

THE MORAL APPROACH TO POLITICS: AS EXPOUNDED IN ISLAMIC  
DOCTRINES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE IDEA OF EQUALITY

by

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## PREFACE

In the fast shrinking world, when men have been living without consciousness of the heritage of each others values and traditions and have now the inevitable responsibility of living side by side, the important need for mutual understanding and mutual appreciation cannot be overemphasized. To perpetuate free institutions and decent standards of living, men of good-will have an imperative moral obligation to strengthen the efforts at such universally desirable aims.

Looking at the United States as a vanguard in the free world's endeavour to maintain an atmosphere where men can live with dignity and freedom, and further viewing its global moral and material responsibilities in an age of intensive ideological warfare, it is of some urgency in this day to face the dangerous lack of understanding between the aspirations, ideology and social, political and economic institutions of the muslim world on the one hand, and the overall western approach to that world on the other.

Instead of an effort to understand and thus appreciate the Islamic values, thereby breaching that gap which has kept them separated from each other, the traditional western literature often deliberately, while at times unconsciously, has tended to discount, ridicule and often to condemn muslim institutions and thought. A glance at the stacks of the libraries of the western world may prove the foregoing statement. It is but fair to record that the muslim world has until recently, foolishly

shut its eyes by refusing to face the facts of modern life. The muslim world has yet to learn the techniques of the Western world in the fields of education, health, irrigation and exploitation of the vast resources of nature to promote the total dignity of human life.

By applying human intelligence in the fields of human welfare, by harnessing the resources of nature to the service of man, the Western civilization stands at its zenith. At the same time, a discerning eye finds deeper social cleavages, and at times poverty in face of plenty in the west too. Among the muslims contributions to the cultural heritage of mankind, ideologically Islam stands for the utmost possible equality of man the human as he is, irrespective of color, creed or caste.

The writer of the present paper is fully conscious of his own limited knowledge, keeping in view the magnitude and complexity of the problem of strengthening the moral underpinning of the contemporary political world. It is the hope, simply, that the effort may point in the right direction, and be of some possible use to those who may be concerned with the same problem, in addition to being an effort to the writer's advantage.

The main burden of the first chapter has been to analyze the views of some of the most representative writers on some of the basic problems of the present civilization, offering relevant Islamic alternatives in the second chapter. The third chapter has been exclusively devoted to the idea of Equality in the Islamic system of social, political and economic values; the fourth chapter being the critical examination of the theoretical expositions in chapters two and three.

It is hoped that, given the chance of happy marriage between the West's tremendous technological advancement and hitherto undreamed of standards of living and other material achievements, and Islam's emphasis on universal human equality based on the invincible ties of human brotherhood and of faith in God, could possibly build a formidable fortification against the forces of tyranny and extreme materialism uncontrolled by any ethical considerations, such as now threaten the spiritual and moral heritage of mankind.

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## CHAPTER I

### BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON WORLD CRISIS AND THE DEMAND FOR A NEW MORAL APPROACH TO POLITICS

The problem of mutual understanding on a wide scale is vital to the continuation of the world civilization that emerged in the age of discoveries and that has brought all sections of mankind into continuous contact with one another. Gradually and painfully this culture has been seeking to regulate behaviour through principles of humanity, liberty, tolerance and reason, endeavouring in the later centuries to subdue the propensity of sovereign states to behave in the manner of ferocious beasts while conceiving of themselves as gods.

The individual's concept of morality and justice develops from the culture, nationality or religion in which he has been brought up, and thus the moral standards of individuals differ from state to state. The representatives of different states may therefore differ greatly in judgment of what is right or just. This means that there are different cultures and various versions of good society. Along with the tendency to attribute all virtue, good and nobility to "ourselves" and bad faith, vice and lack of morality to "others", runs the duel of diplomatic activity among nations in this age of tremendous scientific inventions, and of the relentless policies of nations to increase their national strength.

The results are mutual suspicions, fears and conflicts. Here is, then, a time in which ideological conflicts must be faced and if



possible solved. Otherwise the social policies, moral ideas and religious aspirations of men, because of their incompatibility with one another, will continue to generate misunderstanding and war instead of mutual understanding and peace.

In an effort to obtain a clear statement of the nature of the crisis and of the need of a new moral approach to the complex problems of the time, it may be useful first to analyze a few outstanding works of human intelligence, characteristic and typical of the times in which we live.

#### Oswald Spengler's Philosophy of Civilization

Spengler's book,<sup>1</sup> The Decline of the West, made a deep impression in the early twenties in Europe. It may be fairly said that this sub-continent was trembling with exhaustion and deeply shaken in its deep-rooted sense of superiority as the natural leader of the world and as the source of intellectual activity and of industrial production and captial. Spengler's writings suggest a duality of viewpoint and of the author himself. One side is Spengler the autocrat, the militarist, the forerunner of national socialism; the other is Spengler the scientist, the thinker, the philosopher, the visionary; one is the spiritual father of Hitler, the other the spiritual son of Goethe. This conflicting personality rejects such "soft" notions as impartiality, morality, and moral philosophy.

The essence of Spengler's philosophy may be stated thus:  
"Like all other forces in nature, civilizations follow a common

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<sup>1</sup>Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West (New York: Alfred H. Knopf, Macmillan, 1932).

pattern of birth, growth, decay and death. Hence it is possible to draw a parallel between the life course of different civilizations, and to compare the consequent stages of each civilization in the forms of their politics, economics, religion, art and science.

#### Disappearance of Creativeness

In the last phase of civilization the creative spirit disappears. No new great creations appear, either in art, or in religion or in politics. The life becomes intellectualized and commercialized, thus losing its creative drive. People manage with the situation as it is and the powers that be. In the period of contending states, torrents of blood had reddened the pavements of all world cities so that the truths of democracy might be turned into actualities, and so that rights might be won without which life seemed not worth living. These rights now have been won, but the grandchildren cannot be moved, even by punishment, to make use of them. In the Roman Civilization, already by Caesar's time reputable people had almost ceased to take part in the elections.

#### The Second Religiousness

The second religiousness is the final phase of each civilization, a return, in somewhat changed form, of the religious feeling of the springtime "culture which is every synonymous with religious creativeness". Every great culture begins with a mighty theme that rises out of the pre-urban country-side, is carried through in the art and intellect of the cities, and closes with a finale of materialism in the world of cities.

### Parliamentarianism in Decay

With the apathy on the part of citizens towards public affairs begins the era of the replacment of parliamentary institutions by the Caesars. With this enters the age of gigantic conflicts such as we find ourselves in today. In Spengler's view every country, every nation, whether formally ruled by a monarch or dictator, by an oligarchy or by a parliament, is in fact ruled by a small minority driven by a strong will to power, an "aristocracy" in the original sence of that word--government by the best.

It may not be difficult here to discern that Spengler exalts these considerations to a high degree of influence, since he regards them as universal standards for all times and all nations. All who would accept either democratic form of society or ethical values as such must reject them as vigorously as they have been put forward. Perhaps Spengler helped with his influence, to bring about the crisis, for he proclaimed the immunity of political behaviour from morality a favourite theme with German thinkers and politicians from Luther to Hitler:

The born statesman stands beyond true and false. He doesnot confuse the logic of system. He has convictions that are certainly dear to him, but he has them as a private person; no real politician ever felt himself tied to them when in action.<sup>2</sup>

It may be recalled here that Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy faithfully executed such ideas in international relationships in the early nineteen thirties, and thereby accelerated the tempo of the crisis of our time.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

### Arnold Toynbee's View of Civilizations<sup>3</sup>

Barely twenty years later, on the other side of the British channel, a historian of equal, if not greater dimensions and of wider vision than Spengler, set himself the task of probing into the laws governing the life and death of civilizations.

#### Rhythm of Civilizations

Taking up thirty civilizations, he proceeds to say that it is the theme of constant rhythm, an up and down movement, a swinging of the pendulum, which is apparent throughout the development of civilizations. The main form of the movement is that of challenge and response. A society is repeatedly faced by challenges to its well being and even to its very existence. Its response to that challenge determines the future of that society: if the response is adequate to meet the challenge the life of that society will continue enhanced by the internal and external force deriving from its success. If the challenge is not successfully met, the society loses its intrinsic value or its external prestige or its material welfare, perhaps to such an extent as to constitute virtually the end of that society.

#### Breakdown of Civilizations

The creative minority can no longer bring up sufficient creative force to meet the challenge of the moment. It therefore loses its appeal to, and its spell over, the masses, and can only continue to exercise its leadership either by force or by rendering the mimesis automatic and therefore empty. Thus a schism in the

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<sup>3</sup>A. J. Toynbee, A Study of History (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1947).

body politic, a loss of social unity occurs, which is the beginning of disintegration. Coincident with schism in the body politic is the "schism in the soul". Creativity in the individual is replaced by either abandon or self-control, mimesis by truancy or martyrdom. A sense of drift and a sense of sin replaces the former creative elan. The differentiation which was the mark of growth is replaced by standardization, a mark of decay.

#### Time of Troubles

The disintegration and schism inherent in the phase engender a period of great political and social conflicts called "times of troubles". Heavy and large scale warfare takes place between powerful states, alliances or ideologies. The "time of troubles" exhausts the warring nations and factions and creates among the masses a growing longing for peace and stability above all. The next step is the establishment of a universal state by the strongest state or faction.

The American sociologist H. E. Barnes takes exception to Toynbee's teachings as being dictated by Toynbee's religious convictions. He says: "To unfold the drama of the past damnation and possible ultimate salvation of humanity, not sober and direct historical exposition, is the primary aim of Toynbee." Without entering here the controversy over the validity of either Toynbee's view or his presentation, it seems more appropriate to the present purpose to synthesize the view points discussed so far.

Synthesis: The Pattern of Civilizations<sup>4</sup>

The fundamental source of decay does not, generally, lie in the external conditions, but in the internal causes, notably in the loss of creative force, which is depicted by Spengler as a domination by intellect over instinct, and by Toynbee as a failure on the part of the leading creative minority in the society to devise adequate responses to particular challenges, causing a failure of society to adapt itself to the changing situation.

The lack of capacity to adjust to the requirements of a new situation, has lodged us right in the midst of a "time of trouble", or a "period of contending states", no matter whether this period started with the Napoleonic wars, as Spengler contended, or with World War I. The present century has already seen two wars of unsurpassed magnitude and destructiveness, and another in Korea of considerable dimensions, together with other occurrences and problems any one of which might easily have flared into another world conflagration-- The Suez Canal episode, the Hungarian massacre, the French bombing in Algeria, India's intransigence in Kashmir in face of Security Council's resolutions favouring an impartial plebiscite there, the problem of the Middle East, or that of the Reunification of Germany.

Furthermore, our century has given birth to an ideological warfare of widest scope: the fight between the American way of life and the Communist "paradise" in Russia. The rise of nationalism in

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<sup>4</sup>J. G. De Beus, The Future of the West (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 72.

Asia in the first half century and the ever increasing urge of men there to manage their own institutions, has finally resulted in the end of Western domination over Asia and elsewhere.

### The Yearning for Peace

Under the circumstances it is small wonder that the hankering for world peace, the desire for a universal state on the part of many among the masses who are sufferers from all this military, ideological and racial warfare, is growing by the day. The longing for peace, ever active as an ideal in the hearts of men, has swollen, more widely than is commonly recognized, to a passionate cry for survival.

Roughly speaking, man seeks the solution in two directions: upward, in values that are higher than reason; or downward, in values closer to earth than reason. Upward he seeks salvation in religious, philosophical, metaphysical or mythical solutions. A revival of the religious interest and needs is noticeable in a number of countries. In the United States, the percentage of population which is affiliated with the church stands at an all time high. At the same time, the success in many western countries of non-sectarian movements such as the "Oxford Group" or "Movement for Moral Rearmament" is typical of the intellectual disappointment and spiritual hunger of our age.

It does not, therefore, sound surprising that Toynbee in a speech at Edinburgh should have predicted that the nineteenth century movement in the western world, which replaced religion by technology as the center of interest, will be reversed in the twenty-first century by a countermovement in which mankind will turn back from technology to religion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

### Loosened Moral Standards

As long as spiritual and social life was dominated by religion, moral standards were part thereof. They were set forth in commandments of superhuman origin. When the spiritual and social life became secularized, moral standards lost their absolute character. Historical materialism, by proclaiming economic factors as the origin of all developments in society, inevitably degraded moral standards to a mere function of economic factors.

Freudian psychology, by proclaiming the priority of sexual motives over all others, relegated moral standards to the role of a mere function of the sexual factor. Added to these movements in the field of thought, at work for a considerable length of time, came the world wars (and the physical confusion caused by them) and the loosening of social standards of conduct and of family ties which we have witnessed since.

### Loss of the Sense of Style

Says Sorokin:

Not idealism, but sensory and visual naturalism is now supreme. Art is down to earth. It imitates sensate nature and empirical nature. It has particular inclination to the reproduction of the negative, the macabre, the pathetic, the passionate, the prosaic, the picturesque, and the ugly phenomena of life. Calm serenity is gone, and instead we have distorted figures, suffering ugliness. Women, who figure little in the classical art, are one of the favourite subjects in this phase. They are now depicted 'realistically', in terms of voluptuousness, sensuality, sexuality, seductiveness, and 'prettiness'. The spirit of a purely Sensate Epicureanism is conspicuous.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 107.



