



Thus Shall I Stand Before God

Hassan Hathout

Introduction by Mustafa Mahmoud

THUS SHALL I STAND BEFORE GOD

ISLAM IN THE EYES OF A SCHOLAR

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Dr. Hassan Hathout

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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

CONTENTS

Publisher's Introduction *i-iv*

Acknowledgement *v*

Introduction by Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud *vi-xi*

Mission Statement	1
The Key	7
The Being That Must Be	15
The Mind	27
About Islam	43
Application of Sharia	55
About the Quran	65
About the Sunna	75
Man, Woman and Family	85
The Revival	105
And Other Religions	129
And Start With Yourself	157
Ruling on Some Medical Issues	163

<i>Human Reproduction Fertility Control: Contraception</i>	164
<i>Breast Feeding</i>	165
<i>The Intrauterine Device (IUD)</i>	166
<i>Abortion</i>	166
<i>Sterilization</i>	169
<i>Treatment of Infertility</i>	169
<i>Artificial Insemination</i>	169
<i>In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)</i>	170
<i>Surrogate Motherhood</i>	170
<i>Transplant Surgery</i>	171
<i>Transplantation of Nervous Tissue</i>	172
<i>The Anencephalic Fetus</i>	172
<i>Transplantation of Testis and Ovary</i>	173
<i>The Moment of Death</i>	173
<i>Euthanasia</i>	174
<i>Human Life</i>	174
<i>Euthanasia or "Mercy Killing"?</i>	175
<i>The Financial Factor</i>	177
<i>Clinical Situations</i>	179
<i>Commentary</i>	180

<i>Genetic Engineering</i>	181
<i>Reading the Human Genome</i>	184
<i>Cloning</i>	187
Palestine	191
<i>And What was the Way</i>	200
The New World Order	217
<i>The Authority Over Man</i>	224
<i>The Ownership of God</i>	225
<i>The Equality of Man</i>	227
<i>The Need for Self-Reliance</i>	229
<i>War and Peace</i>	230
<i>The Ecology</i>	233
<i>Population Issues</i>	234
Afterwords	239

PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

Why A Second Edition?

A limitless power to give..

When the author directed his epic book "*Reading the Muslim Mind*" to Non Muslims seeking the truth about Islam, the book became a legacy which has since been translated into numerous languages. The book's impact in re-shaping the thinking of its readers was so intense in uncovering the true essence of Islam, the spirit behind the letter, the rationale and the ultimate reason, God.

Our invitation to Dr. Hassan Hathout to write a book directed towards Muslims was received with enthusiasm, and delivered so eloquently in the first edition of this book, originally written in Arabic, in which he attempted to wrench Islam from the cocoon in which intolerant sectarians have incarcerated it. In "*Thus Shall I Stand Before God*" Dr. Hassan Hathout set Islam free to profoundly interact in this era of globalization and clashing

interests. The success of the first edition, which we published, was evidenced by the need for its co-publication in Egypt, and its beautiful translation into English by Ms. Noha Badawi. Revenue of both books was dedicated to a fund we established to enhance knowledge and awareness of Islam in the United States of America.

During a telephone conversation with Dr. Hassan Hathout following a stormy period of critical health, he stated that he wished to write an updated version in English, after the eleventh of September shockwave, to share with the English-reading community his thoughts of the events, and of the stand of Islam on "terrorism". It was with delight that we shortly thereafter heard from him via telephone, after nearly crippling health events, that he has completed this second version.

In a cover letter, Dr. Hassan Hathout wrote:

*To the noble lady and generous sister,
Madame Ghanima Al Marzouk,*

May peace be upon you all..I send you the newer modified version of "Thus Shall I Stand Before God." I believe it is suitable to all. It contains no tarnish or hurt to anyone, no matter what their opinions are. It is on a Macintosh disk, and should be suitable for readers of English of any religion of the East and West. Perhaps you would also like to distribute it to other countries like India, Pakistan, and others.

I pray that God may guide this universe to the ways of goodness, love, and peace...and that He may guide the Muslims to the true essence of Islam:

"We have sent you but mercy to the worlds." (Quran)

I apologize for my poor handwriting, but this is the hand that was completely paralyzed. I thank God for what He chooses for me, trusting that it is for my good in this life and the one hereafter.

Hassan Hathout

Excerpts from the book:

"Through out my life, love for Islam was part of me; I bore its name, shouldered its burden, and toiled in its favor...Let people extend their hands to take and I will extend mine to give. I want to be inherited before I die. Is there an heir?"

"I love America, despite the rampant ethical and political corruption...it provides sufficient freedom to serve Islam...a freedom unattainable in most Islamic countries...wherever there is freedom, Islam will benefit in the long-run...In the absence of freedom, Islam is the first major loser."

"I am perturbed by some Muslims' encyclopedic knowledge of jurisprudence, but practical ignorance of the mission statement of Islam, "We have sent you but mercy to the worlds""

"I hasten to state that Quran is not a book of cosmic sciences. Whoever wishes to embark upon scientific research, let him look at the universe and the magic of creation, or step into a well equipped laboratory, and work and experiment."

"What can we do instead of feeling depressed and lost? Our first duty is to refuse to accept defeat within ourselves no matter how bad the situation...it is not easy job to maintain hope given such horrible facts...Our second duty is to very honestly search our souls... asking if we deserve the rights we claim...We have treated each other with unfairness and injustice...we have gone astray...we went on a binge of sins and arrogance."

"The key word is love...absolute love of God....transcending our egos, prejudices, and propensity to divisiveness...love that completely occupies the heart...such love transforms...and should encompass all."

May God accept from Dr. Hassan Hathout yet another effort for his lifelong mission.

Ghanima Al Marzouk
Editor - in - Chief

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Mrs. Ghanima Al-Marzouk of Kuwait for undertaking the publication of the Arabic edition of this book, as well as this English edition.

I am also grateful to Mrs. Noha Badawi of Egypt for translating the first edition to English.

My thanks are also due to Lobna Abdelaziz for volunteering her technical assistance.

I ask God to reward them all for this voluntary service to Islam.

*Hassan Hathout
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INTRODUCTION

BY

DR. MUSTAFA MAHMOUD

Dr. Hassan Hathout is a great Muslim thinker, whose knowledge is as wide as the seas: a physician, a scientist, and a traveler who crossed life, tasting its sweetness and bitterness. He tested societies and mingled with people, the best and the worst. He absorbed wisdom, and his wisdom splashed live on paper, an experiment of benefit to those who need it.

He says: the call to Islam is neither a discourse, nor a bombasting appeal before microphones, but deeds and virtues. It is the good example that sparks a tinder in somber souls and enlightens them, reviving them into a new outlook at the world.

He says that Muslims have narrowed the scope of Islam, and fashioned it into a beard and a veil. They narrowed the scope of *Sharia* and fashioned it into laws and penalties, forgetting that *Sharia*, in truth, is mercy rather than penalty, first molding conscience, then enforcing penalty. It instills fear of God, which protects

the Muslim from within himself, and not fear of penalties and executions. Islam is an inner awareness, which shelters the believer, a lucid insight that governs his behavior.

He says that he is in favor of the veil, but does not make of the veil the totality of Islam: whoever wears it is a Muslim and whoever does not has surrendered Islam. It is a naive simplification of Islam and an immature summarization of it. A woman might be veiled, and yet slander and cheat in her dealings; yet how much worthier is the unveiled woman who lives her life in chastity, honesty and sincerity. He relates an event that occurred during the Bosnia-Herzegovina tragedy, when famine was rampant, killing and rape widespread. An association of upright women in an Arab Muslim country wished to extend assistance. What was the assistance? A huge quantity of veils, because the women of Bosnia-Herzegovina could not remain unveiled!

Refuting the allegation of the Europeans who claimed that Islam has confined women and contained their rights, Hassan retorts: *"How could it be so when Islam granted them the right to inheritance and to an independent financial entity? How could it be so when the Muslim woman emigrated with the emigrants, struggled beside and fought with the fighters? (Nusaiba Bent Qaab fought at Uhud!) How could it be so when a woman contradicted Calif Omar ibn al-Khattab as he*

stood on the minbar and Omar said : 'The woman is right and Omar was wrong? How could it be so when listening to Al-Khansa'a declaiming a poem, the prophet, peace and prayers be upon him (pbuh), did not say: 'Your voice is impiety, but let us have some more poetry?' This is the Muslim woman and this is Islam."

Were we to coerce a woman into wearing a veil, we would merely add one hypocrite to the multitude of Muslims.

About the circumcision of girls, Dr. Hassan says: "This is an ancient custom totally unrelated to Islam. As a practicing gynecologist, I came across a number of circumcised Christian Ethiopian women. Had it indeed been a custom of Islam, Nagd and Hejaz would have been the appropriate locality for it." According to Dr. Hassan, the first sin in Islam is the arrogance of Iblis (Lucifer) when he told his God, talking of Adam. *"I am better than he; Thou created me of fire and him Thou created of clay ..."*. This is a profound understanding of the Islamic creed. Arrogance begets sins ... *"No one with a speck of arrogance in his heart shall step into paradise"* as the Prophet said. Eating of the tree satisfied the craving of the ego: an incitement to evil by Iblis; originating from the sin of Iblis.

Israel and the West attempt to stigmatize Islam as intolerant and to sow dissension between the Muslims and Christians of Egypt, but Dr. Hassan retorts: *"Muslims did not slaughter 40,000 Protestants as did Catholics in France."*

How could we be taxed with intolerance when a verse of our Holy Quran states: "*Argue not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner?*"

Our history has taught us that, when Omar ibn al-Khattab came victorious to the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, he did not pray inside but outside the church, out of respect for churches and to make it clear that only Christians were entitled to pray in them. He was the one who ensured the safety of priests in their convents during wars.

Rumors are rampant in the West about Islamic terrorism. To this Dr. Hassan answers: "*It is Israeli terrorism in its origin, its source and its history ...*" This was the start of Israel ... terrorist gangs: the Haganah, Stern, and Irgun.

The solution, according to Dr. Hassan, is first and foremost psychological; that we do not accept defeat within ourselves, whatever occurs ... that our hearts do not fail ... that we trust that God will help us triumph. Did He not say: "*Assuredly God will defend those who believe*" and "*It was ever a duty incumbent upon Us to help the believers.*"

Dr. Hassan believes that liberties in the Islamic world are its immune system, without which it will drown in its disputes and divisions.

What about the Arab (and then Islamic) Common Market ... where is it and when will it be set up? Where is it political discourse of the Arab satellites, which beam their programs that will address the American citizen in his own language? America is a country open to all forms of opinions. Dr. Hassan adds that the nations of the developed world have outlined their vision of the 21st century along the lines of a plantation which they own and manage, and in which the rest of the world are cattle and poultry, paid laborers and slaves to the land as in feudal times.

This is the challenge. Can we take it up?

This is Dr. Hassan.

He attempts to wrench Islam from the cocoon in which intolerant sectarians have incarcerated it, and to set it free to profoundly interact and possibly reveal its treasures and secrets in the globalization era, the era of clashing interests, the era of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Welcome to Dr. Hassan Hathout, and welcome to his book.

Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud

** Dr. Mustafa Mahmoud, a medical doctor, is an acclaimed Islamic thinker and a profound writer on Islamic issues. He has published many books, and is a syndicated author in Al-Ahram and other prestigious Arab papers. His description of his intellectual journey from communism to Allah is among the classics in this century. His writings contribute generously to the enlightenment of fellow Muslims and to educating them on their appropriate approach to a complex and largely hostile world. His awareness of global goings-on, especially pertaining to the future of Islam and Muslims, is intense, and his commentaries are exceedingly popular in the Arab world.*

MISSION STATEMENT

This is June 2003.

The first (English) edition of this book appeared in Los Angeles, California in 1999 by Multimedia vera International.

It appeared, therefore, long before 9/11 2001, so it is not a response to that fateful day. I say this in response to those who after the event called for a second look at Islam and Muslims and the need for Muslims to learn self criticism.

Publishing this second edition means that the movement of self criticism and Islamic reeducation had already started and is still ongoing. So far this book has been addressing Muslims and was presented to them via Islamic bookstores and centers in U.S.A. I felt the need of this second edition, first to replenish the first, but mainly to avail it to the many English speaking people

who will be visiting or residing in Islamic countries for some reason or another.

Many people fall under the mistake of defining Islam by whatever they see any Muslim doing. In reality, nothing is farther from the truth. Like other religions, there are good Muslims, and bad Muslims and the rule is not confined to Islam. If you see some people supposedly Christian or Jewish behaving in a certain way, it will be hasty to conclude that they are representing Christianity or Judaism. Like in other religions, many Muslims feel enthusiastic about Islam but they lack the correct knowledge.

It is our firm belief that if the People of the Book (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) acquire the right knowledge of their own faiths and the other religions, they will see that what binds them is overwhelmingly stronger than the views they differ on. They will learn that mutual tolerance and love are really religious requirements.

And now I want to explain why I call this chapter "*Mission Statement*". Once upon an evening I asked myself: "*If I am to follow modern literary style and choose a mission statement for Islam, what would that be?*". Surprisingly enough I immediately remembered a verse in the Quran I must have had read hundreds of times but now it popped out before my eyes as if saying to me: "*I am the mission statement*". That was the verse from the Quran where God addresses Prophet Muhammad

saying: *"We have sent you for nothing else but as mercy to the worlds."* (21:107).

These days so many quarters are reexamining the way Islam is being taught in Muslim countries. I believe that the first lesson in teaching Islam is to point out this mission statement and elaborate on it. Unless this foundation is well laid, it is futile to fill the brain with details. We have seen so many instances of quoting religious texts that seem oblivious of this rule. The results are often tragic. But then I thought whether Christianity entails such a mission statement, the answer was forthcoming. *"God is love"*! It is a phrase that runs over the tongue of every Christian, but, unfortunately not in every heart. As to Judaism, I like always to quote Rabbi Hillel, when a young man asked him: *"Can you explain the Torah to me while I stand on one foot?"* The good Rabbi answered: *"Don't do unto others what you do not wish others to do unto you. This is the Torah, the rest is commentary."*

If these are essential teachings of the three religions, then why do we not see them applied? It looks like people are utilizing religion rather than serving it.

In my later years, and after a long life learning religion and trying to abide by it, I came to a precious conclusion that I consider the core of my faith as a Muslim, and I am sure members of other faiths reach the same conclusion if they clearly think about it. I no more

primarily divide people into eastern and western, black and white, relative and stranger, rich and poor or even Muslims, Christians, Jew or otherwise. The basic division is people with a loving heart and those with a hating heart. Even religious knowledge is not a criterion and history shows us top clergy of both kinds. It is as though some people look at the world through green glasses while others eye it through red glasses. They see the same details but their attitudes are opposed.

It is my firm belief that people wishing to serve God should exemplify and preach love. It is not the winning of a number of people making them convert to a certain faith or sect that really pleases God, what pleases God is to convert hating people into loving people and this should be the primary message of those who claim to be the people of God. Competition between missionaries of different faiths should not dwindle into enlisting more and more people into their faith. The primary duty is to convert hating hearts to loving hearts even within their own ranks and followers.

The twenty first century is apparently presenting itself as the American Century. America has proven to be the prevailing power and the uncontestable force. In such a unipolar world, America therefore bears grave responsibility. She is the pace maker and the peace maker of our planet. This calls for extreme care in handling the affairs of the world because power can be misleading. That is

why we need statesmen and not just politicians. America has been successful in attracting people from all the world to make one nation. "*Out of many, one*".

We hope that America will be as successful in transforming the world into an abode of justice, peace and love across national borders and inspite of past enmeties and bitterness. But America is not a monolith, it harbors a multiplicity of views and outlooks. Thanks to its system of democracy, it is up to the people to choose their leadership, therefore the ultimate power lies in the hands of the American people. Adequate political education of the masses is the safeguard against hidden agendas and greedy ambitions. It is the duty of thinkers and writers to offer sound knowledge and protect the truth from concealment and distortion.

This book is a humble step towards this goal.

THE KEY

I seek heirs.

My legacy is neither money, nor real estate, neither industry nor a business, neither is it any of the transient things of the world!! And I do not envy the happy owners of such wealth. Allah giveth without stint to whomsoever He wills, blessed is the honest wealth to the righteous servant of the Almighty. What perturbs me about my legacy is that I cannot bequeath it. It disappears with my death, and vanishes into thin air. My legacy is thoughts, experiences and experiments developed serenely over a long and replete life for which I render thanks to the Almighty. There was no time for boredom; there was no time for frivolity. Let people extend their hand to take and I will extend mine to give, provided my legacy can be inherited before I die. Is there an heir?

I was born in Shebin al-Kom, in the Nile Delta of Egypt; I was bred in the countryside, with its tolerance and goodness, where the branches of willow trees drooped in the water of the Shebin river, like a bride beautifying herself with her long locks; the waterwheel, the thresher and the green fields, the river of Shebin seemed to me to be the largest water barrier, although it dried up in winter and I could walk over its bed. We then moved to Cairo and I saw the larger Nile. Visiting Alexandria, I beheld the sea, which was by far larger, and the horizon kept widening throughout my life.

My father was a sensitive poet, a great man of letters and a serene philosopher; never defeated by joy or sorrow, of humor and always a pleasant companion. People swarmed around him. My mother was a blazing torch of patriotism; participating in the national struggle, she was the first woman to lead a women's demonstration in our modest conservative town, in protest against British occupation, walking from the Abbassi Mosque to the Coptic Church. When she married and begot, she nursed her children in the love of Allah and the homeland.

God blessed me in my studies, I graduated and became a professor and a Head of Department in my field of specialization.

I married the woman I had chosen among all the women of the world, having decided to marry her the first time I ever saw her, and I told her so.

I lost my first daughter in a car accident. When I received the cable informing me of the accident, I turned to God saying: *"O Lord, I know that you behold me and so do your angels.. I know that I am being tested and hope to pass the test. I know that time alleviates sorrow, but the first moments are the test, if this is Your will, I accept, I accept, I accept. O Lord, she was given us by You in trust, and now we surrender our trust to You."*

I lived through a war and witnessed the cruelty of man to man. A bullet exploded within a few centimeters from where I stood, but I knew that Allah willed my fate. Some of my patients were wounded enemy soldiers, but I dealt with them in all honor.

I discovered I had a malignant stomach disease, but I did not moan, *"why me?"* It is selfishness to face the disease of others with equanimity and show alarm when it strikes you. I came within a stone's throw of death, and knew no one was immortal. Exalted be God, the Living, the Everlasting!! What if I reach shore and come closer to a most blessed neighborhood?

When the chemotherapy was so stressful, I decided to fight back. I decided not to die before I die. I wrote a book in English entitled *"Reading the Muslim Mind."* The book was a success as a means of showing non-Muslims (and Muslims) the true face of Islam.

I recovered, praise be to God, but the medication adversely afflicted my heart. However, since it was still beating, there was life ahead.

I enjoyed privileges in my life unknown to many: educators, guides and people eminent in terms of their deep faith, idealism, warm-heartedness and abnegation. May God rest their souls.

I lived long in Kuwait, and I cannot forget a special favor it rendered me. It was not the post or the salary, as I could have had them elsewhere. It was the stand of loyalty at a time of crisis of some of the people of Kuwait, some still alive and some long gone.

God (Allah) greatly compensated me and His bounty to me was overwhelming.

Throughout my life, my love of Islam was part of me; I bore its name, shouldered its burden and toiled in its favor. My visits to America showed me that Islam had a real and historic chance there. If we forfeit it, it will be our shame, and how much have we already forfeited! Should we seize this opportunity, it could become a historical cornerstone that would benefit America, benefit the world, benefit the Muslims and the causes of Muslims.

I resigned from my post in Kuwait and left for America, putting an end to my medical career (which I adored and still do). I intended to devote that part of my life to the

service of Islam, as long as I could do so. Forty years' devotion to medicine was a satisfactory contribution, praise be to God. The best service that can be rendered to Islam in America (or elsewhere, whether in Muslim or non-Muslim countries) is to live it in all sincerity and portray it at best.

I love America, despite rampant disagreements at the level of ethics and of politics. Yet, it provides sufficient freedom to serve Islam, a freedom unattainable in most Islamic countries. Wherever there is freedom (freedom of righteousness or of corruption) Islam must benefit in the long run. In the absence of freedom, Islam is the first and major loser.

Looking at the map of Islam in the world, I behold that which is pleasing and that which is displeasing. Looking at Muslims I discern those who serve Islam and those who harm it.

We read about the bear that smashed the face of its owner to kill a fly. Similarly a man might orate, fueled by hate and rancor, harm innocents, indeed causing the death of children and women, yet believing it is Jihad; but it was never Jihad: *"Say: Shall we tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds."* (18:104)

Indeed, a reasonable enemy is better than an ignorant friend, and I sincerely fear to see some of the factions ascribed nowadays to Islam assume power.

We say that we are living an Islamic revival, when what we really need is strong education and guidance.

This book is a modest contribution in this regard. I am writing it past the age of seventy, having spent long years involved in the cause of Islam in the East and the West. I hope that the reader will not doubt the clarity of my mind or the sincerity of my heart, which can be vouched for by those who know me. It is but a contribution to be added to the efforts of believers, scholars and *Duat* who have devoted themselves to the service of Islam and to its defense within and without. I am confident that their efforts will fulfill their aim. Piety must triumph. God will inspire them on Judgment Day to give the right answer when the Almighty asks them: "*I gave you Islam, what did you do with it and for it?*"

I have divided the book into chapters, each dealing with an issue of concern to Muslims, or that should be of concern to them, picking issues and not covering them all. That has always been my philosophy in teaching: ignite a spark rather than fill a container.

One sometimes feels anxiety at the humpy road stretching ahead but, God be praised, Islam advances steadily. God is All-forgiving and, in His mercy, will forgive our past and rectify our future.

The prophet (pbuh) talked to people without a microphone, and said: "*O Lord, let Your servant be heard.*"

This is my plea as I lay this book in the hands of my readers: "*O Lord, Let your servant be heard.*" It is an access to my mind, a testament for those who will come after me, a legacy open to each and every one; may they help themselves as they wish.

Praise be to the Almighty.

Hassan Hathout

THE BEING THAT MUST BE

Let us start at the beginning. Unless we wish to build our house without foundations as so many do.

I asked my granddaughter whether she believed in the existence of God, and she immediately answered: "*Of course*;" she then hesitated and added: "*So does Mummy say.*"

I took one of her books and asked her about its author, and she read the name to me from the cover page. I asked her whether, if I tore the cover page and told her that the book had written itself, would she believe me, and she answered: "*Of course not.*" I then said: "*If the book proves the existence of an author, what does the creation prove?*"

She replied: "*The existence of a creator.*" A simple and clear-cut logic, but strong and convincing.

We have in the Holy Book a similar trend of thought by Abraham: *"Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those having sure faith. When the night grew dark over him, he beheld a star and said 'This is my Lord'. But, when it set he said, 'I love not the setters.' And when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; But when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray.' And when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater! But when it set he said, 'O my people, surely I am quit of that you associate. I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters.'"* (Cattle, 75-79).

Although expressed briefly, the verses of the Holy Quran reflect abundant meanings. Had it been a mere vision of stars, moon and sun? There was nothing in this vision to amaze people who saw it daily but it was made awesome by the fact that it was the Almighty Who drew the attention of Abraham to this vision, which embraced the 'kingdom of the heavens and the earth.' The Almighty is indeed at the origin of a keen vision and a rational mind. In his long reveries, Abraham must have noted that stars, moon and sun were governed by a precise system and a binding law. He could then not avoid the query: *"Who is the author of this system and who drafted this law?"*

There must be a producer to any product, and a creator of creation .

A simple Arab Bedouin who had never gone to school stated the fact in his own way: "*Dung points at a camel, and footprints signify walking. What does the immense universe connote but an All-Powerful, All-Knowing and Omnipotent Creator?*" I tried to be an atheist in my youth, when World War II was raging and all barriers had collapsed between communist Russia and a number of countries, including mine, Egypt. Russia was an ally of Britain, which was then occupying our country. Communism was the fashion among modern intellectuals and university youth, and I tried to espouse it with a number of intelligent and cultured friends. My thoughts ran as follows: "*If this intelligentsia believe in its rightness, could I not be the one lacking in understanding?*" I earnestly tried, in vain, to assimilate the fact of a creation without a creator. As I was perusing a dictionary one night, an inner voice suggested that this dictionary was compiled as a result of an explosion in a printing press which blew up the letters, which then fell down and automatically set themselves to compose the dictionary. Was it credible? Of course not, neither credible nor acceptable. This file was closed forever.

It follows that the query that arises in the mind of any thinker is: "*If there is a producer to any product, who created the first existence?*"

Had there been something preceding Him, He would not be the God Creator; in mathematical terms, His age is "*infinity*." The next query raised is: "*What does infinity mean?*" We do not know. As humans, we are governed by the logic of a beginning and an end and, as such, infinity is beyond our comprehension. Yet, it is a scientific fact taught to students of mathematics, expressed by the symbol ∞ . We should not be apprehensive or torture our mind. The mind is aware of its limitations, and is not called upon to assimilate the unlimited.

A second query follows: We admit the existence of God; of what importance is it to us whether or not He exists?

When you believe in the existence of the Creator, you look at His creation, and you will immediately note that Man differs from all forms of life that we have so far studied and examined. I was taught at school that Man was the head of the animal kingdom, but we refuse to proceed along this kingdom or else be assimilated to animals.

It is true that the atoms that constitute our bodies are, as far as our knowledge has taken us, similar to those that constitute the universe. It is true that vertebrate animals share with man biological specifications: limbs, functions, impulses and instincts. Yet, we are not animals; biology does not render a man a human being.

Whomsoever turns biology into the scope of his life and its purpose is indeed an animal, and what an animal!

We are the species that transcends the scope of biology into the realm of values and spirituality. God endowed man with four characteristics: Firstly, knowledge, a thirst for knowledge and the urge to seek abundance of it; secondly: the concept of good and bad, of right and wrong, of what is permissible and what is not; thirdly: the freedom of choice at crossroads and the exercise of our will according to our choices. As for fourthly, it hinges on the third characteristic; it is: responsibility for the option we choose.

We are not a programmed creature, compelled to react in a specific way, as are other entities, whether atom, galaxy, bee or ant. Whereas animals merely respond to their biological instincts, man, although sharing such instincts, does not automatically respond to them. He scans the situation and appraises it, in terms of its being right or wrong, freely exercising his will; some opt for the right whereas others veer toward the wrong, and each of them is responsible for the option he/she chooses. The Creator endowed man with an innate autonomy and the ability of decision making. When a horse feels hungry it will eat any available food, without giving thought as to whether it was meant for it; neither would we expect it to think, nor blame it for the behavior. It is a different case as far as man is concerned.

When I find your chocolate bar and eat it because I love chocolates, I would be blamed because I should have realized that I had no right to it.

Angels are programmed to goodness and do not do evil because they are ignorant of it. They do not have to restrain themselves as humans do, who have to fight temptation as they feel the urge to succumb to it. Whereas the nature of other creatures impels them "*to be what they are,*" man is supposed to act "*as he is supposed to be.*" This might well be the trait of loftiness in humankind and the reason for which God commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam despite his latent potential for harm and bloodshed.

However, our ability to choose is not absolute; how often are we faced with events we can neither avoid nor control, this is fate. We do not choose it, neither are we responsible for it. It is a test of strength to accept it and refrain from passing judgment on it; to grieve over it only sharpens the pain, since it occurred and cannot be altered. Experience has taught us that events might seem sad but, in the long run, lead to happier developments. Unable to foresee the future, a belief that God only wills one's good is sustenance, otherwise what good is faith in God and in His Mercy?

The responsibility borne by man is one of the main components of his personality; it was innate nature before it was incorporated in religions and laws. A thief or a violator of a traffic light is penalized even in an atheist society. Being answerable for one's deeds is a basic feature of mankind. It is a lesson that should be

clamored loud, because the printed word is voiceless. Since man is responsible for his behavior, he is a free agent; were he not a free agent, he could not be made responsible for his deeds and there could be no premise for judgement or Judgment Day. In other terms, God has created a being answerable for his deeds and liable to be judged, i.e. He created a free agent. This is my first lesson from Islam: freedom is the stratum on which rises humanity. To deny man his freedom (outside enforced laws) is to deny a man his humanness. No one is entitled to coerce another; no ruler is entitled to deprive his people of their freedom, even should he house them in gold cages and feed them milk and honey. The end does not justify the means. The claim that a people are not ripe for freedom is a heinous and unacceptable allegation, as it means that they are cattle and not fit to be humans! No humanness without freedom.

Let us revert to the answerability of man. There are those who live their life in wrongness, enjoy it to the full and then die. They manage to elude the law or are above it. Whereas others spend their life struggling for right, enduring sufferings for their *Jihad*, and then die. Are these two types on a par? Where is that answerability we are talking about? Does their death come to the same end? We most strongly deny it, it is impossible. Death is therefore not the end, and there must be a stage that follows it, when we have to answer for our deeds, are meted a fair judgment, and the scales are balanced. Were death

the final stage, it would be an open invitation to seek one's pleasures however sinful, but to be clever enough to elude the law or circumvent it. There would be no conscience, and man without conscience is an animal, indeed beneath animality. Were death the final stage, it would flagrantly contradict the meticulous system that governs the universe. We live in a universe of balanced equations interlaced with total precision; any imbalance in them would lead to a cosmic catastrophe. There is of course a following stage ... it is the Hereafter.

Let us look at man throughout his long life struggle, because he bore the "trust," because His Creator perfected his soul and inspired him with a conscience of what is lewd and what is God-fearing, but also endowed him with freedom; freedom of obedience and freedom of rebellion: *"There is no coercion in religion;" "Whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve."* *"Prosperous is he who purifies his soul and a failure if he stunts it."* When the course of goodness and right stretches ahead of us, there are those who steadily tread on it, whereas others opt for a course of evil and wrongness, however arduous. Wrongness might be very tempting, and it usually is, if prompted by our biological component. There is a link between God and man: *"I have breathed into him of My spirit."* (15:29) and between man and clay: he was created out of clay and to it he will return. Man will remain torn between his link with God and his link with clay.

Man may attain goodness with a strong will, or avoid evil with great stress; he is a struggling creature and the arena of his life is his self. His days are the greater *Jihad*; he is not automated; *"God charges no soul save its capacity; standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited."* Is it to be wondered then that man is beloved by God and considered honorable by the Almighty? Was he not given preference over other creatures?

Having made life a test ground for man, God would have loved to see him pass the test. However, God willed man to be a free agent, with his own identity and a decision-making ability, and helped him to pass the test. He did not directly intervene (not programming him with no will of his own) but constantly reminding him of His Creator, of goodness and evil as proclaimed by the Almighty, of his responsibility, of the inevitable Day of Judgment awaiting him. Man could escape judgment in life, but not in the Hereafter.

How was man reminded?

The most direct way was for the Almighty to single out men with whom He would communicate directly or through some of His other creatures (Angels who have other functions and duties in the universe), and assign this elite the task to remind people to be elite bearers of good tidings and warnings, setting the good example to be followed. Had they not been human beings, people would have been excused for not heeding them.

This is the concept of prophethood and messages. Since the memory of man wanes over time and place, God sent a great number of prophets and messengers throughout the history of mankind. Some of them are known to us (from the Holy Books) but others are unknown. A Book was revealed to some of them; the only one remaining in its entirety is the last one, last because of its comprehensives and finality until the end of time.

A long chain of prophecies and messages linked to one another, the last three known as the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Let us pause and ponder!

If I ask my readers to peruse what they have so far read what would they conclude? Did they note that our mental and logical train of thought has led us to a Hadith defining the six basics of faith, which we have already referred to?

Omar ibn al-Khattab relates that the angel Gabriel asked the prophet (pbuh), among other things, to define faith, and the prophet replied: *"To believe in God, in His angels, in His Books, in His messengers, in Judgment Day and in fate, whether bad or good."*

Neither the existence of God, nor the basics of faith are a controversial hypothesis that we have to accept without thought or consideration, as do the adherents to

the other religions who have tampered with their faiths' sources and deviated from the right revealed to their prophets. This issue is a mental imperative that goes hand in hand with a sound innate nature and a pure insight inspired by God in a serene soul to appease and relieve it. The rebel and disquiet soul should make use of its mental faculties and, unless arrogant and stubborn, shall deduce verity through absolute thinking, using the mind, the mind, the mind, the mind.

THE MIND

It was claimed, over the past three centuries, that the mind is the antithesis of faith, a saying that did not emanate from a void, as it had its historical justification and well-known grounds.

We have to go back to the history of Europe prior to Christianity and after its advent. Christianity did not arise in Europe, but in the land of Palestine. We know of the birth of Jesus without a father by his virgin mother, as described in the Holy Quran; *"and then the Angels said: 'God has chosen thee, and purified thee. He has chosen thee above all women of creation'"* (3:42).

