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Editorial

We are delighted to present to you a belated volume of *South Asian Journal of Religion and Philosophy* (SAJRP) as we wished to honor those who have contributed to this second volume of the journal without further ado. No human community has been spared contact with the Covid-19 virus. The world community continues to traverse through this catastrophic health crisis affecting all strata of society. There is a pressing need to reflect seriously on this event and on the human response from the people of regions and countries as it has been unprecedented in recent history.

Firstly, we have lost a generation of men and women who could have lived a few more years and enjoyed a longer span of life. Their anguish will continue to haunt us with the suspicion that we could have done better with all our so- called scientific progress and technological development. Secondly, during this crisis many nations were agitated, pointing their finger at one another and even threatening sanctions amidst a growing trade war between the US and China which began before Covid-19. Thirdly, there is the serious issue about the complacency and unpreparedness of some nations to respond to the early signs of the virus. Consequently, nations quite irresponsibly began blaming one another for the development of the epidemic into a pandemic while everyone forgot that, de facto it was 'a new corona virus', which was given the name Covid-19 (Corona Virus Disease, which erupted in 2019). Such a blame game resulted in diplomatic and political distancing while physical distancing (social distancing is a flawed media creation) was being recommended as a mechanism to avert contact with the virus.

The nations that suffered so much need not have been bereft of advice during this health crisis because such is usually and readily available for other matters of internal affairs and governance. Even though the security and safety of citizens are fundamentally national concerns, the nations could have shared intelligence and strategic advice by maintaining their mutual agreements and diplomatic relations. When the

virus was growing into a pandemic in one part of the globe in November and December 2019, adept use of technology and media information about the disease could have reached other countries before it was too late. Political will, creative leadership and national discipline could have come to the aid of a very complex situation. Eventually, countries that opted to follow the hard road have managed well but those which were complacent and without a clear focus have suffered high fatality rates.

Moreover, the most vociferous and frontline nations who usually come forward to defend human rights at the United Nations were also those where human rights violations were committed during the height of the crisis, according to reports. The elderly and other vulnerable groups in certain countries seemed less cared for or felt abandoned by the system they labored to build during their active days of work. Consequently, those who have been the champions of human rights since World War II were now compelled to redefine its parameters. The need has arisen to reassess what human rights really mean for all nations. Ironically, some of these stronger nations are currently being called 'failed states' by their own citizens because they institutionally failed to respond swiftly to the health crisis. The international system according to which stronger nations dictate the terms to smaller or weaker nations could be reversed. Covid-19 has posed new questions to East and West, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, men and women, relationships and health care, prevention and cure, scientific experiments and medicines, consumption and food security. The 'genocidal effect of Covid-19' will remain an issue, which we can neither identify nor fight directly until we find an effective vaccine.

The virus travelled like a wave from its center in Wuhan. After affecting its immediate neighbors (Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong but bypassing Vietnam), it moved quickly into Iran and Italy. The South Asian region felt the brunt of the virus after Western Europe was infected and suffered a high rate of fatality every day for an extended period. Each country in South Asia had its own control strategy and method of treatment, process of quarantine and lockdown. It would be interesting to undertake a socio-cultural study to determine the reactions and the degree of proactivity of each nation. There is a saying that the true

character of a nation and its people is manifested at its best in times of calamity rather than during times of prosperity and progress.

On a more personal note, this time of lockdown has given each of us an invitation to take stock of the way we live our lives. No longer able to rush here and there, we have a chance to pause and notice, to reflect and to gain new insights. Compelled to remain indoors, we have the opportunity to turn our attention to new ways of thinking and acting.

In this context of change and adjustment, our first article by Kenneth Avery describes the profound change made by Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī, who lived during the 9th century C.E. The story of his long struggle to convert to Islam was not caused by his doubts about the laws and doctrines of Islam. The struggle was with his own self (*nafs*). Al-Baṣṭāmī considered himself unworthy of being called a Muslim because he 'was unsure of his standing before God.' Even though his contemporaries recognized his saintliness, al-Baṣṭāmī was aware of his own doubt and shortcoming. This article challenges readers to examine the depth and sincerity of their own commitment to whatever religion they currently embrace. True religion demands more than the profession of doctrines and the observance of regulations.

The religions of South Asia have often considered one another as inadequate paths to salvation while each has understood itself to be the only true path. In an article that will be continued in a subsequent issue of SAJRP, Muhammad Suheyl Umar presents an alternative approach. Focusing on Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, he presents several convincing arguments for mutual acceptance and respect among these religions and encourages readers to recognize the unique quality and truth of each religious tradition. This article is a welcome contribution to a fresh interpretation of the Scriptures of all these religions and could lay the foundation for peace in the region.

Alan Race's article, with its intriguing title, 'Two Truths and One Mystery' is a discussion of the inter-relationship between science, reason and religion. He brings into this discussion Pakistani theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner (1979), Mohammed Abdus Salam (1926-1996),

who convincingly asserted that “there is only one universal science, its problems and modalities are international and there is no such thing as Islamic science just as there is no Hindu science, nor Jewish science, nor Confucian science, nor Christian Science.” However, Race is convinced that there is a ‘sense of mystery’ within and beyond science and that there may even be inklings of this mystery in the scientific endeavor itself.

Shuaibu Umar Gokaru engages in an historical study of modernist and reformist thinking of the late 19th century by focusing on the contribution of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad ‘Abduh, who impacted the celebrated Islamic schools of Aligarh (India) and Al-Azhar (Egypt). Since they found no basic conflict between reason, science and religion, both of these scholars promoted the implementation of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and totally rejected the practice of *taqlid* (blind and unquestioned acceptance of one school of thought). However, they had different perspectives on the relationship between reason and religion. In case of a conflict between reason and Islam, Ahmad Khan would allow reason to prevail whereas ‘Abduh would allow the Qur’an to prevail. Today, more than a hundred years since the death of these two pioneers, we are still searching for the right balance between a life of faith and the use of reason.

The article by Philip Duncan Peters raises the issue of human rights in the context of modern agnosticism and atheism. Although monotheistic religious traditions accept the language of human rights, they do not always agree on the wording and meaning of these rights. The author rejects the arguments of those who consider human rights a question of political expediency. Drawing on both Muslim as well as Christian sources, he exposes the weakness of arguments that try to define human rights by disregarding their origin in God. The followers of all the religious traditions need to work harder to find a common language for human rights.

Joseph Garske investigates the origins and development of three kinds of law: Anglophone, Civilian and Islamic. He argues that the imposition of certain forms of globalization could explain the reaction against globalization on the part of some sections of the human community. The

article provides the reader with insights into the historical interplay of legal values, including those of Islam, which have resulted in the present condition of the world and argues that it is no longer possible to impose a universal system of law because of the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of human society. For this reason, Enlightenment principles and ideas no longer work. 'What could be the shape of a legal structure for a new global order,' he wonders.

Both religious discourse and rationality play a part in the pursuit of happiness and the meaning of human life even though sometimes they produce counter narratives that could stimulate further debate. Both faith and reason have made significant contributions to the quality of life and have encouraged human beings to build a better world through a deeper commitment to human values. The articles in this edition of SAJRP deal directly and indirectly with the scope and the phenomenon of science, reason and faith and the multiple discourses of religious tradition. Their arguments extend from the particular to the universal as well as from general axioms to specific life situations and are rooted in the history of religious thought as well as in the intellectual pursuits that depend on reason and scientific exploration.

The callous global assault of Covid-19 warns us as human beings that we have neither conquered nature nor that we will be able to do so in the future. For we can never know how nature may respond. There is always more to learn and the lessons are complex and compounded by the sheer multi-polarity of the universe and by the diverse life-styles of those living on the planet. This present edition of SAJRP, which is a little late due to the virus, seems to suggest that both faith and reason are more than ever needed today as the global community faces the 'new normal' and the unprecedented challenges that lie ahead for every nation in the world.

Vision

Respectful and critical discussion of issues related to religion and philosophy will lead to a deeper appreciation and understanding of different religions in the world and promote peace among people.

Mission

To provide a forum for discussion of critical issues related to religion and philosophy with a special focus on South Asia.

Aims and Objectives

To encourage a profound and more regular exchange of ideas on the subject of religion and philosophy, particularly on South Asia and to publish original articles, selected through a peer review process on a bi-annual basis.

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A SUFI 'FRIEND OF GOD' AND HIS ZOROASTRIAN
CONNECTIONS:

The Paradox of Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī

Kenneth Avery

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the paradoxical relation between the famed Sufi 'friend' Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī (nicknamed Bāyazīd; d. 875 C.E. or less likely 848 C.E.) and his Zoroastrian connections. Bāyazīd is renowned as a pious ecstatic visionary who experienced dream journeys of ascent to the heavens, and made bold claims of intimacy with the Divine. The early source writings in both Arabic and Persian reveal a holy man overly concerned with the wearing and subsequent cutting of the non-Muslim *zunnār* or cincture. This became a metaphor of his constant almost obsessive need for conversion and reconversion to Islam. The *zunnār* also acts as a symbol of infidelity and his desire to constrict his lower ego *nafs*.

The experience of Bāyazīd shows the juxtaposition of Islam with other faiths on the Silk Road in 9th century Iran, and despite pressures to convert, other religions were generally tolerated in the early centuries following the Arab conquests. Bāyazīd's grandfather was said to be a Zoroastrian and the family lived in the Zoroastrian quarter of their home town Baṣṭām in northeast Iran. Bāyazīd shows great kindness to his non-Muslim neighbours who see in him the best qualities of Sufi Islam. The sources record that his saintliness influenced many to become Muslims, not unlike later Sufi missionaries among Hindus and Buddhists in the subcontinent.

INTRODUCTION

Bāyazīd's fame as a friend of God is legendary in Sufi discourse. In his own lifetime, which probably covered most of the first three-quarters of the 9th century C.E., his fame spread far and wide, for example in receiving letters and emissaries from other noted ascetics such as Dhū 'l-Nūn the Egyptian (d. 860). In later typologies Bāyazīd is regarded as the 'drunken' Sufi par excellence in contrast to the 'sober' Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910).¹ What this distinction entails is debatable. It is clear that he was scrupulously renunciant like most of his contemporary well-known proto-Sufis. He was a visionary who experienced dream-ascents analogous to the heavenly journeys ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad (based on Qur'ān sūras 17 and 53). At the same time he encountered 'drunken' ecstatic states of consciousness and often spoke of his experiences in veiled sayings or paradoxical utterances.² His most famous saying, an outburst occasioned by an ecstatic state, was 'Praise be to me!' (*subḥānī*) in which he speaks as if in the voice of the Divine. This utterance was obviously shocking to many mainstream pundits, Sufi and non-Sufi alike. It is also clear, however, that his temperament was that of a recluse: he did not wish for fame and tried to discourage would-be followers who flocked to see him. He preferred to be labelled insane or an unbeliever when questioned about his obscure or paradoxical sayings. In his intimate converse with the Divine he is seeking nothing except

¹. Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: University Press, 2007; and Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism*. Richmond (U.K.): Curzon Press, 2001.

². Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*. Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1985; especially pp. 43-45.

what God wills, but he is reluctant to be called a leader or charismatic spokesman for his fellow Muslims.³

SOURCES

The primary sources for the life and sayings of Bāyazīd and many other early Sufis are mostly from 10th, 11th and 12th century authors who wrote books in a variety of genres. These include *ḥadīth*-style compilations recording short sayings or deeds, apologetic/pedagogical/teaching manuals, dedicated hagiographical works, or a combination of these genres. Examples include the standard Arabic works such as Sarrāj's (d. 988) 'Book of Illuminations', an apologetic and teaching manual; Sulamī's (d. 1021) *ḥadīth*-style 'Generations of Sufis'; and Qushayrī's (d. 1072) famous 'Treatise', a dual genre book of both teaching and biography. There are also a number of original Persian writings such as 'Revealing the Veiled' by the Lahore based Hujwīrī (Data Ganj Bakhsh; d. circa 1075), and colourful commentaries on the early Sufis' ecstatic sayings by Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shiraz (d. 1209).⁴

For our present purposes, however, there are two main sources for Bāyazīd's encounters with Zoroastrians. The first is the 'Book of Light' compiled in Bastām by Abu'l Faḍl Muḥammad Sahlagī (or Sahlajī; d. 1084), a keen promoter of Bāyazīd's legacy. He collected and preserved in Arabic the sayings, anecdotes and visionary discourses from family heirs and followers who

³. Michael A. Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*. New York: Paulist press, 1996, chapter 7.

⁴. For details of these see Karamustafa, op. cit.; and for Rūzbihān see Carl W Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism*. Richmond U.K.: Curzon Press, 1996.

remained in Bastām. This collection is not an indulgent hagiography, however, as many of the sayings and stories are corroborated in the earlier sources such as those mentioned above. Sahlagī is particularly valuable for the light he sheds on the biographical details of Bāyazīd, his life, influence and associates in his home town.⁵

The second main source is the famed ‘Memorial of God’s Friends’ by Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār of Nishapur (d. circa 1220). This work is the most extensive, popular and influential collection of sayings and anecdotes about earlier Sufis in the Persian tradition. ‘Aṭṭār is known as a lyric and didactic poet, his lengthy rhymed couplet (*mathnawī*) books were the model for Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s (d. 1273) famous work. The ‘Memorial’ is ‘Aṭṭār’s only prose book, its language mellifluous and subtle, an exemplar of exquisite Persian prose. We are now well into colourful hagiographical territory, in the thrall of a master storyteller. Yet despite his lavish embellishment of earlier traditions, ‘Aṭṭār also preserved sayings and stories not found in earlier sources but which were transmitted both orally and in writings now lost to us.⁶

ZOROASTRIAN CONNECTIONS

After the Arab conquest of Iran in the 7th century, Zoroastrianism, the former state religion, gradually lost its hold on the Iranian people. At first there was no mass conversion to the new faith but

⁵. ‘Abd al-Raḥman Badawī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 1: *Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍat al-Miṣriyya, 1949.

⁶. Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā’* ed. Muammad Isti’lāmī. Tehran: Zawwār, 1354 a.h.s. Translation in Paul Losensky, *Farīd ad-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s Memorial of God’s Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis*. New York: Paulist Press, 2009.

there was relentless and eventually successful pressure to adopt the Semitic faith for a number of reasons. The new political and taxation systems favoured Muslims. Those who did not convert were hurt financially as well as socially, becoming second class citizens, clients of the Arab elite. The language of government became Arabic, supplanting Pahlavi and other native Iranian languages. A steady stream of converts, some willing, some forced, increased over the generations until by the 10th or 11th century an estimated 90% of Iranians were at least nominally Muslim.⁷

Yet although there were many reasons for conversion, whether from social or financial motives, or from genuine piety, there was much which held Iranians back from the new imposed religion. The centuries of tradition, language, culture, loyalty to ancestors, particularly among rural and unlettered Iranians, took generations to change. It is not surprising then that towns like Bastām, in the Semnān province near Shāhrūd, away from the main centres of power and coercion, had a substantial Zoroastrian population in Bāyazīd's lifetime.

This brings us to the nexus of the present discussion. It is clear that Bāyazīd's ancestry was Zoroastrian. His forefathers were leading citizens of the town and probably priests (sg. *mūbad*) in the ancient rites. Sahlagī mentions by name his grandfather Surūshān (or Sharūshān) who was *majūsī* (English: Magi), and who converted to Islam. The family lived originally in the Mūbadān quarter of the town. This accounts for the contact Bāyazīd had with Zoroastrian neighbours, as will be expanded on

⁷. Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994; Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, chapter 10.

below. However, Sahlagī also mentions that soon after his birth the family moved to the Arabized quarter of the town which was later named Buwīdhān in Bāyazīd's honour. This may be a retrospective enhancement of his image seeking to downplay his ancestry.⁸

A missing link is Bāyazīd's father who is barely mentioned in the sources and seems to have been absent or died when the child was young. Sahlagī, Hujwīrī and 'Aṭṭār mention that he was a prominent citizen of Baṣṭām, but little else.⁹ His mother, on the other hand, lived into old age and had a powerful influence over Bāyazīd's spiritual development and religious upbringing.¹⁰

NARRATIVE TRADITIONS

One of the most important and symbolic stories is contained in both the main sources, illustrating the development of the biographical tradition over time. Sahlagī records that Bāyazīd had Zoroastrian (*majūsī*) neighbours with a young child who cried at night because they had no lamp. Being a good neighbour, Bāyazīd held up a lamp to their window until the child stopped crying. The parents marvelled at his compassion and sought his blessing on them, that they might find peace with God (*aslamū*) on the Day of reckoning.¹¹

⁸. op. cit., Badawī, pp. 60-63.

⁹. 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. V. Zhukovski. Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336 a.h.s. p. 132; R. A. Nicholson (trans.), Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1982, p. 106. Op. cit., 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat*, p. 138; (trans.), op. cit. p. 189.

¹⁰. op. cit., 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat*, pp. 138-142; op. cit., Losensky, pp. 189-192.

¹¹. op. cit., Badawī, pp. 92-93.

‘Aṭṭār expands and embellishes the story to include the father’s absence, and when he returned from a trip he was told by his wife of Bāyazīd’s kindness. The neighbour declared ‘now the Shaykh’s light has come it would be a pity if we were to go back to our darkness’, and he immediately came to Bāyazīd and converted to Islam.¹²

This wonderful narrative has meaning and symbolism on several levels. The irony that ‘devotees of fire’ did not have any light speaks of their spiritual darkness as much as their material poverty and social exclusion. They recognise Bāyazīd as a bearer of true light who illuminates their darkness, and who shows generosity and compassion toward unbelieving neighbours. ‘Aṭṭār has them immediately converting to Islam (*muslimān shud*) because of the Shaykh’s kindness, but this is a subtle departure from Sahlagī’s original use of the verb *salima* (form IV), finding peace with God or submitting to His will.

Later in the ‘Memorial’, ‘Aṭṭār preserves a saying which might be considered an additional comment on this story. With reference to the famous ‘Light’ verse of the Qur’ān (24:35), Bāyazīd said: “The heart of the one who knows God (*‘ārif*) is like a candle in a lantern made of pure glass whose rays illuminate the entire celestial world. What does it fear of the darkness”?¹³

Another anecdote in ‘Aṭṭār’s book concerns a Zoroastrian (*gabr*) who was invited to become a Muslim. He responds to the requester that ‘If Islam is what Bāyazīd does, I don’t have the strength for it and I can’t do it. If it’s what you do, I don’t have

¹². op. cit., ‘Aṭṭār, p. 152; op. cit., Losensky, p. 205.

¹³. op. cit., ‘Aṭṭār, p. 170; op. cit., Losensky, p. 228.

any need of it'.¹⁴ This reply shows both praise for Bāyazīd, his evident renown and fame as a holy man, while also disparaging the lacklustre faith of ordinary Muslims of the time. The man is unimpressed with the piety of everyday Muslims but he sees in the Shaykh an unobtainable commitment impossible to emulate. The contrast is astutely drawn and shows great honesty and sincerity.

This short story from the 'Memorial' is amplified and embellished in Rūmī's typical style in the *Mathnawī*. Replying to someone inviting him to convert, the Zoroastrian says that the faith of Bāyazīd is too noble for him to attain:

I cannot endure its glowing heat which is too bright for
the struggles of my soul.

Though I am not convinced about the Muslim faith
(*īmān u dīn*) yet I am a firm adherent to *his* faith (*īmān-i*
ū).¹⁵

There is great symbolism in Rūmī's poetry: the 'fire devotee' cannot endure the 'glowing heat' of the Sufi holy man's charismatic presence. But Rūmī goes on to elaborate that the Zoroastrian man's faith is indeed deeper and more profound than outward appearance would indicate. He in fact follows Bāyazīd's truer inner faith, though outwardly he may be an unbeliever.

¹⁴ op. cit., 'Attār, p. 152; op. cit., Losensky, p. 205.

¹⁵ *The Mathnawī of Jalālū'ddīn Rūmī*, R. A. Nicholson (ed.), London: Gibb Memorial Trust, 1925-1940, Book 5, verses 3359-3360.

THE NON-MUSLIMS' CINCTURE

Since the beginnings of the Zoroastrian religion all believers, men and women alike, wore a girdle or cincture, passed three times around the waist and knotted at the back and front. This wearing of the girdle (Persian *kustī*) was obligatory, being untied and retied repeatedly during prayer.¹⁶ After the Muslim conquests the Arabic term *zunnār* designated the girdle or cord worn not only by Zoroastrians but also Christians, Jews and others to indicate their non-Muslim status. The cincture eventually came to identify the inferior position of adherents to other faiths, not only as a religious symbol but as a social and economic marker as well. These people were known as *ahl al-dhimma*, free non-Muslim subjects who in return for paying the head tax (*jizya*) were granted protection and safety. In the sources relating to Bāyazīd he mostly has connection with those of the ancient Iranian faith, although there are a few anecdotes relating to Christians.

What is of interest here, however, is the way this age-old ritual became a religious and symbolic gesture which deeply affected the spiritual life of Bāyazīd, a supposed Sufi holy man and revered Shaykh. In the source texts we find many short anecdotes featuring the *zunnār* where typically he fastens the cincture around his waist in an act of contrition or penance. He then wishes not to untie and retie but more urgently to cut or sever the cord, a ritual act in which he almost never succeeds. The act becomes a metaphor of unbelief and reconversion and is coupled with his recalcitrant *nafs* (ego self / carnal self) as the locus of resistance to divine hegemony and total subservience to God.

¹⁶. op. cit., Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 31.

Sahlagī preserves a tradition which encapsulates Bāyazīd's attitude about this ritual act of wearing and cutting the cincture. He is reported to have said: "When you stand before God, make yourself to be like a Zoroastrian (*majūsī*), wishing that you might cut the girdle (*zunnār*) in His presence".¹⁷ The Arabic of this saying is allusive: 'yourself' is not just the pronoun referring to the hearer (or reader) but it also refers to the *nafs*, that part of the human constitution which 'incites to evil' (Qur'ān 12:53; 75:2).

The ritual linkage between the cincture and prayer is picked up by 'Aṭṭār in the 'Memorial' in the following typical anecdote. Bāyazīd said: "I have been praying for years, and with every prayer I have believed with all my soul (*nafs*) that I am a Zoroastrian (*gabr*) and want to cut the infidel sash."¹⁸

It is instructive to compare the older traditions in Sahlagī with the embellishments made by 'Aṭṭār writing more than a century later. Sahlagī has Bāyazīd say:

For twelve years I was the blacksmith (*ḥadād*) of my self (*nafs*), and for five years the mirror of my self. Then for a year I looked at what was common between these two. When a cincture became visible around my waist (*wasat*) I tried for twelve years to cut it (*qaṭa'a*). Then I looked and saw a cincture in my belly (*fī baṭnī*), so I tried for five years to cut it and it was revealed to me how I could do this. Then I looked at the people (*khalq*) and I saw them as dead, so I said 'God is great' four times over them.¹⁹

¹⁷. op. cit., Badawī, p. 90.

¹⁸. op. cit., 'Aṭṭār, p. 174; op. cit., Losensky, p. 233.

¹⁹. op. cit., Badawī, p. 97.

This rather enigmatic saying has Bāyazīd deal with his personal struggles for a total of thirty five years. The ‘cincture in my belly’ may refer to the very physical nature of his asceticism, and one of the loci of the *nafs*. The same tradition is amplified and adorned by ‘Aṭṭār, making the text some three to four times longer and with much more detail. The following is just the first part: It is related that Bāyazīd said: “For twelve years, I was the blacksmith of myself. I put it in the furnace of asceticism and heated it with the fire of austerity. I placed it on the anvil of scorn and pounded it with the hammer of reproach, until I made a mirror of myself....”²⁰ It is significant that ‘Aṭṭār picks up the ‘blacksmith’ reference and embellishes this, with images of fire, furnace, anvil, and corresponding moral struggles. It is almost as though he was amplifying the Zoroastrian implications as he fleshes out the bare bones of Sahlagī’s text.

Another shorter tradition found in ‘Aṭṭār’s ‘Memorial’ is the following: It is related that Bāyazīd said: “I untied seventy sashes from my waist but one remained. No matter how hard I tried I could not untie it. I cried out in anguish: ‘O God! Give me the strength to undo this one as well.’ A voice replied: ‘You have removed all these but this last one is not yours to undo.’ ”²¹ The question here is the significance of the number seventy. It may allude to the seventy two Muslim sects, or even be a combination of the numbers thirty and forty, both important signifiers in religious number symbolism, as well as in the specific traditions referring to Bāyazīd. It may even be an allusion to the sacred tradition about the seventy thousand veils of light and darkness which separate humans from God. However, the more likely, if

²⁰. op. cit., ‘Aṭṭār, p. 142; op. cit., Losensky, p. 193.

²¹. op. cit., ‘Aṭṭār, p. 162; op. cit., Losensky, p. 217.

more mundane, reference here is to Bāyazīd's age. It is reported that he died at about the age of seventy three, and if this is so, then this is an anecdote from his older years, alluding to his lifelong struggle to remove the signs of unbelief from his conscience.

Near the end of the chapter on Bāyazīd in the 'Memorial' there is a section dealing with the last days of the Shaykh and his approaching death. Unsurprisingly with 'Aṭṭār, there are several twists in the narrative:

Bāyazīd found nearness (*qurb*) to the presence of Majesty (*ḥaḍrat-i 'izzat*) seventy times. Every time he returned he would tie on the cincture and then cut it (*bi-burīdī*) again. When his life was coming to an end he entered the prayer niche, bound on the cincture and put his fur coat on inside out and his hat on upside down.²²

Regarding himself as a Zoroastrian needing repentance and praying with his garb askew, he launches into a long prayer of contrition in which he downplays his ascetic feats and pious obligations as being worthless before God:

All this is nothing; think of it this way: it is nought. I am a seventy year old Turkoman (*turkmānī*) and my hair has become white in unbelief (*gabrī*). I am just now arriving from the desert, calling to my idol 'Tangari! Tangari!' Now I am learning to say 'God! God!' Now I am severing my cincture, now placing my foot within the orbit of

²². op. cit., 'Aṭṭār, p. 180; op. cit., Losensky, p. 241.

Islam, now my tongue utters the formal profession of faith.....²³

This is a most remarkable cry from the heart of an acknowledged holy man at the end of his life. In 'Aṭṭār's eyes his scrupulous acts of devotion and claims of intimacy with God count for nothing. Instead, he is portrayed as a rough unbelieving desert dweller newly approaching the realm of true faith, abandoning his idol, learning to speak for the first time.

