# FINE DIFFERENCES

THE AL-ALWANI
MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN LECTURES
2010-2017

EDITED by RICHARD J. JONES

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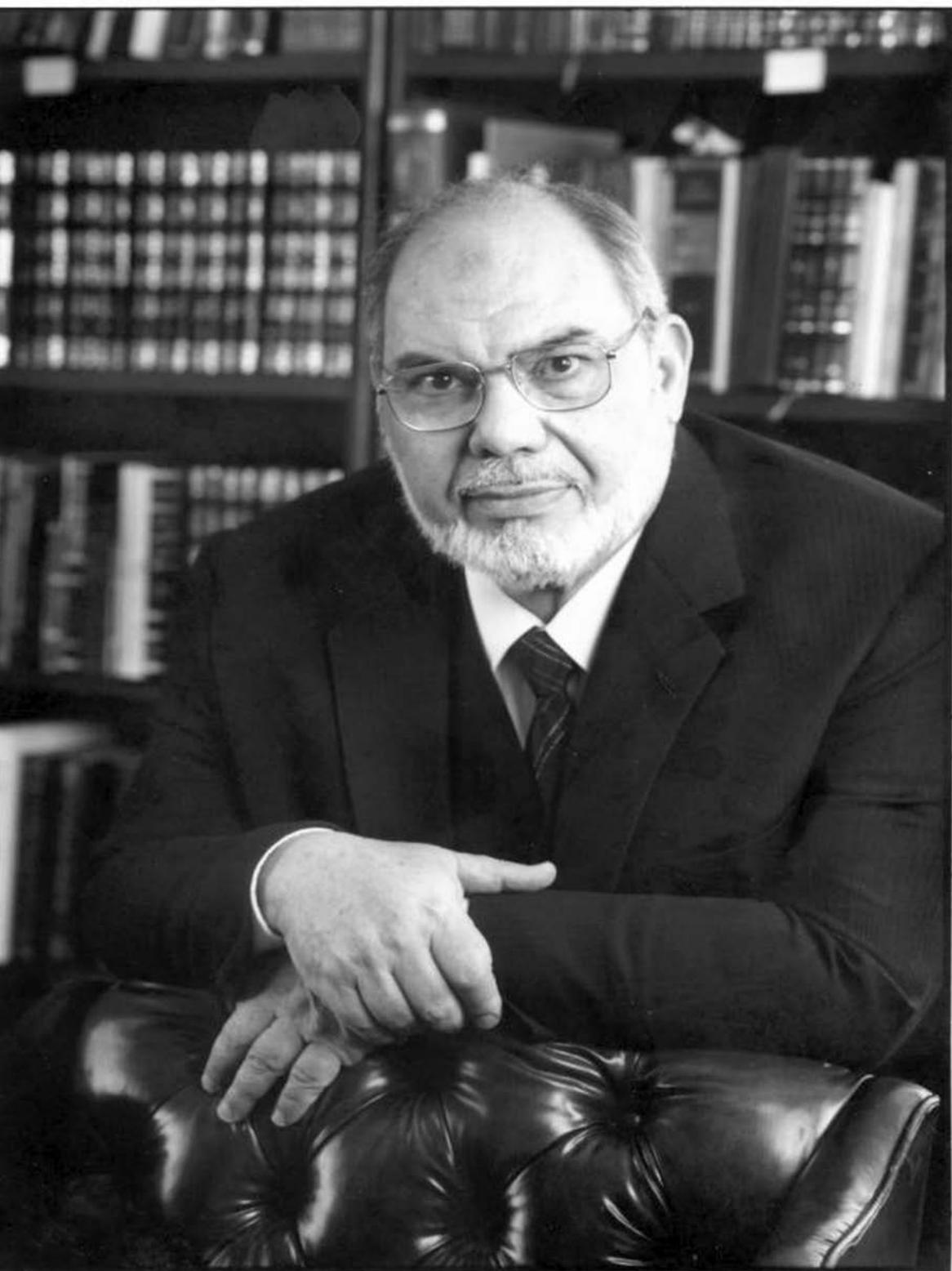
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LECTURES 2010-2017

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Sponsor of the Lecture Series: The Washington Theological Consortium

The Washington Theological Consortium is a network of graduate theological schools from a variety of Christian traditions, including Byzantine and Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, Evangelical, and Historic Black divinity schools. The Consortium enables these schools to share course offerings, libraries, joint Certificate programs and other opportunities for faculty, student and public enrichment. With its partner institutions in Islamic, Jewish, and Spirituality studies, the Consortium also develops courses and public programs for interfaith dialogue, including the Taha Al-Alwani Lectures.