We know part of the childhood of Jesus (pbuh), and then history is silent until he comes to the fore as a prophet and a messenger to the Sons of Israel. He was one of them, a Jew, sent to them by the Almighty to right what was corrupted and re-dress what was distorted. We read in the Gospels: *"I have come to guide the stray sheep of the Sons of Israel."* Those who believed in him

became Christians and those who rejected him remained Jews, and so the matter stands until this very day.

When Jesus was raised to heaven, his apostles spread his teachings and crossed the regional boundaries of Palestine. This is how Christianity reached the capital of the Roman Empire, which reigned sovereign at that time. The weak and the downtrodden embraced the new faith, as did those that were appalled by the evil and corruption that prevailed throughout the Empire. But, they concealed their belief in Christianity and did not dare to proclaim it, as the ruling power looked at Jesus and his new religion as rebels against the State. The Emperor was viewed as a god, and whoso adored or invoked another god was an infidel. It is odd, but so similar to some present rulers of Islamic countries, easily identified by any keen analyst. The old appellations are no longer applied, but the practical reality is alike and similar.

Christians in Rome were a secret sect, meeting and worshipping in caves and grottoes, communicating with each other through symbols scribbled on billboards, only understood by them. If caught, they were liable to the most harsh penalties and tortures. It is regrettable that until this very day, creed and thought are attacked as crimes in some countries. We have seen movies of the rulers and the people being entertained by the sight of the early Christians thrown into the arena to fight against hungry wild animals.

A Council of Seven ruled under the Emperor. When one of them died, his eldest son succeeded him. One of

them died when his eldest son, a military commander, was leading a campaign in Northern Europe. The Emperor and his Council decided to seize the opportunity to set the commander aside and appoint another nominee. But, that commander, Constantine who had been apprised of the news decided to return with his army and claim his right. As he neared Rome, he saw one of the Christian billboards with its symbols, and underneath the symbols he could read: "*Under this emblem, you shall triumph.*" Constantine felt optimistic and vowed, if victorious, to vindicate these people and get to know them ... And Constantine won!

The Christians left their caves overnight to come to power, and a new alliance was forged between the church and the new Emperor Constantine, by virtue of which the strategic interests of the two sides were safeguarded. The clergy felt intoxicated by their victory: victory like liquor intoxicates unless God keeps man sane.

The power of the church escalated. Presiding at first over the realm of faith, it gradually came to control and monopolize it, and started to involve itself in the various human activities, one after the other, until it encompassed them all; everything fell under the umbrella of faith, and faith itself was subservient to the church, led by the Men of the Cloth who claimed even the power of giving access to paradise by selling indulgence deeds, or of, dooming to hell by an excommunication.

Books were banned and lists were compiled of forbidden books; authors were burnt at the stake and so were their writings; the legacy of the former knowledge of mankind

was trashed, including the philosophy of old Greece. Had it not been for Arab Muslims who, later, searched for that legacy and sought it from those who had endangered themselves by concealing it, then translated it into Arabic, Europe would have thence remained ignorant of such men as Socrates and Aristotle. It only knew of them from the Arabic translation of their works. When the printing press was invented in Leiden, Holland, 80 percent of its production remained for years the European translations of the Arab library.

Even useful sciences, such as medicine, were banned because they interfered with the will of God. The church prescribed as a treatment for various diseases licking the grave of a saint or swallowing dust from the grave of another saint, and other such shibboleths and superstitions. A physician called Servitus wrote a book, ascribing to himself the opinion of Ibn Nefiss, namely that blood flowed from the right side to the left side of the heart through pulmonary circulation, and not through small holes in the heart as indicated by Gallinos (Galen) centuries earlier. Because the church endorsed the views of Gallinos, it decided to set fire to Servitus and to his book (The discovery was proved right three centuries later, and was ascribed to William Harvey).

The church's outlook applied to all fields of knowledge, and killing scientists and setting fire to them was common practice. When Galileo declared that the earth rotated around the sun, he was sued, and had it not been for his old age and the respect people had for him, he would have

been condemned to death. He was imprisoned in his home until he died.

The march of time is inexorable, and science triumphed, fueled by a stored up rancor against the church. The (emotional) reaction was not to strip from Christianity what had distorted it, but to exclude the church from life, and negate whatever it represented, including religion, indeed God Himself (Exalted be the Almighty). In such a void, the mind became the worshiped god and science the new religion.

This was the cradle of contemporary Western civilization; it was nursed on atheism, grew and prospered, or so it thought. God, for the remaining believers, existed and was visited in churches at the end of the week, but beware, His presence outside this precinct, lest He interfere in people's personal, social, economic, political or military affairs. The polarization of mind and faith was entrenched and science and religion became implacable enemies, never to meet. But, what is the relationship between mind and religion in Islam?

This relationship is clear-cut and manifest, unseen only by the slave-minded whose minds are totally overcome by western logic. They espouse its thought and do not look elsewhere, their minds bearing the legend "*Made in the West.*" They follow in the footsteps of westerners even when this leads them into a void. How can they extol the mind, and yet incarcerate it in a single

mold, blindly, applying the same model however different the circumstances, the concepts or considerations? How can they worship science and fail to see the glaring fact that science, itself, has admitted its lacks and shortcomings, and its crawling evolution? Do they not realize that, in fifty years time, our present scientific development will be obsolete and sound ridiculous? Had science felt it had reached its plenitude, it would logically have closed up all scientific research centers to benefit elsewhere from their budgets. Every new discovery confirms our previous ignorance. When we strive for new discoveries, we admit our own ignorance. The wider our knowledge gets, the sharper is our recognition of our ignorance.

Given the prejudice against the mind by the church, and the ensuing harmful effect on religion, modern society has been plagued by a lack of faith. I then started to look into the matter in the light of Islamic Shari'a.

Shari'a has great respect for the mind, whose protection is one of its five overall purposes: To safeguard religion, life, mind, the ownership and family. I pondered over the importance of the mind, which entitled it to such a lofty standing. The answer is self-explanatory.

Our mind makes us aware of the Almighty. The Holy Quran calls us to faith in Allah through our mental capacities, challenging our mind - without precondition - to look at ourselves and at the surrounding world, at the signs and portents of Allah. Could there be creation without a creator, could there be a creature without a creator?

If we believe in our Creator, we must identify what He is expecting of us.

The mind, in Shari'a, is the instrument of answerability by virtue of which man is answerable for his choices. Without a mind, man cannot be answerable.

The mind, in Shari'a, is one of the sources of legislation after the Holy Quran and the authentic Sunna. Delegating Mo'az ibn Gabal to Yemen, the prophet (pbuh) asked him how he intended to render judgment, and Mo'az answered: *"I shall consult the Holy Book."* *"And if you do not find a clear indication therein?"* asked the prophet (pbuh); *"I shall look into the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah,"* *"And if you also do not find any clear indication therein?"* *"I shall endeavor and use my mind."* The prophet (pbuh), greatly elated, said: *"Praise be to God who helped the messenger of His Messenger to arrive at what satisfied His messenger."* It is this mental activity, within the context of the Quran and Sunna, which enriched the vast Fiqh legacy, a legacy which enabled Shari'a to maintain its relevance over the ages and propagate its knowledge, until the Muslim mind regressed, closing the doors to Ijtihad, and the Ummah started wasting away.

The mind prompts us to differentiate between right and wrong and identify the permissible. At a radio interview in the United States, I was asked by the interviewer, whose tone indicated disapproval and indignation, why Islam interdicted alcoholic drinks? I asked him

whether he would blame a donkey, which entered the studio, and, feeling the need to urinate, did so on the spot? He replied: *"Of course not."* *"Would you act like the donkey?"* was my next query. *"Of course not."* *"There lies the difference,"* said I, *"your mind was your mentor and guide. If the mind is blurred with alcoholic drinks or drugs, one acts like an animal. The mind upholds humanness."*

The mind enjoins us to act according to God's precepts and to scan His vast universe, in modern terms, to indulge in scientific research. A rudimental knowledge of Islam brings forth a conviction that the Almighty has provided us with two books, not one: The Holy Quran and the book of the universe.

The Holy Book gives us knowledge of our God, our faith, our devotions, our dealings and our ethics. It enjoins us to read the other book and study the universe. This implies as the Quran clearly indicates - studying history, geography, geology, the firmament, the flora and fauna, genetics, the science of water, wind and minerals, of bees and ants, of insects and of natural characteristics, to ponder on the cosmic balance, on the fluctuation of men and nations between rise and fall, on that inner voice and the purity of will. The Holy verses are embedded with so much wisdom. During the golden age of Islam, Muslims responded to such injunctions and reached great heights.

There is no dichotomy between mind and faith in Islam. The first word revealed in the Holy Book was *"Read,"* and Allah swore by the pen. He sayeth: *"Are they equal - those who know and those who know not?"* (39:9) and *"Only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge,"* (35:28) and *"Say, O my Lord, increase me in knowledge."* (20:114) There are also the Sayings of the prophet (pbuh) urging his flock to seek knowledge, and not only knowledge of Shari'a sciences. The saying *"seek knowledge, even in China,"* proves it. Suffice it to quote the Holy verse: *"Say: 'Journey in the land, then behold how He originated creation'"* (29:20).

This is how mind should be perceived in the Shari'a of Islam; given its standing, we have first to safeguard and second, to use it.

We *"safeguard"* it by interdicting alcoholic beverages and the like, securing freedom of thought, including religiosity as in *"No coercion in religion,"* (2:256) we secure the mind also by banning oppression and domination, ensuring the freedom of research and frustrating the causes of unrest, bitterness and hatred.

To *"use"* the mind is a Shari'a duty, and letting it lie fallow is a major offense; the Almighty sayeth: *"We have created for Gehennam many jinn and men; they have minds, but understand not with them, they have eyes but perceive not with them, they have ears, but they hear not with them, they are cattle, nay, rather they are further astray. Those - they are the heedless"* (7:179). They are mindless and do not reflect.

While expatiating on Islam, I tried to unearth the extent to which it is assimilated by Muslims and truly understood, but I faltered and felt perplexed. It seemed as if the Ummah had deviated from the path delineated to it by Islam, having neglected the role of the mind. The mind was no longer its shining beacon, nor its signs its guiding compass. I do not doubt sincerity but sincerity alone does not suffice.

The situation worsens when scholars, entrusted with religious leadership, fail to use their minds, since they are heeded and have a great impact on the multitude. The examples are countless.

When the printing press was discovered, Muslims welcomed it, rejoicing in the fact that the Holy Quran could be printed and widely disseminated. But, the ulama in Constantinople opposed this, issuing a fatwa that the printing of the Holy Book was Haram (unlawful), and much time was lost.

When the late king Abdul Aziz al-Saud (may God rest his soul) wished to set up a telephone network in his young kingdom, the ulama issued a Fatwa damning the telephone as the work of Satan. The King used his brains and had someone recite some verses at one end of the line and made those ulama listen to them at the other end. Amazed, they said: "*But it is the Holy Quran,*" and the King replied: "*Yes, and it cannot then be unlawful or the work of Satan.*"

When the late King Faisal (May God rest his soul) was the Emir of Hejaz, he was visited by a group of ulama who loudly condemned the teaching of physics and chemistry to Muslim youth as it polluted their minds as these were sciences of the infidel. They were taught at a school whose graduates were sent abroad on fellow ships. Faisal was an intelligent and wise man. Instead of engaging in polemics with the religious scholars, he immediately summoned the Director of Education and showed great anger, berating him for teaching physics and chemistry and polluting minds. The Director vainly tried to speak, but the fury of the Emir escalated to the extent that the protesters felt protective of the director. Finally, Faisal told the Director: *"I want the words physics and chemistry erased, to be replaced by "the signs of Allah in the universe,"* and I shall follow up the matter myself, and beware if you fail to do so. The new title was printed and the contents remained. The delegation seemed to be ignorant of the fact that ibn Haitham, Gaber ibn Hayan, Khawarazmi and Bairouny were glorious figures of Islam in such sciences.

We all recall the great enthusiasm triggered by the landing of the first man on the moon, and the ensuing jeering at Muslims and Muslim ulama, indeed at Islam itself in this connection, since some ulama said it was kufr to say man landed on the moon.

An American priest came, some years ago, to the Islamic Center of Southern California, in Los Angeles, appealing for help. He was a priest for one of the prisons,

because it is the rule to provide religious services to the prisoners, each according to their faith, by representatives of the different religions. The priest carried a book in English, beautifully printed with a handsome binding, written by a great scholar of an Islamic country; the book was distributed free of charge for Da'wa purposes. It contained a number of Fatwas, including a very strange and wrong one: a Christian would be called twice to Islam; if he refused, a third attempt was to be made, and if he still refused, it would be Halal (permitted) to punish him!

I recall that Sheikh who was asked by one of the Islamic Centers in America to teach Islam to the youth. The most important point made during the first lesson was to hate Christians and Shi'ites. He also told them not to sit on a chair recently vacated by a woman until it cooled, because the heat of her body would pass into theirs, and this was Haram. Is it to be wondered then that the youngsters had to be forced to attend such courses? They admitted as much to me. As soon as they came of age (and they do so early in America and acquire total freedom), they would never return.

Those are but samples of individual cases. I do not jeer at ulama, and I render homage to the honorable men and to the science of the knowledgeable, the righteous amongst whom who rise above intolerance and tribalism and strongly condemn men who cripple their own mind, and whose sole concern is to set limitations, ban anything new, and narrow the scope of the Halal, as if the rule was to forbid and not to allow.

The issue does not stop at such ulama per se, who are not disturbing because we have no clergy in Islam; else we would have lived the tragedy of the ancient church in Europe. Unfortunately, such men hold sway over large popular sectors, not properly educated. They have created a phenomenon that has shaped a specific mentality which is voiced, disturbs and leaves a negative impact.

I do not indict sincerity but blame failure in using the mind. Some Muslims became an Ummah of excessive sentimentality to the detriment of a keen mental vision, whereas an evenhanded personality has the ability to strike a balance between mind and emotion, and never lets one prevail over the other. When emotion prevails over mind, great harm can occur or great bounty can be stifled, "*and whoso is given wisdom has received abundant good*" (2:269).

Emotions can be noble and sincere ... Once, visiting an Islamic center in Canada, I was told that it had formerly been a church. It had been purchased and turned into a mosque, where the Azan was chanted and prayers performed, under the banner of: "*There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger.*" I was apprised of the fact with radiant faces and beaming smiles; I met a similar situation in the next town I visited. The center there had also been a church, which had been bought and turned into an Islamic Center. The shining eyes and beaming faces expected a reaction of triumph on my part, and I was asked to describe my feelings. I replied with genuine hleakness: "*It is a feeling of fear, unrest*

and pity!"

The shock wiped out their smiles and elation. "*How, Doctor?*" I replied that a pressing query rose in my mind. What had led the Christians to sell their churches to Muslims? It was obvious that the generation that had filled these churches had been followed by another which had forsaken them, heeded its carnality and were no longer in need of churches. Could this happen to Muslims?

The honest answer is yes. We are not in Makka, Cairo, Karachi or Tehran where a general Islamic environment still prevails, where people daily live Islam, which inspires their social customs, their continued legacy and obtaining values, regardless of their knowledge of Fiqh, or shortcomings in religious practice. But, in America, the adherent to Islam is handed a live coal, and swims against the current. Moreover, the control of parents stops officially at a given age, and temptations abound, promoted by the media, education, prevailing values and the strong pressures brought to bear by friends and colleagues.

There lies the major challenge: to emphasize the importance of education, to entrench Islam by conviction and not coercion, to ensure the good example of parents, to sponsor the cause of the coming generation, as the most important cause, to build an Islamic school rather than a center or a mosque, because a school can accommodate a mosque, but a mosque cannot accommodate a

school. Unless we do so, it is most probable that, if the influence of Islam abates from generation to generation, our mosques and centers will be put up for sale within a generation or two.

My audience was stunned.

A few years ago, Salman Rushdie published his miserable book *The Satanic Verses*. Demonstrations exploded and storms raged, providing the book with the best publicity possible. The American press wrote that the agent for Salman Rushdie had asked his publishing house for a large sum to have the book translated into Farsi, and when the book was translated, delegated someone to give a copy of it to the son of Imam Khomeiny May God rest his soul. The agent was fully aware of the violent reaction that would send sales rocketing sky high. Khomeiny saw that Salman Rushdie be executed, but other Muslim leaders opposed this ruling, proving that the affairs of Muslims were no longer a matter of counsel among them. Salman Rushdie was not killed, but 22 Muslim Pakistanis were killed in the streets of Karachi during a clash between the police and demonstrators. Had the book attacked the Jews and their religion, the situation would have been totally different: the book would have been withdrawn, despite the upholders of freedom of expression. A well-laid plan would have been implemented by authorities in all countries, with the means of pressure available to them; the same means are also available to us as well, but they make use of them and we do not. Our reaction is emotional: we wail in anger, let out steam to release anger

and subside ... but afterwards no thought no plan, no mental exercise.

This has been common practice among us. We have hitherto failed to let our mind rule our reactions, habits and nature, or the handling of our affairs.

We try to find excuses for the Ummah. Since it fell under the yoke of dictatorship after the wise caliphate, the Ummah was forbidden to think for itself, use its mental processes and exercise its constitutional rights. If the ruler was righteous, uprightness prevailed: if he was corrupt, wickedness was rampant; but, in both cases, someone else thought for the Ummah.

The honest and sincere reformer is the one who seeks to redress this situation, but it is far from being an easy matter. Were I asked to suggest a slogan for the Islamic Ummah, I would propose: "*O Islamic Ummah, think.*" The mind alone can solve problems.

ABOUT ISLAM

I do not seek to lecture on Islam, but merely to voice ideas and thoughts I wish to share. Since this book is conceptual fare, I can only provide what I have, even if it is not plentiful.

Islam means surrender, submission and peace, man surrenders himself wholeheartedly to His God, the One Who has neither partner nor competitor. That is why the Holy Quran describes the ancient prophets and their adherents as being Muslims. About Abraham, the Almighty sayeth: *"When His Lord said unto him; surrender! He said, I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds. And Abraham enjoined his sons and also Jacob: 'My sons, God has chosen for you the religion, see that you do not die save as men who have surrendered unto Him'"* (2:131-132). The Queen of Sheba says: *"I have surrendered with Solomon to the Lord of the World."* (27:44) And Joseph says: *"O receive me to Thee in true submission, and join me with the righteous"* (12:101).

And the apostles of Jesus say: *"We believe in Allah and bear Thou witness that we have surrendered"* (3:52). Even the Jinn say: *"And there are those among us who have surrendered and some of us have not"* (72:14). The Arabic word the Quran used all the way was *"Muslim."*

When the message sent by Allah, through a great number of prophecies and prophets, was completed, covering all aspects of life, not exclusive to a given region, a given people or a given time; when mankind reached maturity and was qualified to receive the final version and comprehensive directives that covered all the affairs of man in this life and in the Hereafter, then God sent the seal of prophets and messengers, Muhammad (pbuh) and compiled all His teachings in His Book, the Holy Quran, revealing it to His messenger, who would interpret it with his Sunna. He called the religion Islam. *"Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My favor unto you and have chosen Islam for you as religion."* (5:3)

We have accepted Islam as our religion from Allah, and we all wish to be as good Muslims as possible, but how do we start?

We immediately recall the Hadith of the prophet (pbuh) as related by Omar ibn al-Khattab. The angel Gabriel came to the prophet (pbuh), in the mien of a man wearing white clothes, with black hair, and who did not seem to have been travelling; no one knew him. He sat next to the prophet (pbuh), rested his knees on his and,

laying his palms on the prophet's thigh, asked the prophet to tell him about Islam. The prophet replied that Islam was to attest that there was no God but Allah, and that Muhammad was His messenger, to perform prayers, pay Zakat, fast Ramadan and perform pilgrimage if one had the means to do so.

If we wish to be righteous Muslims, we must bear in mind that an edifice must have foundations, or else collapse. The foundation of Islam is faith, faith in God, His Angels, His Books, His messengers and in Judgment Day ... in fate, whether good or bad; and, above all, one must act according to that faith. The Holy Quran emphasizes the meaning of faith: "The Bedouins say, 'we believe.' Say: '*You do not believe; rather say, 'we surrender,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts*'" (49:14).

An all-embracing truth is elucidated by details; it is a logical sequence. The five fundamentals of Islam and the six components of faith detailed by the prophet (pbuh), and the directives for the affairs of religion enunciated by the Almighty and elucidated by the prophetic Sunna, should not overshadow the overall purpose of the coming of the prophet (pbuh), and the fundamental reason for the revelation of Islam to him. The Almighty sayeth: "*We have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all worlds*" (21:107).

How forceful an expression! A negation followed by an exception: We have not sent thee, Muhammad, save for one rea-

son, that you be a mercy unto all men. This is Islam; it starts and ends with mercy and, in between, mercy unto all.

How numerous are the Muslims and Muslim scholars whose knowledge of Islam starts with dictates, prohibitions, book-learning, texts, footnotes and references, a vast Islamic library! In their teachings and dealings, you would look in vain for *"mercy unto all."*

I have never seen some of them smile, although, in Islam, a smile at your fellow men is alms giving. This attitude is reflected in their followers. I used to tell some of my students, when I was teaching at the Faculty of Medicine at Kuwait University: *"The teeth are not an awra (a part of the body to be concealed)."* My plea in the morning to the Almighty has been for years: *"O Lord! Let us always be among the loving and do not deprive us of the blessing of the smile."*

I am perturbed by some Muslims' encyclopedic knowledge of Shari'a sciences and by their practical (or it might be theoretical) ignorance of the fact that the messenger was not sent, *"save as a mercy unto all people."*

In the absence of such awareness, is it to be wondered that such men err, become harsh and inflexible! Whenever faced with two options they choose the hardest, although they daily tell their students that the prophet (pbuh) always opted for the easier course.

I met once at a conference in Kuwait an eminent Muslim scholar, whose followers are numerous - both

educated and common people - and asked him: "*about the son of an adulterous relationship?*"

His immediate response was "*to kill him.*" But, I exclaimed, the son of the adultery was the only one innocent of the crime. I then added: "*Suppose that we are standing and a boy of four or five comes in with a smile on his face and throws a ball at you, expecting that you would throw it back to him. Would you still feel you have to sentence him to death because he is the son of an adulteress?*"

The man hesitated and said, "*God be praised: I would not.*" He was convinced because someone had set him right. Yet, his first answer was an immediate psychological response. How do some Muslims acquire such cruelty!

Let us consider further this Hadith quoted by Bukhari and Muslim on the articles of Faith: "*Islam rose on five pillars: attestation of the Oneness of God and that Mohammed is His messenger, prayers, zakat, pilgrimage and fasting.*"

A great many Muslims believe that the Pillars of Islam constitute the totality of Islam, forgetting that they are but pillars to support the edifice and that if they did not, they would forfeit their purpose. I know of righteous Muslims who, relishing the sweetness of prayers, indulge in supererogation; they fast not only during Ramadan but also voluntarily fast on other days as well, and leave annually on pilgrimage and Omra. This is their

limited perception of the dimensions of Islam, and the extent of their knowledge of it. It calls to mind the man who erects concrete pillars and keeps adding to them, but never starts to raise the edifice.

Those who reduce Islam to the chapter of ritual amputate it, but no doubt in good faith. Islam is by far more comprehensive than this, and good faith is no excuse for the Muslim to be ignorant of his religion. I have a friend who often went on Omra and pilgrimage, while his relatives were in need, his neighbor hungry and a friend of his severely indebted because of a disastrous business transaction. Had he spent this wealth to alleviate the needs of such people, he would have been a better Muslim and closer to Allah. I know of a doctor who was called for an emergency, but insisted on performing his prayer on time, when minutes meant the difference between life and death for the patient ... May God rest her soul.

So many like this do not realize the plight of other Muslims, within and without their own countries, in terms of injustice, oppression and aggression. They do not feel concerned; they do not feel it is a Shari'a duty to succor others; as long as they abide by the fundamentals, they feel they have beeded the injunctions of their religion and are at peace with themselves.

Even devotions are often performed from egotistical motives. How often, during pilgrimage, we see men, as strong as wild bulls, shoving and elbowing their way to

get to the Black Stone and kiss it, uncaring of those who fall on the way or are downtrodden. Their sin might be far greater than the recompense they seek. In a similar situation, I have chosen to turn to God and say: *"O Lord, I would wish to kiss the Black Stone as did Your prophet, but my brother Muslims are also keen to do so and the crowd is overwhelming. I shall not press forward, but make way for them out of love for You."* And I just raise my hand towards the Stone.

COMPONENTS OF ISLAM

The discourse of God to those who pledged themselves is the Shari'a, whose purpose is to safeguard the interests of people in this world and in the Hereafter. Its main sources are the Book of God and the authentic Sunna of the prophet, then the consensus of Muslim Ulemas and "analogy" when a new situation arises not covered by a ruling; some Fuqaha'a take into account other secondary sources. Otherwise, decisions are left to the personal discretion of Fuqaha'a (Ijtihad), who seek to secure people's interests, considering time and place, provided the ruling does not contravene the Quran or the Sunna. It is ruled that whenever the interest of people was involved, there lay the statute of God. The principles of Fiqh (Osoul al-Fiqh) decided the rulings, whereas the subject matter of Fiqh is these very same provisions. The purposes of Shari'a number five: to safeguard religion, life, the mind, ownership and family, with a great many subdivisions of these. The interests of people are either essential, necessary or for betterment purposes in these areas. Acts are classified as Obligatory, Mandoub (recommended), Permissible, Makrouh (reprehensible)

and Forbidden. The widest scope is that of the permissible, because the rule in life is permissibility, unless matters are specifically forbidden.

There is no human act, whether individual or collective, which is not covered by a provision of Islamic Shari'a.

The provisions on "*devotions*" are fixed and clear-cut, as enshrined in the Quran and taught by the messenger (pbuh). They are Tawkifi (by decree) provisions and naturally cannot be the object of debate, Ijtihad or argument in their overall aspects. They are commands to be heeded.

"*Dealings*" (moamalat) are covered by two groups of provisions: provisions on Hudud (legal punishments) are enunciated in the Quran and, as such, are inviolate and cannot be tampered with). The other group is not covered by a text and leaves latitude to Fiqh to devise and discern, without contravening the Quran or the Sunna.

The fixed rulings of Shari'a are not numerous and constitute but a small part of Fiqh. Most of its provisions are the outcome of human thought. This is the cornerstone of our vast Fiqh legacy - sects, schools and opinions - and lends itself to development. When his views were sought on the same issue in two consecutive years, Omar ibn Al-Khattab gave two different answers, *and said: "We ruled as we knew, and we rule as we know."* When Imam al-Shaffei had developed his school in Baghdad, and came to Egypt, he noted that what applied in one country did not apply in the other. He then

rethought his school and wrote about it differently. The views of qualified scholars differed and varied, and such multiplicity was a godsend and blessing. The views did not differ on bases, but on secondary issues, which is permissible. The companions, such as Abu Bakr and Omar, held different views on the same issue, but this did not mar their brotherhood in God. They did not slander or accuse one another, as is happening nowadays over secondary issues, unfortunately, fundamentals do not succeed in closing the bonds of fraternity, in the love of God, between quarreling scholars.

If the human mind, exemplified by the mujtahideen (questing) Muslim Fuqaha'a, refrained from coping with the era and from deducing innovations, from provisions, even if no relevant reference existed in the books of the early scholars, we would be stigmatizing Shari'a as barren, and would no longer be able to claim that it is valid for all time and all place.

As long as the Muslim Fakib remains incapable of charting new courses with his thoughts and questing, he is doing an injustice to Shari'a and impeding its course. It is regrettable that so many of these scholars automatically revert to old writings whenever faced with new developments, though fully aware that they date back to an era when our contemporary problems were unknown, nor even conceived of. The forefathers thought for themselves and made rulings, so why should we not follow in their footsteps, and stop relying on the thinking of others and shying away from making our own views known?

It is even worse to decide without full knowledge of the facts involved. The Shari'a rule is that judgment is part of one's comprehension of an issue. This is the obvious approach of a rational being, but is so rarely the case. I once attended an international conference, in the seventies, at which a Fakih submitted a paper on sterilization; it was a long and rich paper but dealt with castration. I wish to add, in this connection, that the recent trend of convening seminars to consider such questions, seminars attended by Fuqaha'a, as well as physicians, economists and experts in the various sciences of our time, augurs well for arriving at conclusions that will cover any given issue from all angles.

The other item under "*dealings*" is ethics, which is not within the scope of tribunals, courts and laws. Laws are the boundaries we should not go beyond, but ethics are the very ground we tread throughout our lives without ever hitting any boundaries. Ethics might well be the whole realm of Islam. It might well be that laws were enacted to protect the ethical aspect of life, as ethics cannot survive in a legal void. Some Islamists emphasize the importance of boundaries (hodood) and of enforcing the laws of Islam (and I do), but most of them seem more concerned with the boundaries and do not give thought to the realm; they get somewhat confused. We should bear in mind that the enforcement of the laws of Islam in a country where Islam is not embedded in the heart, conscience and ethics of its people is an experiment doomed to failure, because in that case Islam would be an alien factor. People would hide from the law or circumvent it,

or they might be coerced and would obey in appearance alone; coercion is heinous, besides causing hypocrites to mushroom.

A number of Islamists feel that to start by teaching ethical behavior creates a long and futile process, and I thought so in the past, but I am now convinced this is the only way, however long it takes. In terms of Islamic priorities, we only have to recall the saying of the prophet (pbuh): *"I came but to perfect noble ethics."* Ethics are a goal, everything else being a means. There is no harm in overall action, but one should take account of sequence and importance.

I harbor no negative or pacifistic feelings; my only concern is for the Ummah to recover all the aspects of right struggling in the cause of God.

If the Ummah or most of it - profoundly lived its Islam, in heart, conscience and ethics, and not in appearance, clothing and clamor (the prophet, pointing at his heart, said pioussness is here), no tyrant or oppressor, no internal or external foe could even dominate it or impede its course. I met years ago a leader of an Islamic movement, from an Islamic country (!), whose movement was known for its peacefulness, its enlightenment and broad vision, who complained of the persecution meted out to his movement. He said: *"We are cornered to the extent of being stifled and I feel that a clash is inevitable."* But, I told him: *"Beware, and do not make a move, believing that public opinion is sympathetic with you. Wait, until you become the public opinion."*

APPLICATION OF SHARIA

Enforcement of Shari'a seems to be the overriding concern of all those involved in the Islamic arena. I fully share their concern lest I be an aberrant Muslim. My daily plea is "*O Lord, help us to serve Your religion, raise Your Word to the helm, apply Your Shari'a and call to You.*" But it is clear to my mind that the way the Shari'a is applied can be right or can be wrong.

The difference does not arise from Sharia itself, but hinges on the enforcer, on his acumen, his intelligence and his knowledge of Fiqh.

The guileless (usually the most enthusiastic and vociferous) deem Shari'a to be a mold, a ready-made book or a computer disk that you can insert in a slot and get a decision. They forget that Islamic Shari'a cloaks the very elements of its flexibility; that some of its

provisions lend themselves to change according to a change in circumstances, whereas others do not, and that the latter are minimal. They do not realize that a large part of Fiqh no longer complies with our contemporary era, neither does it fit the new environments that now accommodate Muslims as minorities. Whenever a new proposal is made, its author is slandered, accused of wishing to change the Shari'a, or to alter the religion of God. Such mental backwardness mindlessly endows with sanctity the views of the forefathers, forgetting that these forefathers were the pioneers and thinkers of their age, and believing that the "new" remains static over the centuries. What would happen to my patient if I treated him, today, according to the practice of Avicenna, the genius of his age, or of al-Razi, the wise man of his era? All sciences grow and develop; why should the science of Fiqh remain static?

There is a dire need to undertake an overall, sincere and bold review of what we have, retain the sound and change what must be changed. I already sense the accusing fingers and denying voices. Spare them. I neither intend to render the unlawful lawful, or the lawful unlawful, nor do I intend to contravene Shari'a or dare to challenge the basis of religion. But, Shari'a is a wide realm, so do not curtail it, so that ye may bask in God's plenitude.

The drafting of a "*Constitutional Fiqh*" is a pressing need, as it would provide a methodology for the system of rule, and would delineate the relationship between ruler and ruled, the rights of the individual and the powers of the State. This chapter in Fiqh is sorely lacking.

There is also a dire need to draft the Fiqh of minorities. Fiqh was drafted when Muslims were a majority in their countries, and when the world was divided into a Dar (abode) of Islam and a Dar of Harb (war). Today, large groupings of Muslims are citizens of non-Islamic countries, where they are minorities living under conditions, customs and laws that differ from those obtaining in Muslim countries (is it good luck or bad luck?). The Muslim reader will promptly conclude that these Muslims away from their homeland or are strangers; a naive and false conclusion. There is the Muslim Arab, the Muslim American and the Muslim Britisher, who are citizens of their countries, neither aliens nor momentary guests. Such citizens raise query after query as to how the Muslim should endeavor to reconcile his religion with his mode of life. I do not believe that the scholars of the Orient have the answer to such queries. I repeat that passing rulings emanates from one's comprehension of an issue. These would be ruling on what they don't know, a common mistake among scholars and the general public.