'Aṭṭār further expands on this theme in his didactic poetic work known as the 'Divine Book' or 'Book of God'. This dual-rhymed (*mathnawī*) work is constructed with a 'frame' story about a king who counsels his six sons to seek spiritual rather than earthly treasures. Each short speech by the king or his sons is followed by illustrative stories and anecdotes, often taken from the lives of the Sufi masters. The last mention of Bāyazīd in the 'Divine Book' comes in the epilogue, one of the concluding stories in the book. On his deathbed he asks his followers and attendants for a cincture to be bound around his waist. Perplexed by this bizarre request, his followers try to dissuade him, but he is adamant and they finally relent and fetch a *zunnār*. When it is bound on, Bāyazīd begins to weep, smears his face with dust and laments with a sore heart. Weeping tears of blood, he cuts the cincture from his waist and prays to God:

Since I have cut the bond this moment, then consider me to have been a Zoroastrian (*gabr*) for seventy years;
Would not a Zoroastrian who repented at such a moment come to a knowledge of mysteries (*rāz*) by a single act of Your grace?

²³. *ibid.*

I am that Zoroastrian who has repented this moment: though I have been tardy, yet have I turned back. So saying, he renewed his confession of faith and gave voice to endless lamentations.²⁴

This poignant story shows the restlessness and uncertainty of Bāyazīd's faith. In 'Aṭṭār's eyes he considers himself an unbeliever right up to the end of his life despite his scrupulous piety. He identifies as a Zoroastrian who converts to Islam on his deathbed and still hungers for that 'knowledge of mysteries by a single act of your grace'. He is so uncertain of his position before God that he imagines he is still an unbeliever who renews his confession of faith, turning as if for the first time to Islam.

CONCLUSION

There are significant differences between the narratives in Sahlagī and 'Aṭṭār; the former is more matter of fact while the later Persian author adds much more colour and detail, ascribing doubts, anxiety and heart searching to Bāyazīd. Yet the basics of his connection to Zoroastrians is still clear in the 11th century account of Sahlagī: for example his unbelieving neighbours address him with a religiously blended name 'Īsā ibn Surūshān.²⁵

That he deemed himself an unbeliever, unsure of his standing before God, and unworthy of being called a Muslim is clear from his preoccupation with the *zunnār* as a symbol of his infidelity. This is coupled with the metaphor of taking years of austerities and devotion to remove it from his waist. But the question arises

²⁴ Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Ilāhī-nāma*, H. Ritter (ed.), Istanbul: Maṭba'a Ma'ārif, 1940, p. 379. J. A. Boyle (trans.), *The Ilāhī-nāma or Book of God of Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976, p. 346.

²⁵ op. cit., Badawī, p. 92.

as to whether he was ashamed of his family's former association with the ancient Iranian faith, and thus sought to overcompensate for this connection. There is also some evidence that there were a number of Zoroastrians in Bāstām for whom he felt empathy, and that they in turn regarded him as a model Muslim, a great Sufi Shaykh, a holy man to emulate and who motivated their conversion to Islam.

We also see in Bāyazīd the same spirit of compassion and inclusivity which prompted, for example, the Chishti brotherhood from the 13th and 14th centuries on, as they expanded their Order in the subcontinent and enabled non-Muslims to participate in their religious life of rituals, prayers, music, poetry and veneration of saints. Here Sufism later became *the* Islam, not only of rulers and the educated but of ordinary often unlettered people, rural and urban alike.²⁶

Bāyazīd's paradoxical connection with Zoroastrians was a vital part of his character in both the earlier and later sources for his life. It was part of his scrupulous questioning of his conscience (*zuhd*), his relationship with God, and also shows his great humility as a Sufi friend. His legacy still inspires seekers on the path, of those searching for truer meaning, intimacy with the divine, and a more inclusive relationship with fellow humans.

²⁶ Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, chapters 2 and 3.

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MUSLIM PERSPECTIVES ON HINDUISM

Muhammad Suheyl Umar

ABSTRACT

The present day world is a strange mixture of the vestiges and outposts of secular late/high modernity, postmodern mind-set and 'beyond the postmodern' frontier thinking with its divergent trends of engaging with the Sacred, its ideas about the human condition and dealing with the question of Reality. Cultures and their worldviews are ruled by their mandarins, the intellectuals, and they, as well as their institutions that shape the minds that ruled the modern world- and continue to hold sway in the postmodern (and beyond the postmodern) milieu- are unreservedly secular. One, therefore, often encounters the argument, and at times it turns into an objection, that a misleading picture is being presented by bringing in religion and spirituality as a stake holder in the present day discourse. Both within and without the Islamic faith, many would make such an observation and the secular mind-set is, obviously, averse to it. But if the ground realities are taken into consideration, these alert us to another situation.

We live for the first time in history in an age of multiculturalism and it is utterly important and central that we think in plural terms about faith. The most towering problem facing people in the 19th century was nationalism and in the 20th century it had been ideology as, for most of the century, the nations were located on the opposite sides of the ideological divide and the cold war conflict. But now when the war is gone and the ideological

conflict is over, the greatest problem that faces the 21st century is the ethnic conflict and because those conflicts are powered, in part, by multiple faiths clashing with one another it is important that we turn over attention to that danger and do our best to annihilate whatever problems in our human collectivities that we face now or that may come down the road.

I would offer a few observations in relation to the ground realities of the situation. Since everyone comes to the discussion with one's own specific tool kit and training I would exclude all practical considerations and try to say something philosophically or theologically as, like the medieval Muslims, Christians and traditional Hindus, I too consider philosophy to be the long arm of theology and see religious arguments at work behind attitudes and actions and societal behaviours that apparently seem to have nothing in common with religion. Moreover I do not agree with the way mostly common responses are made to the misplaced religious arguments and bad logic used by the present day extremist Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians.

I would, therefore, like to quote Schuon's timely remark at the start that 'if human societies degenerate on the one hand with the passage of time they accumulate on the other hand experience in virtue of old age, however intermingled with error their experience may be.' It is true that the world was already in extreme old age two thousand years ago, but that old age lay hidden under the youth of Christianity and then, subsequently, also under the youth of Islam. Nonetheless, its unseen presence below the surface has now precipitated those two latest religions towards itself, that is, in the direction of old age and "as such we have a choice between two attributes offered us by old age, namely senility and wisdom.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of our contemporaries have chosen the former of these – whence the present state of the world – it is nonetheless possible and even inevitable that some will choose wisdom, a wisdom that is calm and objective, free from the passionate prejudices which have previously been too dominant in human souls with regard to religions other than their own.¹ If we look at the two major houses of faith that share the mutual public space in Pakistan, that is, Islam and Christianity – and to some extent, Hinduism – and try to find the fault line that hampers the path of Peaceful Coexistence with reference to the three communities, it could be described in theological terms as follows. In the case of Islam it is *Misplaced Absolutes*² and *Supersessionism* and in the case of Christianity it is a monopolizing claim on the Divine Mercy through the notion of the One and Only, Unique Saviour. Both lead to religious exclusivism. Islamic *Supersessionism*, taking its point of departure in an apparently ‘benign Inclusivism’ ends up in exclusivism by interpreting the inclusivist verses of the Qur’ān in an exclusivist manner. The monopolizing claim of Christianity arrives at the same end as it classes Hinduism/Buddhism as ‘paganism’, Judaism as a superseded religion and Islam as a pseudo religion.

This point underscores the importance of another basic insight that informs the perspective we are considering here. We are conscious of the fact that a religion’s claim to unique efficacy must be allowed the status of half-truth because there is, in fact, in the vast majority of cases, no alternative choice. But in the ‘Post-Prophetic Age,’ conditions have changed. For those who

¹. Martin Lings, *A Return to the Spirit*, Fons Vitae, 2005, p. 28.

². See ‘In the Wake of 11th September,’ in M. S. Umar (ed.), *The Religious Other - Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2009, p. 10.

come face to face with the founder of a new religion, the lack of alternative choice becomes as it were absolute in virtue of the correspondingly absolute greatness of the Divine Messenger himself. It is moreover at its outset, that is, during its brief moment of 'absoluteness', that the claims of a religion are for the most part formulated. But with the passage of time there is inevitably a certain levelling out between the new and the less new, the more so in that the less new may have special claims on certain people. This is not the place to address the implications- conceptual, theological as well as practical and legal- of this 'levelling out' but we felt that the point needed registration here for its importance.

For thousands of years already, humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches, which constitute so many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different (and therefore original) demands differentiated refractions of the one Truth. The exclusivist claim thus seems contrary to the nature of things. The following observation, again from Frithjof Schuon, sums up the point well.

The ethnic diversity of humanity and the geographical extent of the earth suffice to make highly unlikely the axiom of one unique religion for all men, and on the contrary highly likely- to say the least- the need for a plurality of religions; in other words, the idea of a single religion does not escape contradiction if one takes account of its claims to absoluteness and universality on the one

hand, and the psychological and physical impossibility of their realisation on the other.³

If God had sent only one religion to a world of widely differing affinities and aptitudes, it would not have been a fair test for all. He has therefore sent different religions, especially suited to the needs and characteristics of the different sectors of humanity. In this regard the same author has observed that:

God could have allowed a religion that was merely the invention of a man to conquer a part of humanity and to maintain itself for more than a thousand years in a quarter of the inhabited world, thus betraying the love, faith, and hope of a multitude of sincere and fervent souls— this is contrary to the Laws of the Divine Mercy, or in other words, to those of Universal Possibility If Christ had been the only manifestation of the Word, supposing such a uniqueness of manifestation to be possible, the effect of His birth would have been the instantaneous reduction of the universe to ashes.⁴

³. 'Not to mention the antinomy between such claims and the necessarily relative character of all religious mythology; only pure metaphysic and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal. As for 'mythology', it is – apart from its intrinsic content of truth and efficacy – indispensable for enabling metaphysical and essential truth to 'gain a footing' in such and such a human collectivity.' Frithjof Schuon, 'Diversity of Revelation', in M. S. Umar (ed.), *The Religious Other– Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2009, pp. 1-6.

⁴. *ibid*, p. 20. If Revelations more or less exclude one another, this is so of necessity because God, when He speaks, expresses Himself in absolute mode; but this absoluteness relates to the universal content rather than to the form; it applies to the latter only in a relative and symbolical sense, because the form is a symbol of the content and so too of humanity as a whole, to which this content is, precisely, addressed.

Faced with the fact that there are diverse religions, which apparently exclude each other, most people tend to think that one religion is right and that all the others are false; others conclude that all are false. 'It is as if,' Schuon remarked, 'faced with the discovery of other solar systems, some maintained that there is only one sun, ours, while others, seeing that our sun is not unique, denied that it is a sun, and concluded that there is no sun.'⁵

The analogy of the sun and the stars is encountered in the works of the greatest authorities of the Islamic tradition also, for example, Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī. Keeping in view the fact that the Qur'ān never criticizes the prophetic messages as such, though it often condemns misunderstandings or distortions by those who follow the prophets, one notes that Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī sometimes criticizes specific distortions or misunderstandings in the Qur'ānic vein but he does not draw the conclusion many Muslims have drawn– that the coming of Islam abrogated (*naskh*) previous revealed religions. Rather, he says, Islam is like the sun and other religions like the stars. Just as the stars remain when the sun rises, so also the other religions remain valid when Islam appears. One can add a point that perhaps Ibn 'Arabī would also accept: What appears as a sun from one point of view may be seen as a star from another point of view. Concerning abrogation, the Shaykh writes:

All the revealed religions [*sharā'i*] are lights. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun. Their being

⁵. Frithjof Schuon, 'De l'Alliance', *Etudes Traditionnelles*, Paris, June, 1940.

hidden is like the abrogation of the other revealed religions that takes place through Muhammad's revealed religion. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. This explains why we have been required in our all-inclusive religion to have faith in the truth of all the messengers and all the revealed religions. They are not rendered null [*bāṭil*] by abrogation– that is the opinion of the ignorant.⁶

To maintain the particular excellence of the Qur'ān and the superiority of Muhammad over all other prophets is not to deny the universal validity of revelation nor the necessity of revelation appearing in particularized expressions. The plurality of revelations, like the diversity of human communities, then, is divinely-willed, and not the result of some human contingency. Universal revelation and human diversity alike are expressions of divine wisdom. They are also signs intimating the infinitude of the Divine Nature itself: *“And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of your languages and colours. Indeed, herein are signs for those who know.”* (30:22)⁷ Just as God is both absolutely one yet immeasurably infinite, so the human race is one in its essence, yet infinitely variegated in its forms. Notwithstanding the many verses critical of earlier religious traditions, the fundamental message of the Qur'ān as regards all

⁶ Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Vol. III, p. 153, line 12, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, (n. d).

⁷ Let us note that this is not always a question of race, but more often of human groups, very diverse perhaps, but none the less subject to mental conditions which, taken as a whole, make of them sufficiently homogeneous spiritual recipients; though this fact does not prevent some individuals from being able to leave their framework for the human collectivity never has anything absolute about it.

previous revelations is one of inclusion not exclusion, protection and not destruction.

This is a problem of a particularly specific nature in the West, especially in America where there is a large presence of Christians⁸ who hold that there is only one true faith and only they have it but, *mutatis mutandis*, the same thing is true of other faith traditions, especially of those parts of their exoteric aspect that has been moulded and influence by modernity. That makes it difficult as we work for harmony among the world's faiths. I would like to spell out my point by focusing on the Islamic perspective later.

In the Islamic perspective, the 'divinely ordained diversity' lies in the following verse, which many consider to be among the last Revelations received by the Prophet and which in any case

⁸. The usual proof text/argument on the Christian side is that 'no one comes to the Father except through me' or some variation of these words. Jesus of Nazareth is gone so there is no way that people will come to God through that reference. Perhaps the verse refers to the Word (*logos*) as mentioned in the first four verses of the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, the Word was God. Through him all things were made and without him nothing was made that was made.' If nothing in this whole world and history was made without the Word which was God, in God, this means that Buddha was created by God and Muhammad was created by God. If God made these prophets, these enlightened souls, it is up to me to honour the followers of those originators of the religions made by God. But it is inconceivable, as Frithjof Schuon has said, that in speaking of the future, Christ should have passed over in silence 'the one unique and incomparable apparition' which was to take place between his two comings. There can be no doubt, if the following passage from the Gospel of John be considered objectively, that it refers to the Prophet who was, in fact, shortly to be born. The words of Christ are as follows:

'I have more to tell you, but ye cannot bear it now. But when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will tell you all things. He shall not speak of himself but what he shall hear that shall he speak and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me.' (The Gospel of John 16:12-14)

belongs to the period which marks the close of his mission. As such it coincides with a cyclic moment of extreme significance – the last ‘opportunity’⁹ for a direct message to be sent from Heaven to earth during what remains of this cycle of time. Many of the last Qur’ānic revelations are concerned with completing and perfecting the new religion. But this verse is a final and lasting message for mankind as a whole. The Qur’ān expressly addresses the adherents of all the different orthodoxies on earth; and no message could be more relevant to the age in which we live and, in particular, to the mental predicament of man in these later days.

For each of you We have appointed a law and a way. And if God¹⁰ had willed He would have made you one people. But (He hath willed it otherwise) that He may put you to the test in what He has given you.¹¹ So vie with one another in good works. Unto God will ye be brought back, and He will inform you about that wherein ye differed. (5:48)

⁹. God doth what He will. But it is clearly in the interests of man that a Divine intervention which founds a new religion should be overwhelmingly recognizable as such. The accompanying guarantees must be too tremendous, and too distinctive, to leave room for doubts in any but the most perverse, which means that certain kinds of things must be kept in reserve as the special prerogative of such a period. The Qur’an refers to this ‘economy’ when it affirms that questions which are put to God during the period of Revelation will be answered (5:101), the implication being that after the Revelation has been completed such questions will no longer be answered so directly. It is as if a door between Heaven and earth were kept open during the mission of a Divine Messenger, to be closed at all other times.

¹⁰. The change from first to third person with regard to the Divinity is frequent in the Qur’an.

¹¹. If He had sent only one religion to a world of widely differing affinities and aptitudes, it would not have been a fair test for all. He has therefore sent different religions, especially suited to the needs and characteristics of the different sectors of humanity.

But while considering the limitations of Muslim exoterism, it must be remembered that from its stronghold of finality as the last religion of this cycle of time, Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, can afford to be generous to other religions. Moreover its position in the cycle confers on it something of the function of a summer-up, which obliges it to mention with justice what has preceded it, or at the least to leave an open door for what it does not specifically mention. There is a place for other religions within the Islamic civilization, and Muslims are obliged to protect the temples, synagogues and churches and other religious sanctuaries. It has to be admitted, however, that the authorities of Islam have been no less ready than their counterparts in other religions to fall prey to religious exclusivism. Muslims have been encouraged to believe, and the majority have been only too eager to believe, that Islam has superseded all other religions and that it is therefore the sole truly valid religion on earth. But however absolute the claims of Muslim theologians and jurists may be, they are shown in fact to be relative by the tolerance which Islam makes obligatory towards the religious other.

The intrinsic nature of the Muslim polity is derived from the Prophet's embodiment of the Qur'ānic revelation. His acts of statesmanship should not be seen in isolation as a series of historical events but as a series of symbolic acts which, more powerfully than words, uphold the inviolability of the religious rights of the Other and the necessity of exercising a generous tolerance in regard to the Other. The seminal and most graphic expression of this sacred vision inspiring the kind of tolerance witnessed throughout Muslim history is given to us in the following well-attested episode in the life of the Prophet. In the ninth year after the Hijra (631), a prominent Christian delegation from Najrān, an important centre of Christianity in the Yemen,

came to engage the Prophet in theological debate in Medina. The main point of contention was the nature of Christ: was he one of the messengers of God or the unique Son of God?

What is important for our purposes is not the disagreements voiced, nor the means by which the debate was resolved, but the fact that when these Christians requested to leave the city to perform their liturgy, the Prophet invited them to accomplish their rites in his own mosque. The Christians in question performed the Byzantine Christian rites.¹² This means that they were enacting some form of the rites which incorporated the fully-developed Trinitarian theology of the Orthodox councils, emphasizing the definitive creed of the divine 'sonship' of Christ-doctrines explicitly criticized in the Qur'ān. Nonetheless, the Prophet allowed the Christians to accomplish their rites in his own mosque. Disagreement on the plane of dogma is one thing, tolerance- indeed encouragement- of the enactment of that dogma is another.

One should also mention in this context the tolerance that is inscribed in the first Muslim Constitution, that of Medina. In this historic document a pluralistic polity was configured. The right to freedom of worship was assumed, given the unprejudiced recognition of all three religious groups who were party to the agreement: Muslims, Jews and polytheists- the latter indeed comprising the majority at the time the Constitution was drawn up. Each group enjoyed unfettered religious and legal autonomy, and the Jews, it should be noted, were not required at this stage to pay any kind of poll-tax. The Muslims were indeed recognized

¹² Ibn Ishaq gives the standard account of this remarkable event. A. Guillaume (trans.), *The Life of Muhammad – A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sirat Rasul Allah* Oxford, 1968, pp. 270-277.

as forming a distinct group within the polity, but this did not compromise the principle of mutual defence which was at the root of the agreement: Each had to help the other against anyone who attacked the people mentioned in this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation and loyalty is a protection against treachery.¹³

I would, therefore, like to open up the subject of 'Muslim Perspectives on Hinduism' by bringing out what Islam has thought of itself and of the 'Religious Other' by presenting the details of the various legitimizing, often celebrating, perspectives within the Islamic tradition. By 'Islam,' we mean the source-texts i.e. the Qur'ān and the *Hadith* materials and the great texts that have been universally acknowledged as the highpoints of the tradition. Like any great religion, Islam has its towering landmarks, and it is from these that we have sought to understand it. Such texts are rooted in the Qur'ān. In a profound sense, Islam is the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān is Islam. The basic interpretation of the Qur'ān is provided by Muhammad himself. Following in his wake, numerous great figures— sages, saints, philosophers, theologians, jurists— have elucidated and interpreted the nature of the original vision in keeping with the needs of their times.

Three things need to be said clearly at the outset. Firstly, there are a number of Islamic or Muslim perspectives which not only legitimize Hinduism but go further and celebrate it as a manifestation and expression of a Divine Will for the diversity of religions. These perspectives have their different starting points and they bring different, though not mutually exclusive, sets of

¹³. F. E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Princeton, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 217.

values that bear upon the larger question of the Religious Other and the process of legitimizing Hinduism from a Muslim point of view, but they all converge on the 'common denominator' or the legal minimum of acknowledging Hinduism as an authentic, revealed religion.

Secondly, what follows in this presentation is informed by a very basic insight that has been eloquently articulated by Peter Berger in his typically 'clinical' and non-religious manner. Expanding on his famous dictum '*Homo Sapiens* has always been *homo religiousus*,' Berger went on to claim that

If anything characterizes modernity it is the loss of the sense of transcendence – of a reality that exceeds and encompasses our everyday affairs . . . A human existence bereft of transcendence is an impoverished and finally untenable condition.¹⁴

One can safely add that this assertion is not a theological statement but an anthropological one– an agnostic or even an atheist philosopher may agree with it!

Thirdly, and more importantly, another basic insight informs our discourse. In terms of etymology, religion is 'that which binds', specifically, that which binds man to God. Religion engages man in two ways: firstly, by explaining the nature and meaning of the universe, or 'justifying the ways of God to man' (this is *theodicy*); and secondly, by elucidating man's role and purpose in the universe, or teaching him how to liberate himself from its

¹⁴. Peter L. Berger, 'Secularism in Retreat,' *The National Interest*, 1996/1997; 46, pp. 3-12.

limitations, constrictions and terrors (this is *soteriology*). In the first place, religion is a doctrine of unity, of the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute, the Principle which elucidates, to put it in a religious terminology, that God, who is both Creator and Final End of the universe and of man in it, is One. In the second place, religion is a method of union: a sacramental path, a way of return, a means of salvation. Whatever they may be called, these two components are always present: theodicy and soteriology; doctrine and method; theory and practice; dogma and sacrament; unity and union. Doctrine, or theory, concerns the mind; method, or practice, concerns the will. Religion, to be itself, must always engage both mind and will.

The aforementioned second, or practical, component of religion may be broken to two: namely, worship and morality. Worship, the sacramental element, generally takes the form of participation in the revealed rites (public or private) of a given religion, the purpose being the assimilation of man's will to that of God. Morality, the social element, is 'doing the things which ought to be done, and not doing the things which ought not to be done'; the Decalogue of the Judo-Christian Tradition or its exact equivalent in the Qur'ān and the Hindu Tradition. Some of the contents of morality are universal: 'thou shalt not bear false witness', 'thou shalt not kill', 'thou shalt not steal', etc.; and some of the contents are specific to the religion in question: 'thou shalt not make a graven image', 'whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder', etc. We have thus reached the three elements which Rene Guenon considered to be the defining features of every religion: *dogma*, *worship*, and *morality*. When raised to a higher or more intense degree, namely that of spirituality or mysticism, they become, in the words of Frithjof Schuon: truth, spiritual way, and virtue. We mention this here

because, as we mentioned earlier, the issue would be approached from multiple Muslim perspectives. Last but not the least, the most important single point about religion is that it is not man-made. Religion is not invented by man, but revealed by God. Divine revelation¹⁵ is a *sine qua non*; without it, there is no religion, only man-made ideology, in which no sacramental or salvational element is present. In summary: religion's essential contents comprise dogma, worship, and morality; and religion's indispensable 'container' or framework comprises revelation, tradition, and orthodoxy.

THE QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE - GENERAL

Throughout Islamic history, Hindus, together with Buddhists and Zoroastrians, not to mention other religious groups, were regarded by Muslims not as pagans, idolaters, or atheists, but as followers of an authentic religion, and thus to be granted official *dhimmī* status, that is, they were to be granted official protection by the state authorities and any violation of their religious, social or legal rights was subject to the 'censure' (*dhimma*) of the Muslim authorities, who were charged with the protection of these rights.

¹⁵. Revelation has shaped human history more than any other force besides technology. Whether revelation issues from God or from the deepest unconscious of spiritual geniuses can be debated but its signature is invariably power. The periodic incursions- explosions, we might call them- of this power in history are what created the world's greatest religions and by extension, the civilizations they have bodied forth. Its dynamite is its news of another world. Revelation invariably tells us of a separate (though not removed) order of existence that simultaneously relativizes and exalts the one we normally know. It relativizes the everyday world by showing it to be less than the 'all' that we unthinkingly take it to be and that demotion turns out to be exhilarating. By placing the quotidian world in a vastly more meaningful context, revelation dignifies it in the way a worthy setting enhances the beauty of a precious stone. People respond to this news of life's larger meaning because they hear in it the final warrant for their existence.

This legitimizing perspective is squarely rooted in the Qur'ān, where the fundamental message with regards to the Religious Other, the previous revelations, is one of inclusion not exclusion, protection and not destruction, based as it is on the twin principles of *diversity* and *universality* of revelation and prophecy. Before we present the proof texts for these twin principles from the Qur'ān, it is interesting to note how the Qur'ānic usage of the very word *islām* itself provides us the first instance of these twin principles of *diversity* and *universality* at work.

FOUR MEANINGS OF THE WORD ISLAM

The Arabic word *islām* means 'to turn oneself over to, to resign oneself, to submit.' In religious terminology, it means submission or surrender to God, or to God's will. The Qur'ān uses the term and its derivatives in about seventy verses. In only a few of these verses can we claim that the word refers exclusively to 'Islam,' meaning thereby the religion established by the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muhammad. Moving from the broadest to the narrowest, the Qur'ānic narrative uses the word *islām* in four basic meanings:¹⁶ (1) the submission of the whole of creation to its Creator; (2) the submission of human beings to the guidance of God as revealed through the Divine messengers; (3) the submission of human beings to the guidance of God as revealed through the prophet Muhammad; and (4) the submission of the followers of Muhammad to God's practical instructions. Only the third of these can properly be translated as *Islam* with an uppercase I. The other three have to be referred to as submission'

¹⁶ For details see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, 'The Word *Islam*,' in *The Vision of Islam*, Paragon House, New York, 1994, pp. 54.

or *islām*.¹⁷ And the second, ‘*the submission of human beings to the guidance of God as revealed through the Divine messengers*’ is the grand portal that leads to the Qur’ānic universe of diversity and universality of Revelation.

The term Islam itself can be taken in a universal sense to include all true religion. The Qur’ān makes it clear that the religions of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus may be called ‘Islam’ in its literal meaning of ‘submission to God’. In this sense Islam may be said to have been made to *prevail over all religion*.¹⁸ It could be detailed further through a number of proof texts from the Qur’ān, and we shall come to it shortly. A pertinent quote from the *Ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet) captures the idea. ‘God sent 124000 messengers for human guidance. Out of these divine messengers 313 were given a scripture.’¹⁹ Keeping in view the fact that the Qur’ān mentions only about 26 prophets and messengers by

¹⁷. It should not be imagined that these four meanings are clearly distinct in the minds of Muslims, especially those who live in the ambiance of their religion. It is common for Muslims to think of Islām as their own practices and to think of their practices as the same as the practices of all religions (since all religions are *islām*). If other practices are different, it must be because they have become corrupted. In the same way, it is common for traditional Muslims to think that their own religious activities are the most normal and natural activities in the universe, since they are simply doing what everything in creation does constantly, given that ‘*to Him has submitted whoso is in the heavens and the earth.*’ In other words, the various meanings of the term become conflated and it is not always easy to separate them.

