

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Personal *Memoirs*

by
Dr. Hassan Hathout

PERSONAL MEMOIRS

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O Almighty God, guide our steps,
and chart our course on the straight path
May our deeds be solely devoted to You.

O Lord, ease our sojourn on this earth
and alleviate our exit from it.

May our best day be the day we
behold Your glory

Your servant
who is destitute without You

Hassan Hathout

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PREFACE

The present time is an illusive bridge between a past that we cannot change, but we can learn from and a future that we can never tell, nonetheless we should try to affect.

Memories from a life that is as rich and as dedicated to the higher causes as the life of the author, are gems from the treasure of the past that should never to waste.

The collection is enabling us to see some of the history living and breathing, so we can be both educated and inspired.

The present collection was made possible by the hard work undertaken by Dr. Aslam Abdullah, Editor-in-Chief of the Minaret, Shireen Noah and Khadeeja Abdullah in copy editing, proof reading and type set-

ting. May Allah reward their efforts.

Maher Hathout, Chairman, MVI

IN APPRECIATION OF DR. HASSAN HATHOUT

The memories of childhood and adolescence rarely visit my dreams. But when they do, such honored and cherished guests are they. Yesterday, adorned by his dignity he visited me. This beautiful smile that for so long I loved, re-emerged from the midst of book covers, papers and dust. Delighted by his presence, for a moment the Conference of Books paused in his honor.

In my dream, Dr. Hassan Hathout sat on that same old chair, to the left of the room, in his apartment in Kuwait. I, full of a poetical energy that has now faded away, sat shuffling pages of cryptic verses. When I woke up, I was full of such joy and longing. Back in those days I would take a deep breath before calling him, back in those days I would count the hours before visiting him, back in those days I was truly alive.

I got out of bed and strolled to my den with a heart weighed with so many memories. At moments of panic I used to remember his ever so serene smile and it would comfort me. At moments of doubt, his praise was authentic certification of my worth. At moments of vanity, casually mentioning that my family and I were among his guests brought me instant prestige.

I smiled as I remembered the countless tortuous hours in which I subjected him and his family to my poetry. I would visit accompanied with pages full of words. Out of his kindness he would attentively listen and praise generously. Now, years later, when I re-read my own poetry I realize how kind and generous he was. His poetry, on the other hand, and use of language was nothing short of majestic. Whenever he would appear on television he would insist on speaking classical Arabic. The Arabic teachers in my school would gather to listen to the program, and try to catch him committing a grammatical error. They never did. When I came to the United States, my father, saddened by my departure, went to visit him. Dr. Hassan comforted my father by telling him "a good bow throws an arrow far away and never retrieves it." Through the years of separation and to this very day this statement calms and comforts my father and inspires me.

In one of my visits I told him that at Yale I pray in the library, and I put a sign on my back that reads, "Muslim at prayer." He laughed and laughed. Years later

he talked about a friend of his that prays with a sign on his back. He called me a friend! He is such a generous and kind man.

My father would tell me that Hassan Hathout was a companion of Hassan al-Banna, and I would never tire of seeking out the stories. Hassan Hathout would speak of al-Banna with such love and adoration; he would speak of a relationship not guided by politics or law but by a basic sense of human decency. In fact, in every interaction with Hassan Hathout and in every conversation, God and God's religion were not about technical laws, arguments or disputations but about a basic decency and fundamental morality. Hassan Hathout became a living embodiment of an Islam that is ever so tolerant, forgiving, loving and most of all humane.

As I thought about the dream and strained to recall the details, I noticed a recent issue of *The Minaret* lying on my desk. "Fighting Cancer with Faith" was the title of his article. The article was a wonderful statement of faith and gratitude but as I read his acknowledgment of his wife of 46 years I cried. Dr. Hassan always chided me for my inclinations towards the tragic and melancholy but this was different. Here, there was no tragedy or sadness.

I recalled God's verse: "*There are men among the faithful who have been true to their covenant with God. Some of them fulfilled their vows and some still wait and stand firm.*" (33:23) I felt happy for him and prayed that Allah

would give me the strength to follow in his footsteps. I realized that through the years of struggle and endurance how much he has been an inspiration to me and so many others. But I also realized that now the burden is on me and my generation. Can we discharge the covenant and inspire those that follow us? Do we possess a similar fundamental sense of decency and morality? Part of this decency and morality is that we turn to those who taught and inspired us, to those who permitted us the privilege of finding much that is decent in life and to those who became the symbolic representation of living, human beauty and say thank you. Thank you.

Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl teaches Islamic law at the University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

My hosts kept me really busy as we visited a number of Islamic institutions in East Canada on a lecture tour. My hosts were a group of very committed young people, devoted to establishing and organizing the Muslim community. Arriving at the Islamic center belonging to a major city, their faces glowed as they told me that the beautiful and spacious building had been a church before it was sold to the Muslim community. When I finished my lecture, we moved on to the next city. Again, in a double measure of pride and a sense of achievement, they enthusiastically told me that the Islamic center we had just entered had also been a church before it was purchased by Muslims!

On seeing that I was not equally jubilant, they must have suspected that I habitually masked my emotions, for they directly probed me, saying, "Describe your feel-

ings, doctor, on seeing two major churches transformed into Islamic centers!!” My answer was direct and straightforward, but it was obviously a shocking disappointment to them. “I feel very scared. I feel very worried and very concerned,” I said.

I gave them a few moments to recover their composure before I explained further. I had simply asked myself, I told my friends, what made the Christians sell their churches to the Muslims?! Obviously, the worshippers who had frequented those churches for prayer and religious education had been followed by a disinterested generation which had gone outside the fold and lost their veneration of religious values or even their faith in God, as is rampant nowadays. And if this change had affected Christians, why shouldn’t it happen to Muslims as well?

I am worried by the widespread illusion that Muslims are immune to such a generational mutation. I am also worried by the complacent assumption that because we are Muslims, our children will follow naturally in our footsteps. I found this assumption prevalent especially among immigrant Muslims, in whose mother countries Islam is acquired almost at birth, and the social milieu, in its every detail, inspires the child to grow up as a Muslim.

The situation is different in America, where so many social norms actually conflict with Islamic teachings. The public education system, with its value-free orien-

tation and dubious moral messages, is not helpful. Unless Muslims face the challenge (as some of them already do), the attrition rate of the future generations will be so great that many mosques and Islamic centers will be deserted, and will inevitably be put up for sale in a generation or two!

My argument sounded plausible to my hosts, and I strongly emphasized it at the various gatherings I addressed. The worst thing that can happen to Muslims in America is the gap between two consecutive generations, which breaks continuity and arrests - yet again - the progression of Islam in the future.

I could see the evidence of that gap even among children raised under the umbrella of Islam. My schedule included a meeting with the oldest students in an Islamic - school and another with the young people of an Islamic center. In both instances, the young people insisted that their teachers and parents not attend.

Once on their own, and as soon as they realized that I was quite open to free thinking and free speech, the boys and girls were very forthcoming and open in voicing their concerns. Invariably, they complained of an authoritarian and largely dogmatic attitude in the teaching of Islam, an approach which, they said although forceful, was not quite convincing. I had noticed this phenomenon often during my trips across America, sometimes expressed in such extreme terms as "I hate to come to the Center" or "My parents force me

to come, but when I grow up I'll never come again." Listening to the details, I could see why!

One of the main preoccupations of Muslim adolescents in America - if not the main one - is the issue of sexuality, an area their parents and teachers often refuse to discuss openly with them. I wish parents would realize that if they do not talk about sex with their children, other people will. In the tidal wave of sexual permissiveness in America, it seems that the knowledge that something is forbidden by Islam is not enough to influence young people against it. Parents must couple their teaching with a convincing argument which motivates the children to swim against the current and confidently to part with the torrent of socially sanctioned practices around them.

I usually pose this question to the young people: "Who believes in the equality of the sexes?" One hundred percent of my audience usually does. Then I pose my second question, "Who believes in justice?" Again, all of them do. Then I propose to them that any relationship between two equals, the consequences of which are not equally shared by both, cannot be a just relationship. Again, there is universal agreement. After that the consequences of the rather casual sex common today are not equally shared by both partners; the girl is always loser. If she is deserted, by her boyfriend she is the loser. If she gets pregnant and aborts the baby, she is the loser. If she delivers the baby, and gives him up for adop-

tion, she is the loser. And if she has a fatherless baby, she is the loser. "Can this be justice?" I ask. And I get the loudest possible "No!" in reply. Then I move into a discussion of Islamic teachings and how they secure justice and insist on mutual responsibility and loyalty for the two partners as well as for babies, who have a right to be born into a legitimate and secure family.

Now the children see the reasons behind the Islamic injunctions, and understand that these are not merely dogma issuing from a vacuum. Many of the young ones tap their heads with their forefingers and say, "Got it!!" With such a response, perhaps Muslims will never have to resort to selling their mosques to other religious communities.

A SMART FRIEND

Our small circle of friends has stood the test of time. We were classmates from high school until we graduated as physicians, and, although our subsequent paths diverged immensely - geographically - the solidarity of our friendship has remained through the decades. One of us was known to be particularly smart and resourceful, which gifts helped him through many difficulties in life. In 1948, as a young doctor he volunteered to help the Arab *munadileen* at a Red Crescent hospital in Palestine, before the intervention of the Arab states. When he returned to Egypt, he found that anyone who had gone to Palestine as a volunteer (not in the ranks of the Egyptian army) was to be arrested and detained in a concentration camp.

One day, just before dawn, his mother called at the hospital to give him a very brief message: "You have visitors!" He knew who the visitors were, and calculated

that it would be a matter of an hour or two for "these men" to contact their colleagues in the Police Department of his hospital's district." Let me now quote my friends, telling the rest of the story in his own words:

"I took a thorough look through the papers I had at my hospital residence, and then called the surgical resident on duty to report that I had acute appendicitis, which was a surgical emergency. I displayed the typical signs and symptoms, so that when the chief came he confirmed the diagnosis, and I was immediately taken to the operation theater.

It was during the operation that the police arrived to arrest me, but—alas— they were a bit late. I stayed in bed in my hospital room under guard, enjoying the luxury of being visited by my parents and, especially, by my fiancée (now my wife), and being pampered by my colleagues and the nursing staff. Two months later, all this bliss suddenly came to an abrupt end, when another colleague due to be arrested tried to fake the same illness; his story didn't work. Orders were issued that no one due to be arrested could remain in any hospital, and I was taken—handcuffed and all— to the Haekstep concentration camp, in the desert outside Cairo. Despite the isolation, missing my dear ones and the gruesome food, life was not bad there, and I contributed to the comfort of my fellow prisoners by telling puns and jokes, which were so popular that people used to follow me with pen and paper to write them down. Until the day of the

beating! One of us received a message to appear before the authorities; the officer demanded his signature on the document. When he wanted to read what he was to sign, the officer wouldn't allow it. The outcome was an exhaustive beating by several policemen, in the privacy of the officer's room. Hearing the cries, one detainee threw a stone from behind the barbed wire. It was then that the authorities decided that the prisoners should be disciplined, and called in the Special Forces for that purpose. I emerged as striped as a zebra from my wounds. A rumor spread that they would come again for a surprise repeat of the beatings while we were asleep. They did not, but life was not the same after that.

While Jewish prisoners in a neighboring encampment played poker with the officer-in-chief, deliberately losing to him in return for certain privileges (including being allowed to leave the camp to spend a night at home), our treatment toughened more and more. At last, under pressure on behalf of the sick in the camps, the government allowed teams of doctors (government-employed) to visit the detainees with strict orders to refrain from transferring to hospital all but the most serious cases. We decided to make the best of this opportunity. My friend --the late I.S.-- gave himself an intramuscular injection of 2mls of condensed milk. His temperature shot up to 104 degrees fahrenheit, but the medical council did not consider this a justification for transferring him to the hospital. My plan was different. I

smeared the fingers of my left hand with a film of condensed milk and let them dry. I also procured a safety pin and attached it to the front of my underwear. When I was to be examined by the doctors, I made myself look very ill and told them I had severe pyelonephritis (infection of the kidney). Naturally, they asked for a urine sample, and gave me a cup to urinate in there and then. It was also natural for me to turn my back to them as I did so, out of modesty. During the process, I pricked my finger with the pin and let the urine wash the blood and the condensed milk into the cup. "Oh... the urine is heavily laden with blood and pus," one of the doctors declared, with much concern in his voice. They promptly ordered my immediate transfer to a hospital. Back I went in peace, until there was a cabinet change and we were all set free."

SOUNDS

FAMILIAR

My memory this time is about a book, *Animal Farm*, that first appeared in 1935 and that has remained in print until this very day. The author was a young English writer by the pen name of George Orwell (his real name was Eric Blair) who died at 47, only a few years after the publication of this book, and entered the annals of history as one of the great writers of the century. A socialist himself, he was disillusioned by communism, and his perception of the totalitarian state inspired him to write this story, as well as his other great work, *1984*. When I read these two works in the fifties, I saw that they faithfully described the state of affairs in many Muslim and other countries that had fallen prey to revolutionary totalitarianism, and what Orwell characterized as a fairy tale was to me the personal, vivid and ugly face of real life.

Animal Farm tells of animals who lived in a manor farm somewhere in the English countryside. They were, naturally, treated like animals and exploited for the benefit of the farm owner and his human cronies. One of the eldest pigs dreamt of uniting the animals in a revolution, which would topple man from power, and in which the animals would take their destiny into their own hands, creating an independent animal farm, free of tyranny and exploitation.

After the old pig's death, his dream became a legacy and an ambition that fueled the animals' lives from then on. A lot of planning took place, and finally the promise came true, on a night when the humans were drunk. Every weapon was used—from horse hoofs to bird beaks—until the human beings could no longer fight, and the gates of the farm were securely locked against them.

Then came the second phase, entailing the building up of a new republic that promised milk and honey to every animal and bird, besides freedom and national dignity. Due to their superior intelligence and organizing capacity, the pigs took up leadership under two strong boars, Napoleon and Snowball, assisted by Squealer who had the gift of persuasive speech.

The seven commandments of the revolution, which were painted in large letters on the barn, were:

1. Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs or has wings is a friend.

3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.

It was not long, however, before things began to change. Relations between Napoleon and Snowball soured; then, during a debate relating to the management of the farm, Snowball seemed to get the upper hand. At a certain signal, nine fierce dogs appeared out of nowhere and rushed at Snowball, attacking him until he barely made his escape from the farm. Those beasts were a litter that Napoleon had kept under his personal care for special training. This was their inaugural mission, but later they regularly played the same role in the face of dissent or opposition, which was also drowned out by the sheep's repetitive cry of a slogan Squealer had taught them: "Four legs good, two legs bad."

All the problems at the farm were regularly blamed on Snowball, who was accused of defecting to man and plotting with him against the republic and on Snowball's secret accomplices inside the farm. These accomplices were periodically found out whenever dissent was suspected, and routinely executed.

Nor was there a paucity of problems. A windmill project proved to be a disaster, being destroyed once by a storm, and another time exploded by humans. Crops failed, and an ever-tightening rationing was applied to

all except the junta of pigs. Behind the scenes, contacts with men were made to trade some of the farm's produce for some necessities, which included beer for the exclusive consumption of the pigs who now lived in the house, slept in beds and walked on their hind legs.

When the hens were ordered to surrender their eggs from a height which caused them to break, a brutal purge brought the pig's to their senses, after some of them confessed to having plotted with Snowball. When Boxer, the horse who proved a hero both in the battle against man and in the construction of the windmill, became ill, he was sold to a slaughterhouse owned by a human being. Humans became allies of the pigs, and frequently visited the farm to dine and wine with them.

One of the old-timers among the animals, reminiscing about the good old hope-laden days before and just after the revolution, and paid a nostalgic visit to the great hall in the big barn, which had been closed for a long time, since meetings and debates had long been banned. As he refreshed his memory about the Seven Commandments, he rubbed his eyes, as he saw some amendments written in small letters. Each commandment bore an amendment, so that: no animal shall sleep in a bed... with sheets, no animal shall drink alcohol... to excess, no animal shall kill any other animal... without a reason, and the final commandment read: all animals are equal... but some are more equal than others.