The division of the world into Dar of Islam and Dar Harb (war) is no longer a viable theory. Numerous are the Islamic countries which counter Islam with aggression and harshness and subject Muslims to oppression and persecution, whereas Muslims living in non-Islamic countries freely practice their religion and follow the call to it and are protected by the law, provided they do not contravene it. How far more profitable it would be for Muslims to divide the world into Dar of Islam and Dar of Da'wa (the call to God), although, most regrettably, Da'wa has

been made a crime in some Muslim countries. The tree of Islam (and the tree of humanness) cannot grow in the absence of freedom. We therefore hope that the growth of Islam in countries committed to freedom augurs well for mankind.

A multitude of people, the learned and ignorant alike, are unable to distinguish between incontrovertible religion on one hand, and tribal and social norms and customs, totally unrelated to religion on the other. This is a most harmful and dangerous error.

An opinion was voiced, years ago, to the effect that driving a car was unlawful (Haram) for women. What was the Shari'a justification? Women rode horses and camels in the past, where did the unlawfulness of driving a car originate?

Women driving a car were accused of being whores. What is a more heinous crime: driving a car or accusing chaste women of being whores? Why were the slanderers not sued on Shari'a grounds?

Female drivers might be accused of infringing norms and tradition, but why involve Islam, and then retreat under the lash of embarrassment?

I read in the American press about a case of wrong enforcement of Shari'a in an Islamic country which had opted for Islam as a system of rule. It sometimes happens in that country that, when the intent is to humiliate a political foe, policemen or some of the man's enemies go

to his house in his absence and rape his wife. On one occasion, the raped wife reported the incident, but with dire consequences. She was accused of adultery, having admitted to being ravished, and unable to bring forth the four witnesses stipulated by Shari'a. Is that enforcement of Shari'a? No forensic medicine investigation or analysis, no DNA samples for matching with the culprit's, because Shari'a does not require them! This is a mockery of Shari'a. Any injustice surmised cannot be attributed to Shari'a.

There is also the case of that "*Islamic*" government in another country, whose first action was to close girls' schools and dismiss women from their jobs, forgetting that the quest of knowledge is the duty of every Muslim, men and women alike. Did Islam forbid women to earn an honest livelihood? This government also lashed men who shaved their beards or trimmed them. One can go as far as saying that growing a beard is a Sunna, but it is not an obligation (fardh). Whoever turns a Sunna into a fardh does indeed alter religion, believing that he has acted for the best.

Another deficiency in the arrangement of priorities, in the rare cases when Islamists have come to power, is their traditional first rulings: to cut off the hand of thieves and veil women. But soon afterwards the result of these men gaining power is a rampant corruption, a deteriorating economy, the settling of old scores, and a regime protected by the army and police. Freedom of expression is banned, and a contrary opinion cannot be heard: the first elation is wiped out, replaced by a general

despondency, and the scientific and cultural elite flee the country. It is as if a dictatorship had been replaced by another, but one more monstrous and heinous, because of its claiming the mantle of Islam and draping itself with its cloak. To disagree with the regime is a sin, to criticize it impiety. I met in America a great number of scholars who had fled from the yoke of an Islamist regime. They had been devout all their lives, but had stopped practicing their religion, while still in their country, because they felt that if the new regime exemplified Islam, then they did not need Islam. It is gratifying that, in their new dwellings in America, enjoying freedom and meeting mature Muslim intellectuals, these scholars have recovered their faith in throngs, and have set up institutions to project to themselves and to their children the tolerant and loving face of Islam, the true Islam.

I wish those regimes would recall the words of the prophet (pbuh), when he entered Makka victorious. Turning to those who had sent him into exile, he said: *"Go, you are set free."* He pardoned all those who pledged allegiance to the new rule; otherwise they were free to depart.

There are loving hearts and loathing hearts. With loathing and hate you can dispose of a ruler, dethrone a king or topple a regime, hut you can only build with love. No nation, not even Islam, can rise on anything but love.

Islamists won elections, a few years ago, in a certain country, and were expected to come to power. I was gratified at free elections in a Muslim country and at the victory of those that called people to Islam, but felt apprehensive about a possible failure and the loss of such an opportunity. I feared the enemies of Islam, but also feared its sons. I did not know them, but I wrote them a letter, extending sincere and selfless advice. However, events overtook my letter, and it was never sent. This is what I had written:

"Brothers in Islam, Praise be to the Lord and heartfelt greetings. Peace and blessings be upon you. The echoes of your victory varied: some said the army would intervene, others that you would come to power, but that the experiment would fail, thus putting an end to such attempts throughout the Islamic world. Let us hope that your victory will give precedence to mind over emotion, that you 'counsel one another unto truth, and counsel one another unto patience.'" 'Religion is advice,' said the prophet (pbuh). I would like to stress a few points, that I am sure have not escaped you I would be remiss if I did not do so.

Declare amnesty; tell people that Islam is the religion of peace, that when triumphant, the prophet (pbuh) told his erstwhile enemies 'go; you are set free.' The enemies of Islam equate our religion with bitterness, violence and vengeance, and those ignorant of it among Muslims express the same sentiments.

The difference between Islamic rule and the democratic system is that the former is committed to Sbari'a, whereas the latter is not. Otherwise, the democratic mechanism is closer to the Islamic Shura at the time of the prophet and the Wise Caliphate. The plight of Muslims, throughout their history, since the time of the major schism, was persecution and dictatorship, and not Shura or democracy. We cannot invoke eras when the ruler was righteous. The ability of the Ummah to think for itself and bear its own burdens was annihilated. Islam was always the foremost victim of despotism, in the past and now.

You fiercely toiled to destroy despotism, but to erect is far more difficult than to destroy, in particular as regards building up spirits, ethics and feelings. You cannot achieve this with a decree or a law. Neither can imposed appearances, clothing or behavior achieve that end. Conscience is irreplaceable in Islam; man must reprove himself. You must worship God as if you saw Him, because if you do not see Him, He sees you. The methodology of the prophet (pbuh) was that education should precede the enactment of laws, so that laws would not emerge in an alien ground, to be belittled or circumvented. We sincerely hope to see your Muslim people 'voluntarily' abide by the ethics of Islam. When the inner self is sound, outer appearances are righted automatically.

One of the priorities of Islamic duties is for a country to produce its daily sustenance in bread. If it has to rely

on external sources in this regard, independence is a volatile illusion. The potential of youth, its enthusiasm and its Islamic ardor must be tapped for that purpose.

People must love Islam, embrace it and acquire its ethics (This is our experience in America).

Prophethood has come to an end, but the call to Islam is ongoing; kindle an awareness of Islam and love of it. Addressing the prophet (pbuh), God sayeth in the Holy Quran, *'Hadst thou been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from about thee.'* Let that be the motto of Muslim youth.

The enemies of Islam claim that Islam is an eastern religion and, as such, is hostile to the west, although Islam is a mercy to mankind and a universal call. There are autocratic western policies nurtured on the hate of Islam on the belief that Islam threatens these western countries, unjust economic interests and morally deviant ways. Large sectors of people know Islam only through the media and press articles about deeds of Muslims derogatory to Islam. There is therefore a need for a public relations plan to counter this distortion and convey the realities of Islam.

Islam must emerge in the world with a smiling mien, a cool-headed way of speaking and convincing arguments.

The contemporary civilization of the world holds within itself the very seeds of its erosion, an erosion that

can be countered only by the teachings of Islam. How do we convince the patient that we provide a restorative medicine and not a lethal poison?

What is happening in your country is a propitious opportunity and a valuable experiment which, if successful, could be a turning point in the course of world history.

It is a struggle of the intelligence and not solely an issue of sincerity. May the Almighty grant it success.

This is the end of the missive. I did not mention the name of the country, but everyone knows it, and the ensuing unfortunate events are known as well. Alas! What a pity for Islam.

Islamic Shari'a safeguards society against crime, through three lines of defense: firstly, conscience and devoutness, the field of competence of education and the media; secondly, obviating the causes of crime, which include overall economic reform; and, thirdly, a penal code. If Shari'a is wholly enforced, its success is ensured, but, if enforced in parts, failure is the inevitable outcome. We have the example of Omar ibn al-Khattab suspending the penalty for theft during the famine years. A man came to Omar accusing two of his servants of having stolen bread. When asked, the two servants complained that their master did not feed them. Omar turned to the master and said: *"If they steal again because you do not feed them, I shall cut off your hand."*

ABOUT THE QURAN

This Quran is the inimitable Book of God. Our legacy abounds with writings on its wonders, and I do not pretend to add to them. Nonetheless, I have pondered over its wonders and feel the urge to expatiate on three of its inimitable attributes.

The first of these is its miraculous eloquence, which bemused the Arabs at the dawn of the Revelation. Whatever sanctity Muslims attached to the Holy Book throughout their history, and however they referred to its wonders, I do believe that this miracle which awed the forefathers was overlooked by most of the later generations. Millions still read the Quran with profound reverence and great love but without perceiving the inimitability of its text, unless they master the Arabic language, and how few do this. There are also those who read the Quran with great difficulty, as a form of worship, and they are to be thanked and rewarded.... Some orientalists took up the study of the Quran, although their

knowledge of Arabic was minimal, but they nevertheless ruled on Quranic eloquence: some denied its eloquence, whereas others described it as only superficial style. The verse of the great poet Motannaby applies to them: *“Derogatory remarks on a faultless text but the flaw lies in a faulty understanding.”*

If a faulty understanding prevented the realization of the miraculous eloquence of the Quran, scientists cannot be forgiven for disregarding a basic scientific rule, namely that an appropriate device is required to reveal the nature of the subject matter, whether electricity, nuclear radiation, magnetism or any chemical element. If the most eminent chemist puts his finger in an acid solution, the finger would not turn red, nor would it turn blue if put in an alkaline solution, but a sunflower leaf will take on the right color if dropped in the two solutions; the sunflower leaf constitutes the proper test. The leaf, in the context of the linguistic wonder of the Quran, is the discerning mind, exemplified by the early Arabs, to whom eloquence was the pivot of life, their patrimony and ultimate objective. Excelling in stylistics, they were challenged by the Holy Book. If they raised their swords against Islam, they never failed to exclaim when they heard a Quranic verse: “It has beauty, it has charm.” This is the distinction between words coined by humans and those beyond their ability, the distinction between the human and the divine. Suffice it to recall that, when a strong and awesome personality like Omar ibn al-Khattab heard that his sister had converted to Islam, he vowed to chastise her. But, as soon as he heard her recite some

verses of the Surat Taha, he turned back and, standing amidst the throng of unbelievers, pronounced the Articles of Faith. Is there a better proof of the miraculous eloquence of the Quran, whatever our knowledge of it?

Some Arabs claim that the Arabic language cannot cope with the science of the age, and that scientific subjects should still be taught in foreign languages. It is incredible that the inimitable Quranic language should fall short in much narrower fields. No, this is a matter of self-respect. If we respected ourselves, we would respect our language, as do others around us, even the enemy preying on our Ummah, who went to the grave of history and unearthed his language (Hebrew), to make it the language of education, of discourse, of science and of work.

The Quran's second attribute is its miraculous content, which has affected hearts and transformed men into a new type of being. They looked the same, but what a difference! Their ethics were those of the Jahiliyya, but they espoused those of the Quran. This Quran was in their hearts, in the Council of their ruler, in the court of their judges, in the pattern of their dealings and in their relationships with their fellow men. This is the miracle perceived by men who did not read Arabic or understand the Quran, let alone appreciate its inimitable style. The attitudes of the liberated people toward the conquering Muslims underwent two stages: first, an awareness of a good reputation that augured well. The Muslims guaranteed the vanquished people the religious freedom denied them by the despotic Persians and Romans. Even Chris-

tian Egyptians suffered under the yoke of Christian Rome, which wished to impose the control of its sect. The first act of the victorious Amr ibn al-Ass was to recall Anba Benjamin from his refuge in the western desert to resume his seat at the helm of the Coptic Church. Witnessing the Quranic miracle reflected in the ethics of Muslims and of their dealings, Christians voluntarily entered this new religion in throngs. They felt it to be the natural and rational extension of the Divine Code revealed to the prophets, from Abraham through Moses and Jesus to Mohammed (pbuh). They entered Islam voluntarily and freely, unlike similar events in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere. The Quran was explicit: "*No coercion in religion.*"

Some people believe that the Jizya (tax) imposed on those who did not convert to Islam constituted economic pressure brought to bear for conversion purposes; these people forgot that the needy were exonerated from the tax, and that those who converted no longer paid jizya, but had to pay Zakat, which was usually higher than the jizya. Jizya was a tax in return for which military protection was ensured, the tax was a contribution to defense expenses. Abu Obeida ibn al-Garah refunded the Jizya to the people of Homs when his army withdrew from the town.

Oddly enough, a similar tax was until recently imposed in Egypt on Muslims and Christians alike who wished to be exempted from military service; it was called Badaliya (in lieu).

Jizya belongs to history. It is nowadays felt in Islamic countries that the defense of the homeland is the duty of each and everyone, Christians and Muslims alike, not one group offering life and the other money.

We now come to the third modern miracle, what are of late being labeled the wondrous "*scientific miracles*" of the Quran; these have been the object of books, theses, seminars and conferences. You may raise the query "*why now?*" Simply, because science has only recently reached a pinnacle; it has accomplished over the past two centuries more than it ever did throughout its history. Moreover, scientific progress will be escalating in the coming decade. The ground is now cleared for mankind to perceive this third Quranic miracle, apart from its linguistic eloquence, (Arabic being marginalized in our contemporary world), apart from its wondrous ethics, (as I do not believe that the Islamic world can dare claim that it reflects Islam in its ethics and methodology). It was this scientific miracle that led Western scientists to declare that the Quran could not be the work of men, nor could Mohammad have written it. The book of Dr. Maurice Bucaille, a French physician, entitled "*the Bible, the Quran and Science*" bears witness to this fact. Bucaille deems that it is this scientific miracle which led some Western scientists to convert to Islam, without knowing Arabic, and obviously not tempted by the conditions obtaining in the contemporary Islamic world - the Third World - and definitely not coerced to convert to Islam. The scientific facts mentioned in the Quran were discovered by mankind centuries after the Quranic revelation. Suffice it to say that this is proof that the Quran is the Book of God.

I hasten to state that the Quran is not a book of cosmic sciences. Whoever wishes to embark upon scientific research, let him look at the universe and the magic of creation, or step into a well-equipped laboratory, and work and experiment. There is no other way. It is most regrettable for our Muslim scientists to shirk scientific procedure or to lag behind, while others research and discover, or for them to be content with cheering wherever a new scientific development echoes the Holy Book. Some of our scientists do one or the other of these things. I somewhat reproach them, in particular those who arbitrarily interpret Quranic verses, or those others who are bewitched by the media and by self-advertising. There are Quranic verses that profoundly attract the scientific mind and, reading them, the world realizes their divine source, and the believer feels humbled and more pious. I recall a personal experience, which could well be at the origin of this chapter.

The time is 1948 and the place is an eight-seat plane flying from Cairo to al-Lidd airport in Palestine in the days of the struggle. The planes were not then pressurized. It was my first flight and, as soon as we took off, I became breathless, I had a feeling of suffocation and I sweated profusely; I knew that the higher we flew above sea level, the more relative density of oxygen - the gas of life, as discovered in the 19th century - diminished. As I was reading my daily section of the Holy Book, I was attracted by the following verse: *"Whomsoever God desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam, whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his chest nar-*

row, tight, as if he were climbing to heaven." After my ordeal, it was as if I was reading the verse for the first time.

I wish to comment on how Muslims relate to the Quran. Muslims know that the Almighty rewards those who read the Holy Book, and most of them stop at that. They forget that the next step is to understand it and ponder over it: *"What, do they not ponder over the Quran? or are locks bolted over their hearts and sealed?"* Then comes the ultimate step, the application stage. The Quran is a methodology of work and a pattern of life for the individual, the collectivity and mankind at large. *"His essence was the Quran,"* said his wife, Aisha, describing the prophet (pbuh). The Prophet is our model and our ideal. The primacy of the Quran also applies to mankind: *"Lo! This Quran guides to the way that is straightest."*

Most Muslims today look at the Quran like a patient, who, given a prescription, keeps reading it but never takes his medicine.

There are, however, average Muslims who feel its impact and ensure that their conduct is governed by it. In this connection, I wish to relate two cases in which I was involved. I was giving the Friday sermon, and quoted the verse about backbiting: *"Do not backbite one another; would any one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?"* After prayers, a simple man came to me at the Islamic Center of Southern California, and confessed

that he had spoken ill of me in my absence. He had begged God's forgiveness and hoped that I would forgive him. It was one of the happiest days of my life: here was a man who lived the Quran in his daily life. A friend related the second case to me. He had received a phone call from a man who had gone to primary school with him thirty years before, who invited him to dinner. Asked the reason for the invitation, the man answered that he would give the reason when they met. Sitting at dinner, the man asked my friend if he recalled having gone to a picnic organized by the primary school. My friend barely recalled the occasion. However, the man added: *"Do you recall that when you looked for your lunch box, you did not find it? I had taken it, thinking this was a cute trick."* He went on, I was recently reading a paper, when I came across the following Quranic verse: *'When a visitation of Satan troubles those who believe, they remember God's guidance and then see clearly.'* I remembered and regretted what I had done, and decided to compensate with this dinner your missed lunch, hoping that you will forgive me. I beg God's forgiveness. But, this is not all I did today. I went to my old school and asked to see the librarian, to whom I handed over a book, explaining that I had borrowed it thirty years ago and, liking it had kept it. I told the librarian, I was blind but I have seen the light of day. I am returning the book and hope you will forgive me. I also donated a sum of money so that the library could increase its stock. I am jotting down the names of all those I have wronged and am trying to locate them and apologize. You are one of them. You

have no idea how my life has changed; I feel at peace and closer to God.

This is the practical aspect of the Quran and this is the practicing Muslim. The late Mohammed Iqbal, the great Muslim poet said that his father always told him to read the Quran as if it was revealed to him personally. Were Muslims to do this, they would be reborn new men.

ABOUT THE SUNNA

While giving a lecture at the University of the United Arab Emirates, I met an eminent professor, and felt great kinship with him. In one of our talks, he told me that he intended to marry shortly. As he was a professor of Shari'a, I was astonished that he had not yet married. *"But I am married,"* said he. *"You did not beget any children?"* *"No, I have three daughters, God be praised."* *"Then, you want a son?"* *"No, I do not."* *"Maybe, you are not happy in your marriage?"* *"No, I could not have a better wife, and she takes very good care of me and our daughters."* *"But why do you want to get married?"* *"My only motivation is the Sunna."* *"Do you think your wife will be happy when you marry?"* *"Of course not, she will be most unhappy."* *"Do you believe the Sunna outweighs the Quran?"* *"Definitely not."* *"You tell me that your wife gives you happiness, and that your marriage will distress her; have you forgotten this Quranic verse: 'Shall the recompense of goodness be other than goodness?'"* He fell silent and then said: *"I shall not marry."*

I was afterwards invited to have tea with the family. Happiness reigned supreme, and the wife and daughters thanked me. My liking for the man grew even more; he did not argue, but followed the right path when it was shown to him. This is an example of a rather common interpretation of the Sunna.

I do not say that polygamy is Haram (prohibited), but to follow the Sunna should not obviate discernment. The married life of the prophet (pbuh) could be divided into two parts: Twenty-five years with one wife, Khadija, Umal-Moemineen, may God rest her soul, and ten years during which he married several women for human, political or social reasons, in a society familiar with such customs. But, this second part of the prophet's married life does not apply to Muslims. He had more than the four wives allowed Muslims, and he was forbidden to divorce one and replace her by another, which is allowed to other Muslims. Moreover, his wives could not remarry after his death, which is allowed to Muslim widows. His wives were doubly recompensed for good deeds and doubly chastised for erring. The Holy verse sayeth: "*Wives of the prophet, you are not as other women*" (33:32). Whoever seeks to follow the Sunna concerning polygamy, would he deem it preferable to abide by the first part of the prophet's married life or by the second?

The question of polygamy is one raised at any lecture or dialogue with non-Muslims in the Western world. The answer that seems to be often overlooked by Muslim lecturers is that Islam did not invent polygamy, that

this idea is a common error. There is polygamy in Judaism and in Christianity. The prophets, of the Old Testament had several wives, and were never accused of contravening Divine Law. This fact is mentioned in the Catholic Encyclopaedia. The Church still allows African Christians to have more than one wife, to offset Muslim demographic growth. I personally heard this said by a Catholic bishop at a conference attended by thousands of Catholics, where I was the only Muslim, invited to talk about abortion. The lecturer must have overlooked my presence.

Polygamy was not banned in Europe for religious reasons; the ban was purely a civil decree, dating back to the 6th century. Emperor Justinian enacted a law forbidding men of the cloth (priests) to have more than one wife, on penalty of losing their right to promotion. Polygamy, as such, was later banned.

Polygamy existed in the two preceding religions, and Islam set its scope and limitations, clearly enunciating them in the Holy Quran. We do not claim that Islam forbids polygamy, but we believe that Muslims have overindulged in the use of what is for some a license for personal gratification. If Islam allows polygamy, it also allows monogamy. Social norms and traditions still play a major role in this regard; polygamy is a phenomenon on the wane among Muslims worldwide. Muslim minorities living in countries forbidding polygamy have to abide by the law, and, elsewhere, social norms are changing, and polygamy is no longer as common as in

the past. Moreover, the enhanced social status of women, through education (a duty for Muslims, men and women alike) and access to the labor market (one of a woman's legitimate rights) tips the scale in favor of monogamy; Also influential, of course, are current economic conditions, which do not allow the average Muslim the luxury of two or three wives, except among those living in high-income countries, and these are a minority in the Muslim world.

Polemics center on this issue, with enthusiastic Islamists on one side and women's movements on the other (these most often lacking an Islamic approach). We believe we should be spared such infighting; let the normal process of social development deal with the issue.

Another example of people wishing to emulate the prophet. An eminent Muslim doctor, living in America, came to me one day and told me that he had decided to stop dressing like the unbelievers, and to start going to the hospital wearing the shilwar kamiss of the Pakistanis. I asked him whether he believed the prophet (phuh) wore a shilwar kamiss and, if this was the Islamic costume, what he called what was worn in Saudi Arabia, or Yemen, or Tunisia, or Morocco, or Malaysia or by the Sheiks of al-Azhar? The concept of emulating the prophet through a specific costume is an erroneous concept. The enthusiasts are stunned when asked if the prophet was dressed differently from Ahu Jahl or Ahu Lahab (great enemies of Islam). The prophet dressed like all the people in his society, and he did not change his costume with the advent of the new religion.

The prophet set rules for ethics in clothing, dictating modesty for both men and women, but did not set models. When he was offered a Roman costume, he wore it and neither he nor anyone else objected to this because it was the costume of an infidel, or forbade the wearing of it.

One does not imitate the prophet (pbuh) in such a superficial manner as wearing what he wore, or eating what he ate. He always warned us that what he told us in his capacity as a prophet was binding; otherwise, as he always said: *"I am but a man."* When he drew up the military plan for the battle of Badr, Mo'az ibn Jabal asked the Prophet, *"Is that a revelation by which we must abide, or is it your opinion on war and stratagem?"* When he was told that it was the prophet's personal opinion, he did not hesitate to propose an alternative plan more likely to succeed, and the prophet did not hesitate to accept this plan. When the prophet (pbuh) saw the people in Medina pollinating palm trees he thought this practice would make no difference in their growth. When the cultivators came to him and complained about a reduced crop, due to lack of pollination, he told them: *"You are better placed to know what is of concern to you in your life."*

When the Prophet (pbuh) told his wives, *"The first one to die after me is the one with the longest arm,"* some of them started to measure their arms to see who had the longest arm. But the Prophet (pbuh) meant by *"the longest arm"* she who was most generous and charitable, whose charity reached near and far. The wife who died after him was Um al-Fuqara, *"the mother of the poor,"* the charitable Zeinab bint Jahsh, and she did not literally have the longest arm!

The Prophet had also his share of a sense of humor. When he told an old woman that old women do not enter paradise, the woman was alarmed. But the Prophet soothed her, explaining that God Almighty would restore youth to the elderly in paradise!

Sometimes people stick to the letter of the Prophet's sayings and overlook their meaning. Ordering the Muslim army to a campaign, the prophet (phuh) told them, "*You will pray al-Asr (Afternoon prayer) in Beni Qoraiza.*" Those who understood by this that the prophet meant that they should speed up their march, performed the prayer in its due time, whereas those who followed only the letter missed the "*Asr prayer.*" But in his profound understanding, the prophet (pbuh) hurt the feelings of neither group. I believe that between the two options, I would probably have prayed al-Asr before sunset.

Each of us has his own capacity for acquiring knowledge and his own ability to think, and God shall judge us according to this capacity and ability, rewarding each one for his endeavors. Yet, let us suppose that an enemy decided to attack Medina. Suppose some Muslims propose to defend the city by digging a trench around it, rebuking anyone who disagreed with this idea by saying that the Prophet had done this. . Yes, the Prophet did this because, in his time, this was the latest defense strategy. The Sunna, then, is that we keep pace with the latest defense strategy.

There is a distressing incident, recurring year after year: namely, the fixing of the first and last day of Ramadan, our fasting month. The Lord sayeth: "*So let those of you who are present at the month, fast it*" (2:185). But what about timing? At the dawn of Islam, there was only one way to set the date of the beginning of the months, this was by sighting the crescent moon. This was the '*means*,' but the goal is to fast during the month of Ramadan. Means are one thing, goals another. Sighting the moon was sometimes difficult due to climatic conditions, to facilitate the matter for his Ummah, the prophet said: "*Fast when you see it, and break your fast when you see it; but if you cannot, consider Sha'aban the preceding month - a thirty day month,*" even if in reality the crescent had emerged but could not be sighted.

The prophet explained his choice of this means by saying: "*We are an unlettered Ummah, we neither write nor calculate.*" But if the Ummah has now learned to write and calculate, should conditions remain at a stand-still? Or, should we heed some pedantics who wish to forbid the teaching of writing and arithmetic because of this saying of the prophet? We are living in an era in which science enables us to accurately fix the birth of the crescent moon, no matter what the climatic conditions. We apply science in every domain of our lives, and if we can benefit from it in the realm of our religion, must we blind ourselves to it? We have for ages fixed the beginning of Ramadan by the sighting of the lunar crescent, but do all Muslims fast on the same day, even in

neighboring countries? Even those who disregard astronomy do they go outdoors every day during Ramadan to watch the sunset? No, they just look at their watches and follow the precalculated calendar. This applies also to the five daily prayers. I smile as I write these words because, for years, I was firmly attached to the notion of the actual visual sighting of the crescent, until I realized the difference between means and aims and discovered the precise accuracy of astronomy.

Our Shari'a prescribes that, in the absence of a text, the overwhelming probability prevails. When the choice is between actual sighting and astronomy, no one can argue against the preponderance and accuracy of the latter.

I do believe that, in this context, there is no need to refer to the faction that belittles the value of the Sunna and disregards its legislative importance, being content with the Quran. The view of this fraction has never been seriously taken, although it includes rules, presumptuous Faqihs and jesters. Suffice it to quote the Almighty: *"Whosoever obeys the Messenger, thereby obeys God"* (4:80). And *"Whatever the Messenger giveth you, take; whatever he forbids you, give over"* (59:7) and *"Say: 'Obey God, and obey the Messenger'; then if you turn away, only upon him rests what is laid on him, and upon you rests what is laid on you"* (24:54) and so many others confirming the authority of the Sunna. Volumes have been written about the competent authority of the Sunna.

In conclusion, I can but say that, in order to emulate the prophet (pbuh), one must know and understand him: his personality, his psychology and his background. Otherwise, emulation remains superficial and shallow, totally unrelated to the essence of the prophet (pbuh).

"There is a key to every personality," to quote Abbas Mahmoud al-Akkad in his series on Muslim geniuses. After decades during which I studied the personality of the prophet (pbuh), read his biographies in detail and pondered over them, I became convinced that, were I to define the key to his personality, I would choose one word: *"loving."* He was loving in all circumstances. Although persecuted by the heathens, he told angel Gabriel, who proposed to him to topple on his enemies' heads two hills which surrounded Mecca, *"Leave me alone, Gabriel. O! God, forgive my people; they know not."* When the Muslims were about to fight the heathens, they asked the Prophet to curse their enemies, but he said: *"I hope that they beget children who will worship God."* Abdullah ibn Ubayy was the most hypocritical among the Muslims, to the extent that his own son proposed to kill him, but, the prophet refused to allow this, saying he would not be accused of killing his companions. And, when the man died, the Prophet donated his own cloak to shroud him in honor of his believer son. He stood in respect at the funeral of a Jew, and when his companions commented over this, he said: *"Is he not a human being?"* He once lengthened so much the duration of his prostration in praying, that some feared that he had died, but the Prophet explained

that his grandson was astride his back playing that he was like a horse, and that he did not wish to hurry the boy. The Prophet prayed with his granddaughter in his arms. When a Bedouin urinated in the mosque, he prevented the people from harming the man and told them to pour some water on the stain. He then gave gentle advice to the Bedouin.

A bird was circling in the sky nearby; when told the reason of its anxiety, the Prophet ordered the release of its young which was caught by a Muslim child. The Prophet teaches us that a certain woman was doomed to hell because she had imprisoned a cat, neither feeding it nor letting it fend for itself, and that one man entered paradise because he filled his shoe with water from a well and offered it to a dog that was dying of thirst. God thanked this man and forgave his sins. One of the Prophet's friends sent a letter with a woman departing for Mecca, betraying the Prophet's preparations for the conquest of the city. God revealed this fact to the prophet who sent someone to retrieve the letter from the woman. The Prophet's friend apologized, stating that he had vulnerable relatives in Mecca and wished to gain the sympathy of the Quraysh towards them. The prophet forgave him, and when the Muslims expressed astonishment he said: "Maybe the Almighty looked at the people who had lived the battle of Badr and said, *"Act as you wish, I have forgiven you."*

Get to know your prophet, O Muslims!

This is the example.

This is the Sunna.

MAN, WOMAN AND THE FAMILY

History tells us that when the Islamic army led by Amr ibn al-Aass was nearing the capital of Egypt, the daughter of al-Mokawkiss sat in a room of the palace, accompanied by Armanoussa, her lady in waiting, trembling with fear. She bemoaned her fate, convinced that the Bedouins coming from the desert would rape the two ladies and, if the women resisted, would kill them. But Armanoussa allayed her fears saying, *"No, your Highness, those Bedouins are followers of a new religion which dictates righteousness and the respect of sacred things. They come out from the desert holding their mosque in their hearts, and they raise their swords and lay them down according to a law. We are safer with them than with our own fathers."*

This was the reputation of the Muslims, and we strive to maintain it. We are therefore anguished by

attempts to distort this reputation, that depict Muslims today as a people obsessed with sex; I do not refer to marital relations but to the relentless preying on one victim after another, as do predatory animals. Long ago, the enjoyment of many women and the search for a succession of new faces became a distinct characteristic of this false image of the Muslims. Western media, books and movies display this horrendous image to people who avidly rely on television and movies to acquire knowledge in order to shape a culture. The psychological effect of these lies on viewers is also immense, even when the movie is clearly fantasy, far removed from reality.

This is the image of Muslims portrayed by the enemies of Islam.

A worse image is that created by Muslims whose only relevance to Islam is the name of Muslim: those who, blessed by God with great wealth, felicity and security, let their wealth sweep away their reason and blind their eyes; those, who enjoying God's bounty, forget the Divine Bestower. Then Muslims sink deep into depravity in summer resorts in Europe and America, guzzling alcoholic beverages and indulging in adultery, believing that everything has a price and that they can afford the price. These people thus besmirch the reputation of Muslims and elate Islam's enemies. One of my bitterest recollections is of a full page interview given by a call girl to a British newspaper. The headline next to her picture read: *"I specialize in Arabs."*

We should not wonder at this state of affairs. Enemies and profligates: this is the nature of things. But the saddest thing is to see Muslims devout in their religion inadvertently giving credence to the accusation that Muslims are predatory wolves, to be feared but not trusted, and guarded against by every means, conceivable or inconceivable. Such people harm Islam and other Muslims, while believing that they are acting for the best.

One example among many:

An Islamic association in America convened an Islamic conference, the organizers took great care to avoid any possible pitfalls. They put the male delegates in one hotel and the women in another, but did not book an entire hotel for each gender. There were men staying in the botels occupied by the female conference attendees, and women in the hotels assigned to the male delegates. There was even a boundary to separate men and women, since the sessions were to be held in the open air. If a man wanted to talk to his wife, he had to ask a member of the organizing committee of the conference with a walkie-talkie to call his wife who would find her, and ask her to come talk to her husband! But, both men and women were in the full view of any passer-by! This is not an isolated case, but represents a specific mentality.

