – which, as a *din* (way of life), was completed during the life-time of the Prophet – and the historical experience of the community. Our well-intentioned but self-defeating attempts to pass off the latter as *din* has created a perpetual feeling of guilt amongst the committed, and silent apathy amongst the uncommitted. We shall convince no-one until we are ourselves convinced of this reality.

## Islam and Human Rights

A. K. Brohi

*Both Islam and the West attach the highest importance to the preservation of human rights and the fundamental freedom of the individual in society. Yet despite their common aim, their approach differs widely. In the West concern for the individual springs from an anthropocentric view of the world in which man is the measure of all things. In Islam the view is theocentric: God is supreme and man exists solely to serve Him. It may appear from this that man has no rights, only duties. Since within the totality of Islam man's duty to God embraces both his duty to society and to every other individual, paradoxically the rights of each are protected by the obligations of all under Divine Law. As the state itself is equally subject to this same law, it too is compelled to protect the rights of the individual. By stressing the equality of all men before God, by emphasising his dignity and freedom from submission to all save God alone, by making the state answerable before God and thus protecting the individual from oppression at its hands, Islam set a high standard in human rights to which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 can be seen as a basic corollary or extension of the programme laid down in the Qur'an.*

## 9 Islam and Human Rights

Anyone who undertakes to speak of 'Islam and Human Rights' in an age in which the universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion has been highlighted by the Charter of the United Nations (Art. 55), followed by the Declaration of Human Rights of 10th December, 1948 and by the two Covenants that have been subsequently drawn up on social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, ought to provide the contextual framework of human rights as understood both in the West and in Islam. In this way we will throw into better relief those aspects of human rights as conceived by Islam which may be radically different from those normally associated with a modern approach.

At the conclusion of the Second World War, when thought was again turned to the orderly functioning and reconstruction of the international community of mankind, the primary purpose which inspired the founding fathers of the United Nations was undoubtedly 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to maintain international peace and security'. But the indispensable means for the realisation of that purpose in their thinking could only be the recovery of the individual from the super-incumbent weight that had been imposed on his freedom, initiative and growth by totalitarian regimes. Hence the emphasis

in the United Nations Charter on 'Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.'

The full extent of that crisis which had brought about a disruption in the soul-life of the modern man had never been fully appreciated by those publicists who in the mid-twentieth century had set out to make a general survey of the political, economic, social, cultural or humanitarian implications of human rights and fundamental freedoms that had to be guaranteed to the people of United Nations, since the unhappy predicament of modern man had not as then been fully comprehended. The forces of modern history have been virtually at war with the harmony of human life. We of this generation who have been actually involved in the chaos and the crisis that have overtaken human civilization are not able to appreciate the extent to which the individual has been made subservient to the authority of totalitarian states that have emerged in the wake of mass society. Ortega de Gassa in *The Revolt of the Masses* speaks of the characteristics of such societies. In the welter of contending voices that are even now being heard from the protagonists of the philosophy of enlightenment, and the pioneers of secularist liberalism and Marxist socialism, we have not as yet been able adequately to appreciate the extent of the disruption that has taken place in the contemporary value system. On the one hand, thanks to the technological and scientific revolution of our time, the social environment of modern man, on a world-wide scale, has become much more integrated, in the sense that the days of isolated civilizations and localised cultures are gone never to return. There was a time when diverse cultures and civilizations could co-exist and grow side by side without interaction or interference one with the other. Now, largely due to the application of methods of modern science to the problems of communication and transport, modern man, no matter where he may be, is involved in the total life of humanity as never before. On the other hand, although the overall external shell in which the

snail of humanity is living has been woven into a more or less homogeneous pattern through the inter-play of all those factors which go to define the social and cultural environment of modern man, the springs of modern man's actions are ruled by the most contradictory philosophies of life. There is, to begin with, the religion of love and universal brotherhood brought to us by the prophets of universal religions, and a great deal of our life, at least in Asia and Africa, is lived as though religious norms even today were the decisive criteria in evaluating the worth of man's activities. Then there is the philosophy of life founded upon the secularist approach which, in the name of liberalism, places a high degree of emphasis on the value of the dignity and freedom of the individual and upon the gospel of tolerance, mutual discussion and debate as a means of organising political institutions with a view to securing the development of human personality. This approach has been countered by the challenge from the Marxist socialists who are prepared to surrender the value of human individuality at the altar of new gods who must be worshipped in the temple of dialectical materialism. Their claim for social justice, security and a planned social order as prime movers of social change in the requisite direction are well known. The arrogance of race and of power, the worship of the cult of saviours and of heroes who applaud the military virtues of conquest, total discipline and blind obedience, seem to triumph precisely because of the confusion in thinking which is reflected by this Western secularistic approach to life. Modern man is so completely caught up in this confusion that he is prepared to sell his soul to anyone who offers him the chance to enjoy what he considers to be the good things of life – the ability to 'eat, drink and be merry.'

There is a fundamental difference in the perspectives from which Islam and the West each view the matter of human rights. The Western perspective may by and large be called anthropocentric in the sense that man is regarded as constituting the



measure of everything since he is the starting point of all thinking and action. The perspective of Islam on the other hand is theocentric – God conscious. Here the Absolute is paramount and man exists only to serve His Maker, the Supreme Power and Presence which alone sustains his moral, mental and spiritual make-up, secures the realisation of his aspirations and makes possible his transcendence. It is this which constitutes the decisive distinction between the two attitudes. The Western tradition of liberty is evidenced by the most notable of its charters of rights: the Bill of Rights consequent on the English Revolution of 1689, the Bill of Rights promulgated by the State of Virginia in June 1776, the Declaration of Independence issued by the thirteen American States in July 1776, and ultimately the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution of 1789. The Declaration of Rights of Men and Citizenship issued by the Constituent Assembly of France in 1789, and later incorporated word for word in the Revolutionary Constitution of 1791 and again more recently in our own time in the Soviet Constitution of 1936, are in the same tradition. Here the rights of man are seen in a setting which has no reference to his relationship with God, but are posited as his inalienable birthright. The student of growth of Western civilization and culture notices throughout that the emphasis is on human rights within the framework of an “anthropocentric” perspective of human destiny. Each time the assertion of human rights is made it is done only to secure their recognition from some secular authority such as the state itself or its ruling power.

In marked contrast to this approach the strategy of Islam is to emphasize the supreme importance of our respect for human rights and fundamental freedom as an aspect of the quality of religious consciousness that it claims to foster in the heart, mind and soul of its followers. The perspective is “theocentric” through and through. Man has first to believe in the cardinal doctrine “There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Prophet”,

before he can hope to do good deeds. The emphasis in the Holy Qur'an is on securing the transformation of the quality of man's consciousness. Man is asked to live and work here below in full awareness that he must show obedience to the Will of God. Islam in its turn affirms the grand tradition of the development of the institution of universal religions, which tradition, according to the Holy Qur'an, was consummated in the mission of the last Prophet by means of the revealed word communicated to him by process of divine revelation. It seems at first sight, therefore, that there are no human rights or freedoms admissible to man in the sense in which modern man's thought, belief and practice understand them; in essence, the believer has only obligations or duties to God since he is called upon to obey the Divine Law, and such human rights as he is made to acknowledge stem from his primary duty to obey God. Yet paradoxically, in these duties lie all the rights and freedoms. Man acknowledges the rights of his fellow men because this is a duty imposed on him by the religious law to obey God and the Prophet and those who are constituted as authority to conduct the affairs of state. In everything that a believer does his primary nexus is with His Maker, and it is through Him that he acknowledges his relationship with the rest of his fellow men as even with the rest of the creation. In the words of the Qur'an, "Man has been created only to serve God". And further he alone is acceptable who has acquired nearness to God.

This distinction between the attitudes of Western man and a Muslim is implicit in the Qur'anic view of life which divides its functions into *haqooqullah* – obligations to God – and *haqooqunnas* or *haqooqulabad* – obligations to society. The former category embraces matters like prayers, the need for ritual purity of mind and body, etc., primarily the personal concerns of the individual; the latter category has a social aspect. Yet in both cases the foundation for 'righteous action' whether on the individual or social plane is no other than the quality of consciousness or *niyyat* which

directs all man's actions to the sole purpose of obeying the Will of his Maker, in order to please his ever-watchful Lord and Master, who sees even the innermost thoughts and motivations that impel him to act. He is eventually to return to his Maker and will have to render an account of what he did with the opportunities with which life provided him to do that which was demanded of him by the Divine Law, and his accountability is absolute. And it is this that constitutes the sanction which Islam provides to secure the believer's obedience to the demands that the Divine Law makes upon him. The *haqooqunnas*, that is, obligations to society, in the last resort come within the scope of the jurisdiction or authority of the state in Islam, and relate largely to what in our own time are treated by Western thinkers as constituting secular affairs and secular dealings or relationships between man and man.

It was in relation to this aspect of enforcing obligations to society that the first four rightly guided Caliphs, in view of the nascent stage through which the *Ummat* in the early days of Islam had to pass, were forced to keep "a mild form of patriarchal watch whenever necessary and even interpreted the religious injunctions in their application to new conditions of life in consultation with their companions". But by doing this they did not claim 'spiritual leadership' of the community. Indeed *haqooquallah* and *haqooqunnas* were as binding on the Caliphs themselves as on any other believer who was a member of the community. The Caliph was himself accountable directly to God no more and no less than the humblest citizen of the realm, and obedience to the Caliph so long as he conducted the affairs of the community according to the Book of God and the Practice of the Prophet was based on the divine injunction, "Obey God, Obey the Prophet and those who are acting as constituted authority from amongst you". This accountability, in the last resort, was owed to the Maker, and the believer knew that even if he erred in disobeying the order of the Caliph and escaped the

punishment prescribed for such disobedience, he would eventually be punished on the day of judgement when his accounts would be audited with merciless severity in respect of those aspects of his conduct which injured the rights of others. This then is the sense in which, though man has no rights within a theocentric perspective, only duties to his Maker, these duties in their turn give rise to all the rights, including those contained within the modern understanding of human rights. This mode of approach to the problem of human rights has the obvious advantage of dispensing with the need to provide and implement separate procedures for giving effect to human rights since, within the religious context of Islam, no one escapes the penalty for violating the rights of others, and state power is only an earthly agent of the divine power acting by virtue of delegated authority to enforce the Divine Law. The ruler himself, if he betrays his trust, will also be punished. Since both are bound by the Divine Law, there can, in the strict theory of the Islamic law, be no conflict between the state authority and the individual. This view is fully reflected in the very first address given by the First Caliph of Islam when elected to his office as Head of the Muslim State which had been founded by the Prophet:

*“My fellowmen! I call God to witness. I never had any wish to hold this office; never aspired to possess it. Neither in secret nor in the open did I ever pray for it. I have agreed to bear this burden lest mischief might raise its head. Else, there is no pleasure in leadership. On the other hand, the burden placed on my shoulders is such as I feel I have not the inherent strength to bear, and so cannot fulfil my duties except with Divine help. You have made me your leader, although I am in no way superior to you. Co-operate with me when I go right; correct me when I err; obey me so long as I follow the commandments of God and His Prophet; but turn away from me when I deviate.”*

Even he who is called upon to handle the affairs of the state is

within the grip of Divine Law, and cannot claim any special privileges or prerogatives or immunities. The affairs of the people are to be run for the benefit of the people as a whole. No Caliph had any special privilege attached to his person. As Abdul Latif points out, he was at best only first amongst equals. When food and clothing had to be rationed in Medina he had but to receive his share just as any other ordinary citizen; every man and every woman had the right to question him on any matter touching the affairs of state; he must appear, as did the Caliphs Umar and Hazarat Ali, before subordinate judges appointed by them, to answer charges against them. The same author goes on to add:

*“The economic system of life formulated by the Qur’an, laying a special emphasis on the uplifting of the economically depressed, under which a state levy was to be collected from the rich for the relief of the poor, was rigidly enforced by the state. The exchequer of the state was considered to be the treasury of the people; the surplus, if any, accruing at the end of the year came back to the people in the form of annuities distributed on the basis of individual needs. The Qur’anic injunctions governing the status of women, as independent economic units functioning in their own individual right, were scrupulously respected and upheld. Similarly, security of life and property and freedom of conscience were guaranteed to non-Muslim minorities who were styled Dhimmis. The Dhimmis were protected by the Prophet of God. The Prophet had proclaimed, ‘I shall myself be the complainant against him greater than he can bear or deprive him of anything that belongs to him.’ Indeed so mindful was he of their welfare that a few moments before he expired, the thought of the Dhimmi came to him. He is reported to have said, ‘Any Muslim who kills a Dhimmi has not the slightest chance of catching even the faintest smell of Heaven. Protect them; they are my Dhimmi.’ In a moment of like remembrance, Caliph Umar, as he lay assassinated, exclaimed, ‘To him who will be Caliph after me, I commend my wish and testament – Dhimmis are protected of Allah and the Prophet. Respect the covenants entered into with them, and when necessary, fight for*

*their interests and do not place on them a burden or responsibility which they cannot bear'.*"<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Islam went further in catering for the welfare of the human race by securing the consent of the believers to certain basic principles guaranteeing its preservation in times of war. These are the principles of justice and moderation laid down by Caliph Abu Bakr for the guidance of the first expedition into Syria:

*"Be just; break not your plighted faith; mutilate none; slay neither children, old men nor women; injure not the date-palm nor burn it with fire, nor cut down any fruit-bearing tree; slay neither flocks nor herds nor camels, except for food; perchance you may come across men who have retired into monasteries, leave them and their works in peace."*

The foregoing illustration is typical of the emphasis on what man is not to do, yet the rights of others are implied even when the principles are formulated as prohibitions on the believers. On the more positive side, the Prophet's last *khutba* (congregational address) on the occasion of his final pilgrimage provides the earliest declaration ever made in the history of mankind of what might be called the obligations that were imposed upon believers.

*"Then the apostle continued his pilgrimage and showed the men the rites and taught them the customs of their hajj. He made a speech in which he made things clear. He praised and glorified God, then he said, 'O men, listen to my words, I do not know whether I shall ever meet you in this place again after this year. Your blood and your property are sacrosanct until you meet your Lord, as this day and this month are Holy. You will surely meet your Lord and He will ask you of your works. He who has a pledge let him return it to him who entrusted him with it; all usury is abolished, but you have your capital. Wrong not and you shall not be wronged. God has decreed that there is to be no usury and*

*the usury of Abhas b. Abdul Muttalib is abolished, all of it. All blood shed in the pagan period is to be left unavenged. The first claim on blood I abolish is that of b. Rabia b. al-Harith b. Abdul Muttalib (who was fostered among the b. Layth and whom Hudhayl killed). It is the first blood shed in the pagan period which I deal with . . . You have rights over your wives and they have rights over you. You have the right that they should not defile your bed and that they should not behave with open unseemliness. If they do, God allows you to put them in separate rooms and to beat them but not with severity. If they refrain from these things they have the right to their food and clothing with kindness. Lay injunctions on women kindly, for they are prisoners with you having no control of their persons. You have taken them only as a trust from God (bi amanatillah) and you have the enjoyment of their persons by the words of God, so understand my words, men, for I have told you. I have left with you something which if you hold fast to you will never fall into error – a plain indication, the Book of God and the Practice of His Prophet, so give good heed to what I say. Know that every Muslim is a Muslim's brother, and that the Muslims are brethren. It is only lawful to take from a brother what he gives you willingly, so wrong not yourselves'.”<sup>2</sup>*

Talking about the sum and substance of the various human rights and the fundamental freedoms which have been incorporated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Syed Abdul Latif sums up the position as follows:

*“The twin aim of this Declaration is on the one hand to equip the individual to live a free life considered successively as (i) physical organism; (ii) a moral personality; (iii) a worker; (iv) an intelligent being and (v) a member of a community and of a polity, and on the other to help the individual so equipped to make his contribution to international amity or the peace of the world . . . To the student of the Qur'an not one word in the preamble or in the objectives of the Charter, and not a single article in the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,*

*will seem unfamiliar. Under a creed which places man next to God, and brushes aside all distinctions of race, colour and birth, and calls upon all mankind to live together as a family of God, or as a 'fold every member of which shall be a shepherd or keeper unto every other and be accountable for its welfare', the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must follow as a basic corollary, or an extension of the Qur'anic programme. But a mere declaration of them will not carry humanity far. Several questions call for attention from the Qur'anic point of view.'*<sup>3</sup>

The questions he raises concern first the impulse underlying the Charter of the United Nations, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in pursuance thereof. Is the scheme in the interest of or for the good of humanity as a whole, or is it a practice to serve the interest of a particular country or group of countries? Second, looking at the list of rights covered by the Universal Declaration, he asks if it is possible for any country claiming to be civilized at the present hour to say with confidence that all the rights are observed by it, or that it may serve as a pattern for the rest. It is obvious that the initiative for implementing them must come from the government or legislature of each country. Is the system of political life in every country such as may place in high office the type of men who may have the urge and the high-mindedness to respect the Declaration and implement its provisions? Last he considers the world order which is the aim of the two documents, and which argues a common purpose acceptable to all the countries of the world. As things stand, the world is divided, broadly speaking, into two camps – the Soviet and the American. A world arrangement, whatever its form, will be possible only on the basis of some sort of reconciliation between the two contending ideologies, or by building a half-way house for mutual co-operation. Is such a reconciliation possible? He surveys possible answers to these disturbing questions, and records as his opinion that there is a vast discrepancy between the provision of these rights contained in the Universal Declara-



tion and the actual practices of the people of the modern West. In the words of Professor Hitti:

*“Unfortunately during the last decade or two, in particular, the impact of the West has not been entirely for good. There is a striking contrast between the humanitarian ideas professed by Western missionaries, teachers, and preachers, and the disregard of human values by European and American politicians and warriors; a disparity between word and deed; an over-emphasis on economic and nationalistic values. The behaviour of the so-called advanced nations during the last two wars waged on a scale unknown in history; the ability of Western man to let loose those diabolic forces which are the product of his science and his machine and which now threaten the world with destruction; their intervention in the Near East, particularly in their handling of the Palestine problem by America, England, France, and other nations, all these have worked together to disillusion this man of the Near East who has been trying to establish an intellectual rapprochement with the West. It is these actions of the West which alienate him and shake his belief in the character of Western man and his morality on both the private and the public levels.”<sup>4</sup>*

It is within the context of such evaluations of the negative impact in any practical terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that we can point the excellence of the strategy with which Islam has enjoined upon its members the obligation to acknowledge and implement human rights. Islam is primarily interested in securing for its believers ‘right belief and right conduct’, but in accordance with its teachings the conduct is never right unless it is based on right belief and is consciously willed. Islam is an enemy of all mechanical actions. One cannot in Islam perform prayers without forming conscious intention to pray; one cannot give *zakat* (alms) without consciously intending to do so; one cannot fast without forming conscious intention to fast; you cannot go on pilgrimage and perform the prescribed

rites without being aware of their significance and without the formation of conscious intention to do so. This 'conscious intention' is the core of the matter and the Prophet said that the *niyyat* (intention) of the *momin* (believer) to do the deed, in obedience to the Law of God, was better than mere external conformity with the terms of the conduct prescribed by such law (*Al-niyyatul Momin Khairun Minal Amalhi*). Since it is in the inwardness of his being that such a conscious willing intention can be formed, Islam takes good care to insist that its primary purpose is to produce the *Saliheen* (righteous people), the *Muttaqis* (self-controlled people) and the *Sadiqeen* (people who adhere to truth). It is the transformation of the old Adam in man into an expression of the Divine that forms the essence, if not the quintessence, of the strategy of Islam.

The Western world believes that mechanical conformity to the pattern of conduct, prescribed by the law of the State or by some such authority, is sufficient to secure public order and universal peace. In other words, its procedure is to attempt to influence from outside the inner condition of man believing that social, political, economic and other institutions are capable of influencing the individual character. It is submitted that this is a fallacious approach; only slaves can be thus handled, not free people. Islam, on the other hand, begins by inviting man to accept the paramountcy of the power of the Lord, his own servitude and bondage to the will of his Master who is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe; in the last resort it redeems him by prescribing norms of behaviour by which he is to regulate his life. In the words of Professor D. De Santillana:

*"We may agree with the Muslim jurists when they teach that the fundamental rule of law is liberty . . . God has set a bound to human activity in order to make legitimate liberty possible for all; without the 'bounds of God', liberty would degenerate into licence, destroying the perpetrator himself along with the social fabric. This 'bound' is precisely*

*what is called law, which restrains human action within certain limits, forbidding some acts and enjoining others, and thus restraining the primitive liberty of man so as to make it as beneficial as possible either to the individual or to society. Whatever their form, these rules tend to the same end and have the same purpose, that is, the public weal (maslahah). Accordingly, law, divine in its origin, human in its subject-matter, has no other end but the welfare of man, even if this end may not at first sight be apparent: for God can do nothing which does not express the wisdom and mercy of which He is the supreme source.”<sup>5</sup>*

The Qur'an itself provides clear justification for such a thesis:

*“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*

*Nay, I swear by this city – and thou art an indweller of this city – and the begetter and that which he begat, we verily have created man in affliction: thinketh he that none hath power over him? And he saith: I have destroyed vast wealth: thinketh he that none beholdeth him? Did we not assign unto him two eyes and a tongue and two lips, and guide him unto the parting of the mountain ways? But he hath not attempted the Ascent – ah, what will convey unto thee what the Ascent is! It is to free a slave, and to feed in the day of hunger an orphan near of kin, or some poor wretch in misery, and to be of those who believe and exhort one another to perseverance and exhort one another to pity. Their place will be on the right hand. But those who disbelieve Our revelations, their place will be on the left hand. Fire will be an awning over them.”*  
(XC).

The title of the *surah* is *Al-Balad* or ‘the City’, and it represents the condensed essence of the wisdom upon what may be called the subject of civic rights in the context of the development of monotheistic religion. By the word ‘City’, by which the verse begins, is meant Mecca. The *surah* is in the nature of a ‘charter of freedom’ given to man after the prayer of Ibrahim for the foundation of a city by one of his descendants – the Prophet of Islam – had been answered. It draws attention to the evolution of

religion and man from Ibrahim to Muhammad – the entire period of Semitic civilization – and Mecca as its place of birth and completion.

Man has been created to face difficulties, and to help him confront these trials with fortitude he has been reminded that there is some 'power' that is an overseer of his deeds, namely his Lord and Master who sees him through and through. The *surah* goes on to recount the grace of God to man evidenced by the conferment of powers of sight and of speech. Furthermore, man has been shown two conspicuous ways and now the choice is his, either to elect to negotiate the way of truth or of falsehood: to choose the good or evil deed. Of these two possible choices the path of righteousness consists in siding with the truth and of doing good deeds. This is the uphill or higher way, and the highest deed available to the believer is to 'free a slave'. This constitutes not only physical freedom, but moral, mental and spiritual freedom, as much from other human beings as from one's lower self. It is this freedom from necessity that 'freeing the slave' expresses. This amounts to securing the emancipation of man from virtually all manners of servitude. It imposes on man a whole range of social duties – freeing the slave, feeding the orphan, caring for 'the poor wretch in misery' – and it is these duties which confer corresponding rights on all. Over and above these is the duty to believe, and exhort one another to patience and to mercy. Man must believe in the 'Unseen', he must believe in 'all the Prophets', in 'the Angels', in all the 'revealed books' including those that have preceded the Qur'an. Man's ultimate return is to God who is his Creator, and his liability to render account is absolute. While facing the tests and trials of life, a believer is called upon to be 'patient and to pray' and to show 'compassion and mercy to others'. Those who can adhere to this way of life and exercise their power of choice in conformity with the tenets of the Divine Law are declared to be the 'people of the right hand' and those who disbelieve are

characterised as the 'people of the left hand'. It is this distinction which is vital.

Islam presents man with a Charter of Human Liberty within a religious framework which emphasizes the necessity of his being aware of his responsibility and accountability. In the earlier forms of religious belief and practice, the injunctions prescribed to regulate man's conduct were couched as 'absolute commandments', as for instance in the Ten Commandments given by Moses. In those cases the obedience of the believer was complete if he conducted himself in accordance with the law; at worst even mechanical conformity was enough. But the Qur'an is also the *furqan*. That is to say it is a book that makes exercise of discretion and discrimination possible for man, in that it outlines for him the possible courses of conduct that are open to him as a free agent and invites him to choose the difficult uphill way; to choose the right, side with truth and to stand steadfastly against all odds. Islam makes the believer his brother's keeper, particularly if the brother is helpless, uncared for or unprotected. It extends the sphere of his responsibility by commissioning him to believe, because without proper belief there is no proper conduct. He is, therefore, asked to base his conduct on right belief taught through the revealed Word of God contained in the Qur'an. He is also invited to be a missionary in the cause of Islam, to become a diligent crusader in the cause of inviting his fellow men to the way of patience, to show fortitude and compassion so long as his earthly life lasts. Should he do all this, he is rightly guided and will be duly rewarded by the grant of Eternal Life; real life as opposed to this life which is only the seed-bed of the Hereafter. That life which is to come is better and eternal; this life exists only to provide the opportunity to win the reward of that life. If he uses this to full advantage, not only will the believer achieve success here and now, but will also gain the reward of Eternal Life in the Hereafter.

If the life of man is to be located in the conceptual framework

which results from close study of the Holy Book, the position of man in the scheme of things must be viewed not as though he were a finished product, but rather as an evolving being, in a state of transition. Broadly speaking, man is to be regarded as one who is here on earth to spend his time as though it constituted a transitional phase which will one day be brought to an end by the most certain of all events, namely, his death. During this interim phase he cannot, on his own, hope to know the path he should pursue in order to enable himself to reach higher levels of his being. Just as it is inconceivable, seeing the rose bush embedded in manure and covered in thorns, to imagine the beauty of the rose it will one day produce, it is equally impossible to envisage the final phase of man's evolution in which he is destined to reach his highest fulfilment and expression. As the gardener prunes the rose to encourage yet more beautiful blooms, so the process of *taqwa* in the life of the believer. Instead of abandoning himself complete to the animal impulses within him he must learn to acquire self-control – so that the energy available within him does not exhaust itself on the animal plane of his existence, but is transmuted into higher forms of being capable of surviving the ravages of death and of enjoying the reward of higher, better and eternal life.

Human Rights conceived from the anthropocentric perspective are treated by Western thinkers as though they were no more than an expedient mode of protecting the individual from the assaults that are likely to be made upon him by the authority of the state's coercive power – by the unjust laws that may be imposed by the power of the brute majority to deny man the possibility of self-development. Islam, on the other hand, formulates, defines and protects these very rights by inducing in the believers the disposition to obey the law of God, the Practice of his Last Prophet, and to show obedience to those constituted authorities within the realm who themselves are bound to obey the law of God and the practice of the Prophet and conduct man's affairs accordingly.

Furthermore, affirmation of these rights is to enable man not only to secure the establishment of those conditions in terms of which the development of man as an individual on earth may be possible, but also to enable man to so conduct himself inwardly as well as outwardly, that he may be able to obey the Divine Law, the Law that only his Maker is qualified to impose on him. By accepting to live in bondage to this Divine Law, man learns to be free. Islam terminates the era of revealed religions, declares man free by telling him that no other Prophet hereafter would come, indicates the straight road to be traversed by him, and in the Holy Book provides sufficient guidance to enable him to choose. It is now for him to choose. Depending on the choice he makes, the road he takes will lead him either to Heaven or to Hell.

It is quite impossible within the scope of this paper to do full justice to all aspects of our subject. But before concluding, there is a question which must be answered. The question so frequently asked by Western scholars is why Islam has insisted so strongly on rewards and punishments: why the emphasis on Heaven and Hell. The answer to their question turns on the interpretation of freedom. Islam, a religion of mature minds, gave man complete freedom in the conduct of his life for the first time in history. To this freedom were annexed the consequences of his choice. Given the particular nature of man, true freedom lies only in obedience to God's law; only when he disobeys this law and submits to the rule of the lower passions that stem from his animal nature is man condemned to bondage. It is with this in mind that the Qur'an asks, "Have you seen that person who has taken his lower patience as his gods?" In disobeying God man acts counter to his own nature and reduces himself to slavery. It is too his obedience to God which itself ensures that he shall retain the capacity to be free and responsible. Heaven and Hell are not locations, but merely names for the states of man's being: he makes heaven or hell for himself by the way he conducts his life. Rewards and

punishments are not imposed from outside but follow as natural consequences of what a man does with his life here below. God is not some kind of policeman who enforces the law, but His Prophet sent down to help humanity is the warner and guide. He, through the revelation from God, has told us what we must do if we wish to avoid the many pitfalls along the way and make the most of the opportunities which life on earth offers. According to Islam, human action has an objective quality inherent in it, and it is this which overtakes man either as punishment if his conduct be bad, or as reward if it be good.



## **Islam and International Law**

*Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada*

*The contribution of Islamic jurists to International Law has gone largely unnoticed even by experts. Yet their influence on the formation of modern International Law in the West was certainly as great as that in other more widely recognized fields. Many of the concepts which now govern the conduct of inter-state relations, in peace as well as in war, are pre-figured in the Islamic Codes which they brought with them into Europe as early as the seventh and eighth centuries. It is these which bridge the apparent gap in the development of International Law between the end of the Roman Empire and the appearance more than a thousand years later of 'De Jure Belli ac Pacis' by the Dutch jurist Grotius, usually regarded as the father of modern International Law.*

## 10 Islam and International Law

International Law provides a system of rules governing the conduct of inter-state relations. In dealing with the history of modern International Law, Oppenheim and a number of other western scholars have speculated on the inexplicable gap of more than 1,000 years between the Roman period and the publication in 1625 of the Treatise 'De Jure Belli ac Pacis' (The Law of War and Peace) by Grotius the Dutch jurist, whom they regard as the father of International Law. Had such scholars referred to the Islamic contribution to International Law they would have perceived that the gap is bridged by the influence of Islamic legal concepts which predate later European codification of International Law by many centuries, and provide the 'missing link' in its development. It was precisely in this period that Islam reached its zenith in East and West. From Mecca Islam flashed into Syria, traversed the breadth of North Africa, and then leaping over the Straits of Gibraltar, it hammered at the doors of Europe. Islam achieved its full political maturity within the first century and its greater geographical extent during the first seven hundred years of its existence. It conquered Sicily and reached as far as the Campagna and Abruzzi in the south of Europe. Using Spain as a spring board it jumped into Provence, Northern Italy and even to Switzerland. From its stronghold in Spain and Sicily it transmitted its powerful cultural influences to the whole of

Europe. Baghdad in the East and Cordova in the West were the greatest centres of learning in the Middle Ages. This was the period which saw the beginning of European Civilization. Early European writers on International Law, such as Pierre Bello, Ayala, Vittoria, Gentilis and others, came from Spain or Italy, and owed much to the renaissance provoked by the impact of Islam.<sup>1</sup> It is these writers who provide the missing link between the Roman and the modern period and serve to give a clue to the far-reaching changes brought about by Islam in the concept of International Law. Grotius himself drew heavily on Arabic works as is witnessed in Chapter X (article 3) of his Treatise, where he discusses the concept of *postliminium* (the return of things captured by the enemy). This he notes was known in Muslim Law. There are of course scholars<sup>2,3</sup> who recognize the influence of Islam on modern International Law, but in general it has attracted little attention.

The conduct of the ruler, not only in time of war but also in peace, was referred to by the term *Sariat* as early as the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Codes or Compendia of Law seem to have come into existence in Islam in the very first century of *Hijrah*. In any case the *Corpus Juris* attributed to Zaid-ibn Aly (d. 122 H.) has come down to us and contains chapters on International Law. So far as is known, Abu Hanifa was the first to designate the term *Siyar* to the set of special lectures he delivered on the Muslim Laws of War and Peace. *Muwatta* of Malik (d. 189 H) also has special chapters on this subject. The lectures of Abu Hanifa were edited by his disciple Al-Shaibany (d. 189 H) into the first systematic study of the subject of International Law, the *Kitab-al-Saghir*, and *Kitab al Siyar al Kabir*.<sup>4</sup> This was in the 8th century of the Christian era. It is therefore obvious that International Law was the subject matter of Islamic writings under various titles – *Jihad*, *Ghanimah*, *Aman*, *Maghazis*, *Ridda* and *Siyar* – almost three centuries before the first codification of the Western Law of War, if we are to apply this inflated term

to Clause XXIII of the Second Part of Gratien's 'Decretum'.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Muslim International Law was not a complete innovation in the domain of legal studies and international relations. Nevertheless, it was a great advance on both the Greek and the Roman systems of International Law, since it attached much more importance to ethical values; for though the study of international law evolved into an independent branch of law, yet it continued to be subservient to religion. Further, in Muslim International Law one finds, for the first time in recorded history, a fully fledged notion of recognized rights for the enemy, in peace as much as in war. Moreover, as noted earlier, Muslim jurists were the first to develop the science of international law as an independent branch of law in general, and distinct from political science in particular. Finally, Islam provides for the first time the idea of a universal state based on the equality of man. The *shari'ah* included excellent provisions for the declaration of war, treaties of peace, armistices, diplomatic envoys, negotiations and guarantees of safe conduct.<sup>6</sup> Muslim law is comprehensive in its coverage of these and other topics. There are for example, in addition, ample provisions for dealing with the conflict between private and International Law which we shall not have space to explore in the present paper.

## SOURCES

The sources of the Muslim Law of Nations conform to the same categories defined by modern jurists and specified in Article 38 of the Statutes of the International Court of Justice, namely customs, agreement, reason and authority. The Qur'an and the traditions (*Hadith*) represent authority; the *sunnah*, embodying the Arabian *Jus gentium* is equivalent to custom; rules expressed in treaties with non-Muslims fall into the category of agreement; the *fatwas* and juristic commentaries of text writers, as well as the

utterances and opinions of the Calipha in the interpretation and application of the law based on analogy and logical deductions from authoritative sources, may be said to form reason. Such utterances, opinions and decisions are to be found in the jurists' commentaries in early text books and in the compilations of *fatwas*. These law books and digests had a greater influence on the development of law generally, and on the law of nations in particular, as commented and glossed upon more elaborately by later jurists.<sup>7</sup>

### THE LAW OF WAR – JIHAD

If we examine the concept *jihad* not only in its classical interpretation, but also in the light of more recent exposition, it becomes clear that the basis of a Muslim state's foreign relations is no different from that laid down by modern International Law. The word *Jihad* is derived from *Jahada* meaning ability, exertion or power. It also signifies war, hostility and fighting. Strictly speaking, the Arabic terms for warfare or fighting are *Harb* and *Kital*. The *Jihad* literally means 'an effort attracted towards a determined objective either against a visible enemy, against the devil, or against oneself – *Nafa*.' The *Jihad* in its broad sense of an exertion does not necessarily mean war or fighting, since exertion in Allah's path may be achieved by peaceful as well as violent means. The *Jihad* may be regarded as a form of religious propaganda that can be carried on by persuasion or by the sword. In the early Meccan revelations the emphasis was in the main on persuasion. Muhammad, in the discharge of his Prophethood, seems to have been satisfied by warning his people against idolatry and inviting them to worship Allah. This is evidenced by the following verse from the Qur'an, "He who exerts himself only for his own soul" (XXIX: 6), which expresses the *Jihad* in terms of salvation of the soul rather than a struggle to proselytize.