The alluring, provocative aspects of sex are today more openly and more frequently depicted than in the former ages. A glance at any magazine rack or page of movie advertisements in any big city today will suffice to bear out this point. The danger does not lie in the fact that man is surrendering, but that he becomes an apathetic bystander in the fatal tragedy invading the domain of values by which he is distinguished from other animals.

#### Realism or Jingoism

The "realism" which advocated the freedom from moral restraints and the rejection of ethical considerations for the sake of national interests proved ultimately the greatest illusion. Moral principles of honesty, binding sanctity of international agreements, was replaced by the mere scraps of papers in the books of so-called "real politicians". The present day world is torn by rival ideologies having only this in common: that they do not set great store on spiritual values and religious faith as guides to men. Having lost their spiritual sheet anchor, men know no scruples in descending to the level of the beasts. "The sovereign national state, this child of the modern age, notwithstanding the mantle of nebulous moral obligation in which it likes to wrap itself, still recognizes in the crucial moments of its own destiny no law but that of its own egoism--no high focus of obligation, no overriding ethical code."<sup>7</sup>

Could anything, asks George F. Kennan, be more absurd than a world divided into several dozens of secular societies, each devoted

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<sup>7</sup>George F. Kennan, The American Diplomacy (New American Library, 1957).

to the cultivation of the myth of its own overriding importance and virtue, of the sacrosanctity of its own unlimited independence?

### The Essential Nature of the Crisis

A penetrating and stimulating analysis of the nature of the crisis has been given by Professor E. H. Carr in his book entitled The Conditions of Peace. In this part of the paper we follow the three-fold explanation of the problem which he suggests, i.e., the political, the economic and the essentially moral nature of the crisis.

#### The Political Crisis

The Allied victory of 1919 persuaded almost every country in Europe to accept the view of the victorious powers that the world had been made safe for democracy. Hastily and obsequiously, politicians elaborated democratic constitutions and conferred political rights on their people. But by the nineteen-twenties, for masses of the people all over the world, political rights had come to appear meaningless or irrelevant.

While parliamentary governments in 1920 were possibly receiving greater lip-service than ever before, there was noticeable diminution in its actual prestige in almost every country where it was officially established.<sup>8</sup>

Liberal democracy, which reached its culmination in the nineteenth century, was a democracy of the property owners. It interpreted "equality" as requiring the removal of all inequalities save those arising from the unequal distribution of wealth, and "liberty" as

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<sup>8</sup> E. H. Carr, Conditions of Peace (New York: Macmillan Company, 1943).

liberty to behave and to use one's property in any way not calculated to inflict physical damages on the person or the property of others.

Before the end of the 19th century, organized groups of capitalists were exercising a predominant influence on the political life of all advanced countries. The precise course of development varied considerably according to the various conditions in countries like Germany, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.A.

Under the existing democratic institutions, the will of the unorganized majority is impotent to assert itself against the domination of organized economic power. It is a common belief now that the attitude and the policies of the political parties in most of democratic countries are determined only in a minor degree by the opinions of the electorate which they purport to represent and in a major degree by the vested interests which supply the bulk of party funds. The national policy on vital issues is really settled, as Marx alleged, not by democratic counting of votes, but by the result of the perpetual struggle for power between rival economic interests. Political rights thus became irrelevant so far as they no longer conferred control over those factors which determined the decisive issues of national life.

Democracy is, thus, to be judged partly by the extent to which it succeeds in carrying the democratic principles of equality into the social and economic spheres. Similarly, liberty may no longer seem of paramount importance to the masses unless it raises the banner of liberation from the economic, as well as the political, domination of the more fortunate. The rights of nations, like the rights of men, may become hollow, if they fail to pave the way to economic well-being,

or even to bare subsistence, and if they offer no solution of the problems which most affect the man in the street and the man in the field.

### The Economic Crisis

The economic crisis which underlies the political crisis exhibits with peculiar vividness the failure of the satisfied countries to adjust outworn forms of thought to a new and revolutionary age. This seems to be natural, not only because theories die hard and frequently outlive the conditions out of which they arose, but also because the period in which those principles held sway was, for the economically most advanced countries of the world, a period of unparalleled advance in economic prosperity and in political power and prestige.

The hypothesis of a vast society of equal independent and mobile individuals was falsified to an ever-increasing extent. The individual counted for less and less. The forces which dominated production and distribution and which exercised a preponderent influence in the economic "society" were a few highly organized interest groups, growing ever larger and more powerful. To get a correct picture of the social and economic structure of the modern world, thought is to be given not to the number of the individuals cooperating and competing within the framework of a state, but to the number of large and powerful groups, sometimes competing, sometimes cooperating, in the pursuit of their group interests, and to the state as being constantly impelled to increase the strength and scope of its authority in order to maintain the necessary minimum of cohesion in the social fabric.

The issue is whether to allow social action to depend on the haphazard outcome of the struggle between interest groups or to control and coordinate the activities of these groups in the interests of the community.

In an age when pain and pleasure were regarded as qualitatively measureable, it is hardly surprising to find axiomatic acceptance of the view which required no proof that the maximum production of the wealth would conduce to either maximum or minimum welfare. But the social conscience became increasingly recalcitrant to the view that the principal end of the economic activity is to produce as cheaply as possible the maximum quantity of goods which can be sold as dearly as possible. Price and profit could no longer be accepted as the sole factors determining the objects towards which the production resources of the community should be directed.

The war of 1914-18 hastened an economic revolution by proving conclusively that the most effective mobilization of the national resources for a given purpose is incompatible with reliance on the profit motive. The economic crisis of the nineteen-thirties breached the defences of the last citidal of laissez-faire. "The rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods", said President Roosevelt in his Inaugural Address on March 14, 1933 "have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and abdicated. The measure of restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

Even today in Great Britain and the United States the price and profit mechanism is still commonly defended as the normal test of economic policy, and the departure from it is treated as a regrettable necessity imposed by exceptional circumstances. The profit motive has been so long placed by economists in the center of their system that the people have come to regard it as a central and immutable fact of human nature. The disappearance of price and profit as the dominant factors in the economic system involves a profound modification of the conception of property. In the first place, the social conscience has placed restrictions on the possession and on the use of great personal wealth. Taxation which, half a century ago, would have been regarded as confiscatory, has been imposed on it almost everywhere.

Thus the most urgent economic problem is no longer to expand production, but to secure more equitable distribution of consumption and a more regular and orderly utilization of the productive capacity. Whereas before, the producer, not the consumer, was able to harness the power of the state to his interests so that, in the great industrial countries, capital and labor formed a common front against the consumer and shared the same interest in maintaining both the level and profitability of production, this is not so in the newer order of things.

Any thing that benefits the Capitalist system as a whole, benefits by necessity this trade unionist-socialist movement as it increases the total national income available for distribution between the classes. Socialism as an opposition from within is salutary and inevitable, but accepts necessarily the fundamentals of the capitalist social system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>P. Drucker, The End of Economic Man (New York: The John Day Co, 1939).

"During the past ten years," said Carr (1929-39), "in some of the most civilized countries of the world, wheat and cotton have been ploughed in, coffee burnt, livestock slaughtered and milk poured away."<sup>11</sup> Capitalism is at its lowest when "the pigs are drowned" in the face of starving men. In 1933 President Roosevelt believed "that we are at the threshold of a fundamental change in our economic thought . . . that in the future we are going to think less about the producer and more about the consumer."<sup>12</sup>

The individual profit, which in the 18th and 19th centuries provided the motive force of the economic system, has failed, and to the side of the status quo no moral substitute appears to have been discovered other than war--nothing but war seems sufficiently worthwhile. This fact alone is enough to suggest that the economic crisis is, in essence, a moral crisis.

#### The Moral Crisis

The moral crisis of the contemporary world is the breakdown of the system of ethics which lay at the root of liberal democracy, of national self-determination and laissez-faire economics. Liberal democracy assumed that the individual citizen would recognize the existence of a fundamental harmony of interest on particular points through a process of give and take to their mutual advantage.

This was a "political theory which had replaced the conception of purpose by that of mechanism". The 19th century philosophers,

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<sup>11</sup>Carr, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

Hegel and Marx, were typical in their emphasis on the process as such rather than on the end. Belief in infinite progress, rather than any clear conception of an ultimate end, supplied the sense of higher purpose. The laissez-faire system had not, however, in fact, eliminated moral purpose. The maximum production of wealth and its tried instrument, the profit motive, were elevated to the rank of a moral imperative. Perpetual expansion was the hypothesis on which liberal democracy and laissez-faire economics were based. There were indeed physical limits in this expansion; and by the end of the 19th century they had already been reached.

Under the jolt administered by the events of 1914-18 the wheel ceased to revolve. In 1923 the U. S. which for three generations had been known to the oppressed everywhere as the land of great open spaces and unlimited opportunities, closed the doors to immigration; and this more than any other action was the symbol of a world grown static and stereotyped. "By 1930 the moral cement that heretofore held democratic western society together had disappeared."

"The essential thing", wrote Professor Tawney, "is that men should fix their minds on the idea of purpose and give the idea pre-eminence over all subsidiary issues."<sup>13</sup> The economic machine refuses to run until a new moral purpose is discovered to replace the now exhausted and imperative profit motive as the driving force; and this purpose when it is discovered will also provide democracy with a new source of social cohesion, which it needs to replace the discarded

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<sup>13</sup>R. H. Tawney, The Acquisitive Society, p. 11.



doctrine of the harmony of interests. The essential nature of the crisis through which we are passing is neither military, nor political, nor economic, but moral.

A new faith in a new moral purpose is required to reanimate our political and economic systems. The great wars of the 20th century are not between the poor and starving countries of the world, but between the richest. And this shows that there is no longer an economic imperative driving nations to fight. The principal evil is maldistribution of the wealth, and two great enemies are unemployment and inequality.

It frequently happens that during the normal and peaceful circumstances the governments, through the selfishness and the neglectness of its agents, fail to do justice in the matter of employment and equal treatment of the citizens. This in return creates division and discord within the social polity. The grieved groups yearn for abnormal conditions to change this unsatisfactory set up. The result is war. Apart from the emotional excitement associated with war, it provides a sense of meaning and purpose widely felt to be lacking in the modern life. Hence war has become the most powerful known instrument of social solidarity. And we cannot escape from war until we have found some other moral purpose powerful enough to generate self-sacrifice on the scale requisite to enable the civilization to survive.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ISLAMIC TRADITION IN THIS CONTEXT

Having dealt with the economic inequalities arising out of the maldistribution of the wealth under the capitalist system and the too much emphasis on the material aspect of human life, it is intended here to discuss the Islamic tradition in this context and to consider if this could help relieve the social and economic and moral evils of our times.

During the early part of the Middle Ages two rival systems, one in the East and the other in the West, dwelt face to face, ignorant and entirely unappreciative of one another's ideals. Each claimed to exist by divine appointment and appealed for sanction to the revealed Word of God. The theory of the Holy Roman Empire set before it as its aim a world state in which the Emperor would be the universal sovereign, controlling and guiding the secular affairs of the faithful with an ever widening authority, until it should embrace the whole surface of the globe.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly Islam is a universal religion and claims the allegiance of all men and women. Corresponding to the common recognition of the same creed there was to be a unity of a political organization in which all believers were to owe obedience to the supreme head of the community, the Caliph. But unlike the Holy Roman Empire, the Caliphate was no

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Arnold, The Early Caliphate, (Oxford University Press, 1921).

deliberate imitation of a pre-existent form of civilization or political organization. The Caliphate as a political institution was thus the child of its age, and did not look upon itself as the rival of any political institution of an earlier date.

Islam knows of no priesthood, of no body of men set apart for the performance of religious duties which the general body of the faithful are not authorized to perform. For the understanding of the caliphate it is important therefore to recognize that the incumbent of the office is pre-eminently a political functionary, and though he may perform religious functions, these functions do not imply the possession of any spiritual powers setting him thereby apart from the rest of the faithful.

In any theoretic exposition of the doctrine of the Caliphate, mention must be made of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), one of the greatest thinkers that the muslim world has produced. With encyclopaedic knowledge and judgment sharpened by a wide and varied experience of affairs, he makes a broad survey of muslim history and works out an attractive theory of the origin and development of human society and culture.

Ibn Khaldun, descendant of one of the Prophet's supporters, while writing about his own Arabs of whom he is proud, writes with extraordinary detachment about their weaknesses. He knows the glorious past of his civilization; he knows that the caliphate has represented the best, the ideal state. But he is aware that this is gone, and he does not want to restore it. For him the muslim state is the best state, since it alone enables man to attain happiness in

this world and in the world to come. As such it provides the norm to which the actual state is related, but like his contemporary, the Christia Marsiglio of Padua, he does not advance a return to this ideal society. Human association is a necessity, Aristotle had said; but Ibn Khaldun is not expounding Aristotle. His argument is based on his experience. Association for mutual help and protection is useless without power and authority. Men will destroy one another without a restraining authority recognized by all. Power confers authority.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Khaldun has learnt from Arab tribes and their absorption in the Islamic empire that this support is given only by ties of blood and family. These ties create a sense of solidarity, mutual responsibility and united action. Joined to the will to power this solidarity is the formative force in states and dynasties soon transcending tribalism and common descent and replacing it by a common desire to maintain power and influence. This dynamic and collective force he calls Assabiya. The stability of political order rests on the strength of the Assabiya. The Assabiya depends on the reinforcement of natural ties by some common ideal, such as religion. Mohammed started with blood brotherhood and transformed it into a brotherhood of faith. Ibn Khaldun believed that political stability is the greatest when Islam penetrates and invigorates family ties.