ENDORSEMENT

COMPARISONS ARE ODIOUS, AS THE SAYING GOES. This is true when comparisons are made to claim the superiority of one thing over another. This is not the case in the volume edited by Richard Jones where parallel presentations by Christians and Muslims explore differences without any polemical bias, but rather in the spirit of "receptive ecumenism", the sharing of gifts. The topics of the papers are wide-ranging: migration and integration, reaction to violence, mediation, the ethics of work, law, pluralism — showing that Christian-Muslim dialogue is a rich field. The volume will be of interest to many different types of readers.

Michael L. Fitzgerald, M.Afr.
Apostolic Nuncio
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

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FOREWORD

An internationally recognised and respected expert in the fields of Islamic legal theory, jurisprudence (fiqh), and usul al-fiqh, Taha J. al-Alwani (1935-2016) was a graduate of Al-Azhar University, President of Cordoba University in Ashburn, Virginia, United States, (where he also held the Imam Al-Shafi'i Chair in Islamic Legal Theory at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences), and one of the founders and one time president of IIIT.

The lectures collected in this volume were delivered between 2010 and 2017 in a series sponsored by the Washington Theological Consortium and named in his honor.

A prolific writer and researcher, al-Alwani wrote on a wide range of subjects, substantially presenting the Islamic theological perspective on many of the issues facing modern society. These have been translated into major languages, making his name familiar to both English and non-English/Arabic speaking readers across the Muslim and Western worlds – his insights and penetrating logic continuing to give great value and relevance to his works.

Al-Alwani was a leader in his field and strongly believed in dialogue between different faiths and cultures, his purpose being to foster understanding and respect for the differing interpretations of the Divine by the Other, with a view to strengthening relationships based on that belief. He understood that intrinsic to the inner and spiritual realizations of those who drink from a revelational spring other than one's own, is a set of theologically related fundamentals common to all faiths and across which a complementary conversation can begin.

The power of faith is the power to unite and the recognition of commonalities through the medium of communication is one path to achieve this, and one element of al-Alwani's greater vision. For this to be genuine one has to allow proponents of faith to speak for themselves, that is to freely present their understanding of the spiritual tradition(s) they collectively live by and which shape their understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and humankind's relation to God as they view it. In an attempt to continue

al-Alwani's legacy IIIT has offered just this, a platform for people to 'speak for themselves', that is to enunciate their faith perspective, the culmination of which is this anthology.

Each contributor offers their own unique style of exposition and characteristic interpretation based on the theological perspective from which they choose to view their spiritual station. The topics are varied and do not shy away from some time-honored points of contention, but they also contend with many time honored universal truths. Most important of all, the approach taken is one of open and intelligent dialogue. Taken together we are presented with an informative account of the spiritual traditions and indeed heritage of others and the inner meaning they give to the topics they have chosen to discuss in relation to their faith.

Dialogue is not easy, for it initially takes a person out of their comfort zone and requires on their part mental effort and a broadening of horizons. But in the end dialogue pays dividends. Essays such as those in this anthology are interesting in that reading below the surface of text one begins to build a better picture of high aspirations and noble aims, bringing commonality into focus. Doubtless readers will agree on some of the positions taken and disagree on others. That is precisely the point, to discover points of both convergence and divergence, and walk away having imbibed a greater wisdom. That is the power of faith to unite, as al-Alwani saw it.

Reaffirming our joint spiritual journey to God, and spiritual responsibility towards humanity, is the burden we all share and the antidote to bigotry, prejudice, and all those ideologies that betray mankind's sense of compassion and justice. It is this greater vision which is urgently needed in current troubled and nihilistic times, not only to challenge the volatile nature of political difference, but also and perhaps more urgently to stem the tide of an increasingly popular secularised version of humanity's place in the cosmos, which is taking center stage in the human imagination and is uprooting traditional orthodoxy across all religions, and as a corollary the sacred moral code that once defined how we are to act towards ourselves and to others.

This anthology is a step in the direction of that greater vision. Whilst, the views and opinions outlined are not necessarily those of the IIIT, it is an experimental initiative and open platform to promote community relations between members of other faiths and allow for faith-based community engagement.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have

entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered modern. English translations taken from Arabic references are those of the translator.

Since its establishment in 1981, the IIIT has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts. Towards this end it has, over the decades, conducted numerous programs of research, seminars and conferences as well as publishing scholarly works specialising in the social sciences and areas of theology, which to date number more than seven hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into other major languages.

We would like to thank the Contributors, the Editor, Professor Richard Jones, as well as the editorial and production team at the IIIT, and all those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this book.

IIIT, May 2020

Editor's Introduction

Wholeness for society and wholeness for persons, despite our persistent fine differences, is the theme of a Muslim-Christian dialogue sustained for eight years in Washington, D.C. In this dialogue, as in the theater, setting, characters, and plot have shaped our endeavor.

Our setting is the capital city of a 200-year-old nation of immigrants. Migrants from zones of war and poverty continue to arrive from South Asia, West Africa, and East Africa, as well as from the Middle East. These migrants have included professionals and scholars. Government contracts and employment attract people from all regions of the United States of America to work or pursue higher education here. Local universities have added religious studies to their curriculum. Local Christian theological graduate schools have made room for Jewish and Islamic studies. Washington has also its share of converts to Islam.