All this time Squealer had spared no effort in glorifying the leader, Napoleon, and pontificating on his selflessness and sacrifice, as he and his pig colleagues undertook the colossal mental work of planning and organizing. Even the ceremonial slogan repeatedly shouted by the sheep on all occasions became: "Four legs good... two legs better!!

TERRORIST REMINISCENCES

I remember Moussa Leitto, not because he was a close friend of mine, or even just an Ordinary friend, but because he was the only Jewish student in my high school. This uniqueness earned him a reputation beyond his own class; otherwise he seemed to get along happily within his own circle of friends and colleagues, whether Muslim or Christian. That was a long time ago, before there was an Arab-Israeli conflict and before a State of Israel ever existed. In the Egypt of those days, Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together so peacefully and in a such friendly way that one feels nostalgic about that era. Only one friend of mine expressed reservations about Moussa. His name was Muhammad Abdou (namesake of the famous Islamic scholar of the turn of the century), and somehow had a foreboding about Moussa, through a blend of insight and prophecy. We lightly dismissed it at the time as inherent prejudice, but the whole issue was revived

many many years later, when Moussa - whom hitherto I had forgotten appeared glaringly on the national news. What happened in between is history; Muhammad Abdou remained my close friend and we forgot all about Moussa, although the three of us graduated from medical school (Moussa two years behind us). The United Nations decided on the partition of Palestine between Jews and Palestinians, and a military confrontation ensued between Arab states and the new state of Israel, which occupied a position well beyond the partition line. As an army revolution erupted in Egypt and (colonel) Gamal Abdel Nasser became president, Britain, France, and Israel colluded in the military invasion of Egypt in retaliation for the nationalization of the Egyptian Suez Canal Company, and would have succeeded in their venture had not the Eisenhower administration firmly forced them to depart.

At a time of palpable cordiality and sympathetic relations with the United States, a wave of bombings erupted in Egypt (mail box explosives, etc.) targeting American and other interests, with a concerted effort made by international media to blame the attack on Islamic fundamentalists. Fortunately, however, the Egyptian security authorities were able to lay their hands on the perpetrators, and arrested a network of Israeli agents, unveiling what was later recorded in history as the Lavon affair. Pinhas Levon was Israel's defense minister, and it turned out that he had given

orders authorizing these operations in an attempt to poison relations between Egypt and the West. One of the culprits was Dr. Moussa Leitto, who was later tried and executed, and we remained in awe regarding that foresight or intuition of our friend Muhammad Abdou. The incident was of particular interest to us because it involved someone we knew; but the incident of Zionist terrorism were numerous beyond count, although in some mysterious way they seemed easily forgotten or downplayed by the world media. It was Begin's *Irgun Zvai Leumi* that demolished the King David Hotel (headquarters of the British army in Jerusalem during World War II) and later committed the almost total massacre of the civilian population of the village of Der Yassin.

It was Shamir's *Stern Gang* that assassinated Lord Moyne (British resident minister in Egypt during World War II) and Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations mediator of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. To mention the sinking of USS Liberty, the downing of a Libyan civilian plane over Sinai, the bombardment of a children's school in Egypt, the invasion of Lebanon with Sharon's "salame technique" of bombarding Beirut, the atrocities at Sabra and Chatilla, the assassination of scientists and of Palestinian leaders in Tunis and in Italy, etc is to mention but the tip of the iceberg. It would be unfair and absurd-of course- to blame these atrocities on Judaism as a faith or the Jews as a people; although cer-

tain others are quite adept at the business of incriminating Islam and Muslims whenever violence is perpetrated by a Muslim individual or fringe group, we Muslims should not reciprocate injustice with injustice. Sweeping stereotyping is so rampant , and further promoted by prejudiced media and politicians, that in one of my lectures, as I identified myself as an obstetrician, I hastened to add, "but please don't think that all Muslims must, therefore, be obstetricians."

We do appreciate that on all sides, Jewish, Christian, Muslims and others, there are masses of people who seek the truth and stand up for it and abhor injustice even in their own camp. Commenting on the hawkish elements (and actions) in the state of Israel, no less prominent a Jew than Professor Benjamin Cohen of Tel Aviv University wrote: "Jews, themselves the victims of so many cruelties, can they have become so cruel?"

We live in a very troubled world, and as long as there are unaddressed injustices, peace will remain elusive and neither oppressed nor oppressor will find the way to happiness. Could it ever be that people on all sides will transcend greed and creed and wish for their brethren what they wish for themselves? Peace based upon power is neither durable nor secure: only justice can insure both. Humanity, noble humanity, do you hear me?

My MOTHER

She was a great women. The earliest of the earliest of my recollections as a little boy is her repeatedly telling me, "When I carried you inside me, I pledged to God to name you Hassan and devote you to expelling the British from Egypt;" at that time British armies occupied our country. I took her wish to heart, and from early childhood onwards I grew up with a serious purpose in life. The follies of childhood and the frivolities of youth were not part of my path, for I had other priorities. Speaking of priorities,

I remember the day during my childhood when I was with my mother in her kitchen; she was cooking and wore her somewhat scanty house clothes. We suddenly heard screams, and cries to "catch the burglar;" all the neighbors looked out from their windows. Glancing from our window, my mother saw the burglar frantically running through the gate. In a fraction of a second, my

mother took the flight of stairs from the first to the ground floor in one jump, and headed in pursuit of the thief. Police whistles were heard, and a large crowd of men ran after the burglar, but alas! they had not seen the culprit, and would surely have lost him. It took them some time to catch up with my mother, who directed them to the house where the thief was hiding. The house was searched and the thief was caught.

Parents are usually concerned when their children get too involved in Islamic and/or patriotic activities that compete with their scholastic work, and indeed expose them to actual peril. Not in my case, for in my home God and country were primary concerns.

When Palestine was partitioned and its people took arms to defend their land, I wanted to volunteer to help them (as a young doctor), but my family, teachers and friends warned me of the futility of such personal sacrifice (this was before some Arab states got involved in the fight); but, my mother decided the issue in a few words, saying,

"This is a noble duty that I cannot dissuade you from." Returning from Palestine, we were soon arrested by the government of Egypt, to be put into a concentration camp. I was taken from a hospital in Cairo where I was working. My colleagues, the nurses, and patients wept to see me going with handcuffs on my hands. So did my father, uncle, and fiancée(now wife); but to my mother the scene looked different; with dignity and

pride she said, "Those things around your hands are a badge of honor, Hassan!"

It was no wonder that my brother Maher Hathout (ten years younger than me) grew up a bird of the same feather, even after I had left the country. At a certain time in our political history, martial law courts delivered lengthy jail sentences for Muslim activism, even for giving a donation of ten piasters (cents) to the families of imprisoned Muslims. Such an act could cost the donor a ten year prison sentence; this was a crime my mother used very often to commit, at great personal risk. At one of these mock trials, my brother and three of his fellows were interrogated by the army officer judges, who were headed by a field marshal. Anxious fear held the hall in silence; suddenly, a voice was heard: "Mr. Senior Justice, I demand to be tried in place of my son, for I feel the responsibility is mine.

At a time when the royal palace, political parties and every government of Egypt were corrupt and selfish, and had sold out to the colonizer, we knew that Islam was the only way out, and I decidedly pushed my sons into the Islamic movement. If my son had committed a crime, then give him what he deserves according to the law, otherwise, I demand that he should be acquitted." No one dared interrupt my mother, and the spellbound field marshal politely listened like a school boy. Those four defendants were the only ones - amongst thousands - to gain a verdict of acquittal. Ten years later my broth-

er and I were in jail again, and I was released before him and left the country for Kuwait. My uncle had a heart attack at the time and mother went to his home to nurse him. But there she died after a brief illness. Her three men could not witness the funeral: her brother, confined to his bed, my brother, in jail, and myself away, with her instructions not to come back.

Thousands of her friends and ours took over. It was no wonder, since for years and years they used to call her "mother."

OF LIFE AND DEATH

She was sweet like honey and fresh like a rose in bloom. So intelligent was she, that a local paper ran a story about her; and so gifted, that at the age of four her teacher asked her to teach the class, to the delight of both teacher and children.

It was the late fifties, and we lived in Edinburgh, Scotland; my wife (Salonas) and I were engaged in postgraduate studies there, keeping away from the political climate at home. There were moments when I felt like a fugitive without a future; then I would find solace in prayer and supplication to Allah (God), always asking Him fervently: "Please, my Lord, if you ever put me to the test, don't let it be in Amle," our daughter and only child at the time.

I obtained my higher degrees, and as my funds were becoming depleted, I accepted the offer of a senior medical post in Kuwait, and went there preceding my small family, for Salonas was still completing her Ph.D.

One day, before my departure, Amle was conversing with me in Arabic, and then abruptly switched to English asking, "What would happen if there was no more Amle, Daddy?" (In Arabic, "Amle" means "hope"). Calmly, I answered, "There will be no more Amle, Amle," and to myself, I thought "with Allah is the command before and after." One night, after I departed, my wife dreamt that she was on the curb near our home, crying in horror, 'My daughter, my daughter is gone from me.'

It was a Friday in Kuwait, and I had performed a lengthy emergency operation, missing my Friday prayers. As I was writing my notes, I was told there was a cable for me, and my heart told me, "Amle is dead." When I read the telegram, "AMLE KILLED - ACCIDENT," signed by a friend, it was merely a confirmation. My spontaneous and prompt response was to turn to Him saying, "Lord, I know You are testing me, and I know You are watching me. I also know that in a year's time all thus afflicted are the same, and that the real test is my reaction in the first few moments. I thank you, Allah, and I willingly accept what you have ordained for me. Amle was Your trust with us, and now she is our trust with You, and I am grateful for both."

I went home and performed funeral prayers in absentia. Salonas called and I told her to arrange the funeral in Edinburgh. I went to a colleague's home to ask her to be on call in my place, in preparation to fly to Scotland. My friend's unsuspecting mother complained to me that locusts had that day eaten up their

little garden that had taken the family time and effort to prepare and beautify. I expressed sympathy and advised patience. Next day, I was off to Scotland.

I took my wife in my arms, kissed her on the cheek, kissed her hand, and exhorted her never to succumb to the devil by saying "If only I did... or if only I didn't..." It was an eternal, precise plan that as Amle followed her mother to school, saying, "I am so happy today,' Mummy," a long truck passing another vehicle on the opposite side levered out so that its back end hit Amle's head as she waited on the curb. In minutes Amle was dead. With a friend, Salonas washed her and conducted funeral prayers, and Amle was buried in the beautiful Grange cemetery.

As we entered the house, there was no Amle to greet me. I drank the remainder of her pint of milk. She had left her tooth prints on a full box of chocolate, which she had refused to eat saying, "It is daddy who loves chocolate, Mummy, and I leave them for him." I ate them all ... it was the nearest I could get to Amle. Her washed clothes were still on the line, and bewildered friends watched as we ironed them, in order to donate all her clothes to charity.

Scottish friends were amazed by our composure, it was an opportunity for them to learn about Islam. The police asked whether I wanted to press charges; I didn't. To me the situation was far beyond material compensation, and I asked the police to tell the truck driver that we held no bitter feelings against him, that we were confident he had meant no harm, and that I

knew he was also upset by the accident.

Death is not evil. It is the port of destination for all people after their journey of life. After death is no void; rather, there is the life to follow, the hereafter, which is better, happier and endures forever. Amle preceded us there. I am always reminded of my real abode, of that address to which the most precious of my valuables has already moved. In the 42 years since, Amle has been in my daily prayers, not as a painful memory, but as a dear and beautiful one, although I miss her so. Whenever I visit her grave in Edinburgh, the world seems to contract to its real size, unworthy of worry or stress. I have been through rough times —and I mean really rough times — always feeling that the One who supported me and inspired in me patience over Amle will see me through those lesser ordeals to my complete satisfaction. That Amle's life was short does not make it less precious, for the value of a work of art does not depend on its size. Her memories are my instant recipe for solace, joy, and happiness, whether in the prison cell, on the sickbed, or in the rough-and-tumble of daily life.

We thank God for giving us Eba four years later: now a young pediatrician and the mother of the charming Sarrah and Hassan. We feel very generously rewarded.

Death is not evil, and as I diligently tread the path of life, my heart is really more set on the hereafter, with an appreciable sense of looking forward. After all, I already have an asset waiting for me there!

SAINT IN THE MAKING

Attending the Friday prayer at the New Horizon elementary school (of the Islamic Center of Southern California in Pasadena) is indeed a unique experience. The children have their own prayer hall (*masjid*) where they all assemble shortly before the prayer. They come in (and later go out) in perfect order, do some group recitation from the Quran, and when it is time for the prayer one of them calls the *azan* for *zuhr*, followed by the *khutba* and yet another *azan* to herald the prayer. A Friday *khutba* (sermon) addressing children of this young age must, of course, be very different from one addressing adults, for Prophet Muhammad instructed that we must talk to people in a way proper to their intellectual capacity.

The *khutba* fulfilled all the juridical requirements, and yet its style and language were tailored to command the interest of and guarantee comprehension by these young souls. When the collection of these *khutbas* is

released (as an audio-album titled *Friday Khutbas for Children*), it may be the first of its kind, and could prove a smashing hit.

After the prayer, it is not yet all over: for then the speaker answers questions from the children about the *khutba*, questions that show astonishing insight and attention to details on part of the students. When this period is over, it is the turn of the speaker to ask the children what they make of the *khutba* and to invite their comments on various points in it; the speaker also asks them, if feasible, to support their views with quotations from the Quran or hadith that they have learned in their curriculum. It is perhaps a surprise – though a happy one – to realize that the attention span and the depth of comprehension of the children sometimes exceed those of adults.

The last item on the program is a supplication (*du'a*) to Allah. Any of the boys or girls who wishes to perform *du'a* does so, and the rest say *ameen* in unison after the supplications. Then the children leave in disciplined lines in accordance with their grades and classrooms. Recently, we carried out the idea of training a team of the boys to prepare and deliver the *khutba* themselves and to lead the prayer. The attempt proved a success, and its benefits include a solid commitment to Islam as well as the preparation of future leaders.

One Friday, I was to give the *khutba*. The subject was very relevant at the time, as it was the famous and devastating Los Angeles fires, which were among the worst disasters in the history of California. During my *khutba*, I pondered upon the human race and the very broad scale across which they are

scattered. Adversity can bring out the best in people. The firemen did a heroic job under stressful conditions for days, attempting to put out the fire and ward it off from as many homes as they could. Neighbors helped each other, and a family that was out of town had their home rescued by a neighbor, who had a water pump and who used the water in the swimming pool to extinguish the fire. One man lost his life in a desperate attempt to save his cat, which was stranded inside a burning house. All these and other incidents showed the nobility of humanity and the high standard human beings can attain. At the other end of the scale, however, it was revealed that the fire was the deliberate deed of two men who wanted to pose as heroes fighting the fire, so that they could secure employment at the Fire Department. Their actions showed how low human beings can stoop. One has to choose for oneself a position along the scale of goodness and evil, and it behooves a Muslim to strive to be at the very top.

The routine program followed my sermon. Most of the supplications to Allah focused on helping the victims and rewarding the firemen and others who did their best to help. But I was particularly impressed, and taken by ecstatic surprise, when a nine-year-old little girl raised her hands and said: "O Allah...please forgive those who set the fire!"

A SMART BOY

As I visit Islamic centers across the country, I find that my appraisal of teen Muslim youth in those centers is far from homogeneous. In some instances this group is an aggregate of spoiled young people whose main attraction to the center is to meet their friends and have a nice time. Had it not been for parental pressure, their meeting place would not have been the Islamic center. They have the illusion that they are doing their parents a great favor by consenting to come to the center on Sunday morning.

Focal points of interest among such young people might be a beeper hanging from the belt of a high school boy, an exotic dress, an expensive pair of shoes, or the model of the car one young person drives. Islam itself is far outside their focus, and those of them who fail actually to ditch their classes hardly show any interest there, let alone zeal or commitment.

Yet I don't blame the Islamic centers, and I often sympathize with them. The alternative to the mere presence of these young people at an Islamic center on a school vacation day could be much worse and it is a blessing that they even come. This is the raw material presented to the authorities of the center, and they have to work with it. One of the functions of an Islamic center is to be like a hospital, and a hospital cannot confine admittance only to the healthy. Moreover, I have often seen results even after the passage of years, by which groups or individuals corrected their course and became very solid and serious Muslims. One of the lessons I have learned in my life is never to hasten to bad-mouth a center that I visit and whose youth I find not up to my standards.