It is true that free, manly, self-reliant life of countryside gives way to the peaceful, protected life in towns which relieves other forces and desires. Manly courage yields to obedience to authority. But this is inevitable since man has higher aspirations than the satisfaction of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibn Khaldun, Prolegomena, quoted by M. Muhsin in Ibn-Khaldun's Philosophy of History (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1957).

his physical needs and desires. Culture and civilization can only flourish under the protection of strong urban government with the growth of arts, crafts, trade and commerce necessary to satisfy man's artistic sense, and of intellectual curiosity with the help of education in the sciences. It is no less inevitable that, once man goes beyond the necessities of life, greater comfort and ease should lead to a life of luxury, debauchery and lack of moral restraints. Moral decline goes hand in hand with the political decline.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Ibn Khaldun appears to be the first medieval thinker to realize the mutual dependence of the different activities of the state. For instance, he saw the danger of monopolies. He understood that the higher taxes stifle production; but, more significant than this, he realized the direct bearing of economics on the stability and security of the state. The interest of the state is his paramount concern. Justice is not a moral obligation so much as a sound policy.

### Islamic Order for Human Society

What, as the muslim sees it, does Islam mean for the political economic and social areas of human life and relationship? To the student of Islam, religion pervades all life. It does not distinguish between the duty of the believer and the duty of the citizen as such, or between what is owing to God and what is owing to society. All man's social responsibilities are religious in character, and his religion is fulfilled not only in what ensues in the mosque, but also in the market place. Thus, in fact, Islam sets out to be an inclusive system in which the relations of the person to God pervade also the relations to his fellows.

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted by E. Rosenthal. Ibn Khaldun, The Father of Modern Political Science, "The Listener", April 17, 1958, pp. 651-52.

God has sent to men the knowledge of His will, and in its obedience and fulfillment the good life for mankind is to be attained. Those attitudes of mind and soul embodied in prayers have their counterparts in attitudes towards the world of fellowmen. Islam symbolizes the responsibility towards one's fellowmen. Just as in Christian terms the word "Service" may mean a good deed or an occasion for worship, so in Islam the obligation of religion means behavior as well as belief. "The pillars of religion" in Islam involve not only credal confession but the recognition of God in all realms of human conduct. The comprehensive quality of Islam is epitomized in the historical form of its genesis, from the moment peoples and tribes became, physically as well as spiritually, tributary to Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam. In Madina, Islam came to signify an external as well as an internal loyalty.

The Caliphate became the symbol of the trusteeship of Mohammed's once for all prophethood and of the perpetuation of his model rulership. Both were permanently fused and remained ideologically intact until this twentieth century. Thus it is in community, as including political expression and political sovereignty, that Islam is realizeable. Properly understood, the historical religion is a total way of life, known and learned from the Divine disclosure and attainable in political, social and economic existence, by men on earth. Islam believes that God merits and desires in this world a much more active and immanent role in daily life than Judaism and Christianity have given to Him either in theory or in practice. To the muslim the separation of church and state in Protestant Christianity

and in modern western political liberalism has resulted in the coercive conduct of international relations uncontrolled by religious or ethical principles.<sup>4</sup>

The belief of muslims, christians and the jews that both God and the material soul of man are determined in character has the practical consequence of making the moral man in any sphere of action one who commits his will to, and if necessary gives his life for, certain determined principles. For Islam, then, as for the west, justice consists in governing the individual persons and disputes under codes, commandments or rules which are assumed to be universal and which make all men equal before the law.<sup>5</sup> The basic sources of the cultural heritage of Islam and Christianity do not seem to be much differing. In fact Islam gave to the West, through its Arabian universities in Spain, much of the source material and the enlightenment which made the west what it now is.

Dr. Sir Mohammed Iqbal (d. 1938) a muslim poet, philosopher, lawyer and statesman was an interpreter of those immutable laws, which, in their operation, bring about the rise and fall of nations. His poetry was born of a life time study of Quaranic Laws. In this study his teacher was the Glorious Quran. The Quran contains nothing out of harmony with the progress of scientific thought. The smallest particle in this universe, as well as the highly complicated system of the stars, are governed by definite laws. Nor is man left out of its

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<sup>4</sup>F. S. C. Northrop, The Taming of Nations (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 70.

<sup>5</sup>Complaint and Answer. Translated by Allat Hussain (Lahore: Mohd. Ashraf Press, 1948), p. 3.

governance. But man alone has been endowed by His creator with will. His submission to the Law must therefore be conscious, not mechanical.<sup>6</sup>

This role of conscious, free choice and acceptance by the individual person is the basic assumption of the whole of Iqbal's religious and political thought. His poetry, philosophy, political thinking and action bear an influence of the British philosopher, McTaggart, of Whitehead, of Einstein and of the American Professor Hocking.

Humanity, wrote Iqbal, needs three things to-day--a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and the basic principles of universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is the perpetual ego seeking itself through the mutually intolerant democracies. Believe me, Europe to-day is the greatest hindrance in the way of man's ethical advancement.<sup>7</sup>

The cause he locates at bottom is the too great separation in Christianity between ideals and the daily life. This shows especially in Luther's Protestantism, but it is true also of Catholicism. The lesson which the rise and outcome of Luther's movement teaches should not be lost. A careful reading of history shows that the Reformation was essentially a political movement, and the net result of it in Europe was a gradual displacement of the universal ethics of Christianity (i.e., the definition of good in terms of universal principles holding for all men irrespective of race, creed or nation) by a system of national ethics.

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<sup>6</sup>Dr. Sir M. Iqbal, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 170.



the modern man has ceased to live soulfully, i.e., from within. In the domain of thought he is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economics and political life he is living in open conflict with others.<sup>8</sup>

It is a false bifurcation of man, said Iqbal, made by the Greek and the modern political philosophy when it divides man into spirit and matter as with Plato and Aristotle or into material substances as with Descartes and Locke, or into natural science and the moral science as with Kant and subsequent humanists. Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam, God and the universe, spirit and matter, church and state are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit realizing itself in space and time.

Is it possible to retain Islam as an ethical ideal and to reject it as a polity in favour of national politics, in which the religious attitude is not permitted to play any part? This question became of special importance in India where Muslims happened to be in a minority. The proposition that religion is a private individual experience is not surprising on the lips of a European. The nature of the Prophet's religious experience, as disclosed in the Quran, however is wholly different. It is not mere experience happening inside the experimental and necessitating no reactions on his social environment. It is an individual experience creative of social order.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 155, 177.

Its immediate outcome is to be seen in the fundamentals of a polity with implied legal concepts where civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational.

The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the other. Thus the constitution of a polity on national lines, if it means displacement of the Islamic principles of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a muslim.

Thus the kingdom of God on earth means the democracy of more or less unique individuals, presided over by the most unique individual possible on earth. The democracies of Europe originated mainly in the economic regeneration of European societies. The democracy of Islam did not grow out of the extension of economic opportunity; it is a spiritual principle based on the assumption that every human being is a center of latent power, the possibilities of which can be developed by cultivating a certain type of charter.<sup>9</sup>

The Islamic law is not something finished to the minutest details and God-given in the ancient past. It has to be reformulated continuously. Only its basic creative philosophy and spirit is given by the past. This persisting spirit must be given a fresh expression in the light of modern knowledge, modern conditions and needs.

#### The Islamic Economic Organization

Zakat, or the obligation to alms giving, embodies one of the basic principles of social responsibility by which the possession of wealth obligates the possessor to concern himself about those who lack what he enjoys. It distinguishes ideally between essential possession and actual possession. The former is the right and stake

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. xxix.

of the community in what any man owes. It teaches that what is mine in point of fact is that of the community in the ultimate reckoning. Private property is recognized on the condition of private benevolence. In muslim social thought such is the conception of Zakat.

This institution takes place together with Witness, Worship, Fasting and Pilgrimage among the five pillars of Islam. It has a clear Quranic force. "Perform the prayer and the poor rate"<sup>10</sup> was the formula of submission. Those who withhold the poor rate are a class synonymous with the idolaters (Surahxii. 7). Zakat as serving to identifying the muslim as such is also found in the Quran.<sup>11</sup>

The root idea of the word Zakat is purification. Property is not purely held which recognizes no obligation in and beyond possession. The Quran uses an alternative word for alms, "sadaquat", which is nearly synonymous and introduces the idea of rightness and friendship. "Sadaquat" are wholly voluntary. On the basis of Quranic injunctions and traditional exhortations the practice of alms giving became a basic social institution in Islam. "Take alms of their wealth where-with thou mayst purify them and mayst make them to grow up and pray for them."<sup>12</sup>

The use of Zakat when received in the early community was varied. It was distributed for the relief of the poor and needy, to parents, widows and slaves and orphans and was also used in military

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<sup>10</sup>Quran, (Surah 11, 43, 83, 110, 177, 277 etc.)

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., LVIII, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

ways. By and large it was meant for the internal soundness of the muslim community. The proportion of the payments of one's possessions varied widely from time to time and also in respect of different forms of property—land and its produce, wealth in gold and money, merchandize, and the rest. The generally accepted limit was  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent beyond which the believer was not required to go. There had been a direct method of payment. But the general considerations made it preferable that the transaction should be publicly supervised and administered. When Zakat was officially levied as a tax, it still hinged to a great degree on individual declaration of the property.

In modern times, with far reaching fiscal changes supervening in all muslim countries, and with the rise of the state schemes of social welfare, there has been an instance of the fact that such taxation is not technically Zakat. Taxation is not confined to the muslims but falls on all citizens, whereas Zakat is a muslim ordinance.

The muslims, therefore who pay taxes to-day which are used in part for social welfare must not suppose that they are absolved thereby from their Zakat duty. The government of Pakistan so ruled recently when it agreed to foster the payment of Zakat by sale of Zakat stamps in government Post Offices. Pleas from some quarters that taxation by the state in the interests of the poor of itself constituted Zakat were disallowed.<sup>13</sup>

Zakat is understood by muslims as the basis of an ideology of social responsibility. It is the institutional witness to the duty implicit in ownership. Thus when fiscal policy in modern states undertakes to bring about economic equality through gradual taxation, poor relief and related measures, it is fulfilling the ideal for which

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<sup>13</sup>The Muslim World Magazine for April, 1955, N: 2 Vol: 45, p. 205.

Zakat bears witness. Though the muslim believer may still be obligated to pay his poor rate, he has the satisfaction of knowing that the witness of its continuity has shaped the concept of all taxation and made the state actively cognizant of the poverty.

Zakat is the main support in the Islamic case against the evils of both capitalism and communism. It renders the first innocuous and the second unnecessary. It draws the sting of both by depriving Marxism of any legitimate argument against property, and property of any scandalous features. The owner who truly recognizes, in an active sharing, the debt his very property imposes on him, visa-vis the human whole, obviates the criticism which exploiting capitalism evoked. Thus the raison of detre of communism is destroyed at the root; and capitalism, by the same token, is disciplined into validity. Communism, in the view of the exponents of Zakat, is sufficiently disproved on the sole ground that, if it should prevail, payment of Zakat would be impossible. Capital cannot be destroyed without the elimination of the institution which harmonizes it. Further, Zakat, when practiced, reverses the vicious spiral that Marx identified as the inner contradiction in capitalism. Zakat transforms it into a happy spiral. For the distribution of alms stimulates popular purchasing power and thus quickens the market, sharpens the production, boosts profits and so finally rewards the payer of Zakat and gives him a still greater income out of which to disburse again.<sup>14</sup>

Though the crucial assumption about human nature is implicit in this understanding of Zakat, yet as the muslim sees it, the

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<sup>14</sup>Kenneth Cragg, The Call of the Minerat (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 154.

institution of Zakat solves what is at issue between the great rival philosophies of this century. Islam, it is believed, had always the secret. It answers with charity the communist denial of the right to possess. It solves the problem of poverty by leave of the rich, where Marx proposes to solve it by their liquidation. His insistence on the necessity of violence counters with the efficacy of exhortation and religious obligation. The Quran makes it perfectly clear that hoarding is hateful to God. Monopolists will be condignly punished in hell. Islam demands social justice and social neighborliness. Zakat proclaims finally the sovereign principle: "To have is to Share". Only giving cleanses keeping. Property is a trust. The community is the context of value. As these percepts are followed the Islamic good is actualized. Mankind is rescued from the militant robbery of untempered capitalism.

As a postscript to Zakat, two other factors in actualization of Islamic ideology merit consideration. The law of inheritance in Islam, though of great intricacy and diversity in details, makes in general for division, and impedes the concentration of large capital wealth in individual hands. The Quran and Sunnah give specific directions for the division of personal estates after death and no bequests the testator may have made could override or disturb these proportions. Any transference of property the testator wished outside the provisions of law must be made during the testator's lifetime actually to the recipient. No will could be made such as to settle property on heirs beyond the allowable proportions or by the deprivation of legitimate recipients. Thus inheritance becomes a

means of distributing wealth, and so, in turn, a part of Islam's crusade against excessive capitalism.