I read a Fatwa of a religious scholar in an Islamic country of whom a woman had asked if she could wear the hijab instead of the nikab (in which the face is totally covered, with only two slits for the eyes), as she was accompanying her husband abroad. The scholar told her

that not only should she wear the nikah with two very narrow slits, but that she should also wear a veil over this costume.

I met a father, highly educated and a good Muslim, who had sent his daughter to college, where total freedom prevails, yet who prevented her from attending a mixed lecture at the Islamic Center where the Quran and Shari'a were taught, because he objected to such "*scandalous*" mixing, as if only Muslim youth were predatory animals who could not curb their urges.

Another fatwa saddened me. A woman had two married sons living with her. One of the wives said that she sometimes had tea with her mother-in-law as they watched television, and she asked if she could be merely veiled in the presence of her brother-in-law, rather than having to wear the nikab. The answer was in the negative, stating that the woman's brother-in-law should not see her face. I was astonished because I see the face of my brother's wife, and he sees the face of mine. Have I been sinning to such a great extent all those years?

These are psychological complexes that should not be taken seriously in our contemporary life. I am a partisan of the hijab, like most Muslims, but I do not make of it the whole of Islam: i.e. whoever wears it espouses Islam, and whoever removes it renounces Islam. I look forward to seeing all Muslim women, in both the East and the West, wearing the hijab, because the hijab is a symbol of pride in Islamic identity, at a time when this

identity has lost much of its clarity in many quarters, and also a symbol of the Islamic personality. The greater the number of women covering their heads, the easier it is for the West to recognize Islam and accept it. Clothing is a language like the spoken word. The message conveyed by the woman wearing a bikini differs from that of the veiled, modestly attired Muslim woman. The first is provocation, and the second is described best in the Holy Quran. *"That will be a better way that they may be recognized and not harassed"* (33:59). A Jewish girl, a student in a Los Angeles university wrote that she was subjected to harassment and pestering by thoughtless young men. Inspired by the sentiments of feminist movements, she decided to give the lie to men's belief that they were better than women. Thinking that she was erasing the differences between sexes, she shaved her hair, but the young men's behavior was unchanged. She then decided to cover her hair like Muslim women, and then no one attempted to harass her.

There are those who claim that the verse (24:31) reading: *"And to draw their veils over their bosoms"* means that women should cover their bosom. Well and good. But we know that one of the conditions of prayer is to cover what should not be seen, and we have never heard of women being allowed to pray bareheaded. Thus, the head is a part of the body that should be covered (awra). This is also the consensus of the scholars of Islam. The hadith *"at puberty only the face and hands should show"* is sometimes challenged as weak since it is not found

in Al-Bukhari or in Muslim, but this fact does not invalidate the argument for covering the head.

But I do not like religious hysteria. A veiled woman who backbites is far beneath an unveiled woman who does not do so. Besmirching reputations is more heinous than eating pork, since the Quran equates it with eating dead human flesh.

The veiled girl among my students who cheats on her exams is more contemptible than the unveiled student who does not cheat. One should not confuse minor and major issues. To create confusion in religion can lead to great sin, such as in the case of the man who misquoted a Holy verse to argue in favor of veiling, this is evil indeed. I had to intervene to repair the damage of this act, although I do not like to embarrass anyone.

Instead of reading the verse: *"O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the wives of the believers to dress modestly in order to be recognized and not harassed,"* the enthusiastic brother read it thus: *"tell your wives and daughters and the wives of the believers to WEAR HIJAB!!"*

I feel strongly, as a Muslim, about the demeaning of women which prevails in most of the Islamic world, if not in all of it. Women are still second-class citizens and not only socially, albeit not in Islam. Our laws relevant to women and the family require an enlightened revision

by Fiqh to ensure justice in our present time. There is therefore a need for Fuqaha'a who can liberate themselves from social habits, concepts and legacies that many believe to have a religious connotation which they do not possess, and from the sanctity many people bestow on the words of our forefathers, which words conformed to different conditions in a different era from ours. I do not advocate violating Shari'a, but taking inspiration from it in legislating for current present conditions. I wish our contemporaries to endeavor to do as our forefathers did.

Was Islam revealed only for men excluding women?

No.

Were men favored by Islam over women?

No.

Does Islam state that men were fashioned from different matter than women?

No.

Indeed, the first Muslim convert after the prophet (pbuh) was a woman, Khadija - may God rest her soul - his wife.

The first martyr in Islam was a woman, Somayya Om Ammar ibn Yasser.

The medical corps of the prophet's (pbuh) army was entirely composed of women (al-Assiyat).

When the battle of Uhud reached an impasse, Nussaiba bent Qa'ab rushed in, throwing away her medical kit, she took a sword and shield, instead, fought

and was wounded. After the fighting, no one reproached her for acting like a man or cursed her because she did not remain at home. On the contrary, she was praised by the prophet who said: *"Whenever I turned right or left, she was always before me defending me."* After the death of the prophet, she and her sons fought in the Ridda (apostasy) wars.

When, during the Hodaibeya crisis, the Muslims practically rebelled, protesting against the unfair conditions of the agreement with the Quraysh, it was Om Salama who advised the Prophet (pbuh) to slaughter his offering silently and to cut his hair, convinced that the Muslims would follow suit, which they did.

Was it not a woman who, with wisdom and sincerity, opposed Omar ibn al-Khattab, who was advocating a moderate dowry, and who led Omar to say, *"She is right and Omar is wrong!"*

Does Islam not grant a woman the right to accept or reject a suitor, a right that is voided nowadays by a great many fathers, even though Islam deems that marriage by compulsion is null and void?

Did women not teach their sisters, and men as well, some of whom were scholars and jurists, the affairs of their religion?

Did Islam not grant women the right of inheritance and the right to an independent ownership on which neither father, brother nor husband can encroach? Yet, a great number of Muslim men void that right nowadays.

Did not women emigrate with men, fight with men and sail on the seas with them?

Incalculable examples and proofs of women's status abound from the prophetic era and from the early and shining days of Islam. Were it not for the great sedition (between Ali and Moawaiyah) and the toppling of the Ummah into an abyss of despotism, had early principles been developed and codified over fourteen centuries, matters would greatly differ, in numerous Muslim societies, from the blatant injustice which now takes the guise of religion.

Some men will retort: But the Quran says "*Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which Allah bestowed more abundantly on the former over the latter,*" and in another sura it says: "*Men have a degree over them.*"

Yes, but the ill lies in a faulty understanding and a faulty interpretation.

Every institution must have a head that is its president. When the number of men in a group exceeded three, the prophet (pbuh) always ordered them to set one of them as their head. But this president did not consider himself above his colleagues, or fail to show them courtesy.

I am a physician at a hospital headed by a director, this is a necessity to organize work. But, the director is not entitled to consider himself a better man than I am, or to treat me on such a basis.

The family is the unit of society in Islam, not the man alone or the woman alone. Islam urges marriage and rejects as a mockery life without it. The prophet said: *"Marriage is my norm, whoever has a distaste for my norm is none of mine."* The Almighty sayeth: *"And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider."* (30:21) We wish to draw attention to this love and mercy which overflows in the homes of some Muslims, but is dried up in the homes of others.

If the husband is the head of the home, the wife is its heart. Each one performs a vital function that cannot be dispensed with. They should not compete with each other or quarrel to prove themselves as is the case in modern Western societies, and which has led to alienation and disruption.

Woman is the equal of man, but this does not mean that the two are identical, otherwise, where is the rationale for the creation of both men and women?

Man, because of his physical strength, sees to the needs of his wife and children; thus he is in charge of her, also because her nature and duties usually require her to rely on someone else she might have to curtail her share of family responsibilities.

By his very nature and his duties, man cannot remain idle. He must provide for the sustenance of his family, this is the degree that man is given over woman.

That is why brothers inherit twice as much as their sisters: he has to be the wage earner, and she does not. He must also provide for his mother and sister if they need to be taken care of; this is a one-sided responsibility. The wife may contribute to the budget of the family out of affection and kindness: her commitment is ethical, founded on love and generosity, not a legal commitment dictated by Shari'a, as it is in the case of man. To contribute is voluntary on her part, but is a duty for her husband. In Islam, a husband cannot compel his wife to disburse her money, even were he poor and she rich. These are Islamic realities disregarded in numerous Muslim homes, either out of ignorance of or rebellion against these principles, in either case, injustice gains the upper hand. There are still men who behave as if they owned their wives and what they possess. It is one of the glorious traits of Islamic Shari'a that it grants women the right of independent free ownership whereas to this very day, in some American states, banks and official agencies require a husband's signature for any financial dealings undertaken by his wife.

One is stunned by Muslims' widening ignorance of Islamic teachings about the rights of women. A woman physician, once, told me that her husband took over the management of her consulting room in order to appropriate her earnings. Was she not his wife?

There is a tendency among many Muslims, some of whom are involved in Islamic affairs, to belittle women. Women from one of the Islamic Centers in the West-

complained that when a Board of Directors was appointed for an Islamic school that was to be established, women at the Center were excluded, although some were teachers by profession. None of the men appointed was educationally qualified. I advised the women to write to authorities at the center, saying that, unless mothers and women teachers were appointed to the Board, they would not send their children to the proposed school.

The "*Fiqh of the woman*" is still obscure and ambiguous. Although in some Islamic countries, women hold the highest degrees, occupy senior positions, and bear critical responsibilities with great success, yet, they are not allowed to run for election, or even to vote. It is claimed that such exclusion is a tradition not relevant to religion, and that the time has not yet come to break that tradition. I do believe that, if a tradition denies a right, it is unjust, and religion stands against injustice.

The Almighty says: "*And the believers, men and women, protect one another, enjoining good and forbidding evil.*" These words are addressed to both genders, not to one gender alone, and the duty enjoined is at the very core of political work. Those opposing women's rights in this area equivocate saying that a woman conceives and delivers, as if motherhood forbade membership of parliament. No one claims that all women should become members of parliament, but rather that those women should be free to run whose age, culture, family and other commitments permit them to do so. I do

not believe that any country lacks a number of women qualified to embrace parliamentary life. The world has known women as members of parliament, ministers and prime ministers; why should Muslim women be branded as unsuitable for such posts.

Traditional concepts are sometimes confused with religious teachings, and the eyes of some are blinded to what they should perceive.

An uproar erupted in Egypt a few years ago led by some Islamic leaders, when the Ministry of Health took action to stop female circumcision. The Egyptian Ministry of Health might have rushed to settle by law that which could have been better dealt with through education. And yet, I felt very embarrassed when this faction of Islamists behaved as if engaged in the ultimate battle of Islam. As a matter of fact, Islam should not have been brought into this dispute. It is known that the practice of female circumcision antedates the advent of Islam by a long time. The practice occurs mainly in the Nile Valley (Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia) and was known in some tribes in Russia and Central America: the custom has not been confined to one religion. Muslims throughout the world, barring a tiny minority, do not engage in this practice. I say this with authority since I am a professor of gynecology whose practice has included women from practically all Muslim nations. If female circumcision were Islamic, one would have expected to see it in the women of Al-Madina, Makka, Riyadh, and beyond - which is not the case.

The Islamist proponents of circumcision base their case on two alleged hadiths. The first is: "*Circumcision is a sunna for men and a veneration for women.*" This is a weak hadith. In his book, "*Fath al Bari*," al-Hafiz ben Hagar says, "[This hadith} cannot be authentic, since one of its narrators is Haggag ben Artā'a, who is not reliable. Sheikh Sayyed Sabiq of Egypt, in his encyclopedic book "*Fiqh al Sunna*," states that all hadiths concerning circumcision of the female are non-authentic. The second hadith, narrated by Om Atiyya, concerns a woman in Madina who used to perform this operation, and to whom the Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Take the minimum only in order to secure her liking and the content of the husband.*" If anything, this hadith recommends minimizing an already existing practice, and cannot be interpreted as starting a new one.

A main claim that the circumcision lobby presents to defend the practice is that it tames women's sexual desire, and so protects them from succumbing to immorality. Are we then suggesting to other Muslims that Egyptian girls are more chaste than those of their own societies? And who ever said that circumcision reduces sexual desire? Would cutting out a person's tongue reduce his appetite or feeling of hunger? And is there then an alternative in Islam to a viable conscience and an awareness of God? And is curbing sexual pleasure an Islamic virtue? And does this idea square with the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh) narrated by Anass? "*When any of you makes love with his wife let him be*

truthful to her: if he achieves his pleasure (orgasm) before her, he should not hurry away before she achieves hers."

Some minds amongst Muslims harbor a Catholic taint concerning a woman's worth and her right to lawful pleasures. The scenario of original sin in the Bibles they hold in their hands asserts that it was Eve whom Satan tempted, and who then tempted Adam to eat from the forbidden tree. As a punishment for this sin, the pair were banished to Earth in shame and dishonor. Eve especially was disgraced, being told: *"In pain and suffering shall you procreate, you and your daughters to the end of time."* It is no wonder, therefore, that at about the time Islam began, a Christian conference was held in Europe to debate whether woman had a soul; its participants declared that she had, but also that woman was an (unavoidable) evil, whom God created only for the service of man! The Quran, in contrast, recounts that Satan tempted both Adam and Eve, both succumbed to temptation and ate from the tree. It states that both Adam and Eve both regretted their sin, and repented. God forgave them both and that was the end of that sin. The Quran assigns responsibility for Adam and Eve's deeds: *"Satan caused them twain to slip"* (2:36), *"And Adam disobeyed his Lord and so he strayed"* (20:121), *"Then his Lord elected him, accepted his repentance and bestowed His guidance on him"* (20:122). No human being therefore is born carrying the burden of sin, as some Jews and Christians believe, but rather every human being is born pure, endowed with both guidance

and freedom of decision. *"No bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden, and naught shall be accounted unto man but what he strove for"* (53:38-39). Indeed, the original sin ought to be Satan's arrogance and pride in disobeying God's instruction to bow to Adam.

As I seek to redress the wrongs in our Muslim countries regarding women's issues, I am only proposing to hold the right balance of Islam. I am neither impressed nor fascinated by happenings in the West. The status of woman in the West is indeed far from the ideal we should seek. Her situation is even more pathetic than that of her counterparts in Islamic countries. I am not fooled by the freedoms women have achieved in the West, which, include the freedom of sexual license, the freedom to go nude, to succumb to the basest male sentiments, as well as the freedom to become a sexual object, and to allow her body to be a seduction, used to advertise cars, drinks and other products.

I wish to balance the scales, not to emphasize either their left or right side, but to settle them to an even-handed position. I wish women to be respected.

I believe that women should be served first at a dinner party, and should walk beside their husbands, not behind them. I do not believe these things because of my sojourn in the West, but because a hadith of the Prophet (pbuh) about women is ever present in my mind: *"... honored by the noble-minded, humiliated by the blame-worthy."* This is the guardianship intended by God for men over women. I do not see any shame for

myself in sharing in household chores, washing dishes or dusting furniture. I do not deem such work to be a generous gesture, but, rather, one of my duties. The focal point in the functions of a woman is what she alone can perform: pregnancy, delivery and all that revolves around these. However, the scope of a woman's role may vary from one woman to another, determined by age, education, family duties, personal inclinations and social environment.

A one-legged man cannot win a race, neither can a bird fly with one wing. And, a nation cannot chart its course with men alone, having excluded its women from the shaping of daily life.

As I write these words, a pressing query keeps arising in my mind: How many men reading this are willing to have an objective Islamic outlook on what I say? And, if convinced by some of my ideas, will they be willing to apply them, even if this means changing a custom or tradition? I entertain the hope that my writings will be a seed that will fall on fertile ground, grow and develop to become a towering tree rising to the sky. The mission of the prophet (pbuh) himself was to deliver a message.

I also wonder how many women will rid themselves of the inner feeling of defeat, which has been growing deep roots in them for centuries. I most certainly do not call for a rebellion of women against their husbands; neither do I suggest that women relinquish their wifely duties, or their gentleness. I wish them to uproot this defeatism out of self-

respect, and, sometimes, altruism. This must be an innate change, it will never occur by external help.

We cannot conclude our talk on the family, without referring to children.

There are those who believe that as long as we are devout Muslims, our children will follow in our footsteps. This is not necessarily so.

In rearing children, as in agriculture, there should be protection against weeds, parasites and inclement surroundings.

The shaping of a sound personality is not achieved haphazardly, leaving a child to be the prey of societal currents, his own inclinations, vicious trends or the idiosyncrasies of the media.

A personality is shaped through constant toil beginning at the earliest age; you do not train a soldier during the battle but long before it.

The principle of immunization against diseases also applies to morals. We immunize our newly born long before they are exposed to infection, so that later when they are, they are already resistant to it. We cater for the feeding and clothing of our children as well as for their physical health, but their ethical and spiritual training is not taken into account in a great many families. Psychologists state that years from two to five are those during which children are most receptive and impressionable; years that condition a child remaining lifetime,

to a great extent. Physicians also state that the months of pregnancy and suckling affect the physical and psychological health of the child. The child should be taught throughout his growing period that there is a more noble objective to life than smart clothing and wealth. I recall my mother, may God rest her soul, oft repeating to me when I was a child that, throughout her pregnancy, she vowed to call me Hassan and to dedicate me to the expelling of the British from Egypt! A grave mission and a major project. But, I took this purpose seriously as I seriously, grew up and transcended the distractions of childhood and the levity of youth. My mother and my teachers in kindergarten inculcated in me the concepts of truthfulness, integrity, commitment to duty, and obedience to the Almighty. Parents must set a good example. One should never lie to a child, even as a joke. A smoking or drinking father has no valid argument to convince his son not to act likewise. We cannot deceive our children. It was truly said: *"We do not rear our children, they rear us."*

THE REVIVAL

Did we not all rejoice at the dawn of an Islamic revival witnessed especially in the past two decades, and which has manifestly yielded a beautiful crop of sincere efforts and determination since the beginning of the century, notably by mid-century?

The 1967 defeat might have been instrumental in turning the Ummah towards its God. After following divergent paths, Muslims woke to a bitter reality. Egypt had believed it was the greatest striking force in the Middle East, having manufactured both the needle and the missile, their being in control of land, sea and air, bellowing at Israel and roaring in the face of America. *"Whoever objected could drown himself in the sea, whichever he preferred, the Mediterranean or the Red Sea,"* yelled Egypt's ruler. The Ummah saw this striking force assaulted within hours and defeated within days, they tasted the bitterness of defeat. The bitterness was not allayed by the government's at first calling the

defeat a setback, or by the elated dancing of a member of the Egyptian parliament who rejoiced that the enemy had intended to overthrow the regime, and had failed to do so.

The Ummah realized that Egypt's defeat was not due to a paucity of arms or equipment, or to a lack of fighting will on the part of officers and soldiers. Neither was the failure that of a populace unwilling to endure suffering or to forego its needs. The people had not voiced their numerous complaints, because "*no voice should rise above that of the battle.*" The root cause of the defeat was a regime shaken internally, though appearing strong, a regime infiltrated with poison that, seeming sweet honey to some, dwarfed minds, which were in any case unable to think, since the Ummah thought with only a single man's mind. The spirit of initiative was stifled, even that in favor of the homeland. Suffice it to recall that when Israeli planes attacked, no responsible official could order the anti-aircraft forces to open fire, because "*the Marshal's*" plane was in the air on an inspection tour. Everybody sat paralyzed fearing to imperil "*the Marshal's*" plane.

We do not claim this defeat gave birth to the Islamic revival, as this would be a blatant denial of the role of the Islamic movement in Egypt during this century, which movement spread to the Arab countries, creating an Islamic tide which fashioned a new mettle of men, and filled the gap between words and deeds. Islam was reflected in people, and was no longer imprisoned in books. The Ummah realized comprehensive scope of

Islam, seeing that rites and rituals were but one of its facets, that Islam encompassed the life of the individual, of the Ummah and of the State. Muslims realized that Islam enjoined right, shunned injustice, secured justice, promoted liberty and granted independence. The eyes that had been blinded for centuries to this vision finally were opened to daylight.

I must emphasize that, an Islamic orientation has always spawned enemies, hostility escalated parallel to the growth of the Islamic trend. Such enemies were often in the seats of power, whether of a monarchy or a republic. The external forces of colonialism, communism and Zionism occupied the same trench alongside internal enemies; indeed, these external agents owned the trenches and manned them. These powers were aware that Islam was the foe of injustice and that it could stand up to any aggression. It is no coincidence that any collision with Israel called forth an onslaught on the Islamic movement to divert it from the battle: this occurred in 1948 when Israel was created, before 1956 (at the time of the tripartite coalition between France, Britain and Israel); and before the war of 1967. The only exception in this pattern was in 1973. Anwar Sadat had prepared for such an assault with an intensive campaign of religious mobilization among the armed forces, the result of which was clearly visible during that battle in which the weapon of faith participated for the first time. It is painful to recall that, on the eve of the 1967 tragedy, the Islamists, in their detention camps expressed the desire to take up arms, promising to voluntarily return to the camps after the

battle. Their offer was turned down, as expected. They also offered to donate blood, the doctors among them to carry out the procedure. When this offer was also turned down, these Islamists wanted to donate their money, which was kept for them by the detention authorities, but this offer was also rejected. There was a strong determination to prevent the “*pollution*” of the situation with any Islamic generosity.

It was the time of Arab nationalism and socialist order, which totally muted any Islamic voice or thought. People throughout the Arab region had enthusiastically responded in support of this nationalist movement, welcoming what they saw as a dawning hope and a promising leadership, approving what they heard and what they saw. Arab nationalism became tantamount to a religion. A friend of mine, undersecretary of a Ministry in an Arab country, told me: “*I am an Arab, a racist Arab, I would rather cooperate with a Lebanese Christian than with an Iranian Muslim.*” This was the friend who asked me to write a statement to be broadcast days before the 1967 catastrophe. In my friend’s revision of the text, the only words he deleted were: “*In the name of God, the Merciful, the Most Compassionate,*” as he wished to avoid any Islamic connotation. I told him: “*You make me fear bad luck.*” Days later, we were bemoaning together the downfall into the abyss. The Ummah was jolted to its depth. Inundated with despair, pain and anger, the Ummah sought a way out; the only charted course before it led to God. I intend to reveal the dimension of the Islamic revival, a tide that swept over

the Arab countries and extended to the whole Islamic Ummah. I visited Turkey years ago as a tourist. I entered a mosque in Istanbul, and felt like a tourist, who enters such a place to appreciate art and to learn some history. I prayed two Rak'as, wishing to endow the mosque with an Islamic identification to raise it above the status of a museum. The religious void I felt there pierced my heart with sorrow. I returned to Turkey years later, and, lo and behold! Mosques were swarming with worshippers, including young people and women wearing the head scarf, this in a country whose regime does not allow hijab for women. I felt that the Islamic Ummah had only been slumbering, but had not died. Its heart was still beating, and faith was still coursing through its veins.

This was and still is a blessed revival; it steadily proceeds forward and can set its claim to the future. It is mature, enlightened, wise and cogent, and is not limited to a single party or group. It follows its course quietly, but firmly, and strikes deep roots. It is stronger than the conflict existing between the security forces and those they pursue. The Islamic trend is the conscience of the Ummah, its safety valve and its road to liberation. It is a trend of goodness, if only all good people, whether rulers or ruled, could rally around it. Unfortunately, this is not the case, because it is in the nature of men for the unjust to fear justice, and for the devious to be threatened by straight forwardness.

This trend is feared in the outside world and therefore banned in countries that do not hold the reins of their

own destinies, and whose rulers are more answerable to foreign masters than they are to God Almighty.

It is a peaceable, cultured and civilized trend. These very praiseworthy traits are its major dangers in the eyes of the opposing camp, who relentlessly fight this Islamic revival, distort its image and falsely ascribe to it certain falsities, in the desire to fuel fire against it, since its opponents see it as a great threat. These people have reasons for their acts; Islam, in its true image, defies assumption and repels polarization, it is stronger in its power to unify than any other force, and beneficent in beautifying life and in leading men to righteousness. It is due to this power that some hate and beware an Islamic revival.

There is a committee of the Republican party in the American Congress called the "*Terrorism Control Committee*," which publishes articles and studies that are poisonous to Islam and Muslims. Its chairman is Jewish, a former Israeli Intelligence officer. Everything harmful and derogatory is attributed to Islam. This man reduced the Bosnian tragedy to an attempt by Muslim volunteers to mobilize in order to invade Europe. This committee interprets any terrorist act by a Muslim as representing an intrinsic part of Islam and its teachings. Unfortunately, the committee's reports are distributed to all members of Congress, and become a reference for them. Muslims have recently entered the domain of politicians and politics, and, God willing, this augurs well for the future. It was distressing to watch on American television an Arab leader who, when asked whether

there were moderates and extremists among Islamists, curtly interrupted the interviewer, saying: "*They are all cut from the same cloth.*"

To reveal some facts, while concealing others, is not fair play. We have to admit that the Islamic revival is clouded by the deeds of some adherents to Islam who act in a way derogatory to their religion while believing that they serve it. As a result the revival is marred by negative factors which must be identified and cleared, the perpetrators convinced to mend their ways. This would not be difficult if understanding and sincerity prevailed.

First there is the phenomenon of violence to achieve the desired objective regardless of the fact that in Islam, the end does not justify the means. An honorable objective cannot be achieved through dishonorable deeds. Reading the tracts of such people, I was appalled at what they called "*the Fiqh of violence.*" They try to invent provisions of Shari'a to justify their deeds. Have they forgotten that the sanctity of human life is an edict of Islam? Have they forgotten the Quranic verse: "*Whosoever killeth a human being not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption done in the land, shall be as if he had killed all mankind?*" The death penalty is a sentence that must emanate from a judiciary authority in a State with a clear-cut system, and following a fair trial, thus avoiding all ambiguities. No one is entitled to pass such a judgment on his own, or, to kill in order to secure an interest of his own. In this "*Fiqh,*" assassination is legitimate because the Prophet (pbuh) sent someone to kill Qu'ab

ibn al-Ashraf, this view does not take into account that the Prophet (pbuh), in addition to his Prophethood, was the leader of a legal state entitled to issue legal rulings. Moreover, Qa'ab ibn al-Ashraf had reneged on a pact and was guilty of high treason. After the battle of Uhud, he had ridden at the head of forty cavaliers to the Quraysh to conclude a military agreement with them, according to which he would be their ally against the Muslims, despite his pact not to turn against Muslims. The ruling of the prophet condemning this was the sentence of a court, and the decision of a responsible and legitimate government. Had a Muslim gone unauthorized to kill the man, the prophet would have disavowed him.

To add insult to injury, the extremists kill innocent people: women, children and foreign tourists who are totally removed from these extremists quarrels with the ruling power. They ridiculously announce in Egypt that they intend to ruin the tourist season to bring pressure to bear on the government, forgetting that they are weakening and impoverishing Egypt in the face of a strong and rich Israel who greedily yearns to gobble more territory.

We can but decry and condemn such deviants. It is regrettable and most unfair for any observer to include under the same heading as such people honorable and peaceable Muslims, and to claim that all are cut from the same cloth.

These extremists are guilty of criminal deeds, and it is shameful ignorance to classify them as part of the

within Islamic revival. There has never been anything called: "*Islamic criminality*." Such a thing is unthinkable.

We face the problem of the conceit of the ignorant and the ignorance of the conceited. Both don the garb of Sheikh al-Islam, while lacking the slightest knowledge of Islam. A youth who could be of the age of a grandson of mine disagreed with my understanding of Islamic teachings, and accused me of being influenced by western culture, and of seeking to adulterate Islam. This young man assured me that his knowledge far exceeded mine, and advised me to let him guide me to the straight path. This is a breed of man that you find in both the East and West, who believe that devoutness is to lack civility and politeness. At an Arab Islamic conference, held in America (I attend but few of them), I sat at the rostrum with the eminent author, Fahmy Howeidy. He took the floor, and so did I; and then we were handed written questions. One of these, unsigned, read: "*Is the Middle East so lacking in scholars and Fuqaha'a, so that we come to listen to Fahmy Howeidy and Hassan Hathout?*" I snatched the paper so as to be the one to answer this query, since I thought it might reflect a new facet of the mentality of the Muslim. I said: I would not allow Satan to set a barrier between me and a brother in God (who could be my son or grandson), else I would be helping Satan to marr relations among Muslims, which action is a sharp razor that shaves religion rather than hair, as the prophet (pbuh) said. In any case, I would have liked the query to have been more precise and specific about the

matter of disappointment. We may have erred and this questioner might have been able to set us right, and in that case, we would beseech the Almighty to forgive us. Recent decades have brought great victories by Satan in splitting the ranks of Muslims. I do not know, in fact whether I should blame Satan or blame Muslims for these. Whatever the case may be, I do not intend to add another entry to Satan's victory list. My life has taught me invaluable lessons, and it might be opportune at this juncture to recall some of them, in the hope that they will be remembered. The Muslim brotherhood established a boy-scout group in Egypt in the first half of this century; the members of this group wore shorts. One of the devout, deeming this practice to be Kufr (impiety), or tantamount to Kufr, stormed the house of Hassan al-Banna (the head of the Muslim brotherhood), and told him, "*Hassan effendi, I hate you;*", to which al-Banna replied, "*and I love you.*" "*But, I hate you in God,*" added the man, to which the reply was: "*Then I love you even more.*" Here are two modes of interaction, of interchange and dealing with one another; I know which mode I would choose for myself. The Prophet (pbuh) has rightly said: "*The believer yearns for wisdom, whoso finds it is most deserving thereof.*" It will not harm this young man to listen to the likes of Fahmy Howeidy and Hassan Hathout. If there is good in what they say, he has benefited, and, if not, he has not lost anything.

" May the Almighty help us listen to the words spoken and abide by what is best among them."

My reply worked like magic on the audience, and was a turning point for them, as was reflected in the subsequent comments, in discussions after the meeting, and during visits kindly made to my home. It is regrettable that a great number of the revival young people deem it imperative, in general, to hate, to be angry and aggressive as a means of fighting in the way of God, thus they attack the innocent. I cannot single out for blame the young man of the question, since the young people's leaders and instructors rear them on this anger and hatred.

The criterion for what is Halal (lawful) or Haram (unlawful), for what is right or wrong, for the admissible or the inadmissible among the revival youth is an emotional criterion, which can be erroneous, whatever the motivation behind it, even serving Islam. This is a serious predicament, as such emotional judgments can turn devoutness into an abyss, in which religion is molded to one's will, and legal justice is shaped to suit one's whim. On a visit to the city of Assiout, where I had once taught at the university, a young doctor accompanied me. Passing in front of the Young Men Christian's Association (YMCA), I was attracted by a notice written by the Muslims in large black letters there, indicating the time and place of the 'Eid prayer and inviting Muslims to perform it. To assuage my fears, I asked the doctor whether the YMCA given permission for this advertisement. He was most polite, and the look in his eyes was a staunch denial.

There is great confusion in the order of the priorities of a great many of us. In this connection, I recall an event in my childhood which embedded in me the concept of proper priorities. My maternal grandfather owned a big house and, when he died, this house was divided among his children. My family lived in a third of it. We were recurrently plagued by a thief who, when he was seen, would jump from the roof of one part of the house to another part, and from there to the street, where he would disappear. People would shout, but to no avail, and would wake the next morning to find clothing and kitchen utensils missing.

One time, when I was five years old, I was standing with my mother in the kitchen. She was wearing clothes that could not be worn outside the house but, when she heard shouting, she rushed to the staircase and saw the thief about to run out. She ran after him into the streets and through alleys, until she heard the hooting of the police siren, and pointed at the house where she had seen the thief run in. The police found him on the rooftop, hidden in the chicken coop.

My mother had had to determine her priority instantly: the appropriate clothing or catching the thief. The priority was the latter, and she did not hesitate.

We focus on minor affairs and disregard major issues. This is truly deplorable. I was once lecturing about the Population Conference, which was held in Cairo years ago, I had gone through the draft agenda before it was

amended, modified and toned down. I pointed out some of its items, concurring the sexual rights of adolescents, their protection against parental interference, the medical services that should be available to them and also concurring the legal right to abortion in all cases. I said that, if such items were approved, it would mean the direst tragedy for Muslims in their long history. As I was going out of the lecture hall, a man who seemed very concerned accosted me. He wanted to ask me why I was wearing a tie, like the infidels. I beseeched God for patience.

The late Sheikh Mohamad Al Ghazali, the devout and eminent Muslim preacher and reformer, gave a lecture in North Africa. After his lecture, a young man raised his hand to ask about the sharia's stand concerning vinegar! Days later, in a Gulf country, al-Ghazali was asked the same question. It was no coincidence for the same question to be posed twice at such a geographic distance. There must be a common motivator which aims at frittering away the energy of Muslim youth, and involving it in senseless matters in order to divert them from major issues that should be their main concern.