¹⁸. The verse we are considering is parallel to the words of Christ, ‘This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world. Then shall the end come,’ which likewise admit of both a limited and a universal interpretation, according to what is understood by *world*. In its wider sense (as well as in the narrower one), the first part of this prophecy has now come true inasmuch as every people on earth is now within easy reach of the gospel of the Kingdom, that is, the religion of Truth, in at least one of its modes.

¹⁹. *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*; Muhammad Ḥamīdullah, *Khutbāt-i Bahawalpur*, Islamic Research Inst., Islamabad; English Translation: *Emergence of Islam*, Islamic Research Inst., Islamabad, 1993.

name or by allusion, the following Qur'ānic verses make it quite clear that the Qur'ānic perspective accommodates non-Abrahamic religions.

*Verily We have sent messengers before thee [Muhammad].
About some of them have We told thee, and about some have We
not told thee. (40:78)*

For every community there is a Messenger. (10:47)

*Naught is said unto you [Muhammad] but what was said unto
the Messengers before you. (41:43)*

*They believe, all of them, in God and His Angels and His Books
and His Messengers. And they say: We make no distinction
between any of His Messengers. (2:285)*

THE QUR'AN CONFIRMS ALL DIVINE REVELATIONS

These verses, supplemented by a number of other proof texts (quoted below), establish four crucial principles that enshrine the Qur'ānic Vision, which both fashion and substantiate an open-minded approach to all religions and their adherents and inculcate the attitude that if God is the ultimate source of the different rites of the religions, no one set of rites can be legitimately excluded from the purview of authentic religion:

There is no compulsion in religion. (2: 256)

*Permission [to fight] is given to those who are being fought, for
they have been wronged ... Had God not driven back some by
means of others, then indeed monasteries, churches, synagogues*

and mosques—wherein the name of God is oft-invoked—would assuredly have been destroyed. (22:39-40)

The very plurality of these revelations is the result of a divine will for diversity of human communities.²⁰

So set your purpose firmly for the faith as an original monotheist, [in accordance with] the fitra of God, by which He created mankind. There can be no altering the creation of God. That is the right religion, but most people know it not. (30:30)

The diversity of religious rites is also derived directly from God, affirmed by the following verses:

Unto each community We have given sacred rites which they are to perform; so let them not dispute with you about the matter, but summon them unto your Lord. (22:67)

For every community there is a Messenger. (10:47)

We never sent a messenger save with the language of his people, so that he might make [Our message] clear to them. (14:4)

²⁰ The plurality of revelations, like the diversity of human communities, is divinely-willed, and not the result of some human contingency. Universal revelation and human diversity alike are expressions of divine wisdom. They are also signs intimating the infinitude of the divine nature itself as indicated in the verse quoted before: “*And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of your languages and colours. Indeed, herein are signs for those who know.*” (30:22) Just as God is both absolutely one yet immeasurably infinite, so the human race is one in its essence, yet infinitely variegated in its forms. The *fitra*, or primordial nature, is the inalienable substance of each human being and this essence of human identity takes priority over all external forms of identity such as race and nation, culture or even religion.

Truly We inspire you, as We inspired Noah, and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as We bestowed unto David the Psalms; and Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and Messengers We have not mentioned to you. (4:163-164)

We sent no Messenger before you but We inspired him [saying]: There is no God save Me, so worship Me. (21:25) Naught is said unto you [Muhammad] but what was said unto the Messengers before you. (41:43)

This diversity of revelations and plurality of communities is intended to stimulate a healthy 'competition' or mutual enrichment in the domain of 'good works'.²¹

²¹. Given this clear expression of the universality of salvation, any lapse into the kind of religious chauvinism which feeds intolerance is impermissible. This is made clear in the following verses, which explicitly mention forms of religious exclusivism which the Muslims had encountered among the 'People of the Book': 'And they say: "None enters Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian". These are their vain desires. Say: "Bring your proof if you are truthful". Nay, but whosoever submits his purpose to God, and he is virtuous, his reward is with his Lord. No fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve (2:111-112). In other words, the Muslim is not allowed to play the game of religious polemics. Instead of responding in kind to any sort of chauvinistic claims or 'vain desires' aimed at monopolizing Paradise, the Muslim is instructed to raise the dialogue to a higher level and to call for reasoned debate. The Qur'ānic position is to affirm the universal salvific criteria of piety, accessible to all human beings, whatever be their religious affiliation. This position is further affirmed in the following verses: "It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor with the desires of the People of the Book. He who does wrong will have its recompense . . . And whosoever performs good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such will enter Paradise, and will not be wronged the dint of a date-stone (4:123-124). The logic of these verses clearly indicates that one form of religious prejudice is not to be confronted with another form of the same error, but with an objective, unprejudiced recognition of the inexorable and universal law of divine justice, a law which excludes both religious nationalism and its natural concomitant, intolerance.

Truly those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabeans—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and performs virtuous deeds—surely their reward is with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (2:62)

And they say: ‘None enters Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian’. These are their vain desires. Say: ‘Bring your proof if you are truthful’. Nay, but whosoever submits his purpose to God, and he is virtuous, his reward is with his Lord. No fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (2:111-112)

It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor with the desires of the People of the Book. He who does wrong will have its recompense ... And whoso performs good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such will enter Paradise, and will not be wronged the dint of a date-stone. (4:123-124)

Differences of opinion are inevitable consequences of the very plurality of meanings embodied in diverse revelations. These differences are to be tolerated on the human plane and will be finally resolved in the hereafter.²²

²². Given the fact that “*there is no compulsion in religion*” (2:256), it follows that differences of opinion must be tolerated and not suppressed. This theme is not unconnected with the principle of divine mercy: just as God’s mercy is described as “*encompassing all things*” (7:156), so divine guidance through revelation encompasses all human communities. The Prophet is described as a “*mercy to the whole of creation*” (21:107), and his character is described as merciful and kind in the Qur’an (9:128). In the traditional sources, the word most often used to define the essence of his personality is *hilm*, which means forbearance compounded of wisdom and gentleness. The tolerance accorded to the Other by the Prophet is thus an expression not only of knowledge of the universality of revelation but also of the mercy, love and compassion from which this universal divine will to guide and save all peoples itself springs. To

Say: O you who disbelieve, I worship not that which you worship, nor do you worship that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. For you your religion, for me, mine. (109:1-6)

If they submit, they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, you have no duty other than conveying the message. (3:20)

If they are averse, We have not sent you as a guardian over them: your duty is but to convey the message. (42:48)

We will close this section with words from the Qur'ān, words which might be called the Islamic equivalent of the Christian Credo, a definite statement on the authority of the Word-made-Book, of the faith of the Prophet and of those who may be considered as the most spiritual of his Companions.

They believe, all of them, in God and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers. And they say: We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. (2:285)

follow the Prophet means, among other things, to be gentle and lenient to all, in accordance with the *hilm* which defined his character: "It was a mercy from God that you are gently disposed to them; had you been fierce and hard-hearted, they would have fled from you" (3:159). In regard to the disbelievers, then, the Muslim is enjoined to let them go their way unmolested, to let them believe in their own religion: "Say: O you who disbelieve, I worship not that which you worship, nor do you worship that which I worship. And I shall not worship that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. For you your religion, for me, mine." (109:1-6) Returning to the duty to deliver the message and no more, there are a number of verses to note; for example: "If they submit, they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, you have no duty other than conveying the message." (3:20) "If they are averse, We have not sent you as a guardian over them: your duty is but to convey the message." (42:48)

THE QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE - ANTHROPOLOGICAL

Martin Lings has elucidated the issue with great perspicacity and insightfulness in his masterly study 'With All Thy Mind.'²³ I would also refer here to Arvind Sharma who has closely followed the four crucial principles mentioned above in his *Can Muslims Talk to Hindus?*²⁴ After taking his thesis through the enunciated categories, Sharma concluded with the following verse from the Qur'an:

*Oh mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and we have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you in the sight of God, is the best conduct Lo! God is All Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)*²⁵

This verse seems to offer the clearest mandate for Muslims to talk to Hindus. The verse is a Medina verse and is addressed specifically to humanity, not just to Muslims for the diversity of both peoples and of genders is affirmed. Note that no revelations have been sent in terms of the division of humanity by sex, but rather to the peoples. Not only is diversity of the peoples alluded to but there are no qualifications attached to it such as that they be Jews or Christians or Sabeans. Moreover, the purpose of diversity is to provide an occasion for people to know each other-

²³. Martin Lings, "With all Thy Mind", in M. S. Umar (ed.), *The Religious Other-Towards a Muslim Theology of Other Religions in a Post-Prophetic Age*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Lahore, 2009, pp. 7-24; Also see Martin Lings, "Why 'With all Thy Mind'", Ch. III, *A Return to the Spirit*, Fons Vitae, 2005, p. 29.

²⁴. Arvind Sharma, 'Can Muslims Talk to Hindus?' in *Religions*, Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, 2009, p. 193.

²⁵. Sharma has used the translation of Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (New York: The New American Library, 1972), p. 369.

or to put it in a modern idiom– to engage in dialogue so that it might bring out the best in them. Hence Muslims and Hindus can talk to each other not (only) because revelation is universal but because *diversity is universal* – a pervasive feature of the human condition. In other words, the diversity being celebrated here is ‘radical,’ in its etymological sense of pertaining to the roots of the human condition. I would therefore propose that it is possible for Muslims to talk to Hindus without this possibility having to be mediated through the category of *ahl al-kitāb*, which is to say that Muslims can talk directly to Hindus just because they constitute two different communities and that this difference is meant to enable them to come to know each other. The Qur’ān provides what we might call an anthropological basis as distinct from a revelatory basis for Muslims to talk to Hindus.²⁶

QUR’ANIC PERSPECTIVE – HINDU SPECIFIC

Although Hindus and Hinduism are not directly mentioned in the Qur’ān by name, the *Purānas*, one of the most important sources of Hindu thought and practice, is mentioned in the Qur’ān (26.196).

And (the same message) is found in the Scriptures of the Ancients (Zubur al-Awwalīn).

This is an exact, word to word rendering of the Sanskrit word *Purāna* (old, ancient) into Arabic. Muslim scholarship has identified it as an elliptical reference to the *Purānas*. Interestingly,

²⁶. ‘That ethnical and cultural diversity are part of God’s plan, as the Qur’an confirms (49:13) was a fact accepted even [*sic*] by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328).’ Tamara Sonn, *A Brief History of Islam*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 127. The verse however is cited here in the context of internal diversity within Islam.

one of these, the *Bhawishiya Purāna* (The Ancient Scripture of the Future),²⁷ mentions Kālki, the tenth and the last Avatar of Vishnu and the description, which generated a lot of debate and provided considerable fuel to many missionary agendas, carries a striking correspondence to Prophet Muhammad.²⁸

There is a category of the ‘Religious Other’ counted among the ‘saved’ communities in the Qur’ān called the *Sabians* (*al-Ṣābi’īn*):

Verily the Faithful²⁹ and the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians, whosoever believeth in God and the Last Day and doeth deeds of piety-no fear shall come upon them neither shall they grieve.”³⁰

The precise meaning of the reference to the *Sabians* has long perplexed the Qur’ān commentators, jurists and other religious scholars. There is no consensus of opinion as to which religious group is referred to by this word and certain Muslim rulers in India and elsewhere have taken this verse as a basis for tolerance towards their non-Muslim, non-Christian and non-Jewish subjects. The majority of scholars have become inclined to the view that the word *Sabians* is a cumulative title or reference for the other two families of world religions i.e. the Aryan

²⁷. Enlisted by Al-Bīrūnī though he frankly tells us that he has read only a few of these 18 *Purānas*. See *Al-Beruni’s India*, E. C. Sachau (trans.), Delhi, rep. 1964, p. 130.

²⁸. Pundit Vaid Parkash is a Brahman Hindu and a well-known Sanskrit research scholar who concluded that the guide and prophet called ‘Kalki Autar’ refers to Muhammad (*pbuh*). As an argument to prove the authenticity of his research, Pundit Vaid Parkash says that the Veda, another sacred book among Hindus, mentions that ‘Kalki Autar’ will be the last Messenger or Prophet of Bhagawan to guide the whole world.

²⁹. Muslims.

³⁰. Qur’ān (2:62); repeated almost *verbatim* at (5:69).

mythologies and Shamanistic religions. In this view, the verse could be including Hinduism and other religious traditions along with Abrahamic Monotheisms.³¹

LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Since it would be instructive to glance at the roots of the Muslim appraisal of the religio-juridical status of Hinduism and Buddhism, let us take a look at the Indian subcontinent where Islam met the Hindu and Buddhist wisdom traditions – the oldest among the revealed religions according to our understanding – for the first time and where the legal perspective was initially formulated. One of the earliest and most decisive encounters between Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism on the Indian soil took place during the short but successful campaign of the young Umayyad general, Muḥammad b. Qāsim in Sind in 711 AD. During the conquest of this predominantly Buddhist province, he received petitions from the indigenous Buddhists and Hindus in the important city of Brahmanabad regarding the restoration of their temples and the upholding of their religious rights generally. He consulted his superior, the governor of Kufa, Hajjāj b. Yūsuf, who in turn consulted his religious scholars. The result of these deliberations was the formulation of an official position, which was to set a decisive precedent of religious tolerance for the ensuing centuries of Muslim rule in India. Hajjāj wrote a letter to Muhammad b. Qāsim, This letter became known as the

³¹. Also see Manāzīr Aḥsan Gilānī, 'The Sabeans', *Al-Ma'ārif*, Ali Garh, 1934; M. Ikram Chaghātā'ī, *Ifādāt-i-Manāzīr Aḥsan Gilānī*, Lahore, 2017; Also see Rene Guenon, 'On the Exact Meaning of the Word Hindu', *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*, Luzac, London, 1945. New edition, Sophia Perennis, San Rafael, CA, 2013.

‘Brahmanabad settlement.’³² Part of the letter includes the following:

The request of the chiefs of Brahmanabad about the building of *Budd* and other temples, and toleration in religious matters, is just and reasonable. I do not see what further rights we can have over them beyond the usual tax. They have paid homage to us and have undertaken to pay the fixed tribute [*jizya*] to the Caliph. Because they have become *dhimmīs* we have no right whatsoever to interfere in their lives and property. Do permit them to follow their own religion. No one should prevent them.

Moreover, the Arab historian, Al-Balādhurī, quotes Muhammad bin Qāsim’s famous statement made at Alor,³³ a city besieged for a week and then taken without force according to the following strict terms: there was to be no bloodshed, and the local faith would not be opposed. Indeed, Muhammad bin Qāsim was reported to have said:³⁴

The temples [lit. *al-Budd*, but referring to the temples of the Buddhists and the Hindus, as well as the Jains] shall be treated by us as if they were the churches of the Christians, the synagogues of the Jews, and the fire temples of the Magians.³⁵

³². *Chachnamah Retold—An Account of the Arab Conquest of Sindh*, Gobind Khushalani, New Delhi: Promilla, 2006, p. 156.

³³. Arabised as ‘al-Rūr’.

³⁴. Abū al-Hasan al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*, Beirut: Maktaba al-Hilāl, 1988, p. 422 - 423.

³⁵. *ibid.*, p. 424. See for further discussion, *History of Muslim Civilization in India and Pakistan*, S. M. Ikram, Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1989. It is thus not surprising to read, in the same historian’s work, that when Muhammad bin

Although subsequent Muslim rulers varied in their degree of fidelity to this precedent establishing the principle of religious tolerance in India,³⁶ the point being made here is more theological than political. What is to be stressed is that Hindus and Buddhists were, in principle, to be granted the same religious and legal recognition as fellow monotheists, the Jews and the Christians or the 'People of the Book'. The implication of this act of recognition is clear: the religion these Hindus and Buddhists followed was not analogous to the pagan idolatrous religions, whose adherents were not granted such privileges. Rather, as a community akin to the 'People of the Book', they were regarded, implicitly if not explicitly, as recipients of an authentic divine revelation.

It may be argued, however, that granting Hindus and Buddhists legal recognition was in fact more political than theological; that the instinctive response of Hajjāj and his general stemmed more

Qāsim died, 'The people of India wept at the death of Muhammad bin Qasim and made an image of him at Kiraj'.

³⁶. One cannot overlook such acts as the destruction of the monastery at Valabhi by the Abbasid army in 782. But, to quote the Buddhist scholar, Dr Alexander Berzin, 'The destruction at Valabhi . . . was an exception to the general religious trends and official policies of the early Abbasid period. There are two plausible explanations for it. It was either the work of a militant fanatic general acting on his own, or a mistaken operation ordered because of the Arabs' confusing the local 'white-clad' Jains with supporters of Abu Muslim and then not differentiating the Buddhists from the Jains. It was not part of a *jihād* specifically against Buddhism.' See his 'The Historical Interaction between the Buddhist and Islamic Cultures before the Mongol Empire' in his 'The Berzin Archives—the Buddhist Archives of Dr Alexander Berzin' (http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/ebooks/unpublished_manuscripts/historical_interaction/pt2/history_cultures_10.html). The other acts of unprincipled violence by rogue Muslim generals, such as the destruction of the temple of Nalanda by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1193, are to be seen, likewise, as contrary to the general religious trends and official policies of Muslim states acting in accordance with Islamic precepts. Such acts are thus to be seen as military-political exceptions which prove the religious rule: the religious rights of Hindus and Buddhists, as *dhimmis*, were sacrosanct.

from hard-headed pragmatism than subtle theological reflection. While such pragmatism no doubt played a role in this historic decision, the point to be made is this: the scholars of Islam did not (and still do not) regard this 'pragmatic' policy as violating or compromising any fundamental theological principle of Islam. Pragmatism and principle went hand in hand. The implication of granting Hindus and Buddhists legal recognition, political protection and religious tolerance is that the spiritual path and moral code of the Hindu and Buddhist faith derive from an authentic revelation of God. If this principle was disputed by Muslims, the historical practice of granting Hindus and Buddhists *dhimmī* status would be seen as nothing more than 'Realpolitik' at best or a betrayal of certain theological principles at worst. Indeed, one would be guilty of according religious legitimacy to a false religion.

We would argue, on the contrary, that the Hindus and Buddhists were recognized – in an existential, intuitive and largely unarticulated manner by Muslims as followers of an authentic faith even if this faith appeared to contradict Islam in certain major respects. In fact, in their encounters with Hinduism and Buddhism, Muslims noticed sufficient 'family resemblances' between Hinduism and Buddhism and the 'People of the Book' for them to feel justified in extending to Hindus and Buddhists the same legal and religious rights granted to the 'People of the Book.' We would argue, furthermore, that the 'pragmatic' decision of the politicians and generals was actually in harmony with the Islamic revelation, despite certain reservations, refutations or denunciations stemming from popular Muslim

prejudice and despite the paucity of scholarly works³⁷ by Muslims making doctrinally explicit what was implied in the granting of *dhimmī* status to Hindus and Buddhists.

Let us also note that there is in the juristic tradition a lively debate about whether those communities to whom the *dhimmī* status was granted should also be regarded as *Ahl al-Kitāb* in the full sense. The great jurist, al-Shāfi'ī, founder of one of the four schools of law in Sunni Islam, asserted that the Qur'ānic references to the scriptures of Abraham and Moses (*ṣuḥuf-i Ibrāhīm wa Mūsā*; 87:19) and the scriptures of the ancients (*zūbur al-awwālīn*; 26:196) can be used as the basis for arguing that God revealed scriptures other than those specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān. He concludes that Zoroastrians, for example, can also be included in the category of *Ahl al-Kitāb* and need not be treated only as a 'protected community,' *Ahl al-dhimma*.³⁸

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

It would be useful to explore further the implications of this early Muslim response to Hinduism and Buddhism and to provide a more explicit theological or spiritual justification for this response, which has formed the basis of the official policy of tolerance of Hinduism and Buddhism by Muslims world-wide. But that would be the subject of a separate study, which we cannot undertake here. The conclusion is, however, self-evident.

³⁷. The paucity of scholarly works in question was soon to be amply compensated for by Islamic scholarship after the establishment of Muslim Rule in the north of India with the arrival of Al- Bīrūnī, a process that has continued well into the 20th century.

³⁸. Al-Shāfi'ī, *Kitāb al-Umm*, 4/245 *et passim*. Also see, Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam – Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* Cambridge: CUP, 2003, p. 81.

If Hindus and Buddhists are recognized as akin to the 'People of the Book', then they are implicitly to be included in the spectrum of 'saved' communities, as expressed in one of the most universal verses of the Qur'ān quoted earlier:

Truly those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians– whoever believes in God and the Last Day and performs virtuous acts– for such, their reward is with their Lord, no fear or suffering will befall them. (2:62)

One has to make explicit that which in large part has hitherto remained implicit: if Hindus, like Jews, Christians and *Sabians*, are to be treated as 'People of the Book' and thus placed within the sphere of those believers mentioned in this verse, it should be possible for Muslims to recognize Hindu doctrines as expressing 'belief in God and the Last Day', and to recognize the acts prescribed by Hindus as 'virtuous acts'.

Indeed, in light of the verses cited above, it should be possible to demonstrate that the essence of the Hindu message is at one with the immutable and unique message of all the Messengers:

And We sent no Messenger before you but We inspired him [saying]: There is no God save Me, so worship Me. (21:25)

This verse confirms the uniqueness of the message: "Nothing is said unto you [Muhammad] but what was said unto the Messengers before you." (41:43) If it cannot be shown that the essence of the Hindu message is at one with that of the message of the Qur'ān, it might be possible at least to demonstrate that it is 'like' it: "And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then are they rightly guided." (2:137) If even this cannot be done, then one is deprived

of much of the religio-legal ground or the spiritual logic of the conventional Muslim practice of granting *dhimmi* status to Hindus. For this status must imply that, unlike man-made paganism, the religion practiced by them is – or at least was³⁹ – an authentic one, revealed by God.

³⁹. This reservation is important, for the overwhelming majority of Muslim scholars accept that the 'People of the Book' are undoubtedly recipients of an authentic revelation which inaugurates their respective traditions but that they have not been faithful to that revelation, whether through deliberate distortion of their scriptures (*tahrif*) or through a degeneration which is the effect of the passage of time. The Hindu Scriptures refer to the inevitability of such a degeneration in numerous prophecies, which gave rise to further prophecies in the course of time. Even Buddha himself referred to the inevitability of such a degeneration in numerous sayings, which gave rise to five centuries of development after his passing away. According to Edward Conze, 'Prophecies dating from the beginning of the Christian era have given 2,500 years as the duration of the teaching of the Buddha Śakyamuni.' E. Conze, *Buddhism – A Short History*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000, p. 141. What matters in an exploration of common ground is the concordance on the level of principles, the extent to which these principles are practiced is a different question altogether.

TWO TRUTHS AND ONE MYSTERY¹

Alan Race

ABSTRACT

The celebrated historian of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, once wrote in a throwaway line that we live ‘in a near-inscrutable universe.’² To be reminded of this could assist us in defusing the assumed warfare between scientific rationality and the religious imagination.³ Yet we do comprehend – through the exercise of experience, reason, hypothesis and theory. But as we do so, we become aware that the quest for understanding is never-ending, and this sets up the paradox that the more we claim to know the more the horizon of knowledge extends ahead of our human grasp. Our insatiable curiosity is governed by this paradox, the awareness of which transports us to the door of mystery.

CHALLENGES FROM SCIENCE

Religions have approached the mystery of material existence essentially through their cosmologies, which have developed over time in accordance with both the best available philosophical

¹. A version of this article was first given as a keynote address at the International Conference on Science, Reason and Religion, Minhaj University, 26-27 October 2019. The article explores some aspects of the science and religion debates mainly with the monotheistic traditions in mind. A different account would have been required for the non- or trans-theistic religious traditions.

². Wilfred Cantwell Smith, ‘Shall the Next Century Be Secular or Religious?’ *Modern Culture from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. John W. Burbidge, New York: SUNY 1997, p. 82.

³. For an account of the origins of the warfare thesis, see David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, ‘Beyond War and Peace: A Reappraisal of the Encounter between Christianity and Science’, <https://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1987/PSCF9-87Lindberg.html>

insights and what we now call scientific judgements. But our present-day cultural contexts are now so vastly different from the observations, calculations and philosophical speculations prior to the scientific revolutions of the modern period that this inevitably places acute intellectual challenges before the theologians and philosophers of all religious traditions. The Jesuit Christian theologian and philosopher, Roger Haight, has summed up the impact of the new challenges neatly as follows:

The age and size of the universe seem to dwarf the human and dethrone anthropocentrism; the tight integrity of nature seems to edge out God's intervention in the world and our lives; the randomness of evolution seems to subvert confidence in divine purpose; scientists do not speak of God and do not need the divine.⁴

Given this fundamental shift in outlook, stimulated by modern science, the religions are obliged to work with the results of scientific enquiry if their cosmologies are to remain at all relevant to questions of how human beings are to view the world about them, the origins and trajectories of all life. We are left with the question: whither now the sacred?

The authority within scientific thinking has been summed up by the young Swedish climate campaigner, Greta Thunberg, when she declares to governments and policymakers in face of the world's climate emergency: 'Follow the science.' This invocation endows scientific knowledge with saving potential. For this reason, science is not culturally neutral, as it assumes an arbitration role in moral decision-making: we enquire into the consequences of actions based on scientific evidence. But evidence may not be enough: 'following science' also requires parallel determination, prophetic dynamism and a reason to hope – all of which stems from human imaginative vision. Perhaps this

⁴. Roger Haight, S.J., *Faith and Evolution: A Grace-filled Naturalism*, Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 2019, p. 70.

explains one of Einstein's well-known sayings that 'science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.'⁵

SCIENCE AND IMAGINATIVE VISION

A sense of the mystery of the cosmos leads many of us, religious and non-religious, to the brink of awe and wonder at the sheer vastness of space-time. The prospect is truly staggering: 10^{11} stars in the Milky Way and 10^{11} solar systems in the universe – and maybe even a multiverse. This picture was not known to our predecessors. If humanity is the cosmos become conscious of itself, as is sometimes said, then awe and wonder are intrinsic to the universe as such and are not simply optional human emotions. The question of science and religion then becomes the search for a fruitful relationship between two forms of enquiry: broadly-speaking the sciences providing the theoretical shape of the material processes of life – the 'how' of how things work – and the imaginative visions of the religions pondering the meaning of the whole. Each must inform the other if the mystery is to be respected.