Near the other end of the spectrum, I have come across examples of very bright young Muslims who are actively committed to the cause of Islam and have decided to take it as their purpose in life. One such young man I encountered during a visit to Maryland, and I could see, *inshallah*, a great Islamic future ahead of him. He caught my attention by his complete absorption in getting the rooms ready for lectures, prayers, and meals, cleaning the rooms after the meals, passing brief and cordial greetings all the while to the audience as they came in and took their places. I felt the urge to enquire about him, and was given a very interesting account by my host.

The boy was a high school student, the son of a physician in the community. Through saving from his un-extravagant allowance and taking various jobs whenever his school sched-

ule permitted, he hoped to save enough money to perform *Hajj*, which he had vowed would be at his own expense and without assistance from his family.

Although of Pakistani background, he was sufficiently motivated to learn Arabic in order to understand the Quran and Hadith and have direct access to Arabic muslim sources. He believed that the knowledge of Arabic was conducive to the unity and sense of identity of the Muslims, and always quoted the example of Jews having revived the Hebrew language and put it to use. At school he was very creative in finding ways to make Islam better known, and his tact and amicability never failed him, whether in class or during extra-curricular activities.

You might think that all this would be at the expense of his scholastic performance. Far from it, all his peers and all his teachers considered him an excellent student—unfortunately, except for one. This was a teacher who had a grudge against Islam that he could neither conceal nor overcome. Obviously this is the exception and not the rule amongst teachers; in this case, it showed not only an attitude of verbal ridicule and aggression—which our boy could handle very adequately—but also in a low grade for any paper the young Muslim wrote, even if the rest of the students considered it the best. Since the evaluation of a paper is very largely subjective, our young man thought he could do nothing about this, until a brilliant idea came to his mind.

All his fellow students saw the situation clearly and sympathized with him, although, of course, they felt that the issue

was too delicate to raise. Mohammed called his best friend, and suggested his plan, which the friend readily and willingly accepted.

For their next assignment, the class was given a paper to write on a particular subject. As usual, Mohammad's grade was low, while his Christian friend scored very high. Mohammad made an appointment and went to see the teacher. "In my religion, sir, he began, my teacher is like my father, worthy of my complete respect. Whenever I feel confused, he is the resource to which I turn for guidance; and right now, I feel a need for your wisdom and counsel." "Of course, Mohammad, tell me all about it," the teacher replied. Mohammad went on: "These are copies of two thesis, mine scoring very low and my friend's very high. If you read them you will see they are exactly alike, word for word and letter for letter. The only difference is that mine is the better handwriting. Can you tell me, sir, what is the explanation for that?"

The teacher looked at both papers, verified Mohammad's claim, and for a moment had nothing to say. Finally he said, "I am sorry, Mohammad. I apologize. This will never happen again."

REFLEX BEHAVIOR

Decades ago, when my country was still a kingdom, our primary occupation was the effort to get rid of the British occupation; I was a medical student. Heading the nation's movement for independence were the university students, for the professional politicians and their political parties competed only over who should control the government, and the king exploited that competition, bolstering the position of the Palace as the ultimate authority in the country. To all these, the nation was for them to use rather than to serve, and the occupier was more of a protector than an enemy.

But that was also a time, during and following World War II, when the Soviet Union was considered an ally, and many doors that had previously been closed to it were now open. Clandestinely but actively, communism infiltrated the country, establishing several covert cells

within the student body and the labor movement. At a particular point of political upheaval, there was a call to elect a Supreme Executive Student Committee, to which an unsuspecting university student body responded in a business as usual spirit. Behind the scenes there was an enormous campaign of lobbying, camouflaging and misinformation, and everyone was taken by surprise when all the newly-elected committee members were found out to be communists (communists began as minute minority at the university), except for four, including myself, who were overtly anti-communist and as Muslim.

We could have gotten along together, all working for the goal of expelling the British occupation, but we four soon realized that to the others the main agenda was communism. Taking the Soviet Union as an ally and a role model ranked high among their aims, and they believed the realization of the country's independence could have no other means but class struggle. Of course, to them religion was taboo, being the root of all evil, the opium of the masses, and the rest of the communist jargon. Although we were only four amongst forty, we really gave them hell, and constituted a formidable resistance. It was to their chagrin that meetings had to be suspended for our *Maghrib* (evening) prayers, and that their female associates tried to tempt on us to no avail. As for myself, I was particularly irritating to them, for I was very disciplined, very polite and very tranquil, but

very persevering, and so strong in my arguments that I really foiled their joy in winning over me by their majority vote. Without realizing it, however, they acquired a conditioned reflex that made them vote down anything that I suggested. Even if I claimed that the sun rose in the East, they would vote that it rose in the West.

In one such meeting, the secretary submitted a list of 15 names of students at al-Azhar University, the well known Islamic institution, who were proposed as additional members of the committee. My surprise was short-lived, for when I read the names I saw that they were all known to me, and that every single one was a communist. It was obvious that our friends planned to make their goals palatable to the nation by the support of members of the religious university. These proposed new members had not been duly elected by their fellow students, but I knew this would not count, for only the majority vote counted in our committee. I knew no amount of opposition would change the inevitable, and I had to think of something unconventional.

I raised my hand (which was my preferred posture most of the time) and requested permission to speak at the very end of the deliberations and immediately prior to taking the vote. In ominous(to them) tranquility I then let the session take its natural course. Talk dragged on and on, and at long last the awaited moment came, when the infamous list was submitted for voting. I hastened to grab the opportunity to speak that the chair-

man had granted me. "You know that our countrymen respect and trust men of religion such as our colleagues, the students of al-Azhar University," I began. "Their word will carry far more reliability with the nation than ours." By then, I had inflamed their sensitivities and provoked their prejudices. Then, I added, in a very arrogant and challenging voice: "I therefor request you nay, I order you, to vote yes on the matter of accepting the names on this list as members in our committee. Thank you."

The vote was then taken by an unsuspecting secretariat. But alas for them! I had succeeded in activating their conditioned reflex to vote against me, and, as I expected and had aimed at, the vote was an overwhelming "No!"

CANDLES IN THE DARK

I met her in Switzerland some thirty years ago. She died several years ago. Nowadays, she is incessantly on my mind and in my heart, in loving remembrance and in sharp contrast with much of what is going on in our world today.

When I made her acquaintance, Mme. Irene Laure was a petite, angelic Frenchwoman stepping gracefully into old age. Her legend started during World War II, when the Germans had overpowered and occupied her mother country. She witnessed in ugly detail the humiliation and suffering of her country, its people toiling under the heavy German boot. At an early stage of the occupation, she, her husband, and their children joined the French Resistance, and from that point went their separate ways. Each one of them faced death several times, and her eldest son was tortured nearly to death by the Gestapo. Tested by one ordeal after another, Mme. Laure proved herself to be a person of immense courage,

resolve and resourcefulness, and she became widely acclaimed as a hero of the resistance. When the war ended with the defeat of Germany, Mme. Laure became an instant celebrity in France. She ran for a seat in the Assembly, sailed through the election, and soon became a respected public figure. One thing remained unchanged, however, and that was her unremitting hatred for anyone or anything that was German.

This burden of hatred bothered Mme. Laure, but she just couldn't help herself. She felt ashamed of herself for harboring so much bitterness. Her inner conflict was exacerbated when talks started on rebuilding Europe; as a stateswoman, she realized that it was impossible to rebuild Europe without rebuilding Germany. At long last, she agreed to attend a meeting where Germans were present. The first German to be introduced to her was a woman, to whom Mme. Laure forthrightly said, "I want you to know that I hate all Germans," to which the woman shyly answered, "I understand. Perhaps we should have reacted earlier and more strongly, but I want you to know that my husband was accused of taking part in the plot on Hitler's life and was hanged; then, my son was sent to the Eastern front, where he was killed." That shocked Mme. Laure out of her hatred. From then on she embarked on a series of visits to Germany, apologizing to the German people for the hatred she had carried towards them for so long. Only then did Mme. Laure feel that she had been liberated.

Her new spirit inspired many; the widening circle brought together trade unionists and then politicians from both countries; freed from the shackles that had tied them to the bitter past. This change in people's hearts brought about the European coal industry accords and laid the foundations for the European Common Market; this would have been impossible if people had continued to nurture their hatred and prejudices.

And now I remember her, in amazement at the high peaks and the deep troughs the human heart can reach. I look at the incredible atrocities inflicted upon the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Serbs, and wonder how hatred can thus drive human beings out of the fold of humanity. Beasts do kill under the pressure of hunger, but never indulge in mass killing, mass raping, or mass infanticide. And my heavy heart wanders all over the globe in sorrow and agony. Palestine, Kashmir, India, Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and wherever else my sight can reach only indicate that humanity remains so short of humaneness. The worst part of it is that those who command the means to stop evil don't do it. Through action (sometimes) or inaction (at other times) they become practically accomplices and collaborators. Without doubt, Islam and Muslims seem to be their favorite choice for an enemy; we are maligned by them with lies; God knows the real reason for the attacks on us is greed, or prejudice to creed, or breed.

Could it ever be that people will transcend their base emotions and behave in a way that is worthy of noble Humanity? Can they put themselves in the place of their victims so that they formulate just solutions to their conflicts? Can a spiritual dimension work its way into politics and economics so that people seek the truth and stop worshipping their worst selves? Can the New World Order be a really new system, and not the same old order with new colors and under new management? For, as the Quran says, *We have created man in the best of moulds, then We abased him to the lowest of the low, except such as believe and do righteous deeds, for they shall have a reward unfailing.* (95:4-6)

My ENEMY FRIEND

If you surrender Ramleh, you'll be safe. If you don't, we will do to you what we did to the people of Deir Yassin!" What the Zionist troops had done in Deir Yassin was a complete slaughter of men, women and children, except for a handful who had escaped and reported their ordeal. Our answer was one of defiance and challenge, and the battle of Ramleh began.

One evening when I was working in the surgical theater, I heard an unusual noise. Someone came running to tell me that seven of our Zionist attackers had been wounded, taken prisoner and brought to the hospital, and that a crowd of Ramleh citizens whose dear ones had been killed by the Zionists were crying out for revenge. I immediately left the theater, confronted the crowd on the steps of the hospital and shouted, "Over my dead body!" I made a lengthy and hearty speech about war ethics in Islam and explained how Islam

teaches Muslims to treat prisoners of war. I told them the captive was protected by his captivity and the wounded by his wounds, and reminded them of the behavior and sayings of Prophet Mohammed in this respect, which were valid even when our adversary failed to abide by those ideals. I repeated the message of the Quran: *And let not the hatred of others towards you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.*

The crowd came to its senses and disbanded, and I went to tend to the wounded. The most important thing was to allay their anxieties, for they expected the worst, as commensurate with their brutal aggression. I explained our stand and promised them safety and care, on the condition that they would not try to escape. One of them had a particularly serious shrapnel injury that had pierced through his lung, leaving an open gap in his chest wall. We had frequent visits from delegates of the Red Cross and members of the team of Count Folke Bernadotte (the United Nations peace mediator later assassinated by the Stern Gang terrorist group, headed by Yitzhak Shamir), who were full of praise for the way we treated our captives.

In a short while, there was an exchange of prisoners, and ours were all delivered to the Red Cross, except for Naphtalie Zienfeild, who had to stay with us on account of the gravity of his condition. Every evening I would spend time with him, conversing on all sorts of subjects; sure enough, he acquired a new image of Islam and

Muslims, very different from the one he had been brought up with. Now safe, he very much missed his wife and their one-year-old son. At the human level, we became friends, and a month later, when the Red Cross came to take him home, he said that he was sorry to depart; the last thing he told me as he was leaving was, "I owe you my life, doctor."

What followed was very sad. Ramleh was well defended by its citizens, but was later taken when a garrison from the Arab League that had arrived during a cease-fire vacated their positions at the resumption of the battle, making way for the Zionists to come in, as if (no if's about it - it was true) implementing a secret deal. The tragedy grew, as Arab governments failed to manage either peace or war, culminating in the humiliating defeat of 1967.

It was 1972 when I received a letter from Switzerland signed by a name I had never heard before. It read: "Dear Dr. Hathout: It has been 24 years now since you saved my life in Ramleh, and just as I told you then, I still feel I owe you my life. I have been trying to locate you all these years; but you may remember that last summer you visited Vienna and stayed at a certain hotel, and it was by coincidence that we saw your name and address in the hotel register!"

Napthalie had acquired a new name and a successful business running a factory that made agricultural tools. He invited me to visit Israel with my wife, to be his

guest for two weeks, so that he could show us around and, especially, introduce me to his wife and family, who had heard so much about me from him and were very eager to meet me. Once I had set the date of my visit, he said, he would take care of everything else.

I was taken aback, and felt averse to pursuing the dialogue; visiting Israel was, of course, out of the question. I did answer, however, writing to the address in Switzerland, talking of memories of his injury, our conversations and his worry about his little son. Pleased as I was that he was well, I told him that it was out of the question for me to visit him, or for that matter for us to correspond any more.

Months later, I received another letter: "Since I last wrote to you, many things have happened. I had a heart attack, although I am not a smoker and I regularly play sports. I had to stay in the hospital for two months, during which time my son, to whom you referred in your letter, managed the business very adequately. But soon enough, I was diagnosed as having a heart aneurysm and had to be readmitted to the hospital, this time for surgery. It only took nine days, and I am, wonderfully, up and about again. But what is this nonsense of not being able to visit us? You can surely take a vacation for two weeks, and I will arrange for you to meet the top scientists in your speciality, and will take care of all the formalities."

There his words ended, and after a short blank space on the page, I read in a different handwriting: "One month later, he had another heart attack and passed away at the young age of 54. His wife found this in his papers, and is very keen that it should reach you, together with her appreciation that thanks to your efforts, he was given an extra 25 years of happy life with his wife and family."

TALES OF THE BLESSED

P erhaps the most significant single incident in my life was my encounter with my great teacher, H. B., and my close discipleship with him. He is among the few who have influenced my life, and he certainly shaped my Islamic personality. Since he died in 1949, I have not known anyone like him amongst the teacher/reformers who have appeared in the Islamic arena; and those who did not know him first hand have certainly missed a lot. Never, either before or after him, have I seen a teacher so loved by his students or so loving to them. God blessed him with a loving personality that never failed him, even in the hardest of circumstances. The contortions of bitterness, anger and rancor that abound nowadays were absolutely alien to him. To do his memory any justice a book would be more appropriate than an article, unless I select a single, representative incident to report, as I here propose to do.

One aspect of our education was a monthly spiritual weekend with him in the mosque of an Islamic center. We would meet in the evening and share a very austere dinner, followed by an unhurried *Isha* prayer that would last almost an hour. A spiritual class then started that would take us to 2 or 3 a.m. It focussed on an awareness of God and on heeding His presence and watchful eye in every moment of our life. The teaching was so sweet and intense that we almost physically felt God's presence, and it certainly assured us that we were essentially spiritual beings, though housed in the biological (earthly) container that is the human body. Those sessions provided us with great spiritual depth and support that became our anchor in the storms and our sustenance while undergoing the vagaries of life. An hour's rest followed, that was spent in individual prayer, *tasbeeh* or perhaps a snooze, before we assembled again for a similar pre-fajr class. Fajr prayers were then held, and supplications collectively recited. The after-fajr class on current events entailed free discussions, questions and very often debate, and when the sun was well up in the sky we took leave of our teacher and one another, having the whole Friday ahead of us for our weekly holiday.

On one of those occasions when it was the resting hour, our teacher departed to go to his home. He was on time, however, for the pre-fajr class, during which he was radiant with spirituality. The rest of the program followed as usual, and as I walked home with a few friends

we pondered on the whole event. I expressed to them my perception of a little taint of sadness on the face of our teacher when he returned from home during the night. Some of them shared this feeling. An explanation, however, was forthcoming, for a couple of hours after we were told by telephone of the death of the younger son of our teacher, and were asked to attend the funeral. Hussam died during the hour his father was at home, and the father covered him and came back to us to complete the day's teaching!