There is no primogeniture. Sons are equally treated. It is this fact together with the recognition of numerous secondary heirs who might have been ignored in a free bequeathing, that has given muslim inheritance its significance as a deterrent to excessive concentration of capital. "Thus the laws of Islam, when properly applied, prevent large accumulations of wealth. The muslim Justice, Dr. Mir Siadat Ali Khan of Hyderabad State, under this law, divided an estate of some \$53,000 between seventy heirs."<sup>15</sup>

Along with the Law of Inheritance is the familiar muslim prohibition of usury. In Surah ii and iii, Quran strongly condemns riba or, in the generally accepted sense, the making of gain without due return or compensation. A careful distinction is made between usury and legitimate profit. One of the passages concerned, that in Surah ii, is in fact a spirited reply to those who try to get away with usury under the plea of fair profit. The muslim economists have defined the distinction with great pains and ingenuity. It is suggested that the only legitimate form of return for wealth is where the investor is personally involved in the enterprise and seeks no guaranteed return for his investment. It is asserted that, even in the modern world, banking, commerce and capital development are perfectly feasible on this basis. Instead of the present system of stock market transactions, where investors are entirely out of relation with the enterprise, that use their capital and from which

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<sup>15</sup>F. S. C. Northrop, The Taming of Nations (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 171.

they demand to receive assured gains, Islam envisages a direct relation of capital to enterprise in such a way as to make gains not usurious but legitimate.

If a bridge or a road is to be built, for example, the government or the company should invite specific participation from those with money to invest. They must be consciously linked with the work in hand and be rewarded from the fruits of that particular scheme. When the bridge or road is completed, the profits from the toll and the like are distributed proportionately when all demands of construction and maintenance have been met.<sup>16</sup>

The ideal is the form in which muslim economics seeks to shape in practice its conviction that there should not be exploitation and that the will to work, not the will to make money work for you (presumably to somebody else's detriment), is the true economy. This seems to be no less significant in face of the hardly concealed gambling of the stock exchange.

Zakat and the forms of inheritance and usury prohibitions together constitute the main elements of the Islamic economic system as both an ideal from which direction can be found and an active means for realizing the right. It is hardly necessary to add that these three are corroborated by many Quranic and traditional passages calling for probity, honesty and integrity in social and commercial relationship. The Quran teaches the main basis of an economic planning as consisting of trusteeship, economic co-operation, limited private property and a measure of state enterprise. The overarching truth of God's sovereignty means that man, properly understood, has no right of exploitation.

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<sup>16</sup>S. M. Ahmed, The Economics of Islam (Lahore, Pakistan, 1947), Chapter VII.



"Not one of God's created servants" says Sqyyid Qutb, "has the power to cut off any man's provision, or to withhold from him any part of that provision."<sup>17</sup>

The fear of God is the final assurance of reverence for law. In honouring God, man fulfills what such honor demands in his human relationships. The basic principle is that there is an all embracing identity of purpose between the individual and the society, and that life in its fulness is interrelated.

This system does not favour the distinction between church and the state made in some other faiths, between two orders or levels of human life: that of a political realm where feasible, enforceable standards of behavior can be legally demanded and applied, and that of a spiritual order where goodness must arise through moral and religious forces, to which law may bear witness, but which law cannot actualize. From the Islamic point of view there are not two realms of the good. Islam, as a law unto God, is seen as attainable within the political order. This view has been instinctive and characteristic from the beginning. Islam originated as a politico-religious expression and was intended by the Caliphate to remain so. Mohammed, the Prophet, founded a state. He did not merely launch a religion. It may be more accurate to say that he launched a religion in founding a state. Through the Caliph the non-prophetic functions of the founder were perpetuated, the prophetic ones being already completed. The Caliphate stood for the leadership of an ideal empire in which the perfect

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<sup>17</sup>Social Justice in Islam, translation by John B. Hardie (Washington, 1953) (Cairo, 1945), pp 36, 68.

amalgamation of the faith and society which the Prophet had attained would be perpetuated for all time.

The Islamic state is no less, and it is more, than a cultural expression. The Islam it safeguards and embodies is simply the recognition of the values of Islam through institutions and laws which reflect its spirit. Islam on its God-ward side, becomes the individual's religious relationship, generally informing the national heritage, but creating no dogmatic requirements for the state itself. Laws will not have to satisfy any considerations other than the sovereign will of the elected assemblies. The right to elect and be elected will not turn upon any religious criteria. The muslim as such will be an equal citizen with any non-muslim who is also a citizen. The Islamicity of the state is cultural, general, spiritual; not militant or divisive.

Islamic idealism is not merely an "ethereal minstrel". It is a concrete plan for Islam, not merely Aristotle's philosophizing that good citizens of a state ought to be good men too. Each member of society, imbued with the right spirit of righteousness (cf. Surahii, 177) is intended to develop a dynamic personality.

The Islamic blend of rich subjectivity and powerful objective urge will guarantee not only the use of man as an end, but the reaching of the ideal civilization. But before that much leeway has to be made up towards salvaging the guiding subjectivity from the morass of disuse and unmeaning use, and establishing convincing records of objective welfare.<sup>18</sup>

As a conclusion to this discussion of the Islamic order for human society, it appears appropriate to summarize the main features

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<sup>18</sup>M. R. Sharif, Islamic Social Work (Orientalia, Lahore, 1945), pp. 22-23.

of marriage and family in Islam. For the family is the first context of the individual, the earliest school of his habit and, therefore, a crucial factor in the struggle for the good. The greatest and the most reprehensible mistake committed by the Western writers is to suppose that Mohammed either adopted or legalized polygamy. Attributing false notions to Mohammed, the traditional western scholarship has not been able to do justice to the ideology of Islam.

"It is very difficult for a person living in any one culture, unconsciously or unconsciously dedicated to its ideology, to do justice to the quite different economic, political, legal, moral, religious and artistic doctrines and cultural values of the peoples of other cultures."<sup>19</sup> It appears to be increasingly recognized, both in the West and in the Islamic world that the modern civilization cannot afford the luxury of such damaging misunderstanding as has existed between Islam and the West. For instance, Dante<sup>20</sup> made Mohammed a heresiarch. Later writers dubbed him a sensual imposter. He was a fabricator and a devil, who swindled many women. A preacher in the reign of James I characterized Mohammed as "that cozening Arabian whose religion, if it deserves that name, stands upon nothing but rude ignorance and palpable imposture . . . a subtle devil in a gross religion . . . a monster of many seeds, and all accursed."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>F. S. C. Northrop, Ideological Differences and World Order (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), Introduction, Preface.

<sup>20</sup>Dante quoted in The Call of the Minerate by Kenneth Cragg.

<sup>21</sup>Samuel C. Char, The Crescent and the Rose (New York, 1937), p. 445.

"The current hypothesis about Mohammed", writes Thomas Carlyle "that he was a scheming imposter, a Falsehood Incarnate, that his religion is a mere mass of quackery and fatuity, begins really to be now untenable to any one."<sup>22</sup> If we look to the social orders preceding the advent of Mohammed, we find that among the Athenians, the most civilized and the most cultured of all the nations of antiquity, the wife was a mere chattle marketable and transferable to others. She was regarded in the light of an evil, indispensable for the ordering of a household and procreation of the children. "An Athenian was allowed to have any number of wives, and Demosthenes glorified in the possession by his people of three classes of women, two of which supplied the legal and the semilegal wives."<sup>23</sup>

Marriage became a mere byword amongst the Romans. Polygamy was not indeed legalized but "after the Punic triumphs the matrons of Rome aspired to the common benefits of a free and opulent republic and their wishes were gratified by the indulgence of fathers and lovers."<sup>24</sup> Even the prohibition of polygamy by Justinian failed to check the tendency of the age. The law represented the advancement of thought, its influence was confined to a few thinkers, but to the mass it was a perfectly dead letter. "The Hebrew maiden, even in her father's house, stood in the position of a servant; her father could sell her if a minor. In case of his death, the sons could dispose of her at their

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<sup>22</sup>Thomas Carlyle, Heroes and Hero Worship (London: Chapman Ltd.)

<sup>23</sup>Dollinger (1877-1937), The Gentile and the Jew, pp. 405-406.

<sup>24</sup>Gibbon, The Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire, vol II, p. 206.

will and pleasure. The daughter inherited nothing, except when there was no male heir."<sup>25</sup> The pre-Islamic Arabs carried their aversion to women so far as to destroy, by burying alive, many of their female children.

The clearest enunciation in the Quran of the status of man and wife came in the passage in Surah xxx. 20.

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that ye may find rest in them, and He established between you love and compassion, Verily therein are signs for a people who reflect.<sup>26</sup>

"Paradise is at the foot of the mother", said the Prophet. Mohammed secured to women, in his system rights which they had not before possessed; he allowed them privileges the value of which will be more fully appreciated as time advances. He placed them on the footing of perfect equality in the exercise of all legal powers and functions. He restrained polygamy by limiting the maximum number of contemporaneous marriages, and by making absolute equity towards all obligatory on the man. It is worthy of note that the clause in the Quran which contains the permission to contract four contemporaneous marriages is immediately followed by a sentence which cuts down the significance of the preceding passage to its normal and legitimate dimensions. The passage runs thus, "You may marry two, three or four wives, but not more." The subsequent lines declare, "but if you can not deal equitably and justly with all, you shall marry only one."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Dollinger, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Quran xxx 20.

<sup>27</sup>Quran.

The extreme importance of this provision, bearing especially in mind the meaning which is attached to the word "equity" (adl) in the Quranic teachings, has not been lost sight of by the great thinkers of the muslim world. "Adl" (equity) signifies not merely equality of treatment in the matters of lodgment, clothing and other domestic requisites, but also complete unity of love, affection and esteem. "As absolute justice in matters of feeling is impossible, the Quranic prescription amounted in reality to a prohibition."<sup>28</sup>

Thus the Teacher who in an age when no country and no system gave any rights to women, maiden or married, mother or wife, who, in a country where the birth of a daughter was considered a calamity, secured to the sex rights which are only unwillingly and under pressure being conceded to them by the civilized nations in the twentieth century, deserves the gratitude of humanity.

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<sup>28</sup> S. A. Ali, Spirit of Islam.

## CHAPTER III

### THE IDEA OF EQUALITY IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

In the pre-Islamic era the condition of the masses in the East, as in the feudal ages of the West, was so miserable as to defy description. The lowest of them possessed no civil rights or political privileges. These were the monopoly of the rich and the powerful or of the sacerdotal class. The law was not the same for the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the great and the lowly. In Sasanide Persia, the priests and the landed proprietors enjoyed all the power and influence, and the wealth of the country was centered in their hands. In the Byzantine empire, the clergy and the great magnates were the possessors of wealth, influence and power.

This chapter is concerned with the idea of equality in the Islamic tradition. Why the emphasis on this concept? Because of the depth and breadth of its political implications. In the Western world it has been expounded at least since the days of Aristotle that, as he said, "What is just is equal." The dominant political trend of the last few centuries of western history, accompanying the national idea, has been that of the democratic idea. The essence of the democratic idea is the equality of man, universal suffrage and social justice. This emphasis on equality and justice in economic, social and political aspects has been emphasized in the traditions of Islam.

On the idea of equality in the Islamic tradition the most representative and authoritative exposition is found in the book The Spirit of Islam<sup>1</sup> written by a muslim author, Syed Amir Ali. This is one of the most widely read of books in almost all the muslim countries. His contribution in introducing Islam to the West is outstanding, since his book in the English language not only created the desire for self-examination within the muslim world but also produced many critics and commentators in the Western world.

In order to make clear the significance of the idea of equality in the Islamic tradition, I would freely draw from the main arguments of the author referred to above. Islam, says Amir Ali, recognizes no distinction of race or color; black or white, citizens or soldiers, rulers or subjects; they are perfectly equal. In the field or in the guest chamber, in the tent or in the palace, in the mosque or in the market, they mingle without reserve and without contempt. The first Muzzin (the person who summons the believers to the prayers) of Islam, a devoted adherent and an esteemed disciple, had been a negro slave. Zaid, the free-man of the Prophet, was often entrusted with the command of the troops, and the noblest captains served under him without demur. Kutb-ud-din, the first king of Delhi, and true founder, therefore, of the muslim empire in India, came from a family of the slaves.

In Islam, the slave of today is the grand vazir of tomorrow. He may marry, without discredit, his master's daughter, and become the head of the family. Slaves have founded dynasties and ruled kingdoms.

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<sup>1</sup>Amer Ali, The Spirit of Islam (Oxford University Press, 1923).



The father of Mahmood Ghazanvi was a slave. These examples illustrate the matter of how difficult it may be to find in any other system, depicted in the pages of history, so humane an account of the position of the slaves. These men, to take the few mentioned, were slaves prior to joining the faith of Islam, and their background did not become an obstacle in their appointments to the positions of public responsibility.

Not until Mohammed the Prophet of Islam sounded the note of freedom, not until he proclaimed the practical equality of mankind, not until he abolished every privilege of the caste and emancipated the labor, did the chains which had held in bond the nations of the earth fall to pieces. He came with the same message which had been brought by his precursors and he fulfilled it.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Idea of Tolerance in Islam

Having rooted our commentary in the thought of the author referred to, it seems appropriate to consider next the idea of tolerance in the traditions of Islam, because it has been alleged by a large number of western writers that the religion of Islam has been spread by the sheer force of the sword; and that the only alternative offered by the muslims to the vanquished was either the acceptance of the faith or death.