The 'fruitful relationship' model is a far cry from the 'warfare' model which has been and continues to be essentially focused on issues of epistemology – what it means to know something to be the case. But retaining the notion of mystery refuses the limitations which the epistemology-only approach has imposed on the discussion. Historically, science has never functioned apart from a cultural context composed of imaginative vision. Let me illustrate this with reference to historical precedence in the atomistic thinking of ancient Greek thought, especially that of Democritus (460-370 BCE) and Epicurus (341-270 BCE), and the latter's Latin follower, Lucretius (99-55 BCE), whose epic poem *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) influenced Western thought right up to the Renaissance. Like Democritus before him,

⁵<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191826719.001.0001/q-oro-ed4-00003988>

Epicurus taught that all matter is entirely composed of extremely tiny particles called ‘atoms’ (Greek: ἄτομος, *atomos*, meaning ‘indivisible’), particles which were assumed to carry the whole weight not simply of naturalistic explanation but also of human meaning. (What the ancient Greeks meant by atoms is of course not the same as the meaning intended by modern physics). For Lucretius, in turn, atomism became was not the solution simply to the puzzling nature of matter; part of its meaning was also to free human beings from their subservience to religious superstitions. In their bid to be free from the unsatisfactorinesses of existence, believed Lucretius, people were duped by religion into committing crimes, such as the slaughter of animals for sacred sacrificial purposes. As Lucretius says in *De Rerum Natura*:

This is not piety, this oft-repeated show of bowing a veiled head before a stone, this bustling to every altar, this deluging of altars with the blood of beasts. True piety lies rather in the power to contemplate the universe with a quiet mind.⁶

In other words, physical explanations are better than religious ones if a person desires not only to come to the truth of how the world is constituted but also to settle their inner anxieties.

Science was not simply benign theorising. This was science as salvation – and it has reverberated down the centuries to the present-day. For example, consider this from new atheist, Richard Dawkins, in the introduction to his highly influential book, *The Selfish Gene*:

We no longer have to resort to superstition when faced with the deep problems: Is there a meaning to life? What are we for? What is man? (*sic*) ‘all attempts to answer

⁶. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, R. E. Latham (trans.), London: Penguin, 1951, Book V, lines 1194-1203. I am grateful to Mary Midgley, *Science and Poetry*, London: Routledge, 2001, for insight into the impact of ancient Greek and Latin philosophers on the roots of modern scientific thinking.

that [last] question before 1859 are worthless and we will be better off if we ignore them completely'.⁷

This is pure Lucretius: scientific investigation not only promises well-grounded truths about the natural world but it also helps you discover the meaning of life. In other words, in Darwinian mode, science helps you to forge a philosophy of life on the back of discoveries in evolutionary science as such. Yet, surely, the presentation of 'science as salvation' simply confuses the matter and borders on being irresponsible hubris. Dawkins might at least have acknowledged a debt to Lucretius.

CONTROLLING KNOWLEDGE AND AMBIGUITY

Notwithstanding my observation about hubristic tendencies among some scientists, there is also some truth in the accusation that religious thought too might overreach itself in its desire to 'explain' everything. If there can be 'scientism' there can also be 'religionism'. There has been irresponsible religion – for example, manipulation of the sacred by insisting that scientific discoveries ought to conform to prescribed metaphysical beliefs. Both the religions and the sciences are capable of overreaching themselves.

A great part of the issue here seems to revolve around the issue of who has control over rationality and knowledge. In relation to scientific methodology, do the fruits of scientific endeavour assume the role of a new 'sacred canopy' such that all attempts at a greater imaginative philosophical vision for a fulfilled life, whether religious or not, are considered to be of lesser importance? Science might 'explain' natural processes, but it has no remit for elevating the fruits of its research into a totalising theory of scientism. On the other hand, the religions have

7. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 1. The quotation included by Dawkins is from the palaeontologist, George Gaylord Simpson, *Tempo and Mode in Evolution*, originally Columbia University Press, 1944. 1859 refers to the publication date of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.

developed systems of thought which in the scientific age now seem very unfit for purpose and are easily accused of encroaching too much on science's territorial claims. Under these cultural circumstances, the question before us becomes: what is the nature of a fruitful relationship between two endeavours, each with their essential modes of enquiry and each aware of their limitations in the face of mystery?

Any fruitful relationship must begin by recognising the different perceptions of science and religion in relation to an ambiguous universe, that is, a universe capable of being interpreted naturalistically or religiously. On the naturalistic interpretation, the universe consists exclusively and seamlessly of energy that is discharged in multiple forms, from the Big Bang into an ever-expanding cosmos. As the physicist Sean Carroll has famously remarked:

The basic stuff of reality is a quantum wave function, or a collection of particles and forces—whatever the fundamental stuff turns out to be. Everything else is an overlay, a vocabulary created by us for particular purposes.⁸

On this view, forms of life are dependent solely on material processes: the physical sciences analyse the whole of reality as simply an expanding mass of 'fundamental stuff', with the challenging implication that human existence is a fleeting accident devoid of inherent meaning. On the religious view, however, the universe is perceived as an environment which is both physical and interpenetrated-yet-transcended by a non-physical reality which is characterised as spirit, thereby leading to a view of life as being inherently purposeful because it is related to that which is the source and goal of all life. Judging between these two overarching perspectives, and mainly as a result of the explanatory power of the sciences, the most common

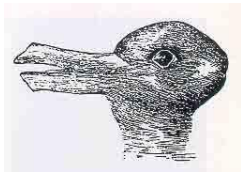
⁸. Sean Carroll, *The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself*, New York: Dutton, 2016, p. 142.

assumption among many, whether scientifically or/and religiously informed, has become the naturalistic view. There is a lingering concern, however, over how far such assumptions have avoided close philosophical scrutiny.

Notwithstanding this common view, ambiguity persists, and I think this is necessarily the nature of the case. Still, we ask: how might 'ambiguity' be depicted? One way into this discussion would be to cite an older debate featuring the notion of verification. Religious assertions were held to be true if they could be verified through evidence and reason. From a previous generation, the philosopher John Wisdom, famously outlined the parable of The Gardener. Two people return to a garden after a period of neglect to find that among the weeds there were some old plants vigorously surviving. One said that a gardener must have been at work secretly as there are live plants among the weeds and there is evidence of some flourishing of beauty. The other said that no gardener can have come, for any gardener worth their salt would do a better job than this. After much dispute the two remain divided about their responses to the garden. Wisdom concluded that there could be no conclusive settlement for the conundrum by appeal to evidence alone. The difference between the two turns on how they 'feel towards the garden.' In other words, no amount of evidence could determine whether the naturalist or religious interpretation of material events is the correct one to adopt. Ambiguity remained.

The issue of ambiguity in relation to the discussion on science and religion has moved from one of verification, as in Wisdom's parable, to one highlighting a role for religious experience as a cognitive activity of the mind acting within an overall environment of ambiguity. Instead of a garden depicting overall ambiguity, picture an image of a duck/rabbit, made famous by the Polish-born American psychologist, Joseph Jastrow (1863-1944):⁹

⁹. See his *Fact and Fable in Psychology*, London: Macmillan, 1901.



We *see* either a rabbit or a duck as we *interpret* the image. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), who used this image, said that we ‘... see it as we interpret it.’ If we now substitute *experiencing* for our *seeing* we then have the formula: we ‘*experience* it as we interpret it.’¹⁰ There is an element of interpreting inherent in all of our experiencing, and while this has been accepted philosophically throughout history it has been most forcefully rehearsed since the European Enlightenment, especially with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The human mind plays a significant role in bringing our experience to consciousness, organising sense data according to patterns of cultural awareness. Moreover, the truth of this principle has been tested and confirmed through the disciplines of cognitive psychology and sociology of knowledge. There is a distinction between a thing-in-itself and a thing-as-we-experience/interpret it.

If we approach the universe’s ambiguity through this lens there will be those who experience the world religiously, either theistically *as* divine gift or non-theistically *as* arising from the formlessness of Absolute reality beyond words. In theistic terms, there are those for whom the world’s intelligibility, creativity and serendipitous qualities invite a religious response of wonder and joy; and for the non-religious there are those who simply affirm the brute materiality of the world, which interprets the qualities of intelligibility and creativity as a function of ‘chance and necessity’. There will be no obvious reason why one responds religiously to the world and another does not see the need.

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (trans.) Elizabeth Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953, p. 193.

Interpreting the big picture of the world/universe, therefore, is not simply a matter of drawing metaphysical conclusions – either naturalistic or religious – from the results of scientific investigations; the element of interpretative awareness has a role to play. There can be no logical route from the absence of non-physical effects in scientific research to the metaphysical conclusion that any proposed spiritual awareness is devoid of cognitive meaning. By the same token, spiritual experience does not resolve the ambiguity inherent in our perception of the world. Even religious notions of ‘revelation’ are more subtle than the view which imagines divine action to emanate from divine *fiat*.

EXAMPLES OF DISCOURSE FAILURE

We have, then, two sets of lenses, the naturalistic and the religious – with the only remaining option being one of responsible conversation between them. But is this enough? There are responsibilities to be borne by both sides of the ambiguity. On the one hand, if the religions want to claim legitimacy for their religious experiences then they can only do this having absorbed the thrust of scientific enlightenment, otherwise they risk obscurantism. On the other hand, science needs to respect the limits that are inherent in its experimental portfolio. Deducing metaphysical conclusions from scientific theory is a mirror image of the accusation that theologians filter metaphysical dogma through a pre-scientific lens.

In order to assist progress in a responsible conversation let me now outline, first, two religious examples of how religious thought has failed to make the adjustments necessary for compliance with such a conversation, and, second, highlight one scientific example of how some conclusions from scientific research fail to respect the limits proper to the discipline.

My first example of *religious failure* to comply with scientific credentials is known as Intelligent Design (ID). Many people,

particularly from a theistic background, have an intuitive sense that the world displays order, intelligibility, complexity and beauty, rendering the search for a Designer a not unreasonable proposition. As Phillip Johnson, one of the originators of ID has put it: '[ID] means we affirm that God is objectively real as creator, that the reality of God is tangibly recorded in evidence accessible to science, particularly in biology.'¹¹ The key phrase here is 'tangibly recorded in evidence' – it expresses a religious fear that without this the reality of God is undermined. Yet in spite of the claim that the need for ID arises from scientific investigation itself, especially from noticing complexity within natural systems, the price to be paid is that 'tangibly recorded evidence' insists on an interventionist view of divine action, and this is something which cuts across scientific methodology itself.

Although ID asserts that repeated miraculous interventions are necessary, in addition to basic evolutionary processes, the fact that these are not able to be tested through usual scientific methods undermines the credibility of ID in its basic claim to be scientific. Furthermore, while emergent complexity is a real feature of the evolutionary process and suggests purpose in creation, direction and purpose in creation are quite different categories. Is it necessarily the case that without the hypothesis of ID the creation is without purpose? This seems to be the basic anxiety of ID theorists. An alternative and, in my view, more responsible approach to issues of design in creation has been put by the Catholic theologian John Haught:

[In] theology's conversations with contemporary science, it is more helpful to think of God as the infinitely generous ground of new possibilities for world-becoming than as a 'designer' or 'planner' who has mapped out the world in

¹¹. Cited in Philip Clayton, *Religion and Science: The Basics*, London & New York: Routledge, (2nd ed.), 2019, p. 18.

every detail from some indefinitely remote point in the past.¹²

It is hard not to think of this as a more cogent approach, both scientifically and philosophically/religiously, to the issue of design in creation.

My second religious example exhibiting unnecessary religious defensiveness in science and religion discussions is known as 'Islamic science', a position which shares comparable concerns with the motivation behind ID. It is probably Seyyed Hossein Nasr who is the main inspiration for Islamic Science:

The Islamic sciences ..., like other traditional sciences, never sought to satisfy the thirst for the Infinite in the realm of the finite. They were based directly on metaphysics and made no claims to usurp its place ... In contrast, modern science has sought to quench this profound thirst for the Infinite on its own level of finiteness, forgetting the limits which have always been set upon the sciences from on high.¹³

There is a legitimate concern here when Nasr presses the claim that modern science poses itself as a form of metaphysics in opposition to religion. However, Nasr's desire is not so much to integrate modern science with an Islamic worldview as render it

¹² John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000, p. 119. A good brief discussion of Intelligent Design can be found in Philip Clayton, *Religion and Science: The Basics*, Second Edition, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019, Chapter 2.

¹³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*, London: World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, 1976, p. 237. A brief summary of Nasr's position is examined in the important report, *Islam & Science: Muslim Responses to Science's Big Questions*, the Report of the İhsanoğlu Task Force on Islam & Science, eds. Usama Hasan and Athar Osama, 2016, produced by Muslim World Science Initiative, Islamabad, Pakistan, pp. 35-38.
<https://www.iasworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Task-Force-on-Islam-and-Science.pdf>.

subservient to Qur'anic claims. In the light of what scientists actually set out to achieve through experimentation Nasr's anxiety seems misplaced. In defence of modern science, it is hard to see how Nasr's stipulations can be embraced by empirical research or even make sense. There seems to be a muddle between the methodological processes of science as such and any alleged (mischievous!) philosophical principles said to be directing it. I will explore this muddle further below.

It is important to note that 'Islamic Science' represents an outlook which is as contentious within the Islamic world as outside of it. In a Foreword to the book *Islam and Science* (1991) by the Pakistani physicist, Pervez Hoodbuoy, and in contrast to Nasr, the Pakistani theoretical physicist and Nobel Prize winner (1979), Mohammed Abdus Salam (1926-1996), asserts:

There is only one universal science, its problems and modalities are international and there is no such thing as Islamic science just as there is no Hindu science, no Jewish science, no Confucian science, nor Christian science.¹⁴

Attempts to bracket off scientific endeavour from religious presuppositions does not represent apostasy: science exists merely to investigate the material world in terms of the world's own structures and processes and what can be deduced from them. Metaphysical reflections lie outside of science's remit.

That said, I turn now to a reflection on how some scientists view their work as the undermining of all religious worldviews, and in so doing transgress the limitations of their craft. This involves the debate, already alluded to, between methodological and metaphysical naturalism.

¹⁴. Mohammed Abdus Salam, 'Foreword' in Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*, Islamabad: Zed Books, 1991, p. ix.

Let the following well-known citation from the American theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg illustrate my point:

It is almost irresistible for humans to believe that we have some special relation to the universe, that human life is not just a more-or-less *farcical* outcome of a chain of accidents reaching back to the first three minutes, but that we were somehow built in from the beginning ... It is very hard to realise that this is all just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly *hostile* universe ... The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems *pointless*.¹⁵

With sentiments like these one can see how the religious mind would feel significantly under attack! But does Professor Weinberg see himself as a *farcical* product of the evolutionary universe? His theoretical work seems far from being farcical. Why then should he think the language of 'hostility' and 'pointlessness' appropriate? These are value-judgements which go beyond the realm of science itself.

My point here is that just as certain religious engagements with scientific method seem unnecessarily defensive when new discoveries seemingly clash with religious dogma, so some scientists fail to obey the limits of methodological enquiry by claiming illegitimate conclusions as a function of instrumental reason, and as a result establish an alternative dogma.

RESPONDING TO THE NEW CREATION STORY

It seems to me that defensive theologians and over-reaching scientists sometimes involve themselves in an unnecessary argumentative tango. That said, we still need to ask about what kind of theological picture looks more promising in responding

¹⁵. Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1977, p.

154. Weinberg shared the Nobel Prize with Mohammed Salam in 1979.

to the new science-generated creation story? I will address this in two stages.

First, the idea of ‘creation’ in terms of the Big Bang as indicative of the beginning of time. It seems intuitive to specify the Big Bang as the first created moment in time (strictly, space-time). Yet that would be a mistake.

Astronomers and cosmologists infer the Big Bang by arguing backwards from the present with inferences that lead them to affirm (speculate?) that the universe at its origins consisted of matter-energy-time-space in its most basic forms, for example, a fluctuating quantum field. Beyond that we can say very little. But, theologically speaking, we should not say that God initiated that initial explosion. Theologically, creation specifies an ontological relationship between Creator and created. Creation, as Roger Haight explains, is not an event but a relationship: ‘an intrinsic and invisible relationship with the ground of being that is intimated in the question of why there is being at all.’¹⁶ The classical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is a statement about contingency and dependency, an affirmation that the universe does not supply its own reason for being. ‘God’ is not the name which ‘causes’ the Big Bang. It is rather, as Roger Haight again highlights, ‘the on-going condition of the possibility of existence.’¹⁷

Creation *ex nihilo* as an ontological relationship entails that God is present to and within all reality, from the first inklings of life to its present conditions. Conceived as the depth of all reality, God does not intervene from outside. Furthermore, there is no need of the ‘God of the gaps’: God, as is sometimes said, makes creation make itself. This leaves science free to investigate creation with all the means of observation, measurement and inference at its disposal. God works ‘through’ the world and not over against it.

¹⁶. *Faith and Evolution*, p. 72.

¹⁷. *ibid.* p. 71.

In relation to evolution, one might say that evolution expresses the power of God's creativity, even suggesting clues as to how that creativity unfolds, while simultaneously remaining hidden within the empirical realm.

A second issue in relation to the new scientific creation story concerns what has been called the 'causal joint' – the issue of how divine and human action are involved simultaneously if God's action is wholly immanent within the natural laws of cause and effect. This has been a long-standing problem in relation to a form of divine action/creativity that refuses intervention. However, there are some suggested solutions. For example, divine action might well occur *either* by virtue of intrinsic indeterminacy at the quantum level, thus leaving 'openings' for divine action without overriding the laws of nature, *or* through noticing in chaos theory how tiny unobservable interventions would lead to desired results on an amplified scale in normal life. Yet however qualified, there seems no way to avoid the accusation that both routes continue to involve some sense, even if hidden, of divine intervention. Moreover, it seems that further analysis of these suggested solutions reveals more difficulties. In relation to quantum indeterminacy, for example, Arthur Peacock, a biochemist and Christian theologian, has written that 'to determine microscopic events on any terrestrial scale, God would have to determine a fantastically large number of quantum processes over extraordinary long periods in advance,'¹⁸ and it is this that sits uneasily with the affirmation of God's underpinning of the inherent consistency and rationality of the creative process as a whole. Peacock cites Nicholas Saunders, in support:

If God does act regularly in quantum mechanics, then there are relatively few quantum processes that would escape his control. If this is the case then it seems very irrational that God would formulate quantum mechanics

¹⁸. Arthur Peacock, *Paths From Science Towards God*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2002, p. 106.

as a product of his creation of the world to be indeterminate.¹⁹

The mystery of God is that the creativity at the heart of cosmology and evolution expresses divine intention and action in the measure that the material of the world acts according to its own inherent nature and not by any 'extra' divine exertion that would violate such divinely given properties.

Although it is not the only possibility in the search for a convincing theological metaphysic in response to the new creation story, the model known as Panentheism – the view that all exists within the divine reality but without that reality being exhausted or circumscribed by what is existing within it – is becoming more and more plausible. This model may be the only one which allows for a sense of direction, intelligibility and purpose in the universe without any sense of interventionist imposition by a creator on inert matter, yet without falling into pantheism as such.

Direction, intelligibility and purpose arising from scientific observations and reflections cannot lead us to descriptions of the inner nature of transcendent reality, but they might suggest patterns in natural processes which chime with theology's estimations in addressing the 'why' questions of existence. Here's one example of such 'chiming' from an evolutionary biologist, Brian Goodwin:

We are every bit as co-operative as we are competitive, as altruistic as we are selfish, as creative and playful as we are destructive and repetitive. And we are biologically grounded in relationships which operate at all the different levels of our beings ... These are not romantic yearnings and utopian ideals. They

¹⁹. Nicholas Saunders, 'Does God Cheat at Dice? Divine Action and Quantum Possibilities', *Zygon*, 35, 2000, pp. 517-44, cited by Peacock. Saunders is a barrister but also a trained physicist and theologian.

arise from a rethinking of our biological natures that is emerging from the sciences of complexity.²⁰

Descriptions of evolution described in terms such as competition, survival and selfishness are not the whole picture. 'Chance and necessity' do not deserve the final word on cosmology and evolution. As the veteran science and religion scholar, Ian Barbour, once indicated regarding the emergent qualities within material forms uncovered by science: 'There can be purpose without an exact predetermined plan.' My notion of 'chimings' fits with this kind of sentiment.

For a number of theologians, the explanatory power of scientific endeavour, the inherent beauty within mathematical formulae and the intelligibility of natural laws and processes has pushed theology into a search for immanent direction in the universe, the prospect of which might seem implausible at first sight. If direction can be discerned, however, it necessarily includes human beings as part of the whole cloth of natural processes. Direction and purpose are human concerns and arise within human consciousness. Therefore, for what we might call the fullest explanatory power of science to be appreciated, account will need to be taken of human creativity and consciousness.

A ROLE FOR EXPERIENCE

This returns us to the earlier discussion about the role of religious experience. Interestingly, after surveying various theories about divine action in the Islamic discussion of science and religion and finding them unresolved, Nidhal Guessoum, Professor of Physics and Astronomy at the American University of Sharjah, UAE, contributing to the İhsanoğlu Task Force on Islam & Science cited earlier, recommends turning to religious experience as the *locus* where divine action relates to the concept of mind or spirit. The

²⁰ Brian Goodwin, *How the Leopard Changed Its Spots*, London: Orion Books, 1994, pp. 166-68.

advantage of a theology in this regard is that it envisages awareness of transcendent reality to arise naturally within the human being as a result of our living under the ambiguous conditions of evolving life and where we interpret such awareness according to our varying cultural frameworks in a globally interconnected world. Experiences are real, often yielding a sense of presence or overwhelming joy and oneness with all living things, leading to a renewed life committed to self-giving compassion, and can be said to be cognitive. The British biologist and zoologist, Alister Hardy, was the first to insist on research into religious experience as a natural biological function of being human. That was in the mid-twentieth century and there are now thousands of reports of such experiences from around the world in the Alister Hardy archives.²¹

From a religious point of view these experiences do not involve explanations in terms of divine intervention; from a scientific point of view the validity of investigating such experiences stems from their openness to empirical research. The central question hovering over reports of religious experience, however, is how it finds a place within the domain of brain/mind/consciousness studies in neuroscience. For some, such experiences will likely be seen as an hallucinatory epiphenomenon or by-product resulting from brain/mind identity; but for others, consciousness constitutes its own non-physical reality, distinguishable from yet correlated with brain activity. This is a huge expanding area of enquiry in science and religion debates. But from my perspective the same issue, stemming from the universe's ambiguity, arises in respect of a choice between a naturalistic and religious assumption interpreting religious experience. In other words, explanations of consciousness may be reduced to material

²¹. Alister Hardy's seminal book is *The Spiritual Nature of Man: Study of Contemporary Religious Experience*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1975. Discussion of the archives can be found in David Hay, *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006. Alister Hardy founded The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre in the 1960s.

assumptions or they may be open to other kinds of explanation not limited by materialist philosophy.²²

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me say that most science and religion discussions finally turn on questions of the status and meaning of being human. This was at the heart of the difficulties faced by both Copernicus and Darwin. With the former, the earth, and therefore the human, was no longer at the centre of God's universe and with the latter the human merged with other life-forms in the evolution of organic life.

A similar anxiety underlies, I believe, present discussions over the possibility of discerning resonance between the scientific investigation of natural processes and the human search for meaning, purpose, hope and excitement at being alive. Furthermore, it is clear that meaning, purpose, hope and excitement do not have to be entertained as merely optional extras to the evolutionary journey, for they are products of the journey itself. As the science writer, Gaia Vince, has affirmed: as a human species, 'we are continually making ourselves through a triad of genetic, environmental and cultural evolution, and ... we've become an extraordinary species capable of directing our own destiny.'²³ This estimation from the perspective of evolutionary anthropology seems entirely open to what a fruitful dialogue between religion and science might offer. Cultural evolution emerges from biological evolution and therefore a 'whole' explanation about the implications of the scientific investigation of life is capable of proceeding by way of

²². For a summary discussion of these debates, see John Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

²³. Gaia Vince, *Transcendence: How Humans Evolved Through Fire, Language, Beauty and Time*, Penguin, Allen Lane, 2019, p. 234.

theological/philosophical self-critical analysis and respectful mutuality between numerous disciplines.

The following assessment of science and religions debates by Oxford University Professor of Physics, Andrew Steane, returns us to the notion of mystery:

[A]ll physical things have a present existence that is, at root, mysterious, and inaccessible to science or the scientific method. Scientific ‘explanations’ are lines of connection starting out from this mystery and then invoking the assumption that the universe is somehow shot through with deep pattern.²⁴

We can interpret that ‘deep pattern’ either naturalistically or religiously, according to the ambiguity of how human beings perceive their place in the scheme of things. It is the nature of human self-consciousness that neither ‘explanation’ can be 100% beyond reasonable doubt. Steane reflects further on the observation of ‘deep pattern’:

Anyone who thinks that scientific explanations are the whole of human experience, or the only thing that matters, will, of course, end up atheist if they are consistent. However, in fact scientific ‘explanations’ on their own are just lines of reasoning dangling in the void; they are neither the whole of human experience, nor the only thing that matters. Without love, they are like so much noise.²⁵

The mention of love here is not a move to end on a homiletic note. It is simply to affirm that the epistemic ambiguity of material givenness, first unleashed by the Big Bang and extending into the unforeseeable future, includes a human reality which invites both

²⁴. Andrew Steane, *Science and Humanity: A Humane Philosophy of Science and Religion*, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 134.

²⁵. *Science and Humanity*, p. 138.

scientific and theological/philosophical reflection, albeit from their different perspectives, on the 'deep pattern' – another term for which is mystery.

MODERNIST AND REFORMIST ISLAMIC THOUGHT:
A Comparative Study of the Contribution of Sir Sayyid Ahmad
Khan and Muhammad 'Abduh to Religious Literacy

Shuaibu Umar Gokaru

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the contributions of two outstanding figures of the 19th century, who were major catalysts for Islamic reform through education, namely, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) of South Asian decent and Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) from Egypt. This paper specifically highlights their views on modernist Islamic perspectives. The method of documentary research was deployed in data collection. The researcher also made use of content and comparative approaches in data analysis. The findings reveal that despite the fact that both scholars had some slight differences in their ideas on modernity, particularly their attitude towards the West, they agreed that Muslims should interpret Islam on the basis of reason in order to meet the changing circumstances of Muslim society. The aim of education in their view was to rescue Muslim societies from their decline and to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with modern Western thought and values. They desired and campaigned for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and denounced *taqlid* (blind and unquestioned reading of one school of thought). The paper recommends that Muslim scholars should understand each other no matter how much they differ even on matters of religious significance. They should not let their difference of opinion divert them from the core of Islamic practice. Dissenting voices even on a religious subject need not be a matter of dissension within the *ulama* or the *ummah*.