Amazing enough, but it was only forty years later that I realized this was not the end of the amazement. My teacher's other son told me that his mother had seen in a dream a man who told her that Hussam would die on such and such day. When Hussam later contracted paratyphoid everybody was apprehensive, but when he recovered and started to go out and play again, they thought the dream was false - and yet it came true.

Months later, the mother told her husband that she dreamt that the same man told her that their little daughter would die on a certain date. This time our teacher called a friend and gave him money to buy a burial plot. The child was quite healthy. But the appointed day came, and she was as usual put to sleep. The next morning she was found dead in her bed.

THE LIFE OF A PIOUS MAN

When I first met him, he was an established physician in his late 60s and I was a medical student in my late teens. Despite our age gap, however, we immediately formed a friendship which proved one of the most enduring of my life. Although he passed away some 40 years ago, I still cherish the memory of his friendship. I grew particularly close to him after I graduated from medical school and came to assist him in his private office.

His office was more like a charity than a clinic. It was usually busy because people arrived without making appointments. Common occurrences included his refunding a patient's fees or even giving a patient money to buy medicine or nutrition otherwise inaccessible. Not all of the doctor's visitors, however, sought medical treatment. Domestic problems were his concern too.

He steered many families out of crises because they had confidence in him and in his gift of wisdom, which he was able thoroughly to articulate. His financial philanthropy tided over many family budgets until better times, allowed many marriages to continue and paid for school and college fees. I know of many bachelor's degrees earned with his support.

His community was like his congregation, and he had a deep knowledge of its members. He had a keen eye for people whose dignity prevented them from admitting their hardship, and he would play tricks to give them assistance without their realizing it. One day at his office, I found a carpenter, who owned a neighborhood workshop, busily working on a sheet of wood. He was sawing it to pieces along lines the doctor had drawn. When the carpenter left, I expressed my puzzlement about the need for such odd pieces of wood. The doctor smiled as he took me aside, confiding to me that the carpenter's business was stagnant. The man was among the poorest in the area, but refused to accept charity. So the doctor invented this task for him to earn wages, and they were generous wages indeed.

The doctor lived in his suburban villa at Heliopolis, but his office was in downtown Cairo. Every weekend, he commuted by train to Heliopolis. During the week, however, he lived in a bedroom and sitting-room adjacent to his spacious office. He would entertain guests in this little apartment for the eids following Ramadan and

the pilgrimage to Mecca, as well as on other religious occasions. He would cook rams and hold consecutive lunch parties for homogenous groups of guests, from the elite notables to the poor rank-and-file.

Each group was unaware of the others. Courteously waiting on his guests, the doctor would at last enjoy his own meal of yogurt, cucumbers and bread.

I remember when the doctor suffered a splitting headache which would not respond to medication. Propped up by pillows on his bed, he instructed his nurse to summon a number of men and women who lived in the neighborhood and whom I knew to be very poor. He pointed to one of the many vases decorating his room, and when it was brought to him from a high shelf, I was amazed to see him pour a handsome amount of cash out of it. He gave all of this money to the poor people. When they had left, he uttered a sigh of relief and said, "Praise be to Allah. The headache is gone." He told me he had saved that money for his funeral, but that he had thought that God, who had never denied him a wish during his life, would surely not deny him a burial when he died. He also remembered Prophet Mohammed's saying, "Treat your ill folk by *sadaqa* (charity)," and so it was!

When I joined him occasionally on the journey to Heliopolis, hordes of little children came out of nowhere and converged upon him to receive the small amount of cash he had ready for each of them. He kept

a stock of change especially for these occasions. You could see and enjoy the children's glowing faces, but the most glowing of all was his. "There is a special gate in Heaven called the gate of those who make children happy," he explained.

After some time, I was transferred far away from Cairo, and my visits to him became infrequent. On one of those rare visits to Heliopolis, I spread my prayer rug and began the *maghrib* prayer. As I was sitting in prayer saying *tashahud*, the doctor kissed my right cheek. This act was very strange, and something in my heart told me that the man was beyond the grip of the usual rules and considerations, that he was on his way out of this world to the hereafter. The kiss was a silent and inspired good-bye. The following weekend I was summoned to attend his funeral, and I helped carry his coffin to the grave.

During his life, I felt he was a heavenly man who had come down to earth. At his death, I felt he was an earthly man going up to heaven. Ever since then, I have thought of him in my prayers every single day. I dearly cherish the time he was with me... and look forward to the time I can be with him. I implore my readers to pray to Allah for my late mentor and friend: Dr. Saleem Sabri.

FACING CANCER WITH FAITH

During my medical career, which spans well over four decades, I have encountered cancer in hundreds if not thousands of cases. Only this time was different, because the patient was none but myself. Minor symptoms pursued by diagnostic tests led to the diagnosis of stomach lymphoma. The diagnosis was not expected. Our medical books tell us that upon receiving the diagnosis of cancer the patient goes through standard phases of shock, disbelief, rejection, resentment, protest and depression, until he finally settles down more in defeat than acceptance.

In my case, however, I felt none of the above! My prompt response was to turn to Allah and address Him: I know that I am being tested and I know that the test is how I react in the first few moments. I accept the fate written in one's register since the beginning of time and

which reveals itself at its appointed time. Despite the fact that cancer afflicts millions of people, most of us remain silent until it is our turn, and then we say "Why me?" Books on medical, social and pastoral care warn the caregiver never to say it is the will of God, or to bring God into the matter in any way. Even pastoral care, as I have witnessed it in this country, has become largely secular.

To me, my illness was genuinely God's will. He Himself forewarns us in the Quran, speaking in the plural of majesty, *Most certainly We will try you by means of danger, hunger and loss of possessions, of lives and of (labor's) fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity— who, when calamity befalls them, say: Verily unto Allah we belong and verily unto Him we shall return.* (2:155, 156)

The issue is far from the myth, oft repeated, "Why does the loving God allow bad things to happen to good people or innocent children?" That is the shallow, simplistic view. We tend to focus on small issues and ignore the big picture. Allah has a purpose and He need not explain it to us on every occasion, because our trust in Him has to be tested. Allah gave us an illustration of this in *Sura Al-Kahf* (18), when the Prophet Moses followed Al-Khidr and saw him doing very strange things, the explanation of which were later given to him.

The probability of dying, of course, crossed my mind, but I asked myself: And who will not die except the One that doesn't die? Isn't death but the crowning of life, the crossing of the bridge and arrival of the ship at long last at its port of destination? And if Allah grants His grace- and with certainty He is the absolutely generous and merciful One- who would not welcome the move to the real, everlasting, and blissful life of the hereafter? Indeed, the day I am mourned may, hopefully, turn out to be my happiest day.

Since Islam emphasizes the rights of our bodies upon us and invokes us to seek treatment, I was put on a regimen of chemotherapy. This exhausted me and I felt very weak and drained. So I decided to fight back, by writing a book, *Reading the Muslim Mind* (published by American Trust Publications, Indianapolis). Some days I could only write a few lines, other days several pages. But the book was accomplished, with my hope that Allah would accept it as a perpetual charity (*sadaqah jariya*) and knowledge that would be put to good use.

Alhamdulillah, my response to the treatment was marvelous, and a later biopsy showed that the disease was completely gone. But, alas, the chemotherapy had affected my heart, and I went through a phase of heart failure and severe arrhythmia, necessitating hospital admissions and life-long medicinal treatment. My submission to the will of Allah never wavered. All the

while I did not give up my activities, having made my decision not to die before I die. Once I'm at the microphone, moreover, all the symptoms disappear and I become very strong, albeit making up for it later. Once during a Friday *khutba*, I spontaneously asked Allah: "Make our stay in this world easy, make our exit from it easy, and make the day we stand before you the happiest of our days." Unexpectedly and inexplicably I broke into tears and others also cried. I felt very embarrassed. Later I recited the *dua*, "O God, I never despair of your mercy; I never doubt your power and I ask you for the health and strength to serve your cause more."

But the Prophet says: He who does not thank people cannot thank Allah. I have therefore to acknowledge the gracious companionship and deep faith of my wife through this episode as well as throughout our 46 years of marriage. We pray that it continues into the hereafter with the promise of Allah, *Gardens of perpetual bliss they shall enter together with the righteous from among their parents, their spouses and their offspring; and the angels will come unto them from every gate saying, Peace be upon you because you have persevered in patience, how excellent therefore is this final abode.* (13:23-34)

As we steadily approach the other side, our life has been abridged into two questions and answers: What do we ask of Allah? His pardon and restoration. And what do we accept from Allah? Whatever He sees fit for us.

THOU SHALT NOT LIVE BY SCIENCE ALONE

Where I used to work, (mainly in the Middle East), the medical doctor is still called "the wise man," a title he has held for centuries. Once you earn the community's confidence, you are sure to be consulted on matters completely outside the sphere of medicine.

One of the features of my life is what I call my "telephone clinic." People ring me up - many wanting to remain anonymous - to explain their problems and seek my views about them. Although sometimes inconvenient, this is a source of happiness for me. It is a pleasure to be able to solve problems and it gives me satisfaction to feel I am trusted.

On one of these occasions an old patient of mine and her husband sought my help to make peace with their 20-year-old son. He was quite a religious young man, so I reminded him of God's words in the Quran:

"Your Lord decrees that you worship none but Him... and that you be kind to your parents." The son retorted: "No. I owe them nothing, doctor." Noticing my shock, he explained: "When they married they made up their minds to have only two children. It was sheer chance that I was second, after my elder sister. Had I been conceived later, they would have killed me through abortion, as they did the five that came after me."

This took me by surprise, as it brought me face to face with a dimension of the issue of abortion that had not previously crossed my mind—that the victim of abortion is not only the aborted baby, but may well also be the parents' relationship with their unaborted children.

Yet we live in the age of the crime of mass abortion. Innocent lives are sacrificed just because they are unwanted or inconvenient. The sanctity of human life has been progressively undermined, hand in hand with progress in science and technology. Medical science has contributed by remaining neutral and by making this crime something praiseworthy and safe—a clinical killing under aseptic conditions, using a spectrum of scientific methods including dilatation evacuation, vacuum aspiration, intrauterine injection and pharmacological uterine stimulation.

Medical science has accepted the argument that the freedom of a woman to control her own body may be extended to the killing, by the hand of the doctor, of an

innocent fetus which, scientifically, is not a part of her body, and whose presence in her uterus is her own doing and not the baby's.

Human life is a value in its own right, and its sanctity covers all phases, including the fetal. Without values to guide science people take on the status of 'things,' and fetuses become tiny little 'things.' Once the value of human life is compromised, the logical consequences for society are that one has a right to die (clinically) if ill beyond cure, and then, later perhaps, that one has a duty to die if by reason of age, infirmity or nonproductivity one's life has become a financial liability.

This valueless appraisal of human life is not a fiction in today's world. The euthanasia movement is actively gathering momentum in some countries. A new line in socio-economic literature preaches that when the human machine has outlasted its productive span, so that its maintenance costs are greater than its productivity, it should be disposed of. Such clinical disposal is sweetened by being called 'death with dignity.'

The most scientific arguments are used to promote these ideas, but unfortunately the ideas emanate from purely materialistic concepts. They ignore the fact that it is value and not matter that makes Man more than just another animal, that makes him master of his environment, founder of civilization and—if you believe in God—the bearer of God's Spirit, the shedder of his light and the trustee of his guidance on earth.

But what is the meaning of God's spirit, light and guidance in scientific terms? Practically nothing... for science concerns itself with the study of the tangible and is, as yet, unequipped to handle 'values.' This would not matter if scientists did not deny the existence of whatever lies beyond the realm of science.

Unfortunately, many have fallen into this trap. A new scientific 'religion' called 'secular humanism' maintains that human values are to be laid down by human beings without reference to any outside or supernatural source. This denies God and makes Man his own god. The source of Man's godlike authority is his mind, the creator of his science. No sooner does Man assume the role of a god than he faces a critical impasse. For the human mind admits its own limitations. Every new discovery today proves our ignorance yesterday, and every new discovery tomorrow reveals our ignorance today. Had the human mind claimed the completeness worthy of a god, then research would have been stopped and research budgets cancelled. The more we know, the more aware we become of our ignorance.

In its tendency to self-worship, science has fallen into another trap: that whatever can be done should be done—if for no other reason than that it is possible. In the field of gynecology test-tube baby technology was soon followed by the technology of surrogacy, in which a woman carries through a full pregnancy the fetus of another couple, and gives it away to them when she

delivers it. For the first time in human history, the human female is willing and able to mother a fetus with the prior intention of giving it away. As this is in most cases done for a certain amount of money, 'motherhood,' as a value, is reduced by having a price put on it.

The right of the baby to have and know a legitimate father and a legitimate mother is ignored. Indeed, the concept of legitimacy does not seem to be very scientific in modern times. If 'motherhood leasing' and 'infant selling' become widespread and a new generation knows that it is common practice that a mother carries, delivers, cashes in and gives away her baby- what effect would this have on the bond that ties consecutive generations together in love and compassion?

We live in the age of the sexual revolution. When Freud formulated his views (a great scientific leap in his days, although later seem as dead and buried), people put sex into the domain of science, freeing it from the unscientific constraints that had confined it to marital life.

Similarly, when the American Psychiatric Association ceased to consider homosexuality an aberration to be treated, the public came to think that it was scientifically acceptable. This not only encouraged homosexual activity amongst suppressed homosexuals, but also caused homosexuality itself to spread considerably.

The result of these and other moves is the current epidemic of exploitation, venereal disease and enslavement to sexuality and pleasure-seeking. We count the cost not only in terms of health but also in loss of self-respect, mutual respect and self-restraint, without which we lose our humanity.

Medical and biological science is by no means the only illustration of the possible hazards of a science unguided by values, but it is the latest member of the club. Since the dawn of history, medicine has confined its efforts to the service of life. Nowadays it has started to be a double-edged weapon — sometimes for life and sometimes against it.

It is no secret today that preparations for biological warfare have made significant headway over the past decades. Top military secrets probably reside now more in biology laboratories than in those of chemistry, physics or mechanics. When the first atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima, Oppenheimer - the father of the atomic bomb - said: "Today physicists have known sin." Will the day come when the same will be said about biologists?

I am a firm believer in science and a strong advocate of scientific advancement. But I am fully aware that if science takes a neutral stand between morality and immorality, good and evil, what is useful and what is harmful, then, at least, people—including scientists—should refrain from such neutrality. Science is subject to

Man, and not Man to science. The freedom of scientific pursuit is sacred, but its products are not necessarily so. The bridge between science on the one hand and technology and mass production on the other should be heavily guarded by a value system. In other words science must have a conscience.

But from where do we derive our values? If Man is too fallible, then what about God? Does God exist? Imagine being told that the order of the words in a dictionary was the result of an explosion in a printer's shop. Would your scientific mind swallow it? Look around you, thoroughly and scientifically, from atom to galaxy. All has been planned, arranged and set to function according to immutable scientific laws- a creation immensely more sophisticated than the words in a dictionary.

If you think God is there, is it logical that He uniquely endowed Man with concepts of responsibility and accountability, and yet left him without the possibility of divine guidance?

AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON EUTHANASIA

Is the third of the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, following Judaism and Christianity. Recognizing and sharing the moral code of its predecessors, Islam, however, brought forth a comprehensive system, the *Sharia*, that covers all aspects of individual or collective life.

The primary sources of the *Sharia* are the Quran and the Tradition (teachings and deeds) of Prophet Mohammed. Issues not specifically mentioned in these two sources are explained by applying the principles of analogy (intelligent reasoning matching new issues with issues judged by the Quran or Tradition) and the unanimous consensus of Muslim scholars. When an issue has been clearly settled by the Quran or Tradition, their verdict is final.

"It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah (the Arabic word meaning God) and His messenger, to have any option about their

decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path.” (33:36)

Such issues are primarily in the domain of creed, worship, morality and a few legislative items. The major part of Islamic jurisprudence is the product of human thinking in response to new events in new times and places, always heeding the five objectives of the *Sharia*, which are the protection of faith, life, mind, ownership and family. A basic premise is the lawfulness of all things unless specifically expected by the Quran and Tradition or conflicting with the objectives of the *Sharia*.