In the Medinan revelations the *Jihad* is often expressed in terms of strife, and there is no doubt that in certain verses the concept of *Jihad* is synonymous with the words war and fighting.

According to classical Muslim doctrine *Jihad* is war. Some of the Muslim jurists have defined war as the expending of ability and power in fighting in the path of Allah by means of life, property, tongue and other means. Sarakhsi writes: "The rule about fighting has been revealed by degrees. First the Prophet was enjoined to proclaim and withdraw: 'Profess publicly, then, what thou hast been bidden, and withdraw from those who join other gods with God.' (XV: 94) Then he was ordered to dispute kindly: 'Summon thou to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and with kindly warnings, dispute with them in the kindest warning.' (XXVI: 126) Later they were allowed to fight: 'Sanction is given to those attacked.' (XXXI: 40) They were also allowed to fight if unbelievers attacked them: 'If they attack you then kill them.' (II: 187) After this they were enjoined to fight on the condition of sacred months having ended: 'When the sacred months are passed then kill the polytheists.' (IX: 5) After this they were enjoined to fight for the cause of God." Shaikh Abdal Wahaab Al-Khallaf observes, "The verses concerning war in a number of Meccan and Medinan Suras of the Qur'an generally explain *Jihad's* 'raison d'etre', which boils down to one of two things, either to defend against attack, or to rout *fitnah* (persecution inspired by religious prejudices); in other words to protect the mission of Islam. 'Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loves not aggressors!' (II: 190) 'And fight them until persecution is no more and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease then Lo, Allah is seer of what they do!' (VIII: 39) 'Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged, those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said Our Lord is Allah'. (XXII: 39, 40)."

The Muslim casuists, like Christian jurists and Divines, have

divided the world into *Darul Islam* and *Darul Harb*, counterparts of Christendom and Heathendom. The territory of Islam is that which is already under Muslim rule, while the territory of war is that which is actually or potentially a seat of war. The classical Muslim writers envisage the continuance of intermittent war between them until the latter is absorbed in the former. According to this theory *Jihad* or holy war is an instrument that the Muslim state is bound to use externally to compel the world to accept Islam. Even under this theory the abode of Islam did not consist exclusively of Muslims, for the People of the Book, and even those belonging to other religions, were not forced to embrace Islam but only to accept Muslim rule. They were granted the status of *Dhimmis*, and were protected in their person and property and were allowed to follow their own religion in an unobtrusive fashion. The *Jihad*, according to this doctrine, is a collective obligation, *Fardal-Kifayah*, a duty which is binding upon the community as a whole and not on individuals. The Shias consider that the *Jihad* has entered into a state of quiescence and hibernation in the absence of the *Imam*, who alone is endowed with the authority of declaring it. According to Syed Ameer Ali, there is, apart from these two divisions, a third one, *Dar-ul Aman*, comprising those states with which the Muslim states are at peace. The inhabitants of *Dar-ul Aman* are *Mustamin*. The *Aman* may be for ever or for a limited duration, but so long as it lasts, the *Mustamin's* treatment is regulated in accordance with the terms of treaty with his country.<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to the classical view, there is another view which has already been adopted by a number of modern Muslim theorists. It is this view which sees the basis of a Muslim state's foreign relations as no different from that laid down by modern International Law. Consequently, Islam strives for peace rather than seeks war; it does not permit the killing of a human being merely because he or she fails to believe in Islam. Resort to war on the part of Muslims against the non-Muslims, therefore, is not

permitted on the basis of religious difference. Instead Islam allows such measures only when non-Muslims make or attempt aggression on Muslims, or interfere by force with their presentation of their message to the world. If there is no such aggression then fighting with those who do not happen to believe in Islam is illegal, and Muslims are permitted to undertake mutually profitable dealings with them. In brief, *Jihad* is not an offensive means for spreading Islam, rather it is permitted as a defensive measure to protect Muslims and their system of life if there is aggression:

*“And one who attacketh you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you.”* (II:194) *“Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors”* (II: 190);

when infidels expel Muslims from their homes:

*“And drive them out of the places, whence they drove you out.”* (II: 191) *“Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah.”* (XXII: 40);

when the Muslim subjects of enemy countries are subjected to persecution and torture, and they seek help of other Muslims:

*“Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory.”* (XXII: 39); *“But if they seek help from you in the matter of religion, then it is your duty to help (them) except against a folk between whom and you there is a treaty.”* (VIII: 72);

*“And to expel the people thence (from the Inviolable Place of Worship) is a greater (Transgression) with Allah; for persecution is worse than killing.”* (II: 217).

It should be mentioned that the various conflicts of the Muslims



with the surrounding tribes in the time of the Prophet, were occasioned by the aggressive and unrelenting hostility of the idolators, and were necessary for self-defence. The battle of Muta and the campaign of Tabuk, the earliest demonstrations against a foreign state, arose out of the assassination of an envoy by the Greeks.<sup>9</sup>

The policy of Islam toward Abyssinia during the first century of the Islamic era is more typical, and constitutes a precedent of great significance. The Prophet is reported to have said, "Leave the Abyssinians in peace, so long as they do not take the offensive." For centuries the Muslims considered Abyssinia as immune from *Jihad* and refrained from attacking it. Relations with it were friendly though Abyssinia was not part of *Dar-ul Islam*. The Islamic state of Medina, it should be recalled, was surrounded by unfriendly states. It had no choice but to defend its independence and vital interests against hostile neighbouring states. Abyssinia gave its full recognition to the then nascent Islamic state in an amicable way and did not carry out any offensive policy against it. Muhammad Talaat Al-Ghunaimi rightly concludes that so long as it is not attacked, the Islamic state is ordained to co-operate with non-Muslim states in terms of peaceful co-existence. It is to abstain from the use of armed force as an instrument of national policy, refrain from any violation of the territorial integrity and political independence of another state, and to undertake to seek adjustment of its differences by peaceful and orderly procedures. These commitments recall those stated by Article 2/1.3.5. of the Charter of the United Nations.<sup>10</sup>

## THE CONDUCT OF WAR

During the actual conduct of war Muslim law permits the following acts:<sup>11</sup>

*Enemy combatants may be killed, wounded, pursued and made captive. As regards the non-combatants they may be killed in defence only, and not otherwise;*

*recourse may be had to ruses (Khid'ah), according to the famous dictum (war is ruse) in Muslim military literature which is attributed to the Prophet;*

*the enemy may be attacked with all kinds of weapons;*

*night attacks are also permitted, as instances of such attacks are not lacking in the history of the time of the Prophet;*

*in the confusion of a night attack or during the use of war-machines which cause damage from an invisible distance, unintentional killing of non-combatants is exempt from punishment, but Muslim soldiers are warned not to aim at them;*

*killing non-combatants unintentionally. Sometimes the Muslim army has to fire at the enemy from a distance at places where not only are there non-combatants, but also neutrals and even Muslim subjects. At times the enemy takes shelter behind women, children or even Muslim prisoners. In all such cases the Muslim army is enjoined simply not to aim at the non-combatants and non-belligerents;*

*enemy property may be destroyed or captured;*

*the supplies of the enemy may be cut off or made unusable in some other way;*

*food and fodder may be obtained from the enemy country. This should be done against payment, but if the enemy people decline to sell it except by force, then force can also be used.*

## ACTS FORBIDDEN IN WAR

In actual fighting the following acts against enemy persons and property are forbidden to the Muslim army:<sup>12</sup>

*Unnecessarily cruel and tortuous ways of killing. As the Prophet says, "Fairness is prescribed by Allah in every matter";*

*killing of non-combatants. These include women, minors, servants and slaves who accompany their masters yet do not take part in actual fighting, the blind, monks, hermits, the very old, those physically incapable of fighting, the insane or delirious;*  
*decapitation of Prisoners of War;*  
*mutilation of men and beasts;*  
*treachery and perfidy;*  
*wanton destruction of harvest, and unnecessary felling of trees;*  
*slaughtering of animals in excess of what is necessary for food;*  
*excess and wickedness;*  
*adultery and fornication even with captive women;*  
*killing of enemy hostages, even if those of the Muslim state have been murdered by the enemy, and even if there is an express agreement that hostages may be killed in retaliation;*  
*severing the head of a fallen enemy. This is regarded as abominable (makruh);*  
*massacre after vanquishing the enemy or otherwise occupying a place. After the conquest of Mecca the Prophet declared a general amnesty excluding only six outlaws;*  
*killing parents except in absolute self-defence, even if they are non-Muslims and in the enemy ranks;*  
*killing peasants when they are not fighting the Muslims;*  
*killing traders, merchants, contractors and the like when they do not take part in actual fighting;*  
*burning captured men or animals to death;*  
*aiming at Muslim prisoners when the enemy takes shelter behind them;*  
*acts which are regarded as forbidden under treaties so long as the treaties are in force and valid.*

## PRISONERS OF WAR

In Europe until the 7th century prisoners of war were enslaved. Grotius advised the European nations to release prisoners of war in exchange or on payment of ransom. For a century no heed was paid to his advice. Some rules regarding prisoners of war were

framed at the Brussels Conference of 1874. The first Hague Conference of 1899 adopted these, and the second Hague Conference of 1907, after making some additions, adopted the Hague rules as part of International Law. The treatment of prisoners of war and other captives is now governed by the Geneva Convention of 1949, superseding the Geneva Convention of 1929. The 1949 convention contains a code of provisions more appropriate for twentieth century wars and armed conflicts than the earlier instruments.

Long before the Geneva Convention Muslim International Law had evolved various beneficial and fair principles for the treatment of prisoners of war. There are two Qu'ranic verses referring to the taking of prisoners:

*“Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve, then it is smiting of the necks until, when ye have routed them, then making fast of bonds; and afterwards either grace or ransom till the war lay down its burdens!”* (47: 4);

*“It is not for any Prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land!”* (8: 67).

Treatment during captivity has been the subject of liberal provisions and has been aptly summarised by Mohammed Hamidullah in his work *Muslim Conduct of States*.<sup>13</sup> As regards the prisoners of Badr, the Prophet ordered:

*“Take heed of the recommendation to treat the prisoners fairly.”* The consequence was that many Muslim soldiers contented themselves with dates and fed the prisoners in their charge with bread. Abu-Yusuf remarks that prisoners must be fed and well treated until a decision is reached regarding them. They are not to be charged for their food, the cost of which is to be borne by the capturing Muslim state. The Qur'an lays down, *“Lo! the righteous shall . . . (go to Paradise) . . . (because) they perform the vow and fear a day whereof the evil is widespreading, and feed with food the needy wretch, the orphan and the prisoners for love of Him (saying): we fed you, for the sake of God only we wish*

*for no reward nor thanks from you.”* (LXXVI: 5–9).

Prisoners are to be protected from heat and cold. If they have no clothes, these might be provided – as was the practice of the Prophet. If they are in any trouble or discomfiture, this is to be alleviated as far as possible, for which also there is the authority of the practice of the Prophet. He has the right to draw up wills for his property at home. Obviously these would be communicated to the enemy authorities through a proper channel. Among prisoners, a mother is not to be separated from her child, nor other near relatives from each other. The position and dignity of prisoners are to be respected according to individual cases. A Tradition is also attributed to the Prophet: “Pay respect to the dignity of a national who is brought low.” There is no evidence in early Muslim history of exacting labour from prisoners. If they tried to escape or otherwise violate discipline, they might be punished. If they succeeded in their attempt to escape and reached safety and were again captured, their previous offence of escaping might not be a ground for punishment, except perhaps as a breach of parole. The Qur’an has legalised the release of prisoners of war on ransom, and there are many instances in the life of the Prophet of his liberating them with various kinds of ransom and compensation. They were required sometimes to teach a number of Muslim boys calligraphy. Sometimes money in gold and silver, or other goods – for instance, spears and ammunition – were accepted. In the battle of Hunayn, 6,000 prisoners of the Hawazin tribe were taken, and all were set free as an act of favour (Bukhari, XL. 7). A hundred families of Bani Mustaliq were taken prisoners in the battle of the same name, and they were also set at liberty without any ransom (cf. Tabari, Tarikh, Cairo edn. III, 132). Seventy prisoners were taken in the Battle of Badr and it was only in this case that ransom was exacted, but they were granted freedom while war with the Quraishites was still in progress. The form of ransom adopted in the case of these prisoners was

that they should teach some of the illiterate Muslims how to read and write. When war ceased and peace was established, all prisoners would be set free according to the Qur'anic directions. The treatment accorded to prisoners of war is unparalleled in human history.<sup>14</sup>

When Khalid put to death captives of the tribe of Jadhimah, the Prophet could not refrain from expressing extreme displeasure at this. He is reported to have said when he heard of it, "O Lord, I tell you my displeasure at what Khalid has done." The confirmation of the protection given by Umm Hanifah, daughter of Abu Talib, to two relatives of her non-Muslim husband is also characteristic of the Prophet and breathes a spirit of humanity only known in the present advanced stage of international practices.<sup>15</sup> The Caliph Umar-II released one hundred thousand prisoners of war and acquired the city of Malatiah from the Byzantines. Prisoners can be exchanged. There are many instances of this in the life of the Prophet, sometimes one for one, sometimes one for more. The vehicles employed for the purpose of such exchange of prisoners enjoyed immunity during their journey to and fro.

An outstanding case of an eminent prisoner of war was that of Al-Hurmuzan, the famous Persian commander who fought the Muslims early in the conquest of Iraq. Al-Hurmuzan was captured (A.D. 640) and sent to Medina. The Caliph Umar called his attention to the result of fighting the Muslims. Al-Hurmuzan replied, "In pre-Islamic times Allah was on the neutral side, leaving both of us to fight and thus we were victorious over you." Umar said, "No! It was because you were united and we were not . . . and now tell me why did you not respect your pledges of peace?" Al-Hurmuzan replied, "I am afraid you will kill me before I tell you," and gasping like one faint with thirst, he begged for a draught of water. "Give it," said the Caliph, "and let him drink in peace." "Nay", said the captive, trembling, "I fear to drink, lest someone slay me unawares." "Your life is safe," said

Umar, "until you have drunk the water up." Al-Hurmuzan believing that he had won his case, poured the water upon the ground. The Caliph ordered another cup to be brought, but Al-Hurmuzan said that he was no longer in need of water. "I wanted not the water," he said, "but safety (*aman*) and now you have given it me." Umar said: "I am going to kill you." The people around the Caliph interposed and said that an *aman* was given. Umar had to yield. Al-Hurmuzan eventually embraced Islam and, thenceforth, residing freely in Medina, received a pension from the treasury.<sup>16</sup>

### TREATIES

International Treaties are agreements of a contractual character between states, creating legal rights and obligations between the parties. Previously the law of treaties consisted for the most part of customary rules of International Law. These rules have to a large extent been codified or reformulated in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties concluded on 22 May, 1969. Long before this, Muslim International Law attached great sanctity to treaties and considered them binding. A Treaty (*Muhadana*) or *Muwada's* is a form of *Aqd* (a tie or conjunction) signifying an agreement on a certain act with the object of creating legal consequences. Making treaties with non-Muslims is permitted by a divine sanction in the Qur'an.

*"How can there be a treaty with Allah and with his Messenger for the idolaters save those with whom ye made a treaty at the Inviolable Place of Worship? So long as they are true to you, be true to them. Lo! Allah loveth those who keep their duty."* (IX: 7).

The Prophet made a variety of treaties in accordance with the political objectives and circumstances which dictated their conclusion. These treaties varied from conciliation treaties between the Awaz and Khazraj tribes to which the Jews of Medina adhered and which constituted a charter for that city, to

the treaty of Hudaibiyah which established temporary peace between the Muslims of Medina and the polytheists of Mecca. The prophet also granted constitutional charters in the nature of treaties to the Jews and Christians who were incorporated as subjects of the Muslim state.

Basing his argument on the Qur'anic command, "When ye contract debt for a fixed term, record it in writing", and on the practice of the Prophet, Shaibany and others say that a treaty must be in writing. The date of writing of a treaty and the date on which it comes into force, as well as the duration of the treaty, must be precisely mentioned.<sup>17</sup> Majid Khadduri interprets Shaibany differently. According to him the writing as well as the signing and dating (in certain cases the witnessing) of the treaty are not necessarily legal pre-requisites, they are merely to indicate that an agreement has been reached, as well as to record the actual terms of the treaty and its duration.<sup>18</sup>

Normally the heads of Islamic states negotiate the treaty. Their representatives are also authorised to enter into treaties. Sometimes the army commander can provisionally enter into treaties. It may be mentioned that unlike the Hira and Damascus Treaties, the Patriarch of Jerusalem demanded that the Jerusalem Treaty should be signed by Caliph Umar himself rather than by his representatives. Umar agreed and came to Jerusalem to sign the historic treaty in A.D. 638.<sup>19</sup>

Treaties are subject to ratification. History records a letter of Khalid ibn-Al-Walid in which he asked from Yaman for instructions from the Prophet. If the supreme chief is not available at hand, the provisional agreement is later ratified by competent authority. It is possible that ratification may be denied and the whole treaty rendered null and void. There is an instance of this in the time of the Prophet, when the Prophet himself had concluded a pact with the proviso that it would be ratified after consulting the pillars of the state; they rejected the terms and the parchment was consequently effaced.<sup>20</sup>



Once the treaty is concluded, Muslim authorities are strict as to the necessity of adhering to its terms. The Qur'an clearly lays down:

*“Fulfil the Covenant of Allah when ye have covenanted, and break not your oaths after the asseveration of and after ye have made Allah surety over you. Lo! Allah knoweth what ye do!”* (XVI: 91).  
*“Excepting those of the idolaters with whom ye (Muslims) have a treaty, and who have since abated nothing of your right nor have supported anyone against you. (As for these), fulfil their treaty to them till their term. Lo! Allah loveth those who keep their duty (unto Him)”* (IX: 4).

Good faith was expressly enjoined by the Prophet for he directed, “Be faithful in keeping your contract for God will require an account of such at your hands.” After the treaty of Hudaibiyah the Prophet exhorted the Muslims, “Be faithful to your oaths because in Islam there is great fidelity to oath and agreement. Beware whoever shall break his promise then I am his enemy in the next world.”<sup>21</sup> It may be recalled that in the treaty of Hudaibiyah one of the clauses allowed that any male from Mecca who sought refuge with the Prophet was to be extradited while no reciprocal measures were to be taken by the Meccan Quraish. At that time Suhail, the envoy of the Quraish, was still in Hudaibiyah. His own son Abu Jandal, who had embraced Islam and was being subjected to tortures in imprisonment in Mecca on that account, managed to escape from the Quraish and reached the Muslim camp still in chains. He fell at the feet of the Prophet and begged for protection and asylum. His father, the envoy of the Quraish, sternly demanded his immediate surrender under the terms of the treaty. No less a person than Hazrat Umar entreated the Prophet, on behalf of the Muslims, to offer protection to Abu Jandal but the Prophet decided to stand by his word. He surrendered a Muslim to the persecution of the Quraish

because that alone was consistent with the promise he had given them. The undertaking was duly honoured.<sup>22</sup>

#### PACTA SUNT SERVANDA (TREATIES MUST BE HONOURED)

Certain theorists, for example the Italian Jurist Anzilotti, later Judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice, have rested the binding force of treaties on the Latin maxim *pacta sunt servanda*. Under this principle, states are bound to carry out in good faith the obligations they have assumed by treaty. In the Vienna Convention the Preamble recites that good faith and *pacta sunt servanda* are universally recognized. Article 26 provides that all treaties are binding on the parties thereof, and must be performed by them in good faith. Long before the Vienna Convention this principle was laid down in the Qur'an. It is inherent in the conception of *Aqd* and is recognized by all the authorities.<sup>23</sup> In Islamic theory Allah considers Himself a third party in every treaty the Muslims conclude. Any breach of a treaty is an unforgivable sin since it is also the renunciation of an obligation towards Allah.<sup>24</sup> Hans Wehberg has correctly concluded:

*“For the Islamic people, the principle pacta sunt servanda has in addition a religious basis, Muslims must abide by their stipulations. This is early expressed by the Qur'an in many places.”*<sup>25</sup>

#### REBUS SIC STANTIBUS (CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES)

While circumstances remain the same, some Muslim jurists specify that the duration of treaties with non-Muslim authorities must be specified. The Hanafi and Shafi schools held that a peace treaty with the enemy should not exceed a period of ten years. They based their argument on the precedent of the Hudaibiyah Treaty, which it will be recalled stipulated that the period of peace would last for ten years. The Malikita jurists, however, allow a treaty of peace with non-Muslims which exceeds ten years but is still for a definite period. Treaties with *Dhimmis* were treated differently. They were regarded as perpetual. <sup>26</sup>

According to Oppenheim, treaties concluded for a certain period of time cannot in principle be dissolved by the withdrawal of one of the parties, but there is an exception to this rule. Vital changes of circumstances may be of such a kind as to justify a party in demanding to be released from the obligations of a treaty which cannot be abrogated by unilateral notice. Many writers defend the principle and assert that treaties are concluded under the tacit condition *rebus sic stantibus*. When kept within proper limits this doctrine embodies a general principle of law as expressed in the Doctrine of Frustration, or supervening impossibility of performance, or the like.<sup>27</sup> The matter is now dealt with in Article 62 of the Vienna Convention under the heading 'Fundamental changes of circumstances.'

According to Al-Ghunaimi, while recognizing the doctrine *rebus sic stantibus* Islamic injunctions stress the inviolability of treaties, and emphasize the principle *pacta sunt servanda*. The Islamic Classical doctrine subscribes to the view that motives may serve in determining changes in those factors which justify Islamic states in unilaterally denouncing its treaty obligations irrespective of the duration of the treaty.<sup>28</sup> It is possible that the passage of time renders certain conditions of a treaty impracticable, and that in view of the changed circumstances they should be revised. Muslim jurists say that if the Muslim ruler denounces a former treaty he cannot do so unless he informs the other party, and he cannot act in any way contrary to the treaty until reasonable time has passed, during which time it is to be expected that the information will have reached the central government of the other party.<sup>29</sup> However, if the other party starts hostilities in violation of the treaty then no notice is necessary.<sup>30</sup> It may be recalled that the Prophet's alliance with the Jews was abrogated as a result of the Jews' attempt on the life of the Prophet. Retaining friendly relations with the rest of his Jewish confederates he marched against the Banu Nadir tribe and subjugated them.<sup>31</sup>

## ARBITRATION

Arbitration is the determination of differences between two states through the decision of arbitrators whose award is binding. Islam insists on first trying to settle international disputes by peaceful means, namely mediation, conciliation and arbitration. War is the last resort when peaceful methods fail to redress aggression. Ibn Hisham records that in the year 1 AH, the first, or at least one of the first, expeditions the Prophet despatched against the caravans belonging to the city states of Mecca – then at war with Islam – was headed by Hamza. Abu Jahl was leading the enemy party. A fight was imminent but Majidy-ibn-Amr, who was an ally of both states, intervened to mediate, and both the detachments parted from each other quietly.<sup>32</sup> Reference may also be made to the case of Ubai-ibn-Salul, who although a Muslim subject, in his capacity as an old ally of the Jewish tribe of Qainuqa, interceded with the Prophet on their behalf, and was granted his request by the Prophet. The most important precedent from the time of the Prophet is the case of the Jewish tribe Banu Quraiza. A treaty was executed between the Muslims and the Jews of Banu Quraiza, stipulating that neither would fight against the other. But in complete disregard of the terms of the treaty the Banu Quraiza joined the enemy in the Battle of the Ditch. After the battle was over the Prophet wanted to punish them for treachery. However, they initiated a proposal for arbitration, and themselves nominated Saad-bin-Muaz, who had been one of them before embracing Islam, as the arbitrator. The Prophet accepted the proposal and honoured the award. In the charter of Medina, arbitration was the means adopted to settle disputes, and the Prophet was recognized as the Supreme Arbitrator with obligatory competence.

## DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

The privileges and immunities of diplomatic agents have been set out in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of April

18, 1961. The immunities accorded under Muslim law compare favourably with these.

The Holy Prophet enjoyed full rights of legation in sending and receiving ambassadors. Amr-Bin-Umaysh Damari was the earliest Ambassador of the Muslim state sent to Abyssinia in 2 A.H. He was still a non-Muslim. The non-Muslim may therefore be appointed as ambassador of an Islamic state.<sup>33</sup> In the time of the Prophet, whenever a foreign envoy or delegation came, there was a Master of Ceremonies who instructed the envoys in the local formalities previous to their reception by the Prophet. The Prophet when in Medina used to receive foreign envoys in the Great Mosque where the pillar of Embassies still commemorates the place. He is reported to have expressed his wish on his death-bed that his successors should award gifts to the envoys as he himself used to do during his life time.<sup>34</sup> Envoys, too, generally presented gifts to the rulers to whose court they were accredited. Such things went to the state treasury. The envoys were officially entertained. There were several large houses in Medina in the time of the Prophet specially meant for foreign guests. There is often mention of the house of Ramlah-bint-Al Harith Ibn-Sad in this connection.<sup>35</sup>

### INSTRUCTIONS TO ENVOYS

A spirit of sympathy, tact and judgement governed the Prophet's standing instructions to his envoys who were accredited to various cities, communities and countries to convey his message. They were asked to work with patience and avoid severity, to give good tidings to the people and not to incite hostility towards their mission. In the case of people with some kind of religion the envoys had orders to invite their attention to the Unity of God and to persuade them to have faith in all the Prophets of God in the first instance. The Prophet also sent representatives with messages to the potentates of neighbouring countries – to Abyssinia, Egypt, Byzantine and Persia – calling upon them to

embrace Islam and to adopt it as the official religion of the state. The authenticity of such messages to foreign monarchs is accepted by various authorities and the text of most of these messages is available.

### PRIVILEGES OF ENVOYS

Envoys, along with those who are in their company, enjoyed full personal immunity. They must not be killed, nor be in any way molested or maltreated. Even if the envoy or any of his company is a fugitive of the state to which he is sent, he must not be treated other than as an envoy. The envoy of the Impostor Musailamah who was extremely rude and provocative in his behaviour towards the Prophet provides a good precedent. The Prophet said to him, "Had you not been an envoy, I would have ordered you to be beheaded." There is also the case of Wahshi, the Abyssinian, who had barbarously murdered Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet, in the battle of Uhud. He was mortally afraid to accept the assignment, but the enemies of Islam themselves assured him that the Prophet did not ever touch the person of an envoy. And so it was proved when Wahshi presented his credentials. The Prophet allowed no deviation from Diplomatic Immunity. Equally, when the Quraish sent Abu Rafi as an envoy to negotiate peace with the Muslims he declared his faith in Islam and refused to return. The Prophet admonished: "You are an ambassador, you must therefore go back and if you still feel as strongly about Islam as you do now, you are always at liberty to return as a common Muslim."

Only in extraordinary cases were envoys detained. While negotiating peace with the people of Mecca prior to the conclusion of the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet deputed Uthman Bin Affan to resume the negotiations in Mecca. The Quraish detained him. This was however not known in the Muslim camp where a rumour spread, after some days of waiting, that Uthman had been killed. This was the limit. Any further concession was bound to

be considered a sign of weakness. The Prophet decided to avenge the blood of his envoy. Sitting under a tree in the plain of Hudaibiyah, he demanded a Covenant of Fealty from all of his followers. The response was spontaneous.<sup>36</sup> It was also reported that in the meantime the Prophet had detained the plenipotentiaries of Mecca until the Muslim envoy detained in Mecca returned safe to Hudaibiyah.<sup>37</sup> Eventually Hazrat Uthman returned and the chapter was closed.

The property of envoys was exempt from import duty in Muslim territory on the basis of reciprocity. Shaibany says, "If the foreign states exempt Muslim envoys from custom duties and other taxes, the envoys of such states will enjoy the same privileges in Muslim territory; otherwise they may, if the Muslim state so desires, be required to pay dues like other ordinary visitors."

### CONCLUSION

Islam, as the very word implies, means peace, safety and salvation. Islam is supranational in the ethnological and other current usages of that term. The Qur'an has proclaimed: "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct." (XLIX: 13). As the Poet-philosopher Iqbal points out: "Islam is neither nationalism nor imperialism but a League of Nations, which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference, and not in order to restrict the social horizon of its members."<sup>38</sup> Islam envisages a world organisation of the type of the United Nations wherein all members may enjoy equal status and rights without any distinction whatsoever. Islam is a religion of unity and action which safeguards the rights and liberties of the individual, and provides at the same time for collective welfare. The contribution of Islam to the internationalizing of human society, to the peace of the world in general, and to International Law in particular, is considerable.





# **Islamic Banks: A Model and the Challenge**

*Ahmed A. El-Naggar*

*In any under-developed country the only successful long term development must come from below. It must start at the grass roots with the smallest unit of society, and it must be indigenous, not imposed from the top through a foreign agency. An Egyptian experiment in Islamic banking provides a model of how such a scheme might work. El-Naggar examines its method of operation and evaluates its contribution to the social and economic development of the community.*

## **II Islamic Banks: A Model and the Challenge**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Most Islamic countries are currently engaged in instituting economic and social development programmes. Such development activities require the establishment of dynamic institutions that will lead the drive towards socio-economic change. But institutions alone are not sufficient to achieve the desired objectives. Other vital factors must be taken into account. The quality of leadership is all important, since it is the leaders of any such institution who are responsible for communicating to the people its fundamental role and purpose. If the people are to play their part fully in what must be a truly national development effort, they must be made aware of what it is they will be involved in. Moreover, the development institutions must be closely connected with the social and cultural environment in which they operate. The instrument of change must reflect the needs and aspirations of the people concerned; must be consistent with the beliefs and spiritual values of the society in which it operates. Failure to take this into account will result in the failure of the institution to achieve its objectives.

We can summarise the problem of development whether social or economic in the Islamic countries in contrast to Western more developed countries, by the nature and state of capital formation and the process of the continuity and volume of its accumulation. If we analyse the problems facing the desired capital formation

process, we shall come up against multiple interacting factors, namely social, economic, psychological, political, etc.

This paper illustrates a model of an Islamic bank that could be considered a practical model for assuming the responsibility of effective socio-economic development in Islamic countries by making use of the concept of development from below. As such it is distinct from any other known financial or social institutions. The developing countries of Islam are asked to study and analyse this experimental model with a view to adopting it as part of their own development planning. The experiment was begun in Egypt in 1963 in Mit Ghamr, a city in the Nile Delta. Its purpose was to explore the possibilities of mobilizing local savings and credits as an essential requirement for socio-economic development in the area. The experiment deserves careful attention not only on account of its valuable insights into the field of savings education and local credit, but also for its unique approach to community development. The goal was to begin industrialization of the Egyptian villages without state interference, and this in the land of the oldest agricultural peasantry and the oldest state bureaucracy in the world.

The model was designed to pay particular attention to the fundamental attitudes of the villagers towards saving and investment, their need to achieve, their trust – or lack of it – in formal economic institutions, and their skills for collaborative efforts in establishing small industries for the development of their community. It was with these considerations in view that the bank established the close contacts that led to mutual trust between the villagers and the Bank personnel.

## CONSIDERATIONS UNDERLYING THE EXPERIMENT

1. The basis of dynamic economic growth is an increased volume of saving.

2. The essential role of private savings, education in saving, and of credit expansion in the process of socio-economic development is fully recognized.
3. Individual saving is primarily a personal matter and reflects a certain way of life. The promotion of thrift must therefore begin by changing current attitudes.
4. There is considerable evidence from successful economic development models to indicate that the effective contribution of the masses in the development process cannot be overlooked. It need hardly be stressed that the economy of developing countries cannot be strongly and organically built up solely from the top. The integration of the masses in the process of capital formation is therefore essential.
5. It was obvious from the beginning that it would be somewhat impractical to establish savings banks similar to banks prevailing in any other country, owing to wide differences of economic, social and political climate, and to the nature of change in our country in contrast to others. Lack of private initiative, lack of entrepreneurs, ignorance in dealing with financial institutions, deterioration of the capital market, and lack of experience are instances of such factors.
6. To be most effective, development institutions must not be separated from the environment in which they operate. Their leaders should consider the cultural context in which they operate, so that the institutions reflect the people's needs and aspirations, and are consistent with their beliefs and spiritual virtues.

#### ACCOUNTS OPERATED BY THE BANK

To enable the Bank to achieve its principles and objectives, the management of the Bank considered it important to provide the simplest possible facilities in the operation of its dealings with the depositors. Accordingly, they initiated three types of accounts:

*The Savings and Loan Fund*

*The Investment Fund*

*The Social Service Fund*

#### THE SAVINGS AND LOAN FUND

The fund guarantees care for the small saver in particular, helping him to accumulate sufficient funds to safeguard his and his family's future. The minimum deposit in this fund is five piasters (5 pence). Such a small deposit ensures that the vast majority of the population have the opportunity to co-operate with the bank and become accustomed to free and regular savings. Freedom of deposit withdrawals at any time is guaranteed in order to provide complete flexibility for savers. No maximum limit is imposed.

Regular savers are entitled to short-term loans to assist them in the exercise of productive activities which would bring prosperity to them and their local districts. These loans are without a fixed rate of interest and are small loans.

The Bank stipulates that scientific studies should prove the technical and economic soundness of any project for which a loan is made. The Bank provides the client with all necessary technical consultations free of charge. It co-operates with him in studying the project and its nature in order to safeguard both the Bank and the borrower by ensuring the soundness of the investment of the loan, and the possibility of repaying it easily.

As the Bank looks upon the saver as the good citizen who does his best to establish himself and who is therefore the person most entitled to assistance when exposed to sudden or unexpected disaster, it has guaranteed that savers in this fund shall benefit from the resources of the Social Service Fund without any obligations to repay what is necessary, in order to prevent him from falling into the clutches of usurers.

#### THE INVESTMENT FUND

This fund accepts the deposits of individuals who wish to increase

their savings by capital investment in profitable enterprises. These deposits are channelled either directly to investment projects, or indirectly through entrepreneurs to finance local projects. The yield of these investments is distributed among depositors in this fund in proportion to the amount and duration of their deposits.

The Bank aims to encourage the initiation of small projects and local industries so that it may create new spheres of work, and additional sources of income to raise the citizens' standard of living in the local areas, and widen the local market.

Freedom to draw from the sum deposited in this fund is restricted in accordance with the nature of investment operations and liquidity requirements.

#### THE SOCIAL SERVICE FUND

The resources of this fund are amassed from the money provided by *Zakat*, and the subscriptions of individual and public bodies. They are distributed in the form of financial assistance to savers who are in financial difficulty as a result of sudden misfortune.

### THE OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF THE BANK

The project was based on many principles which were studied, analysed and carefully applied by the Bank. Of these the three most important are:

*Participation*

*Decentralization*

*Consistency and integrity of the Bank accounts*

#### PARTICIPATION

Islam has strong opposition to banking systems based on the payment of interest. Its alternative is the system of participation. This means that the bank participates with the borrowers of

investment loans in their losses as well as their profits. It could be said that the participation system opens new perspectives for economic thinking on credit and investment policies and activities all over the world. The participation principle enables the Bank to mobilize and motivate the people to borrow money for investment since it is not opposed by Islam. On the other hand, when the Bank participates with the borrowers in their productive enterprises, it necessitates the mobilization of the Bank's technical expertise in the quest for fields of investment, and rational methods to invest in such fields. As a result the Bank helps to conserve the wealth of the local society which might otherwise be dissipated as a result of lack of experience on the part of the borrowers.