PREAMBLE

Islamic modernism appeared in the 19th century in response to European colonization of the Muslim world. Earlier modernism had appeared in Europe in response to Enlightenment thought which relied heavily on rationalism and science. Muslim modernists wanted to defend religion against the onslaught of rationalism. Muslim modernism must be understood in the context of European colonization because the ideas of modernism penetrated into the Muslim world through colonization. In other words, Islamic modernists were influenced by the European Enlightenment and applied positivist and rationalist thought in order to reconcile Islamic traditionalist views with Western thought and values.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (hereafter Khan) from the Indian subcontinent committed his life to the survival of the Muslim community in British India, and earned respect in their eyes as a result of an unsuccessful revolt against the British administration in 1857 due to a lack of organization in which not only Muslims but also non-Muslim participated. He was considered to be the Indian pioneer of modernity because he made a very significant contribution to the spread of modern education and rationalist thought among the Muslim elite in India. His efforts to establish a modern educational institution that later became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920 (modelled on Cambridge University) were especially recognized.

Sir Ahmad Khan was the eldest of the five prominent Muslim modernists whose influence on Islamic thought and policy was to shape and define Muslim responses to modernism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Like the other modernists of his time, Khan was deeply concerned for the state of Muslims in a world dominated by European colonizing powers. As an educational and political leader of Muslims living under British colonial rule in India, he developed the concepts of religious modernism and community identity that marked the transition of

Mughal India to the formation of a representative government and the quest for self-determination.¹

In the Middle East, Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh (hereafter 'Abduh) in Egypt, who sought to propagate the liberal reforms of Islamic law, education, and administration, is considered to be the father of Islamic modernism in the Arab World. The Arab nationalists embraced his views after the First World War. Many Egyptian nationalists adopted his stress on education as the means for gradual reform, believing that this was the way to achieve independence.² 'Abduh believed that education was the best way to achieve reform in all aspects of Egyptian society. His view was that without education, society would not produce intellectuals with the ability to interpret Islam according to the needs of modern Muslim society.

THE EMERGENCE OF ISLAMIC MODERNITY

It is important to note that by the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European countries such as Great Britain, France, and Holland had penetrated and dominated much of the Muslim world from North Africa to Southeast Asia.³ A variety of responses emerged from Muslims who were ready to be self-critical and to reflect on the causes of this situation. Their responses covered the whole spectrum from adaptation and cultural synthesis to withdrawal and rejection.⁴

The Islamic modernist movement sought to bridge the gap between Islamic traditionalists and secular reformers. Muslim

1. Tauseef Ahmad Parray, "Islamic Modernist and Reformist Thought: A study of the contribution of Sir Sayyid and Muhammad Iqbal", *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 1(2): 79-93, 2011. p. 83.

2. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) "Centre for Islam and Science" Retrieved from <<http://www.cis-ca.org/voices/a/abduh.htm> on January 10, 2014.

3. John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 126.

4. *ibid.*

modernists combined the internal community concerns of the eighteenth-century Muslim revivalist movement with the need to respond to the threat of European colonialism and the demands of modernity. Like secular reformers, Islamic reformers responded to European colonialism and influence by their perception of the 'Success of the West'. The West was strong and successful; Muslims were weak and subject to domination, reliance and dependence on the West. They believed that the sources of the West's strength had to be assimilated.⁵

In contrast with pre-modern revivalist movements, Islamic modernism was a response both to continued internal weaknesses and to the external political and religio-cultural threat of colonialism. Most of the Muslim world faced the powerful new threat of European colonialism. The responses of modern Islamic reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the impact of the West on Muslim societies resulted in substantial attempts to reinterpret Islam to meet the changing circumstances of Muslim life.⁶

In reaction to the penetration of Western capitalist modernity into all aspects of Muslim society from the Arab world to Southeast Asia, a significant number of Muslim intellectuals began to compose the general outlines of a new intellectual project that is often referred to as 'Islamic modernism.'⁷

The most prominent intellectuals who pioneered the modernist visions and agendas were Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) in the Middle East and Sir

⁵. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 55.

⁶. op. cit., Esposito, 1998, p. 125.

⁷. John L. Esposito, *Contemporary Islam: Reformation or Revolution in The Oxford History of Islam*, (Esposito, J. L., ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 644-45.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) in South Asia.⁸

KHAN AND ‘ABDUH: CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS

The life and thought of the above-mentioned modernists are important because of their keen interest to rescue the Muslim life from decline and to respond positively to the challenge of colonialism. Their reforms have been beneficial to contemporary Muslims societies because they insisted that education was the way to reform Muslim society. In what follows, I will provide brief biographies of these two personalities.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the most prominent early leader of the modernization movement among Indian Muslims, was noted especially for his advocacy of social and educational reforms. He came from a noble family and was brought up in his grandfather's house, as his father had died early. He did not receive a traditional madrasah (seminary) education but studied the Qur'an in Arabic and Persian classics. As an employee in the British colonial judiciary, he was greatly affected by the failed struggle for independence of (1857). Ahmad Khan became active in analysing both the causes of the revolt and the reasons for what many perceived as the backwardness of Muslims in scientific and social fields. He concluded that a program of education that incorporated both modern subjects and a respect for Islamic values could address the needs of Muslims.

In 1875, Khan established the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in North India, offering English-medium higher education. His journal *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Refinement of Morals) was a showcase of modernist thought featuring his articles and those of like-minded supporters. Prevalent themes in his writing include 'demythologized' Qur'anic interpretation,

⁸. See Richard C. Martin, Said Amir, and Marcia Hermansen (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, New York: Macmillan, 2003.

presenting the sacred text to be in harmony with science and reason, criticism of hadith (sayings of the Prophet), and calls for renewed *ijtihad* (independent reasoning and interpretation). In the passage that follows, Sir Sayyid was knighted in 1888 by the British Empire- presented the case for renewed Islamic theology, capable of assuring an appropriately scientific and rational understanding of religious truth.⁹

In order to know more about Khan's life, it is important to note that from 1859 until his death in 1898 he came to be more and more preoccupied with the problems of Muslim education in India. In 1868, he adopted a westernized way of living, developed cordial social contacts with British officialdom and visited England in 1869-70. In 1876, he retired to devote his time entirely to the institution of modern education that he was developing at Aligarh¹⁰ and his concern was the survival of Muslim community in India. He protested against the Muslim traditionalists who dismissed the British as enemies of Islam and the British who regarded the Muslims as politically, militarily, and economically marginal and incapacitated because of their allegiance to Islam. This showed that Khan's mission was the betterment of the Muslim societies in order to produce intellectuals who could respond to the challenges of modern life. Despite his contribution to Muslim society, he encountered much criticism from Muslims who were anti-colonial and who rejected most of his modernist ideas and thought patterns because of his connection with the British.

Muhammad 'Abduh was one of the most prominent figures of Islam in the context of the history of Islam in Egypt. Born to a peasant family of modest means in the Egyptian Delta, he received a modernist traditional Islamic education in his hometown. He continued his education at the celebrated al-Azhar

⁹. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 31-32.

¹⁰. *ibid.*

seminary. During Afghani's sojourn in Egypt (1871-1879), 'Abduh became closely associated with him and his reformist ideas. In 1882, he joined Afghani in Paris, where they produced the famed journal of *al-Urwa al-Wusqa* (the strongest Link), which agitated against imperialism and called for Islamic reform and unity. 'Abduh returned to Beirut, where he taught for several years before being pardoned by the Egyptian ruler. Returning to Egypt, he served as a judge and then as one of Egypt's leading religious officials, an al-Azhar administrative board member and as Egypt's Legislative Council member. 'Abduh devised programs for the reform of the educational system, the Arabic language and the education of girls. He laboured to introduce reforms in al-Azhar, the religious endowment administration and the court system. 'Abduh's influence extended beyond Egypt, inspiring reformists throughout the Islamic world.¹¹

'Abduh was instrumental in the development of the intellectual and social reformist dimensions of Islamic modernism. He taught the compatibility of revelation and reason, condemned the blind following of tradition (*taqlid*), and championed the legitimacy of and the need for the reinterpretation of Islam to respond to the demands of modern life. 'Abduh worked to reform the *ulama* and, in particular, the curriculum of al-Azhar University and the religious courts. He provided a rationale for the reform of Islamic Law, arguing that while laws concerned with the worship of Allah were immutable, Islam's social legislation was capable of substantive change.¹²

It should be noted that 'Abduh's central approach to Western thought was the selective adaptation of the best it had to offer. He

¹¹. Muhammad 'Abduh, *Laws Should Change in Accordance with the Conditions of Nations* and C. Kurzmana, *The Theology of Unity*. See *Modernist Islam* (1840-1940), United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002.

https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/Modernist_Islam_1840_.html?id=p.3. (Retrieved on 10 January 2014).

¹². op. cit., Esposito, 1992, p. 57.

advocated the idea of modernity for the progress and strength of Muslim societies from their backwardness due to the unavailability of Muslim intellectuals who could reinterpret Islam based on rationalism in order to respond to the challenges of modern life. Hence, he laid down his modern ideal based on rationalism, liberalism, nationalism, and universalism in Islam. For him, Islam was a comprehensive way of life, which encompassed different aspects of life. Hence, Islam was compatible with the data of reason.

CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

As already stated, both the above-mentioned modernists were concerned with education as an ultimate goal for the reform of Muslim society. Hence, the two scholars believed that the independent interpretation of Islam (*ijtihad*) was not only confined to selective individuals but was meant for all Muslims in order to confront the challenges of modern life. Most of their writings expressed their special interest to produce a new generation of Muslim leaders through educational reforms. Thus, before going into further detail regarding their contribution to education, it is necessary to highlight their views on *ijtihad*.

KHAN'S VIEW ON *IJTIHAD*

Khan argued that the survival of Islam depended on the rejection of the unquestioned acceptance (*taqlid*) of medieval interpretations of Islam and the exercise of *ijtihad* in order to produce a fresh interpretation, which would have relevance and validity for modern life. On the one hand, he placed himself within the revivalist tradition of Shah Wali Allah by maintaining that a return to pristine Islam necessitated purifying Islam of many of the teachings and interpretations of the *ulema*. On the other hand, Khan differed with Shah Wali Allah and other eighteenth-century revivalists because of his method. His exercise of *ijtihad* was not simply to use reason to get back to the original

interpretations of Islam, which had been obscured by scholasticism (*ulema*), but to reinterpret Islam in the light of its revealed sources. It should, however, be noted that the extent of his use of reason, the degree to which he reinterpreted Islam and his borrowing from the West marked him off from revivalists of the previous century.¹³

Khan's argument was that where there was a conflict between the Qur'an and reason, reason should prevail. This argument lacked any ground in Islam because it contradicted the authentic teachings of Islam; hence nature is the sign, which testifies the existence of Almighty Allah and shows the metaphysical evidence of the existence of Allah. Thus, in an attempt to introduce new sciences, someone should not say that reason prevails over the text (*Al Qur'an*). Allah promised that He would protect the Qur'an from any corruption and falsehood before and after it was revealed.

The Qur'an, therefore, is a complete message from Allah, which is not in need of addition or subtraction because nothing has been left without the needed explanation. Khan's emphasis was that the Qur'anic text, which contained miraculous or supernatural language, could not be interpreted metaphorically or allegorically. This was the practice of those who had doubt in their mind. By trying to interpret something unknown or ambiguous, they were causing *fitnah*.¹⁴

Islam forbids anyone to interpret the Qur'an from selfish desire or on the basis of allegory. The Prophet (PBUH) strongly warned against such practices. Therefore, without any guidance or knowledge of Qur'anic exegesis, it was totally forbidden. In line with this statement, the Prophet (PBUH) says, "Whoever says something in matters of the Qur'an with his own desires, let him find his place in the Hell Fire." On the basis of this hadith, Muslim

¹³. *ibid*.

¹⁴. For more details on this issue, refer to the Qur'an, *Surah al-Imran* (3:7).

scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that to interpret the Qur'an without the knowledge of exegesis was to invite condemnation by this *Hadith*¹⁵.

Similarly, the traditional *ulama* criticized Khan on his argument that the Qur'an could be interpreted allegorically or metaphorically. It was for this reason that some Muslims, particularly those who were anti-colonialist, had never agreed with his reformist thought despite the contribution that he had made to Muslim society. Besides, Khan relied almost exclusively on the Qur'an for his interpretation of Islam. Since he was not a scriptural literalist, he interpreted the Qur'an on the basis of rationalism. Carl Brown, a political scientist, pointed out that Khan insisted that Islam was 'completely compatible with reason and with nature. This meant that any supernatural events in religion, even the Qur'an, could be correctly interpreted allegorically or psychologically. In short, since he was very much a 19th -century advocate of science and positivism, Khan's ideas ran afoul of the traditional *ulema*.¹⁶

Khan argued that it was only through practicing *ijtihad* that Muslims would confront the challenges of modern life. As stated earlier, his views on the interpretation of some Islamic issues contradicted the mainstream Islamic teaching. It is important to note that the above explanation is not meant to condemn Ahmad Khan's views but rather to expose unacceptable errors. Ahmad Khan needs to be understood for his effort to free Muslim society from European colonialism despite his care to remain loyal to the British.

¹⁵. See *al-Tibyan Fi 'Ulum al'Qur'an* by Aliyu al-Sabuyyni.

¹⁶. Retrieved from 'www.voices of a new *ijtihad*', Centre for Dialogue, New York University. Accessed on February 10, 2019.

'ABDUH'S VIEW ON *IJTIHAD*

'Abduh was convinced that independent interpretation (*ijtihad*) on the basis of the sources of Islam while rejecting blind imitation (*taqlid*) was the only way to achieve the transformation and to restore the unity of Muslim society. It should, however, be noted that the basis for 'Abduh's reformist thought was his belief that religion and reason were complementary and that there was no inherent contradiction between religion and science which he regarded as the twin sources of Islam. The basis of the Muslim decline was the prevalence of un-Islamic popular religious beliefs and practices such as saint worship, intercession and miracles and the emergence of creativity and dynamism due to Sufi passivity and fatalism as well as the rigid scholasticism of the traditionalist *ulama*, who had forbidden fresh religious interpretation.¹⁷ In this sense, his critique was like a double edged sword but his intention was to reform Islam in the context of the development of thought and scientific progress in the contemporary world. Islam did not need be over protected as it has its own inner strength. He wanted to re-equip Muslims to face modernity and its challenges.

Based on the above presentation of their views, it may seem that Khan's use of reason contradicted the views of his modernist contemporaries, particularly the views of 'Abduh, because Khan's use of reason was far more rationalist than that of 'Abduh, who believed that there was no fundamental contradiction between religion and science. While 'Abduh believed that religion and reason functioned on two different levels or spheres, Khan was influenced by nineteenth-century European rationalism and natural philosophy, much of which he regarded as consonant with the rationalist principles of the *Mut'azilah* and ibn Rushd (Averroes), who believed that Islam was the religion of reason and nature. There could be no contradiction between the word of God (*Verbum Dei*) and the work of God (*Opus*

¹⁷. op. cit., Esposito, 1998, p. 130.

Dei/nature): ‘If that religion is in conformity with human nature ... then it is true.’ Khan said that Islam was in total harmony with the laws of nature and was, therefore, compatible with modern scientific thought. Reason and the laws of nature governed Khan’s interpretation of the Qur’an and Sunna and his treatment of such questions as evolution, miracles and the existence of angels. Khan believed that the Qur’an was the final authority in practice but his rationalist approach meant that where a seeming conflict existed between text and reason, reason prevailed.¹⁸

KHAN’S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

There is no doubt that Khan made an important contribution to educational reform through the spread of modern education and rationalist thought among the Muslim elite in India. His approach to Islamic reform was both theoretical and practical. In addition to his prolific writings, which included a multivolume commentary on the Qur’an, he stressed the need for the practical implementation of educational reform by suggesting the following efforts:¹⁹

- To create an atmosphere of mutual understanding between the British government and the Muslims.
- To persuade Muslims to abstain from the politics of agitation.
- To produce an intellectual class from among the Muslim community.

It is interesting to note that, although Aligarh Muslim University was modelled on Cambridge University, it soon assumed a form and personality of its own. Meant primarily for Muslims, it was interdenominational, offering theological education to Sunni as well as Shi’i as well as welcoming a fair percentage of Hindu students. It aimed at the liberation of ideas, broad humanism, a

¹⁸. *ibid.* p. 135.

¹⁹. *ibid.* p. 136.

scientific worldview, and a pragmatic approach to politics. It strove for a steady increase of educated Muslims in the government services. It smoothed the transition of the younger generation of Muslim elite from almost medieval conservatism to at least superficial modernism. It was to produce the leadership for Muslim political separatism in India, as a counter-balance to the growing influence of the Indian National congress.²⁰

In 1886, Khan had also founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Educational Conference for the general promotion of Western education in Muslim India and the promotion of Urdu as a secondary language in all government and private schools. In addition, to emphasize the necessity for educating women as essential for the balanced intellectual development of future generations and to formulate a policy for the higher education of Muslim students in Europe, who were discouraged from marrying abroad in order that they should remain involved in the problems of their own land of origin.²¹

John Esposito writes that Khan combined theory with practice, seeking to implement his ideas and to train a new generation of Muslim leaders. His prolific writing was accompanied by his leadership in many educational reforms. He founded a translation society (in which he translated some of the Qur'anic verses based on rationality as clearly discussed in his *Tahzib al-akhlaq*) in order to make western thought more accessible. He also promoted Muslim journals and set up Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (Aligarh Muslim University), which was modelled on Cambridge University.²²

Khan's educational programme, which was to change the intellectual, political, and economic destiny of Muslim India, had its humble beginnings in the critical year of 1859. From that date

²⁰. Aziz Ahmad, p. 37.

²¹. *ibid.* pp. 37-38.

²². *op. cit.*, Esposito, 1999, pp. 644-45, 47 and 49.

onwards, the use of English as the medium of instruction was one of the main planks of his programme. In 1864, he founded a scientific society for the introduction of Western sciences primarily among Muslims in India. The society translated works on physical sciences into Urdu and published a bilingual journal. In addition, he founded a modern school at Ghazipur and in 1868 promoted the formation of educational committees in several districts of Northern India.²³

MAJOR WORKS BY KHAN

In an attempt to explain the contributions of Khan to education, mention should be made of his major works on modernity. It is through these works that he described his views on modernity and his mission for the survival of the Muslim community in India. His three works on the uprising of 1857 are:

- *History of the Mutiny in Bijnor* (1858)
- *Causes of the Indian Mutiny* (1858)
- *Loyal Muhammadans of India* (1860)

According to Aziz Ahmad, the above-mentioned works are indispensable source material for any serious study of the contemporary context.²⁴ Moreover, Khan's journal *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* (refinement of morals), named after the famous ethical treatise of ibn Miskawah, but apparently modeled on Addison and Steele's *Spectator* and *Tattler*, published articles on a wide range of subjects from public hygiene to rational speculation and gave the Urdu language the capacity to convey novel intellectual concepts. Through its critical pages, modernism emerged as a potent force in India and considerably changed the course and the direction of Islam.²⁵

²³. *ibid.* p. 37.

²⁴. *op. cit.*, p. 31.

²⁵. *ibid.* p. 38.

'ABDUH'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

In order to discuss the contribution of 'Abduh to education, we could begin by noting the changes he introduced to the curriculum of al-Azhar University and the wisdom of the articles in his journal (*al-Urwa al-Wusqa*) and the knowledge contained in his commentary on the Qur'an (*Tafsir al-Manar*). The following questions could be asked: What did 'Abduh want to achieve by changing the curriculum of al-Azhar? What was the main purpose of his journal *al-Urwa al-Wusqa*, and what were the main ideas contained in it? Did his *Tafsir al-Manar* express contemporary Islamic thought?

'Abduh believed that the key to rejuvenating Egyptian society lay in the reform of the Islamic educational system, starting with al-Azhar, which was the leading centre of Islamic learning in the world at the time. Al-Azhar trained and graduated Muslim scholars, judges, teachers, and preachers for Egypt and beyond and was the seat of religious knowledge, authority, and orthodoxy. 'Abduh regarded the reform of al-Azhar and the revival of religion as two features of the same activity. The reform of al-Azhar, he once remarked, 'would be the greatest service to Islam; its reform signifies the reform of all Muslims as its decadence is a clear sign of their depravity. It is also necessary because reordering religion in the light of modern conditions is an impossible task without reorganizing and restructuring the site of religious power that defined and authorized what was Islamic and what was orthodox.'²⁶

Without going further into the situation of al-Azhar, it is clear that 'Abduh suffered a lot from Muslim traditionalists who held that *taqlid* was the only way to refute the idea of colonialism and European domination. 'Abduh totally rejected the idea of *taqlid* because he felt that *taqlid* was what had led to the 'Muslim

²⁶ Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality and Modernity* California: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 99.

conservatism' in science and technology as well as to the decline of Islam. The followings was the curriculum of al-Azhar before 'Abduh's time:

- Philosophy, jurisprudence, and Sufi orders
- Islamic logic, rhetoric and astronomy.

No secular subjects like history or algebra were allowed nor were any of the modern sciences as they were considered worldly subjects that could turn students away from the study of religion.²⁷

When 'Abduh was put in charge of reforming al-Azhar in the 1890s, he was aware that reforms should be affected gradually and with the support of influential *'ulama* from within the institution itself. This sort of reform, he often stated, had to be implemented from below and from within in order to be effective and successful. Although he truly distrusted the efficacy of the use of power, he did on occasion have to resort to its use. In this particular case, however, as quoted by Rashid Rida, his biographer and most trusted friend, 'Abduh did not trust the Khedive, the British administration. Least of all did he trust the old- guard at al-Azhar. He accused them of corruption as well as of the abuse of power to serve their own selfish interests. In his own words:

I intend to reform al-Azhar by convincing the Muslim scholars in charge of the institution of the need for change and not through the powerful hand of the government and its laws. There really is little difference between the corrupt rules that govern al-Azhar and the present government, whose rules are passed by a dictator, the Khedive himself. I would not call on or let a foreign hand infiltrate this institution. I will not permit the government

²⁷. *ibid.* p. 100.

interceding in matters relating to this institution since this government itself is run by a foreign power.²⁸

Many reforms were introduced immediately after 'Abduh took over. The first measure toward its centralization was the creation of an administrative council (*majlis idarat al-Azhar*) made up of three selected Azhari scholars and two outside officials (one was 'Abduh himself and the other a friend of his, 'Abdel Karim Salman). The council was to meet twice a month to discuss and recommend measures regarding all affairs relating to the institution, both administrative and pedagogical. At the time that this council was set up,

Hassuna al- Nawawi, a renowned Hanafi scholar open to the idea of reform, was appointed as rector of al-Azhar. In 1895, to boost the power of the council, al-Nawawi was then appointed the chairman.²⁹ Briefly summarized, the most important measures considered by the council were the following:

- Rectifying the huge discrepancy in wages by regulating the salaries of teachers and staff on the basis of qualification, merit, and length of service.
- Restructuring al-Azhar's principal source of income, namely, the religious endowment funds, which resulted in a quadrupling of its revenues.
- Rearranging of the curricula and method of teaching, which required that all students take courses in the core subjects (*'ulum al-makasid*) of *tawhid*, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, *Usul al-fiqh*, and *akhlaq* (morals) and in instrumental linguistic subjects (*wasa'il*) that included algebra and arithmetic.

²⁸. *ibid.*

²⁹. *ibid.*

- Secular subjects such as history, geography, philosophy, social economy, and natural sciences were also introduced in the form of electives. To secure a diploma, students were required to pass an examination in all core subjects and some of the electives. The new curriculum was intended to discourage students from studying extensive glosses and commentaries and commended the acquisition of the essentials of religious sciences, stressing the importance of cultivating moral character.
- Creation of a library with branches in the various departments of the university and in the main mosques of Cairo, Alexandria and in the other towns and villages of Egypt where preparatory schools were set up.³⁰

It was mentioned earlier that ‘Abduh worked to reform the *ulama*, in particular, the curriculum of al-Azhar University. His passion for reform had begun to develop at Ahmadi Mosque, Tanta and Jami’al al-Azhar, Cairo. The encounter with the conservative system of learning inspired him to undertake reform and embark on transforming the obsolete curricula where ‘the students were to read texts, their commentaries, the glosses on the commentaries and the super glosses on the glosses,’³¹ without critical analysis and comprehension. He introduced ground-breaking initiatives to systematize the syllabus and method of teaching and learning and he was ready to compete with the style of Western education by observing ethical and moral discipline and by including science, philosophy, history and other classical literary studies in the curriculum. ‘Abduh’s strategic focus to undertake change at al-Azhar was highlighted by Yvonne Haddad in her recent article on ‘Abduh’s reform program in which she wrote:

³⁰. *ibid.*

³¹. Ahmad N. Amir, Abdi O. Shuriye, Ahmad F. Ismail, ‘Muhammad Abduh’s Contributions to Modernity’, *Asian Journal of Management Sciences and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 2012.

'Abduh's first experience with learning by rote, memorizing texts and commentaries and laws for which he was given no tools of understanding, was formative in his later commitment to a thoroughgoing reform of the Egyptian educational system.³²

Furthermore, in his letter to his European compatriot, 'Abduh criticized the educational policy introduced by the Egyptian government, which was administered by the British. He tried to initiate reform and transform the whole structure of curricula and fees as well to provide the basic necessities of schools teachers. He emphasized the need to uplift the standard of al-Azhar and asked the British to make Egypt a strong and liberal nation. He wrote:

The Egyptian government spends only two hundred thousand Egyptian pounds on education out of an income of twelve million pounds. It also keeps raising schools fees to the point where education is becoming a luxury that ornaments a few rich homes ... There are only three schools for higher education in Egypt: the schools of law, medicine, and engineering. The other components of human knowledge are denied to the Egyptian who is only superficially exposed to some of them in secondary schools ... The government plan seems to be firstly, to assist primary schools where reading and writing are taught. Secondly, to reduce the spread of education in the country as much as possible. Thirdly, to limit secondary and higher education to very narrow circles ... I do not see what the British will gain from this. On the contrary, it should be in the interest of the British to have a strong and free nation in Egypt. The more wealthy we are, the richer the source they can draw upon.³³

³². *ibid.*

³³. Imarah Muhammad, *Al-A'mal al-Kamilah* (Complete Works of Muhammad 'Abduh), Vol. 3, Beirut: n.p. and Khoury, Nabil Abdo, "Islam and Modernization

The above clearly shows the curriculum that was proposed by 'Abduh in his efforts to respond to the conservatives. 'Abduh proposed such changes so that al-Azhar would produce students who could respond to the challenges of modern life. Furthermore, in his journal *al-Urwa al-Wusqa*, 'Abduh advocated the introduction of modern and local sciences into Al-Azhar. He described the kind of prejudice against modern sciences among the administration of Al-Azhar and related that Al-Ghazali and others had considered the study of logic and similar disciplines obligatory for the defence of Islam.³⁴ He also wrote that new and useful sciences were essential for our life in this age and were our defence against aggression and humiliation and the strong base for our happiness, wealth and strength. In his words: 'We must acquire these sciences and we must strive for their mastery.'³⁵ However, his commentary on the Qur'an (*Tafsir al-Manar*) contains Islamic thought that was influenced by other, contemporary thinkers.