The sanctity of human life is a basic value as decreed by God. Commenting on the killing of Abel by his brother Cain (the two sons of Adam), God says in the Quran: *On that account We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person - unless it be for murder or spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. (5:32).*

The Quran also says: *Take not life which Allah made sacred otherwise than in the course of justice.” (6:151 and 17:33).*

The *Sharia* goes into great detail in defining conditions where taking life is permissible in war or in peace (as an item of the criminal law), with rigorous prerequisites and precautions to minimize the frequency of that event.

Is there a right to suicide? Not in Islam. God is the owner and giver of life and His rights in giving and in taking are not to be violated. We do not own our bodies. Instead, we have been entrusted by God to care, nurture and protect our bodies.

Attempting to kill oneself is a crime as well as a grave sin in Islam. The Quran says: *Do not kill (or destroy) yourselves, for verily Allah has been to you most merciful.* (4:29)

To warn against suicide, Prophet Mohammed said:

“Whoever kills himself with an iron instrument will be carrying it forever in hell. Whoever takes poison and kills himself will forever keep sipping that poison in hell. Whoever jumps off a mountain and kills himself will forever keep falling down in the depths of hell” (narrated by *Bukhari* and *Muslim*)

The sharia specifies the conditions for taking life (i.e. the exceptions to the general rule of the sanctity of human life), and they do not include mercy killing or make allowance for it. Human life per se is to be respected unconditionally. The concept of a life not worth living does not exist in Islam. Justification of taking a life by arguing that it is to escape suffering is not acceptable. Prophet Mohammed taught:

“There was a man in older times who had an infliction that taxed his patience, so he took a knife, cut his wrist and bled to death. Upon this, God said: My subject hastened his end. I deny him paradise.” (*Bukhari*)

During a military campaign, a Muslim was killed, and the Prophet's companions praised the soldier's gallantry and skill in fighting. To their surprise, the Prophet commented, "His lot is hell." Upon inquiry, the companions found that the man had been seriously injured, and that therefore he had plunged his chest onto the tip of his sword, committing suicide. (Muslim)

The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics, endorsed by the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine (Islamic Organization of Medical Sciences, Kuwait, 1981, p.65) states: "Mercy killing – like suicide – finds no support except in the atheistic way of thinking that stresses that life on this earth is followed by a void. The claim that killing is justified if the illness is painful and incurable is also refuted, for there is no human pain that cannot be largely conquered by medication or by neurosurgery."

But there is another dimension to the question of pain and suffering. Patience and endurance are highly regarded and highly-rewarded values in Islam.

Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure. (39:10)

And bear in patience whatever (ill) may befall you: this, behold, is something to set one's heart upon." (31:17)

Prophet Mohammed taught "When the believer is afflicted with pain - even that of a prick of a thorn - God forgives his sins and his wrongdoings are discarded as a tree sheds off its leaves." (Bukhari and Muslim).

When means of preventing or alleviating pain fall short, this spiritual dimension can be very effectively called upon to support the patient who believes that accepting and standing unavoidable pain will be to his/her credit in the hereafter, the real and enduring life. To a person who does not believe in a hereafter, this might sound like nonsense. However, for Muslims, who do happen to believe in a hereafter, euthanasia itself is certainly nonsense.

There is no disagreement that the financial cost of maintaining the incurably ill and the senile is a growing concern, so much so that some groups have gone beyond the concept of the right to die to that of the duty to die. They claim that when the human machine has outlived its productive span, its maintenance is an unacceptable burden on the productive stratum of society, and it should be discarded, and that abruptly, rather than allowing it to deteriorate gradually (Jacques Atali: *La médecine en accusation*, in Michel Solomon, *"L'avenir de la Vie"*, Coll. *"Les visages de l'avenir"*, Ed. Seghers, Paris, 1981, pp.273-275).

This logic is completely alien to Islam. Values take priority over price. The care of the weak, old and helpless is a value in itself for which people willingly sacrifice time, effort and money. This caring starts, naturally, with one's own parents.

Your Lord decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one or both of

them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt but address them in terms of honor. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say: my Lord, bestow on them your mercy even as they cherished me in childhood." (17:24-26).

Because such caring is a virtue ordained and rewarded by God in this world and in the hereafter, believers do not see it as a debit, but as an investment. In a materialistic, dollar-centric community, this logic is meaningless, but not so in the value-oriented, God heeding community of the faithful.

When individual means cannot cover the needed care it becomes the collective responsibility of society, according to Islam. Consequently, financial priorities are reshuffled so that values take priority over pleasures; in fact, people derive more pleasure from heeding values than from pursuing light distractions. A prerequisite, of course, is a moral and spiritual reorientation of a society so that it does not hold to misleading premises.

In an Islamic setting, the question of euthanasia does not arise, or, if it does, it is dismissed as religiously unlawful. The patient should receive every possible psychological support and compassion from family and friends, including the strengthening of the patient's spiritual (religious) stamina. The doctor also participates in this, as well as providing the therapeutic measures for the relief of pain. A dilemma arises when the dose of the pain killer necessary to alleviate pain approximates or

overlaps with the lethal dose that may bring about the patient's death. Ingenuity on the part of the doctor is called for to avoid this situation. However, from a religious point of view the critical issue is the doctor's intention: is it to kill or to ease pain? Intention is beyond verification by the law, but according to Islam it cannot escape the eye of God, who knows all that hearts conceal (Quran 40:19). Sins that do not qualify as legal crimes may be beyond the domain of judges, but remain subject to the judgment of God.

The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics (1981, p.67) states: "In his/her defense of life, however, the doctor is well advised to realize his/her limit and not transgress it. If it is scientifically certain that life cannot be restored, then it is futile to diligently maintain the vegetative state of the patient by heroic means of animation to or preserve the patient by deep freezing or other artificial methods. It is the process of life that the doctor aims to maintain and not the process of dying. In any case, the doctor shall not take a positive measure to terminate the patient's life."

The seeking of medical treatment for illness is mandatory in Islam, according to two sayings of the Prophet: "Seek treatment, subjects of God, for every illness God has made a cure," and "Your body has a right on you." But when the treatment holds no promise it ceases to be mandatory. This applies both to surgical and/or pharmaceutical measures, and - according to a

majority of scholars - to artificial animation machines. Ordinary life needs which are the right of every living person and which are not categorized as treatment are regarded differently. These include food and drink and ordinary nursing care, and are not to be withheld as long as the patient lives (an interesting development is the acceptance of total brain death - including that of the brain stem - as a equivalent to withdrawal from life, even if the patient is being artificially animated; then, certain rulings pertaining to the dead become applicable, including ending artificial maintenance and removing the patient's heart for transplantation, which is last based on analogy to an old juridical rule called the "movement of the slain ("Human life: Its Inception and End;" Islamic Organization of Medical Sciences, Kuwait, 1989, p. 628-9).

The discussion of euthanasia cannot be isolated from the ideological background of a certain community. Muslims, believing in God and in a divinely prescribed Sharia will naturally have different views from others who do not believe in God, or who acknowledge God but deny Him the authority to tell us what we should or shouldn't do. As Dostoevsky said, "Where there is no God, everything is possible." In much of contemporary Christendom, the concept of separation of church and state is being pushed to mean the exclusion of God from human affairs, although these two ideas are not the same.

The so-called euthanasia that occurred in Nazi Germany earlier this century gave us a lot to think about. It was endorsed, pioneered, and implemented by medical practioners of the highest order of intelligence and professional status. Once the concept of a life not worth living was condoned, the sliding slope led subtly to the horrors that followed. Fifty years later, the euthanasia lobby has regrouped, and has launched a powerful second attempt that has succeeded in the Netherlands and now targets Europe and America. Their opponents cast doubt on the alleged free consent of the patient, questioning whether it is in fact authentic, or rather influenced by a morbid psychology, or by the pressure of the patient is feelings of being a psychological or financial burden on his family. Consent given by the family is open to the possibility of conflict of interests. The battle lines have been drawn, and the outcome remains to be seen - a battle which in Islam has no premise to occur in the first place.

POPULATION CONTROL

My first encounter with the abortion issue was in 1964, when I attended a conference held by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in London. During the discussion an over-enthusiastic French doctor took the podium and emphatically declared that abortion should be the right of every woman who wanted it. At the time, this sounded so revolutionary and evoked such a stir that the chairwoman of the conference announced that the gentleman was expressing his personal views and not those of the IPPF. Only a short while later, I realized that she had not been telling the truth, as hidden agendas were revealed in the struggle that led to the legalization of abortion in Britain, and, soon thereafter, in other countries.

When I returned to the Middle East, the IPPF was gracious enough to invite me to other conferences,

where I was confronted with a strong pro-abortion lobby that was pushing abortion not only on secular grounds but on Islamic grounds as well. By the grace of Allah, each time I formed part of a minority who succeeded in thwarting this lobby's efforts to reach some form of a ruling to the effect that abortion was *halal* (divinely permitted).

Years later, Islamic conferences comprising religious and scientific scholars transcended earlier writings and took current scientific facts into consideration, concluding that human life begins at conception and that it is to be respected in all its stages, except when abortion becomes necessary to save the life of the mother. In September 1994, the United Nations planned an international conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo, Egypt. In the "Proposed Program of Action for the Cairo Conference," a United Nations document, it is appalling to read a frank demand addressed to the Third World countries that they legalize abortion as a method of family planning, and relinquish the barriers that hinder young (unmarried) people from enjoying their sexuality, which is to be rendered safe by the use of condoms. The United States has announced its complete support of this plan, and has instructed its diplomatic missions to exert pressure on the various nations to comply with it. The hint was strong that American and International Monetary Fund loans and aid would be linked to such compliance.

Violent protest was voiced in Third World countries as well as in our own, and various writers criticized our government for trying to impose our lifestyle on other people, calling it moral imperialism.

The issue of population - population explosion and the population bomb - has been a focus of attention over the past five decades, and is certainly a vital issue. The prescription designed by the West, to remedy the problem by controlling the populations of the Third World nations, who are the world's major procreators, is certainly an oversimplification.

My studies and readings have revealed to me that there is more to this subject than what catches the eye. At the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in 1974, it was proven that development would lead to decreased numbers, rather than the other way round, hence the transfer of technology would be the appropriate answer to the population problem, rather than abortion and contraception. Development is the best "pill," as was said then. Rebuking the Third World nations without reference to the excessively consumeristic lifestyles in developed countries entails the lie of telling only part of the truth. For example, America constitutes only six percent of the world population, but consumes one - sixth of its resources. It has been computed that the impact on resources and the environment by the birth of one child in America is equal to that of 100 children in Bangladesh. The West's motives for reducing

Third World populations seem to include more than just an innocent regard for the welfare of humanity.

In the Summer 1991 issue of *Foreign Affairs* a report (originally prepared for the U.S. Army Conference on Long Range Planning) by Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute warns against the implications of the proportional increase in numbers of the Third World nations for the international political order and the balance of world power. After three generations, Eberstadt notes, eight great grandparents in the West will share only four or five descendants against over three hundred in much of Africa and the Middle East; therefore the leading countries of today will be the little countries of the future.

The National Security Study Memorandum 200, a study of "Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for US Security and Overseas Interests" (dated December 10, 1974, and classified, but later declassified and released in 1990) reveals the complex political, economic and military aspects of the matter: population factors could be the seeds of revolutionary actions and the expropriation or limitation of foreign economic interests. Poverty and population growth would create pressure for development, induce a review of foreign investment terms, and even boost military growth, if conscription into the military is seen as a viable alternative to unemployment.

Since the seventies, there has been a call to reduce the world population by 2 billion, mainly in Third World countries. At the time this was first suggested, our Defense Secretary commented that such a reduction could be achieved only by the atomic bomb, war or famine. The first is unfeasible, but we currently see famine that could have been averted by the transfer of technology, and wars in Somalia, Rwanda, Yemen and elsewhere, where citizens kill their own compatriots with weapons that are not made in their own countries but exported to them by the developed countries.

More recently, in an article entitled "Would Machiavelli Now Be a Better Guide to Doctors than Hippocrates?" (*World Health Forum*, vol.4, 1993, p.105), Dr. Jean Martin reports some opinions questioning the advisability of continuing vaccination programs in the Third World since these allow children to live, impacting the resources of the countries concerned and leading to a repetition of the cycle of famine and death. The population problem is real, but to try to solve it only by the reduction of the population of the Third World is cruel, selfish and futile.

HOMO- SEXUALITY

Homosexuality has proved to be a serious health hazard. It was in the cradle of homosexuality that AIDS was born and grew, to be the plague of the twentieth century and possibly the twenty-first.

Had this lethal infection remained confined to the homosexual community, it would have been fair enough to say that they have made their choice, and now they face its consequences.

Unfortunately, the infection has spilled over beyond homosexuals, to their female sexual partners, from infected mothers to unborn children, to unsuspecting recipients of blood transfusions, to physicians and health personnel through an inadvertent needle prick or broken specimen tube, and of course to intravenous drug users through infected needles. Homosexuality has, therefore, become a menace both to homosexuals and to

innocent people. Precautions to avoid AIDS are abysmally inadequate.

The homosexuality lobby has attained great political power. They can intimidate their opponents and they wield such influence as to be able to start tampering with the laws of the land in favor of their practice.

Homosexuality is objectionable and clothing it with the name "gay" does not ameliorate it. Homosexuality is selfish, for the frantic race to find a medicine or a vaccine for AIDS costs lots of money that would have been better spent on prenatal care, child health care and education, the homeless, the aged and the underprivileged; but the homosexuals are not ashamed, and are crying out, asking for more money.

But homosexuality has always existed - the lobbyists say - and what has happened in recent years is that people have become honest about it, have shed old hypocrisy and have merely come out into the light. But Muslims say that this is not the whole truth. Homosexuality has been and is being very actively promoted and very pervasively marketed, and is consequently on the increase. And when the medical profession identified "the gay bowel syndrome" even before the current HIV epidemic emerged, and failed to warn the public about it, this seemed proof of a conspiracy of silence. As a matter of fact, homosexuality used to be a treatable disease, until the early seventies, when the American Psychiatric Association announced that

homosexuality was no longer to be considered a disease, but was orientation.

In the mid - seventies, I attended medical conferences where research findings were presented to prove the safety of anal sex, findings that time showed to be false and that I suspect were faked to favor "the cause." And the homosexuals, through their voices, publications, and rallies, their social and political influence, are doing their best not only to be accepted but to widen their sphere on the population chart. Their recent attempts to lower the age of sexual consent to innocent childhood (Swedish homosexuals demanded it should be lowered to the age of four years) can only mean an intention to lure and entice.

The lobbyists also say homosexuality is a natural inclination that a person is born with. So what? Is not heterosexuality also a natural inclination? and yet it has to be controlled and restrained. Indeed, every human being has the potential for all sorts of inclinations, but some of these must be repressed and some may be released as appropriate.

Without the faculty of self - restraint, humanity would be reduced to a jungle and people to beasts, programmed to respond only to their biological inclinations or whims.

According to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, sex is allowed only within marriage, and other "calls" should be repressed, be they homosexual or heterosexual. And

the dictates of religion and common sense do coincide, if we are to derive any lessons from the sequelae of license manifested in the modern epidemics of STD, AIDS, abortion, illegitimate children, erosion of the family and their far reaching psychological, moral, social and economic effects. It is with regret that we see compromise, complicity and even perversion in the ranks of some religious bodies. Religious teachings have been ignored or manipulated out of context, and there were those who fell prey to the disease they were supposed to combat. Muslims are clear in their condemnation of homosexuality. Islam makes it a grave sin and - if legal requisites pertain - a criminal offense. Muslims are often asked whether they think the AIDS epidemic is a punishment from God, a notion that most clergy abhor to acknowledge. We are not in a position to speak on behalf of God, however, Islam tells us that if people follow His guidance it will be for their best, and if they disobey Him it is to their detriment.

The scriptures of Islam, Christianity and Judaism report the fate of the people of Prophet Lot, who also practiced and spread homosexuality to the proportions of a social wave; their lot was total destruction. Over fourteen hundred years ago Prophet Mohammed said: "When sin afflicts a people and they publicize it then God subjects them to ailments unknown to their forefathers."