Mistrust can sometimes trigger keen insight. I have become persuaded that the Islamic revival has been infiltrated, that its youth - either provided the spear of extremism or deluded by sophism is being manipulated by unseen hands, which distort the young people's logic and trip up their minds. I do not have material proof of this, but I can smell the scent of a hostile foreign intelligence agency.

This suspicion did not arise to cross my mind from a void. Books have been published abroad describing plans to contain Islam by Muslims themselves intended to sow dissension among Muslims to the extent that they accuse one another of apostasy. What is even more appalling is the nurturing of religious intolerance against minorities in Islamic countries. Some success has been achieved in this connection, not because the Muslim population has espoused such intolerance, but because a demagogic hateful minority is welcomed by the international media whose voice is echoed in political arenas. Let us take Egypt as an example: the Egyptian people, as a whole, are loving people. Over centuries, Muslims and Copts lived in amity and harmony, sharing in the national liberation of the country from colonialism and in feelings of sincere patriotism, until aberrant factions arose to breed intolerance, inspiring violence. It is not known worldwide that the Muslim victims of this violence far outnumber the Copts (this was told us by Pope Shenouda during a visit to the Islamic Center of Southern California). Are we ignorant of, or blind to the relationship between such events and the viewpoints that the Zionist "Israel Shahak" espouses in his book, *"The Zionist Plan for the Middle East in 1982:"* *"Egypt, at present, has become an inert body, given notably the growing abyss between Muslims and Copts. The division of Egypt is the political objective of Israel, which will have to intervene directly or indirectly to recover control over the Sinai, because of its strategic importance as a long-term reserve for our economic and energy needs. Egypt does not represent a military problem*

for Israel, because of its internal contradictions, and we can push it overnight beyond the 1967 line."

Is it any wonder, then, that the French Muslim thinker, Roger Garoudy, (who, however views may differ about him is an intelligent observer) would scan the world around us and write, *"There is a plan to divide Egypt into two states in the 90s."*

Long before Egypt, there was Lebanon; plans and plots hatched by the same mentality that we would have uncovered long ago, had we read and understood. Unfortunately, we scarcely read, to the detriment of Islam, and we remain oblivious of what is going on around us. Liva Rokach published, in 1980, his book entitled, *"The Sacred Israeli Terrorism"* (Belmont Publishing House), Massachusetts, USA). On page 28, he quotes from the memoirs of Moshe Sharett a letter sent to Sharett on May 26, 1954 when he was Israel's Prime Minister, by Moshe Dayan, at that time his Chief of Staff: *"What we do need is to come across a Lebanese officer - even with the rank of major - whom we could seduce or bribe, who would declare himself a liberator of the Christian Maronites. The Israeli army would then invade Lebanon to occupy the needed territory, and establish a Christian rule allied with Israel, followed by the final annexation to Israel of the land south of the river Litani."*

On the following page, Rokach quotes from the notes of Sharett on May 28, 1954, *"The Chief of Staff endorses a plan whereby we would hire a Lebanese officer willing*

to be our tool so that the Israeli army could enter Lebanon, alleging to liberate Lebanon from the despotism of Muslims."

In our time and in that of our forefathers, we recognized the tool of *"Divide and Rule,"* cleverly used by the British occupier. If fire was set to a church, we immediately knew that this was a ploy of the British; this realization which brought Muslims and Copts closer together. Were people then shrewder than we are now? Or, is the impulse to distrust other Muslims part of an overall revolt against the pressure brought to bear on us in all areas of life, even that of religion? Or, is the problem superficiality with which we handle matters? Ignorance is sometimes better than truncated knowledge.

Goodness, amity and fairness are facets of religion, enjoined by Islam. These are also humane qualities dictated by a sound logic, and denoting wisdom and perspicacity. Much more than other religious groups, Muslims should be committed to achieving these virtues through patience and prayer. Over one third of Muslims live as minorities in non-Islamic countries, and are citizens of these countries. Muslim countries should set a good example respecting their non-Muslim citizens. It is a Muslim duty to pre-empt those who try to foment hostility among Christians towards their fellow Muslim citizens, which hostility is evident in some countries to various degrees.

People, in general, are good-natured, but the vicious, who lack conscience and who harbor a hatred of Islam, leave no stone unturned to sow dissension.

There is currently a blazing campaign in America, kindled by the extreme Christian right, pretending to succor Christian minorities in non-Christian countries. A number of Arab and Muslim countries have been cited, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iran, Indonesia and others, in addition to non-Islamic countries, such as China and Russia (which frowns upon the fierce missionary Christian movement, which runs counter to its Orthodox church). However, hatred can invent unimaginable lies. Can anyone believe that a Christian girl could be abducted in one of our Islamic countries, compelled to convert to Islam and to pray while being raped by several men? This whole scenario is distorted, and no one knowing our countries, their good and bad, can credit such tales. But the ignorant and the simple who feed on such oddities do beleive them, without attempting to verify their veracity.

The issue of the treatment of minority Christians was raised in the American Congress, and voices rose calling for a ban on financial aid or an economic embargo, in the light of the treatment said to have been meted out to Christians in a certain country. The question was then sent to the White House which, to avoid embarrassment, referred the matter to an inter-religious committee. God, the All-knowing, willed the voice of Islam to be heard, through a leader of the Islamic Center of Southern California, and of a young Muslim teaching law at the University of Texas. The Interfaith Committee convened in a mood of elegy bewailing the persecution of Christians around the world. Deliberations proceeded, and finally it was the turn of Islam to speak. It did, as follows:

We have heard a great many things but nothing about verifying such allegations;

Islam condemns religious persecution and sectarian intolerance in the case of all religions, whoever the persecutor or the persecuted. To limit this issue to Christians is indeed the premise of prejudice;

The call for the intervention of America, as proposed, brings to mind the days of the erstwhile colonial powers which sent their navies to intimidate governments or topple them;

There are sensitivities which might not be felt by people here, but which are realities of life that cannot be disregarded; namely, that the main weapon of the occupying army in colonial times was missionaries, in addition to the infantry, artillery and tanks. Missionary work came to be associated with occupation among the colonized people;

Two senate members have tried to show a lack of bias in favor of Christianity, and proposed penalizing countries which persecuted Jews, Christians, Bahai's and Buddhists. What about the other religions? And have you thought about the perception of the minority by the majority, if a foreign country arrived to protect the minority?

As we are in the process of condemning religious persecution in the absolute, we would like the file to comprise a comprehensive study on the persecution of

Muslims worldwide, such as in India, Kashmir, the Philippines, Bosnia, the Russian States, (both during and after the Soviet Union), China, Europe and America itself;

This research should also include the persecution of Muslims, because of the particular Islamic beliefs, in countries with a Muslim majority. These are, in truth, the prime target of religious persecution. Their aspirations for democracy are viewed as extremism and criminality;

We also note that deliberations have never referred to Israel, although it is universally known that both Christians and Muslims are victims of religious persecution in that country, to the extent that most of the Christian community have emigrated. How do you justify this telling silence?

As of this moment, we do not know the outcome of that meeting.

We exert great efforts, and succeed to a large extent. Yet, during our course we are pierced by arrows shot regrettably, by Muslims, or by friendly fires, to quote a saying dating to the Gulf War.

We expatiate on Islam, generate respect and admiration for it, then queries arise.

Such as: *"You claim Islam is a religion of peace, so why do Muslims constantly fight one another?"* The accusation is relevant. One of the tragedies of this century is the Iraq-Iran war which went on for years, scorching

fertile lands, killing millions, destroying cities and pouring oil wealth into the coffers of the enemies of both Iraq and Iran, who sold arms and equipment to both sides. The wound stabbed into the very core of Islam by the great rift between Ali and Muawiya bled anew; we had hoped that it had been forever stemmed.

Another tragedy was the attack of Iraq against Kuwait and its consequences which could have easily been foreseen. Representatives of fifty Islamic centers met in New York and sent a cable to the Iraqi President, telling him that only one person could prevent a foreign military presence in the Arab Peninsula, and that he was that person, if he would withdraw forthwith from Kuwait.

It was easy for Muslims, in the first years of Islam, to tender advice to the prophet (pbub) and to his companions, but it is most difficult to do so in the case of a dictator. Such a man deifies himself, believing himself to be a superman; Saddam Hussein dragged the Iraqi and Arab peoples, as well as the Islamic Ummah, into poverty and dissension, delaying the onward Arab Islamic course for decades to come.

We must emphasize that Islam is not the culprit, just as Hitler's guilt cannot be assigned to Christianity.

Another question addressed to Muslims is: *"although you say that Islam is a religion of compassion, fraternity and solidarity, there is an abyss between those who have and those who have not in the Islamic world,*

at both the level of individuals and of nations; why is this? Truly, a dilemma."

The Arab world, let alone the Islamic world possesses natural, human and strategic resources that should allow it to attain self-sufficiency, if not wealth. Such resources can also secure economic and military power, that in turn can provide self-assurance as well as warding off domination. My only explanation of inequalities in the Muslim world is a weak faith and a severed bond with God.

"The true religion with God is Islam" so states the Holy Quran. When I let my imagination run wild, I sometimes wonder if people will be asked on Judgment Day, Why are you not Muslims?

Some would answer: *"We did not hear about Islam,"* others, *"We did not hear any good about it,"* and still others, *"We looked at Muslims and what we saw did not entice us to become like them."* We Muslims will then be the accused.

We should know that the world is a realm of Da'wa. We should bear in mind that the mission of the prophet (pbuh) was not to convert people to Islam, but to proclaim and explain Islam to them. The Almighty sayeth: *"It is only for the prophet to deliver the Message"* (5:99), and *"Then remind them! Thou are only a reminder; thou are not charged to be a warden over them"* (88:22). The Prophet (pbuh) was often distressed by people's lack of response but the Almighty allayed his pain, saying: *"And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is*

in this world would have believed. Wouldst thou then constrain the people, until they are believers?" (10:99)

Almighty God did not limit the conveying of the Message to the Prophet (pbuh). His directives are clear-cut. He sayeth: *"Say: This is my way. I call to God with clear vision, I and whoever follows me."* (12:108) I wish to comment somewhat on "whoever follows after me"

Let each Muslim ask himself whether he is a follower of Mohammad; if he is, this religion should not remain ignored. He has to convey it to people; this is a religious duty. Islam should not remain a hidden treasure. The world is a realm of Da'wa, otherwise how could we be witnesses over its people as the Quran says.

I wish to call the attention of my brother Muslims, notably the revival's youth to a verity: Da'wa is not oration but deeds. People do not read about Islam in books, but they view it in Muslims. Islam is not a word but a deed.

I was fortunate enough to come across a shining example of sedate practical Da'wa. A young Muslim was interviewed for a post as manager of a supermarket. During the interview, he told the interviewer that, were he chosen for the post, he would like to have some time off on Friday for his prayers at the mosque. He was appointed, and, for the first time in months, the market showed great profits, due to the honesty and piety of the new manager. Months later, the interviewer met the young manager again and related to him that, during an interview in

another city for a similar post, another applicant had also asked for time off to perform the Friday prayer. She promptly appointed him, interviewing no other candidate.

In Seattle, Washington, lived a 86-year-old lady who has since died. may God rest her soul, who decided to convert to Islam as a result of the compassion of a Pakistani neighbor, a woman doctor. The old woman had arthritis and could not walk. The Pakistani doctor regularly visited her, gave her medicine, massaged her and encouraged her until one day the lady was able to walk. The old lady was astonished by such voluntary devotion and asked her neighbor the reason for it. The doctor replied: *"I am Muslim, and my religion enjoins care of the neighbor, the elderly, the sick and the weak. I have not wasted my time; the reward of my God is invaluable."*

I had been invited to attend an Islamic seminar in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Next to me on the panel, sat a young man who seemed to be a Syrian. He spoke perfect Arabic. When I congratulated him on his command of this language, I discovered that he was American. Both his parents had been alcoholics and he had spared no medical, psychological or social treatment to cure them of this nefarious habit which had ruined their family life. Once at a social occasion this young man had met another fellow of his age who had stated that he did not drink because he was a Muslim and Islam forbade alcoholic drinks. This was news to the young American, and he became eager to learn about this religion.

He read about Islam, converted and studied Arabic until he mastered it.

Best wishes to the revival's youth. May the Almighty bless their endeavors.

As sugar sweetens that to which it is added, I look forward to seeing Islamic revival help to raise the ethical level of society, ensure commitment to probity, and to amity among citizens, whatever their creeds or sects, to ban corruption and purify hearts. These are the indices that will gauge the revival.

AND OTHER RELIGIONS

There can be no more fitting way to start this chapter than by quoting the Almighty in the Quran: *"We have honored the children of Adam and carried them onland and sea, and provided them with good things, and preferred them greatly over many of those We created."* (70:17)

The human being is honored because he is a human being.

This honor is bestowed on all children of Adam by Almighty God, despite His knowledge, and that of the angels, that some of them will corrupt the world and shed blood.

That Adam and Eve are our common ancestors weaves a cloth of closeness and mercy among humans, uniting them in a single family with far-reaching cousinship. It is from this premise that relationships among men should be woven.

Each person, whatever his traits or qualities, has in him a whiff of the spirit of God that He breathed into Adam. We all have this spirit.

The human family was proliferated, and has populated the world. We are addressed by the Almighty: "*O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and appointed you races and tribes that ye may know and cherish one another*" (49:13). God's desire is not only for us to know one another, but also for us to be amicable to one another. This is the connotation of the Holy verse.

The Divine Plan was not to create a mankind that spoke a single language, or that was all of the same color or religion. God reminds His prophet: "*And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is on the earth would have believed;*" and, "*to every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation*" (5:48).

Man came down to earth followed by Satan. God showed man the right way, to enable him to immunize himself against evil, but left the choice between good and evil to man, so that he will be answerable for his deeds in this world and in the Hereafter.

Divine guidance was present throughout a long chain of messages and prophethoods of which the last links were Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Among the hundreds of religions existing in the world, only these three are founded on the belief in One Creator, in prophethood and the

messages of the prophets, in Judgment and in the Hereafter. It is therefore natural for these three religions to be closer to one another than to other religions. The Holy Book addresses Christians and Jews as "*People of the Book*," because the Almighty revealed the Torah to Moses, and the Gospel to Jesus. Peace be upon them before the Message was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a completion of earlier messages, meant to describe, amend, as well as detail legal and devotional matters, and to enjoin ethics. The Holy Quran was then revealed, the only remaining Book, in the original language of its revelation, with every single word unchanged.

This common source of the Holy Books of these three religions is pointed out to us by the Almighty: "*We have revealed to thee what we commanded unto Noah, and that we revealed unto thee, and that with which we charged Abraham, Moses and Jesus: Perform the religion and break not your unity therein*" (42:13).

There is a wide common ground between Muslims and the People of the Book. If Islam enables Muslims in their hearts to feel a unity with all of mankind, how could they not closely communicate with other believers in God.

Such a peaceful co-existence does not mean agreement on all points. If I set as a condition that I will deal in good faith only with those identical to me (Muslim or non-Muslim), it means that I like only myself. Divergences do not mean hostility and hatred,- a common error committed by some Muslims, when they diverge even among themselves.

It might be useful for all of us, the People of the Book in particular, to know at least in general, the areas of divergence among us, so that non-Muslims, for example, may determine, with scientific precision, their stand vis-a-vis Islam and Muslims, instead of surrendering to brain-washing that depicts Islam generally as evil and wrong, and that insists, without clarification or particularization, that Muslims are heathens and enemies of Christ. I have often been asked, when lecturing in the West: *"If you believe in God, who then is 'Allah'?"* I always replied: He is 'Yahweh' in Hebrew, 'Dieu' in French, 'Theos' in Latin, 'Khoda' in Farsi. As the English language had no specific name for the Deity, the word 'god' was written with a capital letter: 'God'.

The first divergence between the adherents of Judaism and Christianity (between the adherents, not the religions) on the one hand and those of Islam on the other is a general fundamental divergence. For Jews, the chain of divine messages ended with Judaism, and, for Christians, with Christianity. Muslims believe that this chain extends through the message of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Almighty says: *"Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen Islam as your religion"* (5:3).

To Muslims, Jews and Christians are followers of a Divine Religion; this view is not reciprocated. To us, lack of belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) is a grave matter, indeed a fundamentally dividing one.

Yet, Islam has assimilated this divergence, not by minimizing it, nor through a doctrinal truce, but by prescribing, concerning behavior, a pattern of humaneness and communication, despite divergent beliefs.

Beyond this fundamental divergence, some of Jews' and Christians' other doctrinal concepts, dictated by their own sacred books, are strange to us Muslims, and we innately reject them.

When we recall God, we think of Him as the Eternal Absolute, the Exalted, Who is addressed with the utmost reverence, veneration and sanctification. We are therefore astonished to read, in the Old Testament, that He walked in paradise, gathered angels and told them that Adam wanted to be one of them; that He ordered the deluge, then regretted what He had done, saying: "*I wish I had not done so;*" that Jacob struck the Almighty, Who knocked Jacob down; that He created the World in six days and rested on the seventh. These are stories that could never have been inspired by Almighty God. Our only interpretation of them is that the hand of man has inserted them into the Torah.

The prophets, to us Muslims, are the best beings ever created by God, who chose them to bear His Message and to give a good example to people. The prophets were never deceitful or guileful. We read that Jacob (Israel) covered himself with sheep fur, and took food to his father, Isaac, who, being practically blind, was deceived by feeling the hair of Jacob's body and gave him the blessing that belonged to his brother Esau. Our religion

sanctifies the prophets, believing they would never act as Lot, in the Old Testament, is said to have done: to have gotten drunk and had sex with his two daughters.

Muslims are horrified to read such tales. Some evil man has falsified the Torah, since such stories could never have been a Divine inspiration.

Among Jewish beliefs, we identify two main divergences from Islam: Firstly, Islam does not embrace the notion of a chosen race. Jews believe that God divided mankind into two groups: His chosen people, the Jews, and the others: goyim, or gentiles. The Quran, by contrast, describes mankind as created from a single pair, "*male and female,*" as descendants of Adam and Eve. In one Hadith, men are said to be equal like the teeth of a comb. "*You are all from Adam, and Adam was created of dust,*" said the prophet (pbuh). *The Quran states: "Surely the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most God fearing of you"* (49:13); the Quran does not ascribe nobility to a specific biological lineage.

The second divergence between Jewish and Muslim beliefs concerns their conception of Jesus - Peace be upon him - and his virgin mother, Mary. Jesus was a Jew sent by Almighty God to the Jews with a message of love and piety in place of material greed and selfish tendencies. Jesus came to remind them of the essence and spirit of their religion, which had degenerated into formalism and hollow rites, to make lawful to them some things which had been forbidden, and to bring them the good tidings

of a messenger to come after him, called Ahmed (another named for Muhammad) (61:6). According to the Quran, Jesus said that he had come to confirm the Torah, and to give Jews the Gospel that was revealed to him by God. Some Jews believed in him and became Christians, whereas others refused to do so, and remained Jews, asserting that Jesus was a liar and a dissembler, and that his mother was not a virgin but an adulteress.

In the face of these accusations against Jesus and his mother, and of the plots hatched against them, the Holy Quran elucidates matters, defending Jesus and his mother and relating Jesus' miracles, inspired by God, which Jews labeled blatant sorcery.

Jesus is mentioned in thirteen Suras of the Quran; he is mentioned fifty-nine times in thirty verses, twenty-five times he is referred to as Jesus, twenty times as the son of Mary, and eleven times as the messiah. His mother is mentioned by her name eleven times, and once as "*she who guarded her chastity.*"

Here are some Quranic verses about Jesus: "*The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him;*" (4:171) and, "*We gave to him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, and confirming the Torah before it, a guidance and an admonition unto the Godfearing*" (5:46).

About the virgin Mary, the Quran says: *"And the angels said, 'God has chosen thee, and purified thee; He has chosen thee above all women;'"* (3:42) and: *"The angels said, 'Mary, God gives thee good tidings of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus son of Mary; high honored shall he be in this world and in the Hereafter, near stationed to God'"* (3:45).

We believe that Jesus was supported by the Holy Spirit of God: *"And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, the clear signs, and confirmed him with the Holy spirit"* (2:87); and we believe that Jesus performed miracles inspired by God: *"A Messenger to the Children of Israel, saying, 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird, by the leave of God. I will also heal the blind and the leper, and bring to life the dead, by the leave of God. I will inform you too of what things you eat, and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers'"* (3:49). The Holy Quran mentions a miracle that is absent from the Gospels, which, to us, is a wondrous miracle, that of Jesus speaking when he was only a babe.

When Mary gave birth to Jesus, she feared the accusation that would be made against her, and said: *"Would I had died before this, and become a thing forgotten"* (19:23). But the babe told her to go to her people and to stay silent, having vowed not to talk. *"Then she brought the babe to her folk carrying him, and they said 'Mary,*

Thou hast surely committed a monstrous thing! Sister of Aaron, thy father was not a wicked man, nor was thy mother a woman unchaste” (19:20-28). This was an open accusation of adultery, for which the penalty, according to the Torah (Deuteronomy, 22:13-27) was death. What saved Mary was that Jesus began to talk from his cradle: *“Then she pointed to the child, but they said, ‘How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a babe?’ He said, ‘Lo, I am God’s servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a prophet. Blessed He has made me, wherever I may be; and He has enjoined me to pray and to give the alms, so long as I live, and likewise to cherish my mother: He has not made me arrogant, unblest. Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die and the day I am raised up alive!’” (19:32).* Whenever I lecture to Christian communities in America, at universities, conferences and associations, and read to them the birth of Jesus, as related in the Sura of Mary, tears flow from their eyes. I recall the tears of the Negus, the King of Ethiopia where early Muslims sought sanctuary, when he heard the same Sura, recited by Gaafar Ibn Abu Taleb. After hearing it, he drew a line in the sand and said: *“Verily, the only demarcation between our religion and yours is as this line; both emanate from the same source.”*

But!

Although Muslims, unlike Jews, believe completely in the prophethood of Jesus and in his words, there is in this connection, a fundamental divergence since the

fourth century A.D., between Muslims and the majority of Christians. In 325 A.D., the Nicea Council was held, which proclaimed the creed of a "*Holy Trinity*" throughout the Roman Empire. The early Christians had not abided by this creed, which was never taught by any prophet, including Jesus. The New Encyclopedia Britannica states: "*Trinity was never referred to textually or conceptually in the New Testament.*" Professor Washburn, of Bell University, writes in "*Origin and Evolution of Religion*": "*It seems that the Trinity creed was neither known to Jesus nor to Paul, as they never refer to it.*" The Catholic Encyclopedia states that the concept of Trinity does not exist in the New Testament, and that it emerged later, in the fourth century A. D. The strong opposition of the Fathers of the Church to this new idea was inevitable, but Emperor Constantine, when he convened the Nicea Council, excluded the opponents of the idea of a Trinity and only a minority of the Catholic Church's leaders attended. The Emperor had not yet even converted to Christianity at that time. The notion of deifying a man, however, was not new to him; he had deified his father, and expected to be deified himself after his death.

Mankind has known previous trinities, such as that of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu in India, and Osiris, Isis and Horus in Egypt.

The history of Christianity teems with protracted debates among Christian scholars, historians and others on this issue. The gist of Trinity is that the one God is exemplified by three divine persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; three in one, and one in three

(although the Holy Ghost was deified only in 381 A. D., at the Constantinople Council, convened by Emperor Theodoseus).

My Christian friends, generally, believe in the Holy Trinity. When we discuss it (in a friendly manner), they state: *"It is a dogma to be accepted as it is, beyond logic and polemics."*

I do not intend to open a new debate on the issue. Since Christians are happy in the notion and believe in it, this matter is their own concern. *"There is no coercion in religion"* (2:256).

I only wish to point out that the notion of a Trinity is alien to Islam (as well as to Judaism and the Old Testament). Islam always refers to the *"oneness"* of the Almighty. God is beyond our human perception; we know Him through His omniscience and we know that He is eternal. We cannot divide His infinity into parts or divine persons.

Jesus, to Muslims, is a noble prophet and a trusted messenger but he is a man created by God, not begotten by Him. It is said in the Quran: *"Say: He is God, the One God, the Everlasting Refuge, Who has not begotten, and has not been begotten, and equal to Him there is no one"* (112:1-4). The notion of salvation, to Muslims, revolves around the relationship between man and his Creator, whereas Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross so that his blood could expiate the sins of men. Muslims believe in individual responsibility, and that God forgives or chastises, but does not kill anyone to expiate the

sins of others. Moreover, the Quran states: *"They did not slay him, neither crucified him, but it appeared so unto them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him, they have no knowledge of him, save pursuit of surmise; and they slew him not of a certainty, God raised him up to Him, God is All-Mighty, All-Wise"* (4:157).

We all err. When a Muslim errs or sins, he appeals to God, hoping for His forgiveness, without the need for a human sacrifice (or divine, as our brother Christians believe). A Muslim does not even have to go to a priest to confess and be forgiven.

To Muslims, God is absolute justice and absolute mercy. Our hope in His mercy is founded on His grace and kindness. We beseech God to deal with us with His mercy and forgiveness, and not with His justice.

In a Qudsi Hadith, God says: *"O son of Adam, if you invoke Me and beseech me, I shall forgive what you are guilty of and disregard it; O son of Adam, if your sins rise sky high, and you seek my forgiveness, I shall forgive you; O son of Adam, if you come to Me with the receptacles of the world filled with your sins and do not ascribe another divinity to Me, I will fill them with My forgiveness"* (Al Tirmizi and Ahmed, quoting Anas). This Hadith and others nurture our hope, and no sinner despairs. God's warnings frighten us, and we do not underestimate them, but the decision whether to forgive is that of the Almighty. We live between fear, which

prevents us from sinning, and hope, which keeps us from despair. This is not the case with Christians. A Christian friend of mine, joking with me, as friends do, said: *"I have personally sinned, still sin and shall probably sin again, but my sins have been expiated long ago by the blood of the Messiah. I am sure of my fate, but, you are apprehensive."* I replied jokingly: *"Lucky you; but in our case, it is a matter of individual responsibility."* The Quran states in several Sura: *"No soul laden bears the load of another;"* and *"Every soul shall be pledged for what it has earned;"* and *"Whosoever committed a sin commit it only against himself."* The prophet (pbuh) told his family: *"Endeavor, O family of Muhammad, because I cannot spare you against God's will;"* and Abu Bakr, his faithful companion, said: *"If I set one foot in paradise, I will still beware what God has devised."* What strengthens faith in our hearts is that it brings together belief, wisdom and logic. If a son of mine errs, I either chastise or forgive him, but to chastise a second son for the guilt of the first is a strange notion to us.

These are indeed divergences. But, what now? What do we do about these divergences? Do we kill one another, or bear our differences of opinion, agreeing that we disagree, and exchanging views, each one of us clearing his conscience, so that the course of mankind can proceed in amity and concord?

The history of mankind unfortunately indicates that the first course has very often been chosen.

The leaders of such religious wars were men of the

cloth, who claimed hegemony over religion and claimed they spoke for it.

Such wars may occur between two religions, such as the massacre of Jews in Christian Europe throughout its history, or of Muslims at the time of the inquisition and the Crusades, or in Bosnia in recent history. Wars have even occurred between followers of the same religion, for example between Catholics and Protestants.

Let us ask ourselves a simple question: *"Do we truly believe that God Almighty is pleased and happy that His servants kill one another 'on His behalf,' orphaning children, widowing women and spreading devastation throughout the land?"* Any truly pious person, will reply in the negative. It is therefore truly strange to recall that Saint Bernard, who said after Jesus, *"Love your enemies,"* commented concerning the Crusades: *"A Christian feels glory in killing a Muslim, an act glorifying the Messiah"* (Daniel: *"Islam and the West,"* 1960, p.113). Jews are also not forgotten: *"We sent our forces a long way to fight the enemies of God in the East, when we have before us His bitterest enemies: the Jews. We must first deal with them"* (Cohen: *"The Pursuit of a Millennium,"* 1957, p.70).

We are also amazed by the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, in which French Catholics killed 40,000 Protestants, having promised them safety if they emerged from hiding. The same enmity still smolders after the passage of the centuries, as exemplified by Northern Ireland today.

Islam provides a reasoned, mature and peaceful solution to religious differences. The Quran does not order Muslims to make war against the followers of another religion.

Ruling on ideological divergences is not left to Muslims; it is the province of Almighty God: *"Unto God shall you return, and He will tell you of that concerning which you were at variance"* (5:48).

As for fighting and killing, this is to be for defense alone: *"And fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but aggress not: 'God loves not the aggressors' (2:190).*

As for those who do not fight against us: *"God forbids not those who warred not against you in religion's courses, nor expelled you from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! God loves the just dealers"* (60:8).

The People of the Book are referred to with amity. Some persons allege that the People of the Book are those who lived at the time of the prophet (pbuh), and that their faith was then as sound as ours. No, indeed, else the Quran would not have blamed and warned them, calling upon them to redress their errors.

One of my enthusiastic young students quoted to me the following verse: *"They are unbelievers who say,*

God is the Messiah, Mary's son." I concurred with him, but said that we must peruse the entire Holy Book and read what is said in it about the People of the Book, otherwise we would be liable to set the Quran against itself. Each verse was revealed for a specific situation. The Quran is a text interpreted by the Sunna, which is assimilated by Fiqh to provide us with a legal code. If you read the Quran as a whole, and not in isolated verses, you will note that the People of the Book are addressed differently throughout it. I will just quote a few examples:

"Say: People of the Book! Come now to a word common between you, and us that we serve none but God, and that we associate naught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God. And if they turn their backs, say: Bear witness that we are Muslims" (3:64). And:

"Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say, we believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you, our God and your God is one, and to Him we have surrendered" (29:46). And:

"And whoso disputes with thee concerning Him, after the knowledge that has come to thee, say: 'come now, let us call our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our selves and your selves, then let us humbly pray and so lay God's curse upon the ones who lie'" (3:61). And:

"Yet they are not alike; some of the People of the Book are a nation upstanding, that recite God's signs in the watches of the night, bowing down, believing in God and in the Last Day, calling to honor and forbidding dishonor, vying with each other in good works; those are the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall not be denied the just reward of it; and God knows the god-fearing" (3:113). And:

"And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, thou sees their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize" (5:83). And:

"Surely they that believe, and those of the Jewry and the Christians and those Sabaeans, whoso believes in God and the Last Day, and acts in righteousness, their wage awaits them with their Lord; they shall not fear, neither shall they sorrow" (2:62). And:

"And the food of those who were given the Book is permitted to you, and permitted to them is your food. Likewise the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those who had received the Book before you, if you give them their dowries, in wedlock and not in fornication, nor taking them as secret concubines." (5:5)

However, the Quran teems with reference to the errors of the People of the Book as regards God and His prophets, or in their attitude to Islam.

I wish to digress concerning the last verse I quoted, which allows a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim-- Jew or Christian-- who will freely retain her religion. Marriage is the closest link between two individuals, a "stout contract" and commitment, as stated in the Quran. I say, to those who believe that to be a good Muslim, you have to hate the People of the Book, I disagree with them. I am not a hating man. I am convinced that a heart filled with the love of God cannot harbor hate. I can hate evil, but not the evil-doer. I fight motivated by the love of justice, but not by hatred. If I wish that everyone could convert to Islam, it is a proof of love, not of hate.

A Hadith of the prophet (pbuh) states "*Whoso harms one of the people of the Book harms me,*" and, "*I recommend to you the Copts of Egypt, you have in them amity and in-laws*" (Mary, the Egyptian Copt, was the mother of the Prophet's son Ibrahim). The Prophet received a delegation of Christians from Najran in his mosque, and allowed them to pray there, knowing though they disbelieved in his prophethood, deified Jesus, and believed in the Trinity. He did not condemn their beliefs, nor was he ready to compromise on his attitude exemplified that of Islam in dealing with non-Muslims.

Turning to the companions, may God rest their souls, we find the same pattern of behavior. Omar slapped the son of Amr, ruler of Egypt, for beating a Copt who had won a race against him. Omar provided the poor of the

People

of the Book with a stipend from Beit-el-Mal (The Muslim's treasury). When he entered Jerusalem after having besieged it, the Patriarch Sophronius invited him to perform the afternoon prayer at the Saint Sepulchre, *Omar refused, saying: "I do not wish to have my act misunderstood by future Muslims, they might believe that the church is a praying area for them."* Instead, Omar prayed outside the Church precincts.

He gave his oath to the people of Jerusalem in his capacity as Emir of the Faithful. He pledged the inviolability of their persons, their riches, their crosses, and their churches, which he said would neither be occupied nor destroyed. The people were not to be ostracized on account of their religion, nor harmed. Compare this attitude with the Crusaders' actions on entering Jerusalem in 1099, as described by one of their leaders: *"Our men devastated the city, cruising its streets brandishing their swords, sparing no one even those who begged for mercy. Feet were sloshing in blood and neither woman nor child was spared; the rule of God emerged just and joyful."* (Cohn and Norman: *"The Pursuit of a Millennium"*, 1957, p.68)

The Shari'a rule given in Fiqh concerning Jewish and Christian citizens of the Islamic nation was and still is "We share rights and obligations." this rule that guarantees non-Muslims a citizenship neither truncated nor unjust; they are not to be coerced to relinquish any law enunciated in their Books: *"So let the people of the*

Gospel judge according to what God has sent down therein" (5:47); and: "*O People of the Book, Ye have naught till you observe the Torah and the Gospel*" (5:68). Ali ibn Abu Taleb, may God rest his soul, urged Christians to be true to their Christianity. I wish the present-day Christians would do so.