'Abduh's contribution to educational reform includes his ideas regarding the distinction between laws that are subject to change and those that are not. He sought to provide an Islamic rationale for the selective integration of modern ideas and institutions into Islam. He distinguished between Islam's inner core or fundamentals, consisting of those truths and principles which were unchanging as well as other levels of Islam, which were concerned with society's application of the immutable principles and values of Islam to the changing needs of each age. Hence, he maintained that while regulations of Islamic law governing worship (*ibadat*), such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage were immutable, the vast majority of regulations concerned with social

in the Middle East: Muhammad 'Abduh, An Ideology of Development" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, State University of New York, Albany, 1976).

³⁴. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905).

Retrieved from <http://www.cisca.org/voices/a/abduh-mn.htm> on January 10, 2014.

³⁵. *ibid.*

affairs (*mu’amalat*), such as penal, commercial, and family laws were open to change.³⁶ This is equivalent to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun’s on rationalism, according to which each person can decide on the right action.³⁷

‘Abduh believed that the crisis of modern Islam was precipitated by the failure of Muslims to uphold the distinction between the immutable and the mutable, the necessary and the contingent. ‘Abduh followed this approach in carrying out reform in law, theology and education. His reformist ideas were incorporated into the legal rulings set forth in a journal, *al-Manar* (‘The Beacon’ or ‘Lighthouse’), which he published together with his protégé, Rashid Rida. ‘Abduh followed the Maliki law school’s principle of public welfare and gave fatwas that touched on many issues including Bank interest and the status of women in Islam.³⁸

MAJOR WORKS OF ‘ABDUH

- *Tafsir Surat al-Asr*, (1903), Cairo.
- *Tafsir Juz’ Amma*, (1904), al-Matb. Al- Amiriyya, Cairo.
- *Tafsir Manar*, (1924), 12 volumes.
- *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Hakim al-Mustahir bi Tafsir al-Manar*, (1954-1961), 12 volumes with indexes, Cairo.
- *Fatihah al-Kitab, Tafsir al-Ustadh al-Imam . . . Kitab al-Tahrir*, (91382) Cairo.
- *The Theology of Unity*, (1966), (trans.), Ishaq Mas’ud and Kenneth Cragg, London.
- *Durus min al-Qur’an*, (no date), (ed.), Tahir al-Tanaka, Dar al-Hilal, Cairo.

‘Abduh’s ideas were met with great enthusiasm but also with tenacious opposition. They are still a subject of contention today,

³⁶. op. cit., Esposito, 1998, p. 132.

³⁷. ‘Ibn Khaldun’s Social Structure Analysis’, *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, Vol. 4 (3), March 2014.

³⁸. op. cit., Esposito, 1998, p. 131.

nearly 80 years after his death, as questions of modernism and tradition have re-emerged in the Muslim world. Although he did not achieve his goals, 'Abduh remains a continuing influence and his work, *Risalat al-Tauhid* (The Theology of Unity), is the most important statement of his thought.³⁹

CONCLUSION

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad 'Abduh, who came from different continents, played a significant role not only in introducing the Muslims in their own countries to the challenge of modernity but the entire Muslim community as well. Both scholars adopted *ijtihad* as the mechanism for solving religious issues facing the Muslim *ummah*. They firmly believed that each individual Muslim was allowed to resort to *ijtihad* to improve their religious, social, economic and political life. Moreover, no effort to reform Muslim society could be successful without promoting education for all. Both Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad 'Abduh totally rejected the idea of *taqlid*, because in their view it was one of the major reasons for the stagnation of Muslim society.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad 'Abduh were prominent scholars of the 19th century who exposed the hidden agenda of Western society. They supported the idea of modernity, which required Muslims to understand Islam with the aid of reason because they saw no contradiction between the Qur'an, science and reason. Allah had called upon human beings to use their intellect to understand the universe. Furthermore, Muslims were asked to use their faculty of reason to reject conservative or traditionalist ideas, which were opposed to the values of modernity. Despite the fact that Ahmad Khan accepted the Qur'an as the final authority in Islam, his rationalist philosophy meant that reason would prevail in case of an apparent conflict between the sacred text and reason. For 'Abduh,

³⁹. <http://www.cis-ca.org/voices/a/abduh-mn>

on the other hand, science and reason were complementary to the Qur'an and so there was no need for reason to prevail over the Qur'an. For 'Abduh, modernity should always be seen through the lens of Islam. Hence, whenever a conflict between reason and the Qur'an appeared, the ultimate authority would be the Qur'an.

These two outstanding figures of the 19th century built a solid foundation for the understanding of modernity from the perspective of Islam and they convinced thousands of Muslims never to adopt ideas that would contradict the teachings of Islam. However, they also held that it was irrational for an educated Muslim to totally disregard Western thought and values. Differences of opinion regarding religious beliefs and practices should never be used as a mechanism to reject the ideas of others. Instead, Muslims should use their intellect to examine Western ideas and values and to accept those that did not contradict the pristine teachings of Islam. However, Muslims should reject those ideas that went against the basic teaching of Islam. Justice should be done to everyone, regardless of differences of thought, religion and nationality. According to these two great scholars, Islam would become a universally respected religion if Muslims followed these basic precepts.

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HUMAN RIGHTS, REASON AND DIVINE REVELATION

Philip Duncan Peters

INTRODUCTOIN: A PARABLE

Ed is a maintenance man for a 40-floor, high-rise tower block, where he goes to work every day. Meanwhile, at home, he is building an extension to his house. Before going home at the end of each day, he goes down into the underground basement of the tower block and chisels out 3 or 4 bricks, puts them in his bag, and goes home, and he uses the bricks on his house extension, and in this way he saves a bit of money. This has been going on for a few months, when big cracks appear high up in the building. The engineers are called and they discover significant and dangerous undermining of the foundations.

Our theme in this paper is about foundations; not foundations of a building, but foundations for human rights, and the role of reason and revelation in those foundations.

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Rights are co-relative to obligations - to every right there is a corresponding obligation:

You have a right to my doing X to you, if I have an obligation to do X to you.

You have a right to my refraining from doing Y to you, if I have an obligation to refrain from doing Y to you.

Yale University philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff, provides the following definitions:

I think of justice as constituted of rights: a society is just insofar as its members enjoy the goods to which they have a right. And I think of rights as ultimately grounded in what respect for the worth of persons and human beings requires.¹

Theologian, John Stott states:

Human rights describe the kind of life a human being should be able to expect by virtue of being human, rather than rights which people may have by virtue of being citizens of a country or having signed a contract for sale, which are special human rights.²

The concept of human rights recognises that for me to live the good life, the flourishing life, it does not depend on me alone, but also on the actions, and restraints from actions, of others towards me. Human rights are based on the worth of a person, and therefore the respect that person is due on account of being human. Conversely, to wrong a human being is to treat them in a way that is disrespectful of their worth. Wolterstorff writes,

I will argue that it is on account of her worth that the other comes into my presence bearing legitimate claims against me as to how I treat her. The rights of the other against me are actions and restraints from action that due respect for her worth requires of me. To fail to treat her as she has a right to my treating her is to demean her, to treat her as if

¹. Wolterstorff, Nicholas, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, Princeton University Press (Location 295), (Kindle edition), 2008.

². Stott, John, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th Edition, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2006, p. 189.

she had less worth than she does. To spy on her for prurient reasons, to insult her, to torture her, to bad-mouth her, is to demean her.³

HUMAN RIGHTS TALK

While having many antecedents in previous centuries, articulation of human rights developed in the 20th Century, a milestone being reached with the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴, in the wake of the horrors of two world wars. Although the participants who formulated and ratified the UN Declaration of Human Rights came from a wide variety of religious and philosophical backgrounds, the document itself, along with continuing development of discussion around human rights, is not without controversy. In particular, the suspicion endures that the concept of human rights emerged and belongs to highly individualistic societies and expresses possessive individualism⁵.

In response, it can be said that rights are not just about how you treat me, but also about how I treat you. Wolterstorff argues,

The situation is entirely symmetrical. Rights and the recognition of rights, including natural rights, has nothing to do with possessive individualism.... An ethos of possessive individualism distorts our ways of dealing

³. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, p. 5.

⁴. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

⁵. In contrast, see The Organisation for Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) 1990 'Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.'

<https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/FMRpdfs/Human-Rights/cairo.pdf>

with rights – not the rights themselves but our ways of dealing with them. Instead of being as sensitive to your rights as I am to my own, I stridently claim my own rights and ride rough-shod over yours.⁶

Another charge against human rights talk is that what is presented as ‘universal’ human rights, is often a Western secular vision of human rights. Divergent visions of human flourishing and consequent human rights jostle for position within the West as well as between the West and other cultures of the world. British Christian writer, Roy McCloughry, has said,

If God has not given something as a right, then it cannot be claimed as a right and it is this that may cause Christians to be at odds with those who root human rights in the Western ideal of the autonomous individual who has freedom to choose their own goals.⁷

In a similar vein, Muslim scholar, Maria Massi Dakake writes,

Islamic ethics and social norms are often judged in relation to modern Western notions of ethics and human rights, which in recent centuries have been dominated philosophically by secular and individualistic perspectives and have come, in the last century, to be seen in the West as synonymous with ‘universal’ ethical norms or ‘universal’ standards of human rights. Although Islamic ethical norms have much in common with those of Christianity and other traditional cultures, they also

⁶. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, p. 385.

⁷. op. cit., Stott, John, 2006, p. 199.

differ profoundly in certain key aspects from the secular formulation of these norms in the contemporary West.⁸

Finally, Seyyed Hossein Nasr offers wise words of advice:

If human rights are related to love of humanity, they must be combined with humility, not hubris ... Anything less than mutual respect in understanding the other side makes a sham of the question of human rights. And when the issue of human rights is used as a tool for policy by Western powers, it tends to nullify the efforts of those in the West who, with sincerity and good intention, are seeking to help others all over the globe to preserve the dignity of human life, a belief that not only Muslims, Christians, and those from other religions, but also many secularists have.⁹

However, although what constitutes human rights is an ongoing matter of disagreement, even more significant is the matter of a basis or a foundation for human rights, which I want to look at now.

A FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN Declaration of Human Rights in its preamble declares:

⁸. Dakake, Maria Massi, *Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society*, in (ed.), Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, HarperOne, (Kindle edition), p. 1785.

⁹. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*, Harper, San Francisco, 2004, p. 290.

The peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women¹⁰

However, it provides no basis for this faith. Perhaps that is beyond its scope, and of course, obtaining wide agreement on a basis for human rights, dignity and worth would no doubt have proved impossible. Nevertheless, this lack of a basis is a problem. Many secular people¹¹ are very active and passionate in campaigning for human rights – often more so than religious people. But their problem is with the *why* question, with establishing an adequate foundation for human rights.

Secular notions of human rights provide no reason why humans should have rights, they do not answer the question why all humans have certain inalienable rights. Nicholas Wolterstorff comments:

Present-day discussions by philosophers about morality in general, and human rights in particular, are haunted by Nietzsche's challenge. Is it possible, without reference to God, to identify something about each and every human being that gives him or her a dignity adequate for grounding human rights?

¹⁰. <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>

¹¹. I am aware that the word 'secular' and its cognates have varying connotations in different social and political contexts. I use 'secular' in this paper for people who have no religious affiliation or belief.

Wolterstorff concludes: "It is impossible to develop a secular account of human dignity adequate for grounding human rights."¹²

If this universe has happened by chance, by an unguided set of random events, what meaning is there to life, to good and evil? If humans are the product of undirected evolutionary processes, why does it matter if the strong devour the weak? Why is a human life worth more than a monkey or a mosquito? Why should I treat another human being with respect? Why shouldn't I torture or kill him if I have the power, and if I perceive it would advance my interests to do so?

Adolf Hitler is reputed to have said, "I do not see why man should not be just as cruel as nature." Hitler applied his brand of Social Darwinism to the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, disabled people and others. The fittest survived, and those deemed unworthy of survival perished violently. If there is no God, then there is no ultimate standard of right and wrong, good and evil, and there is no basis for refuting Hitler's position. As Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote: "Without God and the future life ... everything is permitted, one can do anything."¹³ Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes:

In today's world everyone speaks of human rights and the sacred character of human life, and many secularists even claim that they are the true champions of human rights as against those who accept various religious worldviews.

¹² op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, pp. 324-25.

¹³ Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Brothers Karamazov*, quoted in Keller, Timothy, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical*, John Murray Press, (Kindle edition), 2016, p. 177.

But strangely enough, often those same champions of humanity believe that human beings are *nothing more* than evolved apes, who in turn evolved from lower life forms and ultimately from various compounds of molecules. If the human being is *nothing but* the result of 'blind forces' acting upon the original cosmic soup of molecules, then is not the very statement of the sacredness of human life intellectually meaningless and nothing but a hollow sentimental expression? Is not human dignity nothing more than a conveniently contrived notion without basis in reality? And if we are *nothing but* highly organized inanimate particles, what is the basis to claims of 'human rights'?¹⁴

If, on the other hand, there is a God, One God, who possesses the attributes recognised in the Abrahamic faiths, a God who is eternal, infinite, the Maker and Owner of the entire universe, including every human being, a God whose own character and actions are consistently and perfectly just, righteous and good, and who requires that we, his human creation, be just, righteous and good - if there is such a God, then there is a universal reference point for right and wrong, for good and evil, there is an ultimate authority for morality and ethics, an ultimate bar of appeal for justice. Essential also is that this God has revealed to humans the purpose of human life and how humans are to fulfil that purpose, and also that God will one day call humans to account.

Polytheism does not provide this basis because of rivalry among the gods. Atheism does not provide it, because if there is no God,

¹⁴. op. cit., Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 2004, (emphasis mine), p. 275.

there is no ultimate authority to appeal to, just many, often conflicting, human authorities. Richard Dawkins, Britain's most well-known atheist, cites studies which found that most people from different parts of the world, with varying religious beliefs or none, have similar moral principles, with variations only in minor details. He concludes from this that people do not need God in order to be good.¹⁵

The problem is that people aren't always good. And individuals or societies might deviate from what one considers are moral norms. What is more, they may give justifications for these deviations - "these people are sub-human", "they are evolutionarily inferior and due to die out; it's the survival of the fittest", or Adolf Hitler's, "I do not see why man should not be just as cruel as nature."

When people say these kind of things, what basis do we have for saying they are wrong? If there is no ultimate authority, no ultimate court of appeal, no God, then it is simply their opinion against mine, and there is no means of arbitration, no means of deciding what is truly right and wrong. I remember a conversation I once had with a young man at a wedding. He told me he didn't believe in God but believed strongly in feminism. I said to him, 'Men are on average physically stronger than women. Why according to your world-view shouldn't men abuse and be violent towards women?' He had no answer beyond that that was his strongly held opinion. Timothy Keller puts it like this:

¹⁵. Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion* (Black Swan, London, 2006), pp. 254-58. The New Testament/Injil accounts for this similarity in morals across diverse peoples by stating that the requirements of God's law are written on the hearts and consciences of all people (Romans 2:14-15) - whether they recognise the source of that law or not.

Anyone can say, 'feel this is right to do, and so that is how I will act.' The 'moral source' in this case is a feeling within. However, on the secular view of reality, how can anyone ever say to anyone else, 'This is right (or wrong) for you to do, whether you feel it or not'? You can never say that to someone else unless there is a moral source outside them that they must honour. If there is an omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely good God, he himself, or his law, could be that moral source. If there is no God, however, it creates a great problem in that there doesn't appear to be an alternative moral source that exists outside of our inner feelings and intuitions. Therefore, while there can be moral feelings and convictions without God, it doesn't appear that there can be moral obligation—objective, moral "facts" that exist whether you feel them or not.¹⁶

But if there is a God, a God as described or revealed in the Abrahamic tradition, a God who is just, righteous, all-seeing, all-knowing; One whose supreme worth and excellence are based on his eternity, his infiniteness and his underived-ness; a God who created all things, who is their rightful Owner and Lord, and who holds all accountable - then there is a sure foundation for concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, justice, and indeed, for human rights.

In addition to a theistic world-view, an adequate basis for human rights requires a view of human dignity and worth. A world-view

¹⁶ Keller, Timothy, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical*, John Murray Press, (Kindle edition), 2016, pp. 177-78.

which recognised a Creator God but held that humans possessed no intrinsic value would not provide a sufficient basis for human rights. Conversely, for humans to have true worth, that worth must be grounded somewhere. If you remove the foundation from the tower-block, you are heading for trouble! Wolterstorff writes,

An option that is not available is holding that there are natural rights inherent to a worth possessed by all human beings, but that this worth has no ground, no properties or relationships on which it supervenes. That makes no sense. Worth cannot just float free; always there has to be something that gives the entity such worth as it has, some property, achievement, or relationship on which its worth supervenes.¹⁷

We will deal with the grounds of human worth which form a basis for human rights in the next section.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

I want to present a theistic basis for human rights from a Christian perspective.¹⁸ Most of what I say, however, will be based on material from the Holy Scriptures, and in particular the Torah, which in my view are the shared Scriptures and heritage of

¹⁷. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, p. 341.

¹⁸. A number of Muslim scholars have argued for a theistic basis for human rights, finding sources in the Qur'an, the *Hadith* and the *Sirah* of the Prophet. See Qadri, Muhammad Tahir ul-, *Peace, Integration and Human Rights*, Minhaj ul-Quran Publications, London, 2010; Dakake, Maria Massi, *Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society* (ed.), op. cit., Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 2015, pp. 1785-1804.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam.¹⁹ Particular attention will be paid to the creation narrative in the Torah, in Genesis 1-2, and the ground it provides for human dignity and equality and human rights. A key passage is the account of the creation of humankind.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind²⁰ in our image, according to our likeness. Let them rule over the fish in the sea, over the birds in the sky, over the animals and over all the earth, and over everything that moves on the earth.' So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, and over all the land animals.'²¹

This passage is set within the account of creation in Genesis (1:1-2:3). The narrative is arranged in a seven-day pattern with creation taking place over a six-day period²². On the sixth day, God created all kinds of land animals, and then humankind. The fact that the day is the same suggests the creatureliness of

¹⁹. See the Qur'an's testimony regarding the earlier books in, for example, *Āl-Imrān* (3:3-4, 84), *An-Nisā'* (4:136), *Al-Mā'idah* (5:46-47, 68). See Saeed, Abdullah, 'How Muslims view the Scriptures of the People of the Book: Towards a Reassessment', chapter 10 in *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Dialogue, and Transformation*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, (Kindle edition).

²⁰. The word I have translated 'humankind' is actually *ādām* in the original Hebrew text. This is the name of the first man: Adam. In Hebrew, the word can also refer to an individual human being or to humanity as a race. I will alternate between 'humankind' and 'humans'.

²¹. Genesis 1:26-28 (my translation). A helpful treatment of this passage can be found in Macleod, Donald, *A Faith to Live By: Understanding Christian Doctrine*, CFP, Fearn, Ross-shire, 2002, pp. 95-106.

²². Whether these 'days' were intended to be understood literally or otherwise need not detain us here.

humans. We are not utterly distinct from the rest of creation, we are creatures along with them, and so we share many affinities and are similar in many ways. However, what the account emphasises is what makes humankind distinct from the rest of creation, and this is highlighted in the description of God's creating humans.

GOD'S IMAGE AND LIKENESS

God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness'

Humans are not God, or the same as God, but in some ways, they reflect God, just as what you see in a mirror is not you, but a reflection of you. Only humans are said to be made in God's image and likeness. This concept is not alien to Islam. Surah *al-Baqarah*, 2:30 refers to Prophet Adam as *khalifah*, often translated 'vicegerent'²³. But what does it mean to be made in the image and likeness of God? It is connected to ruling: *'Let them rule over the fish in the sea, over the birds in the sky, over the animals and over all the earth, and over everything that moves on the earth.'* But this rule is the consequence, not the content of their being made in the image/likeness of God. The force of the statement is, 'Let us make

²³. op. cit., Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (ed.), 2015, p. 21. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, IDCI, Birmingham, 2007. Seyyed Hossein Nasr speaks of humans beings made in the "image or "form" of God, op. cit., Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 2004, p. 303. Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri writes, "The divine revelation expounded the dignity of the human being and his esteemed position above the rest of creation". He then quotes Qur'an (17:70), "And we have indeed ennobled the children of Adam". Qadri, Muhammad Tahir ul-, *Peace, Integration and Human Rights*, Minhaj ul-Quran Publications, London, 2010.

humankind in our image... so that they may rule...' So it is the capacity to rule not the exercising of that rule.

Arguably, being made in the image and likeness of God includes everything in humans that is distinct from other creatures and that corresponds in some way to what God is like. In particular, we can identify the following attributes of human beings in the surrounding narrative.

A SPIRITUAL BEING

In Genesis (1:28) we read, "God said *to* them..." Already Genesis has identified God as a speaking Being. He speaks things into existence. But here, for the first time, God speaks directly *to* some part of his creation. He speaks *to* these humans. This tells us much about ourselves. Humans were made to hear God speak and understand what He says. And humans were given the ability to respond by speaking back.

God's speaking to these first humans tells us that we alone, as humans, are made for special relationship with God. He has made us with the potential to hear His voice, to receive His revelation. And God has made us with the ability to respond back in prayer and worship. We are loved by God and called to respond in love to him. In other words, humans are spiritual beings. We are religious beings with an awareness of our Maker. Of course, in our present state, that awareness can be suppressed or distorted, but it is nonetheless there.

A little further on in the Torah, in Genesis (5:1-3), we read:

When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them, and he named them 'humankind' when they were created.

When Adam was 130 years old, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.

This tells us that being in the image and likeness of someone includes the idea of son-ship. Prophet Adam, and by extension, the whole of humanity, are children of God by virtue of the fact that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. This is clearly not a physical, biological son-ship, because Adam was created by God from the earth, and Adam's offspring all had human fathers. A clear distinction is made in Genesis 5 between God and Adam in the verbs that are used. In v1, God create (ברא / *bārā'*) mankind, and makes (אשה / *'āsāh*) them, whereas in v3, Adam has or begets (ילד / *yālād*) a son²⁴.

A SOCIAL BEING

We are also created for relationship with other humans. '*... in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them*'. This tells us that male and female is the fundamental distinction within the human race, and also that male and female humans, whatever distinguishes them from each other, are equally dignified as being made in God's image. Of course, other animals are also male and female, but it is only specifically mentioned of humans. In Genesis 2, we have a second parallel and complimentary account of creation, in which we are told that in

²⁴. It is thus not necessary to see a contradiction here between the Torah and the Qur'an, when the latter asserts that God 'begets not, nor was He begotten' *Surah Al-Ikhlās* (112:3).

all God's creation which he had pronounced 'good', there was one thing that was not good:

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."²⁵

God proceeds to make woman. He institutes marriage with the words,

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh.²⁶

But she is also the solution to his alone-ness. Humans are created social beings.²⁷

²⁵. Genesis 2:18

²⁶. Genesis 2:24. See also Qur'an, *Al-A'raf* (7:189), "It is He (*Allah*) Who created you from a single person and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love)."

²⁷. In relation to this, God uses plural pronouns in creating humans: 'Let us make humankind in our image...' Unlike English, Arabic and some other languages, Hebrew does not have a 'majestic' plural where a singular person or being uses the plural form, so it is noteworthy that the One Creator God speaks using the plural form when creating humans. Some have suggested that God is speaking to the angels, but angels do not appear anywhere in this creation account, and angels are nowhere said to be co-creators with God. Many Christian commentators see a suggestion here of plurality within the One God, developed in later Scripture and in Christian tradition, and that humans as communal beings reflect community within the One God. See for example, Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (I.13.24, I.15.3), (ed.), McNiell, John T., Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960. Letham, Robert, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology and Worship*, P & R, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 2004, p. 19-21. Macleod, Donald, *A Faith to Live By: Understanding Christian Doctrine*, CFP, Fearn, Ross-shire, 2002, p. 51.

A MORAL BEING

In the creation account of Genesis 2, we read:

*And the LORD God commanded the man: 'You may eat from every tree in the garden. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'*²⁸

The fruit of this tree was a sign or symbol for Adam. It reminded him that God is the One who decides what is good, and what is evil. This tree represented God's moral authority. If Adam were to eat from this tree, as indeed he does go on to do, he would be disobeying God's command. That would mean that Adam was rejecting God's authority, appointing himself as the one who decided what was good and what was evil for him, declaring his autonomy from God.

Adam, and later Eve, were created perfect. They were part of God's original creation which God said was 'very good'.²⁹ But God created humans with a will – to choose obedience to God, or disobedience. God is the supreme moral Being. He is good and righteous, and He made humans moral beings. He made humans upright, uniquely like God in that they have awareness of right and wrong. He also made humans with a free will, with real choice to choose good or evil.

²⁸. Genesis 2:16-17.

²⁹. Genesis 1:31.

CREATED TO RULE

In Genesis 1:26, 28, God gives humans the task of ruling over the rest of creation.

'... Let them rule over the fish in the sea, over the birds in the sky, over the animals and over all the earth, and over everything that moves on the earth.'... God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, and over all the land animals.'

God is the supreme Ruler over His creation, but he delegates rule to humans. Adam is a *khalifah*.³⁰ Douglas and Jonathan Moo put it well, that, the image of God means being placed into a particular set of relationships with God, each other, and the rest of creation, for the purpose of ruling as his royal representatives.³¹

Ancient Egyptian and Assyrian texts describe the king as the image of God³². The Torah extends this to every human being, male and female. Our task of ruling over and subduing the earth is expressed in many different activities such as farming, building, arts, science, technology, education and study. The command to subdue the earth should not be taken as a *carte blanche* to exploit, pollute and destroy the earth. In Genesis 2:15, we are told:

³⁰. Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30).

³¹. Moo, Douglas J, & Moo, Jonathan A, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2018, p. 74.

³². Wenham, Gordon J, *Word Bible Commentary: Genesis 1-15*, Word, Waco, Texas, 1987, p. 30.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

The Hebrew word translated 'work' is עָבַד /*abad*, which can also mean serve, and the word שָׁמַר /*shamar* translated 'take care' has the connotation of guarding, keeping, preserving and protecting.³³ So the human relationship to the rest of creation should be one of careful stewardship. Wolterstorff identifies a difficulty: if being made in the image of God to a large extent involves the capacity to rule over the rest of creation, where does that leave small children, those with dementia or other serious mental impairments? Are they outside the category of 'made in God's image'? His solution is that even in the case of those humans who never have the capacity to exercise dominion, they still have human nature.

And that nature is such that the mature and properly formed possessors of that nature resemble God with respect to their capacities for exercising dominion... Something may have gone awry with human nature in one's own case, so that one lacks those capacities; but one does not, on that account, lack human nature.³⁴

It could be added that to some extent, even young children and the mentally impaired can exercise dominion. A toddler might paint a picture, an elderly person with dementia tap out a rhythm and sing along. Even the most intelligent non-human species do not engage in these kinds of activities. Jesus the Messiah, quoting Psalm 8, once said,

³³. op. cit., Moo, Douglas J, & Moo, Jonathan A, 2018, p. 78.