Our cast of characters includes scholars who have helped the U.S. Department of State to interpret between Islamic and Western governments. Others are scholars and clergy deeply immersed in teaching their own tradition but who have taken time to walk with believers who follow the other sacred path. All have gone below the cracked surface to look for wholeness.

Our plot moves from felt anxieties to bedrock convictions. In 2007 a conversation began between John W. Crossin, a priest of the Order of St. Francis de Sales seeking to open the door of the forty-year-old Washington Theological Consortium – heretofore all-Christian – and Ahmed Alwani, son of the Iraqi [Islamic jurisprudence scholar Taha Jabir al-Alwani. The younger Alwani was seeking an institutional home for his father's project of relating Islamic scholarship to Western social sciences. As Christian member schools of the Consortium began to see value in co-taught Muslim-Christian postgraduate courses, a Sudanese scholar of Islamic law and founder of two mosques in the Washington area, Mohamed Adam elSheikh, became the first of several Muslim co-teachers. Following the example of Dr. Taha, who in his native Baghdad had opened the doors of his Sunni mosque to Shi'a neighbors so they could hear for themselves what he was teaching, the Washington

Theological Consortium began inviting the general public to overhear these scholars explaining themselves to their counterparts.

These chapters document the thinking of Muslims and Christians, in pairs, about current threats to social and personal wholeness:

Must religious emotions and ideas fuel social conflict?
Who pays the cost of mediating conflict?
What is the right way to value human labor?
What part may Islamic family law play in American civil law?
Is the term "People of the Book" honorific or pejorative?

Addressing these divisive issues, Muslim and Christian thinkers dig down toward their respective ultimate convictions. Occasionally the pair concurs. Always they elucidate their fine differences.

Despite public fears and private misgivings, the doors of the Washington Theological Consortium remain open. These chapters invite you to overhear.

1
From Baghdad to Leesburg:
A Leader of *al-Ta'āruf*

Zainab Alwani

T H E M E : From an Iraqi merchant family ethos which held the customer's satis-faction to be indispensable to their own, to a Washington-based Islamic legal scholar's interweaving of reason with revelation, Taha Jabir al-Alwani spent a lifetime reaching out to hold onto apparently contradictory truths. His scholar daughter sees her father's life as embodying the Qur'anic concept of purifying one's mind by interacting with diverse people and thoughts.

The Early Years

My late father, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, was born in 1935 and grew up in Fallujah, Iraq. Fallujah is an ethnically and religiously diverse city in the Iraqi province of Al Anbar, located roughly 43 miles west of Baghdad along the Euphrates. In a neighborhood that included Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Sabians (one of the ancient communities[1]), my father was exposed to a wide variety of ideas and principles that helped shape his value system of tolerance, mercy, forbearance, and acceptance.

From the beginning, my father was raised within a religious environment that advocated genuine interaction and *ta'āruf* (the Qur'anic concept of getting to know each other), rather than getting away from each other, which usually occurs when ideological biases and prejudices are set forth by societal norms. The Qur'an states:

> O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things). (49:13)[2]

Most of my father's family were merchants and businessmen, so *ta'āruf* was at the essence of their livelihood. Customers were known on a first-name basis, and premier customer service was provided to everyone who laid eyes on the merchandise. As a young boy, my father spent his free time helping in the family business. He observed human interaction first-hand by watching his father and uncles interact with their diverse customer base. They were always respectful and kind, especially to the customers with backgrounds that were different from their own. My father's inquisitive nature led him to constantly try to get at the root of why people chose their respective ideologies, and he would challenge his own beliefs in the process. On many occasions he mentioned that by understanding other people's beliefs and listening to their opinions, you are simultaneously challenging your own, which will guide you to the purest belief system in the end. This understanding uses the Qur'anic concept of *Ta'āruf* as a process of purification of one's mind and reason through interaction with diverse peoples and thoughts.

Linguistically, *'A-r-f*, is the root of *ta'āruf*, which means to know, to recognize, to explore, and to understand one another. This is closely linked to the term *'zawj'* which means 'pair'. Humanity is viewed in the Qur'an as one family, or as existing in a state of kinship, which is impossible without the practice of *ta'āruf*.

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of the community and describes in detail the establishment of the strong bond amongst its members, where 'others' are seen as an extension of the self and not severed as a separate entity. This encourages a partnership between different people to work towards knowing each other, sharing the knowledge and recognizing each other, which results in building a diverse culture. That is how my father viewed the concept of *ta'āruf*.