It is therefore just and logical to state that those provisions of Islamic Shari'a with no counterpart in the Holy Books of non-Muslims do not interfere with non-Muslim's beliefs. Islam guarantees the total equality of citizens, whatever their religion; all equal before the law, a law given by religion in the case of Muslims, and by democracy for others.

We read in the press some time ago that a leading Muslim figure, head of one of the Islamic organizations, had stated in an interview, that Christian citizens would be exempted from military service in lieu of payment of the jizya tax. If he did, in fact, say this, it was wrong and regrettable. Muslim voices more cognizant of Shari'a and its provisions rose to refute this Muslim leader's opinion. The man denied saying what was ascribed to him, citing the fact that the founder of this organization, may God rest his soul, had declared in the 1940's, that the issue of jizya was null and void, since all citizens were enrolled for military service. There was no division of citizens into two groups, one willing to shed its blood and the other to disburse money.

Islam and Muslims have always been proponents of peace and amity. Muslims have never warred against

anyone because of his religion, or to coerce him into converting.

Islam does not call on its adherents to pass judgment on those who are not of the same faith, as did the Catholics who issued ex-communication decrees banning people from paradise, or forgiveness deeds (indulgences) enabling admission thereto. Whether one is admitted to or banned from Paradise is to be decided by the Almighty alone. The Quran says: *"And hence God said: O Jesus son of Mary did thou say unto men 'Take me and my mother as gods, apart from Allah?'"* He said 'To Thee be glory! It is not mine to say what I have no right to. If I indeed said it, Thou knows it, knowing what is within my soul, and I know not what is within Thy soul, Thou knows the things unseen. I only said to them what Thou did command me: *"Serve God my Lord and your Lord."* And I was a witness over them, while I remained among them, but when Thou did take me to Thyself, Thou was Thyself the watcher over them, Thou Thyself art witness of everything. If Thou chastise them, they are Thy servants; if Thou forgive them, Thou art the Almighty, the All-Wise" (5:116). To associate aught with Allah is an unforgivable crime, and Jesus is innocent of any such crime. Another verse reads as follows: *"And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this land safe, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols; my Lord, they have led astray many men. Then whoso follows me, he is verily of me; and whoso rebels against me, Thou art All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate."* (14:35) the ultimate Judge is none but God, the Almighty, Wise, Forgiving,

Compassionate.

Let us turn to history. Wars broke out between Muslims and others, but Muslims have never fought against a religion; they did fight, to repel aggression, to eradicate injustice and vindicate right. Crusaders set Muslims against Christians in ancient times as did colonialism in recent times, but the guilt attached to these acts is not that of Christianity.

Unfortunately, the Crusades have become one of Christian's spiritual legends, seen as a glorious struggle and a holy war. The term "*holy war*," which is ascribed to Muslims today is not an Islamic term, but a Christian one, coined by Europeans to refer to the Crusades. The ghost of the Crusades still greatly influences the western mentality to this very day, although there are signs pointing to the possibility that it might fade away.

In 1095, Pope Urban II (known as Urban the Blessed) was the first to call for a Crusade. He described Muslims as "*a people without God, heathens, idolaters, enemies of the Messiah, dogs, and chaff meant for eternal fire.*"

In such a religious frenzy did the Crusades start. We have already referred to a description of the Jerusalem massacre by one of the Crusades' leaders. The Christian world itself at the time of the Crusades had begun to realize the profound abyss separating the Crusades from Christianity. This view is exemplified by the following: During

the Fourth Crusade, the Christian forces were passing through Christian Constantinople. The Crusaders pilfered the city and desecrated its holy places, to an extent such that the Orthodox Pope sent them the following message: *"You raised your swords against Christians, not against heathens. You did not invade Jerusalem, but Constantinople. You were not seeking the reward of heaven, but the spoils of the world. You did not heed the inviolability of anyone. You ravished wives, widows and even nuns. You desecrated the sanctity of the Church and stole its treasures. It is not to be wondered that the Orthodox Church views you as creatures of Satan."* (The Christians, Bamper Gascoigne, Jonathon Cape, London, 1977 p.119)

When Salah-el-Din (Saladin) recovered Jerusalem for the Muslims, he ensured the safety of the defeated, both the withdrawing forces and citizens. He did not retaliate in a tit-for-tat manner, but repelled the evil with what was fairer. The container reveals its content.

The Crusades came to an end, and colonization began in the same spirit as the Crusades and with the same purpose: economic exploitation, domination and numbing the minds of the colonized people, in order to keep them unaware and confused.

But, the dead quickened and were revived for a brighter dawn, God willing, although their leaders now are reckless in their attempts to set back the hands of the

clock.

The winds of change, however, are blowing in other directions. Change unfolds slowly, but surely. One sound positive trend is evidenced by the decision of the Catholic Church to reconsider its traditional stand towards Islam, quite a new development since the days of Urban II. In the document entitled "*Nostra Etate*," issued by the Second Vatican Council, convened by Pope Paul VI in 1965, the Catholic Church states its stand toward non-Christians. This document reads as follows concerning Muslims: "*The Church also looks with esteem at the Muslims, who worship one God, the Alive, the Self-Subsisting, the Merciful, the All-Powerful, the Creator of the Heavens and Earth, Who addressed mankind. They pledge obedience to all His commandments, as did Abraham, who is part of the Muslim faith. They revere Jesus as a prophet, although they do not recognize his deity, and revere respectfully his mother, the Virgin Mary. They also await Judgment Day, when God will resurrect people to judge them. They honor an ethical life and worship God through prayers, alms and fasting.*"

A giant leap. If it indicates anything, it is that one or the other of the two popes Urban II and Paul VI, was not infallible, as Catholics believe a Pope to be. Their two views are as far apart as is East from West.

Indeed, a salutary step by the Catholics. Thus started the dialogue between the two sides, Muslims and Chris-

tians, at several meetings and conferences. For the first time, in a millennium, a Christian Cardinal, Hu Fu King, addressed Muslims, at Al Azhar University, the most firmly established Islamic university of all. In 1974, Cardinal Pinodolli, the head of the Secretariat for the Affairs of non-Christians at the Vatican, visited Saudi Arabia and met with King Fahd. Numerous seminars and conferences for the purpose of dialogue were held, both at high levels and low, and the net of interaction is widening. A few years ago, in America, if Muslims met with Christians to talk about Islam or participated with them in a conference, some Muslims would deny the fact most vigorously; now, such dialogue has become common and widespread.

The Muslim world, however, is less enthusiastic about this initiative than the Church. There is suspicion that this is a maneuver on the part of the Church, intended to infiltrate the ranks of Muslims and sow confusion among them. There is a sensitivity in the minds of Muslims due to the linkage that existed between colonialism and missionary work. It is also noticed that there is an increase in Christian missionary activities among Muslims, notably at times of great stress, such as famine, wars and amongst refugees. At such times, food and clothing are effective strategic means, when bolstered by immense financial resources. Also making Muslims worry are certain books about missionary activities indicating that Islam is targeted for attention, that "*its turn has come.*" These facts that impede closer relations between Muslims and Christians create suspicion,

although there is true sincerity among some members of the Christian group. I would wish for the Church to exert its efforts, disburse its funds and carry out its missionary activities in Christian Europe, where its impact on Christians, in general, has greatly dwindled, as reflected in ethics, politics and economics. It is not to the credit of the Church to demonstrate that it is only able to propagate Christianity among those who are naked, famished or ignorant.

It is also very difficult for us to forget the Crusades, which are still going on in one form or another; still, although it augers well that John Paul II, the present Pope, commenting in 1995, on the elapse of the second millennium since the advent of the Messiah, said that the children of the Church had to repent for events that occurred during this millennium. He mentioned the Inquisition, the Crusades and the Holocaust of Hitler. The Crusades then have become a sin, and not a matter of worship. People will not assimilate this fact immediately, but may do so soon, in our era of a communications revolution. More recently, (1999) a grass roots action was taken by a member of Christian Europeans visiting the Middle East till Jerusalem to apologize for the atrocities committed by their forefathers, the Crusaders.

Whatever is said about this dialogue which seeks closer links between the two religions, I support and encourage it.

Firstly, I do this because there is a possibility (I say possibility) for such interaction to be a first step on the long road toward peace; secondly, Islam is still widely unknown, or its image has been distorted among a multitude of people. A dialogue with Christians is an opportunity to portray Islam in its true image, a duty enjoined by Shari'a. Thirdly, I believe that the salvation of the world from injustice, oppression and destruction, indeed from suicide, given deteriorating ethics and values, lies in bringing together the forces of the believers in God in the face of the camp of Satan, whatever the differences among the believers.

I hope the proponents of such togetherness are truly sincere, that they rise above political shenanigans and tribal schemes, rather than hiding egotism behind a screen of peace and amity.

The policies of nations are very often founded on injustice, and believers in God should stand against injustice, even if the perpetrator is their kith and kin.

In this world, there are Muslims, Christians, Jews and others, a first world and a third world, aggressors and victims, governments and masses, a white race and non-white races, North and South, atheists and believers, developed and backward people, well-fed and famished, conservatives and liberals.

But behind this layer of differences, lies the real division: between right and wrong. The proponents of right should close ranks in favor of right and right alone.

AND START WITH YOURSELF

It is illogical, when urging cooperation and unified ranks among the three Abrahamic religions, to overlook the necessity of unity among the followers of the religion of Islam.

Division, fragmentation and disputes have invaded our hearts and can no longer be overlooked: we suffer from division at all levels: between individuals, groups, and nations, among those who toil in favor of Islam, among brothers in arms, among fighting comrades.

I cannot claim that we are victims in this disruption,

since we have created it. It seems that we have become so enamored with our differences that we can no longer do without them; we seek them actively. I know people who attend lectures not to benefit therefrom, but to attack the lecturer. Should he fall into error, they feel satisfied, and enjoy tearing him to pieces.

We no longer stand strong in serried ranks as described by the prophet (pbuh).

We no longer have the strength of an interwoven rope, or the force of an unbreaking, firm handle; we have become scattered beads, that have lost the thread that holds them together in a valuable necklace, or as prayer beads to exalt the name of the Almighty.

Thus, the world has underrated and attacked us individually, and as a community and, unfortunately, we ourselves paved the way for this disdain.

I feel great sorrow whenever I hear that over a billion Muslims inhabit this world. The state of the world is not in the image of one peopled by a billion Muslims.

Had we been a billion flies, our buzzing would have kept the world awake;

Had we been a billion mosquitoes, the world would not have stopped scratching;

But, to be more specific, I wish to refer to this grave rift that is splitting Islam into Shi'a Muslims and those of the Sunna.

Muslims have long known sectarian differences; founders of the sects respected one another, and dealt with one another with civility and courtesy. However, their followers, because of ignorance of Islam, of their prophet and of this conciliatory spirit of their Ulemas, have turned their differences into deep-rooted hatred.

Germany made peace with France and Russia with America. The Jews made peace with the Christians, is it not time for the people of the Shi'a and the Sunna to close ranks under the canopy of Islam, since they both believe that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammad is His prophet?

I never felt this dissension until I went to live in the Gulf where I realized that it was a genuine problem, which had never been appropriately addressed.

I also felt that the leaders of both sides did not dare to break loose from this hatred, fearing the violent reaction of their followers, who might unseat them.

"Do you fear them? God is the One to be feared, if you are believers." (9:13)

I pondered over two questions: Is it in the interest of Islam to perpetuate this rift? No.

Are there grounds to hope for a remedy, or is this fatal illness? There is hope for a remedy.

I have met a great number of Shi'a Ulemas in both the East and West. I have talked with them, attended their

lectures and watched them on TV. They do not deny that folklore has been introduced over the centuries into the relations between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, but they are convinced that the remaining residue of it will vanish in time, God willing. This attitude is most encouraging, and demands to be followed up.

I do not call upon the Shi'a to give up their sect, or upon the people of the Sunna to do so.

But, let us not turn a difference in sects into a divergence among hearts. Islam is all-embracing, and can enfold each and every one of us in amity and cooperation. In unity, each Muslim can uphold his own specificity and Allah is the Supreme Judge.

I call upon the Ulemas of the Shi'a and the Sunnis, and the governments dominated by one or the other of these sects in certain countries to draw up a strategy by which rancor is replaced by reconciliation. Consultation, joint endeavors and efforts through the media and education are efforts likely to weave men into a new cloth, more gratifying to God, His prophet and the believers.

For the love of God, and in the interest of Islam, let us shun intolerance, tribalism and personal arrogance; It is weakness and nonsense to incarcerate our future in the irons of the past.

It is dangerous to live in the Islamic world and think it is the whole world;

We cannot continue to live in isolation from what occurs around us, unaware of plots hatched against us by forces mightier and wealthier than we are, that can avail themselves of the tools of science and technology, while our only weapon is our faith, which is disunified.

Plans are serious and everpresent to remove Islam from the world; so many of us are unaware of this fact. And, those who are aware of it minimize the danger, believing that the plans against us will never come to fruition-until they do!

When the decision is made to remove Islam from the world, there will be no difference made between Shi'a and Sunna; in fact their own differences will be a facilitating factor in their destruction.

I wish Muslims would read the book entitled, "*The Gospel and Islam*", containing the proceedings of the conference held in Denver, Colorado, in 1978. The book is six hundred and thirty-eight pages long and includes a chapter on a plan to Christianize the Islamic world (Publisher: Mark California, 1979). An Arabic translation of the book has been published entitled, "*Christianization: A Plan to invade the Islamic World.*"

But, who reads? And who bears

Here are in-depth studies, scientific plans serious intentions and targeted measures.

This book is just an example of the numberless

books and studies that we read, all while deeply shocked at the numbness of Muslims, who seem to be living in another world than this one, and who display their differences and rancor even as the rapacious beast lurks ready to devour them until none are left.

Part of this plan against us could well be the wide-ranging vicious campaign waged in America, in political and media circles, avowedly to combat "*the persecution of Christians in the countries of the world.*" We do not believe the tendency of this campaign is a coincidence; its planning is most obvious, and its instigators will probably be perceived.

We read, but do not heed the words of the Almighty:

"And hold you fast to Allah's rope, together, and do not separate; and remember God's blessing upon you when ye were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, so that by His blessing you became brothers. Ye were upon the brink of a pit of fire, and He delivered you from it. Thus God makes clear His signs to you, that haply ye may be guided" (3:103).

Are we still determined to fall into this pit of fire?

RULING ON SOME MEDICAL ISSUES

It has been the tradition whenever a fatwa (religious opinion) is needed on an issue, to refer it to a competent jurist, a scholar of religion, or to a committee of such scholars, so that they may rule on it. In most Islamic countries there is a government department headed by an eminent Islamic jurist, that fulfills this function. Experience over the last few decades has indicated that this task is becoming increasingly difficult, especially in the field of the biological sciences. Tremendous progress in knowledge and technology has led to the advent of issues of a very complex nature, which are often beyond the full comprehension of religious scholars alone. It has become a necessity that forming opinions on such matters be a joint effort, bringing jurists and scientists together, so that the fatwa or recommendation will be the outcome of a thorough understanding by all.

The following exposition depicts the Islamic view on certain biomedical issues, concluded at meetings and symposia bringing together religious scholars and biomedical scientists, mostly convened mainly by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (Kuwait), The Fiqh Congress (Saudi Arabia) and Al-Azhar (Egypt). We are including this chapter for the benefit of fellow Muslims who are interested in clarifying some ambiguities still surrounding these issues.

HUMAN REPRODUCTION FERTILITY CONTROL: CONTRACEPTION

Islam permits contraception, as long as it does not entail the radical separation of marriage from its reproductive function . Since the time of the Prophet, contraception has been practiced; however, the Prophet made it clear that its use should be a joint decision of the husband and wife. Islam's general recommendation is for the Islamic nation to procreate and increase in number, but quality, not sheer numbers was emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad: on one occasion, he warned that "There will come a day when other nations will fall upon you like hungry eaters upon a bowl of food." When asked whether this would be due to a lack of numbers, the Prophet said, "No. On that day you will be so many, but [in quality] you will be like the froth on the surface of a torrent."

Throughout Islamic history, jurists have permitted family planning for reasons, ranging from matters of health and socioeconomic status to women's concern

about their beauty. Both natural and artificial methods of contraception are acceptable, provided they are not harmful and do not work by causing an abortion. The use of contraception should be the choice of each family, without coercion or pressure. Countries that adopt a population control policy may use wide campaigns of education, but the decision should rest with the family.

The scientific religious meetings referred to above cited reservations concerning population programs designed by Western countries for the Third World. Third World countries are aware of the existence of "*demographic warfare*," intended to deny their populations the sheer power of numbers, or, in some areas, to reduce majorities to minorities. They are alarmed by the fact that contraceptives that are banned from use in the (Western) countries in which they are produced are being abundantly exported to Islamic and Third World countries, entailing the compromise of safety standards. Beneficial investments on the part of the West, such as the development of the Third World's indigenous resources (including the transfer of relevant technology) have not yet shown themselves .

BREAST FEEDING

Breast-feeding is strongly encouraged by Islam. It is not a reliable contraceptive for the individual family, but it has been estimated that on a group (collective) basis breast-feeding is a more potent contraceptive than all other methods combined, as indicated by the drop in fertility rate in a group of suckling women. The

Quran mentions breast-feeding, stating that its natural course is a span of two years.

Islam regards breast-feeding as more than a nutritional (or a family planning) process. It is a "value" and is recognized as forging a special bond, so much so that the a woman other than the natural mother who breast-feeds an infant acquires a special status in Islamic law, called "*suckling parenthood.*" Such a woman is called the infant's "*mother in lactation.*" To accentuate the value of this practice, "*lactation motherhood*" is given equal status to natural motherhood in legal rulings concerning marriage. The result of this is that woman's natural children are considered "*lactation siblings*" of the infant she has nursed, who, therefore, may not marry any of them.

THE INTRAUTERINE DEVICE (IUD)

If an intrauterine device serves as a contraceptive by actually causing abortion, it is not an acceptable method. Current generations of the device contain a copper wire that releases spermicidal copper ions, or include the hormone progesterone, which thickens the cervical mucus so that it cannot be penetrated by sperm. Both actions of these newer devices put the IUD in the category of contraception, not abortion; this has been confirmed by the World Health Organization.

ABORTION

Islam views abortion as being very different from contraception, since the former entails the violation of a

human life. The question that naturally arises is whether the term "*human life*" includes the life of the fetus in the womb. According to Islamic jurisprudence, it does. Islam accords the fetus the status of "*incomplete dhimma*." Dhimma is the legal status that permits rights and duties; that of the fetus is incomplete in the sense that the fetus has rights, but owes no duties. Some of the rights of the fetus are as follows:

1. If a husband dies while his wife is pregnant, the law of inheritance recognizes the fetus as an inheritor, if it is born alive. Other inheritors receive their shares in accordance with the legally prescribed proportions, but only after the share of the unborn child is set aside to await its birth.

2. If a fetus is miscarried at any stage of pregnancy and shows signs of life, such as a cough or movement, before dying, a fetus has the right to inherit anything it was legally entitled to inherit from anyone who had died after the beginning of the pregnancy. After such a fetus' death, what it had inherited is inherited in turn by its own legal heirs.

3. If a woman commits a crime punishable by death and is proven to be pregnant, her execution is postponed until she has given birth and has nursed her baby until it is weaned. This applies regardless of whether the woman is in early or late stages of pregnancy, thus denoting the right of the fetus to life since its beginning. It applies even if the pregnancy was illegitimate, which shows

that the fetus conceived out of wedlock also has the right to life. All sects and juridical schools unanimously uphold this ruling.

4. There is a monetary penalty exacted for causing an abortion, even if inadvertently. This penalty is called the "*ghorra*." If aggression or willful action causes an abortion, a suitable punishment by the court is imposed, as well.

Defining when life begins has been debated since early times, since the inadmissibility of an abortion is subject to establishing the existence of life (some past jurists permitted abortion before four months, others before seven weeks of pregnancy, on the assumption that life had not yet started at those stages. Ten centuries ago, Al-Ghazali rightly described a phase of imperceptible life, before the mother could feel fetal quickening. Recent juridical congresses, taking into account the use of modern technology, have concluded that the stage of an individual's life that can be called its beginning should satisfy all the following criteria: (1) it is a clear and well-defined event; (2) it exhibits the cardinal feature of life: growth; (3) if the growth evident at this stage is not interrupted, it will naturally progress through the subsequent stages of life as we know them; (4) the stage shows the genetic pattern that is characteristic of the human race, and also of a unique, specific individual; and (5) it is not preceded by any other phase which shows the first four characteristics. Obviously, these postulates refer to fertilization.

Abortion is permitted, however, if the continuation of a pregnancy poses a serious threat to the mother. The Sharia considers the mother to be the root and the fetus to be the offshoot, the latter to be sacrificed if necessary to save the former. There are some who argue in favor of expanding the admissibility of abortion before four months to cover drastic cases of congenital anomalies, and of fetal illness incompatible with feasible life.

STERILIZATION

Unless done for a clear medical reason, sterilization is generally frowned upon. It is permitted, however, for women with a reasonable number of children, and who are approaching the end of their reproductive lives. Voluntary and informed consent should be given by both the husband and wife, understanding that there are no promises of a successful reversal of the operation if they should later change their minds. No government policy should pressure people into undergoing sterilization. Doctors have the right to decline to perform the operation if they are not convinced that it is in the best interests of the patient.

TREATMENT OF INFERTILITY

The pursuit of pregnancy is legitimate and individuals may resort to any necessary means toward that end, provided those means do not violate the Sharia.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

Artificial insemination is permissible only if the sperm belongs to the husband (AIH). Another donor's

semen (AID) may not be used, since procreation is legitimate only within the marriage contract, and must involve only the elements (the couple) that are party to it.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION (IVF).

This procedure, commonly known as “*test-tube-baby*” technology, is Islamically acceptable so long as the husband and wife are the donors; i.e. the procedure occurs within the boundaries of the marriage contract. The marriage contract should be valid and current. Since widowhood or divorce brings the marriage contract to a conclusion, it follows that a woman may not be impregnated by her deceased or former husband’s sperm that has been stored in a sperm bank. Inclusion of a third party in fertilization, other than the husband and wife or, the bearers of their genetic material (the sperm and ovum) is not permissible, since this would constitute an intrusion into the marriage contract that unites the pair. “*Alien sperm,*” an “*alien egg*” or an “*alien womb*” (carrying a couple’s embryo) is not allowed.

SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD

Surrogate motherhood, in which a woman carries in her womb the fetus of another couple, is absolutely unacceptable in Islam. It entails a pregnancy outside the legitimacy of a marriage contract. It also results in the splitting of motherhood into genetic and biological components, whereas these should be one. Disagreement about parental rights between women involved in surrogacy has led to legal and other problems in America. A contract deciding the fate of the baby is certainly dehuman-

izing, as it treats the baby as a commodity. The implications of surrogacy may prove to be far-reaching; they are not yet fully recognized, since never before in history have human females willingly chosen to undergo a full pregnancy and delivery with the intent of giving their babies to others. This is done, in the majority of cases, for a negotiated price, which reduces motherhood from a value to an asset. If surrogacy becomes an established practice, its long-term effects on society's intergenerational bonds will be devastating.

TRANSPLANT SURGERY

The Quran says: "*And whoever saves a life, it would be as if he has saved the life of all the people.*" Perhaps there is no better way to implement this concept than by transplanting donated organs in place of failing vital body parts. This conclusion was reached after some synthesis of Islamic rules.

Basically, violating the human body, whether living or dead, is against the rulings of Islam. It would follow that incising the body of a living donor or of a cadaver to obtain an organ to be donated would be impermissible, were it not for the invocation of two juridical rules that readily solve the impasse. The first of these is the rule that states: "*Necessity overrules prohibition.*" The second is "*The lesser of two evils should be chosen if both cannot be avoided.*" Since the saving of life is a necessity that carries more weight than preserving the integrity of the living body or of a corpus, and since injury to the body of a donor is less evil than allowing a

patient to die, the procedure of organ donation and transplantation is sanctioned. The procedure should not pose a danger to the donor, as far as is medically ascertainable. Rules of free consent, devoid of any kind of pressure, should be observed when a donor (or next of kin of a deceased donor) indicates his or her willingness.

TRANSPLANTATION OF NERVOUS TISSUE

Recent experiments have shown some promise in the treatment of some diseases through the transplantation of nervous tissue. This is lawful if the source is the adrenal gland medulla of an animal fetus, or a human fetus spontaneously miscarried after it has died naturally. It is unlawful to sacrifice a living or viable human fetus for this purpose. In a lawful abortion (such as to save the mother's life), tissue from the fetus may be used. Creating fetuses or performing an abortion for the purpose of transplantation is unlawful.

THE ANENCEPHALIC FETUS

An anencephalic fetus results from a congenital abnormality in which the vault of the skull and the brain hemispheres are absent. Such a fetus may be born alive, but will eventually die, after a period that may extend to several days. As long as the fetus lives, it should not be used as a source of organs for transplantation. Artificial termination of its life is unlawful. It may be maintained by artificial resuscitation, in order to keep its tissues healthy until its brain (stem) dies; only then is it acceptable to use its organs.

TRANSPLANTATION OF TESTIS AND OVARY

It is unlawful to transplant into another person testes capable of producing and discharging sperm or ovaries capable of ovulation; such a procedure would lead to a confusion of genealogy and to the conception of babies by gametes that are not united by an authentic marriage, since such sperms and ova will always belong to the donor, not the recipient. Sex glands that are sterile (do not produce gametes) but hormonally active do not bear this ban, but their use has no place in clinical practice.

THE MOMENT OF DEATH

The definition of the moment of death is obviously important in determining the permissibility of ending artificial means of animation or of the taking of a singular vital organ for transplantation (such as the heart). Moreover, it has a direct bearing on juridical issues, such as the apportioning of legacy shares if two or more inheritors should die in succession, or the determination of the beginning of the waiting period a widow must allow to pass after her husband's death before she remarries (four months and ten days, or, if she is pregnant, until the end of the pregnancy).

Recent juridical congresses have accepted a new definition of death based on total brain death (including that of the brain stem), even while some physiological functions may be maintained by artificial animation. The new definition was made possible by analogy to an old juridical rule that recognized the concept of a fatal injury. Centuries ago, it was decreed that if a person was

stabbed and if this resulted in the extrusion of his bowel, then that was a fatal injury, even if the victim continued to show movement or other signs of (departing) life, technically referred to as "*the movement of the slain*." If at this time a second aggressor finished the victim, causing (complete) death, the murder charge would still be made against the first aggressor; the second would be charged also, but not with murder. The condition of persons in a state of brain death whose body organs or systems, remain artificially maintained has been given the status of the "*movement of the slain*," since a return to life is scientifically impossible. It would be no crime, therefore, if animation was switched off in such a case, or if the (fresh and live) heart was taken from such a person for transplantation to a patient whose heart was damaged beyond recovery.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia has been legalized in some countries. Islam has its own definite views on euthanasia.

HUMAN LIFE

The sanctity of human life is a basic value, decreed by God even before the times of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Commenting on the slaying of Abel by his brother Cain (these were the two sons of Adam), God says in the Quran: "*On that account we ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slay 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*" (Quran 5:32).

The Quran also says: *"Take not life, which Allah made sacred, otherwise than in the course of justice"* (Quran 6:151 and 17:33). The Sharia goes into great detail in defining the conditions under which taking life is permissible, whether in war or in peace (as an item of criminal law), with rigorous prerequisites and precautions to restrict it.

Is there a right to suicide? Islam does not recognize suicide as a right, but rather considers it a violation. Since we did not create ourselves, we do not own our bodies. We are entrusted with them for care, nurture and safekeeping. God is the owner and giver of life and His rights in giving and in taking are not to be violated. Attempting to kill oneself is a crime in Islam as well as a grave sin. The Quran says: *"Do not kill (or destroy) yourselves, for verily Allah has been to you most Merciful"* (Quran 4:29).

Warning against suicide, the Prophet Muhammad 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."*

EUTHANASIA OR "MERCY KILLING"?

The Sharia lists and specifies the conditions that make the taking of a life permissible (that is exceptions to the general rule of the sanctity of human life); these do not include *"mercy killing,"* or make any allowance for it.

Human life has an intrinsic value which is to be respected unconditionally, irrespective of circumstances. The concept of a life that is not worthy of being lived does not exist in Islam.

Justifying the taking of life by asserting that this prevents or ends suffering is not acceptable. The Prophet Muhammad 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."* During a military campaign, one among the Muslims was killed, and the companions of the Prophet kept praising this man's gallantry and efficiency in fighting; to their surprise, the Prophet commented, *"His lot is hell."* Upon inquiry, the companions found out that the man had been seriously injured and so had supported the handle of his sword on the ground and plunged his chest onto its tip, committing suicide.

The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics, issued by the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine, states, *"Mercy killing, like suicide, finds no support except in the atheistic way of thinking, which believes that our life on this earth is followed by a void. The claim that killing is acceptable in the case of a painful, hopeless illness is also refuted, for there is no human pain that cannot be largely conquered by medication or by suitable neuro-surgery."*

Furthermore, there is a transcendent 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"* (Quran 39:10). *"And bear in patience whatever (ill) may befall you; this, behold, is something to set one's heart upon"* (Quran 31:17).

The Prophet Muhammad taught: *"When the believer is afflicted with pain, even that of a prick of a thorn or more, God forgives his sins, and his wrongdoings are discarded as a tree sheds its leaves."*

When all other means of preventing or alleviating pain fall short, the spiritual dimension can be very effectively called upon to support a patient who believes that accepting and bearing unavoidable pain will be to his or her credit in the hereafter, which is the only real and enduring life. To a person who does not believe in a hereafter, such pain might seem insupportable, but to one who does believe, euthanasia is certainly insupportable.

THE FINANCIAL FACTOR

There is no question that the financial cost of maintaining the incurably ill and the senile is a growing concern, so much so that some pro-euthanasia groups have gone beyond the concept of the *"right to die."* They claim that when the human machine has outlived its productive span, its maintenance is an unacceptable burden on the productive segment of society, and that such a person should be disposed of abruptly, rather than allowing him to deteriorate gradually.

Such logic is completely alien to Islam. The values preached by our religion have priority over any financial considerations. The care of the weak, old and helpless is a value in itself, for which people should be willing to sacrifice time, effort and money; this care 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'*" (Quran 17:23-25). Because such care is a virtue ordained and rewarded by God both in this world and in the hereafter, believers regard it not as a debit, but as an investment. In a materialistic, dollar-centric community this logic is meaningless, but not in the value-oriented, God-conscious community of the faithful.

When individuals' means cannot cover the cost of necessary care, this becomes, according to Islam, the collective responsibility of society; financial priorities must be reshuffled so that values take priority over pleasures (in fact, actually derive more pleasure from heeding values than from pursuing lighter amusements). A prerequisite of such participation by society, of course, would be the complete moral and spiritual re-orientation of any society that does not already hold to these premises.

CLINICAL SITUATIONS

In an Islamic setting the question of euthanasia does not arise, and, if it does, it is dismissed as religiously unlawful. A patient should receive every possible psychological support, and compassion, from family and friends, including the patient's spiritual (religious) advisors. The doctor participates in this support also, providing therapeutic measures for the relief of pain. A dilemma arises when the dose of the painkiller that is necessary to alleviate pain approximates or overlaps with the lethal dose that might bring about the patient's death. Ingenuity on the part of the doctor is called for to avoid this situation; from a religious point of view, however, the critical issue is the doctor's intention: is it to kill, or to alleviate pain? Intention is beyond verification by the law, but according to Islam, the intention cannot escape the ever-watchful eye of God. According to the *Quran*, He "*is aware of the (most) stealthy glance, and of all that the hearts conceal*" (*Quran* 40:19). Sins that cannot be proved to constitute a legal crime, and that are beyond the domain of a judge, are still in God's purview, and human beings are answerable to God for them.

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

tion equipment. Ordinary needs whose satisfaction is the right of every living person, and which are not categorized as "treatments," are regarded differently. These include the providing of food and drink and of ordinary nursing care, and are not to be withheld as long as the patient lives.

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

COMMENTARY

The discussion of euthanasia cannot be isolated from the total ideological background of any community. Muslims, believing in God and in a divinely prescribed Sharia, will naturally have different views on this issue from those others who do not believe in God, or from those who acknowledge God but deny Him any authority to tell us what we should or should not do. In much of contemporary Christendom, the concept of the separation of church and state is being pushed, incorrectly, to mean the exclusion of God from human affairs.