#### DECENTRALIZATION

The Bank proved that effective socio-economic development is to a great extent dependent on the decentralized management of those institutions which form part of the development plan. This principle constitutes an essential ingredient of success. In clarifying the importance of this principle, certain considerations should be taken into account:

1. Differences in circumstances from one area to another could lead to differences in behavioural patterns and motivation. In a process such as saving, the considerations that motivate the people to save in one community might well be inappropriate elsewhere. For this reason decentralization was considered to be important to the project.
2. The stages of thrift education, credit enlightenment and the inculcation of new social values necessitated direct and sympathetic contacts and relationships between the leaders and employees of the Bank and the population of the local areas. It is unlikely that such contacts and relationships would be effective or successful if managed and organised from the centre.

3. Constant follow-up of the invested loans, the guarantee of their re-payment, the effective use of the money and other factors, required decentralized management of the different activities of the Bank.
4. The development of banks of this type constitutes a form of persuasion for the people of these areas to remain in the locality instead of migrating to the capital and to the major cities.
5. This principle helps in achieving a balanced social and economic development for Egyptian communities. This was one of the main objectives in all countries which adopted a local administration system in the attempt to bridge the gap between the capital and the provinces.
6. The disparity in local conditions, local needs, local resources, local problems, local aspirations and hence local priorities, highlights the importance of establishing means to participate in the social and economic development of the local community which are relevant to its particular needs. In consideration of such disparities the Bank adopted decentralization as one of its main principles.
7. The local areas are rich in unexploited reserves of human energy and the only hope of mobilizing such energy is to have local institutions which, through direct contacts with the locality, can harness this resource.

#### CONSISTENCY AND INTEGRITY OF THE BANK ACCOUNTS

The Bank's operations through its accounts reflects the activities encompassed by its objectives. The Bank endeavours to further the socio-economic development of the community in a way which will mobilize its existing resources and lead it to a more advanced stage of development. That is why the different types of account were designed in a way that was both consistent with, and integrated into, the achievement of this aim. The accounts are diversified to cover a wide spectrum of saving and



investment types. The integrity of the Bank accounts guarantees to provide the community with banking services which are not offered by the existing traditional banking system.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EVALUATION

The results of the experiment were examined by the National Institute for Management Development (NIMD). Of the sample interviewed 64 per cent had a strongly favourable attitude towards saving, and 60 per cent of them favoured the local Savings Bank project. Ninety-nine per cent of the sample indicated that the city of Mit Ghamr had in recent years changed for the better. Asked about the sources which had influenced this change, 87 per cent mentioned the local administration, and 47 per cent considered that the Bank had had an impact in forcing that change in the area. Accordingly, in evaluating the Bank's influence we should note the impact of such banks not only in a traditional economic sense, but also socially.

### SOCIAL EVALUATION

The influence of the Bank in promoting social change is even more significant than its achievements in other areas.

1. It has mobilized the village inhabitants and changed their attitudes from passive fatalism to positive concern for their community.

There is no doubt that the formation of capital cannot be considered as the only factor necessary for far-reaching development. It must be accompanied by social change for the masses. Thrift education provides an opportunity to influence the behaviour of individuals relatively quickly and cheaply. This concept provides the individual with many of the positive characteristics and virtues needed for the development of the community. In achieving this, one of its major objectives, the Bank can claim notable success.

2. It has prevented the deleterious political and social effects resulting from the migration of villagers to the industrial areas and big cities.
3. The bank has created a healthy atmosphere for interaction between the Egyptian intellectuals and the masses in the furtherance of national development, thus disproving the stated need to import external ideologies.

#### ECONOMIC EVALUATION

1. There is no question that by all standard criteria such as increase in average size of deposits, increase in number of banks, increase in bank assets and profits, increase in requests for more banks and other like measures, the project's record looks impressive. In 1967 four more branches and eight new banks were added to the Mit Ghamr Bank, and eight new banks were opened in eight other provinces.
2. Within the three years following the establishment of the first branch, the number of savings banks reached nine, and many local governments were asking for the establishment of such banks in their cities and villages. Handling the increasing number of requests for the establishment of new branches was one of the problems that faced the founders of the Bank. The increased number of requests indicated the strong belief in and appreciation of the Bank project as an effective tool for the socio-economic development of our communities.
3. The Bank has clearly had dramatic success in enlisting savings from a class of very small savers in that section of society not previously touched by other financial institutions. The number of savings depositors in all banks increased from none in 1963 to 357,637 in 1967. Total deposits in all the accounts increased from none in 1963 to £956,538 (Egyptian) in 1967.
4. In spite of the short period during which the Bank has been

in operation, it has rendered vital services to the economic development of the local community, especially in the development and establishment of small industries, and in providing new opportunities of work for unemployed workers in Mit Ghamr and its 53 affiliated villages. A factory for bricks and building materials maintains a leading role in the field of finance investment and saving in the life of the masses.

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTION

Paradoxically yet not surprisingly, it has been its success, rather than the reverse, which has created problems for the Bank. In each case the management of the Bank was forced to seek solutions to these if its operations were to continue unthreatened.

### SOCIAL AND COMMERCIAL OPPOSITION

In the long run, the spread of Islamic banks represents a major threat to the existence of traditional banking systems. They are introducing a new concept of banking more expressive of Islamic belief and practice, and firmly rooted in a popular Muslim base. This led to a number of problems to which the Bank was forced to find solutions. Though existing social authorities see the Islamic Bank as an institution conforming to the narrow traditional concept of banking, when the Bank starts to operate and to develop its social role, they see it as interfering in their own area of authority and regard it simply as re-duplicating their own efforts unnecessarily. Should this reaction result in conflict and consequent political intervention, the social role of the Bank might well be jeopardized by the intervention of vested interests concerned to control or restrict its operations.

By analysing the experience of the Bank in Egypt, it was evident that a process of change is taking place in many sections

of society. In furthering such changes, the functions and role of the Bank could, from a narrow viewpoint, be regarded as conflicting with existing institutions such as the social authorities, the commercial banks and some of the central holding organisations – industrial or commercial – which are mainly under government control. The solution to this problem lay in securing the full understanding and support of the government, and this came through appreciation of the perspectives lying behind the Bank's operations and objectives. Lack of such co-operation would constitute a real hindrance to the Bank's functioning and existence.

It was with this consideration in mind that the Bank started its operations by stressing the savings objective. However, as soon as the social role of the Bank began to make itself evident in the successful development of the local area, conflict with the social authorities started. In the meantime, the size of savings and number of savers was increasing rapidly either by the addition of new savers, or by savers who transferred their money from the commercial banks to the Islamic ones. Inevitably this aroused the traditional banks against their new popular-based and progressive competitor.

#### GOVERNMENT IDEOLOGY

The management of the Bank must recognize the realities of the context in which they operate. It is pointless to ignore the influence of the prevailing political system. Most of the Islamic countries have been affected by the conflict between differing international ideologies. The ideological changes taking place in most of the Islamic countries reflect deep structural changes in their societies with a tendency toward centralizing power in the hands of government. The impact of the conflict is felt mainly in those countries where the government will not tolerate any autonomous economic or social institutions. Since they have the ultimate power, such governments take over the economic and social institutions and remake them in their own images and ideology.

Such action means the politicization of the economic and social processes to the detriment of their functioning.

There is no doubt that the existence of Islamic development banks in such political contexts may suffer considerably. Being an agent of fundamental social and economic change, with Islamic *Shari'ah* as its base, Islamic banks may arouse political leaders to force their control on the Bank's operations and functions. This could well happen at any stage of the Bank's development and could cause serious setbacks. That is why the prevailing ideology, the political system, and the attitudes of government leaders deserve more than passing attention by the Bank's leaders if the other banks are to continue to develop and function. It is important that so vital a project avoid any setback which might endanger its existence and progress.

#### CENTRAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Some Islamic countries have adopted central comprehensive planning to guide the different sectors of their country towards the most effective solution to the problem of development. Such planning is imposed from the top by the central authority of the country concerned. The reverse is true for the operation of local Islamic banks in local areas. To satisfy the needs and fulfil the aspirations of the citizen, and to secure a balanced socio-economic change in these areas, the Islamic Bank must interact with the environment around it. Working from the lowest level of the poor citizens, its effects are felt all over the country with the extension of its branches. If in doing this the banks fail to take into account central government planning, they may well fall foul of the central authorities, who will lose no time in opposing them, by placing restrictions and limitations on the scope of their operation and the role they play. It is essential therefore that without compromising their own position, the banks recognize the importance of co-ordination with the central planning authorities on the one hand, and with the holding industrial

and commercial organisations and social institutions on the other.

#### LEADERSHIP

An important ingredient of the project's success was that the local Islamic Bank was based on intimate contact and mutual trust and confidence between the villagers and the inspired and qualified leaders and personnel of the Bank. The Bank gave the right opportunity to a group of devoted Egyptian intellectuals to participate effectively in the socio-economic development of local communities in their own country. It was not simply a question of meeting the challenge of establishing the bank and extending it, it was also essential to create the right type of leaders, and to build the resources from which further leaders might come. There is an urgent need for men whose personal qualities reflect the ideals of the Islamic Bank; men who are self-aware, sensitive to social conditions, flexible in practice and yet of the highest moral integrity. The development process must be led by individuals who are themselves inspired by the ideals of the Islamic Bank; only they can inspire others. Only they by their continuing action and vision, can further the long term development of the Bank's work. It is these qualities that must be inculcated and fostered by any programme to train future leaders.

In a community development organisation such as the Islamic Bank the main task will be to attract individuals already committed to public service, and then training and retraining them in an atmosphere from which they themselves derive the satisfaction of inspiring others. Skilfully designed recruitment policies aimed at securing candidates with maximum qualifications should be instituted, and training officers should be selected from among those who possess, in addition to technical competence, a capacity to inspire the trainees. Leaders should also be good Muslims.

Developing leaders with the right qualities is not an easy task,

but if the Islamic Banks are to continue to expand along the lines which have to date proved so successful, they must secure the right leadership. Only this will guarantee their continuing expansion. And only then can they effectively further their valuable contribution to the social and economic development of the community.

PART THREE

## **The Challenge**



## **Islam and the West – Past, Present and Future**

*I. H. Qureshi*

*For many centuries following the emergence of Islam, historical and geographical factors ensured that its contact with the West was close and continuing. Despite political conflict, cultural exchange was considerable. In Spain and Sicily for example the Islamic influence was far-reaching in its effect. The discovery of the New World upset the balance of the Old and marks the beginning of European hegemony. The years that followed saw the political and economic eclipse of Islam even in those places where it had been pre-eminent, almost without their being aware of the disaster. Later domination by European Powers in the era of colonial expansion stems from this collapse. Even today many Islamic countries are still suffering the after-effects of such domination. Only a concerted effort to re-discover and re-activate the original values of Islam from within can restore its independence of action and self-respect. Only then will it once again have something to offer to the West, now itself seeking new sources of strength.*

## **12 Islam and the West – Past, Present and Future**

History and Geography alike dictated that Islam and the West should come into close contact. Historically, Islam did not sever its relations with the Judaic tradition. Indeed it looked upon itself as a continuation of the religious enlightenment of the Jews, and instead of rejecting either Judaism or Christianity, stood forth as the pristine and pure form of each, seeking to correct what it looked upon as false accretions to the true and basic revelation accorded to the Semitic prophets including Jesus. Thus Islam established a common idiom of religious language in which it could converse with Judaism and Christianity alike. It soon spread into areas which had been under the control of the Roman Empire, and wrested large territories from the Byzantine Empire which looked upon itself as a successor to the Romans and maintained numerous traditions inherited from Rome. The Byzantine Empire was always under the influence of the Greeks who had even earlier deeply influenced the peoples of Asia Minor and parts of Egypt. The Muslims themselves drank deep at the fountains of Greek learning and soon emerged as the main repositories of its treasures.

The culture of the West is founded upon the Judaic tradition in religion, Greek learning in matters relating to the intellect, and Roman thought in the fundamentals of law, jurisprudence and ecclesiastical organisation. Because of a demarcation between

religious and secular spheres of life, a strong strand of paganism is present in the entire fabric of its thought and culture. Two at least of the constituents of Western culture, namely the Judaic tradition and Greek learning, are not foreign to Islam despite the differences of emphasis on individual points. Roman jurisprudence having become latent in the thinking of the areas that had been ruled by Rome, it too might have played an unconscious role in the development of the *Shari'ah* in so far as *ijtihad* had contributed to its evolution. But paganism is anathema to Islam, which frowned upon all notions, customs and mores of pagan origin, whereas Christianity never fought against pagan influences. There are strong reasons to believe that pagan notions entered Christian thought – even Christian dogma and belief – quite early after Christ. Be that as it may, there is little doubt that there is no aspect of Western life where it has not retained a hold. Even where direct influence may be difficult to trace, evidence of indirect penetration will not be too difficult to find.

Despite this fundamental difference in approach to the various problems of life between Christianity and Islam, it cannot be forgotten that Asia Minor had layer upon layer of thought contributed by several civilizations that had produced a fund of ideas which had become the common unconscious heritage of the people inhabiting the region. This in itself produced common patterns of thought that asserted themselves whenever the human mind was applied to matters of the intellect or the spirit, and it should be remembered that both Islam and Christianity have been denizens of this habitat. This leads us directly to the importance of geographical factors in the historical process. Europe and North Africa are separated by the Mediterranean Sea which also washes the shores of Asia Minor. This sea is not difficult to navigate and since time immemorial has provided lines of communication. Navigation is helped, as a glance at the map will show, by the presence of several groups of islands which provide

easy bridgeheads. At the two extremities, Gibraltar and the Bosphorus, the land mass of Europe almost touches the shores of Africa and Asia respectively. The Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia cut the distances considerably, and Italy, jutting out southwards with Sicily, provides such an easy crossing that navigation offers no problem. Greece and Crete provide yet another bridgehead. Paradoxically therefore, the Mediterranean acts as barrier and bridgehead between the western limits of Islam and the borders of Europe, serving both to encourage independent development as well as cultural exchange. Geography also provided the means of communication by which political domination of weaker people by better organised states became possible. Even during the lifetime of the Prophet, the Muslims came into conflict with the Byzantine Empire which ultimately resulted in its annihilation, though the process took several centuries. In the West, Tariq entered Spain in 711 and the Visigothic kingdom of Roderick came under the sway of the Muslims, who crossed the Pyrenees and would have changed the course of European history but for their disastrous defeat at the hands of Charles Martel in 732. European writers have always rejoiced over the defeat of the Arabs, but they have ignored the fact that this only extended the Dark Ages in Europe by seven centuries. The Moorish Empire however, suffered from the chronic tribal disease of internal dissensions and the tide began to roll back after three centuries of magnificent achievements. In 1085 Alfonso VI of Leon and Castile recovered Toledo. In 1212 Alfonso VIII of Castile won a great victory over the Muslims at Navas de Tolosa and obtained a hold upon Andalusia. Cordova fell in 1236 to Ferdinand III of Castile. The Moorish strongholds now fell one by one until Ferdinand and Isabella took the last Muslim city of Granada in 1492. After trailing glory in art, architecture, medicine, science and learning for several centuries, during which time they illumined the whole of Western Europe, the Muslims of Spain ceased to exist.

The fact that the Arabs held Sicily from the 9th to late 11th century is well known. What is not so well known is that Muslim scholars were welcomed and patronised at several Christian courts in Italy where they contributed to learning and science. Venice, because of its maritime trade, had close business relations with Muslim merchants who were not infrequent visitors to the city. Indeed there was an inn in the city where they could get the amenities to which they were accustomed in Muslim lands.

At the Eastern end of the Mediterranean stretched the Byzantine Empire ultimately conquered by the Ottoman Turks, who established and maintained a strong government in their European territories which helped in the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The Turkish conquest of Adrianople in 1365 put them firmly on European soil and gradually led to the conquest of large areas of the Balkans. The great Turkish victories of Kossovo (1398) and Nikopol (1397) crushed Christian power in the Balkans, and Constantinople itself would have fallen earlier but for Timur's invasion and capture of Sultan Bayazid I (Bajazet) in 1402. The cultural impact of the Moorish occupation of Spain is well known; less is known of the Muslim intellectual impact upon Italy; but the influence of the Ottoman Empire has gone unrecognized mainly because the Muslim conquest of Constantinople is generally looked upon in Western academic circles as a watershed. It marked the beginning of the Modern Age – the Age of Western pre-eminence in every walk of life, and the end of any real cultural influence by Islam on the West. Yet a visitor to those areas of Eastern Europe that have been, at one time or another, under Ottoman rule, finds traces of Turkish influence almost everywhere. Even though tastes in mores, dress and behaviour are affected only too rapidly as the result of the dominance of any cultural group, culinary habits are much less amenable to change. The cuisine of the areas from Athens to Budapest is a constant reminder of the fact that they were, at one time, deeply influenced by the Turks. Sociological research

would expose many more hidden traces of the long association between the two cultures.

The displacement of Muslim influence in the West was not rapid. The first blow was the fall of Toledo in 1085 and the Norman conquest of Sicily (1060–91). Even while the Ottomans were advancing into Europe, the Moors were being turned out of Spain. The fall of Granada in 1492 was followed by Columbus' realisation of his dream of reaching India by a Western route which resulted in the discovery of America. This was a world-shaking event in many ways, not least because it soon upset the balance between the strength of the Muslim world and that of Europe. The realisation that America was not India led to the Portuguese efforts under Henry the Navigator to sail round Africa, until Vasco da Gama reached Calicut with the help of an Arab pilot in 1498. This was thirty-one years before the first siege of Vienna by the Ottomans, at a time when the star of the Turks was still ascendant. The incursion of the Portuguese into the Arabian Sea was most portentous for the Muslim World, heralding as it did the political, economic and intellectual decline of the Muslim peoples. Earlier and elsewhere, the Mongol invasions under Jenghiz Khan (1167–1227) and his grandson Hulagu Khan (1217–1265) had destroyed all that the Muslims had built up in Central and West Asia in the course of six centuries. The Eastern Muslim world did make a recovery, but it was only partial. The Mongols had destroyed irrigation works laboriously built in arid areas; they devastated schools, colleges and libraries. On the one hand the basis of economic prosperity had been destroyed; on the other intellectual effort was paralysed. In the course of the following two centuries the Muslims did build up powerful states, but intellectually their effort had necessarily to be concentrated upon rediscovery and conservation of what was left, thus restricting originality and upsurge. The Portuguese incursion was the precursor of even more disastrous developments.

The entire Indian Ocean had been virtually a Muslim preserve. Arab traders had almost a monopoly of the maritime commerce on its littoral, and they also possessed a good share in the trade of the East Indian archipelago and China. There were few competitors, the Muslim traders were welcome in all ports, Muslim or non-Muslim; commerce was peaceful and the vessels were unarmed. Nor did there seem any great need to build up a navy. The Portuguese, on the other hand, were armed to the teeth and combined trade with piracy. Indeed they soon fell out even with the Zamorin, who had initially welcomed them in accordance with the established tradition of his family. Real commerce was reduced to a trickle so far as the Portuguese were concerned, and therefore they enriched themselves by capturing Arab merchantmen laden with cargo. Arab trade was thus paralysed and the situation soon became intolerable. The Egyptian fleet moved out and joined forces with Sultan Bigarha of Gujrat and the Zamorin, but after some initial success the allied fleet was annihilated near Diu in the South of Gujrat in 1509. The Arabian Sea, and for that matter the entire area of Arab maritime commerce, was left totally exposed to the depredations of the Portuguese. Henceforth the competition for supremacy on the Eastern seas was between the nations of the West, who controlled all the trade that there was. This was more serious a matter than even the Mongol holocaust, because it led to the economic strangulation of the Muslim East, which tragically seems never to have realised this. The vast and rich empires of the Ottomans, the Persians, the Uzbeks and the Mughuls took no remedial measures to save the situation. The loss of maritime trade ultimately led to the enslavement of the entire Muslim world either directly or indirectly. Even now we are still far from independent.

Today the position is that Muslim countries without a single exception are merely autonomous and are by no means the masters of their destiny. We can fight our enemies only with the permission of some Western power or powers, with arms

supplied by them and for such periods as their goodwill continues and their interests are served. Our governments are formed and replaced at the instance of some foreign power. We cannot bring into office a government of our own choice. If some seemingly popular upsurge – that might in all likelihood be created with foreign advice and money – brings a government to power, we can keep it in power only while it suits the power that helped in the creation of the upsurge, or some other power whose interests are not served by that government. In our lands democracy is soon reduced to a farce, because the national will cannot be permitted to assert itself or even to find a clear expression. The result is that we are unable to order our lives in the way that Islam dictates. The powers that be would never permit the emergence of a government that would make a serious attempt in that direction. Indeed the Muslim masses, whose loyalty to Islam is deep, albeit emotional and seldom intellectual, and who are vaguely desirous of seeing the supremacy of Islam established at least in their own lands, are not masters of their destiny. They are exploited for selfish and narrow political ends, which most often are of a dubious character. They are fed upon falsehoods cleverly dished out to them through government-controlled agencies. It is not a mere coincidence that today Muslim governments are mostly veiled or open dictatorships, some blatant others subtle, some unpopular and others charismatic, yet dictatorships that do not permit expression of inconvenient convictions and truths. The peculiar manner in which political development has taken place in these countries has also created elite groups which control all the economic resources and sources of power and, in their own interest, sustain dictatorships. They impose systems of education, economy, social institutions and mores to perpetuate the stranglehold that they have established over the entire area of national life. All this is done in the name of progress which is identified with westernization. The Muslim peoples cannot come into their own until they



dethrone these elite groups which are the creators of all their misery and have led their nations into a deep psychosis of an inferiority complex that paralyses their thought and action alike. The elite suffer from their inferiority complex even more deeply than their victims. There can be little hope of release from the tentacles of this psychosis – a psychosis that leads into unquestioned faith in and worship of everything Western – through the adoption of half-measures to revive the sense of national identity and the uniqueness of Islam. The Gordian Knot can be cut only with the sword of revolutionary thought and action. As the new ruling elite includes many in its ranks who do not believe in Islam and, taking their cue from their mentors in the West, look upon religion as obscurantism and thus inimical to progress, they try their utmost to destroy Islam. A new technique has been evolved by some dictators of subverting Islam in the name of Islam, because otherwise the inert masses would wake up and sense danger. With the name of Islam on their lips and even with some actions of a superficial nature to remove any suspicion regarding their bona fides, they propagate ideas and mores that are destructive of Islam, fooling in this manner not only the masses but even some thoughtful Muslims who tender all support to these enemies of Islam to sustain them in power.

A great agent in the production of an elite, not only indifferent but in fact hostile to Islam, is the so-called modern education in Muslim countries. A discussion of its shortcomings and evils would take too much time, but within the present context, it is perhaps sufficient to say that a system which, in spite of its origins and cultural and religious overtones, has wrought havoc in the West itself so far as moral and religious values are concerned, when transported and debased in the process to an entirely different environment – different not only physically but in its traditions and culture as well – could not fail to corrupt the new environment, and to be itself corrupted in the process. The old system that had prevailed in the Muslim world and had

lost neither its vigour nor its utility, was deliberately left to languish uselessly, instead of being reformed and made responsive to new needs. The result has been the production of a selfish and spineless intelligentsia possessing neither spiritual nor moral strength, nor real ability to deal with mundane problems. Thus we get a total contrast; a confident, strong and efficient albeit morally and spiritually decadent West, and a spineless, unthinking, inefficient and weak world of Islam morally and spiritually corroded. How then can the Muslim countries – with little to offer materially or morally – play any independent or constructive role in the world? How can they gain the respect of the West? The Muslim lands seem to have lost their own souls; how can they retrieve other souls from darkness? The West may be standing on the brink of a disaster, but this makes no difference. If it collapses it will not collapse alone, but will take its imitators and dependants – including the world of Islam – along with itself into the abyss. And all of us, the Muslim world and the materialistic West, seem to be heading inexorably in that direction.

As Muslims we must believe in the redemption of the world through the teachings of the greatest and the last of the Prophets. For this we have to set our house in order. First of all we must throw off the shackles of slavery and gain true independence. We must cut ourselves loose from the apron strings of the Great Powers, otherwise we shall never be able to develop our unique individuality. This will mean a struggle, an appraisal of the world situation from a Muslim and not national or parochial point of view, and total dedication to the effort without inhibitions and false fears. We invite the Great Powers to meddle in our affairs in the hope that they will relieve us of our weaknesses and solve our problems which in fact are quite often their creation. And yet in these days of global strategies and interests, as well as because of many smouldering fires in our own areas, we do need a strong prop to help us. This prop can only be the collective strength of the Muslim World, a world that is today torn by

internal dissensions and narrow loyalties, with the result that not even our present small units are safe from disruption. To achieve the goal of a united and strong Muslim World, we shall have to shed many disastrous selfishnesses and create a Pan-Islamic organ of action. The highest form of such an organ known to political science is the State. Why should our intellectuals, leaders and statesmen not begin to think on these lines? We have in history the examples of many states emerging from the unification of smaller sovereign states – for instance Germany, Italy and the United States of America. Many would be disposed to call this idea chimerical and unrealistic, but if it is realised that we have no alternative, we can and should set about working for its realisation. Is there any real obstacle – except that of vested interests – in the creation of a Muslim Commonwealth of Nations for consultation on matters of common interest? It would have tremendous moral stature and mediate in interstate disputes. Gradually it could acquire coercive authority and convert itself into a confederation. Beyond that it need not go. In its initial stages it could develop Pan-Islamic organs of discussion relating to such subjects as education, economic growth and development. Instead of going around the world with the beggar's bowl either for pecuniary assistance or for experts with technical expertise, the Muslim World can achieve prosperity and the development of its great potentialities by the investment of its resources in its own less favoured areas, and by creating a pool of experts who today sell their talents to the highest bidders in the West. It must be remembered that every penny invested abroad and every brain exported only impoverishes the Muslim lands to the benefit of the West.

If the world of Islam achieves unity and devises means for its own development, using its own economic and human resources, it can shake off its dependence upon the West and look forward to dealing with others on terms of equality. It can then think for itself on sound lines without a trace of an inferiority complex and

recover its self respect. Only then can its real development begin in accordance with its particular character. It will have something to offer not only to the West, but to the entire human race. Islam as the badge of backwardness is quite a different matter from an Islam that has acquired self-respect. Its voice will be heard with attention, and who can foretell the result of a self-confident Islam speaking to a West tired of its moral and spiritual bankruptcy and seeking for itself fresh springs of strength?

## Women in Islam

*Aisha Lemu*

*There is no aspect of Islam more widely misunderstood than the role and status of its women. The popular view combines the fantasy of a Hollywood version of the Arabian Nights, with a picture of deprived and repressed victims of a man's world. Neither approaches the truth, but ignorance and prejudice have supplied facts to fit the case. Closer examination of the role assigned to women in the teaching of the Qur'an reveals a quite different picture, in which women lead a life balanced between freedom and protection possibly more fitting to their needs than the competitive struggle the more 'liberated' women are embarking on in the West. It is not impossible that the West might learn something from an informed and unprejudiced study of women's place in Islamic society.*

## 13 Women in Islam

Western ignorance of the World of Islam is almost total, but if there is one area above all others where the vacuum of knowledge has been most effectively filled with misinformation, it is that surrounding the role of women in Islam. Non-Muslims ask such questions as, "In Islam do you believe that women have souls?" and "Muslim women do not pray or go to Mecca, do they?" and "Paradise is only for men in Islam, isn't it?" The assumptions that underlie such questions are without any foundation in fact, representing as they do a compound of fantasy and misconception based on ignorance. To those outside Islam, the Muslim woman is spiritually a non-person, existing in a world of shadows, oppressed and suppressed, from which she will at death pass into a sort of limbo for soulless nonentities. This impression has in the past often been fostered by Christian missionaries, many of whom may have actually believed it to be true. Side by side with this image in the Western mind is another one projected by the entertainment media, of the Muslim woman as a member of the harem in the Hollywood version of the 'Arabian Nights'. Here she forms a unit in a flock of scantily-clad and bird-witted young ladies who lie around in palaces awaiting the opportunity to be noticed by their Lord and Master the Sultan. These images are of course very appealing to the Western imagination. As the mysterious and chaste veiled woman, living

in fear of her jealous and brutal husband, she is the traditional maiden in distress, waiting for St. George to slay the dragon and rescue her. As the slave-girl, dazzling in silks and jewels, she awaits her master's pleasure. Which Western man or woman has not at one time or another indulged in a fantasy in which he or she plays one of these roles? This is doubtless why the fantasy lingers so long. We want to believe that these women exist so that we can weave these day-dreams about them, though publicly we must condemn a situation so obviously contrary to the principles of women's liberation.

This then is the fantasy, and as long as we recognize it as such it is a pleasant form of escapism. But if we are concerned to discover the true role of women in Islam, the best source of information on this must be neither tales of imagination nor Hollywood's choicest offerings, but the source-book of Islam, namely the Qur'an, and the *Hadith* – the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

We shall look at some of these verses in the Qur'an and at sayings of the Prophet Muhammad which relate to women, and try to draw from them some conclusions as to what these mean, or should mean, in the practical expression of a woman's life. We shall not examine the historical status of Muslim women in individual countries past or present, since this varies considerably with time and place, owing to the influence of regional customs stemming from pre-Islamic or modern cultural factors.

Let us start by correcting the misconceptions about the spiritual status of women; do they indeed have souls which might experience paradise? The Qur'an states categorically that men and women who practise the principles of Islam will receive equal reward for their efforts.

*“Lo! men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak*

*the truth, and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard (their modesty) and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah much and women who remember – Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward.” (XXXIII. 35).*

Again:

*“Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do.” (XVI. 97).*

Each of the Five Pillars of Islam – Belief, Prayer, Fasting, Poor-due and Pilgrimage – is as important for women as for men, and there is no differentiation in their reward. As God says in the Qur’an:

*“O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female . . . the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.” (XLVI. 13).*

Indeed, one of the most famous mystics in Islam, Rabi'at Al-Adawiyah, was a woman.

Having established beyond question the spiritual equality of men and women in Islam, what of their intelligence, knowledge and education? The Prophet Muhammad said:

*“The search for knowledge is a duty for every Muslim, male or female.”  
“Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”*

“Knowledge” for a Muslim is not divided into sacred and secular knowledge, and the implication of these sayings of the Prophet,



in modern terms, is that every Muslim boy or girl, man or woman, should pursue his or her education as far as possible, bearing in mind the words of Allah in the Qur'an:

“*The erudite among His bondmen fear Allah alone.*” (XXXV. 28).

In Islam, therefore, both men and women are credited with the capacity for learning and understanding and teaching, and one of the aims of acquiring knowledge is that of becoming more conscious of God. Islam considers that the more a person, male or female, studies the creation and observes its workings, the more he or she becomes conscious of the Creator, the power who made and sustains the creation. One of the most famous women in the history of Islam is Aisha, the Prophet's wife. And the quality for which she is remembered primarily is that of her intelligence and outstanding memory. By virtue of these qualities, she is considered to be one of the most reliable sources of *Hadith*. The Prophet is reported to have advised the Muslims that they could rely on Aisha for half of their religious instruction.

Generally speaking, there was not in the Muslim world of the early and mediaeval times any bar or prohibition on women pursuing studies – on the contrary, the religion encouraged it. As a result of this many women became famous religious scholars, writers, poets, song-writers, doctors and teachers in their own right. Nafisah, a descendant of Ali, was such a great authority on *Hadith* that Iman Al-Shafii sat in her circle in al-Fustat when he was at the height of his fame; Shaikha Shuhda lectured publicly in one of the principal mosques of Baghdad to large audiences on literature, rhetoric and poetry, and was one of the foremost scholars of Islam.<sup>1</sup> There are numerous other instances of learned Muslim women who have been teachers, writers and poets being held in the highest respect by the Muslim society. There is, therefore, every encouragement for a Muslim woman to

pursue studies in any field which benefits her intellectually, and to make use of her academic or professional training for the good of the community, subject to certain moral precepts which we shall look at later.

Having clarified women's independent spiritual and intellectual status in Islam, we should turn next to their status with regard to men, and their relationship with men. We are here looking at a relationship of interdependence. The Qur'an says:

*“And of His signs is this: He created you for helpmeets from yourselves that ye might find rest in them, and he ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect.”* (XXX. 21).

This is the central definition of the relationship between man and wife. They are expected to find tranquillity in each other's company and be bound together not only by the sexual relationship but by 'love and mercy'. Such a description comprises mutual care, consideration, respect and affection. There are numerous *Ahadith*, particularly those narrated by Aisha, which give a clear insight into the way the Prophet treated his wives and the way they treated him. The most striking thing about these is their evidence of the mutual care and respect of the marriage relationship. There is no servility on the part of the wives, and there are probably as many references to the Prophet doing things to please his wives as there are of the wives doing things to please the Prophet. The Qur'an refers to wives generally in another chapter, saying:

*“They are raiment for you and ye are raiment for them.”* (II. 187).

In other words, as a garment gives warmth, protection and decency, so a husband and wife offer each other intimacy,

comfort, and protection from committing adultery and other offences.

It follows from what has been quoted from the Holy Qur'an that one of the important aims of Islamic regulations governing behaviour and human relations is the preservation of the family unit in such a way that the atmosphere of tranquillity, love and mercy and consciousness of God can develop and flower to the benefit of husband and wife, and also of the children of the marriage.

In examining the conduct expected of men and women towards each other, both inside and outside marriage, we have to bear in mind these aims and weigh their benefits to the individual and to society. We must also bear in mind that Islam has a coherent view of life, and that the various aspects of it should not be considered in isolation from each other. It comprises a total way of life, and each part of it needs to be seen in the context of the whole. To understand the role of a woman in a Muslim society, therefore, we have to examine both her duties and her rights; the behaviour expected of her towards men and the behaviour due to her from men. Of the latter, the Qur'an says:

*“Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women).”* (IV. 34).

In a Muslim society, therefore, the man has full responsibility for the maintenance of his family. This is a legal obligation. Anything a wife earns is her own to dispose of, either to use it herself or to contribute it to the family budget if she wishes. The wife herself is responsible for the care of her home and the welfare of her family. She may express her views and make her suggestions known on all matters, but the best role she can play in keeping the marital tie intact and strong is to recognize her husband as the person responsible for the running of the

affairs of the family, and to obey him even if his judgement is not acceptable to her, provided he does not go beyond the limits of Islam. This is the meaning of obedience in the context of marriage in Islam. It is a recognition of the role of the husband as the head of the family unit.

The Prophet is reported to have said:

*“The best woman is she who, when you see her you feel pleased, and when you direct her she obeys. She protects your rights and keeps her chastity when you are absent.”*

A man is expected to take care of his wife and show consideration to her and to all women as the weaker sex. The concept of chivalry had its origin in the early Muslim world, and is held by many scholars to have passed from the Muslims into Europe at the time of the troubadours of Mediaeval France. This concept has come in for many blows in the last fifty years or so, as it runs contrary to the present-day tendency for women to attempt the struggle for their livelihood in a harsh world in the same way as men do. The Muslim opinion is that she should be spared from these struggles and worries so that she can give her full attention to the making of a home. The Muslim woman's role in the home is a vitally important one to the happiness of the husband, and the physical and spiritual development of their children. Her endeavour is to make her family's life sweet and joyful, and the home a place of security and peace. This and her early character-training of the children have a lasting effect on the behaviour and attitudes of the next generation when they reach adolescence and adulthood. There is a well-known saying in Arabic – *al-ummu madrassatun* meaning ‘the mother is a school’, which conveys the importance of this role.