My father's *ta'āruf* methodology allowed him to view people's differences as opportunities to improve himself, which in turn elevated the value of every human life and interaction, just as the Qur'an explains "And we certainly honored the children of Adam, and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of our creation" (17:70). While this methodology left him vulnerable to being taken advantage of, he always referenced the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) : "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother or his neighbor what he loves for himself."[3]

This methodology guided every aspect of his life, including business. For him, healthy competition and business productivity was not driven by the maximizing of individual profits, but instead, by the level of satisfaction derived by

customers and neighbors.It was the latter's profits and not his own, that served as the family business' barometer for success. The family saw it as their responsibility to treat customers well so that they would bring more customers into the market and in turn more business to both themselves and their neighbors. In their opinion an unbalanced emphasis on accumulating personal wealth is what leads to greed and selfishness, which hurts both the individual and society as a whole. Islam expects wealthy and successful individuals to assist those around them who are in need by supporting them financially and contributing to the neighborhood by establishing educational institutions, orphanages, and scholarships for students, among other charities. My father's town was a fully functioning microcosm of that concept. This mentality countered the extant and potential greed and selfishness of the market, to promote a contagious positive atmosphere that allowed the whole town to thrive.

The Influence of the Methodology of *Taʿāruf* on Taha's Scholarly Work

My father's *taʿāruf* methodology was the guiding light in his journey towards reforming Islamic thought. In one example, he recognized that some contemporary Muslim scholars were deviating from the etiquette of disagreement, witnessing sadly scholars engaged in unhealthy disagreements over trivial issues of jurisprudence, whilst leaving the most serious ones uncovered, affecting division amongst the Ummah.

This reality motivated him to write his world renowned book, *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*[4] – a revolutionary text that presented a contemporary model for disagreement based on how early Muslim scholars exercised their intellectual freedom while holding their opponents in high esteem. He called upon scholars to restore the link between knowledge and ethics; to adhere to the principles and rules of inference and deduction; and to demarcate areas of mutual agreement and cooperation with the objective of achieving Muslim solidarity. He believed that any knowledge promoting conflict, animosity, and turmoil needed to be reexamined. In fact, as a testament to his philosophy of reexamination, he revised his own book forty years following its initial publication. He wanted to ensure that all the varying opinions were fairly portrayed, removing personal biases supporting one idea over another.

In another example, he wrote *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections,*[5] which sought to generate a rich intellectual discourse on how religious laws and ethics can reinforce civic belonging and can adapt to meet the practical needs of a dynamic Muslim population anywhere in the world. The book was founded on his view that any small community, cooperating with

each other based on a belief system that humanity is one family governed by universal values, was the best community. The impetus for this was his experience growing up in Fallujah. He believed that God's last message was given to the Prophet Muhammad, and that all the prophets and messengers have come with one unified message believing and affirming God's Oneness. He emphasizes that the higher Qur'anic objectives are:

a) *Tawhīd* (believing and affirming God's oneness); b) *Tazkiya* (purifying humanity and society from evil), along with the important process of building *taqwā* (God-consciousness), which transcends personal spirituality; and c) *'Umrān* a (building a value-based civilization in order to achieve good and harmony between humanity and the universe).

These are expressions of God's purpose behind the creation of the world and humanity, as well as essential criteria by which human behavior is judged and should be guided.[6] Therefore, he promoted the concept of *fiqh al-ta'ayyush,* understanding of living together harmoniously. This concept presents an ideal community that cares about every citizen's welfare, safety, and happiness regardless of race, religion, or creed.[7]

Muslim Reformer and Human Thinker

Although my father is commonly known as a Muslim reformer and thinker, he considered himself as a Human thinker through an Islamic lens. The thrust of his intellectual production has been aimed towards reforming humanity with Islamic legal thought as his vehicle. At the heart of his intellectual paradigm was the belief that scholars must constantly reassess current Islamic thought and develop new methodologies that help realize authentic and relevant contemporary rulings. His call for Islamic reform was framed as the "Islamization of Knowledge" project.[8] According to him, the following issues need urgent reform: the sources of knowledge, the relationship between reason and Revelation, and the Qur'anic objectives. The first step toward formulating his proposed synthesis redefines knowledge in terms of an Islamic epistemology that should be achieved by studying the Qur'an's directives as the sole source of knowledge and "the *Sunna* as the source that explains and clarifies the Qur'an and most importantly applies its teachings and methodology."[9] He explains this strategy through the following six discourses:

1. Articulate the Islamic paradigm of knowledge (the *tawhīdī* episteme) in which belief can be transformed into a creative and dynamic intellectual force capable of presenting adequate answers to the ultimate questions.

Islamization of Knowledge suggests that the higher values of the Shari'ah and the character of Islamic teaching are based on belief.[10]

2. Develop a Qur'anic methodology that will enable people to deal effectively with historical and contemporary problems. By combining the Qur'an as a source of knowledge, along with the insights of the natural and social sciences, it will empower these sciences to make effective contributions to those values that sustain human life by linking them to the higher purposes for which creation was intended.