Now if we can separate from the over-all idea the political necessity which has often spoken in the name of religion, no faith is more tolerant than is Islam of the followers of other creeds. The Quran contains express injunctions on this point. There shall be no compulsion in faith. Guidance has become manifest from error.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

And again it is said! "It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve."<sup>4</sup> The Islamic principles of tolerance and respect for the religious institutions of other peoples is fully discernible in the guarantee which Mohammed the Prophet gave to the minorities of his day.

To the Christians of Najran and the neighboring 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 beside; there shall be no interference with (the practice of) their faith and their observances; nor any change in their rights and privileges; no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric; nor any priest from his priesthood; nor any monk from his monastery; and they shall continue to enjoy every thing great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not oppress or be oppressed; they shall not practice the rights of blood vengeance as in the Days of Ignorance; no tithes shall be levied from them; nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops.<sup>5</sup>

This guarantee also appears, in an abridged form, in the outstanding work The Life of Mohammed by Sir William Muir.<sup>6</sup> The toleration and generosity with which the non-muslims were treated are evidenced by the fact that the Zimmies (i.e., minorities) could be nominated as executors to the wills of the muslims; that they often filled the offices of the rectors of muslim universities and other educational institutions, and of curators of muslim endowments so long as they did not perform any religious functions. In the beginning the military commands, for obvious reasons, were not entrusted to non-muslims, but

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<sup>4</sup>Quran, xviii, 30.

<sup>5</sup>The Spirit of Islam.

<sup>6</sup>William Muir, The Life of Mohammed, Vol. II, p. 229.

all other posts of emoluments and trust were open to them equally with the muslims. This equality was not merely theoretical, for from the first century of Hegira, known in the European channels as the "Flight of Mohammed", we find important offices of the state held by the Christians, Jews and Magians. The Abbasides with rare exceptions recognized no distinction among their subjects on the score of religion. And the dynasties that succeeded them in power scrupulously followed their example. "If the treatment of non-muslims in Islamic countries is compared with that of the Christians under European governments, it would be found that the balance of humanity and generosity, generally speaking, inclines in favour of Islam."<sup>7</sup>

Under the Mughal Emperors of Delhi, Hindus commanded armies, administered provinces and sat in the councils of the sovereign. Even at the present time, can it be said that in no European empire, ruling over mixed nationalities and faiths, is any distinction made of creed, color or race? Even the largest and the most invincible vanguard of the free world has not been in a position to tackle the problem of human equality. In an age of ideological warfare, this failure may prove, as a recent work by A. A. Berle emphasizes, to have been greatly against the national interests of the U. S. A.

Our government may spend years and millions in building up a 'good neighbor policy' towards Latin America, but the Latin Americans will still question whether we can be regarded as good neighbors if we regard the peoples to the South as inherently inferior.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Amer Ali, The Spirit of Islam, p. 276.

<sup>8</sup>Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Race Prejudice and Discrimination, edited by Arnold M. Rose (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), pp. 10, 17.

Mr. Berle continues further:

But to insist upon individual loyalty to the U.S. at the same time that the white population refuses the corresponding duty of recognition, equality and acceptance sets up an intolerable strain. It must be assumed that the strain will be exploited to the limit if the U.S. is ever tested by another world war. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the saddest luxury of race discrimination is the greatest single strategic threat to the politico-military safety of the country.<sup>9</sup>

The necessity of a different approach to the vital problem of human relationship has recently been emphasized by humanitarian U.N. agencies and well-meaning people all over the world. Says Humayun:

A charter of human rights must therefore be based on the recognition of the equal claims of all individuals within one common world. It is necessary to emphasize this because of one fundamental flaw in the western conception of human rights. Whatever be the theory, in practice they often applied only to the Europeans and some times to only some Europeans. In fact, the western conception has to a large extent receded from the theory and practice of democracy set up by early Islam, which did succeed in overcoming the distinction of race or color to an extent experience neither before nor since.<sup>10</sup>

#### Islamic Foundations of a Constitutional Government

Islam gave to the people a code which, however archaic in its simplicity, was capable of great development in accordance with the progress of material civilization. It conferred on the state a flexible constitution, based on a just appreciation of human rights and human duty, it limited taxation and made men equal in the eyes of the law. It consecrated the principle of self-government and established

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>Humayun Kabir, Human Rights - A symposium. The Islamic Traditions and the Problems of To-day (London, New York: Allen Wington, 1956), pp. 191-192.

a control over the sovereign power by rendering the executive authority subordinate to the law--a law based upon religious sanction and moral obligation.

The excellence and effectiveness of each of these principles, says Urquhart, (each capable of immortalizing its founder) gave value to the rest, and all combined, endowed the system which they formed with a force and energy exceeding those of any other political system. Within the lifetime of a man, though in the hands of a population, wild, ignorant and insignificant; it spread over a greater extent than the dominions of Rome. While it retained its primitive character, it was irresistible.<sup>11</sup>

An examination of the political conditions of the muslims under the early Caliphs brings into view a popular government administered by an elective chief with limited powers. The prerogatives of the head of the state were confined to administrative and executive matters, such as the regulation of the army, transaction of foreign affairs, disbursement of the finances, etc. But the Caliph could never act in contravention of the recognized law. The tribunals were not dependent on the government. Their decisions were supreme; and the early Caliphs could not assume the power of pardoning those whom the regular courts had condemned. The law, in the days of early Islam, was the same for the poor as for the rich, for the man in power as for the laborer in the field. Though it could not have been so to the extent of perfection, the practice was far more close to the ideal, than it has been recently in Islam.

An incident which occurred during the Caliphate of Omar, (634-44), the second Caliph of Islam and one of the greatest administrators, reflects the high degree of equality of all men in Islam.

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<sup>11</sup>Urquhart, The Spirit of the East, Vol. I, Introd. p. XXVIII.

Jabala, the king of Ghassanides, having embraced the faith was performing the circumambulation of the Kaaba, when a humble pilgrim engaged in the same sacred duties accidentally dropped a piece of his pilgrim's dress over the royal shoulders. Jabala turned furiously and struck him a blow which knocked out the poor man's teeth.

The poor man came to me, wrote the Caliph, and prayed for redress; I sent for Jabala, and when he came before me I asked why he had so ill-treated a brother muslim. He answered that the man had insulted him, and that were it not for the sanctity of the place he would have killed him on the spot. I answered 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 usual penalty of the law. Jabala replied, 'I am a king, and the other is only a common man'. King or no king both of you are muslims and both of you are equal in the eye of law. He asked that the penalty might be delayed until the next day; and on the consent of the injured, I accorded the delay and Jabala escaped during the night and joined the Byzantine emperor.<sup>12</sup>

The whole episode had been communicated by the Caliph to the commander of the muslim troops in Syria. Similar communications appear to have been frequent under the early Caliphate. No person in the camp or in the city was a stranger to public affairs. Every Friday, after divine service, the commander of the faithful mentioned to the assembly the important nominations and events of the day. The prefects in their provinces followed the example. No one was excluded from these general assemblies of the public. It was the reign of democracy in its best form. The Pontiff of Islam, the commander of the faithful, was not hedged round by any divinity. He was responsible for the administration of the state to his subjects.

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<sup>12</sup>Amer Ali, Spirit of Islam, p. 279.

Now it would seem difficult for a new government, introduced by the force of arms, to conciliate the affection of the people at once. But the early Saracines offered to the conquered nations motives for the greatest confidence and attachment. At the head were chiefs of moderation and gentleness such as Abu-Obadah, who tempered and held in check the ferocity of soldiers like Khalid, and who maintained intact the civil rights of their subjects. They accorded to all conquered nations the completest religious toleration. Their conduct might furnish to many of the civilized governments of modern times high examples of civil and religious liberty. They did not lash men and women to death. They did not condemn innocent females to Siberian mines and to the outrageousness of their guards. They had the sagacity not to interfere with any beneficent civil institutions existing in the conquered countries, which did not militate against their religion.

The measures taken by the second Caliph, Omar, to secure the agricultural prosperity of the people evinces an ever present solicitude to promote their well-being and interests. Taxation on land was fixed upon an equal and moderate basis; aqueducts and canals were ordered to be made in every part of the empire. The feudal burdens, which had afflicted the cultivators of the soil, were absolutely withdrawn, and the peasantry were emancipated from the bondage of centuries. Admitting no privilege, no caste, the legislation produced two grand results-- that of freeing the soil from factitious burdens imposed by barbarian laws and assuring to the individual perfect equality of rights. Its remarkable success and marvelous effect upon the minds of men has given rise to the charge that, as a religion of the sword, Islam was propagated by the sword and upheld by the sword.

The Interdependence of Spiritual, Social and Economic  
Aspects in the Islamic Political View

The above conception of a welfare state is supported by numerous Quranic injunctions, and has been remarkably explained and interpreted in the socio-political and economic spheres by Mohammed Zafarullah, former foreign minister of Pakistan and at present the judge of the international court of justice. Zafarullah is widely respected in the muslim world and in the west for his knowledge and ability.

God commands you that you entrust political authority to those who are best capable of discharging this trust, and when you are called upon to judge between the people, judge with justice and equity. Surely excellent is that which God admonishes you. God is all hearing, all seeing.<sup>13</sup>

Several principles are deducible, says the judge of the world court, first, that under God sovereignty rests with the people. It is for the people to entrust various aspects of political authority into the hands of the persons who are deemed most capable of carrying them into effect. Attention is thus drawn to the very important principle that the exercise of the franchise and the performance of the functions of representation and of executive and judicial offices are all in the nature of a sacred trust and must be approached and carried out in that spirit.

This exhortation at once lifts politics from the arena of controversy, conflict and sordid manuvre into the exalted sphere of a moral and spiritual function. The proper exercise of the franchise is the key to the successful working of democracy. This is emphasized in mandatory language in Islam.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Quran, IV, 59.

<sup>14</sup>Islam and the West (proceedings of the Harvard Summer School Conference on Middle East), edited by Richard N. Frye (Gravenhage: Mouton and Co., 1957).



"Consult them in the matters of administration."<sup>15</sup> Mutual consultation and advice is described as a characteristic of the muslims. "Those who hearken to their Lord and observe prayers, and whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation, and who spend out of whatsoever We have provided for them."<sup>16</sup>

It was this system and training which converted so many unlettered and untutored dwellers of the desert into such efficient executives and administrators in so short a time in the early years of Islam. The central fundamental point or doctrine in Islam is the unity of God. Everything else stems from that. God is one, He is also unity. All else proceeds from Him and depends upon Him for support, sustenance and advancement. All mankind are His creatures and servants. Islam recognizes no privileges based upon race, family, color, office, wealth, etc. The only badge of nobility, as it were, is the degree of righteousness of a person's life. "O mankind, We have created you from man and woman, and We have made you peoples and tribes that you may recognize one another more easily. Verily the most honorable among you, in the sight of God, is he who is most righteous among you. Surely God is All-knowing, All aware."<sup>17</sup>

As Islam does not recognize any class, nor any privilege based upon any class distinctions, its economic and social values are all

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<sup>15</sup>Quran III, 160.

<sup>16</sup>Quran XLII, 39.

<sup>17</sup>Quran XLIX, 14.

designed to establish in practice the brotherhood of man on the basis of equality and dignity. In fact mankind are warned that if they will not cultivate true love for each other and practice sincere brotherhood, they may be pushed to the "brink of a pit of fire."

### The Social Aspect

In the social sphere, Islam has sought to emphasize the spirit of brotherhood and equality by instituting and insisting upon simple standards and dispensing with formality and ceremonial. Liquor and all intoxicants, as well as gambling, are prohibited, and moderation is enjoined in the matters of food and drink. "It is pointed out that the use of intoxicants and indulgence in gambling would foster enmity and hatred and neglect of prayer and remembrance of God."<sup>18</sup>

With some exceptions the social intercourse in Islamic society has throughout been perfectly easy and free and a consciousness of brotherhood and equality has always been kept alive. At the five daily services in the mosque, no discrimination of any sort is permitted, by way of allotment of seats or pews, and access is open to all alike. The yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, where all pilgrims are informally clad in two simple white sheets, and the annual fast extending over a month with its uniform discipline, these tend in the same direction.

### The Economic Aspect

It is perhaps in the economic sphere that in the present age the values sought to be inculcated by Islam would arouse the keenest interest.

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<sup>18</sup>Quran, V, 91-92.

Islam starts with the fundamental fact that the original sources of wealth--the earth and its capacities and treasures, the sun, the moon, the stars, the atmosphere, clouds, rains, etc.--are the gifts of God to all mankind, and that these have been subordinated to man and subjected to his service. There can, therefore, be no property in them. Wealth is produced by the application of knowledge and skill to the use of these sources. This involves the use of skill, capital and labor, but must also be shared with the community as a whole, as trustee of God's bounties which are the original sources of all wealth. This share of the community is recovered through a capital levy called the Zakat. The root of the word is zakka, i. e., "he purified", or "he fostered". This levy has both characters. By separating the share of the community it purifies the rest and makes the rest lawful for division between skill, capital and labor.