As much as we condemn homosexuality, Muslim's attitude to the AIDS patient is one of care and compassion. Psychological support should be given as well as medical care if available. However, methods and measures to prevent the spread of infection to others should be rigorously observed. As is medically well - established, prevention is better than cure, and Muslims do not believe that the preventive medicine against AIDS consists of a medicine or vaccine, but rather that it may be found in a clean lifestyle. Diseases are prevented by preventing their cause.

MARRIAGE AND SOCIETY

A common scenario in many Islamic centers, even these days in some, is when a man and woman come to the administration office requesting an Islamic marriage. Just great! Congratulations. Two witnesses are produced and the marriage is contracted, and the couple leave with broad smiles and a decorated sheet of paper that certifies their marriage at the Islamic center.

A short time later, however, the lady comes back in tears and distress. She has been kicked out of her house, without means to obtain her rights, since the certificate given by the center is not an official document recognized by the law of the land.

This was the lesson that prompted many Islamic centers to insist that the couple desiring marriage bring formal marriage license from the city authorities. There is a special space on the license for a religious marriage,

where the person performing the marriage specifies that the marriage has been conducted according to the Islamic faith. After verbally securing the *ijab* and *qabul*, the couple, their witnesses and the representative of the Center sign the document.

The completed license is then mailed to the city authorities, to be entered in the official register and mailed back. However, some bridegrooms, entrusted with mailing the license to the city, fail to do so. Now, the Islamic Center mails the license to the city. Having the certificate recorded in the official registry ensures that an ill - intentioned man can never deny his marriage.

As expected, we encountered some argumentative (or unread) men who accused us of violating Islam, whose requirement for marriage is merely two witnesses. This requirement was valid at a time when people were honest. In later times, a could actually buy two witnesses to testify to his marriage to almost any woman. In every Islamic country now, there is a special civil servant (*Mazoun*, *Qazi*, etc.) whose duty it is to officiate at the *nekah* and to fill out documents that he then enters in an official register. The *Sharia* has its fixed components (*ibadat* and *hudood*) that can never be tampered with. However, the Quran allows for *ijtihad*.

In Islam there is room in the marriage contract for any pre-agreed special stipulations. The dowry (especially the deferred portion of it, and how disbursed), the

muslim upbringing of children if the mother is non-muslim, or any lawful thing mutually agreed (the daughter of a friend of mine demanded in the contract that kitchen cleaning be done jointly; it still is after 12 years). These stipulations can be legally formulated into prenuptial agreements; otherwise, the law of the land reigns.

Interfaith marriage is another relevant issue to Muslim life in America, one which is a challenge to many parents. Sometimes, a son challenges his parents to an arbitration based on the Quran. For a Muslim man to marry a Christian or a Jew is not *haram* (unlawful) ... but it is not the best of the *halal* (lawful). It is the religious duty of a Muslim man to plan for the future of his children, to consider whether they will be Muslims or lost to Islam; their chances are slim if their mother is not Muslim, and if they do not become Muslims, the father will carry the heavy burden of responsibility.

Another factor to take into consideration is that a Muslim woman can only marry a Muslim man. Since muslims are a minority in America, any Muslim boy who, by marrying a non-Muslim, is not available for marriage to a Muslim girl, aggravates the crisis of marriage among Muslim girls.

When Caliph Omar heard that one of his commanders in the newly conquered lands of the Roman Empire had married a beautiful Christian, he sent him written orders to immediately divorce her. Cunningly, the man wrote to Omar: "Is what I did *haram*?" Omar answered:

"No. What you did is not *haram*. But if you and your like succumb to the beauty of Roman women and marry them, who will marry the Muslim women?" This established the chapter of *fiqh* called: The narrowing of the lawful, for the overall interest of the *umma*.

Muslim girls often protest not having the same right as men of marrying a non - Muslim. In Islam (as in Judaism and Christianity), the husband is the head of the family (and the wife its heart).

When the leader of the family does not recognize the religion (Islam) of the other party, she might be wronged, whereas a Muslim husband is obligated by Islam to recognize and respect Judaism and Christianity, and to enable his wife to abide by them in her life and her worship. There will never be a conflict of loyalties such as might arise if a Christian husband wants to enjoy his sexual rights during Ramadan while his Muslim wife is fasting, to quote just an example. In non-Muslim countries, it remains the duty of Muslim parents and Islamic centers to maximize opportunities for their boys and girls to marry one another.

We have reason to believe that the question of polygamy warrants much clarification. We cannot say that polygamy is prohibited in Islam. Nor was it prohibited in Judaism or Christianity, as evidenced by the Biblical prophets who were polygamous. Attempts to curb polygamy in Europe started in the sixth century (with the Emperor Justinian).

Islam found polygamy already existing, and regulated it. The Quran set firmly the criteria and conditions about which many new Muslims had been lax. Muslims in America face a special situation. Polygamy is illegal in America, and Islam does not permit a Muslim to commit a crime. We American Muslims are subject to American law, and we have the right of objection only if the law forces us to do something that is against Islam.

Since monogamy is not against Islam, we don't have a case for dissent. Moreover, when an American Muslim takes a second wife, as is rumored to be the practice of some Islamic centers, the second wife is denied her legal proof of marriage, and will therefore essentially be kept as a hidden or secret wife, which contradicts the Quranic criterion of equity between wives.

SAEED

RAMADAN

His fame acquainted me with him even before we met. I was a medical student in Cairo while he was at a high school in the city of Tanta before he joined us to enter law school. The boy was a genius, because he was one of the most outstanding orators of our time. It was no wonder therefore that his movement to Cairo posed on him a very busy speaking schedule at home and at abroad, and this kept growing after he graduated from law school to be a lawyer. I was really concerned and went to our teacher and guide H.B. to tell him "Saeed should not be consumed in this way. He should be removed from the speakers' roll and ordered to obtain his Ph.D. One thinker is more useful to the *dawa* than a thousand ordinary members." This proved impossible at the time, but it was much later on, when the circumstances changed, that he got a Ph.D. in international law from a university in Germany. Saeed

was so mature that it was not uncommon while he was a student to be the representative of the Ikhwan in important meetings perhaps with heads of political parties, cabinet ministers or visiting dignitaries. He was a person of great spirituality and acceptance of fate which contrasted with many other peers of his age. When the guide H.B. lost the parliamentary elections at the Islamiya constituency against all odds – thanks to the flagrant intervention of the government – we were stunned with the news. The sad silence was broken by Saeed's voice "If Allah willed otherwise, it would have been" ... to which a frustrated peer answered "Saeed: Don't mix spirituality with work."

Saeed married Wafaa, the daughter of H.B., as he intensely desired. He continued to serve, and shine, in Egypt, Palestine (1948), Saudi Arabia and almost all Arab and Muslim countries. After H.B. was martyred, he took over the editorship of *al-Manar* and later *al-Muslimoon*, two very prestigious Islamic publications. Then the army coup of 1952 came, and the honey-moon with the Ikhwan was only brief. With Nasser as dictator Saeed was naturally among the opposition. When sentenced to life imprisonment he was outside Egypt, and so his Egyptian nationality was revoked. Although he was very instrumental in the foundation of the organization of Muslim countries and the League of Muslim World he was soon distanced. He then chose to settle in Switzerland and make it his home. Life was too tough

for the young family in Geneva, and as the family grew (four boys and one girl), it had to go through heroic measures to endure financial deprivation,. Saeed, nevertheless, founded the Islamic Center of Geneva, a hub for scholars and an effective institution for the promotion of Islam. Casting on his material need and meagre means, the agents of a certain government promised him millions if he just adjusted his stands and standards to comply with theirs. Repeatedly his answer was "I can speak only what is in my heart."

Continual stress gave Saeed a stomach ulcer. During one of its active episodes the ulcer bled heavily and Saeed had to be given a blood transfusion. Unfortunately, the blood was tainted with Hepatitis C virus that could not be pre-detected. That gave Saeed his chronic ailment which he endured for many years with a progressively failing liver function. It was in hepatic coma that he achieved his final rest in August 1995. It was time for the sick to be healed, the stranger to go back home and the stressed to be released from the ordeal of life and be generously rewarded by his Lord in the hereafter.

Saeed had always expressed his desire to be buried in Medina. When he died, his eldest son Ayman (a leading neuro-surgeon in Geneva) submitted the request, but unfortunately for some reasons, the authorities refused. He was taken to Cairo and buried beside his beloved great teacher and father-in-law, Hassan al-Banna.

KEEP MARRIAGE MONOGAMOUS

As a child, I asked my elders why the learned people were more humble than the less learned. I was told that those who are arrogant about their knowledge are often the ignorant ones. Thinking about my life in Kuwait, I remember an incident which well illustrates that early lesson.

During a very precious period of my life, I worked as a professor of obstetrics and gynecology in Kuwait. As it happened, I acquired a reputation in the country and the surrounding region, both as a doctor and as an Islamic scholar. Therefore, it was not unusual for me to be invited by universities to give lectures which were sometimes medical, at other times Islamic.

On one such occasion, the Al-Ein University in the United Arab Emirates invited me for what turned out to be a blessed visit, because during it I befriended a person whose brotherhood I have cherished for the past 14

years. He was an Islamic law professor, a jewel of knowledge and of perfect Islamic integrity. When I had concluded my first lecture, he suggested that I dismiss the official driver assigned by the university and allow him to show me around, like a pampered tourist. The saying of Prophet Mohammed about souls being like drafted soldiers - similar souls coming together and differing ones separating themselves from each other - seemed certainly to be very positively working for us, and soon we felt like brothers.

The next morning, as he was showing me the various quarters of the university, my friend surprised me with a statement of a fairly personal nature. "God willing, I am getting married," he said. Looking into his eyes, I could read, "this news is for your information," but also, "what do you think?" He took me off guard, and all I could do was to ask whether he was not already married. My friend said that he was, by the grace of God, and even had three beautiful daughters. "So you must be yearning for a boy?" But again he disappointed me. "Oh no, it does not make the slightest difference to me whether I have male or female progeny," he replied. That left me with only one remaining card which I was hoping not to have to play. I speculated that there might be something wrong with his wife: "A fault in her character, or in the way she treats you or looks after the family, that leaves you with no choice but to marry again?" But alas! I felt really at the end of my rope when he said,

"Not at all, she is a perfect wife and mother in every respect, so devoted to my pleasure and my needs and to the well-being of the children. One could never hope for a better wife."

This time, I had to control my voice as I asked the obvious question, "If that is so, why on earth do you want to marry again?" And, with an air of extreme confidence, he said, "It is just in observance of the traditions of the Prophet (the *sunna*)."

It occurred to me to ask him whether his new marriage would make his wife happy or unhappy. Fortunately, he admitted that such a marriage would no doubt make her very miserable. Then I posed a technical question to him, "Which is the primary source of Islamic law, the Quran or the traditions of the Prophet?" He, of course, chose the Quran. I then reiterated, "And you say that the lady is very good to you?" He again said that she was. "And that your marriage will make her very miserable?" Once more, he agreed. So I then said, "Allah asks, in the chapter *Al-Rahman* of the Quran, 'Is there any reward for good other than good?' What do you say to that?"

My friend was dumfounded, and for several moments he remained speechless. But then, he commanded my absolute respect and admiration when he finally broke the silence by saying, "You are right. I am not going to marry."

In the evening, he invited me to his home for a very generous meal. He had told his family about our discussion, and I was blessed with four more grateful friends.

I later added that Islam, like Christianity and Judaism before it, does not prohibit polygamy. The Old Testament prophets are a good example of this. We must remember, however, the Quranic requirement of equity, which God declares almost impossible to achieve in a polygamous marriage. There is no excuse for crudely invoking the traditions of the Prophet to justify polygamy.

A study of the Prophet's marital life clearly shows that it had two phases, the first of which was his 28 years of monogamous marriage to Khadija. The second phase consisted of about ten years of polygamous marriage, starting at age 53, with elderly or widowed women, and mainly for humane and political reasons. The Prophet married a number of wives greater than that permitted to other Muslims. He was also prohibited from divorcing a wife and marrying another, but other Muslims were not. His widows were not permitted to marry after his death, which is also not the case for other Muslims. Therefore, if a person is really keen on following the Prophet's traditions, is it the first or the second phase of the Prophet's married life that he ought to follow?

A UNIQUE JOKE

Thirty-five years is a long time, but I am told nothing has changed, except perhaps for the worse. The event I remember took place in a major Middle Eastern capital during one of those cyclic spasmodic episodes of mass arrests of Islamic proponents, with a wide (safety) margin of those merely suspected to be so. Tens of thousands of detainees converged in a steady flow on the specially prepared facilities in specially armored trains and buses, all carefully handcuffed (pairs both to one another and to a guard on either side, all staying linked even if one of them had to use the train's toilets), and finally delivered, passing through a succession of huge iron gates, to the court-yard of the prison. Each batch would be ordered to strip naked and to squat on the ground in single file. This was followed by an order to thoroughly blindfold oneself with a piece of underclothing, to stand up, turn right and with the right

hand to hold onto the right shoulder of the prisoner ahead. Obeying fierce orders, would row, threatened by whips, along a winding way that included climbing a staircase.

Desperate fingers almost burrowed their way into the shoulder of the man in front of one, for this was the only way to follow the course. Those who were able to cheat by looking from underneath their blindfold glimpsed some persons, awaiting torture, hanging by their cuffed wrists from a high of iron bars, completely naked, with bleeding whip wounds striping their bodies, and prison functionaries dressing the wounds with iodine to keep them clean until it was time for the next dose of torture in the evening.

Later, the newcomers would come to know that there were more sophisticated and varied methods of torture carried out in and near the interrogation rooms, evidenced only by incessant screams of pain and voices frantically shouting a willingness to sign any document of confession just to gain a respite.

The running terrified column reached one of the prison wards, where the men were ordered to remove their blindfolds. The room was 20 by 30 feet with a single iron-barred door and two small, iron-barred windows high up near the ceiling, and with a sink beside a toilet in a corner.

There was a crowd of men, but no one had the curiosity to ask questions; the atmosphere felt as though

it was the Day of Judgement, when people will be resurrected out of their tombs and as the Quran says; "That day shall a man flee from his own brother, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and his children; each of them, that day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to others." (80:34-37)

Prison clothes and a dirty, worn out blanket were handed to each man, and the door was locked, with instructions that there should be no noise or speaking. A restless lull followed, but not for long, for soon the door was opened and another group of dazed, horrified prisoners shoved in. And this kept repeating itself again and again, until the ward was completely filled, at its packed capacity of 112 people. Bedtime (with out beds) was a horrendous exercise, a row of heads at each of the opposing walls and two rows of heads at the middle of the room, the bodies facing in opposite directions. Sleeping on one side, the men lay straight, with no joint flexed except that of the foot, to straighten it in line with the body. But alas! The breadth of the ward was less than that of four men sleeping in tandem. So the lightest inmate would have to creep over the others, to disentangle and rearrange their legs and feet.

At dawn, everybody rushed to get ready for prayer, and their ability to organize the use of the single toilet and the single water faucet for their ablutions was admirable. At the call to prayer, they lined up, but it was

obvious that the lines were too close together to allow for the bowing and prostration at *rokoo* (kneeling) and *sujood* (prostration). Under the circumstances, however, they thought it permissible to make a symbolic bow and to prostrate their foreheads on top of the heels of the line in front.

The prisoners chose Sheikh Mohammed as their imam, to lead the prayer. He was the eldest (86 years) and had been educated in the religious school system where he had learned the Quran by heart, as well as gaining command of a large body of religious literature. *Fajr* prayer is very special, and the tranquillity of day-break, coupled with the prisoners' deep sense of helplessness and injustice greatly sharpened the spirituality of the group. Rising from the second *rakaa*, Sheikh Mohammed began to recite an old *qunoot* (seeking God's help in adversity) supplication, written centuries ago to address similar situations of agony and distress. When Sheikh Mohammed, raising his hands above his head, prayed to God saying, "O Allah, secure our freedom", the walls rang and vibrated with the emotional answer, *ameen* (amen). The same thing happened when Sheikh Mohammed prayed: "O Allah, undo our shackles; O Allah: be for us and not against us." But when Sheikh Mohammed continued his supplication saying, "O Allah: increase us and do not decrease us," there was absolute silence. Nobody answered.