The practice of so-called euthanasia in Nazi Germany has opened our eyes in many ways. It was endorsed, pioneered and implemented by medical practitioners of the highest order of both intelligence and professional status. Once the concept of "*a life not worthy of being lived*" was accepted, the foundation was laid for the kinds of decisions which eventually led to the horrors that followed. Fifty years later, the euthanasia lobby has regrouped in the Netherlands, and is targeting Europe and America. Their opponents question the alleged free consent of patients who, already in great personal distress, must additionally suffer from knowledge of the burden both psychological and financial, their illness and treatment is placing on their families. Furthermore, consent given by family members is open to the possibility of conflict of interest. The battle lines have been drawn and the outcome remains to be seen, this is a conflict that is avoided in Islam due to its firm theological strength.

GENETIC ENGINEERING

Genetic engineering particularly has attracted lengthy discussions among Islamic scholars because of a phrase in the Quran about "*changing God's creation.*" According to the Quran, after Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin by eating from the forbidden tree, he was dismayed to see them repenting and being forgiven and honored by their mission to populate Planet Earth as God's viceregents. Satan then asked God to grant him another chance to prove that humans are not so trustworthy after all. When God granted him permission to tempt

mankind (making it clear that he could tempt only those who opted to follow him), Satan disclosed some of his plots to confound men, saying: "*Verily of Thy servants I shall most certainly take my due share, and shall lead them astray and fill them with vain desires. And I shall command them so that they cut off the ears of cattle (in idolatrous sacrifice), and I shall command them and they will change God's creation*" (4:118-119). This verse has deeply influenced the verdicts of Islamic scholars and the opinions of medical practitioners regarding issues related to it. For example, the verse has a bearing on the issue of sexual conversion operations, whereby men try to turn themselves into women and vice versa. While the verse clearly applies to such radical and unnatural surgery, the consensus is that this Quranic verse cannot be invoked as a total and radical ban on genetic engineering. If carried too far, a ban would conflict with many forms of truly curative surgery that also entail some change in God's creation.

Many ethical issues are raised by the scientific development of genetic engineering. The creation of new virulent bacteria for use in biological warfare, for example, was a serious concern of the early seventies when the technology of recombinant DNA was first described. Such an application of the technology is clearly wrong. Applications such as the diagnosis, amelioration, cure or prevention of genetic disease are acceptable and even commendable. Gene replacement is essentially transplantation surgery, albeit at the molecular level. The pharmaceutical possibilities of genetic engineering may

open tremendous vistas in the treatment of many illnesses, and possible applications in agriculture and animal husbandry might help solve the problem of famine throughout the world.

The main concerns about genetic engineering lie in the area of the unknown and unsuspected future. The possible grafting of new genes not only into somatic cells but also into germ cells, thus affecting coming generations, could become associated with tragic, self-perpetuating mutations. The hazards of atomic radiation were not apparent for some time, nor could the damage caused by it be repaired; the stakes in genetic engineering are far higher.

The introduction of genetic material from one species into another practically means the creation of a new species possessing mixed features. If pursued recklessly, according to man's inclination for seeking the unknown until it is known and the unachievable until it becomes achievable, mankind may be confronted by patterns of life that have yet to appear on the biological stage. In such a case, scientists might think that everything is under control, while it is not really so. Manipulating human progeny might even be extended beyond combating disease to the cultivation of physical characteristics considered desirable, leading to elitism and discrimination against (normal) individuals who lack those characteristics. Worse still would be the attempt to manipulate behavior by isolating the genes that shape it. An attempt to tamper with the human personality and its

capacity for individual responsibility and accountability would certainly be condemned by Islam.

Genetic engineering technology itself attracts large capital for investment, and its investors will inevitably seek the maximum financial return. Many scientists have already exchanged their ivory towers for golden ones, and a spirit of open and altruistic cooperation is replaced by trade secrecy and the patenting of new forms of life. Moral concerns have been voiced that bear on equity, justice and the common good. Perhaps it is time for a comprehensive public debate leading to the formulation of an ethical code for genetic engineering. A long story is to come, which is just beginning to unfold.

READING THE HUMAN GENOME

This ambitious project aims at reading the genetic material to a detail far beyond that of a chromosome or segments of a chromosome; this is done in the case of certain genetic illnesses. Each chromosome is itself constituted of a large number of genes, strung together like the beads of a rosary. Each gene controls a certain biological function. Each gene, again, has the structure of two pairs of basic chemical entities that are really the chemical alphabet on which the genetic material is based. These pairs are repeated in a certain sequence that is the equivalent of an experience in the genetic language, just as writing employs alphabet, or the telegraph uses the dot and dash, or the computer language uses the line and the dot. The project of reading the genome, therefore, aims at "*spelling out*" the genetic

code in terms not of pages, lines or words, but of individual letters. An error (as in typing) of one letter can alter the message, as expressed by a genetic disease (either current or in the person's future, or just the propensity to that disease, if certain environmental factors are met). In order to explain the thousands of genetic diseases of whose causes we are ignorant, we have to "*proofread*" the genome (the total genetic material), establishing the association of a certain defective gene with a certain genetic disease. Some genes responsible for certain diseases have already been identified (e.g. those causing cancer of the breast, cystic fibrosis, etc.), and the list will certainly grow. Although the logical step to take upon discovering the faulty gene would be gene replacement by genetic engineering, this, unfortunately, is not attainable at the present time, and the gap between diagnosis and therapy can pose an ethical dilemma. Let us take the example of a woman who has been diagnosed as harboring the breast cancer gene, which means that her risk of getting the disease is many times that of the average woman. Because at present the technology for gene replacement does not exist, we have the option of several courses, all ridden with problems. Many doctors would give such a woman the advice to merely have frequent check-ups, so that, if the disease does strike, it will be detected at the earliest stage, which carries the maximal chance of successful treatment. But this is not a preventive approach, the woman would be leading a life of fear and anxiety, and intervention will only be carried out after the disease has already

appeared. Some women in this situation have decided therefore on a real preventive approach, having their breasts surgically removed (both breasts, since we don't know which side the cancer will affect).

This seems to be major surgery for an illness that, after all, may never happen; if this practice becomes widespread, it would be a great waste of resources and finances, ultimately meaning operating on thousands of women to protect only the few destined to get the disease. The picture is further confused by the fact that this gene is transmitted from mother to daughter at a risk of 50% (half of the daughters, on the average, would have the gene). Classically, this should warrant a thorough check-up of the investigation of the sisters of a woman found to have this gene, but what if the woman prefers to keep her diagnosis confidential, or if her sisters would have preferred that the issue never have been raised or mentioned to them? And when such a woman becomes pregnant, should her female fetus be diagnosed for the gene? And what to do if the fetus is shown to have it?

Some genes herald the propensity to an illness that happens later in life, say, at the age of 40 or 50. Would such knowledge lead to a bias against the person in certain jobs, or in health insurance coverage, or in a woman's plans to marry and beget children?

And, when the genes governing certain traits (not diseases) are identified, will the medical profession succumb to the rule of supply and demand, and engage in

providing to people offspring with certain preferred features, like a particular eye color or height?

These and many other questions lack answers, and perhaps a "*genetic manifesto*" should be detailed well in advance, before discoveries enter the stage of application, becoming almost impossible to withdraw.

CLONING

By "*cloning*" is meant the production of a genetic replica (a copy or copies) of an individual. Cloning happens in nature in the form of identical twins. In a natural singleton pregnancy, the mature sperm (containing half of the genetic material) fuses with (fertilizes) the mature egg (also containing one half of the genetic material), producing a fertilized egg, which contains the full genetic complement of an individual. This fertilized egg embarks on a series of divisions, into 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and so on, leading to the formation of a fetus. What happens in the case of identical twins is that each of the first 2 cells (the first generation) behaves as if it is the initial fertilized egg, and goes on dividing toward its own fetus, the two fetuses will be genetic copies of one another, since they emanated from the same egg.

This behavior could be induced artificially (1993). If applied to various generations of cells, a large number of identical embryos could be produced out of -initially-one fertilized egg. This is called cloning by induced twinning.

The other kind of cloning is far more exciting. Reproduction would be achieved without the combination of male and female elements -either one would do. There would be no need for sperm and egg (sex cells). It has long been known that a body cell (e.g. a skin cell, rather than a sex cell) can be made to divide (grow) giving rise to similar (skin) cells. If the nucleus (containing the genetic material) of a skin cell is encased by an egg whose nucleus has been removed, growth occurs toward the formation of an embryo, which, of course, would be a genetic replica of the donor of the skin cell. This embryo would be implanted in a surrogate uterus; the pregnancy would develop, and a birth would occur. This is in fact how the famous sheep, Dolly, was produced in Scotland, to be followed by many successful attempts, in a number of research centers, to clone other animals. The disturbing issue in all this was that the same technology would also work on humans. Some countries imposed a moratorium on government funding and/or attempting human cloning, but, as history tells us, private capital can move to countries without such restrictions. The debate still rages concerning human cloning.

Perhaps the most alarming possibility of human cloning is the devastating effect it could have on the time-honored system of blood relations that humanity knows. Words like father, mother, twin, uncle, cousin and so on could be blurred beyond recognition. Many theoretical scenarios have been posed. If a body cell from a woman is cloned, and then deposited into her own uterus for the duration of pregnancy, would she then give

birth to a girl who would be herself (her genetic copy), her identical twin or her daughter? If the original clone were from her mother, would the baby be her mother's identical twin, or the woman's own daughter by birth? If my clone is preserved for a hundred years, and then used to create a person who is a copy of me, can this clone demand of my children and grand children the legacy they received from me by inheritance? Would the day come when preserved clones of especially gifted people (gifted physically or intellectually) are on the market for purchase by women who want to give birth to a replica of a genius through the process of in vitro fertilization? Would it be permissible for a family to keep a clone of their child as a spare in case the child dies, or to provide perfectly matching organs and tissues if the child should need a transplant? And how would a young clone feel if the original (who may be several decades older) should be afflicted by a malignant disease known to be genetically determined, indicating that the same outcome awaits him? On the long-term scale, it is known that the survival of the higher species is possible only through the genetic variability resulting from cross breeding between males and females continuously through consecutive generations. A biological lineage emanating from only one cell, repeated by genetically recopying, would certainly cause to accumulate the inevitable abnormal mutations that intermarriage would have ended, thus resulting in the ultimate extinction of that lineage.

But some arguments are presented in favor of cloning. If a couple is barren because the husband has no sperm, can a cell from him be cloned and transferred to his wife's uterus? Of course, the baby will be a genetic copy of the father (only), but it can be said that the pregnancy was a joint effort of both, without the involvement of a third party outside the marriage contract.

The possibility is suggested of manipulating the cloning process in the direction of producing only certain tissues or organs, rather than a whole individual, providing a boon to the practice of transplantation surgery by augmenting supply and ensuring tissue that matches the recipient perfectly, since genetically it belongs to him.

When cloning was discussed in the 1997 symposium comprising Islamic jurists, and medical scientists, held by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences, the meeting's recommendation was against human cloning, in view of the overwhelming preponderance among its implications of ones objectionable to Islam. The pursuit of research and the development of technology are permissible, pending assurances of its harmlessness. Third World countries were especially warned against allowing foreign capital, overtly or clandestinely, to pursue within them any work on human cloning.

PALESTINE

I would like to try to shed some light on the issue of Palestine, particularly for the new generation, because they are the ones who have to know about this matter.

It occurs to me that the roots of the Palestinian issue appeared in Europe about a century ago; through an alliance between two contrary points of view that always have been at odds and have faced each other with animosity.

Throughout the history of Christian Europe, the Jews were subject to persecution and oppression—the massacres, the hate that never abated. From a religious point of view, Christians believed that Jews had killed Jesus Christ, who, to Christians, is actually God. And, when the Roman governor, Pilates, hesitated to condemn Jesus to death (we must remember that at that time Jews had the right to run the affairs of their religion), Jews shouted, His blood is upon us and our progeny to the end

of time. From the secular point of view, European Christians believed that Jews were selfish by nature, that they used their skill in money affairs to establish themselves as a pocket of power, often sacrificing the best interests of the countries they lived in.

Even when the campaigns of the Crusades were targeting the Muslims in the East, each one began by massacring European Jews; and, when the war in Spain ended in the defeat of the Muslims at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella, the revenge taken in that country was not limited to the Muslim population, but encompassed Jews as well. Jews were offered three choices: to become Christians, to leave the country, or to die. Actually, very many Jews chose to leave. The majority of these emigrated to Muslim countries in North Africa, or actually went to the capital of the Islamic Caliphate, Istanbul. Under the Caliphate, these Jews lived in peace and prosperity; the Sultan (head of the Muslim State) used to say of Ferdinand and Isabella, "*They impoverished their country, and enriched mine.*"

The Jewish population left in Europe suffered there. This suffering culminated at the time of Hitler, with what he called the Final Solution to the Jewish Problem, meaning physical liquidation, what is known as the Holocaust. Not long before that, even in Britain some shops carried a sign reading: "*Jews and dogs are not allowed.*" Emptying Europe of Jews was actually an aspiration of many Europeans. Jewish resentment at this persecution caused many ideas to emerge, revolving

around the belief that the time had come for Jews to have a home, an independent state of their own, where they will never suffer persecution again. The irony here is that the oppressed and the oppressor both agreed on one cause, that of an independent state for the Jews, though the two sides wanted this for different reasons.

In a conference in Basel, Switzerland in 1895, Theodore Herzl revealed the project of establishing an independent Jewish state. Herzl exploited sentiments inspired by spiritual Zionism, which was tantalizing at that time to the Jewish mind, and which he planned to replace with political Zionism, whose goal was the establishment of a Jewish state in a place where the local population will not be a real obstacle. Palestine was not identified or selected for this project at that time. Herzl favored Mozambique or the Congo. Many of his disciples thought similarly, like Emetz Nordo, who was nicknamed "*the African*," or Chaim Weitzmann, nicknamed "*the Ugandan*;" the nicknames referred to the places these men thought suitable for the new Jewish state. In 1897, the Argentine was suggested for the purpose; Cypress was mentioned in 1901, the Sinai in 1902, and Uganda again in 1903; these were all proposed by the British government.

Hertzl was terribly disappointed when Jews worldwide did not like the idea of a Jewish state as a political reality, whether for ideological reasons or because they were not actually willing to leave their homes, where they were well-established. In fact, a conference

of rabbis that took place in Philadelphia near the end of the 19th century issued a statement saying that the Jews' spiritual mission was incompatible with the establishment of a Jewish political entity.

Hertzl tried to find a way to deal with the reality of this reluctance. He found that religious sentiments could be used to motivate and mobilize the Jews. To him, Palestine was perfect, the only place where fundamental religious emotions would find a response. Some Jewish history was enshrined in Palestine, and Jews had an emotional attachment to that place. The banner of religion was duly raised, emotions ran high, and Hertzl achieved his victory. In 1905, a year after his death, the International Jewish Conference adopted the idea of a home for the Jews in Palestine. To achieve this goal, Zionists falsified two claims to Palestine, in order to brainwash the people of the West. Neither of these claims can withstand critical study.

The first claim was that of a historical right. In fact, the Jews did live in this area at one time in their long history; they lived there during two periods, both of which do not add up even to a few hundred years. Therefore, Jews cannot consider Palestine their property based on that period of residence. Further, history records that when the Jews entered Palestine, they did not find it empty, and that when they left Palestine for the Jewish Diaspora, they did not leave it empty. Before, during and after the time the Jews lived in Palestine, that area was inhabited by the Palestinians, who are mentioned in the

Torah. The Palestinians are still there. The Jewish claim of a historical right to Palestine cannot stand up on the basis of truth and reality, but rather stands only as forged history.

The second claim to Palestine is a religious one, based on the covenant of God with Abraham. This claim refers to God's statement in the Torah: To you and your seed, I give this land, from the river Nile to the great river of Euphrates. If we accept this statement, we must then ask, who are the seed of Abraham? From the Jewish point of view, the seed of Abraham is descendants of Jacob (Israel). We ask, what would happen if one of the progeny of Israel had believed in Jesus, the son of Mary, and had become a Christian? In their opinion, he would then be expelled, not only from Judaism, but also from his status of a seed of Abraham. We also ask the Jews again and again: Don't you know that Abraham had a son before Isaac, that is, Ishmael? Doesn't he also belong to the seed of Abraham? The argumentative ones will say, No; Ishmael is not considered a son of Abraham, because his mother, Hagar, was a maid. We invite those who make this argument to read the Torah, the story of Abraham; in Genesis, Ishmael is called Abraham's "*son*" over and over again. Then, we ask about the other twelve sons of Israel. We know that Israel married his two cousins, Rachel and Leah, and also their two maids, Zilpah and Billha. Six of the sons of Israel were borne by the two maids; are these then not part of the family, not to be considered real sons? With this critical look, the religious claim to Palestine should collapse; there is no answer to reality.

Muslims in America and in the West in general have a huge duty to educate Christians that Muslims are closer to them theologically than are the Jews. At least, we recognize Jesus Christ as an honored Prophet and Messenger of God. He was borne to a chaste, honored virgin, Mary, and, when Muslims say this, bridges are established. Unfortunately, there is a type of Muslim whom I wish had stayed where they originally came from. You can imagine the disappointment and bitterness I felt when some young Muslims sought my advice because they had had a heated argument on the subject of whether Muslims should accept the jiziah from atheist communist countries. This is the taz paid by People of the Book who are citizens of an Islamic country (in lieu of exemption from military service) ; it is comparable to the zakat paid by Muslims. These young people asked whether the same rule can be applied to atheists, for example to communists. Some of them argued that the jiziah should be accepted from Christians, like Americans, British and French, because these are People of the Book, but that the rule is not applicable to communists. I told them, *"My sons, are you blind to the fact that we are living in a miserable time when we, the Muslims, pay the jiziah to others, so that they may protect us—and protect us from whom? From our fellow Muslims?"* This state of affairs saddened me greatly, and I said, O Allah, forgive me; I shouldn't yield to my sorrow.

Returning to the subject of the Zionists, they publicized another fallacy, that was swallowed by many until recently. This was the assertion, made by Zingwell in

1905, that granting Palestine to the Jews would constitute giving "a land without people to a people without land." This fallacy continued to circulate, culminating in Golda Meir's reply, in 1969, to a reporter's question about Palestinian rights: "*What Palestinians? I don't see them.*" This fallacy was destroyed with Palestinian resistance in the Intifida; people saw the Palestinians resisting the occupation of their land.

The weapon of money, however, was a very effective one in the Zionists' hands. They attempted to persuade Sultan Abdul Hamid, then head of the Muslim Caliphate, to accept the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine; in return, the Zionists would pay the debts of the Sultan and invest his personal wealth. The Sultan refused to give up the land of Islam and of Muslims; I invite historians and analysts to investigate whether his stand on this matter contributed to his later overthrow. Zionists, however, proceeded to create for themselves areas of power in the West, building on the fact that there were people in the West who were very leery of Islam's ability to expand; they found listeners among those who felt this fear of Islam and Muslims.

Until 1952, Sinai, in Egypt (under British rule), was off limits to Egyptians, who needed a visa to enter this part of their land. Meanwhile, the Jews set out to convince the British that they would guard from Palestine the British routes to India, which was called the Jewel of the British crown. Using brainwashing and money, Zionists were able to "*Zionize*" a good number

of important British politicians. At one time, Disraeli, the British Prime Minister, a Jew, needed money to enable England to buy Egypt's share of the Suez Canal, put up for sale by Egypt's ruler of that time, who was deeply in debt. Time was of the essence; Britain wanted to make the purchase before France stepped in. The powerhouse Rothschild bank (owned by Jews) paid the necessary amount over the weekend, and Britain was indebted to Disraeli and Rothschild for the conclusion of this great business deal, which was really a great victory for Britain.

1914-1918 was the period of the First World War; in addition to economic power, another factor was used to attempt to influence the British. The distinguished chemist, Dr. Chaim Weitzmann, (who later became the first president of Israel, and father of Ezra Weizman, later another Israeli president), invented an explosive material that superseded any other available at that time. Weitzmann gave his invention to the British government, in return for a British promise to help the Jews establish a homeland in Palestine.

During the war, Arab armies, under the leadership of Al-Sharif Hussain (Sharif Hussain was the father of King Abdullah, the grandfather of King Hussein of Jordan), marched from the Arabian Peninsula to join Britain and her allies in their fight against Turkey, which was allied with Germany. Britain's promise to Hussain was to make him king of a sovereign, independent Arab state. The terms of this agreement included the guarantee of a Jewish

homeland. Al-Sharif Hussain agreed to this provision on the condition that the Arab kingdom would be established. I saw this document, with Hussain's signature at the end, in a documentary shown recently in Europe.

However, when hopes for the establishment of that Arab kingdom were at their peak, the foreign ministers of Britain and France began to divide up the Arab countries between them, in what was known as the Sykes-Picot agreement. When the First World War ended, with Britain, France and the Allies victorious, it had been decided that Egypt, Sudan, Palestine and Iraq were to belong to Britain, while Syria, Lebanon, Tunis and Algeria would go to France. To appease Sharif Hussain, Britain made Faisal, Hussain's older son, King of Iraq, and his younger son a prince (an emir) of what was called the East of Jordan. Eventually, this son became the King of Jordan.

In 1917, just before the end of the war, Balfour, Britain's Secretary of State, issued his famous Declaration, which said that *"The government of Great Britain looks with sympathy on the establishment of a homeland for Jews in Palestine, on the condition that it will not encroach on the rights of the native inhabitants of this land."*

After the war, Palestine was made a protectorate of Britain. Ironically, the High Commissioner of Great Britain in its protectorate was the Jewish Zionist Herbert Samuel; he spared no effort to make that meal ready to

be eaten. The Jewish Agency and the Jewish Fund were established to buy the lands of Palestine from the people living there, at greatly inflated prices; unfortunately, those who agreed to sell were the rich, not the poor. Jews began to build settlements on this land, to which multitudes of overseas Jews began to emigrate. This greatly disturbed and threatened the Arabs of Palestine, who decided to revolt against the British occupation in the hope of ending the flood of Jewish immigration; they saw these Jews as coming from foreign lands to take away their land and their homes. This time produced names like that of Ezz-el-Din Alqassam, or of the leader of the great Total Strike of 1936, Hajj Amin al-Hussaini, who was the mufti of Jerusalem. Britain was really troubled by that strike, which lasted for six months until Britain found the effective way to stop it.

And what was that way?

The Arab countries interfered with the revolution, exerting pressure on the Palestinians to stop their actions. All these Arab leaders were puppets of Britain. At that time, the military power of Germany was increasing, and its movements in Europe had begun; the approach of the Second World War was visible on the horizon, so the Arab countries pressed the Palestinians to end their revolution, afraid that otherwise Britain, their big brother, could be defeated in the coming war.

In the autumn of 1939, the Second World War erupted. A new brigade was formed in the British army, the Jewish Brigade, which included Moshe Dayan and Abba

Eban, whose names would be familiar to many. This brigade achieved the highest level of training, experience and equipment, and was toughened by battlefield action; it was actually formed with the purpose of spearheading military occupation in Palestine. At the same time, judges in Palestine were sentencing any Palestinian who possessed even a single bullet to 15 years in prison.

The war ended, as we know, with the defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan. When U.S. might entered the war on the Allies' side, and, later, when the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Japan, the war's outcome was decided. Europe, both the victorious and the defeated countries, emerged from the war deeply injured, even destroyed. Britain was clearly licking its wounds, and was aware that its rule in India was almost ended. Therefore, Palestine was no longer important strategically to Britain. In addition, there was great unrest in Palestine among the Jews, Palestinians and British. This was the time when Britain declared Menachem Begin to be a terrorist, and offered a monetary reward to anyone giving information leading to his arrest; this announcement came after a bomb exploded at the King David Hotel, the headquarters of the British Army in Jerusalem. During this period also occurred the machine-gun attack by Zionist gangs on worshippers at the Arbaceen mosque in Jaffa, in which all the victims were killed. The same period saw the massacre of Deryasin, in which the Jews killed almost all the inhabitants of that village, and set fire to their homes.

At this time, Harry Truman, the president of the U.S., had been completely won by the Zionist side. Even some officials of his State Department tried to remind Truman that the Arabs' rights had been violated; he would retort by asking, "*How many votes can they muster in the United States? All they have is a bundle of legal documents.*" Truman mobilized his foreign policy machine to bring all the weight of the U.S. to bear on the smaller countries to persuade them to vote in the United Nations in favor of the partition of Palestine. The decision to partition Palestine led to the Resolution with which we began this chapter. At the same time, Britain announced that, on the 15th of May, 1948, it would withdraw its forces from Palestine, ending mandate on that land.

It was natural that the Palestinians would resent the idea of partitioning their land with those whom they considered strangers, coming from overseas to take over their land from them. An armed struggle began. The Palestinians, while obviously poor in equipment, performed acts of heroism and courage.

Had the Arab countries only supplied the Palestinian fighters with simple weapons, that would have been much better than introducing to the battlefield the so-called Arab armies. I was an eyewitness at this time. I lived in the city of Ramleh, about four kilometers from Lidd. These two would have been one city, had there not been some farms separating them, preserved as religious endowments. A Salvation Army, which was formed of Palestinians led by a talented officer named Fawzy al-

Qawukji was disbanded due to lack of weapons. The Arabs withdrew from Jaffa even before the British mandate ended, mainly because they lacked ammunition. During the days just preceding May 15, I was shuttling wounded Palestinian fighters, in an ambulance, from the Jaffa hospital to the one in Ar-Ramla, so that these men

would not fall into the Zionists' hands. Jaffa looked to me like a deserted city, in spite of the fact that, according to the partition agreement, it was on the Arab side. The city had asked the military committee of the Arab League to send weapons, but the committee's members did not believe Jaffa deserved an answer; by the time they agreed to send the weapons, it was already too late. At midnight of the 15th of May, the Jews declared the beginning of the State of Israel; as I mentioned before, the U.S. immediately granted its recognition, followed by the Soviet Union.

At that time, the three main Zionist gangs — the Haganah, the Stern, and the Ergun Zvai Leum — were fully equipped and organized, and well-coordinated; they faced the Arabs, who were completely disorganized. Each city was supposed to defend itself with whatever it could muster, even with rifles; any chief in a city was called a zaim, or leader. Predictably, the land held by the Arabs was eroded, and gradually lost; the citizens of Ramleh were still safe, but were under siege. The Arab armies which had announced their mobilization in Palestine were still very far away; 82 mujahids alone defended Ar-Ramla from Jewish attacks on the

city, which took place every night. Every night, a wave of attackers pounded the city, but withdrew defeated, though leaving some casualties behind it. I remember that nine of the Zionists were wounded, and brought as prisoners of war to the hospital. We treated them very well, not because we followed the Geneva conventions, but because we acted according to the teachings of Islam. I could tell a lot of entertaining stories about this time, but will not go into details about it.

It is an interesting fact, as Mohammad Hassanain Haikel reported in his book *"The Secret Negotiations Between Arabs and Israel"*, and as was well known, that on May 12th, 1948, Golda Meir visited Amman, Jordan, disguised as a Bedouin, to meet King Abdullah. It was revealed later that she tried to persuade Abdullah not to go to war on the side of the Arabs, and that he replied that he would look very bad if he didn't, but that his army would never cross the partition line. As it happened, the Jordanian army, which at that time was called the Arab Legion, and which, ironically, was led by an English officer, entered East Jerusalem, or Old Jerusalem, as it was called; meanwhile, the Egyptian army moved toward Gaza from the south. But, whenever the Egyptian army came across a Jewish settlement, it did its best to circumvent it, moving forward without engaging the settlers. It was proven later that this procedure created a major problem for the Egyptian army. It became a sore spot, causing great losses during the army's withdrawal. The army was about finished when it was besieged in Al-Faluja; present then were

Gamal Abdul Nasser, Kamaladdin Hussain, Marouf al-Hadari, and other officers, who later became the nucleus of the Organization of Free Officers that led the revolution in Egypt in 1954.

In spite of all this, in general, the fighting went in the Arabs' favor; unfortunately, they yielded to external pressures, and accepted a cease-fire of one month. It became clear later, though, as usual, too late, that this cease-fire was a disaster for the Arabs. During the month it was in place, Israel completely re-armed itself.

During the cease-fire, there came to Ramleh a Jordanian brigade with tanks and artillery, under an officer named Idriss Bek. The citizens were delighted and very optimistic, thinking that if Ramleh could defend itself with only 82 men with rifles, what could it do with a brigade of professional soldiers, armed with tanks and artillery? Thousands of families came back to Ramleh because the brigade was there. The map of the battlefield was redrawn; the cease-fire ended and fighting started again. To the great surprise of the mujahideen, the freedom fighters, they found that the Jordanian brigade was withdrawing, needlessly and without a fight. When Ramleh fell to the Jews, it was noticed that, in the Egyptian as well as the Arab newspapers, there was no longer any discussion of the problem of the partition of Palestine; this was replaced by the problem of the Palestinian refugees. The Jews who had conquered Ar-Ramleh allowed women, children and old people to leave, after stripping them of everything they had. They

launched a campaign of terror that forced people to run away to save their lives; it was God's will that at that time I was not in the city. When I came back, it was obvious that the city had already fallen; I had to be relocated to a new hospital, in the school of the Friends in the city of Ramallah. There, I saw the problem of the refugees in all its misery, suffering, homelessness and death.

On the Egyptian front, things went from bad to worse; the main concern was with how to withdraw safely, and another cease-fire was announced. By that time, Israel already controlled more land than the partition resolution had given it. In spite of the second cease-fire, the Israeli forces continued their progress, acquiring land by force. They took all of the Negev, which gave them access to the Red Sea; later, they built the city of Eilat on this land. In the cease-fire negotiations, Israel dealt with the Arab countries one by one; there was no united Arab front to negotiate. The agreement of Rhodes was concluded; by that time, the Palestinians were being treated as if they did not exist.

A defeated army is usually a dangerous army; it becomes even more dangerous when the reasons for its defeat are political. In the case we are discussing, political reasons led to the launching of a war without any preparation, a situation to which the military alerted the political leadership at the time. Matters became even worse when soldiers and officers in the battlefield discovered that some of their weapons were in such poor

condition that they exploded on their own side, instead of among the enemy; it was discovered later that this was the result of corruption in the exportation and transportation of the arms. It was felt that those benefiting greatly from these corrupt activities included Egyptian aristocrats and, at the very top, King Farouk. The writer Ehsan Abdul Qoddous wrote a famous article about this matter, declaring, "*I point my finger in accusation.*" Qoddous challenged the state to take him to court. Adding to the effect of this was the deterioration of the King's personal behavior and reputation, as well as the failure of any of the political parties to take a stand against him. All of this created the environment for the revolution in Egypt in 1952, which toppled the King and made Egypt a Republic. And so, the reign of Mohammad Ali and his family, who had ruled Egypt for 147 years, was over.

The leaders of the revolution promulgated what were called the Six Resolutions. One of these was the regaining of Palestine. After a short period during which General Mohammed Najeeb was president of Egypt, power settled with Gamal Abdul Nasser, who ruled Egypt after that. Nasser broke the monopoly of the West in selling weapons to Egypt. Nasser dared to buy from the Eastern (Communist) bloc, hoping to strengthen the Egyptian army unencumbered by the severe limitations imposed on arms purchases by the West. Another positive event of this time was the end of the British occupation of Egypt. When the United States failed to conclude a hoped-for agreement to finance the High Aswan Dam, Nasser

nationalized the Suez Canal; the Soviet Union agreed to help Egypt build the dam, which was considered at that time to be crucial to Egypt's industrialization.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal was a slap in the face to Britain and France; so, these countries conspired with Israel to attack Egypt in 1956. It was then that Bulganin of the Soviet Union declared threateningly that London and Paris were within the range of Soviet missiles. President Eisenhower, running for re-election, denounced what he called the aggression against Egypt, and stated that he would offer no military help to the attacking countries. Those countries all eventually agreed to withdraw their forces. This affair greatly lessened the prestige of France and Britain, who were thereafter no longer considered first-class nations. Israel, on the contrary, emerged a winner, gaining the right to sail its ships in the Aqaba branch of the Red Sea. The people of Egypt remained unaware of this fact for eleven years, until the next war in 1967.

During this same period, Egypt began to build up its military, for which effort the Egyptian people gave everything they had. Field Marshal Amer declared that Egypt was the strongest striking power in the Middle East. But Egypt suffered from a weakness created by the absence of democracy, the concomitant impunity of corruption, and the pervasiveness of fear due to the nature of the regime. This weakness led to Egypt's terrible defeat in 1967. After this defeat, Nasser, declaring that what is lost by force can only be regained by force,

began a war of attrition. Then, Nasser died, and in 1973, President Sadat launched the "*War of Crossing*," overwhelming the Israeli forces, in Sinai.