We turn now to the procedures of marriage in Islam. When a girl reaches the age of marriage it is customary for the Muslim parent to play a major role in the choice of the husband, but she

must be consulted. It is reported that when a girl came to the Prophet complaining that she had been married without being consulted, the Prophet directed that she was free to have the marriage dissolved if she wished. Nowadays educated Muslim girls are having a greater say in the choice of husband, but it is still considered that the parents' opinion of the boy is of great importance, and it is rare for a boy or girl to marry against their parents' desire. A widow or divorcee, however, may marry whoever she wishes, presumably because she is considered to have enough maturity and experience to decide for herself. When a girl or woman is married it is a compulsory part of the marriage for the bridegroom to give her a dowry, which may be of any agreed value. This dowry is not like the old European dowry which was given by a father to a daughter on her marriage and thence became the husband's property. Nor is the Muslim dowry like the African 'bride-price' which is paid by the bridegroom to the father as a form of payment or compensation. The Muslim dowry is a gift from the bridegroom to the bride and it becomes her exclusive property. It remains her property even if she is later divorced. Only in the case of 'Khul – divorce at the wife's request – may she be required to pay back all or part of the dowry.

The treatment expected from the husband, whether or not he is on good terms with his wife, is laid down in the Qur'an:

*“But consort with them in kindness, for if ye hate them it may happen that ye hate a thing wherein Allah hath placed much good.”* (IV. 19).

Even if divorce is decided on, the good treatment referred to before is still required. The Qur'an says:

*“Divorce must be pronounced twice and then (a woman) must be retained in honour or released in kindness. And it is not lawful for you*

*that ye take from women aught of that which ye have given them.”*  
(II. 229).

Thus the dowry and any other gifts he may have given to her cannot be taken away.

The Qur'an also says:

*“When you have divorced women and they have reached their term, then retain them in kindness or release them in kindness. Retain them not to their hurt so that you transgress (the limits).”* (II. 231).

Kind treatment of wives and families is a part of the religion of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

*“Among the believers who show most perfect faith are those who have the kindest disposition and are kindest to their families.”*

And according to another *Hadith*:

*“The best among you are those who are kindest to their wives.”*

Divorce is taken to be a last resort in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad said:

*“Of all the things God has permitted, the one He most dislikes is divorce.”*

Moreover the procedure of divorce in Islam is such as to encourage reconciliation where possible. After divorce the woman should wait three monthly courses during which her husband remains responsible for her welfare and maintenance. He is not permitted to drive her out of the house during this period but she may leave if she wishes. The main purpose of this waiting

period is to clarify whether the divorced wife is or is not expecting a child. Its second use is as a cooling-off period during which the relatives and other members of the community will try to help towards a reconciliation and better understanding between the partners. The Qur'an says:

*“And if you fear a breach between them twain (the man and wife) appoint an arbiter from his folk and an arbiter from her folk. If they desire amendment Allah will make them of one mind.”* (IV. 35).

If they are reconciled they may resume the marriage at any time within the waiting period, whereupon the divorce is automatically revoked. If further trouble arises and divorce is pronounced a second time, the same procedure is followed. Only if the matter reaches a third divorce does it become irrevocable. The wife is then free after three monthly courses to marry another man if she wishes. The first husband is not then permitted to re-marry her unless she has in the meantime married another man and been divorced.

This procedure is the normal one followed if the husband is the one seeking divorce or if the divorce is by mutual consent. If the wife seeks divorce against the wishes of the husband she may take her case to the court and obtain divorce. An instance was reported during the time of the Prophet when a woman came to him saying that although her husband was a good man and she had no complaint against his treatment, she disliked him greatly and could not live with him. The Prophet directed that she should return to the husband a garden which he had given her as her dowry, as the condition of her divorce. This procedure is sanctioned in the Qur'an where Allah says:

*“And if you fear that they may not be able to keep the limits of Allah, in this case it is no sin for either of them if the woman ransom herself.”* (II. 229).

In many ways modern developments in marriage law in England and other Western countries are tending towards the Islamic pattern, albeit unconsciously, in stressing guidance and counselling before divorce, privacy of divorce proceedings, and speeding of the process of divorce once it has been established that the marriage has irretrievably broken down. The law of Islam does not compel unhappy couples to stay together, but its procedures help them to find a basis on which they can be reconciled with each other. If reconciliation is impossible the law does not impose any unnecessary delay or obstacle in the way of either partner's remarriage.

Another right of the Muslim woman which is a part of Islamic Law is the right to inherit property. The method of division of inheritance is clearly laid down in the Qur'an, and the general rule is that women are entitled to inherit half the share given to a man. This may, if taken in isolation from other legislation, appear to be unfair; however, it must be remembered that in accordance with the verse of the Qur'an quoted earlier, men are charged with the maintenance of all the women and children in their family, and, therefore, their necessary obligations of expenditure are far higher than those of women. The half-share that a woman inherits may therefore be considered a generous one, since it is for her alone. Any money or property which a woman herself owns, or any business which she runs, is entirely her own and her husband has no right to any of it.

Apart from her role as a wife, the Muslim woman has a very important role as a mother. The status and value attached to parents in the Muslim world is very high. The Holy Qur'an says:

*“Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, say not ‘Fie’ unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. And lower unto them the wing of submission*



through mercy, and say: *My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little.*" (XVII. 23–24).

Again God says:

*"And We have enjoined upon man concerning his parents – His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in years – Give thanks unto Me and unto thy parents. To Me is the journeying."* (XXI. 14).

It is reported that a man came to the Prophet and asked:

*"Messenger of God, who is the most deserving of good care upon me?"* The Prophet replied: *"Your mother (which he repeated 3 times), then your father, then your nearest relatives in order."*

In another *Hadith* the Prophet is reported to have said, *"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers."* In other words, Paradise awaits those who cherish and respect their mothers. The Muslim mother has consequently a great feeling of security about the type of care and consideration she can expect from her children when she reaches old age. As the verse of the Qur'an quoted above indicates, thankfulness to parents is linked with thankfulness to God, and failure in either of these respects is indeed a major failure in one's religious duties. The principles of Islam made explicit in the Qur'an and *Hadith* are belief and good conduct; good conduct begins at home with one's closest relatives. A Westerner who has had close contact with a Muslim society cannot fail to be struck by the love and respect given to parents and the honour shown to old people in general, both men and women, as a direct application of these principles of Islam.

We have discussed a Muslim woman's status with regard to her husband and her children. What then of her relations with men other than her husband and her close relatives? This is where a

considerable difference is found between Islamic practice and the customs now prevalent in the Western world. In the West, sexual relations outside marriage are still in theory generally considered a sin or at least vaguely undesirable. But in practice no steps whatsoever are taken to reduce the very high incidence of pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations, in spite of the soaring rates of illegitimacy and venereal disease. On the contrary, in films, television and certain sections of the press, there is every encouragement to consider pre-marital experience desirable, and extra-marital affairs quite normal. Abortion will conveniently get rid of any undesirable side-effects of this way of life. In contrast with this uncontrolled situation, Islam advocates a number of very specific measures to reduce the temptations towards sex outside marriage. As a start the Prophet advised all people to get married if they could, so that their natural desires should have a legitimate and legal fulfilment. Owing to the permission for limited polygamy, there was no necessity for there to be a surplus of unattached women in the society. Women are directed in the Qur'an when they appear in public to cover themselves in a modest type of dress so as not to attract men. The Muslim way of life excludes the boy-friend girl-friend system, mixed parties, dancing between men and women, taking alcohol or drugs, and other facets of the Western way of life which are well-known to provide the situations from which pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations develop. Social entertainments in Islam are generally either within the family and close friends of the family, or among men and women in separate groups. Sex outside marriage is considered in Islamic Law not only as a sin but as a crime which can be punished under the law in the same way as theft or murder. The punishment for it applies equally to the man and woman and is severe and deterrent in its effect.

Whatever may be the habit of men the world over of blaming women for actions which they condone in themselves, according to the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam God requires the same

high standard of moral conduct from men as He does from women. He has imposed the same legal penalties on men and women for infringement of the moral laws. This is true of the moral code throughout Islam. There is no dual standard in its application to men and women alike.

Let us now look back at some of these points in more detail since they are very relevant to the life style of a Muslim woman. Firstly the matter of dress. A Muslim woman may wear whatever she pleases in the presence of her husband and family or among women friends. But when she goes out, or when men other than her husband or close family are present, she is expected to wear a dress which will cover all parts of her body, and which should not reveal the figure. What a contrast with Western fashions which every year concentrate quite intentionally on exposing yet another erogenous zone to the public gaze! In the past few years we have seen the rise and fall of the mini-dress, the micro-skirt, the wet look, hot pants, the see-through, the topless and other garments designed to display or emphasise the intimate parts of a woman's body. There is of late a similar tendency in men's dress which has become almost skin-tight, although here the men's fashion designers appear to have come to a temporary standstill until men are liberated enough to accept topless or see-through trousers, which is fortunately not yet the case. The intention of Western dress is to reveal the figure, while the intention of Muslim dress is to conceal it, at least in public. The relevant verse of the Qur'an says:

*“O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they will be recognized and not be annoyed.”*  
(XXXIII, 59).

A Muslim woman is required when she goes out to wear a dress that covers her from head to foot and does not reveal the figure.

According to some scholars only the hands and face should be uncovered, while according to others the face should also be covered. The onus of modest behaviour however falls not only on women. The injunctions of the Qur'an are directed to men and women alike.

*“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands’ fathers, or their sons or their husbands’ sons, or their brothers or their brothers’ sons or sisters’ sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know aught of women’s nakedness.”* (XXIV. 30–31).

One of the other practices aimed at strengthening the home, and minimising promiscuity, is that of the seclusion of women. The verses of the Qur'an on which those who practise it base their custom say:

*“O ye wives of the Prophet! Ye are not like any other women. If ye keep your duty (to Allah), then be not so soft of speech, lest he in whose heart is a disease aspire (to you), but utter customary speech. And stay in your houses. Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizement of the Time of Ignorance. Be regular in prayer, and pay the poor-due, and obey Allah and His messenger. Allah’s wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing.”* (XXXIII. 32–33).

Literally these verses are addressed only to the wives of the Prophet, and some authorities maintain that it applies only to them. Other theologians, however, interpret it by implication to apply to all Muslim women, and this opinion is widely accepted

in a number of Muslim countries where women generally stay at home, coming out only for some over-riding reason. Those who insist on this might nevertheless take into account those other verses of the Qur'an exhorting women to cover themselves when they go out, and urging both men and women to lower their gaze and behave modestly in the presence of the opposite sex – implying that women could go out on their legitimate business. They might also consider the necessity of some Muslim women going out to study and practise certain occupations, such as medicine, nursing and teaching at all levels, which for Muslim women and girls ought to be done by fellow women. It is simply worth noting that the two opinions exist, and that in practice one may see various degrees of seclusion or otherwise in different parts of the Muslim world.

In most parts of the world social functions among Muslims are either family affairs or celebrations by men and women in separate groups. To a Westerner accustomed to mixed parties with dancing and drinking this may sound an unexciting social life. However, the family circle in the Muslim world is generally a wide one, the feeling of brotherhood is so strong, and the hospitality of Muslims so warm and welcoming, that alcohol and the presence of the opposite sex are found to be unnecessary ingredients of enjoyment.

Polygamy is perhaps the aspect of Islam in respect of women uppermost in the Western mind. The first point to clarify is that Islam does not impose polygamy as a universal practice. The Prophet himself was a monogamist for the greater part of his married life, from the age of 25 when he married Khadijah until he was 50 when she died. One should therefore regard monogamy as the norm, and polygamy as the exception. Although it has been abused in some times and some places, polygamy has under certain circumstances a valuable function. In some situations it may be considered as the lesser of two evils; in others as a positively beneficial arrangement. The most obvious example of

this occurs in times of war when there are inevitably large numbers of widows and girls whose fiancés and husbands have been killed in fighting. We need only to recall the figures of the dead in the First and Second World Wars to be aware that literally millions of women and girls lost their husbands and fiancés and were left alone without income or care or protection for themselves or their children. If it is still maintained that under these circumstances a man may marry only one wife, what options are left to the millions of other women who have no hope of getting a husband? Their choice, bluntly stated, is between a chaste and childless old maidenhood, or to become somebody's mistress – that is, an unofficial second wife with no legal rights for herself or for her children. Most women would not welcome either of these, since most women have always wanted and still do want the security of a legal husband and family. For women under these circumstances compromise may be their only choice. Given the alternative, many of them would rather share a husband than have none at all. And there is no doubt that it is easier to handle sharing a husband when it is an established and publicly recognized practice, than when it is carried on secretly and with attempts at deception of the first wife. It is no secret that polygamy of a sort is widely carried on in Europe and America. The difference is that while the Western man has no legal obligations to his second, third or fourth mistress and his children, the Muslim husband has total legal obligations towards all his wives and their children.

There may be other circumstances unrelated to war, individual circumstances where marriage to more than one wife may be preferable to other available alternatives – for example, where the first wife is chronically sick or disabled. There are of course some husbands who can manage this situation, but no one would deny its potential hazards. A second marriage in some cases could be a solution acceptable to all three parties. Again there are cases in which a wife is unable to have children, while the

husband very much wants them. Under Western laws a man must either accept his wife's childlessness if he can, or if he cannot he must find a means of divorce in order to marry again. This could be avoided in some cases if the parties agreed on a second marriage. There are other cases where a marriage has not been very successful and the husband loves another woman. This situation is so familiar that it is known as the Eternal Triangle. Under Western laws the husband cannot marry the second woman without divorcing the first one. But the first wife may not wish to be divorced. She may no longer love her husband, but she may still respect him and wish for the security of marriage for herself and their children. Similarly the second woman may not wish to break up the man's first family. There are certain cases such as this where both women could accept a polygamous marriage rather than face divorce on the one hand, or an extra-marital affair on the other. It is worth noting such examples, since for the majority of Westerners polygamy is only thought of in the context of a harem of glamorous young girls, not as a possible solution to some of the problems of Western society itself. I have given some time to it, not in order to advocate its indiscriminate use, but in an attempt to show that it is a practice not to be thoughtlessly condemned without some awareness of its uses and possible benefits in any community.

With so much evidence to the contrary, it is clear that the role of women in Islam has been misunderstood in the West largely through general ignorance of the Islamic system and way of life as a whole, and because of the distortions of the media. If we summarize what has gone before, we can see her role in a very different light. The Muslim woman is accorded full spiritual and intellectual equality with man, and is encouraged to practise her religion and develop her intellectual faculties throughout her life. In her relations with men both are to observe modesty of behaviour and dress, and a strict code of morality which discourages unnecessary mixing of the sexes. Her relations with her

husband should be based on mutual love and compassion. He is responsible for the maintenance of the wife and children, and she is to give him the respect due to the head of the family. She is responsible for the care of the home and the children's early training. She may own her own property, run her own business and inherit in her own right. She may not be married without being consulted and is able to obtain divorce. The system of limited polygamy can be seen to have uses which may be in the interests of women as well as men. Finally she can look forward to an old age in which she is respected and shown every care by her children and by society as a whole.

The Islamic system has achieved the right balance of freedom and security that women seek and that is in the interests of society as a whole. All the relevant quotations which provide the authority for this picture come directly from the Qur'an and *Hadith*, since these are obviously the most authentic sources. If at different times and in different places these principles and laws have sometimes been distorted, ignored or flouted, it is not the principles and laws which are at fault, but man's selfishness which sometimes leads him to distort, ignore and flout that which he has no liking for, and to turn aside from the truth.

Fortunately no one has changed or can change the words of the Holy Qur'an. The regulations for the protection of women which were revealed in the 7th century can still be verified in the 20th century. These laws and social regulations regarding women contain certain fundamental truths which will benefit whoever applies them. The present time of widespread re-thinking of the role and rights of women is perhaps the appropriate time to look with fresh eyes at the Islamic point of view. Whilst contributing to the formation of stable societies in both sophisticated and underdeveloped peoples in vast areas of the world over the past fourteen centuries, it has retained the continuity of its principles. There may well be lessons here from which the Western world could learn something of value.



## **Islam and the Racial Problem**

*M. Aman Hobohm*

*Since its earliest days Islam has held out an ideal of racial equality unparalleled in the Ancient World, and still unfulfilled in many parts of the Modern World. Its teachings prefigure the statements of such documents as the United Nations Charter and recent laws for racial integration in the West. Its realisation of these ideals in practice constitute a model and a source of hope for those to whom racial equality is still a dream.*

## 14 Islam and the Racial Problem

If you were to go to the Holy Places of Islam in and around the venerable city of Mecca, the city of the Ka'aba or Sacred Mosque for the worship of the One and Only God, at the time of the annual *Hajj* or pilgrimage, you would witness an amazing and unforgettable sight. You would see a multitude of people – close on two million – from every corner of the world, black and brown, yellow and white, Arabs and Iranians, Turks and Malays, Indians, Pakistanis and Indonesians, Chinese and Africans, black and white Americans, blond and blue-eyed Europeans. In short one might well exclaim with Schiller, 'Who knows the nations, who the names of all who here together came?' And there is yet more to amaze the eye of the observer. Whatever his colour or origin, every man visible is dressed alike in two white sheets of simple material. All distinguishing marks of birth, wealth, rank and race are eliminated beneath this covering. Together they cry out, 'Labbaik, Allahuma Labbaik!' Their cry echoes and re-echoes from the mountains around. 'Here am I, O Allah, here am I. There is no-one else who is Thy associate, all praise and blessing belong to Thee alone, for Thou art the sovereign, and Thou hast no associate!'

This huge gathering of believers from all corners of the earth, on the Plains of Arafat, is perhaps the most striking symbol and proof of the unity and brotherhood of man as enunciated and

upheld by the religion of Islam, and it is equally symbol and proof of the equality of men before Allah, the Supreme Being as taught by this religion.

The concept and idea of the oneness of humanity is Islam's unique contribution to human civilization, and it came as a natural sequel to its cardinal doctrine, the doctrine of *Tawhid*, or of the Unity of God. This doctrine, which runs throughout the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, has found its most concise and terse expression in the chapter of the Qur'an called *Al-Ikhlās*, or 'Unity'.

*"Say: He is Allah, the One!  
Allah the eternally Besought of all!  
He begetteth not, nor was begotten.  
And there is None comparable unto Him."* (CXII. 1-4).

He, Allah, the One and Only, is the author of all existence. He is our creator, to Him we belong and to Him is our return. He is more than mere author and creator: He is also the *Rabb* of His creation and His creatures, and *Rabb*, according to the great authority on the Holy Qur'an, Imam Raghīb, in Arabic signifies the cherisher, sustainer and fosterer of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion and perfection. Thus, Allah being the *Rabb ul-Alāmin*, the 'Rabb of the Worlds', as He is called in the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'an, all of His creation is equally and without exception under His care and guidance. He deals with all of us alike, no matter to which race, nation, tribe or parentage we may belong, for He created us all alike, as the Qur'an further elucidates in numerous verses and words, such as:

*"And mankind is naught but a single nation."* (II. 213).

We are all the children of Adam, and Adam was made of dust.

For the first time in human history the idea dawned that all men have a common origin because all belong to Allah. The whole of humanity is but one family, one nation, and should, ideally, form one fraternity – the universal brotherhood of man. Differences of colour and languages, of build and of features, are not regarded as differences of quality, or as marks or degrees of excellence, but as an expression of diversity in nature:

*“And of His signs is this: He created you of dust, and behold you human beings, ranging widely.”* (XXX. 20).

*“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of your languages and colours. Lo! herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge.”* (XXX. 22).

Allama Yusuf Ali, commenting on this verse, remarks: “All mankind were created of a single pair of parents; yet they have spread to different climates and developed different languages and different shades of complexions. And yet their basic unity remains unaltered. They feel in the same way, and are equally under God’s care.” Whatever the country in which a people lives, whatever the language they speak, whatever the colour of their skin, they are recognized as one family, living under one roof – the canopy of heaven – scattered, but of common origin:

*“O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women.”* (IV. 1).

There is one verse in the Holy Qur’an, however, which not only re-states the common origin of man, explains the division of humanity into nations, or races, and tribes, tells us that the object and purpose of this division was also the ultimate unification of humanity, but goes a step further. It points out the one and only

criterion, the only standard by which man is judged by God and by which we too should therefore judge our fellow-man. It makes it quite clear that this criterion is neither his colour nor his race; neither his social standing nor his caste; not even his skill nor the degree of his intelligence. It is a quality which lies within the reach of all men who desire to achieve it.

*“O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is knower, Aware.”* (XLIX. 13).

“The principle of the brotherhood of man laid down here”, observes the author of an English translation of the Qur’an, “is based on the broadest foundation. The address here is not to believers but to men in general, who are told that they are all, as it were, members of one family, and their divisions into races, nations, tribes, and families should not lead to estrangement from, but to a better knowledge of, each other. Superiority of one over another in this vast brotherhood does not depend on race, nationality, wealth or rank, but on righteousness, on the careful observance of duty towards God and fellow-man, on moral greatness.” It is this verse of the Qur’an above all, that is Islam’s answer to racism, an answer which, as far as the Muslim community is concerned, did not remain a pious exhortation but sounded the death knell of racial discrimination in the World of Islam. This is borne out not only by the example set by the Prophet Muhammad but also by subsequent events in the history of all Muslim nations and by the continuing general attitude of the Muslims. In consequence of these teachings of Islam and their translation into practice by the Prophet Muhammad, such a complete change was wrought in the minds and hearts of all who embraced Islam, that to them racial differences presented no problems at all. They were neither disturbed nor embarrassed by the phenomenon.

There are countless instances in the life of the Prophet Muhammad which show us that, as is the case with regard to all injunctions of the Holy Qur'an, he was in this, too, the perfect exemplar, the pattern of conduct, both in the application and actualization of the principle of the brotherhood of man in his own dealings with his followers, and in his personal relations with adherents of other faiths. But we can only appreciate fully how formidable a task it was to establish this principle among his followers, if we look at the social conditions which prevailed in Arabia before the advent of the Prophet. In "The Social Structure of Islam" by Reuben Levy the author states: "The population of Arabia, outside of a few settled communities embedded in it, has throughout historical times been so constituted as to form a number of groups or tribes, very loosely held together either by loyalty to a particular leader or by the assumption of descent from a common ancestor, whether real or legendary. Within each of such groups or tribes, the independence of the individual units – the tents or families – has always been taken as a matter of course, and the head of each unit has been regarded as being in status the equal of every other. In the heads of the families lies the power to elect the *shaykh* or tribal chief, of whom, in theory, no special qualification is required. In actual practice, however, there is normally a strong prejudice in favour of choosing the *shaykh* from amongst the members of particular families. At the time of the rise of Muhammad such families held a position of great influence within the community, so that in any claim to authority the factor of birth was considered of paramount importance. Noble ancestry was the supreme test of nobility, and no person whose genealogy was not entirely free of hereditary taint – for example, ancestors of servile or negro origin – could be regarded as conforming to the requisite standard. Such persons were relegated to the humbler ranks of society and were thus compelled to undertake careers that inevitably marked them as inferior beings. . . . In the same way that the old nobility resisted the

assumption of equality by other Arabs, so the inhabitants of Arabia as a whole refused to consider foreigners as being their peers." It is to this situation that the Qur'an speaks in the following verse:

*"And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour unto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and he did save you from it. Thus Allah maketh clear His revelations unto you, that haply ye may be guided, and there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct."* (III. 103-104).

Among the measures introduced by the Prophet of Islam to level the differences of rank and of race among his steadily growing community perhaps prayer ought to be mentioned in particular. Five times a day the Muslims meet together for prayer. Among the first Muslims were members of the noblest Arab families as well as a good number of negro slaves. At prayers they all stood shoulder to shoulder before the Almighty, and when, in the further course of prayer they prostrated themselves before their Lord, it might well have been that the head of a noble Quraish praying in a row behind a negro slave rested at the latter's feet. In prayer and in the company of the Prophet no difference of status was recognized between the two. And, as Mohammad Ali observes in "The Living Thoughts of the Prophet Mohammed": "From standing side by side in the ranks of prayer, the next step was a mere corollary: they mingled freely on terms of perfect equality on all other occasions. Service to God was thus the door through which the fraternization of humanity was effected . . . The negro slaves and the noble Quraish were made to meet together on terms of equality in prayer and in religious gatherings. It was thus impressed on their minds that

they were all equal before God, and life once moulded on these lines led to the natural consequence that the negro slaves and the Arab nobility enjoyed equal status in society." In the first Muslim community a negro slave, Bilal, was chosen by the Prophet himself to deliver the *Adhan*, the call to prayer, while the Prophet himself was the *Imam* or leader of the congregation. Thus, of the two office-bearers of the Mosque, the Prophet himself, of noble blood and birth, was one, the other being Bilal, a negro.

In his famous oration, delivered on the occasion of his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet reaffirmed and re-stated the principle of equality and brotherhood of man in Islam, bequeathing it as a sacred legacy to succeeding generations of Muslims, who have faithfully followed his teachings up to the present day.

*"Ye people! Listen to my words, for I know not whether another year will be vouchsafed to me after this year to find myself amongst you at this place."*

*"Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until ye appear before the Lord . . . And remember, ye shall have to appear before your Lord, Who shall demand from you an account of all your actions . . . Ye people, ye have rights over your wives, and your wives have rights over you. Treat them with kindness and love . . . keep always faithful to the trust reposed in you."*

*"Ye people, listen to my words and understand them. Know ye that all Muslims are brothers unto one another. Ye are one brotherhood."*<sup>1</sup>

*"All men are equal in Islam. The Arab has no superiority over the Non-Arab, nor does the Non-Arab have superiority over the Arab, save in the fear of God."*<sup>2</sup>

There are many examples in the history of Islam which



demonstrate the principle in practice. A few only will illustrate the point. One of the acid tests of unrestrained and unrestricted inter-racial relations are inter-racial marriages. That such marriages were never frowned upon by Muslims is borne out by the fact that many a Caliph of the Umayyad and Abbasid, as well as of later dynasties, had Turkish, Greek or even negro mothers. Neither racial origin nor social rank were ever considered a handicap in rising to a position of authority or eminence in a Muslim state. Subuktagin, the confidential slave of a Samanid prince in Transoxania, himself became a prince and founded the dynasty of the Ghaznavids, to which belonged the famous ruler and conqueror Mahmud, who was the first Muslim to bring Islam to Northern India. Aybak, the favourite slave of the chieftain Muhammad Ghuri, the real founder of Islam in India, was the first of the Slave Kings of Delhi, and the Mamluk sultans of Egypt were of similar origin. Whole series of dynasties were founded in the Middle East during the 12th and 13th centuries by the Turkish Atabegs. Originally purchased as slaves to be the bodyguards of the Seljuq sultans, they were appointed to the highest office in the state.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, social rank or high office did not bestow upon the bearer special privileges before the law and certainly did not entitle him to ill-treat a brother Muslim with impunity. The following incident reported to have occurred during the reign of Umar, the second Caliph after the death of the Prophet, illustrates this. Jabbala, King of the Ghasanides, having embraced Islam, set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca. While performing the circumambulation of the Ka'aba, a humble pilgrim engaged in the same sacred duties accidentally dropped a piece of his pilgrim's dress over the royal shoulders. Jabbala turned round furiously and struck him a blow. The poor man went to the Caliph and prayed for redress. Umar sent for Jabbala and asked him why he had so ill-treated a brother Muslim. He answered that the man had insulted him, and had it not been for the sanctity of the place, he would have killed him on the

spot. Umar replied that his words added to the gravity of his offence, and that unless he obtained the pardon of the injured man he would have to submit to the penalty of the law. When Jabballa refused to do as he was bidden because, as he retorted, he was a king and the other only a common man, Umar replied 'King or no king, both of you are Muslims and both of you are equal in the eye of the law.'

But perhaps one of the most instructive examples of the policy of Islam towards different races is furnished by Spain. In Syed Ameer Ali's fundamental work "The Spirit of Islam", he comments,

*"Immediately on their arrival on the soil of Spain, the Muslims or Saracens published an edict assuring to the subject races, without any difference, the most ample liberty. Suevi, Goth, Vandal, Roman and Jew, were all placed on an equal footing. Their women were invited to intermarry with the conquerors . . . The fidelity of the Arabs in maintaining their promises, the equal-handed justice which they administered to all races and classes, without distinction of any kind, secured them the confidence of the people . . . The Jews profited most by the change of government."*

When many centuries later Spain was re-conquered by Ferdinand and Isabella, innumerable Jews left the country for Muslim lands, preferring a life in exile under Muslim rule to life in their home-country under new rulers of whose racial and religious tolerance they were not convinced. This is yet another aspect of the principle of the brotherhood of mankind as envisaged and enunciated by Islam; namely religious tolerance. The essence of the attitude of Islam towards adherents of other faiths is to be found in the charter which was granted to the Jews by the Prophet after his arrival in Medina, and in the message which he sent to the Christians of Najran, a town in Southern Arabia, then largely inhabited by Christians, after Islam had fully established itself in the Arab Peninsula. "In the

name of the most merciful and compassionate God”, says this first charter of freedom of conscience, “given by Muhammad, the Prophet, to the believers, whether of the Quraish or of Yathrib – as Medina was then called – and to all individuals, of whatever origin, who have made common cause with them: all these shall constitute one nation . . . The Jews who attach themselves to our commonwealth shall be protected from all insults and vexations; they shall have an equal right with our people to our assistance and good offices. The Jews of the various branches (here follow the names of the various Jewish tribes of Medina and the surrounding territories) and all others domiciled in Yathrib, shall form with the Muslims one composite nation; they shall practise their religion as freely as the Muslims; the clients (meaning the protected, and the allies of the Jews) shall enjoy the same security and freedom.” (From Hisham, pp. 341, 342).

To the Christians similarly he also wrote:

*“To the Christians of Najran and the neighbouring territories, the security of God and the pledge of His Prophet are extended for their lives, their religion, and their property – to the present as well as the absent and others besides; there shall be no interference with the practice of their faith or their observances; nor any change in their rights or privileges; no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric; nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood, and they shall continue to enjoy everything great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not oppress or be oppressed; they shall not practise the rights of blood-vengeance as in the days of ignorance – the era before the advent of Islam; no tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops.”<sup>4</sup>*

“This document,” observes Syed Ameer Ali, “has furnished the guiding principle to all Muslim rulers in their mode of dealing with their Non-Muslim subjects, and if they have departed from it in any instance the cause is to be found in the character of the

particular sovereign. If we separate the political necessity which has often spoken and acted in the name of religion, no faith is more tolerant than Islam to the followers of other creeds. Reasons of State may have led a sovereign here and there to display a certain degree of intolerance, or to insist upon a certain uniformity of faith, but the system itself has maintained the most complete tolerance. Christians and Jews, as a rule, have never been molested in the exercise of their religion, or constrained to change their faith. If they are required to pay a special tax, it is in lieu of military service, and it is but right that those who enjoy the protection of the State should also contribute in some shape to the public burdens. Towards the idolaters there was greater strictness in theory, but in practice the law was equally liberal. If at any time they were treated with harshness, the cause is to be found in the passions of the ruler or the population. The religious element was used only as a pretext.”<sup>5</sup> If there have been instances of religious intolerance in the history of the Muslim nations, it should clearly be understood that these instances did not happen because of Islam but in spite of Islam. They betray both a lack of knowledge of the teachings of Islam, and understanding of the spirit and principles of that religion.

One might interpose here that the idea of racial equality and of the brotherhood of mankind is not the exclusive property of Islam; that these ideas have been proclaimed by different individuals and ideologies in different places and at different times. One might quote from various sacred and profane works of the most dissimilar authors, demonstrating that in the West – in Europe and America – these ideas have been accepted and adopted as principles of policy, of organised society, since the 18th century at the latest, when the Age of Enlightenment had dawned and the French Revolution had sounded the clarion call of ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité!’ The idea of racial equality and of human brotherhood is certainly not the invention of Islam, nor has it been proclaimed only by that religion and by nobody else.

Yet only in and through Islam has this idea ever been realised in action over centuries and among the most heterogeneous and dissimilar nations and races.

In spite of the lofty ideals of Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, the West did not and has still not solved the racial problem, nor has the West been able until today to establish racial equality everywhere in its hemisphere. It is barely thirty years ago that racism was raised in Germany to the position of State Philosophy – the most brutal and barbarous racism imaginable. Racism in the shape of “Apartheid” is still allowed to raise its ugly head in South Africa, and racism is certainly not eradicated in the United States in spite of the abolition of slavery that took place some time ago, and in spite of anti-discriminatory legislation introduced after the Second World War, aimed at the levelling of differences between the various racial groups and at the abolition of racial discrimination. In the Socialist World, Marxism-Leninism or Communism has introduced its own brand and type of racism – “ideological racism” – which is as hateful and abhorrent as biological racism. Wherever we look we find that neither the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, nor Communism, nor the U.N. Charter of Human Rights – the latest exercise in bringing about racial equality and in abolishing racial discrimination – have been able to achieve their goal, while Islam has most certainly done so.

How has Islam succeeded where other systems and ideologies seem to have failed? What is the secret of its success? In what way can the religion of Islam contribute to the solution of the racial problem under which millions of our fellow human beings are still reeling? This success is based on two decisive factors, namely the universality of its teachings and the Divine sanction on which the Islamic concept of the brotherhood of mankind is based. A Muslim believes that Islam is not only the last of the world's great religions but also an all-inclusive religion which contains within itself all religions which went before it. It is one of its

most striking characteristics that it requires its followers to believe that all the great religions of the world that preceded it were revealed by God, and it is a fundamental principle of Islam that a Muslim must also believe in all prophets who were raised up before the Prophet Muhammad. Prophets, according to the express teachings of the Qur'an, were sent by God to all nations:

*“And there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them.”*  
(XXXV. 24).

But whereas all previous prophets were sent with specific missions to their own people, the Prophet Muhammad was sent to all nations of the earth:

*“Say, O mankind, I am sent unto you all, as the Apostle of God, to whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth . . .”*

and elsewhere:

*“We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples.”* (XXI. 107).

“There is no question now”, says Allama Yusuf Ali in his commentary on this verse, “of race or nation, of a ‘chosen people’ or ‘the seed of Abraham’ or the ‘seed of David’; or of Hindu Arya-Varta, of Jew or Gentile, Arab or ‘Ajam, Turk or Tajik, European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; American, Australian, or Polynesian.” The Prophet Muhammad was sent to them all. This distinguishes him from all other prophets, and it distinguishes Islam from all other religions. The message that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad from on high was a message addressed to all nations on earth, and the principles set forth in that message applied universally to the whole of mankind. He was the last of the

prophets, and Islam, based on the revelation which the Prophet received, is the final and perfect expression of the Divine Will:

*“This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam.”* (V. 3).