³⁴. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, p. 350.

From the lips of children and infants, you, Lord, have called forth your praise.³⁵

This seems to indicate that even pre-weaned children (the literal meaning of ‘infants’) are spiritual beings with the capacity to worship their Maker.

HUMAN WORTH AND DIGNITY

Even a cursory reading of the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2 will leave the reader with the impression that human beings are distinct and special, part of creation but also the apex of God’s creation. Later Scripture, referring back to the creation account, sees humans as possessing great worth because they are made in the image and likeness of the Being of infinite worth, namely God.

In Genesis 9:5-6, after the flood, God says to the Prophet Noah and his sons:

And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

This is significant, because the context of God’s statement here is after the ‘Fall’ as a result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and after the human race has sunk deep into corruption and

³⁵. Matthew 21:16, *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, Biblica, 2011.

violence, where God states that, '*every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.*'³⁶ This passage declares the sanctity of human life. Murder is so serious that death is to be meted out as punishment. And the reason given is because God has made humankind in the image of God. The prohibition against murder is grounded in the worth of a human being, regardless of age, race, ability or any other distinguishing feature.

In the New Testament (*injl*), humans being made in God's likeness is invoked in James 3:9-10:

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

James exposes the incongruity of praising God and cursing human beings, because humans are made in God's likeness. Being made in God's likeness bestows great worth on any and every human being, such that to curse someone is to demean that worth. Again, this applies to all human beings without qualification. Here is Wolterstorff again on the connection between human worth and human rights:

From our discussion of rights there emerged a fundamental principle of action: one should never treat persons or human beings as if they had less worth than they do have; one should never treat them with under-respect, never demean them. Once this principle is formulated and held up for attention, it occurs to us that

³⁶. Genesis 8:21, *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, Biblica, 2011.

it is but an application of the more general principle that one should never treat anything whatsoever as of less worth than it is.³⁷

OUTWORKING IN LATER SCRIPTURES

Subsequent Scripture is full of concern for justice and in particular, the rights³⁸ of the most vulnerable in society – widows, orphans, the poor and foreigners. Often it is the prophets who confront the Israelites, and their kings, with their failure to live up to God's requirements of justice and righteousness.³⁹ In fact, it was against the background of the failure of Israel's kings to rule with justice and righteousness that the hope developed of the eschatological Messianic king who would *reign on David's throne and over his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever.*⁴⁰

Space does not permit a survey of later Scripture, nor of the teaching of Jesus the Messiah on justice and rights. Suffice for now that Jesus the Messiah extended the obligation to 'love your neighbour as yourself'⁴¹ to loving even one's enemies:

³⁷. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, p. 370.

³⁸. Under 2, 'Definitions...' above, I quote Nicholas Wolterstorff for a brief working definition of justice and rights, "I think of justice as constituted of rights: a society is just insofar as its members enjoy the goods to which they have a right. And I think of rights as ultimately grounded in what respect for the worth of persons and human beings requires".

³⁹. An excellent survey can be found in Wright, Christopher J. H., *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 2004, pp. 253-80.

⁴⁰. Isaiah 9:7 (my translation). See also Luke 1:32-33.

⁴¹. Mark 12:28-31.

*But I say this to you who are listening: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.*⁴²

In relation to an enemy who has wronged me, I have a duty to forgive, but he does not have a right to be forgiven. However, if God (speaking through the Messiah, Jesus) has commanded me to forgive and love my enemies, I have an obligation to God to do that, and it is God who has the right to me obeying him by forgiving and loving my enemies.⁴³

CONCLUSION

Human rights are rooted in the dignity and worth of every human being. But where does that worth come from? It cannot be free floating – we cannot say human beings have great worth ... because human beings have great worth. Human worth must be based on something. Secular world-views, with their dismissal of God, do not provide an adequate basis for human worth and human rights. By contrast, a theistic world-view, as presented in the Torah, with its view that human beings are made in the image of God, the Being of ultimate and infinite worth, provides a firm foundation for human dignity and rights.

⁴². Luke 6:27-28 (my translation). See also the famous 'Parable of the Good Samaritan' in Luke 10:25-37.

⁴³. op. cit., Wolterstorff, 2008, pp. 383-84.

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AN ANGLOPHONE LEGAL CULTURE
FOR THE GLOBAL AGE:
Religion and Values in Conflict with Civilian and Islamic Laws

Joseph P. Garske

ABSTRACT:

Each of the three historic legal traditions, Anglophone, Civilian, and Islamic represents a very different premise of underlying values, especially those values expressed in supernatural or religious terms. Islam, with its universal values, makes no clear distinction between the realm of law by which practical affairs of the world are conducted and the divine tenets by which all men and women are admonished to live. The Civil law resembles Islamic practice in that traditionally it has also been based on universal values that were thought to provide equitable and humane standards applicable to all persons. Like Islam it has also encouraged a high level of personal cultivation as an aid to public order. However, its founding doctrines are based on the purely secular constructions of human rationality. Anglophone law is fundamentally different from the other two legal methods in several important ways. First, as a transcendent regimen it operates elevated above the public and is insulated from public understanding by a division of knowledge. Rather than an atmosphere of obligation or enculturation its pragmatic values allow for a wide freedom of personal behaviour within limits set down by authority. Historically, its legitimacy among the public has rested on an atmosphere of religiosity that conferred an aura of sanctity on its institutions of judicial rule and instilled faith in their procedures.

These differences between the three great legal traditions take on an added importance as the project of globalization becomes increasingly Anglicized: the principles and methods of Civil law are being subsumed by a process of convergence while Islamic practice is being reconstructed in ways to fit it within the definitions of a tolerated religion. Presiding over a global public of diverse culture and ethnicity Anglophone law rests on instrumental values expressed as a twin premise: the *Rule of Law* over all persons and things, and the uniform enforcement of *Human Rights* for each individuated legal person.

1. GLOBAL VALUES

a) GLOBAL PROJECT

The project to construct a regimen of global law involves institutions and issues, precedents and procedures, evolving legal doctrines and judicial practices. It engages a world of conflicting legal orders, of territorial states, and international jurisdictions. It takes place in a technological atmosphere of computer networks, media communication, of multi-national finance and trade. The project involves matters of diplomacy, regulation, legislation, commercial practice, criminality, and warfare. Constructing a legal order of such complexity and extensiveness requires enormous effort on the part of highly trained experts as well as persons with a broad understanding of global affairs.

Those involved in this undertaking come from the most diverse assortment of ethnic and geographic origin. But more importantly for legal purposes they come from either of the two Western methods of law, Civilian and Anglophone--or their derivatives around the world--or from the still widely influential Islamic

tradition. Yet, from such variegated origins the scholars, jurists, and practitioners involved must attempt to establish a workable commonality by which to proceed in their task. They must be generally agreed upon an end result that provides both a uniform and a workable framework for global governance. (Slobodian 2018)

A peaceful order that includes all peoples in all regions of the earth has long been the dream of prophets and philosophers, but in the twenty-first century it has become a real and tangible possibility. Much of the unified purpose shared by those involved in the work comes from a common regimen of specialized training they have received that qualifies them to take part in this massive project. That training has equipped them with knowledge of the requisite legal language, its specialized vocabulary, an assortment of advanced concepts, and applicable methods. Finally, joined together by an ethic that expresses their high purpose and provides their work with an assured legitimacy, they are able to engage the monumental task of building a global regimen of law. (Slaughter 2004)

b) TWIN PURPOSE

Because of the obvious need for a cooperative atmosphere in this legal project of globalization and the need for acceptance among a global public, the method and purpose that predominates in this great undertaking, along with the ethos that guides its participants has come to be expressed in terms of clear and understandable values. That is, both the underlying values of the project as a whole and the professed values that guide its participants are clearly and frequently expressed in succinct and easily understood terms. (Kennedy 2016)

Despite differences of opinion on minor issues, despite debate between schools of thought, or rivalry between institutions and nationalities, inevitable in a project of such massive scale, there exists at least two agreed upon aspirations that combine to provide the common purpose of their global work. The two elements, frequently affirmed by scholars and jurists and announced to the public, also form the twin premise by which those involved define their work. Those values are a seamlessly established global *Rule of Law* over all persons and things in every region of the world, and along with that, the guaranteed enforcement of *Human Rights* for every individuated legal person existing on the earth. (Habermas 2001)

These aims are so widely promulgated and readily agreed upon that they form more of an assumed background to the topic of global law than the substance of its discussion. Like the phenomena of technological development they are assumed to be simply occurring as part of an uninterrupted advancement leading into the future. They appear in conversation as obvious givens, beyond question, taken almost to be inevitable fixtures of human aspiration. The idea of legal rule has become a casual part of the global project even though its deeper implications may go unrecognized. The idea of rights is also reflexively accepted, without examination, as an indisputable good. Yet, when taken in the abstract neither term provides any specific understanding of what it actually might mean in a context of global rule or in its practical application to a global population. (Breyer 2015 & Dworkin 2013)

c) THREE TRADITIONS

When examined closely, in fact, these objectives are seen not only as the end result of the global project, they are also overriding values that guide the project itself. As such, they are remarkable in several ways. First of all, they are not ultimate values, but are merely instrumental in scope. They make no reference to divine origin, nor do they claim the imprimatur of any religious authority, or any apparent basis in an idea of human nature or human potential—except perhaps the unstated assumption that human beings must necessarily be ruled over and that rights are a beneficent good. When examined closely they have little necessarily to do with any larger purpose beyond the practical necessity of ordering human life and establishing the legal instruments which will be part of that process. Actually, these global objectives did not always exist, nor were they recently conceived by those involved in the global project. Instead, in their current usage, they are self-referential to a specific type of legal order rooted in the Anglophone past.

Taken within the context of the three great legal traditions, Anglophone, Civilian, and Islamic, these specific values represent a certain way of ordering human affairs. Yet, beyond that, there is still the question as to why these particular values prevail in the project to construct a system of global law instead of, for example, the values of fairness and openness, or conciliation, or of being easily intelligible and freely accessible. It was quite natural that the English language law would assume its role as vanguard and exemplar in a legal regimen that will prevail among all peoples in all regions of the earth. After all, being malleable and adaptable in its approach, it was unimpeded by the fixed doctrines and rigid logic of Civilian practice. Moreover, in a world shaped by

constantly advancing technological innovation, electronic realities, and mediated contact between persons, it was free of the deeply imbued anchor of direct human engagement so basic to Islamic *Sharia*. (Amanat 2007)

In the global project the many practices of Civil law are being subsumed by an enveloping legal regimen that is pragmatic and utilitarian, adaptable to changing circumstance. At the same time the Islamic way of life is being reconstructed, reconceived and redefined in ways that will make it a tolerable religion. Yet, to understand not only how this is happening, but also why it is happening, perhaps the greatest problem is one of perspective. Because the project involves all persons in all parts of the world, there is no detached vantage place from which to examine its processes. Thus, to understand this project and the three great traditions involved in its construction—and the tandem of values that shape it—the first problem is to find a way to gain perspective. One approach is to understand the values that define the global project by examining their historic origin, to understand how they are born of logical necessity from a certain method of law that has come to predominate in the global age. (Habermas 2008)

2. ANCIENT ORIGINS

a) CIVILIAN

Perhaps the most remarkable commonality of the three historic traditions of law is that they each may claim an originating source within a single geographic expanse, a single historical milieu. This general region included both Mesopotamia and Phoenicia of remote antiquity and is often viewed in a religious sense as the

birthplace of the three great Abrahamic Religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But in the global age this unity of history and geography is perhaps more important as the source of another influence that shapes the global age: the three widely influential traditions of law. Because of these elements of common origin it is inevitable that each of these strands of legal development has either assimilated to, reacted against, or in some way been shaped by the others. Although these connections may have occurred centuries or even millennia ago, some of those interactions have an impact into the modern world that can still be easily traced. (Wolff 1982)

This legal genesis reaches back to ancient Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria, with survivals into Persia during the fourth and third centuries BC. Later, during the Roman period this tradition became important as merchant law and what was called the *jus gentium*, or law of peoples, an alien customary law that operated independently of Roman administration. During that time the Mediterranean city of Berytus (Modern Beirut, Lebanon) emerged as a centre of study that attempted to assimilate that Syriac-Aramaic law to the Latinic law of the Roman Empire. Legal codes produced there became highly influential, especially after about 200 AD, as the City of Rome went into decline, and after 300AD when a new imperial capital was founded at Constantinople (Modern Istanbul). Two centuries later, around 500 AD the scholar Tribonian was summoned from Berytus to the new imperial city where he presided over the compilation of the famous Code of Justinian. That work took its Latin title, *Codex Justinianus*, both from the name of the Emperor who commissioned it and the new format in which it was published; instead of the scroll it was issued as a *codex*, or bound book. (Ong 2003)

Ironically, the promulgation of that law from the imperial capital proved to be a complete failure and the entire project was quickly forgotten. But five centuries later, a copy of the legal text was taken from an Italian archive to the city of Bologna, Italy, where, in 1088, a university was founded. The purpose of the scholars assembled there was to resurrect the ancient Roman law and to derive from its sophisticated precepts the rudiments of a legal order for a backward and agrarian domain. Those labours would eventually produce a medieval law for Christendom called the *jus commune*. Bologna was the first of the historic European universities that would later become centres for the study not only of law, but also the surviving heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the principles of philosophy and theology. Over time, advanced learning from the Islamic world was also included, not only in medicine and the physical sciences, but also especially in philosophy. In part, it was because of the disputation caused by these philosophical teachings from Persia and Andalusia, and the unity of knowledge arising out of them, that the great Christian edifice eventually began to break down. Later as that scholastic paradigm was displaced by a modern scientific *Methodus*, the *jus commune* was also superseded by a non-religious Civil law tradition, the *Jus Civile*. (Barker 1966)

Although European legal precepts would become avowedly secular, in fact, they built upon a pattern of law and learning that had originated in medieval Christianity. One benefit of that heritage was that the legal premise of Europe came to be based on values and aspirations that were instructed to all the population, whatever rank, high or low. Moreover, the scholar remained at the centre of law and just as the theologian had presided over the life of Christendom, the philosopher became a central public figure in modern times.

b) ISLAMIC

What came to be known as the *Sharia* began to take shape in the century following the time of Justinian. In fact, much of the story of the development of Islamic law can be written as a reaction against and an alternative to the Justinian system, a system that worked through a policy of *in terrorem*, judicial terror, combined with a strictly enforced religious obeisance. Unfortunately, the imposition of that highly centralized method of rule was extreme in its brutality, causing much conflict and suffering, and provoking widespread resistance among peoples both within and outside the borders of the Empire. For that reason, the invading Bedouins—who also revered the name of *Isa*, or *Yesu*--were not only resisted as conquerors, but also often welcomed as liberators. In fact, the way of life imposed by the *Nova Roma*, or New Rome, had provoked rebellion and uprising on many fronts; Arabia was only one source of these numerous outbreaks. (Hallaq 2010)

The original Empire of Rome had a long history and, despite lapses into corruption and tyranny, had originally been founded on the very humane tenets of Stoic philosophy. Those principles recognized the various traditional forms of tribal ritual and custom to be merely different expressions of a universal human impulse to venerate the divinity of the universe. In the Stoic view the main function of the Empire was military—stated in the martial principle of *Imperium*--to maintain peace between the many tribes and peoples and to guard against foreign invasion. In fact, the Romans encouraged the customs and rituals of the tribes and kingdoms as sources of cohesion and stability within the various regions of the Empire. For the Stoics, culture in terms of human cultivation in thought, word, and deed was the only

true foundation for peace and order. But under the new model of empire, after 300AD the philosophers were driven into exile, their schools made illegal, and the light of their teachings was extinguished. The New Rome ruled on the legal principle of *Dominium*, the imposition of direct judicial authority over every person and thing within the Empire, mobilized for the production of wealth. (Hadot 2002 & Erskine 1990)

To a certain extent the teachings of Mohammed carried the same spirit as that of the old Stoics, especially the emphasis on personal cultivation. Islam set forth a daily routine of prayer, a calendar of holy days, and the requirement of pilgrimage, all of which, when taken together, defined a way of life. But Mohammed also had the instrument of the *codex*, or book, that made possible a uniform widespread mnemonic culture, in a single language, and in a way the cumbersome scroll could not. It might be said that whereas Justinian had employed the book to impose a uniform judicial rule on a slavish population—from the top down, by contrast, Mohammed used the book to raise the understanding of a tribal population—from the bottom up. The *Prophet* taught a unity of the divine as an advance on the many deities represented at the *Kaaba*. Similarly, the practices of *Sharia* carried forward the spirit of conciliation and harmony that, despite differences of language and outward form, was already a commonality throughout the traditional world. Ultimately, those methods of justice and mercy, of sacredness and practicality, came to be standardized and memorized across a vast territory and a growing multitude of followers. (Donner 2010)

c) ANGLOPHONE

What came to be called the Common law of England was also born out of the context in which the Justinian Code was first being promulgated from the University at Bologna to all of medieval Christendom. Following the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 AD King William I was able to establish a highly centralized and punitive form of Kingship on his inescapable island domain. Although the Kingdom of England, as part of the Christian world, was nominally governed according to the medieval *jus commune*, William also established three exceptional Royal Courts of Justice that served directly under his auspices. The original purpose of these courts was to oversee questions of land title and possession among the nobility. Land was of utmost importance at that time, because land was the primary form of wealth. Moreover, William actually resided in France while he ruled England as a distant servile kingdom, mainly useful as a source of revenue. Evidence of his efficient policies of seizure and impound from farmstead and village survive in the famous *Domesday* book, listing all chattels of a captive population. (Baker 2005)

Originally, the Three Royal Courts of Justice were presided over by judges trained in law at Bologna. But the judges had surrounded themselves with a retinue of scribes, servants, and messengers who assisted them in the mundane processes of litigation. In the practice of the time those functionaries joined themselves into guilds of trade by professing a strict oath of fraternal discipline, the medieval beginning of what would become the modern profession. A turning point occurred in 1166 when, in a dispute with King Henry II, the Royal Court justices were expelled. In their place the King granted a monopoly of trade to the court guildsmen allowing them to conduct legal

matters as a system of commerce in litigation. The guild members, only semi-literate and with only a perfunctory knowledge of legal methods, began to administer each of its courts as a regal sanctum. Theirs was a pragmatic approach, based on internal consensus, mostly unconstrained by established principle. Over time, the lay judges became virtual sovereign oracles, their recorded words taking on the authority of law. But by their close attachment to the absentee kings, their jurisdiction came to transcend all other forms of judicial authority within the realm. The Kings were pleased with the arrangement, because the guildsmen were self-supporting by the fees and gratuities they collected from the litigants, while a constant flow of fines, bails, and forfeitures poured into the Royal Treasury. (Coquillette 1999)

Inevitably, the law guildsmen harboured a special animus toward their most dangerous rivals, legal scholars at the universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Actually, at the time, their method of administering this parochial type of justice would not have been thought to constitute a legal science or a system of law, nor would their work have been viewed within any large framework of philosophy or theology. The guiding purpose of those joined together was to carry out the policies of the king and to reap a profit in doing so. Like any bureau or department, theirs developed internal practices and procedures over time, while their authority rested on the overawing majesty of royal prerogative. What eventually came to be recognized as an alternative tradition of law was originally merely a fraternal order of trade with its own internal rites, internal habits and ways established on the medieval pattern. Only later, after the Puritan Revolution of the seventeenth century, when the fellowship of Common law became part of the ruling hierarchy, did their ascendancy require an announced ethos in justification of their

rank and authority. They satisfied this need by defining themselves in the Calvinist judicial tradition that imagined itself extending back through Justinian to Berytus, and Mesopotamia, to Hammurabi, and even to the judicial priests, their Cuneiform progenitors at ancient Sumer. (Rosenblatt 2008 & Schochet 2008)

3. ULTIMATE AND UNIVERSAL

Over long centuries the three historic legal traditions inevitably borrowed from or acted upon one another—including the comparable use of religiosity in the expression of their underlying values. During the middle Ages a cosmopolitan and sophisticated Islam influenced a backward and insular Christendom in this way. Of particular importance were specific pivotal occasions, for example, during the reign of Charlemagne in the ninth century, the reign of Frederick II during the thirteenth century, and the era of Aristotelian—or Averroist—philosophy among the Scholastic philosophers of the medieval university. Finally, both periods of what historians call *The Renaissance* and *The Enlightenment* were profoundly affected by the Islamic world, including its conceptions of law. Just as *Sharia* scholars of Muslim Spain had influenced the Jesuit philosopher Francisco Suarez during the seventeenth century, they would, in turn, influence Leibnitz, Hume, Montesquieu, and Goethe during the eighteenth century. (Cardini 2001, Bevilacqua 2018 & Osterhammel 2018)

But from the beginning of the nineteenth century the direction of influence was reversed. European methods of law and learning, shaped by the *Age of Reason* began to be adopted within the Islamic world.

4. INSTRUMENTAL AND TRANSCENDENT

The relationship between law, religion, and values in the tradition of English law was shaped by a long historical process leading up to the present age. That process began with the Norman Conquest in 1066 when there was a close correlation in the general law of Christendom between ecclesiastical and secular governance. Law and religion were thought to be two halves of a single whole, with both spheres taught at the university as equal parts of the *jus commune*. Because of this correlation between the adjudicative and the educative, the legal and the religious, the medieval law of England was correlated with the values and norms that prevailed among the population – except within the Royal Courts of Justice. (Parish 2012)

Because England was governed for long periods of time mostly by absentee kings, the Royal Court lawyers were able to operate without close oversight. They enforced no code of law, operated outside limits of dogmatic principle, answered to no academic or ecclesiastic authority. Instead the Royal Courts existed as insular bureaus that followed by succession their own recorded practices. Their guiding ethos was necessarily to please their Royal Master and to exploit the commercial opportunities of their trade.

5. GLOBAL CHALLENGE

a) CONVERGENCE:

Relations between the two legal traditions, Anglophone and Civilian, reached their great turning point, not so much as a *Conflict of laws*, but more as a supersession of one law by the other. In fact, historians sometimes mark the inception of a global law

based on Anglophone methods at the Nuremberg Trials, following the Second World War. Immediately after the Allied Victory in 1945, there had been (from both legal and geopolitical perspectives) introduced the possibility of transcendent legal oversight based on an English doctrine set forth by Chancellor John Sankey. That innovation would fundamentally alter the relationship between Anglophone and Continental laws. (Borgwardt 2005)

The basic principle of international law, which was recognized since Westphalia in the seventeenth century stipulated that, in matters of war, as in all other instances, authority over individual citizens rested with the individual states. Until that time the processes of international law extended between, but did not enter within, national borders. The innovation at Nuremberg, for the first time, allowed the sovereignty of nations to be penetrated by a supervening judicial forum, permitting it to act upon affairs even within recognized nation-states. The effect, in historical terms was twofold, it posited a worldwide atmosphere of *Dominium*, wherein a transcendent judicial power could directly reach every person and thing on earth. (Raful 2006, Byers 2003 & Lovell 2012)

Simultaneous with the developments at Nuremberg in 1945, the two legal methods, Civilian and Anglophone, were being applied in conjunction with the parallel founding of the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund. Together those institutions comprised a two layered regime that would redefine the geopolitical framework: an international legal structure based on the nation-state, the UN, and an enveloping legal atmosphere concerned with finance and trade, the IMF. While the former represented the explicit and public approach of the Civilian

method, the latter reflected in its composition the less explicit collegial approach of the Anglophone method. This simultaneous beginning also helped fill a legal vacuum left by the war, as two transcending doctrines were unfolded: the *Rule of Law* over all persons and things along with the uniform enforcement of *Human Rights* for every individuated legal personality in the world--including the legally created personality of the corporation. These concepts established an expanded jurisdiction for a post-war hegemonic system and reflected the importance of wealth production as a paradigm of world order, both primary values for an Anglophone regimen of global law. (Slobodian 2018)

Actually, for purposes of constructing a global order, the English tradition had several inherent advantages over its Civilian counterpart. Most obviously, its pragmatic methods were not impeded by cumbersome philosophical considerations and logical impediments. (Bell 2007)

b) CONFLICT

Anglophone legal engagement with the Islamic world during the twentieth century, however, was very different. There its approach might be typified by only one of its nineteenth century innovations, the doctrine, *Conflict of Laws*. Deep in the historic past the *Sharia* had made crucial contributions to an atmosphere that gave rise to a distinctive Western tradition of law. But in the twenty-first century the *Sharia* offered virtually no element that was anything but a contradiction of the English method—especially the Muslim encouragement of personal cultivation and legal learning among its followers. Equally important, while sectarianism and nationalism divided the modern Islamic world, the Anglophone nations were able to mobilize their own domestic

public sentiment against the *Sharia*, portraying it as backward and barbaric. In an increasingly hostile world Islamic law came under scholarly, regulatory, diplomatic, judicial, and even military attack. Although many in authority would have favored the complete eradication of Islamic influence, perhaps the more generally held public view advocated merely a reconstruction of its way of life, a domesticating of its doctrine and practice, and its incorporation as a religion, recognized and tolerated along with Christianity and Judaism. (Amanat 2007)

However, for several reasons, these assaults on the Muslim world only met with limited success. First of all its way of life was organic, synonymous with daily habit and local custom for millions of people. An attack on Islam was not an attack on a hierarchy of authority or a system of government. Instead it amounted to an assault on individual persons deeply enculturated and instructed from birth. When confronted by the West, the great weakness of Islam was that it had become a disunited collection of peoples and nations and often – especially as Western style governments had been adopted – bitterly divided within itself. Moreover, the legal dimension of this great encroachment was not easily recognized by the Islamic peoples. English law not only involved an unfamiliar vocabulary and system of knowledge, it also operated beyond public view or even beyond public awareness. Even persons highly educated at a Western university had no necessary understanding of how the law worked – only those who had been admitted to its fellowship of discipline had access to that type of knowledge.