3. Review and reevaluate the traditional Qur'anic sciences. My father acknowledged that the traditional Islamic sciences mainly revolve around the Qur'an and the Hadith and were descriptive in nature. Therefore, they concentrated on analyzing the text primarily from lexical and rhetorical perspectives; the Qur'an was understood in terms of interpretive discourse (*tafsīr*). Developing a new methodology of how to read the Qur'an as a source of knowledge was he believed imperative.[11] In order for scholars and researchers to derive authentic conclusions or even formulate sound questions from within the Qur'an, he called for a *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi al-Qur'ān* (interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an) as an effective way for serious scholarly engagement with the sacred text.[12] His methodology emphasized that the Qur'an should be understood from within itself, through its unity of structure and its own Divine language and discourse. My father's methodology suggests that Muslims should read the Qur'an from beginning to end in order to formulate their questions, issues, and answers. He also considers that tracing a certain Qur'anic concept or principle throughout the Qur'an in order to attain a better understanding of the word and its relevance and meaning is a valid scholarly approach. Scholars/readers should search for various references to the same word/concept and its meaning in each context. This research method requires the reader to give his/her intellect its due role as a partner to the text. He argued that this methodology, in addition to the two above-mentioned and the two combined readings, should guide the process of reading and understanding the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the Islamic heritage.

4. Develop a methodology for dealing with the Sunnah as the major source for clarifying and implementation of the Qur'anic teaching. This body of knowledge, which presents a model for its application to real-life situations, remains a practical experience at the highest level of human capability as practiced by the Prophet, who was also known as "the living Qur'an."[13] This means that Muslims need to construct a methodology that enables them to understand how to relate the teachings of Revelation to

real life. In other words, one should not focus on the Sunnah's legal rulings, but rather on its reasoning, for doing so will release it from being just a collection of particular responses to specific questions and circumstances.

5. Develop a methodology to reexamine Islam's intellectual heritage as the product of the human mind and, as such, subject to considerations of a historical reality that differs significantly from our own.[14] He dealt with the question of the *turāth's* (the Islamic legacy/heritage) role in reading the Qur'an and in formulating legal precedents. According to him, the *turāth* is a rich source that must be understood critically and in a way that delivers Muslims from subjective positions of total rejection, total acceptance, or piecemeal grafting.

6. Reexamine contemporary Western thought critically in order to learn from it and adopt its best elements according to strictly defined standards.

The Islamization of Knowledge, for him, was a conscious process that seeks to restructure the Muslim mind so that it can once again undertake ijtihad (literally, "exertion") in its broader sense[15] – the development of new laws to fit new situations, through the exercise of independent reasoning from the sources where law is not self-evident – and offer humanity knowledge and cience that engages the transcendence of knowledge.[16]

Knowledge is commonly understood as a set of meanings, concepts, beliefs, judgments, and perceptions devised by people in their repeated attempts to understand life's challenges and the events surrounding social phenomena. He adds and emphasizes that knowledge should include corroborating evidence from *wahy* (Revelation) and *wujūd* (the physical universe). Revelation provides humanity with some knowledge about 'ālam al-ghayb (the unseen world), which is beyond the reach of human perception, and 'ālam al-shahādah (the perceptible world).[17] By definition, one can acquire knowledge that is outside the bounds of direct human experience only through Revelation.

My father's methodology stressed the revival and subsequent use of ijtihad as an intellectual and creative exercise to understand Revelation, creation, the universe, and human life. This process of thinking states that human reason and the five senses are responsible for exploration, examination, inductive reasoning, and decision-making.[18] As a result, he saw no contradiction between 'aql (reason) and *wahy* (revelation) maintaining that the combined readings of the *wahy* and *wujūd* are a foundational approach to achieving a comprehensive understanding of both worlds.[19] Knowledge of the physical world must be derived from reason, perception, or experiment. According to the Qur'anic

teachings, valid proof, sound argument, and intelligent debate are essential for one to arrive at effective and legitimate results supported by external data. Therefore, humanity is expected to use *'aql* and the five senses to understand the main source of knowledge: the *wahy*. Therefore, *'aql* and *wahy* are not contradictory, but are complementary, to one another.[20]

Taha Jabir al-Alwani's main contribution to the field of Islamic sciences was in opening the gateway for the creation of new methodologies that build upon the existing corpus of Islamic tradition. As a reformer, my father did not believe in abandoning the classical Islamic tradition, but instead believed in the necessity of developing methodologies to seriously examine the Islamic sciences, knowledge and legacy to help build upon the good and overcome negative ideas and situations.