In Islam and to every single one of its followers the equality of man and the brotherhood of mankind are not the figment of the human brain and mind. They are guiding principles decreed by God. Equality and Fraternity, as well as Liberty, are fundamental to the teachings of Islam, and only where they are conceived as such can these lofty ideals become reality. It is only through God, Creator and *Rabb* of all that is in the heavens and the earth, that we shall find any road to the unification of humanity; to the brotherhood of man which knows no boundaries of colour, race, caste, country, language, and rank. Without absolute and unreserved faith in Him, and in the truth and universality of His revelation, without the will to serve Him, which is the purpose of our creation, and to follow His commandments and guidance, this goal never has nor will be achieved. To a true believer the accidents of birth or colour are a matter of indifference in his evaluation of his fellow men.

*“Verily the most honoured of you, in the sight of God, O men, is he who is the most righteous, the most God-fearing, of you.”*

There is the only yard-stick by which man is measured in Islam – the absolute value set on his worth by God.

Peace and mutual trust among individuals and nations alike can only be brought about if we base our inter-human relations on the recognition of, and strict adherence to, absolute values. Materialism, humanity’s ideal in modern times, lacks all prerequisites because its concept of values shifts from time to time

and from place to place. Islam is the only force which provides man with the spiritual and moral foundation on which lasting peace and mutual trust and respect among the nations of the world can be built. Islam is, first and foremost, an international religion, says Mohammed Ali in "The Religion of Islam" and it is before the grand international ideal of Islam, the ideal of the equality of all races and of the unity of the human kind, an ideal founded on the belief in the Oneness of God, that the curse of racism and narrow-minded nationalism, which have been and still are responsible for many of the troubles of the ancient and the modern world, can be swept away.

The Muslim Community, past and present, has not only established true and lasting brotherhood among its members, a brotherhood that encompasses every one who belongs to it, irrespective of racial or social differences, it has also shown us by its example the road to this goal. The starting point is faith, unquestioning faith in God, the *Rabb* of the worlds. From there it leads us to submission to His will – the stage at which we willingly and cheerfully obey His commandments and actualize the principles laid down by Him for our actions and conduct – until we reach the stage of supererogatory service to God and men. The road leads us, to use Arabic terms, from *Iman*, faith, to *Islam*, submission, and ultimately to *Ihsan*. And this is the road we must tread if we want to bring about mutual respect and trust among men, the road to the abolition of all racial and social discrimination, the road to the unification of mankind, to the universal brotherhood of which the assembly of Muslims of all races and from every corner of the world at Mecca during the days of *Hajj* or Pilgrimage bears witness.



# Islam and the Intellectual Challenge of Modern Civilization

*Hamid Algar*

*Far from being threatened by any intellectual challenge from modern civilization as typified by the Western World, Islam itself might be said to constitute a serious challenge to the declining standards and values, and the increasing confusion of that world. The philosophically fragmented and dichotomous West has little to offer to a religion whose strength lies in its unity of faith and life, thought and action. To the secularism of the West Islam opposes its notion of the sovereignty of God. It challenges the relative with the absolute; the limitations of materialist and rationalist awareness with its consciousness of transcendent reality. Nor does the challenge lie simply in an aggregate of opposites; rather in the choice of a radically different alternative. The strength of such a challenge would be all the greater if Muslims themselves demonstrated more positively and convincingly the consequences of this choice.*

## 15 Islam and the Intellectual Challenge of Modern Civilization

*By the token of time, verily man is in loss, except such as believe, perform righteous deeds, enjoin truth upon each other, and enjoin patience upon each other.*

Surat al-'Asr

There exists a certain evident antithesis between modern civilization, in its essential character, and not Islam alone, but religion as such. Religion, and hence par excellence Islam, is posited on the imperative reality of God as creator, sustainer and judge, with the origin, life and destiny of man, both as individual and collectively, being determined by the exercise of these three attributes. The entire credal and ritual structure of religion serves to strengthen the perception of this reality, and to give it expression in its most manifold form throughout the whole range of human activity. As befits its nature as final revelation, Islam is particularly detailed and explicit in this respect, and erects a vast structure of interrelated norms of action and conduct that enable man to saturate his life in unceasing awareness of the divine reality, to live in a state of *dhikr* – remembrance. The modern world, by contrast, tends either to the active and deliberate denial of the Divine reality, placing reality instead in the spatio-temporal flux, or to a disregard of it as marginal to the true and pressing concerns of man. The result is, in either case, a thoroughly secularized

mode of existence, characterized at the worst by ignorance – *jahiliyyah* – or at best by neglect – *ghafra*. To-day, it is true there are stirrings of unease, and a renewed desire to gain awareness of transcendental reality can be discerned. Few, however, have any concept of the means that must inevitably be applied, or any understanding of the spiritual and intellectual prerequisites for deliverance from the modern mentality.

Modern civilization, it needs stressing at the outset, is essentially Western civilization; the fact that it is now spreading over the globe in a vast and levelling flood, and that certain non-Western peoples are actively participating in its further elaboration, does not contradict this fundamental assertion concerning its origin. It bears the traces of a particular historical development that begins with the humanism of the Renaissance, continues with the rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and culminates in the scientism and materialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rise of modern civilization has therefore been gradual, and its displacement of religion as the motive force of man and society has been stealthy. Christianity has thus been able to come to some accommodation with the phenomenon – at least outwardly. Indeed, in its Protestant form, which introduced the principle of ‘free enquiry’ into religious matters, Christianity was itself a factor in the formation of the modern mentality. Even before the Reformation, with its readiness to grant Caesar a realm, to give the secular a sphere of legitimacy, Christianity can be said to have sown the seeds for the alienation of large areas of man’s life from religious concern. In any event, the history of Christianity in the West, and the history of modern civilization, form a continuum with no visible interruption. The view which the Christian and the post-Christian West have of themselves, as being endowed with a universal mission of redemption, is in many respects the same. Whereas it was earlier deemed necessary to ‘win the world for Christ,’ now ‘modernization’ – that is, adherence to the model of the West – is exported and

preached with almost evangelical fervour as a sure means of redemption.

For Islam, however, modern civilization represents a doubly alien phenomenon. It is alien with respect to its metaphysical bases (or rather lack of them), and it is alien with respect to its geographical and historical origins. Acquaintance with modernity has been forced upon the Muslim world without any notable preparation being effected by a process of indigenous historical change; modernity has come as an alien and intruding force. Much has happened in the Muslim world in the course of the past two centuries that is the result of entirely autonomous development, and to discuss recent Islamic history purely in terms of 'response to the West,' as is the habit of many Orientalists, is misleading and the result of ethnocentricity. Nevertheless, it remains indisputable that a considerable portion of the intellectual energies of the Muslims has been directed for well over a century to confronting the alien intrusion that is modern civilization. The preoccupation began as the result of empirical necessity, when European armies and enterprises overran the Islamic world, and reduced almost all Muslim lands to a colonial or semi-colonial status. Now that overt imperial domination has come to an end, receptivity to modern civilization continues under its own impetus, and the definition of some acceptable relationship to modernity remains a dominant concern for many Muslims. Varying solutions have been offered. The initial reaction of many Muslims to their first acquaintance with the modern West in the early nineteenth century was an instinctive and total rejection, even of such commonplace items as the printing press. The opposite extreme is that now advocated by certain 'déracinés' of Muslim origin, who demand an explicit abandonment of Islam, both as culture and religion, and an uncritical adoption of Western norms and methods in all areas of life.

Between these two antithetical positions lie a wide variety of formulae that seek, in one way or another, to straddle the gap

between Islamic tradition and modern civilization. Many Muslims have pointed to the formative influence exerted by Islam on the origins of post-medieval European civilization, an influence transmitted through Muslim Spain and Sicily, and claimed to regard modern civilization as being in essence their own, whatever were the circumstances of its historical elaboration. This attitude first appears in the nineteenth century in the thought and writings of figures commonly regarded as the initiators of an 'Islamic renaissance,' namely the Persian, Jamel al-Din Asadabadi ('Afghani') and his Egyptian disciple, Muhammad 'Abduh. It has had a lasting popularity as a formula that permits the assimilation of Western civilization while proclaiming a strict loyalty to Islam. Apologetic in nature, it means a readiness to define Islam in terms of whatever appears fresh and persuasive in Western civilization. It is argued, for example, that rationalism, democracy, parliamentary government, female emancipation and even evolution are to be found in Islam – found, indeed, in their most perfect form – and that although such concepts appear to be importations, they are in reality returning exiles that belong properly in the world of Islam. Even writers of some insight claim that the 'values' of the twentieth century are confirmed by Islam, thus disregarding the essential contradiction between the modern mentality and religion that we indicated at the outset. Other Muslim thinkers have spoken of the need for a selective blending of elements drawn from the Islamic heritage and from modern civilization, but they give little hint of how a correct selection is to be made, and still less of how that selection is to be imposed on society at large. They establish a dichotomy between the material and non-material dimensions of modern civilization, with the material identified as assimilable, and the non-material rejected as alien. The dichotomy is in many respects artificial, not least because the material dimension of modern civilization can hardly be separated from the intellectual and spiritual climate in which it was elaborated. Whatever be the adequacy or inadequacy

of the varying approaches sketched above, there can be no doubt of the acuteness and pervasiveness of the problem. Few are those who enjoy a tranquil cultivation of their religion and heritage without being in some measure aware of the simultaneous existence of a different mode of being, one based on a world-view alien to the Islamic perspective. Moreover, whatever theoretical views of modernity and its relation to Islam are put forth, the actual modernization of Muslim society – its reshaping in the mould of the West – is proceeding with ever-increasing rapidity, even in those lands that are popularly thought to be the most conservative.

Given the discordant nature of the Muslim response to modern civilization, and the observable fact of the almost completely unchecked modernization of the Muslim world, it might be concluded that, as the title of this lecture suggests, modern civilization is indeed posing an intellectual challenge to Islam; a challenge that has not yet been met. However, it is a question not so much of an intellectual challenge (we doubt if modern civilization has the capacity to mount such a challenge, as will be suggested in a minute), as of a certain psychological state induced in the Muslims by their encounter with modern civilization. The first casualty of this encounter was the political, economic and military hegemony of the Muslims in their own lands; another maybe more important victim has been their self-assurance; their instinctive confidence in the veracity and adequacy of their religious and cultural traditions. As a result of the proximity of the heartlands of the Muslim world – what is called the Middle East – to Europe, friction and conflict between Muslims and the West has been almost continuous, and the Muslim world has been among the primary targets of the aggressive energy of the West. The region continues to suffer at the hands of the surrogates of Western imperialism. For decades the Muslims have been subject to the pressures of a civilization evidently superior in the accumulation and manipulation of material power, and their

reaction could not have been other than in large part defensive, apologetic and unsure.

To succumb under the pressure of historical circumstance to a particular psychological state is not, however, to be defeated by an intellectual challenge or philosophical challenge. Even to speak of an intellectual challenge of modern civilization results from an outmoded and inaccurate notion of modern civilization as inherently self-assured and irresistibly dynamic, with Islam – or any other traditional civilization – as its petrified or passive counterpart. Now whatever be the historical contingencies of the matter, and whatever be the shortcomings of the Muslim response to modernity, such a view of modern civilization and Islam respectively is false. Modern civilization is losing much of its cohesiveness and confidence, somewhat as the Muslims and other non-Western peoples were assailed by self-doubt when confronted by the power of the West. The naive faith in the pseudo-religion of progress, in the adequacy of rationality as a means of cognition, in the supremacy of Western civilization as the apex of all human history – all this is fading as the realization grows that society and the individual in the modern world are confronted by apparently infinite and insoluble problems. Social and psychic disorders are seen to be merely the outward symptoms of a far deeper malaise, one that is a direct outgrowth of the modern mentality with its imperviousness to the transcendental. It is paradoxical that this loss of confidence and cohesion in the West should come at a time when the Westernization of the rest of the world is proceeding at an unprecedented pace. But this Westernization of the globe merely represents the farthest reach of a wave, the force of which at its point of origin now appears to be spent. By this we do not mean to imply that an ebb of the universal wave of Westernization will succeed its surge, or that the material power of the West will necessarily collapse. We mean only that the modern mentality, with its essential character of scientism, rationalism and hostility to the suprarational, is

approaching collapse beneath the weight of its illusions and inadequacies. It is true that modern civilization has posed a challenge to Islam, and other traditional civilizations, but the lance-tip of that challenge is now broken, and thrust back at the West.

Conversely, Islam is not to be regarded as a passive respondent to challenge; one whose role in the interplay of civilizations is limited to reaction. Islam is in its essence a divine revelation of the nature of truth and reality, joined with a method – also of divine origin – for anchoring consciousness of truth and reality in every sphere of human life. Given the fact of its divine origin, and given the very nature of truth, Islam is – from a certain point of view – austere, detached and neutral, its veracity and authenticity existing totally apart from confirmation or rejection by men. It is therefore absurd to speak of modern civilization, a mere compound of errors, as posing an intellectual challenge to Islam. From a different point of view, however, Islam is not merely disinterested truth, but the active and determined effort to make truth supreme and acknowledged in the world – or in the words of the Qur'an, to “make the word of God the uppermost.” Under this aspect, Islam appears as a combative force, with the duty to repel falsehood and conquer the world for truth. The Qur'an still exists to do battle against falsehood, with the weapons that are constituted by its arguments in favour of truth, its miraculous cohesiveness and comprehensiveness, and its literary and phonetic beauty. The life of the Prophet Muhammad also presents an active and combative aspect, one that made possible the establishment of a world order that bore witness to the truth, and thus complemented rather than contradicted the contemplative and serene dimension of his blessed character. We conclude, therefore, that Islam in its aspect of disinterested truth is impervious to any challenge, while in its aspect of combative truth it presents a challenge itself to all systems of thought and belief, whether the polytheism of pre-Islamic Arabia or the various assumptions and habits of mind that go to



make up the modern mentality. The reality and urgency of that challenge is not in any way lessened by the psychological state in which many contemporary Muslims find themselves as the result of particular historical circumstances.

The challenge posed by Islam to the modern mentality is manifold. Of greatest and most radical importance is the supreme assertion of God's creativity and sovereignty, and of His ineluctable presence throughout His creation. God created us and having created us sustains us; we are therefore His in the most literal of senses, and will be reclaimed by Him: "*Verily we are God's, and verily to Him we shall return.*" Moreover, even before that reclamation by death, there is no escape from God, unless it be unto Him, for the Qur'an tells us that "*He is with you wherever ye are,*" and that "*Wheresoever ye turn, there is the face of God.*" It is true, as modern man is so fond of repeating, that he is the master of the material world, but Islam reminds us that he is not the master of the world, absolutely and by right, able to dispose of it as he pleases. Man's mastery is rather by proxy and appointment, and to fulfil purposes of God's choice, not his own. With these categorical statements, the Qur'an challenges the denial of God made by the modern world, and the careless assumption that the world and man's place in it can be satisfactorily viewed and understood without reference to its omnipotent and omnipresent Creator and Sustainer.

Islam also challenges notions of truth and authority that are current in the modern world. Truth is commonly seen by modern man as originating on the plane of individual experience or reflection, not on a plane superior to him; it thus becomes subject to the variation of personal inclination, disposition and circumstance. It can never be ascertained with certainty or finality; absoluteness is banished in favour of relativity, and what may be true for one individual or collectively is not necessarily so for a different individual or group. To make truth dependent on man's perceptions or experiences of it is, however,

to bid farewell to the notion itself. It is no more possible, for example, that the hereafter should exist as truth for some and not for others, than it is for a mathematical formula to yield different results for different people, each valid for its recipient. Truth by virtue of its nature must be indifferent to the varying circumstances of those who perceive it. Now Islam makes it plain to man that truth is not of his own definition but resides with God, and is, in a sense, external to man. Man's knowledge of truth depends on its bestowal by God and on his own capacity to accept and comprehend what is bestowed. The Qur'an tells us: "*They perceive naught of His knowledge save that which He wills.*" This corresponds to all the other essential attributes of man – life, speech, will and so forth – which are, like the knowledge of truth, the result not of man's necessarily weak exertions, but of bestowal by God. The means whereby knowledge of truth is conferred consist above all of revelation, of which the culminating and most perfect example is the Qur'an entrusted to the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an is the criterion (*furqan*) that distinguishes between truth and falsehood; it is the balance (*mizan*) in which all things are weighed to ascertain their veracity or falsity, their worth or worthlessness; and it is guidance (*hudan*) and light (*nur*), laying down for man a clear path through the shadows of his illusions or imaginings. By belief in the Qur'an and the practice of its message, degrees of certain knowledge of truth unfold to man, until ultimately the duality of knower and known is overcome, and man is himself the truth that he perceives. How far is this high degree to which Islam summons man, from the dismal and relativist perspective of the modern world, which systematically closes off to man all access to absolute truth!

Islam not only supplies man, in revelation, with the means for the perception of truth, but it also makes of the same revelation (together with its ancillary, the *Sunnah* – exemplary model – of the Prophet) a supreme source of authority. One of the most striking features of the modern mentality is its rejection of any

notion of transcendent authority; the visibly growing anarchy of Western society is merely the externalization of this radical rejection of authority. In the absence of authority, all vagaries and 'insights' become of equal value; anyone can establish a 'philosophy' and demand a serious hearing. Particularly remarkable is the extension of the anarchic rejection of transcendent authority into the sphere of religion itself. The whole fragmentation of Christianity, together with its unceasing revision of dogma and ritual, may be seen to have sprung from the absence of a principle of authority, and the arbitrary exercise of human choice in matters of religion. The entirely logical consequence of this rejection of authority has been the rise of the pseudo-religious cults and pretended esoterisms that claim the loyalty of an increasing number of people in the post-Christian West; the field is now fully open to the ingenious and the charlatan. To those who revise, reform and invent religion, in whatever name it is done, Islam always poses the question, "by what authority (*sultan*) would you do this?", for its followers have never sought to arrogate to themselves the authority that belongs to revelation alone. The permanence and immutability of Islam, and the fact that it has never known a 'reformation,' a 'demythologization,' or a godless theology, are not signs of rigidity or stagnation, as is sometimes imagined by non-Muslim observers, but rather of a crucial submission to the authority of revelation as the sole guarantor of truth. Borrowing a Qur'anic image, we may say that Islam is like a rope let down from heaven. By holding fast to it, man maintains his connection with his Creator and his access to truth. To change or reform the religion would be like letting go of the rope, and thus losing access to truth. The changelessness of Islam thus poses a challenge to the modern mentality that having attempted to usurp the authority of discovering and defining truth, finds itself unequal to the task and engages in ceaseless change and experimentation.

A further result of the rejection of revelation as the source of

truth and authority has been an inability to distinguish between the different spheres of consciousness open to man. In his growing disillusion with the limitations of a rationalist and materialist perception of the world, modern man is attempting to penetrate to planes of consciousness lying beyond the bounds of sensory experience. All too frequently it is the infrarational rather than the suprarational to which he then gains access, even though the difference is not perceived. This is partly because of the all-pervasive influence of psychology, which is capable of perceiving only the infrarational – and that in a very limited fashion – but does not hesitate to equate it with the suprarational, and partly because of the popular confusion between soul and spirit. But more important, the situation springs above all from the absence of an ordering principle of authority that alone may define things as they are and draw a clear and unmistakable distinction between the realm of the spirit and the realm of the soul, the suprarational and the infrarational spheres. Islam provides such a clear distinction, and not only enables man to organise his everyday life in a manner consonant with God's will for him, but also to transcend it and to proceed through degrees of ascent to a more immediate perception of reality. The means for this spiritual ascent are contained in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, and are transmitted through Islamic tradition with an absolute guarantee of effectiveness and authenticity. We refer here to the whole rich tradition of *tasawwuf*, which in its sobriety, dignity and profundity, challenges not only the two-dimensional world-view of rationalism, but also the strictly satanic pretensions of pseudo-esoterism.

It would be possible to discuss other leading characteristics of the modern world and its mentality which far from posing a serious intellectual challenge to Islam are in fact of a fragility and falsity that invite challenge by Islam. We do not wish to give the impression, however, that Islam is merely an aggregate of opposites to the modern mentality. It is rather an autonomous,

integrated and coherent set of doctrines and practices that rest on a world-view utterly separate from that of modernity. Islam offers to modern man not a set of solutions for his problems, but a radically different choice of direction. The clarity and persuasiveness of this choice would be greater, it is true, if the Muslim world itself, overcoming the contingencies of its historical situation, could provide an assured demonstration of the choice and its consequences. We hope and believe that such a demonstration will ultimately be given. But the choice of Islam as belief and direction is not dependent on any external circumstances, and is open to all men in all times who wish to learn truth and orient their lives according to it. *“For God’s is the East and the West, and His Mercy is near to all who call upon Him.”*



## **Islam and Secularism**

*Altaf Gauhar*

*There is a fundamental incompatibility between religion and secularism, despite the numerous attempts to reconcile them, bring about some sort of synthesis, or contain the one within the other in practical form. Islam will not succeed in re-establishing itself by compromise with, or wholesale grafting of, secular ways and institutions. The inevitable result will be a dilution of Islam in all fields of activity. Any attempt at regeneration demands that Islam look forward not back – but forward in full consciousness of her own traditions, values and beliefs. Only from this basis can Islam hope to construct a society relevant to its needs, and free from the dangerous infiltration of secular and alien influence.*

## 16 Islam and Secularism

A sufi poet of the Punjab, Baba Bullhe Shah, said: "The word of truth ignites a furious blaze." What Muslim society needs today is a word of truth.

I submit that there is no common ground between secularism and Islam. I believe that secular society and secular institutions are in a state of disintegration, and that the present offers us an opportunity to attempt an objective assessment of the damage caused by secular domination to Muslim thought and culture. The reconstruction of Muslim society is a task of immense complexity and urgency, and, if we fail to attend to this task now history will pass us by, allowing us to sink into oblivion like some of the earlier civilizations. I shall state briefly the fundamentals of Islam.

Firstly, Belief in God, the Creator and sustainer of the worlds, whose Grace is unbounding and whose Mercy infinite.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Belief in the Word of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad in Al-Qur'an, which represents, for us, the consummate and ultimate expression of divine will:

*"Proclaim the Word in the name of God,  
who created man from a blood clot!  
Proclaim the Word of God,  
the most generous,*



*Who conveyed knowledge through the pen,  
knowledge to which man had no access.”<sup>2</sup>*

The Qur’an and the Prophet are inseparable. The Qur’an is God’s command and the life of the Prophet the fulfilment of that command. *“Muhammad is but a messenger. Other messengers have preceded Him. If He were to die or get killed will you revert to your old ways?”<sup>3</sup>*

Finally, belief in the Hereafter. The word *Akhirah* used in the Qur’an implies a state of existence which commences when the present state reaches its end. The Qur’anic concept of the Hereafter comprises three elements (1) accountability and personal responsibility, (2) due process, and (3) complete justice.

If this is the essence of Islam, then secularism represents its complete antithesis. Secularism rejects belief in God, belief in the Revelation, and belief in the Hereafter. The fundamental assumption of secularism is that material well-being in the present world is an essential means to human happiness. That material well-being does not remain a means and becomes an end in itself is a major dilemma of secular culture. As secular society progresses from lower levels of material well-being to higher levels, efficiency becomes its sole preoccupation. *“Secularisation is the hallmark of any modern economy which must operate without much concern for religion, ethics, aesthetics, or considerations of prestige. Its main orientation has to be toward maximum efficiency. In every type of social, political, or economic order, the modern economy must obey these principles. Its essential characteristic is a capacity for self-sustaining growth.”<sup>4</sup>*

It is through this process that growth becomes the God of secularism, in place of the God of mercy. Inflation, its mortal enemy as the devil. Hell comes to mean high prices, recession and unemployment, and paradise nothing more than affluence, full employment, and leisure. Since there is no limit to man’s desire there is no point of rest in his pursuit of pleasure. As he gains

more he seeks more. Whatever time he saves is vigorously reinvested to save more time, until he is left with nothing. His whole being goads him to achieve ever-rising levels of efficiency and material well being, and what started as a legitimate idea turns into a senseless chase.

Scholars have been at pains to bring about some reconciliation between religion and secularism. A sustained effort was made in Turkey to make religion as "it should be, an individual personal matter, a thing of the conscience, a matter of private faith."<sup>5</sup> Since the religious feeling was "too strongly embedded in the human soul," religion could certainly be consigned to the recesses of private life.

Much the same argument was used by Muslims in modern India. Secularism, they felt, should not be regarded as the opposite of religion, it was the antonym of "other worldly". When secularism recognizes no world except the present, how could it be treated as the opposite of a non-existent 'other world'? But secularism in Hindu society has always been a contradiction; "ours may be a secular state, but it is a secular state in a non-secular society."<sup>6</sup>

Paul Tillich claimed that secularists should not be excluded from "the community of the faithful".<sup>7</sup> Assuming that the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern, he contended that, in secularism, man is "the measure of his own spiritual life. The divine is manifest in the human; the ultimate concern of man is man." But this does not create any common ground between religion and secularism. It only suggests that secular man treats himself as the ultimate end. So do other primates, in their conduct, if not in their philosophy. Vernon Pratt, in an incisive little monograph examines the state of religious beliefs in a secular age, and argues that both secularism and religion try to answer the same question: What is the meaning of Life? While life, as a whole, may make greater sense in the transcendental framework, in terms of individual life "there can

be just as much 'meaning' with or without 'the super-natural'."<sup>8</sup> If that were so why should secular man be affected by the 'final emptiness of all' and bear 'the expression of discontentment, of sickness, of displeasure, of idleness, of lovelessness'?<sup>9</sup>

Let us turn now to the material gains which are overtaking secular society. The disturbing side-effects of growth have assumed alarming proportions. Any decline in growth now will bring about an inevitable deterioration in the quality of life and that is unacceptable to secular man. On the other hand, continued growth at its present rate may cause disastrous deterioration in the material conditions of existence. According to one estimate, we cannot look beyond 250 years, if industrial activity continues to grow at its present rate. The secular man will have made the atmosphere too hot for himself.<sup>10</sup> I submit that the secular society is facing an institutional collapse. The situation has not come about as a result of any external challenge but as a direct consequence of a fundamental duality which has gradually destroyed the basis of every secular institution. The principal institutions of secular society were: (a) the legislature which comes into existence through a process of free and fair elections, (b) the judiciary which occupies a pivotal and independent position, (c) the executive, which obeys the legislative and the judicial sovereign and, (d) the press which is the principal instrument for the formulation and expression of public opinion. These institutions were established and developed according to precise theoretical concepts, and the ideals which they represented reflected the moral values of secular society. These institutions were evolved under a democratic system. The citizen was assured of his fundamental rights, and equality of status and opportunity. The system of elections was to ensure the liberty of the individual to choose the person whom he would like to place in a position of authority over himself. The independence of the judiciary was not only guaranteed but zealously guarded by society. The executive played an objective and faithful role, while the press was the

keeper of the conscience of the people. These were high ideals to which the institutions of secular society were dedicated. Yet each one of these ideals was betrayed. This betrayal came about as a result of the duality in secular profession and practice. This duality is the result of three fundamental separations; the separation of the Church from the State, the separation of public from private conduct, and the separation of national from international conduct. The first two separations are well-known. It is the third separation, the one between national and international behaviour, which is of particular relevance to my thesis.

The dual standards which imperial powers applied to their conduct at home and to their conduct abroad emerged from this separation. The system of free and fair elections was good at home but not for the colonies, where the natives had to be educated and controlled, before they could be trusted to understand what was good for them. The whole legislative arrangement was an elaborate hoax. The judiciary administered a legal system alien to the people, and maintained an august judicial appearance, while all the time it served as a principal instrument of imperialism. There was no freedom which was not suppressed by the judiciary so long as the law was not violated. The judiciary administered unjust laws with complete justice. The executive objectivity which was a guarantee for the citizen at home became a justification for servility in the colonies. The press, an instrument of free expression of views at home, was used to control and influence the intelligentsia in the occupied territories.

These double standards were pursued by imperial powers as state policies and few people questioned the arrangement. Every single element in the economic system of secular society, the mobility of labour, the mobility of capital, and free inter-play of market forces, was violated in the colonies where people were treated as a vast pool of cheap labour. The entire secular world, which claimed to cherish fundamental and universal human rights, deliberately pursued policies which had no other aim but the

debasement and exploitation of a major portion of mankind. The secular society made a fundamental mistake of judgement when it assumed that its conduct abroad would not affect its conduct at home. This assumption was really another way of saying that private conduct had no connection with public conduct, or that the State had nothing to do with matters of personal belief and conscience. When an ambivalent arrangement, of which the sole aim is exploitation, is pursued over a period of time it is impossible that it should not influence the character of the people engaged in it. The methods which were evolved to promote the policies in the colonies were bound to find their way into the working of similar institutions at home. This, more than anything else, has been responsible for the erosion of secular institutions. The West had to meet its Watergate to realise, however briefly, that its duplicity abroad had eroded its base at home.

It is time to take a look at contemporary Muslim society. "Islam is still a living religion," says Muhammad Munir, a former Chief Justice of Pakistan, "but it is surrounded by a hostile world and none of the Muslim countries has now any international importance, not even the status of a second-rate power." Among the causes of Muslim decline he lists: (a) the gradual loss of political power, (b) limited economic resources, (c) the rigidity of the orthodox system of law and (d) the disappearance of basic Islamic values. Referring to conditions in Pakistan he deplors the fact that the Islamic bodies set up under successive constitutions "have done or suggested nothing to make the people of Pakistan adopt Islamic ways of life."<sup>11</sup> He concludes: "The true explanation of the absence of Islamic life and values is easily discernible in the love of wealth and desire for self-aggrandisement among the muslims of Pakistan." Barring exceptions, this would be generally true of Muslims anywhere in the world. The love of wealth is the standard by which we should measure the extent to which secularism has penetrated into Muslim society.

The truth is that we breathe, think and live by secularism. Whenever we talk of Islam, our concern is to justify it to a secular audience. We interpret the Qur'an, not infrequently, to show that it is not an out-dated book, and that many of the modern discoveries are mentioned in it. The orthodox among us oppose science and technology – as some of our predecessors opposed philosophy – because they regard any development in human thought as a threat to their faith.

We are the under-developed people of the world. Our sole ambition is to achieve economic advancement, and we believe that we can do this only by adopting secular institutions. Indeed, some of us are convinced that, but for Islam, we would have achieved the millennium of self-sustaining growth by now.

Politically the concepts which enthrall us are the concepts of nationalism and sovereignty. Once a nation state is established, whether it is the result of distribution of plunder among the victors, or a grudging dispensation granted by a receding imperial power, or it is carved out of the hearts of the people by a Balfour dagger, it acquires a universally acknowledged right to defend its solidarity and sovereignty. Within the nation states our effort is to preserve the legacy of imperialism: corrupt systems of elections, alien modes of education, and outlandish procedures of administration. We allow ourselves to be divided along linguistic and racial lines, because such divisions appear to offer greater prospects of material gain. We insist on retaining the Roman law even though, in our conditions, it has become a tiresome charade. We imitate all the secular skills in public affairs. The language of our communiques and Press Notes is the language of concealment. We talk in cabinet rooms of hard realities, pragmatic moves, and contemporary compulsion, and when we emerge from there we proclaim the glory of Islam. There is nothing but power at the summit. Morality is for the bushes and the slopes, and principles for barren valleys.

These are but symptoms. The real malady is our attitude toward

power. The trouble started when Muslims were an ascendant force in the world. While we claimed that Islam permitted no dichotomy or diarchy, the rulers started undermining the unity of the Islamic State when they asserted that the affairs of the state were their sole concern, though they would not claim authority in matters of religion. There is no Church in Islam, but an area of religion, distinct from the area of the state, came to be recognized. Two distinct zones of power, one for the rulers, and the other for the *Ulema*, were established. The rulers issued decrees (*Farmans*) in their zone, and the *Ulema* announced verdicts (*Fatawa*) in their own zone. When Malik Shah Seljuk, in the 11th century AD, announced the appearance of the *Idulfitr* moon Abul Maali declared that the moon had not been sighted. During interrogation Abul Maali took the position: "We obey the King in matters of state, but in matters of religion the King must consult us." The King conceded the point.<sup>12</sup> Later, toward the end of the 13th century AD, Sheikhul Islam Hafiz Ibn-e-Taimiyya was forbidden by the Sultan to give any *fatwa* regarding the pronouncement of divorce in pursuance of a promise or declaration. The Sheikh spent five months and eighteen days in prison because he refused to accept the right of the Sultan to interfere in the matter.<sup>13</sup>

By the 13th century it was possible for a ruler to issue commands and say, "I do not know whether such commands are permitted or not by the Shari'ah. I command what I consider to be of benefit to my country and what appears to me opportune under the circumstances."<sup>14</sup> No secular leader could have stated his position more arrogantly or blatantly. The Qur'anic injunction calling upon the Muslims to "Obey God, Obey His Prophet, and those in positions of trust" was stretched to mean that the people must obey the rulers and carry out their commands without question. So long as he did not interfere with the right of a Muslim to offer his prayers the people were bound to obey him. As a consequence, even the right of dissent, let alone the

right of revolt, ceased to be available to a Muslim subject. Mere silence in the face of oppression came to be treated as an act of great courage.

The present represents a great opportunity to reconstruct our society. The forces of Imperialism and Colonialism are on the retreat. Muslim society, despite centuries of domination, has survived a long spell of domination and persecution. We have to break out of our present state of intellectual stagnation. Travelling backward will not take us to our goal, it will only take us to the beginning of the road. This nostalgia for the past is nothing but lack of willingness on our part to face the challenge of the present. The model of leadership which the Prophet established for mankind is there – in front of us, not behind us. The faith of the Muslims in the truth of their way of life and in their dignity burns like an eternal flame. Nothing moves a Muslim more profoundly than the Qur'an. There is no individual whose name, memory, and life is cherished more passionately by a Muslim than that of Prophet Muhammad. No political vision inspires the Muslims to higher levels of devotion and self-sacrifice than the vision of the *Ummah*. Political power in Islam is in the nature of a trust. It is not an end in itself. Unless power is treated as a trust it will degenerate into force. It is possible for a secular leader to suggest that power flows out of the barrel of a gun. In Islam power flows out of the framework of the Qur'an and from no other source. It is for Muslim scholars to initiate universal *Ijtihad* at all levels. The faith is fresh, it is the Muslim mind which is befogged. The principles of Islam are dynamic, it is our approach which has become static. Let there be fundamental rethinking to open avenues of exploration, innovation and creativity. We must have our own system of education, our own system of Government, and our own system of justice.

Our opponents will say, what system are you talking about? When was your system devised and where was it established? The answer that the system was established by Prophet



Muhammad, in accordance with the framework of the Qur'an, will be dismissed as applicable only to a brief era when conditions were completely different. The purpose of these questions will be to convince us that it is futile for us to seek our own way of life, and that we would be much better off if we were to accept, without reservation, one of the two systems, the capitalistic system or the communist system, which have grown under the umbrella of secularism. The answer to all this is that historical and empirical evidence is not enough to determine the merits of a system. A system has to be seen in relation to the objectives which it seeks to achieve, and the conditions in which it is to operate. To regard a system as something static is as absurd as to believe that human conditions never change. Since human beings, and their conditions, are in a state of constant change, no system which cripples the forces of change can retain social relevance for any length of time. We must begin to define our system on the bases of the principles given in the Qur'an, the life of the Prophet, and a study of present conditions and future trends.