Even so, the weaknesses of Islam also reflected its great strength: rather than being invested in a frame of institutions and authority, it was instead a way of life among a population deeply

instilled with a sense of obligation for its preservation. Thus, whether involving the highly educated and sophisticated or those from backward regions on the fringe of world affairs, the eradication of Islam would require a root and branch assault on entire populations. But there was another source of resistance when attempting a conquest of the Islamic world, deeper than even the Qur'anic teachings or indelible custom. It touched more deeply than accoutrements of religion or consciously held values. The world of Islam, unlike the West, was still predominantly a human world of families and extended family relations. In other words, they were peoples who continued to live by the natural ties of consanguinity – no stronger bond between humans existed in nature. It was not an overstatement to say that an attack on the Islamic way of life not only involved the atomizing of families, and the individuating of persons. It also amounted to a reconstruction of human existence from a natural and familial, to an artificially objectified and orchestrated reality, a prospect that would inevitably provoke an instinctive response of great credulity. Hence, the question remained as to what kind of inducement would attract Muslims from their traditional way of life to another, and whether the Anglophone legal atmosphere could provide that incentive.

c) CHALLENGE

All legal regimes must exist in two dimensions, the coercive or adjudicative and the persuasive or educative. In the short-term judicial order can be imposed by brute force, *in terrorem*. But for a legal regime to be established with continuity and stability, the public must come to understand it in terms of the benefit it confers, they must be instilled with the habit of compliance. Yet, at the beginning of the twenty-first century neither strata of

Anglophone legal rule—British or American, entitled or professed, imposed by *Class* or by *Expertise*, based on heritable title or collegial regimen—could claim to produce a type of justice that had a necessary relationship to any scale of morality or standard of norms comprehensible to the public in natural human terms. Historically, both strands of this law had relied on a constructed religious mentality by which its obscure workings could be made understandable as producing a positive good: the conquest of malevolent human nature in the Christian plan of world redemption. But that source of understanding was dependent on a homogeneity of belief among the subject population. Within a global population of extremely divergent ethnicity, custom, and belief those conditions would be nearly impossible to duplicate. Furthermore, in the global project any strategy of missionizing to compliance by way of religious conversion seemed anachronistic, beyond possibility. (Moffitt 2017)

Nor would the legal values of the new global order be expressed in universal ideals, *Enlightenment* principles, or an affirmative idea of human possibility, secular or religious. Instead, they were self-referential, instrumental, technical, and pragmatic values: a transcendent *Rule of Law* and a unitary enforcement of *Human Rights*. However, the events at Nuremberg, Dumbarton Oaks, and Bretton Woods had also introduced another legal factor and another source of values that would become important in the legal regimen of the global age. That was the *Expertise* of an Americanized version of Anglophone law and the atmosphere of material consumption attached to it. Under this influence public aspiration invariably became highly focused on the single purpose of wealth production. The former cohesive educational instruction based on ultimate values taught through doctrines of

religion had been superseded by a more pragmatic and less reflective one—but it was a solution of questionable sustainability. The Anglophone project had come to rely on materialist or consumer appetites drawn from the American example--making the process of globalization often seem to be only, in fact, a process of Americanization. (Cannadine 1994 & Kennedy 2016)

The question of whether this quality of values would be embraced by a global public as adequate reason to abandon deeply inured ways of living, or whether it would be rejected as superficial and unsatisfactory, may have had much to do with the rise of popular resistance to the project of globalization that began to occur in many parts of the world in the early twenty-first century. For those who were joined together by entitled rank or professional discipline to impose the Anglophone method along with the values that were its correlate, this was also a crucial question. After all, such a vast undertaking, potentially the culmination of human history, required concerted effort, even in favourable times, when the global public seemed willingly compliant. As with all human projects, of course, elements of ambition, rivalry, and power were involved. Yet, by the unity of a professed fellowship, with its pejorative view of human nature, its limitation on public understanding, and its own proven collective resolve, those distractions could be overcome. However, the question remained: would the habiliments of *Class* and the instruments of *Expertise* be sufficient to withstand resistance from those who clung to ultimate values, whether expressed in terms of the supernatural or the humane? In the global age this could also be the final question of values for those peoples with a deep heritage of cultivation and learning in the Civilian and Islamic worlds. (Domingo 2010 & Cutler 2003)

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Book Reviews

SHABANA FAYYAZ,

Pakistan's Response Towards Terrorism: a Case Study of Musharraf Regime. Vanguard (2019) Hardcover.

ISBN-10: 9694026105; ISBN-13: 978-9-6940-2610-7. pp. 272.

US\$7.72 /Rs.1,197.00.

The author Shabana Fayyaz presents a comprehensive and detailed policy analysis of Pakistan's response to the global war on terror, in the post 9/11 era. The analytical fulcrum of the study is based on whether Pakistani state's response towards terrorism has brought any change in its traditional security policy. The study is focused on the period of Gen. Pervez Musharraf's regime, from 2001 to 2008. The book is comprised of seven chapters, followed by a chapter of conclusion.

The first two chapters introduce the area of investigation and a wide literature review. Chapter three deals with the conceptualization of security with the help of theories of international security studies. The study utilizes an integration of four theories that cover the regional, national, and individual dynamics. It includes the security concept of Barry Buzan's multi-level and multi-sectoral concept of security, Mabub-ul-Haq's concept of human security, Buzan and Weaver's regional complex theory, and Muhammad Ayoob's subaltern realism theory which, respectively, focus on the multidimensional, regional, individual, and state as a security referent. The multiplicity of the theoretical framework depicts the writer's commitment to a holistic analysis of the situation and policy. However, the triangulation of theories may raise an important

concern that in all these theories the security referent is different. Though it may help to answer the question with holistic analysis, it also lacks a focal point. The author has considered the state as a centre of analysis, but the theoretical framework does not suggest any basis on which this level of analysis has been selected by the researcher.

Secondly, there are certain basic contradictory assumptions among these theories. For example, subaltern realism considers the state and regime as the same thing while other theoretical explanations highlight some difference between the two. Similarly, the primary referent of security in the human security framework is individual, though state and human security may complement each other. However, the individual framework takes priority when the state itself sabotages the security of individuals. State-centric theories treat individuals in relation to the state by limiting their status to citizenry and do not consider the state's responsibility towards the basic human rights and dignity of human beings, particularly when interests of both entities clash with each other. Therefore, a pertinent question may emerge as to how this theoretical framework can be helpful in case of such inconsistencies.

The fourth chapter dwells on the historical description of terrorism and extremism in Pakistan. In this part, the writer traces the role of Islam in state policies and its consequences at the national and regional levels. The regional element incorporates the policies towards India, Afghanistan, and Iran, obviously in relation to international actors, e.g. the US and the USSR. The chapter on historical analysis builds on mapping various militant organizations as the security architecture of the Pakistani state. This part comprehensively elaborates the role of religion and the

Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan as key variables. However, in relation to the theoretical framework, it fails to present a picture from the human security standpoint as to how people were marginalized in relation to the state's engagements. Further, it misses some important events in the history of Pakistan, for example, the debacle of 1971, where both variables (i.e., the role of religion and the dispute over Kashmir) do not play a considerable role.

While analysing Musharraf's response at the national level in the form of military operations in chapters 5 and 6, the author comprehensively highlights the regional and national factors in an event-based analysis. But the analysis misses two very important points. First, Musharraf's unilateral decision to become involved in the war on terror clearly lacked a national consensus without taking all political parties on board. Second, it is important to take into account the internal political dynamics of the United States, the country with which the Pakistani government was dealing. Ahmed Rashid in his *Descent into Chaos* (Penguin Books, 2009) highlights this factor by implying that the Republican Party has historically been more prone to military solutions and that this political party has also made a natural alliance with the military in Pakistan and influenced their decisions to launch these operations with the help of a substantial flow of military and economic aid.

The seventh chapter deals with the domestic reforms undertaken by the Musharraf government which have been analyzed by the author with the help of the human security framework. The analysis would have been more useful if an analysis of the seven missing dimensions of human security, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, had been included.

The concluding chapter beautifully puts all the levels of the analyses together to present a holistic picture. In sum, the book provides a comprehensive description of the situation and the policies of the post 9/11 era from the point of view of an event-based analysis. The author has placed more emphasis on description than on prescription. For this reason, the book does not offer many helpful suggestions that could be adopted by the state in response to the threat of terrorism. However, the author has indicated interesting fields for future research. Indeed, this research on the threat of terrorism and its relation to national security policy is a commendable contribution and seems to be a sincere effort to expose the truth.

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WILLIAM H. BRACKNEY and RUPEN DAS (eds.),
Poverty and the Poor in the World's Religious Traditions:
Religious Responses to the Problem of Poverty.
Santa Barbara, USA: Praeger, 2019.
ISBN 978-1- 4408-4445-4 (print). 978-1-4408-4446-1 (e-book).
pp. 422. US\$ 58.40 (kindle), US\$ 73 (hard cover).

The articles in this book discuss the issue of poverty and how to help those who are poor. According to the foreword, the book "aims to inform theoretical thinking within and between religions on poverty and to provide tools for practical engagement with this blight on humanity both by the religions acting alone and by the religions acting together" (xiii). The articles do not provide universal answers to poverty but specific

religious responses to the problem of poverty since these responses may vary from one religion to another according to the perspectives, doctrines and theologies of different religious traditions.

I appreciate the writers' intentionality behind their descriptions of poverty and the poor. Unfortunately, some people in different religious traditions are escalating wars, hatred, terror and targeted killings against one another in the name of their religion, as Pascal pointed out in the 17 century, one of the darkest eras in human history, "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." (Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662).¹ However, the writers describe poverty and the poor as the recipients of the common good and as a meeting place for different faith communities. The writers offer case studies and historical and textual surveys of issues related to the poor.

Poverty and the poor are discussed in the light of the following major religious groupings: the Chinese religions, the traditions of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism, African religious traditions and North American indigenous religious traditions. In these articles, the writers have

1) Dealt with the religious texts of each religious tradition except the African and North American indigenous traditions, which are more oral in nature; 2) reviewed their historical responses to poverty alleviation; 3) pointed out how their contexts differ from others and 4) described the different styles of writing such as analytical and story-telling in an oral religious community.

¹. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/blaise_pascal_133606 (accessed on April 7, 2020).

What follows is a summary of how the various traditions have responded to poverty and the poor. The Chinese Religions (chapter 3) shows the interconnectedness of poverty and community relationships, self-governance, collective virtues, and the development of the individual in classical Confucianism and Daoism, where moral integrity is more important than fulfilling physical needs (p. 58).

The Buddhist Tradition (chapter 4) provides stories from different periods of Chinese history. The Jewish Tradition (chapter 5) describes 4,000 years of historical experience contained in the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and other texts that address contemporary issues. The Christian Tradition (chapter 6) deals with various texts such as the Bible and the Apocrypha and discusses Church history from the early period up to the Middle Ages, including the Roman Catholic Orders, the Reformation and the modern era. This chapter also discusses the State's response to poverty, Non-Profit Organizations, the Social Gospel, liberation theology and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Islamic Tradition (chapter 7) discusses the way *zakat* and *sadakah* respond to issues of poverty. This chapter also discusses the difference between *Faqir* and *Miskeen* and how "being poor is 'Good News'" (p. 247).

Chapter 8 discusses the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh traditions of India based on several texts in Sanskrit and the vernacular languages. This chapter draws on the writings of Mahavira and his immediate and later followers. Sikhism, whose religious text is the Guru Granth Sahib, emerged as a separate religion in the 15th century, borrowing ideas and practices from both Hindu and Muslim traditions. The African Religious Traditions (chapter 9) do not have a single corpus of literature. However, poverty did

not exist before the colonial conquests when the poor became a political, religious, and social concern. Chapter 10 analyses the North American Indigenous Traditions, drawing from oral traditions rather than from religious and cultural texts. The prevalence of poverty in indigenous communities is a modern phenomenon and differs from the poverty found in capitalist societies. This chapter is written in a story-telling style.

This collection of articles is important and informative for students, practitioners of religion as well as for scholars and community leaders because it wrestles with the thorny issues of poverty from within the various religious traditions using a multidisciplinary study of poverty and social development. The various writers draw from religious sacred texts and oral traditions to analyse the theology and the historical evolution of the issues. They focus on specifically religious perspectives rather than on the political, social, cultural, pastoral, emotional, psychological, physical, financial or anthropological dimensions of these issues. They have also provided primary documents and references for readers as helpful tools for further study.

In spite of the impact of poverty throughout the world, the attempt to understand its significance from an inter-religious perspective is a recent development. In my view, the book would benefit from a chapter addressing the implications of this interreligious perspective for the alleviation of poverty as well as from a discussion of the place of religious values in the modern world of democracy, science and technology.

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ALOYSIUS PIERIS, S.J.,

Give Vatican II a Chance.

Tulana Research Centre, Gonawela, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka (2010).

ISBN 978-955-8459-02-7 pp. ix + 220.

The text is a compilation of several articles produced by the Indologist-theologian Aloysius Pieris, S.J. In this discussion he traverses through the hallmarks of the decisive content of the Second Vatican Council (known as Vatican II), which he considered to be the most significant ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church in her history.

The material is not a historical account but helps readers to contextualize the struggles and achievements of the Council's deliberations and also exposes the untold but well-meant dimensions that motivated the prelates who actively participated in the Council proceedings. Pieris does not claim to be a Church historian but his contribution in this text is to ascertain that Vatican II was an exceptional Council which was unique and substantially different in terms of its vision and content to the twenty other councils held previously, except the Council of Jerusalem in the early Church that is recorded in Acts 15:1-29.

The convener of this epoch-making Council, Pope St. John XXIII, assumed the leadership and was keen to promote the renewal of the Church together with its worldwide episcopate. The Italian buzz word used was *Aggiornamento*, specifying the need for the Church to move internally towards renewal and update its understanding of its own doctrine and practice. Pieris clarifies the distinction between reform and renewal in the third chapter as follows: "Renewal moves from the periphery to the centre (or from base to the summit), whereas reform flows from the centre

to the periphery or from the summit to the base. Reform is smooth and renewal is stormy” (p. 93).

Vatican II, unlike previous Councils in history, was not convened to condemn heresies or to re-establish the centrality of papal authority over orthodoxy and its teaching authority. The emphasis was on a church in a changing world whose concerns would be embraced by the church. The prelates energized by the visionary Pope John XXIII were invited to read the “signs of the times” in order to be relevant and meaningful as a community among the communities of the world. The previously overemphasized centrality of the church was to be redefined as the need of the church not to seek dominance but to be a witness for and a servant of humanity by seeking divine direction through the life of its master, Jesus Christ.

However, for the aged Pope John XXIII with his epoch-making vision, according to Pieris, Vatican II was a pastoral Council to renew the church by going to the roots of the nascent church. Most of the other Councils made efforts for reform without making any structural changes and the majority of them were held to counter schisms and heresies that had emerged in history. A careful scrutiny indicates that they were inward-looking and defensive enough to be offensive, while Vatican II at its core was a humbling call to all people of goodwill, a move unprecedented in the history of the Catholic Church.

The new dimension of openness on the Council floor provided common ground with non-Christians, who were being considered important as the world was moving in new directions with the development of the 1960s. In October 1965, in a Declaration called *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), the prelates made

a distinction between one kind of ecumenism, which was related to fellow Christians and another kind of ecumenism, which was related to other religious traditions. This move by the Council was considered commendable even by other non-Catholic Christians.

However, the prelates were not so aware of non-Christian religions. Paul VI first instituted the Secretariat for Non-Christians headed by Cardinal Paolo Marella (1964-1973). Later Pope John Paul II surprisingly upgraded the Secretariat to the status of a Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue (PCID) in 1988. This move was precipitated by his Assisi gathering of the leaders of the world faiths in 1986. However, his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Random House Inc., 1994) undid some of the above when he “crossed the threshold of other religious traditions” in an uncritical manner to the dismay of many non-Christian leaders around the world. The world has been unclear about the Vatican’s position regarding other religious traditions ever since this publication. For theologians like Pieris, the Council was a new Pentecost (i.e., an energized moment) within the Church. Though the Council proposed “a new model,” it was not totally new because it was the original concept presented by Jesus Christ. But the Church was now willing to support local churches who were also calling for reform in view of the deliberations made by the prelates gathered in Rome.

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SHANTHIKUMAR HETTIARACHCHI,

Faithing the Native Soil: dilemmas and aspirations of post-colonial Buddhists and Christians in Sri Lanka.

Author Publication, 2012.

ISBN 978-955-54203-0-3. pp. xix 396. LKR 750.

The author begins by describing the experience of the Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka, marginalized by successive foreign colonial powers (the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English). He vividly portrays the frustration and bitterness engendered by nearly five hundred years of colonial rule during which certain elites benefited from having direct access to the English language, to positions of influence in society and to new political opportunities for self-governance and social recognition as a people. The powerful colonial presence, administrative structures and educational apparatus systematically displaced the role of Buddhists as custodians of the nation, race and religion, and changed the identity of Buddhism as a “religion of the soil,” in such a way that the Sri Lankan Buddhist community and its institutions could never be the same again (pp. 254-55). In response to the domineering attitudes of the foreign occupiers of the land, however, the native population gradually rediscovered the significance of Buddhism for their self-worth and sense of identity without having to return to the pre-colonial disposition.

He critically assesses the Christian community and concludes that it can no longer return to the privileged position, which it enjoyed during the colonial period. The author finds that the Christian leadership failed to discover deeper connections between their Christian faith and the cultural, social and political environment of Sri Lankan society of the post-colonial period. In his view, “the Churches, as institutions, instead of using their full

potential as centres of thinking, planning and mobilization in order to be a faith of the soil, seemed to have pitched their tent in comfort zones of what the foreign missionaries carved out for them" (p. 56). The Christian community, the author argues, failed to become rooted in the 'native soil' because of its flawed understanding that the 'redemptive faith project' should rise above cultural norms and national feelings. This was the colonial view embraced by the missionaries and uncritically adopted by the local churches. In contrast, the welfare both of the nation and of the religion were regarded as synonymous values by the Buddhists and their institutions (p. 201).

The author moves on to discuss the efforts made by the Catholic Church to develop a consistent and effective theology of religions after the positive steps taken by the Second Vatican Council (1963-65). He paints a very clear picture of the conservatively dominant attitude of the Western patriarchy, which did not allow the development of new theological approaches in the context of Asia even years after the Council. During this period, Vatican authorities also suppressed the development of liberation theology within the Latino world.

The main reason for the re-emergence of such pre-Vatican attitudes lay in the fact that most Catholic theologians were cut off from the multi-religious context of Asian society, which could test and evaluate their new ideas (p. 62). Missiologists, theologians, ecclesiologists living in the West, such as Hendrick Kraemer, Karl Rahner, Hans Kung, developed their views within the specific context and practice of a particular church (p. 81). However, even after Vatican II, Roman Catholic theology did not venture much beyond the 'fulfilment theory', particularly that of Von Balthasar, Karl Rahner (anonymous Christians) and de

Chardin (though he presented “a new theological ‘window’ with science as a mission paradigm” [p. 82].) Their theological approaches, however, were not able to address the vast multi-religious context of Asia with its own ‘competing saviour figures’. Hence, theology and missiology remained Eurocentric. Its missiology remains problematic even to this day, especially with the Vatican’s declaration, *Dialogue and Proclamation* (Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue, 1991), which clearly marks the ‘missiology-impasse’.

In contrast, the Federation of the Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) presented a far more open and positive approach to relations with other religions by asking: “How can we not give them reverence and honour? And how can we not acknowledge that God has drawn our peoples to Himself through them?” (p. 70). Whereas the Buddhist nationalists and their institutions successfully regained their identity as custodians of the Sinhala nation, they failed to secure the role of a responsible majority where the native minorities could be safe and free (p. 198). In the author’s view, the indigenization of Christianity and a return to the core of Buddhism are the two basic challenges facing Christians and Buddhists in the post-colonial Sri Lanka today (p. 224).

The Sinhala Buddhist institutions challenge the Christian community to become a ‘faith of the soil’ by renouncing their colonial ideas of expansion, and ‘church planting’. Moreover, the ‘missiological blowback’ now generated by new Evangelical churches is also challenging the ecclesiastical foundations of both the Catholic and Protestant traditions (p. 231). These are all clear signs that the traditional churches need to re-think their role and their contribution in a Buddhist society. All major Christian

traditions (Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical) have a civic responsibility to find a way of living in harmony with the Buddhist majority, as they cannot return to a Constantinian brand of Christianity (p. 232).

The analysis of the cultural, political and religious history of Sri Lanka presented in this book could encourage a similar exploration of other Asian societies where both majority and minority religious communities have lived side by side for centuries. The indigenization of religious communities and the articulation of an authentic missiology have not yet been accomplished in most countries throughout the Asian region. Old colonial attitudes of superiority and expansion still impact relationships among the religious communities. Followers of all religious traditions, both those belonging to the majority as well as the minority communities, have a serious social obligation to reassess their attitudes to one another in the light of contemporary challenges such as the shameful evidence of injustice and protracted corruption, abject poverty and the increase of ecological and pandemic health issues such as Covid 19. This book advocates a critical assessment of the mental attitudes and behaviour that the religious communities have inherited from the past and which still prevent them from collaborating to find solutions to these issues.

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KHALED ABOU EL FADL *et al.*

The Place of Tolerance in Islam.

Boston: Beacon Press, 2002. pp. ix + 117. Price not mentioned.

ISBN 978-0-8070-0229-2.

This book consists of various responses to a presentation by Khaled Abou El Fadl on the place of tolerance in Islam. The author is an accomplished Islamic jurist and a world renowned expert in Islamic law. This book was compiled a year after the September 11 attacks and addresses questions that arose in the aftermath of those attacks in the United States.

Abou El Fadl demonstrates the central place of tolerance in Islam. He argues that Islamic civilization has crumbled because the traditional institutions that nurtured Islamic orthodoxy and marginalized Islamic extremism have been dismantled. Islam has been hijacked by puritans to suit their own agenda. He explains his position lucidly by pointing out that, according to puritan Muslims, Islam is the only straight path (*al-sirat al-mustaqim*). This straight path has been illumined by a system of divine laws. In Abou El Fadl's view, puritan Muslims display a belligerent attitude of supremacy, intolerance, and exclusiveness vis-à-vis those who do not agree with them. Puritan Muslims believe that God's will can be known by these divine laws (Sharia). A person should obey the Sharia in every aspect because the sole purpose of human life is to obey God's will by fully implementing the Sharia. Those who deny, dilute or even argue about the Sharia are either infidels, hypocrites or iniquitous. Puritan Muslims insist that those who obey the Sharia are rightly guided whereas those who disobey are misguided. Moreover, puritan Muslims believe they can create a social order that reflects divine truth perfectly. Besides obeying the Sharia in their own lives, they

actively and aggressively demand that all human beings should follow the Sharia. To achieve his goal, they are ready to destroy those who oppose them.

Abou El Fadl says that groups such as the Khawarij and the Assassins, who displayed belligerency towards others in the past, were marginalized from mainstream Islam. The traditional jurists, who supported a more inclusive approach, enjoyed a certain amount of freedom from the centralized political system. Abou El Fadl explains how traditional Islam, which supported the independent thinking of the Ulema, has now collapsed. The reason for this break down is that the power of the state in many Muslim countries has grown extremely powerful and has taken away the religious authority of the clergy by turning them into a salaried class serving the state's interest rather than focusing on the growth of Islam. This situation has created a vacuum in religious authority, which fanatic groups fill by indulging in highly visible acts of violence. However, these groups are socially and intellectually not part of mainstream Islam.

Furthermore, Abou El Fadl points out that these fanatic groups derive their theological legitimacy from Wahhabi and Salafi schools of thought. Wahhabis put severe limits on orthodoxy and are intolerant of opinions other than their own. In the wake of the sharp rise in oil prices, Wahhabis appropriated the Salafi orientation, which was originally a liberal interpretation of the original sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunna, and developed an intolerant version of Islam known as Salafism. The Wahhabi ideology and its militant offshoots reject the notion of universal human values and insist on a normative particularism that is text-centred. The Wahhabi and militant groups read

selected texts from the Holy Qur'an in a literal and ahistorical fashion and reach exclusive and intolerant conclusions.

The first response to Abou El Fadl is by Milton Viorst who points out that (1) although the conventional reading of the Qur'an does not support violence, it does suppress individual creativity and innovation; (2) Islam rejected humanistic values in favour of otherworldliness by rejecting the reflections of the Mut'azilites. As a result, the West entered the Age of Reason under the influence of the Renaissance; (3) Abou El Fadl's work will be read and appreciated by people in the West rather than by those in the Islamic world because of the dominant position of the jurists.

The next response is by Sohail Hashmi, who makes two important points: (1) the narrow and illiberal readings of the Qur'an are not exclusively from fringe sectors of society and (2) Muslims have generally fallen short of the Qur'anic standard of tolerance, diversity and freedom due to limitations in their interpretation of the Qur'an. Subsequently, Tariq Ali argues that (1) radical Islam was brought into being by the needs of the Cold War to serve the interest of the West and (2) Islam needs a reformation which will require a rigid separation of the state and mosque with a thoroughgoing democratization of the Islamic world. In a subsequent response, Abid Ullah Jan argues that the West and Muslim opinion makers easily shift the blame onto Islam and Muslims with the view that Muslims tend to destroy every form of opposition. The next writer, Stanley Kurtz, feels that Abou El Fadl's liberal pluralism will not appeal to people living in West Asia but only to people who are relatively free of social and familial restrictions. He further disagrees with Abou El Fadl with regard to the rise of puritan Islam. He argues that intolerant and extremist fundamentalism is better understood in the context of

massive population increase and urban migration in West Asia and the consequent collapse of traditional social systems.

Another contributor to this volume, Amina Wadud, argues for a deeply forged cooperation between Muslim intellectuals and lay men and women that should go beyond an intellectual interpretive enterprise and should challenge puritanical interpretations of the Qur'an. In a subsequent essay, Akeel Gilgrami suggests that the democratic mobilization of Islamic societies will empower Muslims to reclaim the centrality of tolerance by reading the Qur'an historically and contextually. Subsequently, Mashood Rizvi rejects the view that the world's most pressing problems have their roots in the intolerance of Muslims and suggests that we should rather be concerned with the perpetuation of international systems of oppression that marginalize, impoverish and dehumanize several millions of economically vulnerable people.

In his response to the views expressed by Abou El Fadl, John L. Esposito makes two points: (1) Western powers must rethink and reassess their foreign policies and their support for authoritarian regimes and (2) Muslims must move courageously in the path of religious, intellectual and spiritual renewal. In the next response, Qmar ul Huda, emphasizing the plural tradition within Islam, calls for a deeper understanding of purists and their understanding of the world. He invites mainstream Muslims around the globe to devise mechanisms to defend themselves from extremist movements and to revitalize their own faith traditions by cultivating openness, pluralism and a compassionate heart. Subsequently, Scott Appleby points out that well-trained jurists, religious scholars and public intellectuals must speak out for Islam rather than preachers and technocrats.

Appleby suspects that the religious training in Muslim religious institutions does not enable Muslims to get in touch with the depth and breadth of Islamic scholarship.

In his concluding remarks, Abou El Fadl accepts that extremist interpretations frustrate the universal message of Islam. But he also reminds us that tolerance has been affirmed by Islamic scholars for over a millennia and that tolerance is not a liberal Muslim invention to appease the West. Finally, he stresses that Muslims must recognize the moral trust, which God has shown to them as Muslims and which God offers to the whole of humanity.

This little book opens up many issues in response to the viewpoints of Abou El Fadl. It is a useful aid to those who are looking for a suitable response to the growth of Islamophobia in the world today.

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