The proceeds of this levy are to be devoted towards purposes designed to foster the welfare of the community; e.g., the relief of poverty and distress, the provision of public works for the benefits of the community at large, the maintenance of scholars and research workers and of those who devote themselves to the service of man, the provision of capital for those who possess useful skills but lack necessary capital to put them into practice, etc. "Take out of their wealth alms so that thou mayst through it purify them and foster their welfare."<sup>19</sup> And "An alms that is levied on the well-to-do is returned to those in need."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Quran, IX, 103.

<sup>20</sup>Tradition of the Prophet.

It is a legal levy imposed by the state and is to be distinguished from the public and private charity to which also the muslims are repeatedly and emphatically exhorted by the Quran. With regard to the use and application of the wealth, Islam aims at the widest possible distribution and constant circulation. The Zakat just referred to is one of the means of securing such distribution and circulation. "Hoarding and holding back are most severely condemned as heinous sins entailing the defeat of their own purpose and severe penalties."<sup>21</sup>

Behold you are those who are called upon to spend in the way of God and of you there are some whose hold back is being miserly only against his own self. God is self-sufficient; it is you who are needy. If you turn away, He will bring in your stead a people other than you. Then they will not be like you.<sup>22</sup>

It is pointed out that in the substance of the well-to-do, the needy have a share to which they are entitled. "In their wealth was a share for those who could express their needs and those who could not."<sup>23</sup> "So give to kinsmen his due and to the needy, and to the wayfarer that is best for those who seek the favour of God. It is they who will prosper."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Quran, IX, 34-35, IV, 37-38.

<sup>22</sup>Quran, XLVII, 39.

<sup>23</sup>Quran, LI, 20.

<sup>24</sup>Quran, XXX, 39.

### The Concept of Interest

The taking of interest is prohibited, because it restricts the circulation, accumulates wealth in a few hands and fosters wars.<sup>25</sup> Trade, commerce, partnership, joint stock companies and other commercial ventures and activities are not restricted. The principle is that a person may invest his money in any legitimate venture which puts wealth into circulation, promotes employment, and fosters the welfare of the community. What is prohibited is a transaction the essence of which is that one person advanced money or makes a loan in kind with a stipulation that he must receive a fixed return for the use of the money or the commodity lent, irrespective of what may happen to the subject matter of the loan. So long as the transaction is one which is designed to foster the welfare of the community through the circulation of wealth and the promotion of the industry and commerce, and the person participating in it by way of investing money accepts the risk of loss and becomes entitled also to the share in profits, there is no objection.

### The Law of Inheritance

Another device aimed at breaking up accumulation of wealth or property and securing a wide distribution is the Islamic law of inheritance, the number of heirs is apt to be quite numerous. Should a man die leaving his surviving father, mother, widow, sons and daughters, every one of them would be an heir and would receive a

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<sup>25</sup>Quran, II, 276-280.

prescribed share in the inheritance. The system thus breaks up wealth in each generation. Islam recognizes individual ownership and private property and gives it a full legal protection. It does not restrict wealth, but regulates the modes of its acquisition and the purposes to which it must or may be applied.

Thus the idea of equality has been the most important concern of Islam throughout the social, moral and economic aspects of human life. Fourteen centuries ago, the prophet Mohammed declared, "The aristocracy of the old time is trampled under my feet. The Arab has no superiority over him that is not an Arab, and he that is not an Arab has no superiority over the Arab. All are children of Adam and Adam was made of earth."<sup>26</sup> It is to be noted that the Arabs of the days of the prophet were prouder of their race than are the white people of our days in the west. But the aristocracy of the old time was uprooted by the Great Advocate of equality between man and man, and it is that equality alone which can eradicate racial prejudice. The world is on its way to universalism, and the work of Mohammed in this connection may soon be completed. "They are the equal members of the family of God, be they white or black, colorless or colored."<sup>27</sup>

### Islamic Universalism

Never has there been an obstacle to human progress so great as the idea of inequality of mankind--an idea glaringly opposed to all the

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<sup>26</sup>Khawja Kamaluddin, Islam and Civilization. Muslim Mission and Literary Trust (Oxford University Press, 1934) (The Working Mosque, 1931), p. 66.

<sup>27</sup>Quran, II, 213.

best tendencies of general civilization and culture. "And they say that none shall enter the garden (of paradise) except he who is a Jew or the Christian. These are their vain desires." "Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whosoever believes in Allah (God) and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear from them; nor shall they grieve."<sup>28</sup> The Holy Quran thus, from the viewpoint of a muslim, among the books in the religious literature has done more than any other to deal an effective blow to all sorts of false distinction and intolerance, and to give a character of unity and liberty to all mankind. If, in the light of the Quranic passage just quoted, we make good actions the only criterion of honor and distinction, then all the national, linguistic, color and territorial disturbances that have proved to be veritable curses for humanity will disappear.

To teach, on the one hand, that there is only one God for all and that His mercy and blessing as Rabb (God) are equally meant for all and to announce, on the other, that all men are members of the same family, that there are no such divisions in humanity as exist between the West and the East; and further to level all distinctions of nation, race, color and community by upholding rectitude of action as the only mark of distinction; and lastly to class all virtuous men as brothers to one another--are the four glorious achievements of Islam, the parallels of which are nowhere to be found in the history of mankind.<sup>29</sup>

A corollary of brotherhood is equality. Equal before God, the muslims are equal among themselves. Among the believers the

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<sup>28</sup>Quran, II, 62.

<sup>29</sup>Kamaluudin, op. cit., p. 36.

superiority is marked only by priority in faith or by strict observance of its precepts. "O Quraish God has suppressed among you the pride of nobility and the arrogance of the times of ignorance."<sup>30</sup> Equality before law is a fundamental basis of the whole system, political as well as civil. "Let them all be equal before thee," say the celebrated instructions of the caliph Umar to Abu Musa al Ashari, "in respect of thy justice and tribunal, lest the powerful put their hope in thy partiality, and the weak despair of thy justice." This absolute equality was proclaimed at a time when it was practically unknown throughout the Christian world.

These values, desired to be inculcated by Islam, may well be of help in a world which, Professor Toynbee<sup>31</sup> says, as a whole is suffering today from the sudden confrontation, at close quarters, of races, civilizations, and religions that have lived in isolation from one another in the past. Suddenly, as a result of the annihilation of distance by technology, we have been compelled to live together on intimate terms, before we have had time to get to know and to understand one another and to adjust our behaviour to our neighbor's behaviour. This, Toynbee adds, is a dangerous situation, and it is bound to last for some time, since technology has brought all into physical juxtaposition far more quickly than the human psyche can adapt itself to the new physical situation.

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<sup>30</sup>T. W. Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, The Legacy of Islam (Oxford University Press, 1952).

<sup>31</sup>Crescent and Green (A miscellany of Writings on Pakistan), Chapter I "Pakistan as an Historian Sees Her, (London: Cassel and Company, Ltd, 1955), p. 1.



Looking as an historian to the state of Pakistan, Toynbee records:

One thing that Pakistan obviously does stand for already is the transcending of physical and linguistic differences by a common religion. If in Pakistan political allegiance were to be decided on lines of race or language, Pakistan would immediately fall to pieces. Fortunately a common adherence to Islam has proved itself a stronger spiritual force among Pakistani muslims than differences which otherwise might have been disruptive. Pakistan contains numerous and valuable minorities. The majority community and the several minority communities, i.e. Hindu, Sikh and Christian, have the task of living together as fellow citizens, and, more than that, as friends. In so far as they succeed in achieving this, they will be doing a piece of pioneer spiritual work, not only for themselves, but for the world as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Toynbee, op. cit., p. 12.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LIMITATIONS OF PRACTICAL REALITIES

It has been my endeavour in chapters II and III of this paper to attempt the doctrinal exposition of the Islamic values such as have political implications: namely the idea of equality of mankind, the concept of production and distribution of wealth, the responsibility of political authorities towards the citizens, and the idea of social structure in the Islamic nations. The main concern has been with the theoretical exposition of Islamic values and not with their practical applications.

A glance at the social and economic conditions of Islamic countries would show that leaders in recent centuries have failed to give practical effect to the ideals of the faith. It seems appropriate at this stage to examine critically those doctrines and traditions with reference to their application, and to explore the avenues offering chances of readjustment or of reconstruction of those values in accordance with the demands of modern times; and finally to explore the possibilities of a synthesis of the values of the western civilisation and the Islamic to the good of mankind.

#### The Basic Conflict in the Present Islamic Community

In the muslim world, the growing awareness on the part of the masses of their heritage and destiny today has diffused the responsibility

of the response to the present challenge into a wider spectrum of society. The intellectual, therefore, cannot merely superimpose in the light of western training a modification of traditional values. He must beware of the vacuum that might thus be created. He must help to bring about a solid replacement out of indigenous materials, albiet, perforce, a synthetic reconstruction. Can there be a so-called Protestant revolt within Islam today? The Protestant Reformation in Europe paved the way for the relatively free development of modern science, philosophy and historical criticism. Conversely, when Europe lay dormant in its darkest hours of inquisitorial ignorance, muslim thinkers had been probing nature and philosophy.

The humanistic trend is important today not for the muslim intellectual alone but for the mass of muslim believers. Professor W. C. Smith of McGill University discusses the need for a synthesis of the Islamic religious tradition in terms of the intellectualist view of modernity--"a synthesis which, with due regard to Point IV, seems the muslim world's most fundamental need."<sup>1</sup> There is a steadily growing desire to adopt the techniques of modern civilization in pursuit of the national strength and welfare, and on the other hand a marked reluctance to abandon traditional ways of life and values. The deep attachment to traditional Islam manifests itself in varying degrees of intensity among the different muslim countries. The muslims from North Africa to Pakistan are calling for economic and social reforms, insisting however, that such reforms should be undertaken in harmony with the principles of Islam. "The emergence of Pakistan is possibly the most significant

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<sup>1</sup>W. C. Smith, Islam in the Modern History (Princeton University Press, 1957).

event in contemporary Islam."<sup>2</sup> The fact that Pakistan is predominantly a muslim country is not of particular significance, for so are Egypt, Syria and Iraq. What is singularly interesting, however, is that Pakistan has declared itself as Islamic Republic and has adopted an Islamic constitution, which has succeeded in reconciling the parliamentary concept of limited government with the retention of the Islamic political and constitutional recognition of the universal sovereignty of God.

By an Islamic community Pakistanies mean a political community governed by the precepts of Islam as revealed in the Quran and recorded in the Tradition. God rules by delegating authority to the state of Pakistan, exercised through the people according to His limits. But it is one thing, say the critics, to liberalize a religious message; it is another matter to make it work. In spite of the efforts made so far, there is no clear definition of what an Islamic state is. The past five years have seen the steady revival of the concept of an Islamic community (Ummah), especially in Egypt. "Influenced by the idea of modern nationalism, this is not merely a community of faith but a political community as well."<sup>3</sup> In Jordan and Saudi Arabia one sees and hears the frequent denunciations of western culture as a degenerating influence upon muslim society. There is a trend to insist on an Islamic basis for the national existence, interwar experience having showed that the muslim intellectuals and political leaders had been unable to undergird the transpiring change with a social philosophy acceptable to the masses.

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<sup>2</sup>P. W. Thayer, Tensions in the Middle East (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1958), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>Ahmed Hasan al Baquiri, Religious Basis of Arab Social and Political Renaissance, (Al-Hilal Lxv), "Our Arab Nation", January 1957.

But there are also other developments in Arab countries that tend to undermine the identification of national aspirations with a revived and active Islam. Everywhere in Iraq, Egypt, Arabia, Syria and North Africa, governments are concerned with the economic and social evolution of their respective countries. As their progress toward reform acquires shape and meaning there is a gradual emergence of a proletariat and a middle class. As education becomes widespread, as services are extended to a larger portion of the population, these and other classes will demand greater participation and representation in the social and political process. As the gap between the few who have traditionally held power and the masses is narrowed down, new centers of power will arise demanding a role in political life. The possible transformation of the social structure from its traditional form may totally change the role played by the various groups in Arab society and politics.

One of the basic conditions of a free parliamentary system is the entertainment of alternative solutions, a flexibility that permits change in accord with changing need. A system, says Najjar M. Fauzi, based on doctrines preconceived cannot tolerate radical deviation. On closer analysis, however, it would appear that the Islamic system is not unqualifiedly inflexible. The legislative power, to be sure, in an ideal Islamic state belongs to the Quran, which contains God's revelations to His Ummah or community. These revelations are not only of religious order; they envisage a definite civil organization. Now the Ummah is based on Quran, hence it's essentially religious, but also political, nature. The revelation of God to His community is regarded as having stopped with the death of the Prophet Mohammed.

Islam, in its history since that time, undoubtedly has encountered many particular situations not explicitly referred to in the Quran. Yet it has survived the difficulties it encountered, manifesting a flexibility in the system of Islam.

On this subject of flexibility I would like to quote the Italian scholar David Santillana.

Having as its scope social utility, muslim law is essentially progressive, in much the same way as our own. It is not unchangeable and depending on mere tradition. The great schools of law agree on this point. The Hanafite school of law maintains that legal law is not unchangeable. It is not the same as the rule of grammar or logic. It expresses what generally happens and changes with the circumstance which has produced it. To apply laws which are founded in ancient usage, once that usage is changed, is to set oneself against general opinion and to prove one's ignorance of religion. The truth is that whenever a law is based upon the custom of a particular time, that law must change when the conditions which called it into being have changed.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of the West presents Islam with new problems, new challenges. The problems are all the more difficult to deal with for having taken hold of Islam at a moment when it had just come out of a long period of isolation. Islam was caught, as it were, out of practice in dealing with them.