This work cannot be done by scholars in isolation. The existing institutions have to be replaced now by Islamic institutions. The primary responsibility lies with those people in Muslim countries whom history has placed in positions of authority. They alone can construct the Islamic system in the context of the *Ummah*, and they alone are in a position to command the attention of the people who are qualified to work out the details of the system.

We have been talking about developing common organisations such as Khilafat, Pan-Islamism, the RCD and the Islamic Conference. We have been seeking association with the Afro-Asian and the neutral bloc. We are content to be part of the Third World even though all we have achieved so far is to leave some of our partners behind in the Fourth World. It does not occur to us that we belong to a natural organisation, the Muslim World, which is a greater reality than any international forum, the United Nations, the NATO, CENTO, SEATO or the Common-

wealth. It is for the leaders of the Muslim World to take the initiative and assume constitutional and legal responsibility for the establishment of the *Ummah* for the Muslim World. Mere declarations of intent or resolutions will not serve the purpose. The time has come to take a decisive and constructive step toward the establishment of the Muslim World. We must agree to a stage by stage development of areas of common authority and interest. The Muslim World must organise itself under the aegis of a Treaty of Mecca. Under this Treaty member countries should spell out the steps by which the control and authority of different organisations of the *Ummah* will become applicable. If Europeans, who were the founders of nationalism and sovereignty, have agreed to accept the supranational and supra-sovereign character of European Institutions under the Treaty of Rome, it should be easier for the Muslim nations, who do not subscribe to concepts of territorial sovereignty, to submit to the supranational authority of the *Ummah*. The proposed Treaty of Mecca should establish an *Ummah* Court of International Justice, an *Ummah* council of education and cultural affairs, an *Ummah* Currency and an *Ummah* Bank of Trade, Investment and Development. The Muslim World needs a press. The Jews have a press, the Christians have a press, the Socialists have a press, the Communists have a press. The Muslim World has newspapers but no press.

The world is divided into opposing forces. The Muslim World will add a new dimension – a dimension of belief, justice, and accountability. Will we seize this opportunity or let it pass? When an individual dies that is the end of the matter. You put an epitaph which gives two dates, two ends of a span. But you cannot write the epitaph of a civilization. Individuals often die of accidents. Civilizations do not perish in storms, conquests or earthquakes. They succumb slowly to the cancer of injustice, tyranny and arrogance, cancer which spreads and corrodes its inside before it starts gnawing at its texture.

Unlike individuals, civilizations have an infinite capacity of self-regeneration. They can pull themselves back from the very edge of the precipice and regain their balance. This is the time for Muslim society to assert its right to organise its existence according to its principles. If we fail we may have failed forever.

*“How many gardens and springs and fields and exquisite palaces did they leave behind? When the end came neither the heavens nor the earth shed any tears, nor did they get a reprieve to reform themselves.”<sup>15</sup>*



# What Islam can give to Humanity Today

*Muhammad Qutb*

*Man the world over is alienated, confused and torn asunder almost to the point of schizophrenia by the deep-rooted problems and anxieties that confront him in modern society. His greatest need is for a stabilizing and integrating force powerful enough to restore his wholeness and re-define his purpose in life. His rejection of traditional forms of worship, and his consequent separation from God, have left him with the choice between a multiplicity of philosophies and creeds all of which promise him satisfaction in this world, none of which fulfil his deeper needs nor answer the innate ontological questions man has asked himself since time immemorial. His distress is aggravated by a fundamental dichotomy which extends even to the religious sphere. Unity of life as well as the integrity of his being are shattered. The religion of Islam provides that powerful integrating force which man needs today. The concept of Oneness of God and the Unity of life offers the divided self and the divided world a possibility to recover their identity and purpose by re-uniting the fragmented aspects of life and establishing the rightful and necessary role of worship.*

## 17 What Islam can give to Humanity Today

How can we best sum up the contribution Islam can make to the world today? In a lecture delivered by Arnold Toynbee in 1948, under the title "Islam – the West and the Future", he observed that Islam could provide the solution to two of the main problems of the present day, namely those of racial discrimination and of alcoholism. But these are no more than symptoms of a far deeper malaise. There is no spiritual nor practical reason why Islam should confine itself to the solution of these issues rather than to other far more deeply-rooted problems now confronting mankind. The mission of Islam is to face all such problems and to offer a solution by showing mankind the true path he should follow to gain salvation in this world and the next. Let us determine the solution by first of all defining the need. What is mankind's greatest need today? How can Islam meet this need?

According to Holy Revelation the basic issue in man's life has been, and will be till the Day of Judgement, the question of worship. Who is to be worshipped and how is He to be worshipped? Let us deal with the first question – who is to be worshipped? Writers and thinkers in the West during the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Materialism in the 18th and 19th centuries when these ideas were first raised, sought to solve the problem by making it disappear. Their advice was 'Forget about

this issue, it is of no concern whatsoever; live life and enjoy it, if you choose, do not worship anything at all?' By freeing man from the bondage of religion they thought to offer him an unprecedented opportunity of finding happiness on this earth. But their thinking was based on two major illusions. The first illusion was the belief that humanity would attain happiness, and would experience constructive development when it rejected religion.

Indeed the West has progressed tremendously, both technologically and scientifically, since it rejected religion. This very progress fostered the illusion in the hearts of men. They forgot that religion in itself was not the force that held them back, but their own interpretation which, since the Middle Ages in Europe, had obstructed their progress. However, they overlooked a more important factor – that the scientific and technological progress achieved by Europe after neglecting its religion was not the first, nor even the fundamental, ingredient of life. It cannot by itself establish a sound human life. Only now is the West coming increasingly to realise this, as they recognize that the absence of spiritual values is the main reason behind the anxiety, confusion, madness, suicide, many other psychological and nervous disorders, and the feeling of perplexity and illusion among youth, all of which constitute a threat to the security, peace and welfare of humanity, despite all the material progress achieved during the last two centuries.

The second illusion is the related thought that man can do without worship altogether. This naive illusion is not borne out by our knowledge of man's history from his earliest known origins up to the present time. Whether in the Ancient or the Modern world 'worship' in some form or another has never ceased to exist in man's life. When man says to himself 'I will worship nothing whatsoever', he does not, as he imagines, rid himself of the problem of worship. He merely changes the object of worship, and proclaims himself or his interests as the

God to be worshipped and to govern his whole life. Worship is not confined to the offering of prayers, devotions or the submission of offerings, as people appear sometimes to imagine when talking of the subject. This is a matter of forms only. Worship itself is essentially obedience and acquiescence to a certain Being, and the belief that it is our duty to obey that Being. Worship in this sense is an integral part of every man's entity and existence because it is a component part of himself. Within this context there can be no one who does not worship even though he claims otherwise. Man is an instinctive worshipper whether or not he chooses or is aware of it. It is only in the nature of the worshipped deity or the way he is worshipped that one man differs from another. Either he worships God, or he worships some other deity or deities by whatever name. His worship of God is either true or deviant, and no sensible man would make such false deities the object of his worship.

Having established this fact, the Qur'an proceeds to the other part of the question, namely the explanation of the right way to worship God. It stipulates the uniformity of worship just as it stresses the Unity of God. The correct worship of God is represented in two integral indivisible aspects, namely the maintenance of the rites of worshipping God to the exclusion of any other, and the following of God's revelation in establishing a point of reference for guidance in life. To pray or present offerings to an idol, an object, or a person, is corruptive of religion as well as of worship. The same corruption results from the adoption of a non-godly attitude and practice in life. There must be unity between man's worship and his attitude towards life. The deity addressed by man in his prayer and devotions is the same deity addressed while studying, earning a living, attempting to better conditions on earth, eating, drinking, copulating, as well as while communicating with his family, with other individuals, with other societies, peoples and states, whether in peace time or during war. "Say: Lo! my worship and my



sacrifice, and my living and my dying, are for Allah, Lord of the Worlds” (VI. 163). In all that he does, the constant reiteration of God’s name in his heart has the practical effect of recalling to him God’s commands, so that he may obey them. In Islam God’s commands deal with all such matters and indicate the permitted as well as the prohibited.

When this happens something of considerable significance occurs in man’s life. To begin with man will be giving due worship to His Creator. Man would never appreciate God as he truly should if he worshipped Him in prayer once during the day and considered this to be the end of it. God says, “I created the Jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me” (LI: 56), meaning by this the wide range of worship which comprises prayer and devotions, living and dying. To do otherwise would be to worship two deities, one in the holy shrine through prayer and devotions, the other (or others, though eventually they culminate into one), through obedience in affairs of everyday life. “Allah hath said: Choose not two gods. There is only one God. So of He, He only, be in awe.” (al-Nahl XVI: 51). The ability of the human heart to sense the glory of God and his miraculous powers revealed in the creation of a universe which is such a wonderful model of accuracy, order and uniformity, as well as in the creation of all living objects, will or should lead man to worship this Almighty God in due veneration of His glory and power. This could never occur through a worship that is pursued from moment to moment and relinquished for the remainder of man’s day-to-day living. Regardless of God’s reward for this worship, a sense of duty demands that it should be followed as a means of paying others what is due to them. “Lo! Allah commandeth you that ye restore deposits to their owners.” (IV. 58), and who except this Omnipotent God deserves disinterested and constant worship? Yet of His mercy God is bounteous to those who give Him His due, namely worship in its wider or uniformly comprehensive sense,

for He will reward them by eternal life in Paradise, and secure their future after death, which, since it is the longer period of man's life, is the worthier to be preserved.

The uniformity of worship during man's span of life influences many important aspects of his living. It gives him first of all an inner security which is nowhere to be found outside the frame of faith. It cannot be obtained either through drugs, drink, narcotics, leisure or sensual pleasure. All these confirm the state of mind which man wants to evade, but they neither remove nor cure it. Security emanates from faith and the mention of God's name. As the Qur'an puts it, "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God: for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction." This security is not a placid resignation to events. Rather, it is the search for the good life wherever it is to be found; the *Jihad* under God's name to instal God's justice in the world; the opposition to all forms of injustice abhorrent to God; the search for knowledge and instruction. In all these activities the believer will rely on God because everything is moved by and returns back to Him. The believer, moreover, is confident that God promises only goodness to him, and this is why no anxiety overshadows the earning of a living, the pursuit of study, the *Jihad*, and the establishment of a civilization, a fact that was once apparent in the early Muslim period.

Until recently there were writers who acclaimed the present age as the 'age of anxiety', calling it the age of creative anxiety. But they came to realise that it was now more in the nature of a poisonous drug even though taken in the smallest dose. They also realised that the impetuous frenetic activity was neither a real nor creative activity. It was only symptomatic of an illness that would soon lead to other consequences, causing man to lose his sense of security and psychological balance. Other writers have said that anxiety is a necessary accompaniment of civilization however damaging or beneficial. This interpretation lacks

scientific precision, since anxiety goes hand in hand only with a civilization thriving on materialism and neglecting the spirit. This type of civilization lacks the basis for inspiring a true sense of security, and it is this civilization which is responsible for tearing the human soul between two deities, the one that is worshipped briefly if at all in the holy shrine, and the other who dominates the realities of day-to-day life. This latter deity who accompanies man is more often than not a tough and ruthless one who does not inspire security and stability in his worshippers. As history shows this was once a flourishing civilization that sensed no pangs of fatal concern because it was secure in the name of God.

Uniformity of worship brings together many aspects of man both within his inner self or in his life generally, which present-day deviations have, without justification, torn asunder. It brings together spirit and matter, body and soul. It brings together religion and science, piety and material development, religion and life. Finally it brings together this life and the Hereafter.

Let us look briefly at each of these unities brought about by Islam. Soul and body or spirit and matter are both of genuine authenticity in the human make-up. *"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man from clay. When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall you down in obeisance unto him.'"* They were brought together inseparably at the birth of man, and the whole of his history is a living confirmation of this fact. But in periods of *Jahiliyyah*, there is always a tendency to set them apart by directing each on a separate course of its own, and by the exaggeration of one at the expense of the other. Some pre-Islamic periods emphasised the spirit as the real essence of man and despised the body as an impure object unworthy of veneration. Such an object was entitled only to degrading and tortuous acts. The material aspect of life was also despised as it was nearest to the

body, to clay. Other pre-Islamic periods exaggerated the body and sensual pleasure. They considered the body to be the real thing, and the soul only a beautiful shadow that lacked substance. They saw it as a secondary object in man's life or as an inhibitor. As a result these eras of history dedicated a great deal of their interest to material produce and construction and almost completely neglected the spiritual make-up of man.

Both attitudes base themselves on a false premise, namely that there is a deep-rooted contradiction between body and soul that can be only conciliated by suppressing one in favour of the other. One either suppresses the body to free the soul, or suppresses the soul in order to attain material emancipation. But, in reality, in neither case does suppression lead to goodness. The suppression and devitalization of the body runs counter to instinct, resulting in the obstruction of man's energy, material and cultural retardation, poverty, misery, depression, pessimism and despair. Alternatively, the suppression and blackening of the soul lead to inner worries that can never be satisfied even by the deepest immersion in earthly pleasures which necessarily result in conflict between individuals, communities, states and peoples. These are signs that something counter-instinctive has occurred; the result is a loss of equilibrium in man's life.

Islam, on the other hand, provides the balanced alternative which harmonises soul and body and disposes of any contradiction and conflict between them. Islam never accepted the idea of an irreconcilable conflict between these two entities. It is true that the body and the soul are two different elements but they are integrated in man. Their lack of cohesion is not caused by their mutual existence in the human-being, but by the domination of one by the other, and the consequent loss of the instinctive equilibrium which God bestowed on him. "Oh man! What has seduced thee from Thy Lord Most Beneficent? Him who created thee, fashioned thee in due proportion, and gave thee a just bias." (V.7). Moderation or equilibrium lies at the basis of God's

creation. But man in his ignorance disturbs this equilibrium. As a result disturbance occurs in the soul as well as in the actualities of life, as is testified by events. This idea is expounded in *L' Homme Cet Inconnu* by the scientist-physician Alexis Karel. He indicates that our serious ignorance of the nature of man as well as our neglect of his spiritual aspect, and our setting up of economic, social and political systems based on ignorance, lie at the root of our deterioration as people, even though this coincides with our scientific and cultural progress. And it is Islam which restores to man the balance and moderation with which he is endowed by God. It puts into effect a simple and realistic though far-reaching measure, namely an invitation to the soul and body to take part in the whole of life.

Prayer is not only a spiritual hymn, it is also a set of movements performed by the body through standing, kneeling and prostration, combined with a conscious mental concentration on the verses recited in prayer. Food, drink and sex on the other hand are not pure body movements, but also represent spiritual aspirations made permissible by mentioning God's name, and performed in strict observance of what is lawful and what is forbidden. In this way, such acts become connected with God. Any human act invariably lies between these two poles and is thus included in the integrating system which brings together soul and body, spirit and matter, earth and sky.

A similar split occurred between religion and science. Man has an instinctive disposition to worship, yet he has too an instinctive disposition to know the secrets of the material world around him, and to subject these to his power. Both dispositions are instinctive and authentic: both are innate. No necessary contradiction, split or conflict exists between them. Divine Revelation provided no grounds for it, but man's errors have created conflict and dispute between them. This dichotomy occurred in Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance when the Church opposed science and scholars, and threatened to bury, torture and kill

people of science such as Copernicus, Galileo and Jordano Bruno. As time passed the gap widened and the conflict deepened, until the mere mention of God's name in scientific research was tantamount in the ordinary European's sense to a violation of the spirit of that research and an unwarranted attempt to integrate two irreconcilable attitudes. As Darwin put it, "The interpretation of evolution with reference to Providence is an introduction of a metaphysical element into a purely mechanical situation."

This misinterpretation of the nature of the relationship between the two subjects could not help but disturb man's balance and security. It aroused conflict in man's inner self between two genuine elements each requiring satisfaction. When one feels that the satisfaction of one's spiritual needs lies outside the framework of science, and that the satisfaction of scientific needs lies beyond the reach of religion, and if one feels at the same time that these needs proceed in two separate and diverging directions, one ends by worshipping two irreconcilable deities, each demanding from his worshipper a differing attitude, behaviour and point of view. For the time being, there is no choice other than to worship the two. Again man is torn apart, whether consciously or unconsciously. His anxiety is reinforced, and when, as frequently happens, he is forced to choose between them, he succumbs to the deity of science as being more able to satisfy his immediate needs, and abandons the deity of religion as belonging to a world altogether less real and tangible whose existence, in any case, he doubts.

Islam in its simplicity eliminates this contradiction again by means of a realistic and simple procedure. The God who man worships in his prayers is the same God who gave man knowledge for the first time, and the same God who invites man still to learning and knowledge.

*"He taught Adam the nature of all things." (II 31).*

*"Read: in the name of thy Lord who createth. Createth man from a clot.*

*Read; And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, who teacheth by the pen. Teacheth man that which he knew not.”* (XCVI. 1-5).

God invites man to contemplate the secrets of the universe:

*“Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alteration of the night and the day; in the sailings of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which he gives therewith. To an earth that is dead, in the beasts of all kinds that he scatters through the earth, in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise.”* (II. 164).

God taught that He was all that is between the sky and the earth:

*“And hath made of service to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth.”* (XLV. 13).

In order to exploit what is in the heavens and on earth by his physical and mental efforts, all that man has to do is to learn the universal law by which God administers this universe:

*“It is He who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the substance which He furnishes (But unto Him is the resurrection).”* (LXVII).

Thus will come the unity of orientation through the Oneness of God.

Human knowledge is not stolen from God despite His will as in the myth of Prometheus. It is a divine gift bestowed on man. Man does not need to disobey God in order to learn. It is God who instructed mankind to learn and to seek knowledge. The Prophet says, *“The quest of knowledge is an obligation.”* Man

should not have any sense of guilt when he exploits the resources of the heavens and earth for his benefit, nor should he think that he is doing so in rebellion against a Divine Will which seeks to crush and oppress him in the way the relationship between man and God is portrayed in the Greek myth. It is God who harnessed the resources of this universe for the benefit of man and instructed man to settle in the earth.

*“It is He who produced you from the earth and settled you therein.”*  
(Hood 61).

There is thus no need for man to feel that he is worshipping two opposed gods, each one with conflicting demands on him. In all that man does there is only One God. When man offers prayers, Allah demands that he should fear Him. When man seeks knowledge Allah demands him not to use the fruit of this knowledge in wrongful tyranny over the earth. Man does not feel that he is surrendering to God only out of ignorance or inability, as Julian Huxley claimed in *Man in the Modern World*. According to Huxley, when man gains knowledge and control over his environment, he rebels against God, making a god of himself. On the contrary, the more man learns the nearer he becomes to God and to the fear of God.

*“The erudite among His bondsmen fear God alone.”* (XXXV: 28).

Man prays to God to give him more knowledge:

*“Oh My Lord. Advance me in knowledge.”* (Taha 114).

Thus even when he is seeking knowledge, man is in his heart always thinking of Allah. He will conduct his life in exploiting the fruits of science for righteous ends with the same assurance and confidence he has in Allah when he offers Him his prayers.



In this way Islam establishes a unity between religion and science and learning, as between religion and life.

In Europe life was excluded from the sphere of religion through particular circumstances which were not inherent in religion itself. Western man thought of religion as a spiritual relation between man and God, and of life as human endeavour with no relation to God. This is invented by the West, and not revealed by God. It is inconceivable that such a concept could be supported by the words ascribed to the Messiah, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." This is contradictory to the entire concept of religion according to which Allah is the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, and Caesar and all men must surrender to the judgement of Allah. These words should be seen as an instruction by the Messiah to his followers not to declare war against Caesar, but to pay the taxes he required, till the establishment of a state that would enforce what Allah had revealed, and would subject Caesar himself to the judgement of Allah. There is a similar case in Islam. Allah told the Muslims in Mecca before the establishment of the Muslim state:

*"Withhold your hands establish worship and pay the poor-due."*  
(IV. 77).

No Muslim has understood from this instruction that religion is only a spiritual relation between man and Allah, and that the daily affairs of life should be administered by Caesar or other non-believers in the way they choose. This instruction was for a period of time only, and was followed by the establishment of Muslim society and the Muslim state, thus making life in its entirety subject to the judgement of Allah. This was accompanied by the revelation of detailed legislation governing all aspects of life.

As a result of this wrong interpretation of the scope of religion

in the West, life increasingly moved away from religion, until in modern times it was finally excluded completely from its ambit. Politics followed the principles of Machiavelli who justified lying, deception, hypocrisy, dishonesty, killing, murder, fraudulence and trickery, all of which were forbidden in Islam. Economy was based on the usurious system which is also forbidden in Islam. Social relations were based on social hypocrisy and the hideous isolation of individuals described by Aldous Huxley in *Texts and Pretexts*, where every man has become an island in itself without any connection with other islands scattered in the ocean of life.

Karel considers that the contravention of innate laws cannot take place without severe punishment, as these laws are as crucial as the Law of Nature itself. The chaos and turmoil now rampant all over the world are the heavy price man has paid for the contravention of the innate laws created by Allah. It is Allah and not man who knows human nature. How ignorant man is of his nature, as Karel again so rightly observes. Though he has learned a great deal about the universe surrounding him, his ignorance of himself is profound, since he sees himself only through his passions and desires. Allah alone knows innate human nature: He knows what is suitable for it and what is not. He has revealed this religion to guide the life of man as well as his relation with Allah. In a simple yet far-reaching way, Islam establishes the connection between religion and life, and extends this to embrace the Hereafter.

Islam presents the true concept of religion. Religion is faith and laws; a faith governing spiritual relations with God, and laws administering the affairs of life in the name of God. In both cases we are seeking the same God, we worship one God. The *Shari'ah* as revealed encompasses the whole range of human activity, as well as international relations whether in peace or in war. Thus politics become Islamic politics; economics become Islamic economics, social relations become Islamic relations,

relations between the two sexes will be organised according to Islam, thought and art become Islamic activities. Islam embraces the whole of life.

Allah who revealed the *Shari'ah* knows that in man's life there are permanent elements, and others that develop and change. Allah does not want these latter to be petrified or stunted in their growth, therefore he enacts in his *Shari'ah* comprehensive and constant principles which, without themselves altering, allow for the process of continuous change through the right interpretation of these laws in their detailed application to new circumstances. This has been the endeavour of Muslim scholars throughout history. In this way a constant interconnection is maintained between religion and life. Life will not be petrified in one form, nor will its development contravene the scope of religion. As Khalifah Omar Ben Abdel Aziz said, "The more new problems people have, the more new rules they will find." It is through this fusion that unity of this life and the Hereafter will be achieved. The dichotomy between religion and life led to a separation in the awareness of people of this life and the Hereafter. In pursuit of these separate ends they developed two completely unconnected sets of actions, the one bearing no relation to the other.

Islam establishes a unity between this life and the Hereafter and considers them as a continuous process. Together they constitute one path, the beginning of which is this life and its end the Hereafter.

*"But seek, with the (wealth) which God has bestowed on thee, the home of the Hereafter, not forget thy portion in this world."* (XXVIII. 77).

and:

*"Say who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, which He hath produced for His servants and the things, clean and pure, (which he hath provided) for sustenance?"*

*Say They are, in the life of the world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgement.”*

In Islam there is not a single deed which is concerned exclusively with worldly life or with the Hereafter; its purpose is always twofold. Offering prayers, for example, which people may think of as a deed motivated solely by concern for the Hereafter, also has its purpose in the worldly life. As God says in the Qur'an, "*Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds.*" (XXIX. 45). Prayer is intended to be offered in the worldly life, and be rewarded in the Hereafter. Even the relationship between the sexes, which might be thought of as an exclusively worldly affair, is linked in the consciousness of Muslims with the Hereafter. Muhammad said:

*“You will be rewarded by Allah for copulation with your wives.”*

He was asked:

*“We do that to satisfy our desire, how can we be rewarded for it?”*

Muhammad replied:

*“If you satisfy your desires in a forbidden way, wouldn't you be punished for it?”*

They answered:

*“Yes, we would.”*

Muhammad then said:

*“If you then satisfy your desire in a permissible way, you must be rewarded.”*

The result is that this world and the Hereafter are interconnected in the awareness of the Muslim individual. In everything he does he will commit himself to act in accordance with the revealed Will of Allah. While he conducts his worldly affairs in this life, his heart will be looking forward to God's reward in the Hereafter.

This full integration in the structure of Islam is clearly expressed in a way which has roused the interest of many orientalists writing about Islam. The English orientalist Gibb says, "The kind of society that a community builds for itself depends fundamentally upon its beliefs as to the nature and purpose of the universe and the place of the human soul within it. This is a familiar enough doctrine and is reiterated from Christian pulpits week after week. But Islam is possibly the only religion which has constantly and consistently aimed to build up a society on this principle. The prime instrument of this purpose was law."<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian orientalist Wilfred Cantwell Smith remarks:

*"Observers have noted the paramount position of the community in Islam. Less thought has been devoted to its significance in Islamic history, which is that community in motion. It is well known that Muslim society has a remarkable solidarity, that the loyalty and cohesion of its members are intense. Many have recognised that the community is not only a social group but a religious body; that the 'church and state' are one, to use the inappropriate language of the West. We would go much further, as has been said, in interpreting this. Yet to stress these facts, to insist upon the centrality of society, is not to deny but to interpret our initial emphasis on religion as personal. The community is based on, as it is integrated to, individual faith. Not only is Muslim society held together (as other societies) by common loyalties and traditions, and by a very carefully worked out system of values and of beliefs. Not only is it the product of a superb ideal. It pulsates with the vitality of a profoundly held and deeply personal conviction, a religious conviction that is warm and meaningful for the individual member. We may say that this society, this community, is the expression*

*of a religious ideal, using 'religious' in the personal sense earlier proposed. As a creed or theological system may be the expression in an intellectual form of a personal faith – as is often the case, particularly with Christians – so a social order and its activities are the expression in a practised form of a Muslim's personal faith."*<sup>2</sup>

This integration, which is an expression of the unity of worship and the Oneness of God, is most precious in Islam. It is the real meaning of *Shahadah* – “No God but Allah.” It is the most precious gift that Islam can give to humanity in this age; a humanity perplexed, confused and suffering from anxiety through its loss of the unifying element, whether in its theoretical concepts or in its actual behaviour. It seems uncertain in Toynbee's discussion of the possible future contribution of Islam to new manifestations of religion, whether he was aware of this meaning or not. Whatever the case may be, this meaning does not present 'a new face of Religion' as Toynbee and others thought. It is the true meaning of religion revealed by God to mankind. It is the meaning which materialised in Islam fourteen centuries ago, and was formulated in a concrete way over a long period and in large areas of the world.

Islam provides us with guidance throughout life from cradle to grave, answering the innate questions that consciously or unconsciously press on man in his journey through this world. What exactly is man? What is his role on the earth? What are the limits of his energies? From where have we come? To where will we go after death? For what purpose do we live? How should we organise our life? These are the questions which demand answers. If no convincing and decisive answer is provided, and if that answer is not the right one, it will undoubtedly affect man's psychological stability and his behaviour. Man will be in a state of crisis. The present world situation is the most obvious example of the extent of this crisis: no further evidence is needed than modern man's present behaviour.

What is man? A simple question, yet how difficult for contemporary mankind to answer, and how far their answer from the truth. Is man really an animal as Darwin suggested, or is he a human being? Is he a God as portrayed by Julian Huxley? Does man stand alone as his own creator, as suggested by a book with the title *Man makes Himself*? Is he a slave as conceived by other doctrines and theories, and if so, a slave to what? To an exploiting class as suggested by the materialistic theory of history; to his own body and desires; or to the machine as he came to be under technological progress? What are the potentials of man? Is he merely a body and reason, or a body, reason and soul as well? What are the limits of reason? Is he able by it alone to understand and explain all things? What is his attitude towards those things which he cannot understand or explain? Should he ignore them, or surrender to them reluctantly? Where does man go after death? Is the end of man's limited life on this earth the end of everything, or is there some form of continuation? What is the purpose of human life? Is it to obtain as much material enjoyment as possible, or is there some other objective, and of what kind? Is it to control nature, or to control others? (Or is it perhaps to co-operate with them?) And to what use should this control be put? To enslave others? To destroy? Or merely to assert ourselves? If on the other hand we desire to control others that we may co-operate with them, the same question arises: to what end will we co-operate? The questions are endless. How should man live? Who will decide the question for him? Philosophers, politicians, dictators, the masses, youths, elders? Or should each man decide for himself as Sartre's existentialist philosophy suggests? Clearly the answers to all these questions and more will determine man's behaviour and the kind of life he will lead on earth.

Contemporary mankind whether in the East or the West has provided a variety of answers. For the most part they are wrong and misleading. The result is the present unprecedented turmoil

and chaos, and the misery the vast majority of mankind is suffering from, despite the technological and scientific progress which was theoretically to provide humanity with spiritual happiness in addition to material prosperity.

Islam provides humanity with the right guidance for its journey, and the right answers to its persistent questions. Thus assured, man is enabled to set out to achieve his objectives in complete harmony of aspiration, thought, and feeling. Man in Islam is simply man. He is neither god nor animal – the two extremes argued by Huxley and Darwin respectively. His role is to be a vicegerent on earth; to inhabit it in accordance with the will of Allah. Allah has bestowed on man the talents and abilities necessary for this role. Among them is the ability to learn, the ability to know and distinguish between the path of righteousness and the path of evil, and the ability to choose and pursue one of them. It is because of this ability that man's actions acquire moral value. Man cannot, and should not live without moral values. There is no single human action which does not fall within the scope of morality. We cannot say that morality has no bearing on politics, science or sexual relations. The only acts that have no relation to morality are the acts of an animal: for an animal there is no choice. Man on the contrary has two alternative courses of action open to him, and he is able to follow one of the two. As a result, all his actions have moral value. If he opts out of the moral choice, behaving like an animal, he will pay the price of his action in misery and perplexity.

We came to be by the will of Allah. We will in the end return to Allah. On the day of resurrection, Allah will question us as to what we did in our worldly life. Those who followed the course of Allah and the way revealed by Him, will later see the paradise of Allah. Disbelievers will end up in hell:

*“And if as is sure come to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows my guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those*



*who reject faith and belie our signs, they shall be companions of the fire, and shall abide therein.”* (II. 38–39).

The duty of man on earth is to worship Allah:

*“I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve me.”* (LI. 56).

The worship meant is the comprehensive worship already indicated, including not only specific acts of worship but everything that man does:

*“Say: Truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for God, the Cherisher of the world. No partner hath He.”* (VI. 163–164).

If fulfilled in accordance with Allah’s purpose, every act becomes an act of worship.

The course humanity should pursue is the course of Allah, since Allah is Lord and man is not: He is the Creator and man is not: Allah is Omniscient and man is not. Wherever man creates laws for himself, he sustains harm and introduces disorder and confusion into his life. Man can only be truly free and truly equal, when he worships Allah alone, complying only with His *Shari’ah*. All man-made slogans of freedom and equality will remain illusions with no substance in reality, as long as some men remain the legislators of others. Such a state of affairs would be consistent with the materialist theory of history. He who owns will be he who rules, while all other people will be his slaves. Feudalists become the rulers and peasants are condemned to servitude: capitalists rule and workers are the slaves; Communism rules, and all people become slaves of the state and are subject to it as their only source for sustenance. But when Allah is ruler through compliance with *Shari’ah*, all people, the rulers and the

ruled, will be in the servitude of Allah alone, equal in their servitude to Allah, therefore equal in freedom vis-à-vis each other, since all are bound by *Shari'ah* which has not been made by any of them, and none can alter it to defend his own interests at the expense of others. When man finds this type of guidance on his journey, he will immediately discover the landmarks of the path ahead of him, and will follow this path. His soul then will not be thrown into confusion; his mind will not suffer bewilderment; his footsteps will be firm and steady.

Man should not demean himself. He is a being greatly honoured by Allah, and should not be humiliated or lose his dignity.

*“We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation.”*  
(XVII: 70).

On the other hand man should not imagine himself greater than he is and out of arrogance turn his back on the worship of God.

*“Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds. In that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient. Verily, to thy Lord is the return (of all).”*  
(XCVI: 6-8).

Man should not feel that life is an unrepeatable opportunity, a feeling that leads inevitably to over-indulgence in sensual pleasures. Rather he should avail himself of the reasonable share permitted by Allah, and realise that the excessive pleasure he is seeking without permission from Allah is not good in itself. Allah did not prohibit this excess in order to torture man, but lest it might discourage him from attaining his ultimate aim, and degrade him from human dignity to the level of an animal. Moreover, every excessive pleasure that man abandons in his worldly life in obedience to Allah, will be compensated for,

many-fold on his return back to Allah. Man should play his role on this earth with clear vision and awareness. He should not build the world of matter while undermining the spiritual world, neither should he create material facilities as ends in themselves, neglecting the ultimate aims of human existence, which will only be attained by establishing divine justice on Earth, and will only be fulfilled by belief in Allah and by following His course. It is by presenting this concept to humanity, after providing a true meaning of divinity and worship, that Islam gives humanity the guidance it needs in its present fumbling in the dark.

We return now to a point raised earlier, namely the question of stability and change in human life. Darwinism has had an immense influence over Western thought. It has suggested that there are no permanent elements in human life, or in any form of life, throughout the entire universe. To regard any value system such as morality or religion as permanent is therefore an unscientific way of thinking and a restriction on human life that should be eliminated. Yet when we think about it outside the context of local and particular conditions in Europe, and the ensuing conflicts between science, religion, learning and other human activities, we realise that it is the extremist rejection of the permanent values in human life that is unscientific, and that it is this which needs a careful scientific examination unconnected with emotional or historical factors.

The economic, political and social aspects of people's lives do change owing to the constant interaction between human reason and the Universe. This reaction constantly generates more knowledge of the mysteries of the Universe; knowledge which is put to use in harnessing its resources in the service of man. This is true. But what has this to do with constant values in human life? What has this to do, for example, with worshipping Allah? The necessity of this worship is derived from the fact that Allah is the Creator and the Organiser of this Universe with

all therein, including mankind. How does man's discovery of the properties of matter, splitting the atom and its molecule, or sending a rocket to the moon, stars or other planets change this necessary relationship?

The story of (modern) Prometheus and his rebellion against God when man learned more about the Universe and harnessed its resources, is a myth and not science. We should not – in the age of science – be dominated by unscientific stories. To say that man knows himself and his requirements better than Allah is also an emotional statement which lacks the scientific spirit of enquiry. Again this is a result of the situation in Mediaeval Europe, when the clergy tyrannized on earth in the name of God in a way that led people to abandon the God of the church in whose name tyranny was practised, and to invent another God – call it Nature or any other name – who had no church, no priests, and who put people under no kind of obligation. These were circumstances peculiar to Europe and not universal realities or scientific facts. How can we, in the age of science, cling to a concept derived from a specific historical and geographical base, and turn it into a permanent and universal reality on which our life should be based?