His respect for the groundwork laid by the Islamic legal tradition in the fields of law, exegesis, theology, etc. is great. At the same time, he strongly believed that Muslim scholars needed to go beyond duplicating classical commentaries, to instead produce knowledge able to chart a new beginning for the intellectual future of the Muslim Ummah and humanity, respectively. This can only be achieved by purifying our own belief systems through the understanding and acceptance of those who differ from us. Just as God favored humanity over all of creation, we must live up to that standard, and put forth the effort to truly get to know one another.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I leave you with a memory of *Karraadah al-Sharqiyah*, a well-known district in Baghdad. It is a vast area that was predominantly populated by Christians, Shi'ites, and a small group of Sunnis. It bordered the famous street of Abu Nawas, which lay along the bank of the beautiful Tigris River. My father was the Imam of a big Sunni mosque in that neighborhood. His Friday sermons not only impacted Muslims, but also attracted others from different faiths. People were captivated by his moral and social values. After his sermons, I would observe people from all walks of life coming to sit and talk to him. One of them was our Christian neighbor, Uncle John, who would discuss religious, political, and philosophical issues with my father. Uncle John confided in him and deferred to his knowledge, even though they were of different faiths. My father pursued natural interactions with other people throughout his life. This example summarizes my father's dedication towards knowledge. It also demonstrates his *ta'āruf* – his precious ability to relate to others bearing the diverse faces of humanity.

Notes

1. Sabians were our neighbors, classmates, and colleagues. They were known for their expertise in gold- and silver making. The Sabians (Arabic: الصابئة) were a religious group mentioned three times in the Qur'an as a people of the Book. Sabians are mentioned at 2:62, 5:69 and 22:17: ("Verily, as for those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], and those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the Magians, [on the one hand,] and those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught but God, [on the other,] verily, God will decide between them on Resurrection Day: for, behold, God is witness unto everything.") (Asad).

2. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, and the Arabic text has been preserved in its original form. The Qur'an has been translated into most of the world's languages; yet only the original text is accepted as Divine. This study relies on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary,* Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

3. *Sahih Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

4. His book *Ethics of Disagreement in Islam* (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), 3rd edn. 2011.

5. Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections* (London and Washington: IIIT, 2003).

6. Zainab Alwani, "*Maqāṣid Qur'āniyya*: A Methodology on Evaluating Modern Challenges and *Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt", The Muslim World*, Vol. 104, Issue 4, October 2014, pp. 465–487.

7. See the collection of his articles: *Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani: Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London, Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1426/2005).

8. See "*Maqāṣid Qur'āniyya*: A Methodology on Evaluating Modern Challenges and *Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt*", pp.474-475.

9. T. J. al-Alwani and I. D. Khalil, *The Qur'an and the Sunnah: The Time-Space Factor*, Occasional Papers 3, revised edn. (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995), p.28.

10. Zainab Alwani, "*Maqāṣid Qur'āniyya:* A Methodology on Evaluating Modern Challenges and *Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt*", pp.471-472.

11. Al-Alwani's reviews of the classical Qur'anic sciences was reflected in his analysis of the theory of abrogation* (*Naḥwā Mawqif Qur'āni min al-Naskh),* [Towards a Qur'anic Approach on Abrogation] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyya, 2007), and the concept of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih. Al-Muḥkam and Mutashābih* [The Sound and the Ambiguous] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyya, 2007).

12. T. J. al-Alwani and I. D. Khalil, *The Qur'an and the Sunnah,* pp.15-17, 22-24.

13. T. J. al-Alwani and I. D. Khalil, *The Qur'an and the Sunnah,* p.30.

14. See al-Alwani, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical & Scriptural Analysis,* trans. Nancy Roberts (London and Washington: IIIT, 2011).

15. Ijtihad literally means "to endeavor, strive, put oneself out, work hard." In Islamic legal terminology it means "the process of deriving the laws of the Shari'ah from its sources the Qur'an and Sunnah." *Mujtahid* means a person who is an expert of the Islamic legal system.

16. T. J. al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought,* p.22.

17. Ibid., pp.16-17.

18. Ibid., p.132.

19. Ibid., p.94.

20. T. J. al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, p.94.

* Publishers note:
In *Naḥwā Mawqif Qur'āni min al-Naskh*, Taha J. Alalwani rejects the concept of abrogation entirely.

2

Washington as a Site of Muslim-Christian Encounter

Richard J. Jones

T H E M E : Washington is a different place, depending on whether people come here from European-American territory, from the African-American minority, or from the Islamic world. Washington affords multiple inducements to Christian-Muslim encounter. National, state, and local governments, in response to growing multiethnic and multireligious populations, pay increased attention to the newer religious groups, particularly Muslims. Local schools and think tanks help transmit received religious traditions, but they also grapple with new knowledge and help revise our identities. Taha Jabir al-Alwani's lifelong awareness of a religious community's habitat, including its status as a social minority, enhanced Washington as a site.