The 1973 war produced far-reaching results. During this war, Egypt was able to cross the formidable Bar-Lev Line into the Sinai. The war, therefore, showed Israel that it was not as invincible as we had thought. It proved that the Arabs were capable of winning a war against Israel. The war also made plain that the U.S. can tilt the scale of events in the Middle East. Following this war, President Sadat saw that his only option was to place himself on the side of the U.S. He made a visit to Israel that led to the Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. The Arabs were forced to realize that they could take no military action without Egypt's assistance. Certainly, Sadat could have achieved better conditions in the Camp David agreement, but he took the stand of being "*the head of the family*," and refused to listen to his advisors. In retrospect, knowing what we now know, it is clear that, had the Palestinians participated in those negotiations, they would have gained more than they are now struggling to gain. Maybe, if the Arabs could have negotiated as a bloc, they would have gained much more than they ever would be able to; probably, by now, they would not have needed the so-called peace process, which they are falling over themselves to achieve with Israel. The Arab front now is broken. The worst break occurred when Iraq attacked Kuwait; there is no longer anything that we can call an Arab front.

The Palestinians achieved some gains through the action of the children of Palestine, who proved themselves, using stones and rocks, in their intifida against the occupation of their land. Following this revolt, the P.L.O. recognized Israel, and the two sides began negotiations. Unfortunately, Palestinians no longer have loyalty to their land itself, since no land is left to them; a Palestinian works under a Zionist for his sustenance, to the point that part of Israel's punishment of the Palestinians for their revolt was to close the borders between Israel and the occupied areas, preventing Palestinians from working in Israel.

Concerning the Palestinian lands, Israeli opinion is divided between two philosophies: that of the Labor Party, which has adopted the slogan, "*Land for Peace*," and which believes that eventually Israel will control the Arab world from Atlantic ocean to Persian Gulf area through economic means; and that of the Likud Party, which does not want to give up any part of the land, and which depends on the use of sheer force to achieve its goals.

I cannot be more brief than I am being in trying to summarize these events; there are further issues that do not escape the attention of the Arab nations or the Arab negotiating teams. First, the Zionist occupation is not only military but also displacive. It aims at marginalizing or erasing the Palestinians' existence, and replacing it by Jews. The birth rate among the Palestinian Arabs is higher than that of the Jews; this disturbs the Israelis,

since it will produce a demographic change. The situation in Palestine is not like that during the Crusades, when the crusaders had homes to which they yearned to return; the crusaders did not want to expel the Arabs from their homes. The Israelis, on the contrary, have no homes to return to; to them, Israel is home. They intend, therefore, to take the Arabs' places in their lands. This aim is no secret; for instance, an Israeli professor, Ben-Zion Dainar, declared that "*There is no place in our lands for two peoples.*" Yuri Librani, an advisor on Arab affairs to Menachem Begin, has said that Israel would reduce the Arab population to a lot of manual laborers and restaurant waiters. Ship Aldau remarked that Israel had a choice between "*the Eretz Israel or the Eretz Ismail;*" he meant by that that Palestinians and Israelis cannot coexist.

The second strategic fact underlying Israeli policy is that Israel is by the nature of its existence expansionist. The map of an Israel extending from the Nile to the Euphrates still occupies a wall in the Knesset offices. The two blue lines of the Israeli flag represent the Nile and Euphrates rivers. Golda Meir was once asked, What are the borders of the state of Israel as you see them? Her reply was: "*When we reach those borders, we'll let you know.*" David Ben-Gurion stated that the Jewish state hoped to include southern Lebanon, southern Syria, Jordan and Sinai.

Further, the Israeli occupation is racist. Rafael Eitan, former commander in chief of the Israeli armed forces,

remarked that anyone who accused the whites of South Africa of racism was a liar, that it was the blacks there who wanted to control the white minority, just like the Arabs wanted to control the Israelis. And, when in 1975 the African countries voted in support of the U.N. resolution to declare Zionism racism (a resolution that was later nullified), Menachem Begin's response was to ask how people who used to live in trees could now turn around and try to lead the world. It is a fact that the Jews are racist even toward each other. The Ashkenazi Jews, who are white European Jews, see themselves as superior to the Sephardic Jews, whereas 70% of the Jews are Sephardic. This racism shows itself, for instance, in Israel's educational system, including the fees demanded by different schools. Only 6% of university students and 3% of graduate students are Sephardic. As for the Ethiopian (Falasha) Jews, who were used for propaganda, they are seen as outcasts. They are so despised that, when they chose to donate blood, theirs was thrown away and wasted, so that other Jews would not have to use it; when this scandal was disclosed, it created a great deal of bitterness among the Falasha Jews. To the cursory look, the Jews appear homogenous, forming a single front, but in fact the Orthodox Jews have issued their own fatwa, declaring that Conservative and Reform Jews are not even Jews at all.

This is an oppressive system. We don't need to do too much to prove that point. It is useful to note the remark of an Israeli, Judas Magnus, the first president of Hebrew University; he said that Jews have more than a right to

demand justice from the world, but that he was not prepared to gain that justice at the expense of the Arabs. Similarly, Benjamin Cohen, a professor at Tel Aviv University, said, “ *Jews have always been the victims of cruelty; how can they be so cruel themselves?*” Many Jews see things this way. Two American Jewish organizations, Peace Now and Land for Peace, which are branches of similar movements in Israel, denounce the atrocities inflicted on the Palestinians by the Israeli government. These organizations believe that the Palestinians have the right to their own state, their own home.

A saliaut feature of the conflict was the eruption of the Intifada. Palestinian children threw stones at the occupying Israeli soldiers. The only answer was shooting those children with bullets and mesciles, with a supplementary order from the then prime minister (Rabin) to break their bones if caught. The result was a world wide sympathy with the Palestinian cause except with the U.S. government whose position was and has always been to take the side of supporting Israel all the way and its automatic protection in the security council by using the american Veto. Things dragged on but a window of opportunity appeared as the Israeli and Palestenian sides entered into negotiations under the auspices of the United States and the world saw the famous shaking hands between yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin during the ceremony at the lawn of the White House. The staunch enemies became friends and were granted the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Unfortunately, when Rabin returned to Israel, he was assassinated by a Jewish extremist who was a member of an extremist religious Zionist party. This dealt a grave blow to the long hoped for peace.

The sequence after that is well known, during a coalition government in Israel, the minister of defense Ariel Sharon, entered the Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem with a heavy Israeli military guard. This was enough to incite an inflamed Palestinian reaction. Violence escalated, serving the purposes of the militants on both sides. The Likud party came to power as the Palestinian anger intensified and the Palestinian reaction escalated from throwing stones to bullets, mines and suicide bombers as is already well known. Hatred progressively became deeper and deeper rooted.

We do not want to engage in details especially noting that the situation in the Middle East is rapidly changing. One recognizable fact however is that the United States is the only country that can enforce some kind of solution to the Arab Israeli issue. It would be for the good of all if such a solution comes without further delay because both sides are getting used to bad habits of conflict and sinking more and more into hatred. Such a solution should entail at least a threshold of fairness or else it will be as transient as the Versailles treaty of peace after Germany lost the first World War.

Some Israelis think that the Palestinians could be accommodated easily among the Arab world. Nothing is

farther away from the truth. The Palestenians would neither be welcomed or welcoming to loose their home and be adopted in other countries. What will happen if such a solution is imposed, is that the Palestenians would spread bitterness and resentment in the host Arab countries.

An independent Palestenian State looks to be the ideal solution. The human heart is amenable to change once the circumstances change. As happened in Europe and elsewhere the enemies of the past become the friends of the present. Both sides have their fears and apprehensions but these can never be solved by being overpowered and suppressed. Perhaps national greed can be tempered if you can put your feet in the shoes of the other party.

So far one sees plenty of politics and military power but very little statesmanship. At present it seems that the U.S.A. is the only power to influence the course of history in this conflict and others in the world.

We do hope that statesmanship in america can prevail over politics, party politics and myopic interests.

THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The slogan "*New World Order*" has been recently replaced by the term "globalization," which events have proved to mean "*Americanization*."

One of the most positive outcomes of World War II was the establishment of the United Nations, as a more viable replacement for the "*League of Nations*" created following World War I. With the U.N., the international community looked forward to putting the world in the collective custody of all the nations, and to providing a forum for conflict resolution, appealing to the wisdom and good offices of the extended human family. The U.N., it was also hoped, would encounter any military and aggression by means of the combined force and resolve of all the nations. There is no doubt that the U.N. has proved its value by helping many peoples and resolving many conflicts. But the ideal initially hoped for has remained, at least partly, out of reach. The power of veto given in the U.N.'s Security Council to the big

countries has often stifled justice. The U.N. itself has often suffered from the mounting influence of the United States of America, which contributes a sizeable part of the U.N. budget, and which has effectively harnessed its economic and political influence to dictate the way smaller countries vote.

It is needless to say that the underlying shaper of international politics in our times is finally economics. Resources and markets are all important. Greed and selfishness confuse the picture. National boundaries and borders are coming to mean less and less. The world is progressively being classified into the exploiters and the exploited. The camp of the masters has its internal rivalries, but it maintains its solidarity vis-a-vis the other camp: that of the victims. America has decided to be the king in both camps.

With the growing ascendancy of economic interest over considerations of law and principle, America has endorsed as its strategy the acquisition of an overwhelming military machine. Not only are arms sales a handsome source of income, but military strength is the final arbiter when it comes down to the nitty-gritty of ultimate conflict. The Achilles's tendon of the American military people will not accept. The need was therefore pressing to be able to launch major wars without suffering American losses. This goal was given budget priority, and became achievable. The Gulf War was a perfect example of this. Watching the surgical strikes and precision bombing of that war exhilarated the American public,

and few body bags came back home.

Until very recently, America has been very keen on camouflaging its actions with some semblance of a U.N. endorsement, even if this only amounts to a fig leaf. With the assurance of a casualty-free war, it seems that the need for the fig leaf is no more. In December 1998, America bypassed and surprised the world with a heavier bombing of Iraq (joined symbolically by Britain- once Great Britain). The cruise missile became both the American foreign policy and the New World Order. And now let us go back a little bit.

Although a New World Order was announced at the time of the precipitate fall of communism, that collapse did not prove the fitness of today's capitalism. Both systems rely on materialistic ideologies unsuited to a species whose characteristics extend far beyond the material. Both assume--albeit in opposite directions--that the individual and the society are in irreconcilable conflict. Communism sought to crush the individual in favor of society. Yet what is society but the individual multiplied? The result was inevitably a crushed society.

Capitalism, on the other hand, extols the individual and unduly shields him from the claims of society. This tendency has imbued the individual with selfishness, collectively expressed as classism, the power of corporations, nationalism, racism, slavery and colonialism. The cornerstone of capitalism is that the only function and sole destiny of capital is to grow and keep growing,

without limits. When local markets are saturated, others are sought overseas and in the Third World. There is a blindness to the fact that it is impossible to attain infinite growth on a finite planet.

The race for dollars, and more dollars, is coupled with the encouragement of patterns of consumerism, and with planned obsolescence; the intent is not to satisfy needs, but rather to satisfy the wish for comforts, pleasures, and luxuries. Natural resources, many irreplaceable, are being violated at an accelerating pace. Capitalism has especially exploited the Third World, a vital market and cheap source of labor and materials, which capitalist countries presume to be expendable. Not only are the peoples of poorer countries robbed of their nations natural resources and raw materials for a meager price (compared to the exorbitant prices they must pay to buy the finished products made with those materials), but they are prevented even from carrying out such projects as might improve their lot, and make them less dependent on First World imports.

To prevent the Third World from dying of exsanguination, it is regularly injected with fresh capital, in the form of loans and aid in order to maintain its buying power, to the favor of Western capital.

Alas, only a tiny fraction of that aid goes to address the needs of the people. The major part goes to the homegrown elite, who form the ruling class, with their retinues, all of whom undertake to maintain the

status quo. This elite prevents the public debate of the terms and conditions of the West's loans and aid, and blocks any attempt at supervising the management or establishing accountability for any mismanagement of the money. They deny the rights of labor allowing lax safety procedures, and prevent any unearthing of the appalling corruption that has become the hallmark of government in the Third World; including much of the Islamic World. This behavior seems to explain two paradoxes. The first paradox is that, in many Middle Eastern countries, the more money the West pumps in, the poorer the country becomes, and the deeper it gets into debt. The second is the total betrayal by the major democracies of the democratic movements of the Middle East, even when these seem close to gaining power through following sound democratic processes. Invariably, in such cases, the democracies side with the dictators against the democratic aspirations of the people, and, when necessary, even support the dictators with their military power.

The expression "*stability*" has come to mean, in real terms, the reservation of the best exploitative opportunities to foreign capital, with no regard for the local people. They, and future generations, will inherit a rising debt that their GNP is unable to service, let alone pay. This state of affairs is both known and bitterly felt by the people of the Third World. They call it injustice and they try to change it, but they are brutally suppressed. Western politicians participate in this suppression, and, to justify their actions in the eyes of their own people, use propagandistic formulae and terminology (for instance, declaring

that their victims are eroding the stability of their nation, or are committing blatant aggression against the national interests of the particular Western country). Until recently, Western leaders were able conveniently to call those seekers of justice "*communists*." Since the collapse of communism, the new label used is "*Islamic fundamentalists*."

Under the influence of a gigantic media machine, owned by large corporations and big capital, and designed to manipulate and shape public thinking, the masses in the West have so far been swift to swallow the bait and, unsuspectingly, to sanction the means and ways of their policy-makers. And yet, this is not the worst consequence of the submissive and unsuspecting nature of the people of the West. What they have been even slower to grasp is that the voracious appetite of capital and its greedy practice, as in the Third World, is not confined to faraway places inhabited by strange and exotic people. Government and big business do not flinch from doing the same thing at home, to their own citizens, whenever prompted by the dictates of their sacred principle: growth and more growth, capital and more capital, dollars and more dollars! What else can explain the shifting of major chunks of industry to Southeast Asia and elsewhere, where cheap labor can produce a cheaper final product which, however, will not be sold more cheaply when it is shipped back home to America? During this process, millions of American workers have been laid off.

This road of unbridled capitalism cannot continue indefinitely. All evidence shows that it will hit a dead end before long--evidence that has been attacked, ignored, and even hidden, but which exists, whether its opponents like it or not. The twin golden-egged geese of the world's resources and the peoples of the Third World will not survive for long. Unless there is a radical change before it is too late, our planet will eventually cease to be sustainable.

What is called for, however, is not merely a change of rules, but a change of heart. As long as the mentality of materialism reigns, there is no hope for more than a symptomatic treatment that may delay the inevitable for a brief time but will not prevent it. So long as the prevailing thinking views human interaction in terms of "*Us versus Them*," North versus South, exploiter versus exploited, rich versus poor, white versus people of color, and masters versus slaves (or servants), there is no hope for the future. The ship of humanity will sink, even while the passengers in the deluxe and first class cabins amass more valuables and luxuries.

It is doubtful that the politicians and financiers of the world possess the necessary vision, wisdom or ability to undergo a dramatic change. It is pitiful to watch them staying the ominous course, and leading humanity so close to the edge of the abyss. Our only hope is a massive campaign to educate the public who, as voters, remain the final arbiters of policy. If a demand is created among the public for a new way, politicians will have either to change or to get out of the way of change.

What does Islam have to do with all this? Islamic scholars and thinkers (not the terrorists and extremists that the media hold as a fixed mask over the face of everything Islamic) have, for several decades, been sketching the features of an Islamic system that would address world problems and that, based on the Islamic Sharia, is, naturally, not only a copy of formulas that might have served well in previous times and circumstances. Nor is this system to be considered exclusively Islamic, or prescribed strictly for Muslims, for the welfare of humanity is a common concern of everyone, and, with our ever-shrinking interactive world, we all face the same destiny. The principal features of this Islamic system are described below.

THE AUTHORITY OVER MAN

Man is not the supreme being of this universe, but is himself responsible and accountable to the Supreme Being, God! Without God, everything becomes possible, as Dostoyevsky said; anything can be rationalized and justified. When man dethroned God he slipped into self-worship. The true role of man in this universe is to be God's vicegerent and trustee; he has been equipped as to be capable of having full mandate over nature, in order to manage the planet in accordance with the Creator's instructions, rather than according to his own impulses and temptations. Neither science (a tool yet in its infancy) nor arrogance (a fatal trap) should delude man into playing God if only man were wise enough to resist this.

THE OWNERSHIP OF GOD

Ultimate ownership is God's, by virtue of His being the Creator. Our ownership is a secondary ownership. We are free to own, and to increase our wealth by lawful means, practically without limits, so long as we are aware that capital has not only rights but also duties. The function of capital is not merely to grow ad infinitum, hut also to help us fulfill our obligations toward society.

The assumption (by both communism and capitalism) that there is an inevitable conflict between the individual and society does not exist in Islam, which presumes an equilibrium that is delicately balanced between the individual and society, and does justice to all. This balance is not maintained merely by the strong arm of the law, but by a strong desire to win God's pleasure that makes giving a continuous source of joy to the giver. God is always part of the equation, and is a living reality, which notion, from a materialistic perspective, is irrelevant and absolutely meaningless.

The premise in Islam is that God has remitted the sustenance of the poor into the wealth of the rich. In a new world order, this principle may be expanded to international proportions. Such a new system is of course achievable and attainable, but not under a value-free educational system, a tidal wave of media indoctrination, or within a society tolerant of injustices. Society is now so interdependent and integrated that nobody can live in isolation, either at the apex of riches or at the nadir of poverty.

Over fourteen centuries ago, Omar, the second caliph of Islam, decreed that if a man died because of poverty, the citizens of his town had to pay his ransom as if they had killed him. The community is *"like one body: when one organ suffers, the others rally in support,"* as the Prophet has said. Every citizen has the right to live at a certain threshold of comfort (not merely of subsistence), and, since living on charity is discouraged, it follows that individual rights include the right to gainful employment. Laborsaving technology is therefore allowed as an answer to a labor shortage, but never to economize on jobs, throwing laborers into unemployment. Man takes priority over machine, and the juridical rule is that *"the collective welfare takes priority over individual welfare."* This does not mean arresting technological progress, but means that such progress should constantly take into account its consequences for labor. An existing example of this is that workers are encouraged and helped to buy shares in their companies, in order to blur the polarization between labor and capital, and to give workers a vested interest in the progress of their companies.

Another rule in Islam is that money, as an instrument cannot breed money unless coupled with some kind of production; hence, usury is unlawful in Islam. In recent decades much has been written about usury-free banking, and indeed a number of banks, not only in Islamic countries but also in Europe and America, have successfully pioneered its application.

THE EQUALITY OF MAN

The oneness of humanity as a single family sharing a common ancestry from Adam and Eve, should be emphasized and taught to children from a young age, together with the concept of the inherent equality of human beings. It is unfortunate that both science and religion were, at one time, misused in Europe (and America) to concoct evidence of the natural superiority of the white (or Aryan) race over the others. The false evidence in support of this claim is now dead and buried, but its legacy continues. In most churches in the West, even now, Jesus is portrayed as a blond, white man with blue eyes, unlike the dark-haired, olive-complexioned people common in the area of Palestine.

Racism pervades practically all aspects of life in the West, and the will to change it has yet to gather sufficient momentum. An uphill battle for civil rights in America has been going on for decades, and in spite of palpable progress, one cannot say that the bitter taste of slavery has been washed away. Equality is not a set of legal specifications but is primarily a state of mind.

So far, blacks in America have not heard the word "*sorry*" from whites for the chapter of slavery that has tarnished the history of white civilization (although the non-white-Japanese-Americans have received an apology and reparations for their internment during World War II). Racial tensions continue to erupt, and, though regrettable, the participants in these incidents of violence often have some justification. The Los Angeles riots in the near past are a case in point.

Every time there is a call for action to improve the lot of American blacks, the response, though often helpful for a limited time, usually misses the root cause of the problem. Neither bullets nor dollars will provide permanent, real solutions. Only when everyone, in the depths of his heart, feels and believes that every other human being is a dear and equal brother or sister will real change occur. This feeling cannot be decreed by law, but is a function of education. To transform our world, we must bring about a total educational revolution, with the objective of creating a unified and compassionate society, undivided by barriers of any kind, and of giving new life and significance to slogans of freedom, fraternity and equality, not only within national borders, but on a global scale.

To effect change, the re-education of the new colonialist nations must be coupled with a real effort on their part to assist the development of the Third World. It has been estimated that the subsidy Europe pays to its farmers is enough to cause turnaround in the Third World so great as to eliminate the problem of hunger. This idea was summarily scoffed at in a (philanthropic) meeting in Europe of former ministers and Prime Ministers from various countries. Neither the elimination of the subsidy nor the development of the Third World was considered a real option in the case of the former for reasons of political expediency, and of the latter for those of political strategy. "*Globalization*" pursues the same course as ever.

THE NEED OF SELF-RESTRAINT

Application of the uniquely human faculty of self-restraint has been rapidly eroding and needs to be restored. Although this quality is a principal distinction between man and animal, the mentality of modern times seems to have played havoc with it. A young man who was arrested for shooting at passing cars on a freeway, killing several people, had only this to offer as explanation: *"I felt like killing someone."* This is not a lone example. Statistics on crime clearly indicate that grossly impulsive and destructive behavior has become a common social phenomenon rather than an exception, a fact that anyone who watches the news or reads the papers can confirm. The lack of a sound value system and the consequent appalling lack of resistance in the face of impulses and temptations, are underlying factors that have led to gradual societal destruction.

A key to change can be found in education and the media, but education must be informed not only by knowledge but also by a belief in what is right, and an awareness that we are accountable to a higher power; only then will it pervade most people to become fully responsive to the prompting of their consciences. If there is a Day of Judgment, as Muslims and others believe, then one cannot envy the media moguls who will be confronted on that day with their role in publicizing and promoting violence, pornography and licentiousness. Speak lightly of the unthinkable and it naturally becomes thinkable. Our young people then explore and experiment, until debauchery and miscreancy become societal addictions.

Unfortunately, some nations are subtly setting the example to their youth of a recourse to naked power, a recourse taken especially when these nations are strong beyond limits, and their adversaries are weak beyond limits. The fig leaf of values and principle often falls when the military giants crack down on presumed aggression with all their might and against almost no resistance; when a worse aggression follows such action, the same giants pull back because "*the task would not be easy.*" Regard for human life is ahysmal: these countries both attack and fail to protect it. One of the strongest, and also most revealing, comments made by a military leader during the Gulf War was, "*We are not in the business of counting bodies.*" He meant, of course, the bodies of the other side.

WAR AND PEACE

The rules of war in Islam are very clear, and have been explicitly delineated by the Prophet Muhammad himself. War must either be of a defensive nature or to remove oppression, wherever it might be, following what is now called a just cause; and, it must be fought without harm to innocent civilians or the environment. An alliance to stop aggression is described in the following Quranic verse: "*If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make peace between them, but if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies, then make peace with justice and be fair, for God loves those who are fair*" (49:9).

Alliance with non-Muslims in a just cause is acceptable. An example of this is the Prophet's treaty with the Jews of Madinah for the joint defense of that city against the disbelievers. Another example is the reference by the prophet to a treaty between the tribes of Makkah, long before the advent of Islam; these tribes agreed to join together in supporting the oppressed. The Prophet commented, "*That (The Fodoul Alliance) was an alliance before Islam, but if, in Islam, I had been invited to it, I would have joined it.*" The Prophet's explicit instructions to his armies were that they should fight only against belligerents and not against women, children, or the elderly. Non-Muslim religious people in their monasteries or houses of worship also should not be harmed, nor should enemy trees be cut or set on fire as a war measure, nor should animals be targeted or slaughtered except for food. When one reviews these stipulations, it becomes obvious that the implementation of these lofty Islamic war ethics would require a special effort in a modern war. Perhaps World War I was the last war in which it was possible for fighting to be largely confined to military personnel. Starting with the Spanish Civil War in the thirties, the rules began to change, as became evident in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The two atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki speak for themselves, as does the carpet bombing during the Vietnam War, as well as that war's "*free fire zones,*" in which were killed not only people, animals and plants, but even the soil itself.

Some people would therefore take it that those Islamic war ethics are now theoretical and cannot hold in our modern age. Muslims and others, however, look at the issue from another perspective. Since modern warfare is so devastating, war itself should cease to be an option in conflict resolution. War should be obsolete just like slavery! It is a bad omen that the New World Order was announced on the occasion of an overwhelming military strike. Subsequent decisions raise the suspicion that what is new in the New World Order is no more than that the same old order presided over by one power instead of two adversarial ones.

With humanity at an apex of civilization, never attained before, and ready to move into the new millennium heralding and celebrating a New World Order, a world free of war, that makes use only of alternate instruments of (just) peacemaking, is no longer an idle dream.

Why can't independent courts of justice settle differences between nations? After all, war does not differentiate between right and wrong but only shows who is stronger and possesses more destructive power. The implementation of fair and just conflict resolution would be quite possible if courts of law capable and desirous of honest and impartial handling of conflicts were to be established (this would exclude the United Nations and its Security Council). The success of any such proposal revolves around one pivot: that the civilized countries decide to be civilized! This takes a love of truth; nobody would ever say these nations are against truth, but in fact they are. Truth is a value, and regrettably politics is blind to values, this is the real threat that we face today.

Will the strong accede to justice as decided by law or persist in believing that might makes right? Will the military-industrial complex give up its *raison d'être*, the opportunity to justify itself by some war or another every now and then? Can justice be paramount in apportioning the cake of the world resources and the cost of replenishing them? Of course not; that would be blasphemous for the masters of the current order, unless things change, and change will not come from above. It will come from below, from the grass roots.

THE ECOLOGY

For the sake of making dollars to buy their food, service their debts, arm their military, protect their dictators and attempt to satisfy the insatiable appetite of their rulers and elites, the poorer side of humanity in the developing countries is condemned to deplete their national natural resources. As for the affluent side of humanity: with the goal of making the rich richer in order to enable them to enhance their consumeristic patterns, increase their luxuries and indulge in their amusements, the industrialized world is violating, poisoning, polluting and killing the ecology. This happens at a time when science and technology are capable of affecting the biosphere in a dramatic and unprecedented way, and it happens in peacetime, apart from the devastating and permanent damage that a full-scale modern war is capable of causing. We borrow from the future at an extravagant rate, while sane and reasonable estimates tell us that we are incurring a debt future generations will not be able to pay. Remedial measures and workable suggestions have been prescribed, but the obstacle, as may have been expected, has been the influence of those who hold the reins of power, the custodians

of unbridled, greedy, selfish, gluttonous, short-sighted capitalism. As the Quran says, *"There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle you, and he calls God to be his witness about what is in his heart, yet he is the most contentious of enemies. When he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading mischief and destroying tilth and progeny; and God loves not mischief"* (2:204-205).

Notwithstanding bitter opposition from big business, the ecology movement at least outside the sphere of politics has steadily gained momentum. On Earth Day 1990, one hundred million people in 140 countries turned out for the largest grass-roots demonstration ever. The politicians who would otherwise lose their votes cannot ignore this. Perhaps it is time to establish an international ecological agency in which world governments would participate with the agreement to voluntarily heed the agency's recommendations, recommendations that, of course, should not be oblivious to the question of justice.

POPULATION ISSUES

The world's population is growing at a pace which far exceeds that of available resources. Concerns about the population explosion are therefore quite legitimate. Since most of the population increase occurs in the Third World, the countries of the latter have been accused of irresponsible behavior and targeted for blame by the West. Disciplinary action has been considered, and a number of countries that provide aid, (including the United States of America), have entertained the idea of linking that aid with fertility regulation and family planning achievements. Worse than this: in an article entitled *"Would Machiavelli now be a better guide for doctors than Hippocrates?"* Dr. Jean Martin reviews some Western

opinions that question the advisability of some vaccination programs and other health measures in the Third World, since these allow too many children to live and utilize resources, eventually causing the cycle of famine and death to be repeated. In other words, there is a call to set limits on the reduction of mortality in the Third World. A shift from humanitarianism to "*pragmatism*" sounds logical to some, hence the inclusion of Machiavelli's name in the article's title.

That there is a problem, no one can deny. That there is a need to provide families who wish (without being coerced to use them) with safe and reliable contraceptive methods is a fact also, and Islam has no qualms about that. Our only reservation is that putting the blame of the population problem solely and squarely on Third World countries is not telling the whole truth, for the issue is really multifaceted. Placing blame on the Third World ignores the fact that the birth of one baby in the United States "*imposes more than a hundred times the stress on the world's resources and environment as does a birth in, say, Bangladesh,*" according to Paul and Anne Ehrlich of the Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford University, writing in National Geographic magazine. These authors note that while population problems in poor nations keep these countries poor, the same problems in rich nations are destroying the ability of the earth to support civilization.

The way to reduce population growth in the Third World has been debated (in particular at the World Population Conference in Bucharest, 1974). Historical precedent (what happened in Europe to bring down

fertility rates) and common sense indicate that development is the cause and not the outcome of reduced fertility, that is, development is the best "pill." That people's insecurity is a natural stimulus of fertility is also a known phenomenon. Yet the capitalist countries put a disproportionately high emphasis on fertility regulation in the Third World. Their concern goes far beyond mere philanthropic or altruistic considerations for the welfare of humanity. In the summer 1991 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, a report (originally prepared for the US Army Conference on Long Range Planning) by Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt, of the American Enterprise Institute warns against the implications of the proportional increase in population in 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, compared to over three hundred for much of Africa and the Middle East; therefore, the leading countries of today will be the smallest nations in the future.

The National Security Study Memorandum 200, a study of *"Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for US Security and Overseas Interests,"* is a very interactive document, revealing the complex political, economic and military facts, and the solid realities of the world in which we live. Population factors may be the seeds of revolutionary actions and an impetus in poorer countries for the expropriation or limitation of foreign economic interests. Poverty, population growth, and population youth would urge development, induce the

review of foreign investment terms and conditions and even boost military growth if conscription into the military is seen as a viable alternative to unemployment. This memorandum at times imparts the feeling that industrial countries are already waging a pre-emptive war against underdeveloped countries.

It would seem to us that a New World Order should be geared to the needs of the global village, for that is what our planet is becoming. It should not pre-suppose the inevitability of the division of the world into haves and have-nots, hence the inevitability of a fight to the death between the two groups. A new world order would require the rich to be humble, content and willing to give up for the common good many luxuries that their current lifestyles incorporate. These luxuries are not vital necessities; the reward of the wealthy would be the happiness of providing vital necessities for the major part of the human family. What else can be more conducive to happiness? God must be brought to the equation!

AFTERWORDS

My sharp self-criticism of certain aspects of our life as Muslims is never meant to impart the slightest sense of despair. It only emanates from my deep conviction that sound treatment can only be based on accurate diagnosis.

In honesty and frankness we should draw today's world map (I don't mean the geographical) and realize our place in it. It is obviously not very high. But to chart our journey to a destination we want, it is essential to identify our point of departure.

We Muslims should acquire complete awareness of the goings-on in the world now and the plans that are being drawn for its future. We should be concerned that the "knowledge" gap between First and Third Worlds is accelerating exponentially, which means that we are actually moving backwards at a tremendous pace. It looks that the masters are designing a world where our lot is to be servants, dependents and consumers.

This should change, and it can. The vital first step, however, is a new attitude. The will and intent (niyyah) to change. It costs no money, but if it happens the rest will follow.

The key word is love - Absolute love of Allah, transcending our egos, prejudices and propensity to divisiveness. Such love that fills the heart leaving no place for hatred, resentment or argumentativeness. Love that prompts us to do things we are now too lazy to do, and do without things that we deem as life necessities whereas they are not.

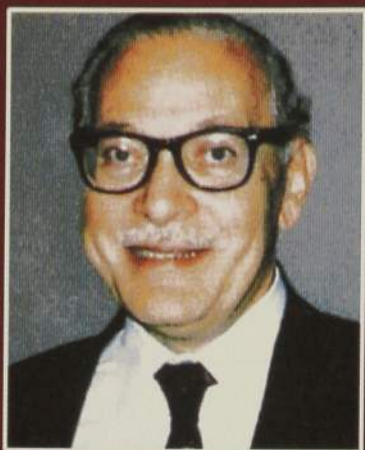
Such love transforms. And it should encompass all. "To enjoin good and forbid evil" is our mission defined by God in the Quran, and the field of action is "*all the worlds*," as He ordains.

Let no one scoff at the idea of "love" and sarcastically ask: And then what after? My answer is that "then, and only then, we will be able to do things. Even on pragmatic basis, the Muslim Umma has the space, the resources, the numbers and the brains to make it the super-power. But it is not. Why?

That is the question.

I am absolutely optimistic, but God is absolutely the Patient. So let us work on ourselves, because God will not change the status of a people unless they are able to change what is in themselves.

Let us move on. In His Light and with His Love.



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. Appalled by the distorted image of Islam in the West, he has made it his mission to explain Islam as it (really) is. He is the author of eight books and innumerable medical and non-medical paper and articles.