The existence of values in the life of man is objective and derived from the fact that he has more than one course open to him; is able to choose and commit himself to a certain course. How is this changed by man's discovery of the secrets of the Universe, or by his harnessing its resources? The abolition of moral values from the life of man – which means a regression to the level of animals or machines – is based on an unscientific concept, presupposing absolute passivity on the part of man. This is true whether we are talking of the psychic determinism preached by Freud and psycho-analysis, or the economic determinism on which the materialist philosophy of history was based. Freud, for example, has not offered a shred of scientific evidence to prove the existence of the Œdipus complex on which his

psychological determinism was based. On the other hand, in the light of the economic determinism propounded by Marx, England should have been the first country in Europe to experience Communism. England is still not a communist state, while the biggest communist blocks in the world, Russia and China, have moved from feudalism to Communism. The claim that moral values are not permanent, and that they should keep pace with material development, is based on a supposition incapable of scientific testing or proof, namely that the innate entity of man develops with material development. There is no evidence of this. We talk, for instance, of the dominant instinctive motivation of man being for food, water, clothes, shelter, sex, ownership of property and self-assertion, and we can say with all certainty that the *forms* of these things have developed greatly with the passage of time. However, who can say in a truly scientific sense, that their *substance* has changed as well? Moral values are concerned with substance, not form. Though the forms of human activity change, the moral values related to this activity are not changeable; they continue to determine, by virtue of their permanency, all the variable forms of human activity from one generation to another. The permanency of values does not prevent change in form, nor do changes in form require any change in essence. Contemporary humanity went astray when it removed many things from the realm of permanence and pushed them into the realm of evolution without any valid scientific basis. The most flagrant example of this was placing the issues of religion and morality within an evolutionary context, and claiming that man's behaviour had nothing to do with morality. An illustration of this is the assertion that man's sexual behaviour remains outside the scope of morality since it is a purely biological function. A strange claim, and stranger still to attribute it to the evolutionary process. Sex as a biological relation unrelated to morality has been for millions of years a fact in the world of animals. What kind of evolution is it which takes man millions

of years back to the state of an animal and no more? What scientific spirit is this, Darwinism or other, upon which such a concept and its resulting behaviour can be based? Islam provides us with a decisive judgement on this topic. It teaches us that human life should develop constantly – scientifically, politically, economically and socially – but that in its continuous development it should not abandon the constant values derived from the permanent and unchanging facts related to Allah, in his creation of the Universe, life and man. Life based on this concept will be balanced in its movement. It will not become fixed at any one point, nor will it set out irrationally on the path to its own destruction.

By providing humanity with these three major concepts – the unity of divinity and of worship, guidance throughout the human journey, the resolution of what is permanent and what is changeable in human life – Islam gives humanity a radical solution to the chief problem now leading to the disorder and confusion we are witnessing. Having fulfilled its primary mission by re-establishing the right concepts, Islam goes on to provide practical solutions to the problems of everyday living. Unfortunately there is no time to deal with these in detail in the present paper. The hope is that here, and elsewhere within this book, a clear model of that solution has been indicated.

# Islam and the Challenge of Economic Development

*Khurshid Ahmad*

*The economy of Islamic countries, despite its rich resources, is in disarray, a situation due as much as anything to the prevalence of Western modes of thinking – Socialist as well as Capitalist – in the Islamic world.*

*No economic model which is not in conformity with Islamic values will be appropriate, let alone successful, in the regeneration and reconstruction of the internal economy of Islam. Islamic development economics must be rooted in the precepts embodied in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Only in this way will the development of man be in accord with the material advancement of Islamic society, and a balance be maintained between ideological, political and economic values.*

*It is with this in mind that the author first states the current problems, and then proceeds to delineate the outline of an Islamic theory of economics in which the moral, spiritual and material aspects of human life are integrated into a total plan for development.*

## 18 Islam and the Challenge of Economic Development

A major challenge confronts the world of Islam: the challenge of reconstructing its economy in a way that is commensurate with its world role: ideological, political and economical. What does this demand: economic development with a view to “catch up” with the industrialized countries of the West, Capitalist or Socialist according to one’s inclination and sympathy, or politico-economic dependence? Or does it demand total socio-economic reconstruction in the light of a basically different model, with its own set of assumptions, ideals and growth-path, something that would be unique and value-specific?

The Muslim countries suffer from widespread economic underdevelopment, i.e. non-utilisation and/or under-utilisation of human and physical resources with consequent poverty, stagnation and backwardness. Even those countries which are resource-rich, the state of their economies remains predominantly underdeveloped. There are gross structural deformities within the economies of the Muslim countries. Whatever development is taking place is contributing, *inter alia*, to the aggravation of these deformities. Most of the Muslim countries have been unable to internalize the engine of growth. Their economies are dependent on the Western countries in a number of ways – for the import of foodstuffs, manufactured goods, technology, etc. on the one hand, and for the export of their primary products on the other.<sup>1</sup>

The paradox of the Muslim world is that it is resource-rich,



but economically poor and weak. Development planning has been introduced in a number of Muslim countries. In some, the art is now at a fairly advanced level. Nigeria, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia are some of the instances in view. But in almost all these countries developmental effort is modelled after the prototypes of growth developed by the Western theorists and practitioners of planning and “sold” to the planners in the Muslim countries via international diplomacy, economic pressurization, intellectual mobilization and a number of other overt and covert means. Whatever be the source of inspiration – the Capitalist economies of the West or the Socialist models of Russia and China – no effort worth the name seems to have been made to re-think the basic issues of development economies in the light of the ideals and values of Islam and its world strategy.

How does this policy and the actual developments stand in relation to Islam? It would be correct to say that developmental policies have been, more or less, Islam-neutral. As against this unfortunate ‘fact’, it is our submission that as far as Islam is concerned, it cannot be neutral *vis-a-vis* economic development. But there is no evidence to support that generally speaking, the policy makers derived any inspiration worth the name from Islam and tried to translate its economic ideals into development policies, some lip-service here and there notwithstanding. Actual policies have had no or little relation to Islam with the result that the economies of the Muslim world have failed to be transformed towards Islam and the deformities and inequities inherited from the colonial period and beyond have been generally aggravated. Muslim thinkers have criticised this state of affairs and have emphasised that Islam should be the main inspiration in their development thinking.<sup>2</sup>

The primary task of any theory of development is to examine and explain the nature of the processes of development and factors responsible for it, to identify and analyse principal obstacles to

development in a given situation, and to try to prescribe the most desirable and the most efficient ways and means to remove those obstacles and achieve various dimensions of economic development.

It can hardly be over-emphasised that such an effort must be made with academic rigour and scholarly detachment. Nonetheless, it would be idle to assume that this theorizing can take place in a climate of so-called positivistic objectivity and of complete value-neutrality. Most of the economic thinking that masquerades as value-neutral turns out, on closer scrutiny, to be otherwise. The result of this approach, however, is that its value-assumptions remain apparently hidden. They remain implicit, and as such, are not susceptible to evaluation in an ordinary way.<sup>3</sup>

This state of affairs is highly objectionable. We agree with Myrdal that “efforts to run away from the valuations are misdirected and foredoomed to be fruitless and damaging” and that “the only way in which we can strive for objectivity in theoretical analysis is to lift up the valuations into the full light, make them conscious and explicit, and permit them to determine the viewpoints, the approaches and the concepts used. In the practical phases of a study the stated value premises should then – together with the data established by theoretical analysis with the utilization of those same value premises – form the premises for all policy conclusions”.<sup>4</sup>

A major contribution of Islam lies in making human life and effort purposive and value-oriented. The transformation it seeks to bring about in human attitudes and *pari passu* in that of the social sciences is to move them from a stance of pseudo-value-neutrality towards open and manifest value-commitment and value-fulfilment. As such, the first premises which we want to emphasise is that economic development in an Islamic framework as also Islamic development economics are rooted in the value-pattern embodied in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.<sup>5</sup> This is our basic frame of reference.

Our second premise is that this approach clearly rules out a strategy of imitation. The Capitalist and the Socialist models cannot be adopted as our ideal-types, although we would like to avail ourselves of all those experiences of mankind which can be gainfully assimilated and integrated within the Islamic framework and can serve our own purposes without in any way impairing our values and norms.

But we must reject the archetypes of capitalism and socialism.<sup>6</sup> Both these models of development are incompatible with our value system. Both are exploitative and unjust and fail to treat man as man, as God's vicegerent (*khalifah*) on earth. Both have been unable to meet in their own realms the basic economic, social, political and moral challenges of our time and the real needs of a humane society and a just economy. Both are irrelevant to our situation, not merely because of the differences in ideological and moral attitudes and in socio-political frameworks, but also for a host of more mundane and economic reasons, like differences in relative resource bases, changed international economic situations, bench-mark differences in the levels of the respective economies, socio-economic costs of development, and above all, for the fundamental fact that the crucial developmental strategy of both the systems – industrialisation primarily through maximisation of investible surplus – is not suited to the conditions of the Muslim world and the demands of the Islamic social ideals.<sup>7</sup>

Development economics is presently passing through a period of crisis and re-evaluation. It is coming under attack from a number of directions. An increasing number of economists and planners are becoming sceptical about the whole approach of contemporary development economics.<sup>8</sup> There are others who consider the application of a theory based on Western experience to a different socio-economic situation, as is being done in the less developed countries, inappropriate and even injurious to the prospects of development.<sup>9</sup> There are others who are critical of

the tools and instruments of development planning and regard the alleged sophistications and mathematical refinements as pseudo-scientific inasmuch as they contain elements of simplification, abstraction and even falsification.<sup>10</sup> There are still some others who are becoming disenchanted with the very idea of growth – some because of its socio-economic and ecological costs,<sup>11</sup> and others because they have begun to see the limits of growth.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of this and other considerations, it can be suggested that the state of development economics today is not a very healthy one.<sup>13</sup> We, therefore, suggest that the central ideas of development economics and its suggested remedies deserve to be re-examined. A much more critical approach deserves to be adopted towards the panaceas that have been 'sold' to the Muslim countries.

The above submissions spell out some of the negative aspects of our approach, that is, what an Islamic approach to development should not be. On the positive side we submit that our approach should be ideological and value-oriented. In development economics, as in economics – or in any branch of human activity, there is an area which deals with technological relationships. But such technological relationships *per se* are not the be-all and end-all of a social discipline.

Technological relationships are important and they should be decided according to their own rules. But technological decisions are made in the context of value-relations. Our effort is to weld these two areas and to make our values explicit and to assign to them the role of effective guide and controller for the entire system. This means that as against an imitative stance, our approach must be original and creative. It is only through a thorough understanding of the social ideals and values of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and a realistic assessment of our socio-economic situation – resources, problems and constraints – that we can adopt a creative and innovative strategy for change.

As such, our approach would be ideological as well as empirical and somewhat pragmatic – pragmatic not in the sense that ideals and values can be trimmed to suit the exigencies of the situation, but pragmatic in the sense that ideals and values are to be translated into reality in a practical and realistic way.

Islam stands for effort, struggle, movement and reconstruction – elements of social change. It is not merely a set of beliefs. It also provides a definite outlook on life and a programme for action, in a word, a comprehensive milieu for social reconstruction. We would, therefore, conclude this section by submitting some basic propositions about the dynamics of social change as they reveal themselves by reflection on the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. They also provide some indicators for goals of socio-economic policy.

(a) Social change is not a result of totally pre-determined historical forces. The existence of a number of obstacles and constraints is a fact of life and history, but man is not subject to any historical determinism. Change has to be planned and engineered. And this change should be purposive – that is, sustained movement towards the norm or the ideal.

(b) Man is the most active agent for change. All other forces have been subordinated to him in his capacity as God's vicegerent (*Khalifah*). Within the framework of the divine arrangement for this universe and its laws, it is man himself who is responsible for making or marring his destiny.

(c) Change consists in environmental change and change within the heart and soul of man – his attitudes, his motivation, his commitment, his resolve to mobilize all that is within him and around him for the fulfilment of his objectives.

(d) Life consists of a network of inter-relationships. Change means some disruption in some relationships somewhere. As such there is a danger of change becoming an instrument of disequilibrium within man and in society. Islamically oriented social change would aim at least friction and disequilibria, and

planned and co-ordinated movement from one state of equilibrium to a higher one, or from a state of disequilibrium towards equilibrium. As such, change has to be balanced and gradual and evolutionary. Innovation is to be coupled with integration. It is this unique Islamic approach which leads to revolutionary changes through an evolutionary trajectory.

These are some of the major elements of healthy social change through which Islam wants man and society to move from one height to another. The task before the Islamic leadership, intellectual as well as politico-economic, is clearly to formulate the objectives and strategy of change along with the ways of achieving it and also to establish institutions and inaugurate processes through which these policies could be actually implemented.

#### ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

Now we would like to elaborate on some of the essential elements of the Islamic concept of development.

Economic development, according to the current literature on development, consists of a "series of economic activities causing an increase in the productivity of the economy as a whole and of the average worker, and also an increase in the ratio of earners to total population."<sup>14</sup> It is looked upon as a dynamic process involving structural changes which produce a significant and sustained improvement in the performance of the economy, actual as well as potential, measured usually in real per capita terms, and which is spread over a fairly long period of time. Its substance lies in enabling people meaningfully to control their economic environment, so as to improve the quality of life.<sup>15</sup>

Islam is deeply concerned with the problem of economic development, but treats this as an important part of a wider problem, that of total human development. The primary function of Islam is to guide human development on correct lines and in the right direction. It deals with all aspects of economic develop-

ment but always in the framework of total human development and never in a form divorced from this perspective. That is why the focus, even in the economic sector, is on human development with the result that economic development remains an integrated and indivisible element of moral and socio-economic development of human society.

The philosophic foundations of the Islamic approach to development, discussed by us in detail elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> are as follows:

1. *Tawhid* (God's unity and sovereignty). This lays down the rules of God-man and man-man relationship.
2. *Rububiyyah* (Divine arrangements for nourishment, sustenance and directing things towards their perfection). This is the fundamental law of the universe which throws light on the divine model for the useful development of resources and their mutual support and sharing. It is in the context of this divine arrangement that human efforts take place.
3. *Khilafa* (man's role as God's vicegerent on earth). This defines man's status and role, specifying the responsibilities of man as such, of a Muslim, and of the Muslim *ummah* as the repository of this *khilafa*. From this follows the unique Islamic concept of man's trusteeship, moral, political and economic, and the principles of social organisation.
4. *Tazkiyah* (purification *plus* growth). The mission of all the prophets of God was to perform the *tazkiyah* of man in all his relationships – with God, with man, with natural environment, and with the society and state.

We would submit that the Islamic concept of development is to be derived from its concept of *tazkiyah*, as it addresses itself to the problem of human development in all its dimensions and is concerned with growth and expansion towards perfection through purification of attitudes and relationships. The result of *tazkiyah* is *falah* – prosperity in this world and the hereafter.

In the light of these foundational principles, different elements of the concept of development can be derived. We would submit the following as its essential features:

(a) Islamic concept of development is comprehensive in character and includes moral, spiritual and material aspects. Development becomes a goal – and value-oriented activity, devoted to the optimisation of human well-being in all these dimensions. The moral and the material, the economic and the social, the spiritual and the physical are inseparable. It is not merely welfare in this world that is the objective; it is also the welfare that Islam seeks to extend to the life hereafter – and there is no conflict between the two. This dimension is missing in the contemporary concept of development.

(b) The focus for developmental effort and the heart of the development process is man. Development, therefore, means development of man and his physical and socio-cultural environment. According to the contemporary concept, it is the physical environment – natural and institutional – that provides the real area for developmental activities. Islam insists that the area of operation relates to man, within *and* without.<sup>17</sup>

As such, human attitudes, incentives, tastes and aspirations are as much policy variables as physical resources, capital, labour, education, skill, organisation, etc. Thus, on the one hand, Islam shifts the focus of effort from the physical environment to man in his social setting and on the other, enlarges the scope of development policy, with the consequent enlargement of the number of target and instrument variables in any model of the economy. Another consequence of this shift in emphasis would be that maximum participation of the people at all levels of decision making and plan implementation would be stipulated.

(c) Economic development is a multi-dimensional activity,<sup>18</sup> more so in an Islamic framework. As efforts would have to be made simultaneously in a number of directions, the methodology



of isolating one key factor and almost exclusive concentration on that would be theoretically untenable. Islam seeks to establish balance between the different factors and forces.

(d) Economic development involves a number of changes, quantitative as well as qualitative. Involvement with the quantitative, justified and necessary in its own right, has unfortunately led to the neglect of the qualitative aspects of development in particular and of life in general. Islam would try to rectify this imbalance.

(e) Among the dynamic principles of social life, Islam has particularly emphasized two: First, the optimal utilisation of resources that God has endowed to man and his physical environment and, secondly, their equitable use and distribution and promotion of all human relationships on the basis of Right and Justice. Islam commends the value of *shukr* (thankfulness to God by availing oneself of His blessings) and '*adl* (justice) and condemns the disvalues of *kufr* (denial of God and His blessings) and *zulm* (injustice).

In the light of this analysis, development process is mobilized and activated through *shukr* and '*adl* and is disrupted and distorted by *kufr* and *zulm*.<sup>19</sup>

This is basically different from the approach of those who look upon production and distribution in an either/or relationship with the development process and is a much wider and more dynamic concept than that of the role of production and distribution in development. The developmental effort, in an Islamic framework, is directed towards the development of a God-conscious human being, a balanced personality committed to and capable of acting as the witness of Truth to mankind.

We may, therefore, submit that in an Islamic framework economic development is a goal-oriented and value-realising activity, involving a confident and all-pervading participation of man and directed towards the maximisation of human well-

being in all its aspects and building the strength of the *ummah* so as to discharge in the world its role as God's vicegerent on earth and as 'the mid-most people'. Development would mean moral, spiritual and material development of the individual and the society leading to maximum socio-economic welfare and the ultimate good of mankind.

## Appendix I

*Speech given by Mr. SALEM AZZAM, Secretary-General of the Islamic Council of Europe at the Inaugural Session of the International Islamic Conference at the Royal Albert Hall, London on Saturday, 3rd April 1976.*

Brother Prince Mohammed Al-Faisal, distinguished guests, Brothers and Sisters:

It is an honour and my very great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Islamic Council of Europe and indeed, on behalf of all the Muslims of Europe, to this International Islamic Conference.

I am particularly grateful to Prince Mohammed Al-Faisal for honouring us with his presence here this evening. His enlightened interest in the affairs of Muslims is a source of inspiration to us. It was his noble father the late Shaheed King Faisal (may God have mercy on him) who was the moving spirit behind the creation of the Islamic Council of Europe. It was his vision that guided the Muslims of Europe in their need for a central body to effectively co-ordinate their activities, to give them a sense of unity, and to impart an ideological direction to their efforts.

We heartily welcome you Brother Prince Mohammed Al-Faisal in your personal capacity and also as the personal representative of His Majesty King Khalid Bin Abdul Aziz, the Khadim Al-Haramain.

The Islamic Council of Europe was established in May 1973 by a Conference of Islamic Cultural Centres and Organizations

of Europe held in London, in pursuance of resolutions passed by the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Muslim States held in Jeddah and Ben-Ghazi.

The establishment of the Council fulfilled a long-standing need for a dynamic and forward looking organisation capable of coping with the ever increasing problems of Muslims in Europe.

Islam came to Europe within the first century of its emergence as a new order. Muslims have made lasting contributions to the history and culture of certain parts of Europe. There are today more than twenty-five million Muslims in Europe, over five million in Western Europe. Islam is the second largest religion in Europe today.

We are faced with two major problems:

First, protection, preservation and promotion of the religious and cultural life of the Muslims. And secondly, development of a better understanding of Islam and Muslim culture in the West, with a view to improving relations between the Muslims and the followers of other faiths and ideologies.

As to the first problem, Muslims are a part of life in Europe and they want to participate in all areas of activity as responsible participants. But they are eager to see that their religious and cultural personality seeks proper development. This is what they have done in the past; and this is what they want to do today.

We are faced with a number of difficulties. I do not propose to bother you by itemising them here; nonetheless, one aspect deserves to be mentioned. To cater for the religious, educational and cultural needs of the Muslim Community a large number of organisations have come into existence. They have been engaged in very useful work but most of them functioned more or less in isolation and except for the larger ones, all catered for the needs of a relatively small number of Muslims. There is some fragmentation and consequent duplication of effort.

In a situation like this it was imperative to have a central organisation to achieve proper co-ordination among the activities of different Islamic centres and organizations and to give direction and purpose to their efforts. The Islamic Council of Europe was established to fulfil this need. In a short span of more than two years it has developed strong links everywhere in Europe and has active constituents working in all parts of Europe. It is also trying to develop closer contacts between the Muslims in different parts of Europe and to directly and indirectly provide moral, intellectual and financial assistance to them. It is producing Islamic literature to meet the needs of these growing communities. It is giving special care to the educational needs of the new generations.

Our second problem relates to the overall relations between Islam and the Western world.

The West has known Islam for over thirteen centuries now, but it has generally known it in antagonistic terms – as an enemy and as a threat. It is not surprising therefore that our religion has been portrayed as a hostile, tyrannical, violent and even idolatrous religion. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has seldom evoked from European writers any but the most antagonistic sentiments. With the advance of knowledge and a greater contact between Europe and the Muslim world, intellectual, social, cultural, political and economic, we hope the old attitudes will change, yielding place to better understanding and closer co-operation based on loyalty to facts, honest appreciation of areas of agreement and disagreement between us, and respect for differences, where we may disagree. It is our hope that this Conference will create a climate of greater understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Distinguished Guests:

This International Islamic Conference is an historic event. It has no parallel in the history of Europe for never before have so many distinguished Muslim scholars and statesmen been

brought together in one place in Europe to explain before the world Islam, as Muslims understand it. Their presence is indicative that Muslims are united by a unique bond of faith. We do not base our unity on kinship, colour, blood or geographical location; it emerges from our faith which transcends all these ties. There is some apprehension in certain quarters that this Conference has political or other extraneous ends to serve. Let me state categorically that this is not so. Our primary purpose is the presentation of Islam in its true form based on the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Our aim is to develop a better and correct understanding of Islam as a way of life. This would help all of us in removing prejudices that have become hallowed with age and distortions that have gained prestige through currency. We want the truth to be known.

We also aim at giving the Muslims of this country and of Europe an opportunity to understand their religion better and to appreciate their heritage and culture. In this way we hope that they will be able to contribute more effectively to the ethical and spiritual life of these countries.

Islam is a dynamic force and can help find a way out of the cultural, social and economic crises with which we are faced today. That can be achieved only if we live and act as good Muslims. This is our message to the Muslim Community.

We also aim at the promotion of co-operation between the Islamic World and Europe. We believe such co-operation will be more fruitful if it is based on understanding and knowledge. If knowledge is strength, prejudice and ignorance are weaknesses. We wish to remove ignorance and prejudice which for so many centuries have been the cause of misunderstanding and a potent source of friction in our relations.

Before I conclude. I want to convey my thanks to the people and Government of the United Kingdom on whose soil this historic event has taken place. To the members and staff of the

King Abdulaziz University I wish to express my deep gratitude for their unstinted support at every stage of preparation for this Conference and, lastly, to my brothers and sisters who worked so hard to make this Conference a success – I would like to say thank you very much.

*We conclude by saying Praise be to Allah  
Lord of all the worlds.*

## Appendix II

*Address given by the Secretary-General of the Islamic Council of Europe in the Concluding Session of the International Islamic Conference held in London Monday, 12th April 1976.*

May I begin by offering on behalf of all the delegates to this International Islamic Conference, and on my own behalf, our profound gratitude and submission to Almighty Allah for having guided the course of the Conference and for blessing our deliberations.

The various sessions of the Conference have been held in an atmosphere of understanding, accommodation, and sympathy inspired by one desire – to serve the cause of Islam and to work for the welfare of the Muslims.

Scholars from different countries responded to our invitation and have contributed valuable papers which will form a permanent record of this Conference. I have no doubt this record will be of use to scholars and statesmen in understanding different aspects of Muslim thought and culture.

We convened this Conference with two main objectives:

(a) To give the Muslims of Europe a sense of belonging to the Muslim 'Ummah' which transcends colour, creed, language and territory, and –

(b) To acquaint the Europeans with the truth about Islam as the Muslims understand it.

The conference has proved a great success, and this has been acknowledged not only by the participants and observers, but



by the world press also. His Excellency Dr. Amadou Karim-Gaye, Secretary General of the Islamic Secretariat, which represents forty Muslim States, who participated in the inaugural session of the Conference, told newsmen on his return to Jeddah that the International Islamic Conference was a historic event and never before had he attended such a great and representative gathering of Muslims. The London *Times* in its Editorial on Saturday, 10th April, 1976, described the Conference as "an event without any exact precedent". The *Times* said that the western public was "abysmally ignorant both of the content of the Muslim faith and the history of Muslim Countries". The *Times* invited particular attention to a proposal mentioned in the conference to establish an institutional framework for the unity and welfare of the Muslims and commented "It would be an excellent thing if the present Conference were to take that suggestion up. Islam after all is a far stronger bond between people of different nationalities than the pale agnostic humanism of Modern Europe".

The enthusiasm shown by members of the Muslim Community in Europe has proved beyond doubt that the Muslims are fully conscious of the need for organizing themselves under the message of Islam. This Conference has given the Muslim Community of Europe a sense of pride and belonging. So far as the European Community is concerned, a great deal of the Message of Islam, as interpreted by the Muslims themselves, has been communicated to them through the mass-media.

One overwhelming impression which all of us have gained from this Conference is that the Muslims all over the world find themselves on the threshold of action. It is of vital importance that the Muslim scholars should realize the vital significance of the moment and present to the Community a concrete programme of constructive and positive implementation. A programme which should not only show the direction in which the Muslims should move, but also the institutional framework which

they should endeavour to establish through consultation and consensus.

Any programme formulated by the Muslims must conform to the Message of the Qur'an and seek guidance from the life of the Prophet who presented a model of leadership to mankind. For Muslims any course of action must encompass the past, the present and the future. We talk of the past not as a mere legacy but as a spur to action. We talk of the present not to indulge in unrealistic optimism but to make careful assessment of our resources and our capabilities. And we talk of the future in terms of our destiny – which we must realize to establish a peaceful world order free from exploitation, tension and domination. The Muslims are united by a bond which is stronger than any other bond discovered by any civilization in history. This bond is expressed in one word – '*Ummah*' and it is in the direction of establishing the Muslim '*Ummah*', in the original sense, that we have to move, in a spirit of co-operation and understanding. It is within the '*Ummah*' framework that we must devise our policies and programmes of implementation so that we may be able to contribute to the establishment of world peace.

The delegates of this Conference have given their most careful consideration to the various suggestions made by scholars in their papers and have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to organize this Conference on a permanent basis. They have desired that this Conference should be convened in the future, at such regular intervals as may be possible, in different capitals of Europe. I am sure this will be widely acclaimed throughout the Muslim World.

Islam represents a complete way of life. The present Conference is the first step in acquainting the people of Europe with different facets of our beliefs and culture. We will in due course take up different aspects and problems and examine them in detail. In this connection, I must mention the decision of the Islamic Council of Europe to convene an International Confer-

ence on Banking during this year to consider a system of banking free of interest as envisaged by Islamic law.

Conferences represent only an aspect of the work of the Islamic Council of Europe which is continuously engaged in organizing and supporting all such activities as contribute to the development and preservation of the identity and personality of Muslims in Europe while helping them toward harmonious integration with their environment.

Before I conclude, I must take this opportunity to thank all the delegates for the invaluable contribution which they have made in making this Conference a truly historic occasion. I must also express my gratitude to my colleagues in the Council, and all the volunteers and members of the staff of the Council – and indeed to all those gathered here – for the devotion with which they have worked for the success of this International Islamic Conference. And finally, I would like to thank the King Abdulaziz University and particularly Dr. Muhammad Omar Zubeir, Dr. Abdullah Naseef and other colleagues for their invaluable help and support without which we might not have been able to surmount the difficulties that lay in our way.

Brothers and Sisters, the Message of Islam can be translated only in one language, and that is the language of action. The Message of the Qur'an can be translated only in one language, and that is the language of action. The Message of the Prophet can be translated only in one language, and that is the language of action.

Brothers and Sisters, I invite you to a future full of thoughtful, purposeful, constructive, and positive action. May God bless your efforts and guide you in all your endeavours!

## Notes

### Introduction xi–xxvi

1. Hamilton A. R. Gibb. *The Heritage of Islam in the Modern World*: International Journal of Middle East Studies, January 1970 Vol. 1, p. 3.
2. *Ibid*, p. 4.
3. Henri Pirenne. *A History of Europe*, George Allen and Unwin, 1936, p. 46.
4. Phrantzes, Georgius. *Chronicon* (Ed. E. Bekker 1838). Translation from G. Paton Walsh *The Emperor's Winding Sheet* (Macmillan) 1975.
5. *The Muslim World*, a quarterly review of current events, literature and thought among the Mohammedans and the progress of Christian mission in Muslim lands, Editor, Rev. S. W. Zwemer, published for the Nile Mission Press by the Christian Literature Society for India, 35 John Street, Bedford Row, London WC1, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan 1911. pp. 2–3.
6. *Ibid*, p. 11.
7. *Ibid*, p. 35.
8. *Ibid*, pp. 54–58.
9. *Ibid*, p. 55.
10. *Ibid*, p. 56.
11. *Ibid*, p. 97.
12. *The Islamic Concept of World Economic Order*, Altaf Gauhar, published by Islamic Council of Europe, pp. 19–22.
13. W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought—The Basic Concepts*, Edinburgh Press, 1968, p. 15.

14. *Ibid*, p. 16.
15. *Ibid*, p. 18.
16. *Ibid*, p. 18.
17. See appendices.
18. Henri Pirenne. *A History of Europe*, George Allen and Unwin, 1936, p. 48.

### Chapter I pages 2-14

1. Al-Qur'an XLVI (9); III (19, 67, 83-85); X (72, 84); II (128, 131-133); XII (101); V (44, 111); XXVII (44).
2. Al-Qur'an XLII (13); XV (9); LXXXV (21-22); III (84); XCVIII (1-3).
3. It is an established fact that the present text of the Qur'an is unchanged from that presented by Prophet Muhammad. The message was transcribed soon after its revelation to the Prophet, and this process continued till his death. These transcripts were compiled in book form and preserved by the First Caliph. The Third Caliph had several copies made of this text and distributed them to different centres of the Islamic world. All copies of the Qur'an from that time onwards, wherever and whenever they may have been written or printed, follow this text. The Prophet enjoined the believers to recite the Qur'an in prayer from the first day. Scores of companions of the Prophet knew the Qur'an by heart, and each one of them memorised at least a part of the Qur'an during the life of the Prophet. Since that time it has become customary to recite the whole of the Qur'an during the *Tarawih* prayers in the month of *Ramadan* in every Muslim country, and hundreds of thousands of people know the Qur'an by heart. No other religious book has been so preserved either in memory or in writing. There should not be the slightest doubt about its authenticity.

4. Briefly the Traditions were recorded in the following manner. Anyone attributing anything to the Prophet had to cite names of persons through whom he claimed to have received the information. The chain of narrators went back to the person with whom the Tradition originated. The original narrator had to be a person who had reasonable access to the Prophet and should have been a direct observer of an event, or recipient of a saying. The lives of the narrators were carefully investigated to test their reliability. The Traditions were thus compiled and the chain of narrators was recorded, along with an account of their lives. Even today we can verify every detail of the life of the Prophet and ascertain his exact teachings.
5. Al-Qur'an XL (78).
6. Al-Qur'an II (285); IV (150-152).
7. Al-Quran VII (158); VI (19); XXXIV (28).
8. Al-Qur'an V (3); XXXIII (40).
9. Al-Qur'an XLIX (10).
10. al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Salah, 38; Kitab Tahsim al-Dam, 2.
11. Musnad Ahmad 5 (411); Al-Baihaqi-Kitab Al-Hajj; Zad al-Ma'ad, Ibn Al-Qayyim - Vol. 4, page 31; similar traditions are available in al-Bukhari and Muslim.
12. Al-Qur'an VI (73); XIII (16); XX (8); VII (54); XXXII (5); II (107); XXV (2).
13. Al-Qur'an XXXV (3); LI (58); VI (164).
14. Al-Qur'an VI (17-18); XVIII (26, 27); LVII (5); LIX (23); LXVII (1); XXXVI (83); XLVIII (11); X (107); LXXII (22); XXIII (88); LXXXV (16); XIII (41); XXI (23); XCV (8); III (26, 83, 154); VII (128).
15. Al-Qur'an XIX (81-82); XXXVI (74-75); XI (101); XVI (17, 20, 22, 51); XLVI (27, 28); X (18); XLIII (84); XXXV (3); VI (46); XXVIII (28); XXXIV (22, 23); XXXIX (5, 6); XXXII (60-64); XXV (3).

16. Al-Qur'an LXVII (13, 14, 19); XVIII (26); L (16); LVII (4); XXVII (65); XXXIV (2, 3); VI (59).
17. Al-Qur'an LVII (3); XXVIII (88); LV (27); II (255); XL (65).
18. Al-Qur'an CXII (3); II (116, 117); VI (102); XXIII (91); XVIII (4, 5); XIX (35, 88-93).
19. Al-Qur'an XXXIX (3, 64); XXVIII (88); VII (55-56); X (18); XXXI (13); XXXVIII (65); XL (60); XVI (36).
20. Al-Qur'an XXV (43); IX (31); XLII (10, 21); XXIII (116-117); CXIV (1, 2, 3); XII (40); VII (3); V (41-43, 48); II (178, 181-183, 229, 232); IV (11, 60); XVI (116); XLV (18); V (47, 48, 50).
21. Al-Qur'an XXIV (62); XLIX (15).
22. Al-Qur'an III (79).
23. Bukhari (Bk. 10, Chs. 153-154); also narrated in Muslim, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Musnad Ahmad. It is a *muttafaq'alayh* (agreed-upon) tradition.
24. Al-Qur'an XVIII (110); XLI (6); XVII (90-93).
25. Al-Qur'an VI (50); VII (188).
26. Al-Qur'an VI (17); X (49).
27. Al-Qur'an VI (58); XIII (40); XXVIII (56); XXXIX (41); LXXXVIII (22).
28. Al-Qur'an II (120, 145); X (15); LXIX (44-47).
29. Al-Qur'an III (144); XXXVI (3); LIII (56).
30. Al-Qur'an LXVI (1).
31. Al-Qur'an VI (56); X (15); XLVI (9).
32. Al-Qur'an XXIV (62).
33. Al-Qur'an III (50); IV (64, 80); XXVI (108, 110, 126, 131, 144, 150, 163, 179).
34. Al-Qur'an XXIV (54).
35. Al-Qur'an LIX (7).
36. Muslim, Bk. 43, traditions 139-141. Musnad Ahmad Vol. 1, p. 162; Vol. 111, p. 152.
37. Al-Qur'an XVI (44); LXXV (17-19).
38. Al-Qur'an XXXIII (21).