I. Approaching Washington

Approaching from the Islamic world
When Muslims encounter Christians in Washington, D.C. at the beginning of the 21st Christian century, this place of meeting may have a different feel from other times and places where encounter has occurred. Unlike Cairo, Damascus, or Cordoba, Washington is not a historic site of past Islamic glory. Unlike Paris, London, or Moscow, Washington is not the seat of an overtly declared former empire over non-Western societies – provided you are willing to overlook the fifty years when Americans attempted to govern Mindanao in the Philippines! Unlike Thailand, India, East Africa, West Africa, the Caucasus, and Bosnia, Washington is not a place where Muslims currently find themselves contending – even at war – with the Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian majority in their own population.

Of course Washington does not belong to the *Dār al-Islārm*, where Islamic law is the law of the land. I know of no Muslim activist who would be ready to

color our metropolitan area on his world map with a peaceful and satisfying solid green. As recently as March 2010 the Washington Post reported a skirmish in the Virginia House of Delegates — the Speaker had to resist protests from some delegates because he invited Imam Johari Abdul-Malik from Fairfax County to offer the opening prayer at a legislative session.

Yet Washington is not the *Dār al-Harb*, where Islam must fight to exist. The Muslim Link newspaper lists fifty-four Islamic centers on its Masjid Locator page; the website of the Islamic Circle of North America lists four additional local mosques.[1] Our area may not deserve a deep Islamic green on the map, but neither does it warrant being colored a hostile pale yellow.

I suggest that North America as a whole, and the Washington area in particular, deserve to be colored on an Islamic map at least as light green, as Dar es Salaam – a place where the Islamic community succeeds in living out largely unmolested the way of the Prophet Muhammad. My impression is that Washington today is a fairly peaceful place to live as a Muslim.

Of course we know of Islamic revolutionary groups, based elsewhere in the world, who impute aggressive designs against true Islamic government to Foggy Bottom; 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.; Langley, Virginia; or to a pentagonal building in Arlington on the bank of the Potomac. We also know from police reports and public trials that some young recruits for international revolutionary Islamic groups have come from northern Virginia. I nevertheless wonder whether even the late Osama bin Laden – or Imam Anwar al Awlaki, who was until recently our neighbor in Virginia and now is a target of American bombing reprisals in Yemen – I wonder whether even these revolutionary leaders would deny that Muslims living, working, and praying in Washington find themselves in a generally safe place.

Approaching from European-American territory
Turning from Muslim immigrants to Americans of European descent and Christian convictions, how do the latter experience Washington as a place to encounter Muslims? Being a Christian born and baptized in the District of Columbia, I allow myself to speak for this group. We find Washington to be a city that gently educates us into awareness of a living and diverse Muslim community. Growing up in Northwest Washington, I saw construction begun on the Islamic Center on Massachusetts Avenue. However, I never met a Muslim. If in the 1950s there were Muslims among my classmates at John Eaton Elementary School, I was unaware of them. I recall my fellow student at St. Alban's School for Boys, Mehdi R. Ali, not as a Muslim but only a Pakistani diplomat's son. In my white neighborhood of Cleveland Park, I was unaware of the existence of black Muslims.

Not so my children, growing up thirty years later in Toronto, Canada, and in Alexandria, Virginia. My son was taught world history at St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School by an ardent American convert to Islam, Abdul Malik. Among my daughter's close friends was Tami Rauf, daughter in a strictly observant Muslim family. My son and daughter's generation has tasted falafel and Afghan bread, recognize halal food stores and Friday crowds at mosques, and are aware of Muslims fasting during Ramadan. To my eye and ear, local broadcasters and publications like Washingtonian magazine and the Washington Post emphasize messages of religious tolerance and the celebration of ethnic diversity much more strongly than any messages of suspicion or alarm regarding Islam.

Of course, there is a vast and variegated lot more to the United States of America than just what one encounters in Washington, D.C. Professor Akbar Ahmed of American University, a former ambassador for Pakistan, made this point after his 2008 project interviewing Muslim communities across the United States for his film Journey into America. Muslims in some locations may be less well established, less ethnically diverse, and less well regarded than in the Washington area. Focusing on the local, however, I affirm that the cityscape of Washington offers exposure and remedial education for any Americans of European descent and Christian convictions who have never visited a Muslim-majority country or shared a classroom with Muslims. This city invites learning about Islam.

Approaching from the African-American Minority Population

I mentioned my growing up in the white highlands of Cleveland Park. One winter's day in 1970 I climbed to the observation floor of the Washington Monument at dusk and watched bluish and amber streetlights come on. I recognized the downtown street pattern of spokes and squares. I saw my home landmark Washington Cathedral on the ridgetop. Moving to the east window, I stood amazed as grid after grid of lights revealed Northeast Washington, and then Anacostia – unknown lands! Most of the residents of those neighborhoods were of African-American descent. Some had been there since before the federal district was carved out of the Free State of Maryland. Their population swelled during the American Civil War as a place where former slaves settled, and it swelled again as a site for jobs during the First and Second World Wars. Coming down from the Washington Monument, I requested placement as a seminarian at the Church of the Atonement on East Capitol Street. Belatedly, at the age of twenty-eight, I came to know middle- and upper-class black Christian Washingtonians.