A LESSON TAUGHT BY A STONE

More than 40 years ago, I was the lone physician in a desolate region of the Egyptian countryside. One morning, I had to respond to an emergency call. While I was driving the ambulance along the narrow, muddy road that ran between the cornfields, a peasant boy appeared out of nowhere with a stone in his hand that he threw, smashing my window. I narrowly escaped being hit. Reflexively, I halted the ambulance and ran after the boy. But he was younger and lighter, and knew his way through the dense plantation. After a while, I had no choice but to reform, humbly and breathlessly, to my ambulance and resume my call. When I arrived, I was too late; the patient had just died.

This was a lifelong lesson to me to be always clear about my priorities and never to succumb to the temptation to let myself be distracted from my primary aim by

secondary or new issues. Even when both goals can- or should - be served, major (strategic) goals should never be eclipsed or dimmed by symptomatic or fleeting events. The memory is alive in my mind these days, in view of its relevance to Muslim life in America. Since the World Trade Center bombing, followed by the pre-emption of a plot for other bomb attacks in which Muslims have been incriminated, the Muslim community in America has been stunned into a phase of helpless anxiety and passive expectancy. Some succumb to a feeling of guilt about a crime they did not commit, and which they actually detest and loathe, while others are flabbergasted by the announcement of a Muslim inciter/informant, as if such have not been the norms of security agency practice since antiquity.

Meanwhile, the traditional enemies of Islam in the media have been tremendously active in tarnishing the image of Islam in pursuit of their long-term agenda. Criminal charges against Muslim individuals are considered charges against the religion of Islam, whereas religion is never mentioned when similar or worse crimes are committed by followers of other religions. The tag of fundamentalism is affixed to everything Islamic, to the extent that a major paper's a photograph of people going to the Eid prayer in Cairo included the caption "Muslim fundamentalists going to Eid prayers."

We would like to emphatically propose to our Muslim community in America that now is the worst

time to slip into paralysis and allow the ears and minds of our fellow American citizens to be monopolized by the camp hostile to us. The campaign slandering Islam should be matched or outpaced by a campaign educating the public opinion about Islam as it really is. Let others spread lies, but we must reveal the truth. Let them preach hate, but we should preach love. After all, the Quran tells us that our prophet was sent for no other purpose than that of mercy to the world. It is true that our access to the media is a tiny fraction of what our opponents is, which should only make us multiply our personal and grass - roots activities. In our experience at universities, colleges, schools, churches, associations, dialogues, trialogues and symposia with our Christian and Jewish brethren, the response to our words is invariably positive; and people say that our information about Islam is new to them, and that they realize after hearing us that there is more to Islam than the media would like them to know. Indeed, America will not change from above downwards, but from the grass roots upwards, and when a minimal critical mass has acquired respect of Islam through the true knowledge of it, both the media and the politicians will change their course.

Whatever happens locally or globally, our attention should never be deflected from our triple Islamic duty in America of: (1) living Islam in America, preserving our identity, worship and morality; this does not conflict with being full-fledged Americans keen on the guidance

and welfare of this country; also, fully utilizing our legal and constitutional opportunities; (2) transmitting Islam to the younger generation, this is necessary to ensure the perpetuity and firm rooting of Islam, as well as to allow us to earn an influential weight in American social, economic, political and moral affairs; and (3) making Islam known to those who don't yet know it, which is a dictate of our religion: *"It is the messenger's duty but to proclaim,"* (5:99) *"Say this is my way, I call to God upon clear vision, me and those who follow me."* (12:108)

This is the essence of Islamic work. It has no secrets, fears no infiltration, and has no worry about informants. Islam cannot conquer the world by force but can win it with an ideology. The world needs the teachings of Islam, and will listen to them, if we can only present them in a graceful and palatable way. Acts of terrorism are merely setbacks and obstacles in the way of Islam; in a letter published in the *L.A. Times* of July 8, 1993, we tried to reach any unknown Muslim elements who might be carting out or thinking of carrying out violence, and draw their attention to five points. First, that Islam abhors the harming of innocent non-belligerent lines (even during a declared war). Second, whatever harm they hope to inflict on America out of political vengeance is only a fraction of the harm they are inflicting on the image and possibly the survival of Islam in this country, which has proved more accommodating to it than some so-called Islamic states. Third, our religion

requires of us to make Islam known to others, and if this is the way they present Islam, then one wonders what they are fighting, unless it is Islam itself. Fourth, we are all acutely aware of the injustices afflicting Muslims; we have legitimate grievances, but we know that Islam - even when this attitude is unilateral - does not accept that the ends justify the means; a worthy cause can only be served by guiltless means. Fifth, throughout the course of Islamic history, resorting to terrorism has only led, in the long run, to consequences disastrous to Islam.

Terrorism, as is too obvious to point out, is not confined to the ranks of Muslims. Real Muslims should not engage in it.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

A few decades ago Egypt was under military occupation by the British. Worse than this was the cultural and ideological invasion people's minds. The educational system was being manipulated to produce a generation with poor *Iman* (faith) and a very shallow Islam.

We used to have one hour of Islamic studies a week, and this the teacher - who also taught us Arabic - would often ("better") utilize for teaching grammar. Social life was being extensively molded into a European pattern and people were in a rush to imitate the "enlightened, modern and strong Europe." Islamic ways were considered outmoded, and a pioneering university professor who had just completed his doctoral studies in France declared that there was no other way for Egypt than to adopt Western civilization with "its good and bad, sweet and bitter, pleasing and displeasing." That was the slo-

gan taken up by a large portion of the of leaders and the educated of the country. One Pasha even said that a donkey was better than a human since the donkey felt no jealousy about his wife.

While Christian missionary activities were given free reign in the land, there were no organized Islamic activities, and Islam was relegated to the old, poor and ignorant. The elite and the rich sent their children to Christian private schools (like the Sacred Heart and the Mother of God), both as a status symbol and in the belief that for their future, the knowledge of a foreign language was more important for the children's fortune than knowledge of Arabic. Naturally these students became quite alienated from Islamic knowledge and history.

In a conversation with the late Sheikh M. M. Almaraghy who at the time was the grand imam of the famous Al-Azhar mosque, he expressed the surprise he felt when his two daughters, both of whom attended a French Christian school, asked him if he knew a man called Umar ibn al-Khattab, and who he was.

Asked how they came to hear about Umar, they answered that on their train trip to Alexandria they had encountered in their compartment two women, French tourists who had questioned them about Umar, hoping to learn more about him. But the two girls had nothing to offer, and were able only to listen to the French tourists. "It is only when they know that Europeans are

keen to learn Islamic history that our youth take interest in it," the sheikh commented.

And now, let us talk about the Egyptian university, the only one at that time. Feeling self-conscious about being known as observant Muslims, six students used to meet daily for their *zuhr* prayer almost secretly, under the stairs of the offices of one of the departments. It was their good luck that they encountered a man of perfect faith and complete Islamic integrity. He was an elementary school teacher, who later on became the teacher of the nation. In reaction to the dismal state of (Islamic) affairs in the country, he had started an Islamic movement, which was still in its budding stage. He convinced the students that dignity belongs to God, His messenger and the faithful, and that Islam is something to be proud of, whatever the odds against one may be. In full confidence, they decided to come out of hiding, and chose for their prayers no other place than the hall in front of the Rector's office.

Others were encouraged and the numbers at prayer increased, and it became inevitable that the Rector would ask to see representatives of the group. Very politely but very firmly the students stated their case. The only question the Rector asked was whether they prayed openly merely in defiance of their Christian colleagues. They assured him that this was not the case, that Christians were people of the Book and that they had very friendly relations with them. "I am convinced,"

the Rector said, and I will have a mosque built on the campus using the university budget; and until it is ready, I will order the room occupied by the British professors to be used as a temporary mosque." Anticipating serious political consequences, they tried to persuade him to choose another room. "The last word is mine in this place," he answered, "and it has been on my conscience for a long time that when I studied in Europe I allowed myself to be coerced to include in my thesis phrases that denigrated Prophet Mohammed, on the threat that otherwise my Ph.D. would not be granted. Perhaps now I have the opportunity to atone."

And so it was. In a few months a mosque was born.

FORGIVENESS AND MUSLIMS

The combination of the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Mohammed form the source of Islamic morals and laws known as the *Sharia*. They emphasize richly the importance of forgiveness as a way of life. God's forgiveness to human beings is an axis of the relation between the two. Human beings are not programmed like animals to respond by instinct to the events around them. The human race is uniquely endowed with a built-in capacity of moral judgment. The potential of the human species lies in its awareness of good and evil, in its ability to make choices, to have and to set standards, and to be accountable for these standards and choices. Human beings are not perfect, nor were they meant to be. They lead a life of continuous decision-making, and making choices between temptation and virtue can be taxing. No one can expect to tally up a perfect record. The fullest hope of human

beings must rest in God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Muslims do not subscribe to the idea of a chosen race. They believe that accountability is personal and that there can be no atonement by vicarious sacrifice through an anthropomorphic god. Islamic "salvation" focuses entirely on the love and forgiveness of God.

According to Mohammed, "If you were not a creature who would sin, repent, ask forgiveness and be granted it, God would have created another being who would sin, repent, seek forgiveness and be granted it." In a hadith *Qudsi*(words of God, reported by Mohammed but not part of the Quran), God says: "O child of Adam, while you call upon Me, and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done and I shall not mind. O child of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O child of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth." In Islam, God is the Absolutely Just, and also the Absolutely Merciful and Forgiving. A Muslim asks God for His forgiveness and not His justice. This sense of hope is supported by the saying of Prophet Mohammed: "When God decreed the creation, He pledged Himself by writing in His Book that is laid down with Him: 'My mercy prevails over My wrath.' "

Islam, however, ascribes to God, and none but Him, full authority to decide the matter of justice versus forgiveness, and no one else is permitted to decree or predict who is destined for either. No one is allowed to set conditions or put restrictions on God's forgiveness, or to play a special role in the granting or denying of it. Concepts like excommunication or granting indulgences are completely alien to Islam, a religion that is characteristically without a religious hierarchy or clergy. Prophet Mohammed taught in one of his traditions: "A man said: 'By God, God will not forgive so-and-so.' At this, God the Mighty said: 'Who is he who swears by Me that I will not forgive so-and so? Verily, I have forgiven so-and-so and have nullified your (own good) deeds.' "

The committing of even the most heinous sins should not lead the sinner to despair of God's forgiveness. The message of the Quran further reassures:

Those who invoke not with Allah any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for lawful cause, nor commit fornication; and any that does this (not only) will meet punishment but the chastisement on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him (or her) and he will dwell therein in ignominy, unless he repents, believes, and does righteous deeds. For God will change the evil of such persons into good and God is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (25: 68-70)

Nor is God's forgiveness, according to Islam, exclusively on religious lines. According to the Quran:

Those who believe (the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians, and the Sabians, any who believe in God and the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2:62)

Even beyond these groups, the Quran says: *Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily We will give a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward, according to the best of their actions. (16:97)*

Forgiveness as a universal human ethic is mandatory and an important virtue. Common sense tells us that, the more people are guided by their forgiving nature, the happier they are, whether at the individual, family, community, national, or international level. Islam emphasizes forgiveness and enjoins its followers to be forgiving as much as they yearn to be forgiven. The following story is an important example of this fact:

Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, had a relative called Mistah whom he used to support financially in the spirit of charity. A sad incident happened when a group of hypocrites, including Mistah, plotted to spread rumors tarnishing the reputation and honor of Ayesha, daughter of Abu Bakr and the wife of Mohammed. This created a psychological crisis for the Prophet, his wife, her father and the Muslim community. Some six weeks later a Quranic verse was revealed, exonerating Ayesha, to the relief of all concerned.

Before this revelation, the natural response of Abu Bakr had been to suspend his financial support to Mistah in retaliation for the latter's evil action. Soon, however, the Prophet called Abu Bakr to him to tell him that a verse had been revealed and that it would serve to guide all against talking such a punitive attitude:

Let not those of you who have been graced with (God's) favor and ease of life ever become remiss in helping (the erring ones among) their near of kin, and the needy, and those who have forsaken the domain of evil for the sake of God, but let them pardon and forbear. (For) do you not desire that God should forgive you your sins, seeing that God is Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of grace? (24:22) Abu Bakr immediately resumed his favor to Mistah.

In the early days of his prophethood, Mohammed and his followers endured fierce oppression by the enemies of the new religion. In one instance stones were thrown at Mohammed and, as he sat desolate, tending to his bleeding wounds, the angel Gabriel visited him with greetings from the Lord and an offer of retaliation. Did Mohammed "wish to cause the mountains to crumble over his enemies' heads?" The Prophet answered, "Leave me alone, Gabriel! May it please your Lord to forgive my people, for they do not know."

The following years saw more persecution and killing of Muslims, and a plot upon the life of Mohammed, making it necessary for the Muslims to

migrate from Makka to Medina, where Islam reached its fulfillment as a community and a state. After a lengthy conflict, it became the task of the Muslims to enter Makka with a powerful army to purify the Mosque of Abraham of the contamination of the idols. As the enemies of Mohammed stood in surrender, awaiting his verdict over them, he declared an unexpected general amnesty, and addressed them saying, "You may go. You are a free people!" It was this forgiving behavior that won the local community over to Islam, a feat that could never have been achieved by pressure or coercion. Any other stance would have conflicted with the Quranic injunction that *There is no compulsion in matters of faith.* (2: 256)

The Quran incessantly reminds Muslims of the importance of forgiveness, praising those *who shun the more heinous sins and abominations; and who, whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive.* (42:37) There is no more Islamic axiom than the following: *A kind word and the veiling of another's faults is better than a charitable deed followed by hurt.* (2: 263)

There was inevitably, a heated theological debate between the Muslims and the followers of other religions, which tolerated misdeeds that were frequently mentioned in the Quran. Yet, even under these circumstances, positively no justification for compromising on forgiveness was ever allowed:

We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden--(so

that now) they distort the meaning of the (revealed) words, taking them out of their context; and they have forgotten much of what they have been told to bear in mind; and from all but a few of them thou wilt always experience treachery. But pardon them, and forbear; verily, God loves the doers of good. (5:13)

Islam is a religion with both a moral code and a legal system. Even though both are necessary and complementary, their tenets need not always coincide. Consider Jesus' saying: "Whoever smites you on your right cheek, then turn to him the left cheek, also." Although this is a greatly revered biblical quotation and a clear statement of moral responsibility, it cannot be made into a law by which courts can make rulings. Islam sets forth laws to ensure justice and fair dealing; no human society can dispense with it. Islam emphasizes that justice is not the highest goal. The Quran repeatedly clarifies that those who win justice do better to transcend it. Forgiveness is more virtuous, nobler, and nearer to God: *If you have to respond to an attack (in argument), respond only to the extent of the attack leveled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for (you, since God is with) those who are patient in adversity.* (16:126)

But (remember that an attempt at) requiting evil may, too, become an evil: hence, whoever pardons (his foe) and makes peace, his reward rests with God—for, verily, He does not love evildoers. (42:40)

The Prophet's own injunctions on the subject of forgiveness are numerous. The angel Gabriel once answered a question of his in this way:

"Your Lord commands you to forgive those who harm you, pardon those who deny you, and visit those who sever their relations with you."

He outlined on one occasion three points of forgiveness at once:

"I can swear on three matters: no wealth is undermined by charitable giving. The more a person is forgiving, the more dignity he/she attains. The more a person is humble, the higher his rank is raised."

Such are the attributes of the righteous, whom the Quran describes as:

Those who spend freely, whether in prosperity or adversity, who restrain anger, and who forgive (all) people; for God loves those who do good. (3:134)

IVAN, THE TERRIBLE

I did not know him, but his brother, a surgeon, was a close friend of mine. My friend used to say: "He is my brother, but I am not proud of it." I was impressed by the speed of his rise from army major to general, and for a while thought that he must have extraordinary military talents. It was only later that I realized that his gifts were not exactly military.

He was the military governor of a political detention camp, and soon enough rose to be chief of all the political detention camps in that far-away country, at that far-away time. His talents were focused on the torture and humiliation of his prisoners, who numbered in the tens of thousands. If not completely subdued, he thought, they might turn rebellious. He was credited with organizing the practice of torture and developing it into an efficient system, so that his personal presence become unnecessary for the perfect running of his expanding and scattered domain.