There seem to be two alternatives for muslim nations on the question of nationalism. Islam firstly may continue in the path of its present evolution which will end in a total secularization of the state. Western writers would quote Turkey as an example, though the writer of the present paper would like to opine that Turkey has been and will continue to be muslim. The other way for Islam is to restore traditional values, making them more flexible and adaptable to the needs of the time.

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<sup>4</sup>David Santillana, "Law and Society", in The Legacy of Islam by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, (London, 1956), pp. 305, 306, 317.

On the economic front which is related to the political one the question arises whether the muslim world will be condemned to division into absolutely sovereign states, at a time when the age of nationalism seems to be on the way out. European nations, in order not to die out, are in search of a larger principle that could regroup their legitimate differences without destroying these differences.

Will not Islam, constituted into independent nations, conceived according to the modern western type, run the risk of being definitively dissociate and at the mercy of great politico-economic groups? Since the unity proper to the muslim world is politico-religious, will it be able, in the face of the "great powers" of the world and of their presently strong economic structures, to find coherence sufficient to constitute a temporal whole? Will it be capable, in order to bring this about, of assuming the heavy economic problems regarding which its own traditions remain unarmed? Division into national entities has emphasized the economic weakness of each muslim state. National independence has been bought at the price of economic subjection to some power or other. And economic subjection is the worst of all in that it is not felt as much as the political kind. It would seem that an extreme type of nationalism ultimately would prove disastrous. The very existence of the muslim world may depend upon the capacity of various muslim statesmen to emphasize collaboration and mutualism rather than the nineteenth century west European model of absolutely independent sovereign states. Some sort of federation, keeping intact the existence and autonomy of the federating units, seems to be the most reasonable and realistic course of progress. The muslim world has the roots of its religious unity in

values that have properly also their implications political and terrestrial. If it is to maintain its religious unity, therefore, it appears required at the present time to ensure itself of a sufficiently strong economic base.

### The Lack of a Tradition of Political Theory

Next may be noted, in the context of comparison of Islam with the West, a peculiar reason for certain of the difficulties of the Islamic community. This matter is pointed up in the following statement by Dr. Elie Salim, Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies, in the School of Advanced International Studies:

The Arabs are suffering from deep and chronic enigmas that seem to play a subtranean role beneath this whole panorama of trouble and discord. The disturbing thing is that these deeper enigmas not only are ignored by politicians and reporters, but they are almost unknown. Of the few thinkers who have made an attempt to tackle them, and then only superficially, it is significant to note that the majority have been non-Arabs.<sup>5</sup>

The tragic dearth of an organized tradition in political theory puts the Arabs in a relatively awkward position visa-vis the modern political ideas and institutions that they have adopted from the West in the past half century. It is an easy matter to borrow the code Napoleon, to translate Swiss laws into Arabic, and to introduce a constitutional framework worthy of the most advanced democracies. The test is whether Arabs are capable of enforcing these laws and managing these foreign administrative systems. To function properly the constitutional and representative governments under which people in the Middle East live

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<sup>5</sup>Thayer, op. cit., Chapter IV "Problems of Arab Political Behavior", by Dr. Elie Salim, p. 69.



must presuppose a long and mature experience in democratic public service, rule of law, responsibility, and social cooperation. These basic requisites are never imported; they must be lived, nurtured, and developed on the native soil. The abundant political literature handed down to us by Arab writers in the classical period consists primarily of detailed historical descriptive exposition. A thorough investigation of these writings reveals the absence of free adventurous thinking (i.e., the courage to examine the state in isolation from Sunnah and Sharia), of analysis, and therefore of universal relevance. The totality, namely the civil entity, has rarely interested the Arab. His concern is more with the immediate and the practical. This attitude explains in part, but only in part, why Arab political writers have tended to ignore the state and have concentrated their voluminous writings on the Caliph. The allegiance of the Arab is personal, and the domination of the personal over the public interest is at the basis of the Arab political problem.

It is the record of history that most of the Arab rulers since the Umayyad period (661-749) (in Islamic history this period had replaced the elective and representative institutions by kingship based on the succession of the son after the death of the father), with notable exceptions, have not treated their subjects with the high ideals of muslim religion. The argument may be raised that in the West the kings lived a no less corrupt life, and their behavior, therefore, can be justified by the spirit of the age in which they lived. As a matter of fact, some of the rulers, for example Abu-al-Abbas, Muawiyah and Harun-ur-Rashid of the Umayyad and Abbaside (750-1111) dynasties were admittedly more representative and responsible, judged by the contemporary standards of government in Europe. They cared more for the

welfare of their subjects. They advanced and encouraged the pursuit of knowledge. One point should, however, be clarified. In the West there were political writers who, through independent reasoning, were able to discern the excesses of their rulers and to restrain them through guidance, and at times through the fomenting of violence. There was always the intellectual element, which tempered the licentiousness of kings and princes. Government in America and the Western Europe has been greatly influenced by the writings of political philosophers like Locke, Mill, Montesquieu and Rousseau. In the Arab world this balance is lacking. Governmental power was too strong for the scanty intellectual tradition in political speculation.

Though hundreds of books exist on political history and on the legal aspects of the Caliphate, there is not a single authentic book in Arabic on political philosophy. This is a serious matter especially in a land whose people have consistently suffered injustices. Not only the Arab world but the whole of Asia is unfamiliar with the idea of natural rights and with the theory of government that holds the state responsible for the protection and the promotion of these rights. Since the people as such are often passive, the fault cannot be attributed to them, but to their intellectual leadership. The real test lies in whether the minds of the people are converted to a new way of life that scorns that practice. The Egyptian fellah (cultivator) still refers to his superiors as Beys and Pashas, and it will take decades of proper education to persuade the average man of the Arab world, who has been a negligible entity since history was written, that he is really equal to the Pasha in the eyes of law. It will take an

equal amount of training in democratic principles under freely elected institutions to convince the citizens that by political status he is equal if not superior to his administrators whether Mudir (director) or Mutasarrif (governor).

Some Consequences of the Lack of an Independent  
Political Tradition in the Recent  
Centuries of Islam

The evidence that the government is the servant of the people and that the citizen can approach the latter and demand without fear and humiliation that his right be granted represents indeed a great achievement. The greatest weakness in Arab administration is the absence of enlightened civic responsibility. The social setup in the Middle East tends towards the theory of authority from upward. In the gradual broadening of political horizons these inner conflicts and the narrow loyalties will eventually be resolved. The most formidable hurdle in the way of reform is the strong hold of traditionalism. It did not escape the eye of Mohammed Abduh,<sup>6</sup> an outstanding Egyptian Reformer who sought a base from which to attack traditionalism. For he held that it was not really what was in the Quran regarding free will and predestination that presented a problem. It was rather a rigidity superimposed by Taqlid (blind obedience) which had seeped into the social order, creating apathy in the soul or even soul atrophy. For example, the institution of charity, as a civil institution, was commendable at the time of its propagation by the Prophet, but it no longer can be tolerated as a political principle, as we shall show.

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<sup>6</sup>Mohammed Abduh, Treatise on the Unity of God, 5th edition (Cairo, 1926-27).

Such at least is the thought in the reinterpretation of Islam by the modern generation in some of the muslim countries. The concept of charity implies the presence of second class citizens. The modern state abhors charity and thrives on responsibility. It considers itself in duty bound to give shelter to the poor and food to the hungry. Modern civilization rejects the belief that the life of the poor depends upon the goodness of the heart of the rich. Unless right replaces charity, the theoretical foundations of Arab governments would remain faulty. It is not merely charity as manifested in Waqf (endowment) that is criticized here. The argument delves deeper into the charitable attitude that permeates the governments. When the average citizen approaches a government official, he feels that he is approaching one of incomparably higher status than himself; he is afraid and hesitant. In making his request the citizen pleads with the official to expedite his business and to do it as a personal favour. He usually expects complication and delay, and is prepared to request reminders from influential friends and politicians. It often happens that when an official has done what, in fact, is his duty toward you, he makes you feel that you have been the object of charity. To take for granted the matter of right and duty, reflects a democratic ethos. Present Islamic society still waits for democracy to mature in the minds of the people. There is still a large gap between the government and the people, and much larger between constitutional provisions and the actual operation.

How to inculcate the spirit of public service and responsibility at all levels of administration is a serious question. The difficulty of the Arab governments in this respect is twofold: first the absence

of an adequate number of educated and trained citizens to fill the important posts in the administration; and second, the reluctance of the educated few to accept government employment at the present scale of the salaries. Further Arab governments do not enjoy high prestige, which in itself would be sufficient to attract competent young men to the civil service. It is also doubtful whether the budgets of Arab governments can be substantitally increased to provide for higher salaries at a time when already more than half of the budget is spent on salaries. The lack of human resources leaves the student of Arab and Asian governments in a sober mood, knowing that the most revolutionary of the laws cannot achieve without sufficiency of time, patience and serious preparation the real reform that the enlightened man seeks.

Since we Arabs are not steeped in democratic heritage, it is natural for our leaders not to comprehend fully their role in service, and many of our leaders are not fully convinced that they are the servants of the people. It will be some time before this political philosophy is actually believed and followed. For our world has had the misfortune of breeding masses who were always so poor, so ignorant, so reduced, so crushed by nature, religion and society as to accept their lot without question. For the Arab world, indeed for the whole of Asia and Africa, the problem of masses constitutes the deepest and most challenging problem of governments.<sup>7</sup>

A society of Lords and masses cannot withstand the compulsions of the twentieth century unless the Lords are already conscious of the potential volcanoes that may erupt under them at any time. When they are aware of these possibilities, they may be led, willingly or unwillingly, to break the tradition of history in Asia and the Middle East to establish governments whose role is to elevate the total dignity

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<sup>7</sup>Dr. Salem, op. cit., p. 77.

of the citizen. Under the influence of communism, that wonderful devil that scares away ghosts, and under the impact of a consistent western challenge of the past two centuries, the masses of the East are awakening and demanding new rights. Their voice is loud and confused; yet it emerges with force and potential. Every significant political decision is taken with the masses in mind. Their power for good and evil is incalculable. It is the trust of enlightened leadership to channel it to constructive ends. Until this gigantic question is tackled effectively, there can be no talk about progress, freedom or stability.

The Individual Apathy and the Lack of a Rational  
Approach to Nature

The Arabs suffering is material and concrete, and is the most eloquent witness to the cruelty of nature and man. The problem of "man" is the fount from which all major conflict in Arab life flow. The most pressing need is for the muslim intellectuals, who care for the construction of a better state founded on reason and dedicated to the promotion of the fundamental and inalienable human rights, to start now, before it is too late, to disentangle first their own rulers, and then their people, from the restrictions of a self-imposed theology such as to prevent them from life in the world. Life in the world is subject to the reason, science, daring, curiosity and openness. These are stifled by an excess of preoccupation with poetry, imagination and myths. If man is master of the earth, then he must deal with its infinite potentialities of mastery and command. It is the nature of the earth to be subjected and exploited by man in the process of elevating himself

materially, intellectually and spiritually. Reason is the means through which this mastery is attained. This rational interpretation--generally speaking--is not readily accepted by the Asians, of whom the Arabs are part. The Asians respect nature, but they approach it cautiously. Because they fear it, they do not understand it. Victory, however, presupposes understanding. With the renewal of learning among the Arabs, and consequent expansion of vision, a new system is being moulded. It is still early to predict its impact on socio-political development.

Not to respond fully to the challenges of nature is shameful. But there are certain situations in which not much can be done. The heat of the desert, the dearth of industrial material, are enough to cause despair. Egypt's agriculture is perhaps the most efficient in the world, and yet its people live in tragic misery. A survey of Arab material conditions, inspite of newly found oil in certain parts of the Arab world, shows the urgent need of the Arabs for substantial economic aid. This is imperative because balanced men are rarely found in economic misery, and stable political institutions are often the fruits, not only of solid men, but also of solid economies.

The most pressing problem facing muslim scholarship seems to be the restatement of original Islamic principles minus the heap of traditional rituals incorporated into, and sometimes equated with, the fundamental doctrines. Not since the tenth century has Islam been confronted with a greater challenge of self-examination than in the first half of the twentieth century. "Between the twelveth and nineteenth centuries, Islamic society lapsed into scientific and cultural stagnation,

accompanied by political corruption and social disorganization."<sup>8</sup> Once again the civilization of Europe and the West confronts the world of Islam with the challenge of its science, technologies and political and social ideologies. The future of Islam will undoubtedly depend upon the kind of response it will make. There is a heartening indication that muslim society is beginning to awake to the importance of reform. The muslim states at the same time are seeking to assert themselves on an equal footing with the rest of the world.

They seem to realize, vaguely, that their own institutions are no longer adequate for this age, and that nothing short of complete transformation and reorganization is sufficient to secure for them a place in the sun. In the new states frantic efforts are being made toward modernization. The urgent mood is dictated by the fact that the muslims have to accomplish overnight what the West achieved in a century if they want to benefit from the western progress. In other words, is it possible for a truly Islamic state to be truly democratic? Will muslim nations be able to work out a synthesis of democratic ideals and Islamic dogmas in a way that will give progress and stability? Will muslims be able to give up their political and social institutions without discarding the religious? The future of Islam will depend upon the manner in which it reformulates its teachings and reorganizes its institutions.