39. Al-Qur'an IV (65).
40. Al-Qur'an XXXIII (36).
41. Al-Qur'an XLIX (1).
42. Al-Qur'an VI (30, 31); X (45); XIII (5); XXIII (33); XXV (11); XXXIV (7, 8); XXXVIII (26-27); L (2-4); LXIV (7).
43. Al-Qur'an XVIII (7); LXVII (2); LXXV (36); LXXVI (2); LXXXI (8, 9); LXXXIII (1-6); CII (8).
44. Al-Qur'an XXXIX (68); XLIV (40); LVI (49-50).
45. Al-Qur'an VI (93-94); XIX (81, 96).
46. Al-Qur'an XVIII (48, 49); XXIV (24); XXXVI (12, 65); XXXIX (69); XLI (20-22); XLIII (80); XLV (28, 29); L (17, 18); LIV (52, 53); LXXXII (10-12); XCIX (2-6).
47. Al-Qur'an II (166, 167, 254); X (28); XIV (21, 31); XVI (86); XXVIII (62-66); XXXV (18); XL (18); XLVI (5, 6); LXX (10-14); LXXX (34-37); LXXXII (19).
48. Al-Qur'an XVIII (105, 106); XXVIII (65); XXXIX (71); LXVII (8-11); LXXIX (37-41).
49. Al-Qur'an II (80, 81, 123, 255); IV (108-109); V (20); VI (51); X (3); XX (109); LIII (26).

## Chapter 2 pages 16-30

1. Kanz-ul-Anwar.
2. Mishkat al-Masabim.
3. Sayih Muslim.
4. Abu Dawud.
5. The companions were Ka'b ibn Malik, Hilal ibn Ummayya & Mirara ibn Rabi' who merely out of lethargy failed to join the expedition. They confessed their weakness openly.

## Chapter 3 pages 32-67

1. My interpretation of the basic connotations inherent in the



term *din* is based on Ibn Manzur's standard classic, the *Lisan al-'Arab* (Beyrouth, 1968, 15v.), hereafter cited as *LA*. For what is stated, see vol. 13: 166, col. 2-171, col. 2.

2. *Da'in* refers both to *debtor* as well as *creditor*, and this apparent contrariness in meaning can indeed be resolved if we transpose both these meanings to refer to the two natures of man, that is, the rational soul and the animal or carnal soul. See below pp. 45-46.
3. It is I think extremely important to discern both the intimate and profoundly significant connection between the concept of *din* and that of *madinah* which derives from it, and the role of the Believers individually in relation to the former and collectively in relation to the latter. Considerable relevance must be seen in the significance of the change of name of the town once known as Yathrib to *al-Madinah: the City* – or more precisely, *al-Madinatu'l-Nabiy: the City of the Prophet* – which occurred soon after the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!) made his historic Flight (*hijrah*) and settled there. The first Community of Believers was formed there at the time, and it was that Flight that marked the New Era in the history of mankind. We must see the fact that *al-Madinah* was so called and named because it was there that true *din* became realized for mankind. There the Believers enslaved themselves under the authority and jurisdiction of the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!), its *dayyan*; there the realization of the debt to God took definite form, and the approved manner and method of its repayment began to unfold. The City of the Prophet signified the Place where true *din* was enacted under his authority and jurisdiction. We may further see that the City became, for the Community, the epitome of the socio-political order of Islam; and for the individual Believer it became, by analogy, the symbol of the Believer's body and physical being in which the rational soul, in

emulation of him who may God bless and give Peace!, exercises authority and just government.

4. *LA*, vol. 13: 402, col. 2-403, col. 1.
5. *Al-Mu'minun* (23): 12-14.
6. *Al-A'raf* (7): 172.
7. *Al-Asri* (103): 2.
8. The concept of return is also expressed in the meaning of the term '*uwwida* in the sense of returning to the past, that is, to tradition. Hence the signification of *din* as custom or habit. In this sense it means return to the tradition of the Prophet Ibrahim (upon whom be Peace!). In this connection please see above p. 35; and below, pp. 41, 42. It must be pointed out that by 'tradition' here is not meant the kind of tradition that originated and evolved in human history and culture and had its source in the human mind. It is, rather, what God has revealed and commanded and taught His Prophets and Messengers, so that although they appeared in successive and yet unconnected periods in history, they conveyed and acted as if what they conveyed and acted upon had been embodied in the continuity of a tradition.
9. *Al-Tariq* (86): 11; *LA*, vol. 8: 120, col. 2.
10. There is a close connection between the concept here described and the application of the verb *raja'a* in its various forms in the Holy Qur'an with reference to man's return to God.
11. *LA*, vol. 2: 442, col. 2-445, col. 1.
12. True *din* brings life to a body otherwise dead just as 'the rain which God sends down from the skies, and the life which he gives therewith to an earth that is dead.' See *al-Baqarah* (2): 164.
13. *LA*, vol. 13: 167, col. 1.
14. It clearly refers to the man who, having consciously realized that he is himself the subject of his own debt to His Creator

and Sustainer and Cherisher, enslaves himself to his self and hence 'returns' himself to his true Lord.

15. *LA*, vol. 13: 169, col. 2.
16. *Al-Baqarah* (2): 245.
17. *Din* also means correct reckoning: *hisab al-sahih*. It is the apportioning of the precisely correct measure to a number or thing so that it fits into its proper place: '*adad al-mustawa*. This somewhat mathematical meaning conveys the sense of there being a system or law governing all and maintaining all in perfect equilibrium. See *LA*, vol. 13: 169, col. 1.
18. *LA*, vol. 13: 170, col. 1.
19. *Al-Dhariyat* (51): 56.
20. *LA*, vol. 5: 58, cols. 1 & 2; see also *al-Rum* (30): 30.
21. *LA*, vol. 5: 56, col. 2, 57, col. 1.
22. *Al-Nisa'* (4): 125.
23. *Ali 'Imran* (3): 85.
24. *Ali 'Imran* (3): 19.
25. *Ali 'Imran* (3): 83.
26. This of course does not imply that the diversity between religions is only a matter of form, for the difference in the form indeed implies a difference in the conception of God, His Essence and Attributes and Names and Acts – a difference in the conception expressed in Islam as *tawhid*: the Unity of God.
27. In a sense, the words of God in the Holy Qur'an: – Let there be no compulsion in religion (*al-Baqarah* (2): 256) – corroborates what has been explained above in that in *true* religion there should be no compulsion: not only in the sense that, in the act of subjugating to religion and submitting to it, one must not compel others to submit; but in the sense that even with oneself, one must subjugate and submit oneself wholeheartedly and willingly, and love and enjoy the submission. Unwilling submission betrays arrogance, disobedience and rebellion, and is tantamount to misbelief,

which is one of the forms of unbelief (*kufir*). It is a mistake to think that belief in One God alone is sufficient in true religion, and that such belief guarantees security and salvation. *Iblis* (Satan), who believes in the One True God and knows and acknowledges Him as His Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer, his *rabb*, is nevertheless a misbeliever (*kafir*). Although *Iblis* submits to God, yet he submits grudgingly and insolently, and his *kufir* is due to arrogance, disobedience and rebellion. His is the most notorious example of unwilling submission. Unwilling submission, then, is not the mark of true belief, and a *kafir* might therefore be also one who, though professing belief in One God, does not submit in real submission, but prefers instead to submit in his own obstinate way – a way, or manner, or form neither approved nor revealed and commanded by God. Real submission is that which has been perfected by the Holy Prophet (may God bless and give him Peace!) as the model for mankind for that is the manner of submission of all the prophets and Messengers before him, and the form approved, revealed, and commanded by God. Thus, the fundamental core of true religion, then, is not the *belief*, but rather, more fundamentally, the *submission*; for the submission confirms and affirms the belief to be true and genuine.

28. By 'the Way' I mean what refers to *ihsan*, or perfection in virtue.
29. The Revealed Law, or *shari'ah*, is the Law of God.
30. See *al-Ahzab* (33): 72.
31. See *al-A'raf* (7): 179.
32. *Al-Tawbah* (9): 111.
33. The man of Islam, *i.e.* the Muslim.
34. When we also say that Islam means 'Peace', we refer in fact to the *consequence* of the submission denoted by the verb *aslama*.
35. *Al-Fajr* (89): 27-30.
36. There is in truth no such thing as subjective Islam, and

objective Islam in the sense that the former implies less of its reality and truth than the latter, to the extent that the former is regarded as less valid and less authentic than the latter; or that the latter is other than the former as one independent reality and truth while the former is the many interpretations of the experience of the latter. We maintain that what is experienced as Islam by every individual Muslim subjectively is the same as Islam as it objectively is, and we use the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' here to distinguish rather than to differentiate the one from the other. The distinction between the two pertains to the level of understanding and the degree of insight and practice existing between one Muslim and another. The distinction thus refers to the *ihsan*-aspect of Islamic experience. In spite of the naturally different levels of understanding and degrees of insight and practice existing between one Muslim and another, yet all are Muslims and there is only *one* Islam, and what is common to them all is the *same* Islam.

37. I.e. 'ibadah and acts of 'ibadat.
38. See above, note 63.
39. See *al-An'am* (6): 164.
40. Analogically, the legal concept of *habeas corpus* (you must have the body) as a fundamental procedure of justice is perhaps only a mere imperfect reflection of the awesome and irrefutable Procedure to come. That the soul is capable of denial of acts of injustice is implied in *al-A'raf* (7): 172-173; and in these Verses must be seen clear evidence of the soul's capacity (*wus'*) to exercise a power (*quwwah*) of inclination towards right or wrong resulting in its acquisition or earning (*kasaba, iktasaba*) of good or evil. In the Islamic concept of justice and injustice outlined above, the fact that the witness to a man's actions, good or bad, is his own self is of great significance.
41. 'Order' and 'discipline' here do not refer to the kind of order and discipline in the systematic deployment of knowledge

found in modern universities and schools, but to the ordering of knowledge by the self that seeks to know, and to the disciplining of the self of itself to that ordering (see below pp. 58, 60).

42. *Al-Ma'idah* (5): 3.
43. *Al-Baqarah* (2): 17–20.
44. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 40.
45. *Saba* (34): 28.
46. *Al-Talaq* (65): 11.
47. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 46; *al-Talaq* (65): 11.
48. *Al-Anbiya'* (21): 107.
49. *Ali 'Imran* (3): 164; *al-Nisa'* (4): 170.
50. *Al-Ma'idah* (5): 19.
51. *Al-Qalam* (68): 4.
52. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 21.
53. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 56.
54. *Bani Isra'il* (17): 79.
55. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 6.

## Chapter 5 pages 82–III

1. Controversies have arisen, as they certainly may, in the interpretation of Qur'anic text. What is being affirmed here is the fact that the Qur'anic text is not bedevilled by a hermeneutical problem. Differences of interpretation are apodeictically soluble in terms of the very same categories of understanding in force at the time of revelation of the text (611–632 A.C.), all of which have continued the same because of the freezing of the language and the daily intercourse of countless millions of people with it and with the text of the Holy Qur'an.
2. Except Wilfred C. Smith (*The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1962), who did so on the basis of a Heraclitean metaphysic of change. His theory has

- been analysed by this author in *The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam. Numen*, Vol. XX, Fasc. 3, pp. 186-201.
3. Holy Qur'an, II (30); VI (165); X (14, 73); XXXV (39); VII (69, 74); XXVII (62).
  4. Deuteronomy, 6: 6-8; 9: 5-6. Hosea, I, 2.
  5. Holy Qur'an, II (284); XCIX (6-8); CI (6-11); CIII (1-3).
  6. Holy Qur'an, XXXV (24). See also XVI (84, 89).
  7. Holy Qur'an, XVI (36).
  8. "To every people we sent a prophet-guide" (Holy Qur'an, XIII (8)); "We sent every prophet that guidance may be conveyed in his people's own tongue..." (XIV (4)).
  9. "We would pronounce no judgement until after We had sent a prophet." (Holy Qur'an, XVII (15)).
  10. "Those who know and those who do not, are they ever equal?" (Holy Qur'an, XXXIX (9)). "Nor are they equal, the blind and the man of vision, darkness and enlightenment, that which is shaded and that which is in full light." (XXXV (19)) "Read! For your Lord is the more generous. He it is Who taught man use of the pen; Who taught man that of which man had no knowledge." (XCVI (3-5)).
  11. "Everything We have created, We gave it its pattern." (Holy Qur'an, LIV (49)); "He created everything and gave it its measure." (XXV (2)); "To every creature God has assigned a pattern". (LXV (3)).
  12. "The power to determine everything on earth and in heaven is His." (Holy Qur'an, XLII (12)); "God is He Whose will is always fulfilled." (XI (108)); (LXXXV (16)); "Gods' will or commandment will always be fulfilled." (XI (108); LXXXV (16)); "God's will or commandment will always be fulfilled." (IV (47); XXXIII (37); VIII (41, 44)).
  13. "All that is on earth and heaven praises God; He is the Almighty, the Wise." (Holy Qur'an, LVII (1)); "To God give praise the seven heavens and the earth, all that is in them and all that exists. You do not perceive their praise."

- (XVII (44)). See also, XXIV (41); LIX (24); LXII (1); LXIV (1); XVII (44).
14. "We have created neither mankind nor the jinn except to serve Me." (Holy Qur'an, LI (56)). "O men, serve Allah. For it is He Who created you." (II (21)); "We have sent no prophet but we have revealed to him that there is no God by Me. Therefore, serve Me." (XXI (25)). See also VI (102); X (3); III (79); XXIII (32).
  15. "Praise the name of your Lord on high, Who created everything in the best of forms." (Holy Qur'an, LXXXVII (1-2)); "Would you not believe in Him Who created you from dust, then made you flesh, then perfected you into a man?" (XVIII (37)); "O man, what confuses you about your generous Lord? Who created you, Who endowed you completely, Who made you straight and perfect? He could have created you in different form . . ." (LXXXII (5-8)).
  16. Unlike the Bible, the Holy Qur'an tells us that Adam did indeed commit a misdemeanour by eating of the tree which God forbade. But it also tells us that Adam repented and his repentance was accepted (Holy Qur'an, II (35-37); XX (115-122)). Furthermore, Islam upholds the principle of personal responsibility absolutely and rejects every shade of vicarious guilt or merit. "No soul may carry the burden of another; nobody may assume the guilt of another however closely related he may be." (XXXV (18)). "Whoever does a good deed, that will be reckoned only unto him; and whoever does a bad deed, against him." (XLV (15)).
  17. Holy Qur'an, XV (29); XXXVIII (72); XXI (91); LXVI (12).
  18. "Lift up your face toward *the* religion, like a *hanif*. That is the natural religion with which Allah has endowed all men at their creation. No exception or change befalls Allah's creation." (Holy Qur'an, XXX (30)).
  19. "As far as religion is concerned, God has instituted for you the same religion which He had instituted for Noah, this



and what has been revealed to you Muhammad being one. It is the same which we have revealed to Ibrahim, to Moses, to Jesus. Observe therefore the religion; and do not divide yourselves." (Holy Qur'an, XLII (13)). "Felicitous are those who believe in God and all His prophets without distinguishing between them." (Holy Qur'an, IV (152)). "How many prophets did we send to those that went before you! . . . We sent no prophet before you (Muhammad) but We have revealed to him that there is no God but Allah; that service is due Him." (XLIII (6); XXI (25)). "God has revealed this Book to you Muhammad, in truth, in confirmation of previous revelations; for it is He Who revealed the Torah and the Evangel." (III (3)).

20. "With Allah, the religion is Islam." (Holy Qur'an, III (19)).
21. "With Allah, the religion is Islam. Those to whom revelation was sent before you did not disagree with *the* religion except after some of them claimed their own illusions to be genuine knowledge of religion." (Holy Qur'an, III (19)).
22. "Allah has sent the prophets to proclaim (the religion) and to warn. He revealed to them the Book in truth to put an end to their disputes in religion, disputes which did not arise until their false claims had intermingled among them." (Holy Qur'an, II (213)). See also V (14)).
23. "Those who were given the Book did not disagree among themselves concerning religion except after their introduction of what they thought to be evident information (which was far from being the case). For they were never asked to worship but Allah and to serve Him sincerely in *hanif* spirit (in the spirit of natural religion); that is to observe the prayer, and to pay the *zakat*. That is the true religion." (Holy Qur'an, XCVIII (4-5)).
24. A popular tradition reported by all traditionists.
25. Holy Qur'an, II (135), III (67, 95); IV (123); VI (79, 161); X (105); XVI (120, 123); XX (31).

26. "Say, O People of the Book! Come now to agreement with us, based on a fair principle common to both, namely, that we shall all worship none but Allah; that we shall never associate any other with Him; that we shall never take one another as lords beside Allah." (Holy Qur'an, III (64)).
27. "Those who have believed, the Jews, the Christians, the Sabceans – all those who believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgement, and do the good works, their reward is surely with their Lord. No fear shall befall them; nor shall they grieve." (Holy Qur'an, II (62)).
28. "Religious goodness does not consist in your ritual worship, turning your faces towards the East or towards the West. Rather, it consists in believing in Allah, in the Day of Judgement, in His Angels, Books and Prophets, as well as in sharing one's wealth, for His sake, with the relative, the orphan, the destitute, the wayfarer; in spending it for the ransom of those who are not free, as well as in observing the prayers, paying the *zakat*, fulfilling one's contracts and promises, in holding firm in good times and ill times, or under constraint; in being always truthful. Those are the truly felicitous." (Holy Qur'an, II (177)).
29. See n. 27, 28 above.
30. Wing-tsit Chan, *et al.*, *The Great Asian Religions*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969, pp. 348–358. For specific social values of Islamic rituals, see Holy Qur'an, XXIX (45) for prayer, and XXII (27) for pilgrimage.
31. "Let there be of you an *ummah* which calls men to the good, enjoins the good deeds, forbids the evil. Such would be the felicitous." (Holy Qur'an, III (104)).
32. "Those who have done injustice to themselves; when they are asked 'Why is your condition so miserable?' they answer: 'Our weakness was exploited by our enemies.' Then will they be told: 'Isn't the earth of Allah large enough? Why then didn't you emigrate and get

- out from under your yoke?' Such people will have the eternal fire as their abode. Theirs will be a sad fate, except the impotent among men, women and children, who are utterly incapable of means of action." (Holy Qur'an, IV (97-98)).
33. "We have sent to them Our prophets. We sent Jesus, Son of Mary, and revealed to him the Evangel. We endowed the hearts of his followers with compassion and mercy. But monkery We did not prescribe to them. They invented it . . ." (Holy Qur'an, LVII (27)).
  34. Holy Qur'an, II (82, 177); IV (7, 35); VIII (41); XVI (90); XVII (26); XXIV (22); XXX (38); XLII (23).
  35. Holy Qur'an, XXXIV (28); III (110); II (143); XXII (78); IV (135).
  36. Holy Qur'an, II (256).
  37. Holy Qur'an, X (99).
  38. Holy Qur'an, XVI (125).
  39. Holy Qur'an, V (108); III (176-177); XLVII (32).
  40. Holy Qur'an, XLVII (4); VIII (62); X (99); II (256).
  41. Holy Qur'an, XIII (12); VIII (54).
  42. The 'Covenant of Medina' was the constitution of the first Islamic state. It was dictated and enacted by the Prophet in the first week following his emigration from Mecca to Medina. For the full text, see Ibn Hisham, *Sirat Rasul Allah* tr. by Alfred Guillaume under the title *The Life of Mohammed*. London: Oxford U. Press, 1955, pp. 231-234.
  43. Holy Qur'an.
  44. Holy Qur'an, XXIX (46); XVI (22); XVIII (111); XXI (108); XLI (6).
  45. Holy Qur'an, II (79, 101); III (23, 64-65, 70-71, 78, 98-99); IV (44, 50, 78); V (15, 51); VII (169).
  46. A. Guillaume, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-154.
  47. *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151. The event has been confirmed by revelation of V (83-85).

48. A. Guillaume, pp. 146ff.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 270–277. Mohammed Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Mohammed*, tr. by I. R. al-Faruqi. Indianapolis: The North American Islamic Trust, 1976, pp. 477ff.
50. Mohammed 'Ali bin Hamid ibn Abu Bakr al Kufi, *Shah Namah: Tarikh-i-Hind wa Sind*, tr. A. M. Elliott, in *The History of India as told by Its Own Historians*. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal Private, Ltd., n.d., Vol. I, pp. 184–187.
51. Quoted in Alistair Duncan, *The Noble Sanctuary*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1972, p. 22. Also Thomas W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*. Lahore: Sh. M. Ashraf, 1961 (first pub. 1896), pp. 56–57.
52. Thomas Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
53. Michael the Elder, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche* (1166–1199), ed. J. B. Chabot. Paris, 1899–1901, Vol. II, pp. 412–413. Quoted in Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
54. Gregorii Barhebraei, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, ed. J. B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy, Louvain, 1872–1877, p. 474.
55. *Et ego inveni per antiquas historias et authenticas apud Saracenos, quod ipsi Nestorini amici fuerunt Mochometi et confederate cum eo, et quod ipsi Machometus mandavit suis posteris, quod Nestorinos maxime conservarent. Quod unigue hodie diligenter observant ipsi Saraceni* (Laurent, J. C. M., *Peregrinatores Medii Aevi Quatuor*. Lipsiae, 1864, p. 128).
56. Quoted by Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72.
57. Holy Qur'an, III (191) XXIII (115).

## Chapter 7 pages 134–152

1. Peltier: *Works of Boukhary* – the hadith of the Prophet.
2. Ibn Hazm: *El Mouhalla*.
3. Dr. Moustapha Siba'i: *The Socialism of Islam*, p. 10.

4. *Ibid.*
5. "Hama" – protected, in the sense of nationalised.
6. *Ibid* from Ibn Qudama: *El Mouqhni*.
7. Moustapha Siba'i: *Socialism of Islam* – p. 102 quoting *Al Amwal* of Obeid Ibn al Qacim.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Abu Zohra: *El Moudjtama' El Islamy (Speaking of the Islamic Society)*, p. 36.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
11. Kant. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)* introduction to the first edition: "Die Begriffe ohne Empfindungen sind leer: die Empfindungen ohne Begriffe, blind."
12. Seyyid Qutb: *Social Justice in Islam*.
13. Seyyid Qutb: *Social Justice*.
14. Shaikh Mohammed Abu Zahra: *The Islamic Society*.
15. Dr. Muhammed El Mubarak: *The Ideas of Ibn Taymyya on the State and the extent of its intervention in the Sphere of Economy*.
16. Dr. Moustapha Siba'i: *The Socialism of Islam*.
17. Hassan Al Banna: in his introduction to *Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, The Socialist Hermit*, by A. Djaoudat Al-Sahhar.
18. Ibn Al-Qayyim: *A'alm al Muwaqqf' in 'an Rabbi al 'Alamine*.
19. Seyyid Qutb: *Social Jusice*, p. 2.

## Chapter 9 pages 176–195

1. Syed Abdul Latif: *The Mind Al-Qur'an Builds*. pp. 74–75.
2. A. Guillaume: *The Life of Mohammed; a translation of Ibn-Ishaqui's Sirat Rasul Allah*.
3. Syed Abdul Latif: *op. cit.*, p. 83.
4. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*.
5. D. de Santillana: *Law and Society*. Essay in *The Legacy of Islam*.

**Chapter 10** pages 196–220

1. Afzal Iqbal: *Diplomacy in Islam*, p. xxi.
2. T. A. Walker: *A History of the Law of Nations*, p. 89.
3. Nys: *Original Driot International*, p. 216.
4. Mohammed Hamidullah: *The Muslim Conduct of States*, p. 8.
5. Mohammad Talaat Al-Ghunaimi: *The Muslim Conception of International Law and the Western Approach*, p. 83.
6. Al-Ghunaimi: *op. cit.* Foreword, p. vii.
7. Majid Khadduri: *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 48.
8. Syed Ameer Ali: *Spirit of Islam*, p. 215.
9. Syed Ameer Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
10. M. T. Al-Ghunaimi: *The Muslim Conception of International Law and the Western Approach*, p. 204.
11. Ali Raza Naqvi: *Laws of War in Islam – Islamic Studies*, Vol. XIII, p. 45.
12. Ali Raza Naqvi: *Laws of War in Islam, Islamic Studies*, Vol. XIII, p. 25.
13. Mohammed Hamidullah: *Muslim Conduct of States*, p. 207–208.
14. Anwar A. Qadri: *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World*, pp. 280–281.
15. Anwar Ahmed Qadri: *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World*, p. 280.
16. Majid Khadduri: *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 128–129.
17. Hamidullah: *op. cit.*, p. 261.
18. Majid Khadduri: *op. cit.*, p. 204.
19. Hamidullah: *op. cit.*, p. 262.
20. Ibn Hisham: p. 676.
21. A. A. Qadri: *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World*, p. 28. Afzal Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
22. Afzal Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
23. Majid Khadduri, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
24. Al-Ghunaimi, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

25. Hans Wehberg: *Pacta Sunt Servanda*, A.J.I.L., Vol. 53 (1959), p. 775.
26. Syed Riazul Hasan: *The Reconstruction of Legal Thought in Islam*, p. 182.
27. Oppenheim: *International Law*, Vol. I, p. 939.
28. Al-Ghunaimi: *op. cit.*, p. 211.
29. Hamidullah: *op. cit.*, p. 264.
30. Qadri: *op. cit.*, p. 278.
31. Majid Khadduri: *op. cit.*, p. 210.
32. Ibn Hisham: p. 419.
33. S. Riazul Hasan: *op. cit.*, p. 164.
34. Bukhari (Ch. 56: 176).
35. Hamidullah: *op. cit.*, p. 138.
36. Afzal Iqbal: *op. cit.*, p. 36.
37. Hamidullah: *op. cit.*, p. 140.
38. Iqbal: *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 224

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1. Ahmad Shalaby: *History of Muslim Education*, p. 193.

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2. Ya gabi. *Historian II*, p. 123.
3. R. Levy: *The Social Structure of Islam*.
4. Baladhuri: *Fitrah al Buldan*, p. 65.
5. Syed Ameer Ali: *The Spirit of Islam*, pp. 270–271.

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2. Al-Qur'an, XCVI (1-5).
3. Al-Qur'an, III (144).
4. Encyclopedia Britannica 1974, Vol. 9, p. 523D.
5. *Islam in Modern History*, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Princeton University Press 1957, p. 172.
6. Dr. Khundamiri, quoted by Edward B. Fiske. *New York Times*, September 1974.
7. *Dynamics of Faith*. Harper and Row, New York, 1957, p. 63.
8. Vernon Pratt. *Religion and Secularization*. Macmillan, 1970.
9. Herman Hesse. *Siddhartha*, 1954, p. 621.
10. Robert L. Heilbroner. *An Inquiry into the Human Prospects*. New York, 1974.
11. Muhammad Munir. *Islam in History*, Lahore 1974. pp. 287-298.
12. *Tarikh E. Dawat O Azimat: Syed Abul Hassan Nadvi*. Lucknow: p. 132.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 116.
14. Alauddin.
15. Al-Qur'an, XLIV (99).

### Chapter 17 pages 314-337

1. Gibb: *Modern Trends in Islam*. Chicago, 1947, p. 86-87.
2. W. Cantwell Smith: *Islam in Modern History*. Oxford University Press 1957, p. 26-27.

### Chapter 18 pages 338-349

1. See Pearson, Lester B., *Partners in Development*, London: Pall Mall, 1969, pp. 27-72, and annex I, pp. 231-353; Amin, Galal A., *The Modernization of Poverty: A Study in the Political Economy of Growth in Nine Arab Countries*, 1945-1970, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974. For a review of the overall



- situation of the Muslim countries, see Cook, M.A., (ed.) *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 373–427; Baster, James, *The Introduction of Western Economic Institutions into the Middle East*, Chatham House Memoranda, London: Oxford University Press, 1960; Hershlag, Z.Y., *Introduction of the Modern Economic History of the Middle East*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964; Muslim World Congress, *Some Economic Resources of the Muslim Countries*, Karachi; Umma Publications, 1961. For overall background, see also Cook, M.A. *Economic Developments*, in Schacht, Joseph and Bosworth, C. E., *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 210–243.
2. See Maududi, Abul A'la, *Islami Nizam-i-Ma'ishat ke Usul aur Maqasid* (Principles and Objectives of the Islamic Economic Order) in Maududi: *Maashiyat-i-Islam*, Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1969, pp. 141–164; Siddiqi, M.N., *Some Aspects of the Islamic Economy*, Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1970, (Ch. III: “The Quranic Norm”, pp. 27–40); Chapra, M. Umar, *Economic System of Islam*, London: Islamic Cultural Centre, 1970. For a brief but candid review of this aspect of literature on Islamic economics, see Siddiqi, M.N., *A Survey of Contemporary Literature on Islamic Economics*, mimeographed paper presented to the International Conference on Islamic Economy held at Mecca (February, 1976), pp. 20–21 and 70–73. The Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan tried to suggest an alternative strategy in its *Manifesto for the 1970 Elections*. It is brief but succinct and thoughtful. The Economic Programme Committee of the Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistani tried to prepare a more comprehensive statement of Islam's economic strategy. See *Mawjudah Maashi Buhran aur Islami Hikmat-i-Ma'ishat* (The Contemporary Economic Crises and Islam's Economic Strategy), Lahore: Jamaat-i-Islam, Pakistan, n.d. (1970). A recent doctoral

dissertation makes a similar effort in the context of the problems of environmental engineering. See Hussaini. S. Waqar Ahmad, *Principles of Environmental Engineering System Planning in Islamic Culture: Law, Politics, Economics, Education, and Sociology of Science and Culture*, presented to Stanford University, California, 1971, See particularly Chapter VI. See also Siddiqi, Na'im, *Islam ka Mizan-i-Nazariyyah-e-Ma'ishat* (Islam's Balanced Ideology of Economics) in Chiragh-i-Rah; Socialism Number, Karachi, 1967, pp. 496-525.

3. Gunnar Myrdal writes in *Asian Drama*, (op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 32): "The problem of objectivity in research cannot be solved simply by attempting to eradicate valuations . . . every study of a social problem, however limited in scope, is and must be determined by valuations. A 'disinterested' social science has never existed and never will exist. Research like every other rationally pursued activity, must have a direction. The viewpoint and the direction are determined by one's interest in a matter. Valuations enter into the choice of approach, the selection of problems, the definition of concepts, and the gathering of data, and are by no means confined to the practical or political inferences drawn from theoretical findings. The value premises that actually and of necessity determine approaches in the social sciences can be hidden. In fact, most writings, particularly in economics, remain in large part simply ideological . . . Throughout the history of social studies, hiding of valuations has served to conceal the inquirer's wish to avoid facing real issues" . . . See also Myrdal, G., *Value in Social Theory, Essays on Methodology*.
4. *Ibid*, p. 33.
5. A number of development economists have confessed that development planning cannot be ideologically neutral and that development economics is a 'normative' discipline.

- Dudley Seers says that development is “inevitably a normative term” (Seers, D. *The Meaning of Development*, International Development Review, December, 1969, p. 2). Galbraith asserts that “Economic development is an intrinsically normative subject” (Galbraith, John K., *The Underdeveloped Country*, Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corp., 1965, p. 20); Lauchlin Currie says that in the field of development “A non-normative approach is especially sterile.” (Currie, L., *Obstacles to Development*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967, p. 45).
6. For a more detailed discussion, see Ahmad, Khurshid, *Socialism ya Islam* (Socialism or Islam), Karachi: Chiragh-e-Rah Publications, 1969.
  7. See Ahmad, Khurshid, *The Third World's Dilemma of Development*, Non-Aligned Third World Annual, edited by Andrew Carvely, St. Louis, Missouri: Books International, 1970, pp. 3-18. See also Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, op. cit., particularly Vol. I, pp. 5-35, Vol. II, pp. 709-95; Vol. III, pp. 1843-2003. See also Viner Jacob, *The Economics of Development*, in Agarwala and Singh, *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1958; Kuznets, Simon, *Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-Industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries*, in Agarwala and Singh, *ibid.*, pp. 135-153; Welch, Claude E., *The Challenge of Change: Japan and Africa*, in Sprio, Herbert J., *Patterns of African Development: Five Comparisons*, Englewood Cliffs, J. J.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1967, pp. 63-90.
  8. See Kurt Martin and John Knapp, (eds.), *The Teaching of Development Economics*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967, Part IA and Part IIA; Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations* (London): Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1968, 3 volumes; Paul Streeton, *The Frontiers of Development Studies*, London: Macmillan, 1973. Schumacher, E. F., *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*,

London: Blond Briggs, 1973.

9. See Baur, P. T., *Dissent of Development*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; Seers, Dudley, *The Limitations of the Special Case*, in Martin and Knapp, op. cit.
10. Mynt, H. *Economic Theory and Development Policy Economics*, May, 1967, pp. 117-130; Vernon, Raymond, *Comprehensive Model Building in the Planning Process: The Less Developed Economics*, *The Economic Journal*, March, 1966, pp. 57-69.
11. See Mishan, E. J., *The Costs of Economic Growth*, London: Staple Press, 1967; Hodson, H. V., *The Diseconomics of Growth*, London: Earth Island, 1972.
12. Meadows, Dennis, et al. *The Limits to Growth*, New York: A Potomac Associate Book, Universe Books, 1972; Mes-sarovic, Mahajli and Pestel, Edward, *Mankind at the Turning Point: The Second Reports to the Club of Rome*, New York: E. P. Dutton, rev. 1974. The debate on this issue is vast and proliferating. For a critique of this line of attack see Becker-man, Wilfred, *In Defence of Economic Growth*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1974.
13. For a more detailed discussion of this issue by this writer see *The Third World's Dilemma of Development*, Non-Aligned Third World Annual, St. Louis: Books International of DHTE International Inc., 1970, pp. 3-18. For a brief but succinct statement see Adelman, Irma, *On the State of Development Economics*, *Journal of Development Economics*, 1974, pp. 3-5.
14. Bonne, Alfred, *Studies in Economic Development*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 250.
15. See Burton, Henry J., *Principles of Development Economics*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965, pp. 2-3. Kindle-burger, Charles P., *Economic Development*, New York; McGraw-Hill, 1965, Ch. I; Hagen Everil, *The Economics of Development*, Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1968, Ch. 2; Lewis, Arthur, *The Theory of Economic Growth*,

- London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955, pp. 420-435; Kuznets, Simon, *Six Lectures on Economic Growth*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1959, Ch. 1.
16. See this writer's *Islam and the Contemporary Economic Challenge*, mimeographed paper presented to the International Youth Seminar, Riyadh, December, 1973.
  17. "God does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in themselves" (Qur'an XIII:11).
  18. This is being increasingly realised by development economists. One of the lessons, insists Max F. Millikan, we must learn from the developmental experiences of mankind is to see development "as a systematic interaction of a large number of elements". See Millikan, Max F., *A Strategy of Development: The Case for Development*, New York: Praeger Special Studies, 1973, p. 25.
  19. The Quran says: "It is God who has created the heaven and the earth. He sends down rain from the skies, and with it brings out fruits to feed you. It is He who has made the ships subject to you, that you may sail through the sea by His Command. He has also harnessed the rivers for you. And also the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses. He has subdued for you the day and the night and has given you of all that you ask for. If you try to count God's favours to you, you would never be able to count them all. But man is given up to injustice and ingratitude" (XIV: 43: 34). In the context of this divine policy for human sustenance and development, it is very important to say *Inna al-Insana lazalumun kaffar*. This refers to things that disrupt and destroy the process of human development. Reference as to the disvalues of ingratitude, i.e. non-utilization of what God has given, and injustice, i.e. their misuse in the social sense. See al-Sadr, M. Baqar, *Iqtisaduna*, (Beirut, 1968).

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