As later, much later, revealed by the press, he recruited experts from East Germany and other communist satellites, but he always exceeded his consultants, to the perfect satisfaction of the ruling regime at that time. Never did budgetary constraint or a notion of accountability hamper the evolution or the working of his demonic machine. Meticulous care was taken to keep the nation in complete ignorance of what was happening behind those walls, and all that time the newspapers, radio and television ceaselessly hailed Big Brother and praised his achievements in restoring the pride and prosperity of the nation and making its army the mightiest striking force in the whole region, and one of the strongest in the world. Singers chanted songs of adoration on the air, songs including the countries new freedom, justice, and human rights. A whole generation of schoolchildren was raised on the sanctification of the man and the era.

But back to the camps: Daily beating was a basic routine. Inmates were allowed one daily visit to the toilet, walking between two lines of policemen, who vigorously used their whips on the prisoners. Toilet time was limited to one minute, or else it was the whip again. Naked bodies were suspended for overnight beatings; then, medical assistants dressed their injuries so that they would survive the regime of torture. Fathers and sons were ordered to severely slap one another on the face, and any suspicion of hesitancy or leniency would

bring wrath. People of special interest to the authorities dwelt in solitary cells half-filled with water (in winter) and were subjected to attacks by hungry dogs. Some of the women were forced to disrobe, and were abused with a rod of wood. When people invoked the mercy of God, our general used to tell them: "If this god of yours comes here, I will lock him up in that cell!" And it was a Muslim country. The extraction of phony confessions was naturally easy. Those who died were secretly buried and declared to have escaped. Persons destined to appear in court or, on occasion, to be released, were given special treatment to condition them so that they would never dare to speak out.

But alas! To the bad luck of the general, Big Brother died and another dynasty took over. In the transitional power struggle the general fell into disfavor with the new regime. Not only was he relieved of his duties (and authority) but he was arrested and locked in a cell in one of his own prisons. Although he was not given the harsh treatment that bore his brand name, all the time he cried bitterly like a child. It was then that articles, books and films took the long-awaited opportunity to unveil the secrets of the outgoing administration. One of the top writers of the country, who had been a vehement proponent of the regime, published his famous apology, "The Restoration of Awareness," and the media took a 180-degree turn.

Our general was eventually released, an ordinary person in retirement, although at an early age. No hand was extended to harm him, but naturally he lived in fear of retaliation. One day he was driving his car from a sea resort back to his home in the capital, when he slammed into a truck loaded with iron bars, which juttred out beyond its end. Not only was he immediately killed, but his body was also so torn asunder that onlookers had to collect it piece by piece.

We Muslims believe in accountability, that even if it is evaded in this world it is inevitable in the hereafter. I often ponder where the general is now, and what is happening to him. Sometimes I heartily wish that his victims, dead and living, would forgive him. It is not that he deserves to be forgiven, but that they might, hopefully, deserve to be forgivers.

PRISONERS OF WAR

During the first 13 years of Prophet Mohammed's mission in Makkah, and subsequently in Madinah, the Muslim community suffered severe persecution. In Makkah, Muslim men, women and children were killed, their homes ransacked and their families displaced and starved. The persecution was so intense that a great number of Muslims migrated to neighboring countries to escape the oppression of the ruling elite of Makkah. Even in Madinah, where Muslims had lived in relative peace, they were subject to regular raids by the Makkans. The Muslim community never retaliated against any of these acts of terrorism or war.

However, when persecution and oppression crossed all boundaries of tolerance, Muslims were divinely enjoined to defend themselves and other innocent victims against their enemies' ruthless attacks.

The soldier of Islam is, consequently, a different breed. A man asked the Prophet Mohammed: "A man may fight for booty, for fame or for pride... which of these is in the cause of God?" The Prophet answered: "Whoever fights so that the word of God becomes the supreme word, this is in the cause of God."

Whatever is prohibited during peace is also prohibited during war. War is no excuse for a leader to be lenient with misbehaving troops. The Prophet says: 'Beware of the prayer (to God) of the oppressed... for there is no barrier between it and God. Even if he (the oppressed) was a nonbeliever.'

In one of the battles between Muslims and non-Muslims, a civilian woman was found killed. This was strongly denounced by the Prophet saying, "She did not fight."

The Prophet's instructions to Muslim commanders were: "Fight in the cause of God. Fight those who deny God. Do not be embittered. Do not be treacherous. Do not mutilate. Do not kill children or those (people) in convents."

The Prophet instructed his companions to be good to captives: "It is my recommendation that you be good to the captives." Abu Aziz-ibn Umair, one of the captives of the Battle of Badr, recalled: "Whenever I sat with my captors for lunch or dinner, they offered me the bread and themselves the dates, in view of the Prophet's recommendation in our favor (in the desert, bread was

a more luxurious item of food than dates). Whenever any of them took a piece of bread, he would offer it to me. Feeling shy, I would give it back, but the one offering it would immediately return it to me.'

Another enemy, Thumama ibn-Athal was taken prisoner and brought to the, Prophet, who said: "Be good to him in his captivity." When the Prophet went home that day, he instructed his household to collect whatever food there was in the house and send it to the prisoner. When the members of the Quraiza tribe were captured, loads of dates were regularly taken to them, with the Prophet's instructions to shelter the captives from the summer sun and to provide them with water to drink.

Islam forbids Muslims to ill-treat prisoners of war, or to deny them food, shelter, and other essentials of life. According to Islamic law, the captive belongs to the state and not to his captor. The ruler has the ultimate decision, as he sees fit, whether to grant freedom or to do so only after receiving a ransom.

Among those to whom the Prophet granted their freedom was a poet called Abu Azza, who, had told him: "I have five daughters who have no one to support them, so give me to them as a charity, and I will promise never to fight you or help your enemies."

Abul-As ibn Al Rabia'e was freed for a ransom, which the Prophet later returned to him.

Umama ibn-Athal was set free upon his promise not to provide the enemy with food. This gentle treatment touched the man, who then converted to Islam, saying to the Prophet: "There was a time when your face was the most hated face to me, and there has now come a day when it is the most loved." The Prophet asked Muslims to fight despotic authorities. He believed in liberty and not in compulsion. The freedom of liberated people to decide their religion was always ensured by the Prophet.

The Prophet asked Muslims to treat wounded enemies, and to accord full respect to captives. The Prophet said to his companions: "I entrust the captives to your charity," and they acted accordingly, even giving them priority over themselves in the best of the food they shared.

MUTA

MARRIAGE

This article was prompted by a discussion among a group of young people at the Islamic Center of Southern California, a center for all Muslims. Towards the end of their conversation, I happened to be passing by, and was invited by some of them to share my views (I later discovered that the debate was rampant in some university campuses). I don't at all intend to undermine the mutual respect between Muslims, ignite sensitivities between them, or compromise our chosen maxim: "We collaborate in that on which we agree and excuse one another on matters of disagreement." However, when individuals from one group attempt to "push" a view on others, members, perhaps causing confusion among unsuspecting young people, it becomes quite legitimate for us to educate them on our stand on the issue.

LANGUAGE:

According to Hans Wehr's Arabic-English dictionary (editor J. Milton Kowan, pub. Spoken Language Services Inc., New York, 1976), the Arabic word "*muta*" means enjoyment, pleasure, recreation, etc. As is common in linguistics, the word has acquired a specific usage in legal jargon, referring to what is called the *muta* marriage. Although every marriage entails *muta* (enjoyment and pleasure), the technical term "*muta* marriage" refers to a specific relationship different from the usual ordinary marriage as universally known.

Specific usage of this word should not be confused with its general meaning, and the context should be discerned. Some other examples of a word being used in different ways are the words "gay" (which can denote homosexuality), "love" (sometimes copulation), "mouse" (a pointer used with a computer).

DEFINITION OF MUTA MARRIAGE

According to its advocates, *muta* is an agreement between a man and a woman, in the presence of witnesses, that they will cohabit for a specified time, for a specified price to be paid to the women. If she withholds sex from him part of the time, a commensurate amount of the payment will be deducted.

The rules of *muta* are:

1. Both payments and duration must be specified at the outset.

2. Divorce (or other rulings for dissolving a marriage) does not pertain to it. It ends with the conclusion of the specified period.
3. The *idda* after its conclusion is not the same as that for normal marriage (three menstrual cycles), but consists of two menstrual periods or forty five days, whichever comes first.
4. If one of the two partners dies the other does not inherit anything, since inheritance is between husband and wife only.
5. If the woman gets pregnant, the child is related to the man. But if the man denies paternity, then the child shall not be considered his, without his being required to swear by Allah five times that he is telling the truth (as is required by juridical *liaan* between husband and wife).
6. The woman should be Muslim or belonging to the People of the Book.

VIEWS ON MUTA

Except for one group of the Imamite Shii *Madhab*, there is unanimity on the unlawfulness of *muta*. The practice was known in the *jahiliya* (pre-Islamic period). The literature is extensive on both sides of the issue, but it is futile to reproduce it here. The opponents of *muta* marriage are unanimous that the prophet declared it unlawful, we may note that it is even disputed whether this was or was not preceded by initial permission.

All Sunni sources report that the ban on *muta* was reaffirmed by the Prophet several (five) times, both in order to emphasize it and for the benefit of new converts to Islam. This is supported by the emphasis placed on the ban by such personalities as Ali ibn-Ali Talib, and Jaafar al-Sadiq, both respected by both Sunnis and Shiites. When Ali heard Ibn Abbas wavering on the possibility of permitting *muta* under overpowering circumstances (similar to permitting [alcoholic] drinks or the eating of pig meat), Ali told him: "You are a person who has lost his way." When Jaafar al-Sadiq was asked about *muta*, he said, "It is *zina* (fornication) itself." This is also reported by some Shiite sources. During his caliphate, Omar reconfirmed the ban, and none of the companions of the Prophet who were present challenged him.

Needless to say, the advocates of *muta* seek to refute or challenge sources that claim *muta* to be unlawful.

QURANIC EVIDENCE

1. *Successful indeed are the believers: Those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vile talk; who are active in giving zakat; who guard their chastity except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hand possess, for (in their case) they are free from blame, but those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors.* (23:1-7)

2. *If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed the free, believing women, they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess. (4:25)*
3. Sura 4:23-24 gives a full list of women to whom marriage is unlawful. Then it adds: "Except for these, all others are lawful, provided you seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property, desiring chastity not fornication. Give them their dowry for the enjoyment (*muta*) you have of them as a duty; but if, after a dower is prescribed, you mutually agree (to vary it), there is no blame on you." The proponents of *muta* seize on the word enjoyment (*muta*), attempting to make it mean the specific *muta* and not the generic *muta* relating to marriage, as the text implies this claim; obviously take the word out of context.
4. *Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace. (24:33)* If *muta* marriage were a viable option, then the burden of keeping one's chastity would have been unnecessary.

HADEETH EVIDENCE

1. The Prophet said: "You young people: whoever has got the means to marry then let him do so If he does not have the means: then let him fast

(for it curbs the desire)." Obviously, there is no place here for *muta*.

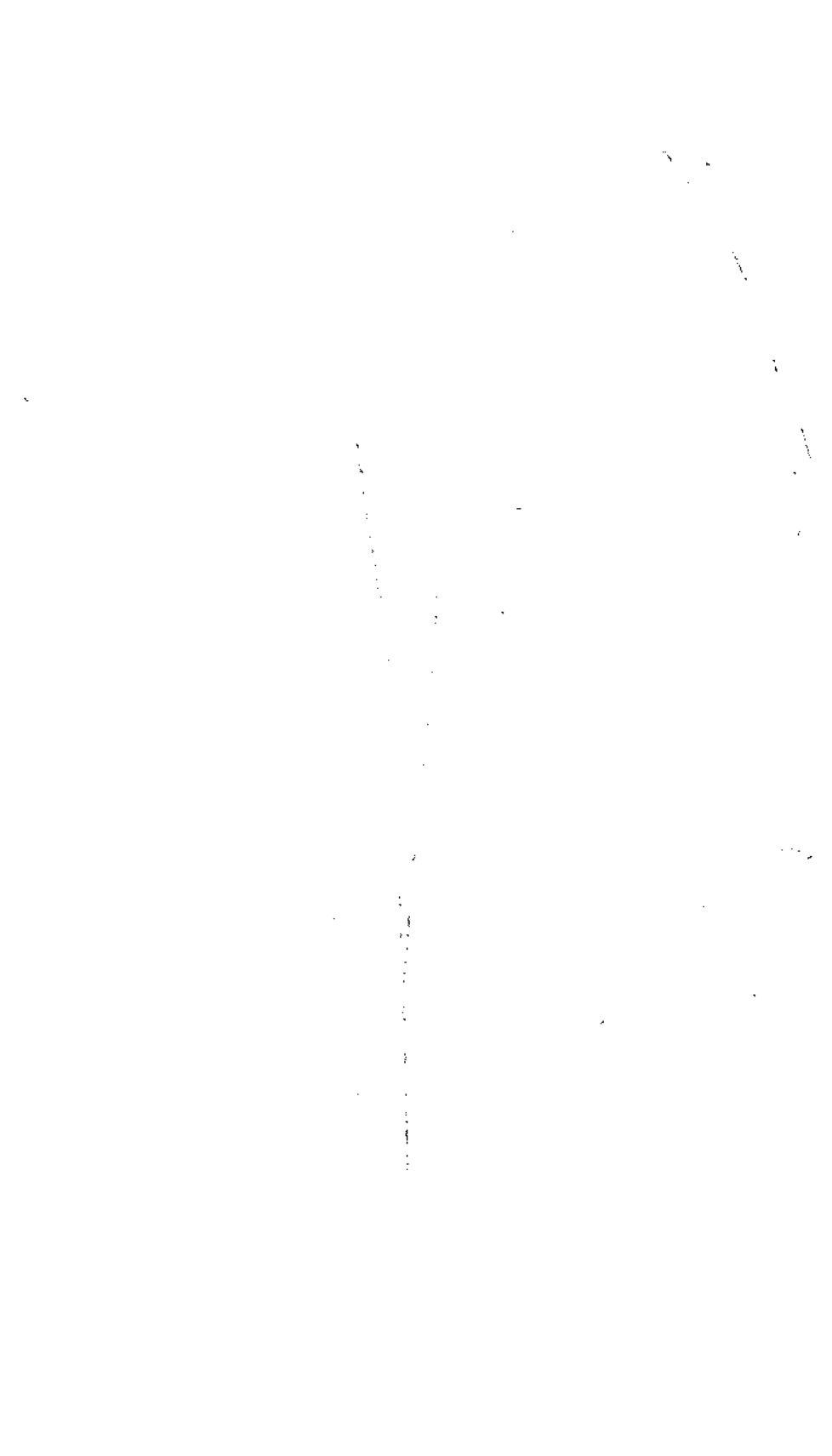
2. The prophet said: "Seven (kinds) of persons will be sheltered under the shade of Allah on the Day of Judgment, when there will be no shade but His (including) a man whom a woman of beauty and status invited (to have sex with her)," but he said: "I fear Allah." If *muta* were legitimate, it could have accommodated such passions.

COMMON SENSE

We all claim, in fact boast, that Islam raised the status of women, gave them dignity and respect, and made them equal – although not similar - to men. Can this be reconciled with *muta*, which entails the renting of a woman's body by man after man, for a specified time and price, like any other rental contract? On several occasions, I asked my opponent in debate whether he would feel comfortable knowing that I had lived with his sister or daughter, say for a fortnight, and for fifty dollars?

The response was always complete embarrassment, often accompanied by a request that I change the subject. In Islam, you should not accept for others what you do not accept for yourself and your family. What would be the value of chastity (entailing self-restraint) if *muta* furnished an easy outlet for sexual desire? *Muta* is not marriage as prescribed by Islam. Marriage is different in its goals (including the intention of life long-commit-

ment) and in its juridical technicalities and stipulations. It is not appropriate to defend *muta* when the evidence is so overwhelmingly against it. And Allah knows best.



About the Book

This book presents the unfolding drama of the 20th century from the perspective of a Muslim activist. It highlights the values one man stood for in the thick and thin of times.

About the Author

Hassan Hathout is a physician, scientist, teacher, speaker, thinker, writer, poet and ethicist, as well as an Islamic scholar. He is one of those encyclopedic personalities reminiscent of older times. As an Egyptian American, he is bicultural and bilingual.

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