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<sup>8</sup>Fazi M. Najjar, "Islam and Modern Democracy", The Review of Politics, Vol. 20, April 1958.



### The Concept of Sovereignty in Islamic Political Thought

Men live by ideas. Ideas become concrete manifestations in a culture. The basic ideas that we have been discussing succeed and fail of being implemented through the formation of kindred ideas as well as in the forming of social institutions and mores. A case in point is the complex concept of sovereignty. Two contrasting viewpoints regarding this question prevail in the world of Islam.

The first school of thought holds that the absolute sovereignty of God cannot be reconciled with the sovereignty of man, unless political and religious spheres are recognized as matters falling into separate categories. It has been affirmed that no one in any Islamic state has realized the importance and necessity of a separation between state and church as a prerequisite for democracy as well as did Kemal of Turkey. In Egypt, Khalid Mohammed Khalid<sup>9</sup> and Al Abd al Rasik<sup>10</sup> hold that reform in Islam is contingent upon separating politics from religion, and that true Islam is adaptable to a modern system of government if stripped of historical and stultifying traditions of the time. Islam would be compatible with form of government that promotes the general well-being.

The second group is more consistent, though less liberal, in as much as it recognizes the principle of the sovereignty of God and the Sharia (tradition) as the source of legislation, but it seeks to harmonize them with modern progress. "This school of thought maintains that

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<sup>9</sup>K. M. Khalid, From Here We Start (Cairo, 1955).

<sup>10</sup>A. A. Rasik, Islam and the Principles of Government (Cairo, 1925).

the principle of popular sovereignty is compatible with the sovereignty of God, on the ground that the former is only 'political sovereignty' whereas God is the 'true sovereignty.'<sup>11</sup> Since Islam is the true religion, its principles constitute the fundamentals of a true sovereignty. There is no contradiction between the contention that the nation is the source of authority and the doctrine that the Quran and Tradition are the source of legislation, because it is the nation which understands and applies them in the existing conditions.

Destruction of the Traditional Hold as a Prerequisite  
for the Reconstruction of Original Values

A reformer has to understand that in matters of the mind and spirit, while some progressive characters may adopt modern ways, the old conservative who rules goes on repeating word for word the teachings of his forefathers. He (the reformer) must reckon with the enormous power of tradition and the dead weight of inertia. The question is not merely a matter of intelligent conception of the cultural aims in view. It is also one of economics. It is not surprising that enormous opposition is encountered by those who would bring new life into the old organism. What would become of the host of "Ulemas", the Mufties and the Quadies (important officials of the administration of the justice) and so on, were it once admitted that "the Sharia was invention of the centuries after Mohammed's death and that his revered name was falsely invoked to validate it?"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Abbas M. Al Aqqad, Democracy in Islam (Cairo, 1955), pp. 62-63.

<sup>12</sup>A. Guillaume, Islam (Edinburgh: R. and R. Ltd, U.K., 1956).

For the West the problem is an old one. It was faced by Europe at the Reformation and the Renaissance, and it may well be that Islam is now at the threshold of a Reformation; however, many of those who see that some reform is called for point ominously at the schism within the body of Christianity which resulted. It is on the other hand, in Pakistan that is found the most clear and the most uncompromising attitude towards the tradition of the past and the force of the modern historical criticism. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98) held that it was impossible that there could be any contradiction between Islam and science, insisting that Islam was in conformity with nature. Syed Ameer Ali, the author of The Spirit of Islam,<sup>13</sup> the most widely read of books in many muslim countries demanded that the Quran shall be read without the interpretation put upon it by the "Ulema" who represent the unauthorized teachings of their ancient predecessors.

The next outstanding figure in Indian Islam is Dr. Sir Mohammed Iqbal<sup>14</sup> (1876-1938) who asserted that the modern muslim must study what Europe has taught, must work out how far European experience can help in the revision, and if necessary, the reconstruction of Islamic thought without completely breaking with the past.

The fall of Adam he (Iqbal) interprets much as Christians do to-day, as a parable of 'man's' rise from a primitive state of appetite to the conscious possession of a free self capable of doubt and disobedience and the emergence of a finite ego which has the power to choose. 'God will not change the conditions of men until they change what is in themselves.' Islam during the centuries had created something like a collective-

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<sup>13</sup>Amer Ali, The Spirit of Islam (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

<sup>14</sup>Dr. Iqbal, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought.

will-conscience, therefore one has to recognize that even the immutability of socially harmless rules relating to food and drink, purity and impurity, has a life value of its own. The claim of the present generation of muslim liberals to reinterpret the fundamental legal principles in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life, in my opinion, is perfectly justified.<sup>15</sup>

### Social Status of Women in the Muslim World

On the social life and especially the equality of women, Iqbal says that he does not know whether equality in these matters is possible according to the muslim law. "In view of the intense conservatism of the muslims of India, Indian judges can not but stick to what are called standard works."<sup>16</sup> This seems to be a poor stand for Iqbal to take after the brave words that have gone before; and it would be a poor consolation to a woman who by a mere rule had received the equal of her brother's share of her father's property to be told that the rule no longer assumes the superiority of males over females, for such an assumption would nevertheless be regarded as contrary to the spirit of Islam; "men have status above women".<sup>17</sup>

"I, too, am most sorrowful at the oppression of women; But the problem is so intricate, no solution do I find possible."<sup>18</sup> This is the cry of a reformer who cannot grapple with the tremendous force

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<sup>15</sup>Quoted by Guillaume in Islam, p. 161.

<sup>16</sup>Dr. Iqbal, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Quran, 2, 228.

<sup>18</sup>Dr. Iqbal, Short Poems.

of inherited custom and practice. But the country<sup>19</sup> he dreamed about in the nineteen-thirties now has given full voting rights to women, has reserved seats for them in the National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures, has appointed them as ambassadors and opened opportunities to them in various sectors of national life. This shows how Sharia has undergone a revision. Egypt, the Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq are all on the move. The changes which are being made illustrate how a definite attempt to relate the Sharia to the conditions of modern life and to more liberal view of human relations is being realized in positive legislation.

It is abundantly clear that some hard thinking has preceded these changes, and one can not but admire the ingenuity of the reforms. The emancipation of the women has been argued on humanistic grounds; it is pathetic that a child who should be playing happily in the streets should be made to perform the hardest of all duties, the bearing of children and the management of the home.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of this deplorable state of affairs, the mother becomes a nervous wreck and the children are weak and feeble; the practice having a degenerating influence on the muslim stock. The evolution of law, it may be useful to recognize, is a slow process; and one cannot expect rapid advance when all the powers of the church and tradition can be marshalled against any proposal that is not in keeping with the corpus of the tradition on which theoretically the law is based.

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<sup>19</sup>Famous Lahore Resolution 1930. Pakistan Movement.

<sup>20</sup>Ottoman Law of Family Rights 1917 (amended and adopted in modern Lebanon, Jordan and Syria) quoted in Islam by A. Guillaume, pp. 172-173.

Scientific Restatement of Original Islamic Principles  
by Modern Muslim Thinkers

On the point of this sub-head I would again make observations with reference to Pakistan, this country being unique among the muslim countries in that it has come into being with the conscious and declared aim of showing the world what a free and enlightened muslim state should be. Mohammed Ashraf, the chief editor of Islamic Literature, a quarterly magazine (Lahore, Pakistan), about whose paper Alfred Guillaume--one of the most authentic authorities on modern Islam--has said that he does not know of a parallel among Christian periodicals to its broad tolerance, Ashraf disagrees with the theory that the Quran and the Tradition are of equal authority.

Any society which desires to shape its legal and social structure on Islamic foundations must reexamine its attitude towards Hadith (Tradition) and decide the matter with open eyes and unbiased mind. What the Prophet said or did, provided it has been correctly reported; is of great importance in explaining the real intent of Quran and its detailed application in a particular historical situation.<sup>21</sup>

He is opposed to any blind obedience to a chain of authorities of which the present orthodox are the last link. This is no better than ancestorship. Ashraf demands that the muslims should evolve fresh principles of historical and rational criticism, re-examine and recodify the existing corpus of traditions, and then proceed on the basis of the Holy Quran, and the Hadith so selected and codified, towards a modification of the existing body of Islamic laws.

Islam is the totality of a culture in both its social and individual aspects; it is also a way of life. It furnished those basic

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<sup>21</sup>Mohammed Ashraf, Islamic Literature (Lahore, Pakistan, 1948).

emotions and loyalties which gradually unified scattered individuals and groups and finally transformed them into a well defined people. In fact, the movement for Pakistan provides an example at its best of Islam as a people building force. The same tendency is discernible in the Middle East, instead of persisting with small national existences, an urge towards unity based on federal lines is taking place after the departure of foreign colonial powers, who had divided the area into tiny states for the sake of administrative convenience consonant with the imperialistic interests.

The monopoly over the interpretation of Islamic laws by the traditional "Ulema" is no more acceptable to the people. Their exponents feel that the transfer of power of Ijtihad (independent judgment) from the individual representative scholar to a muslim legislative assembly is the only possible form Ijma (i.e., collective judgment) can take in modern times. "The legislature as the representative of the people is alone competent to apply the principles of Islam to the life of the community."<sup>22</sup>

Following the liberal interpretation of Islam as made by Pakistani intelligentsia, the new constitution of Pakistan under article 198, gives the National Assembly the power to interpret and apply the Islamic principles. The Shariat in Pakistan is not to be regarded as a static code of action but a dynamic force, a concept of life, not of law, a guide for the springs of action and thought. The new constitution is not the replica of the political organization of

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<sup>22</sup>Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore (Pakistan). Addresses of Iqbal, 1932.

the early days of Islam when the conditions were altogether different. It is a modern constitution with Islamic ideology as its guiding principle.

It is neither pretended nor claimed that the finer elements of Islam incorporated in the constitution of Pakistan have fully been realized. The evolution of democracy, whether Islamic or secular, in a new country is likely to be slow, it meets with many pitfalls in its initial stages. The recognition of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic on March 23rd, 1956 was not the proclamation of a reality but of an aim yet to be achieved.<sup>23</sup>

In Indonesia,<sup>24</sup> no clear cut generalization can be made about the struggle between conservative and reformist elements. But for the younger, urban intelligentsia, from whose ranks much of the future leadership will be recruited, Islamic modernism is often a beacon in the storm, a new religious-philosophical rallying point around which personal ambitions and political and nationalist aspirations gather. At the same time, by the same token--the retention of Islamic principles--muslim conservatism, exemplified by the political party N. U. (Nadwat-ul-Ulema), offers effective competition to communism and nativism and to proletarian centered ideologies (like the "populism" of the P.N.I.) in the countryside; where economic and social dislocation is inconspicuous in as much as the village society is subjected to the ever accelerating process of modernization.

#### Conclusion

In spite of the fact--a hard and undeniable fact--that muslim civilization has made a great contribution to the cultural heritage of

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<sup>23</sup>G. W. Choudhury, "The Impact of Islam in Pakistan", Current History, June 1957, p. 339.

<sup>24</sup>Najjar, op. cit.



mankind and especially to the concept expressed in the classical statement of Aristotle that "What is just is equal", the muslim world as a whole presents but a poor and miserable picture when seen today from the viewpoint of the achievements of modern civilization in the fields of health, education, and other material standards of living. In view of the materializing goal of the modern welfare state, namely to enhance the total dignified and self-respecting life of the individual, muslim countries without exception stand centuries behind the West. The very survival of a civilization depends upon its capacity to adjust and respond to the challenges of changed circumstance; otherwise the result is failure, frustration and ultimate demise.

The history of Islam has shown that it has extraordinary powers of adaptation. It has succeeded in absorbing apparently incompatible philosophies and mutually contradictory religious conceptions, and it has silently abandoned others which it has tried and found wanting. Its one danger is that the old forces of reaction will be too strong for the new spirit of liberalism, armed as they are with shibboleths and anathemas which can rouse the ignorant masses and terrorize men of vision.

There are increasing contacts between civilizations and even between religions in the modern world, but the growth of mutual understanding is discouragingly slow. Perhaps necessity will force the pace. Fruitful collaboration between the West and the Muslim world will become possible only if the West comes to understand and to appreciate the muslim people and their culture to the point of obviously wishing to see their problems solved together with its own, and to see their culture, together with its own, survive and flourish. Only with a West

that believes Islamic civilization to be worth defending will the muslim world in general be willing to cooperate. The survival of the West itself is perhaps dependent upon this.

To conclude with Professor Toynbee:

Now, in a world in which distance has been 'annihilated' by the progress of western technology, and in which the western way of life is having to compete with the Russian way of life for the allegiance of mankind, the Islamic tradition of the brotherhood of Man would seem to be a better ideal for meeting the social need of the times than the western tradition of sovereign independence for dozens of separate nationalities.<sup>25</sup>

It may be believed that there is enough wisdom, love and vision in the West to promote trust and friendship between two well meaning peoples. There is much that is common to Christ's message of good-will and peace and to Mohammed's teachings of universal human brotherhood. The necessity of such an understanding is obvious in an era of human civilization when two worlds are at stake. This fact, today, has the most profound of political, as well as moral and spiritual meaning.

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<sup>25</sup>Toynbee, The World and the West, Chapter II, "Islam and the West (New York and London, 1953), p. 30.

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