After a further delay of three decades serving the church in other parts of

the world, I finally made my first visit to Washington's oldest mosque, guided by my student Taalibah Hassan. This mosque was originally organized in the 1930's by Elijah Muhammad and local followers under the name Muhammad's Holy Temple of Islam No. 4 – following temples organized in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit. The present mosque building, dedicated in 1960 and mother to a flock of subsequent mosques, continues in active use on Fourth Street, N. W. at New Jersey Avenue. This section of Fourth Street was renamed by City Council in 1992 as "Islamic Way".

When African-American citizens of Washington look at their home city, and when members of the African-American minority population nationwide come to live in this city, they can observe a city where African-American voters are the majority in the District of Columbia and Prince George's County, Maryland. For eighty years American Muslims in Washington have worked towards the same goals as black churches: to mobilize the public not only in elections but also in support of children, families, and the alleviation of illiteracy, homelessness, drug abuse, disease and crime. Prior to the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 Muslims pursued these goals through creating Muslim-owned businesses and adopting names and dress which rejected control by the dominant white society. Black nationalism still prevailed during the brief months of 1963 when Malcolm X, minister of Harlem's Temple No. 7 and editor of the national newspaper Muhammad Speaks, took on interim responsibility for Washington's Temple No. 4. Malcolm X's tenure in Washington came just prior to his break with Elijah Muhammad, his pilgrimage to Makkah, and his second conversion – to non-racial, Sunni Islam.[2]

I see Washington as a place where native-born African-American Muslims have now been established for three generations and take their place between the vastly more populous black Christian congregations and the newer mosques led and better financed by more recent Muslim immigrant groups. Any Muslim-Christian dialogue in Washington must acknowledge the distinctive identity of this segment of the Muslim population – African-American but not Christian, Muslim but not new Americans.

We all come to Washington by our own routes. A Washington address is strategic and chosen by some, to others incidental and merely a given, and for still others a circumstance they may feel they must explain and justify. To the extent that Washington is for us more than a billing address and an airport, the meaning of Washington to us as home is part of what we bring when we as Muslims encounter Christians, and we as Christians encounter Muslim neighbors. Was it the Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill of Massachusetts, who said, "All politics is local"? I suggest that, no matter how

many conferences we attend and international links we cherish, the important Christian-Muslim encounters are local. Significant encounters are the ones where you have to show up tomorrow and be responsible for what you said or did tonight.

II. Inducements to Dialogue in the Washington Area

Governments

Recently at Washington National Cathedral, Canon John Peterson told two dozen Sunni, Shi'a, Anglican, and Roman Catholic theologians that his cathedral, visible on the highest elevation in the District of Columbia, was a good place for an international peace-seeking meeting because of the Cathedral's "symbolic and convening power."

If a cathedral can ascribe to itself symbolic and convening power, how much more may those governments do so whose seat is in the capital city of a powerful nation, and in the adjacent counties of Maryland and Virginia which house the skilled civil servants, military personnel, and private contractors who plan and execute so much of the national government's work?

Unlike the ring of suburbs around Paris which belong to a North African immigrant population now in its third generation, and in contrast with pockets of Turkish working-class immigrants in major German cities, or South Asian working-class immigrant neighborhoods in British cities, here in the Washington area most immigrants from Muslim-majority countries seem to have commanded salaries and status permitting them to take up residence across a broad geographic space. I know where to find a miniature Saigon in Arlington County, Virginia, but I do not know where to find little Baghdad, or little Mogadishu, or little Kabul, or little Teheran. The scattered residential pattern of immigrant Muslims requires school districts and county-wide agencies, with resources larger than those of a single local school, to address the concerns of Muslim parents about such matters as halal food on lunch menus, co-ed social activities, and student dress. Local governments have of course given much attention to accommodating the large Spanish-speaking minority. I am told that in Prince William County, Virginia the languages most frequently spoken in the homes of public school students, after English and Spanish, are Farsi and Arabic.[3]

The opening of curriculum and the social life of schools, first to the African-American heritage and then to the Hispanic heritage of its students, has prepared educational and law-enforcement authorities and employers to expect to make some accommodation for residents whose cultural heritage

lies in the Islamic world. Public-school curriculums in our area are now acknowledging the importance of non-Christian religions, including Islam, in the content of courses in world history. Private schools, including church schools, have added world religions to their curriculum, whether in response to the plurality of religions represented by families able to pay, or because these schools' leadership perceives that understanding other religions is crucial in today's world.

Whether issues are the local ones such as curriculum, deportment, and prayer in public schools, or national ones such as immigration policy or criminal justice and investigations, government in the Washington area has grown accustomed in recent decades to hearing from not only Christian and Jewish advocacy groups, but also from Hindu, Islamic, and other religious voices. The Washington offices of the Islamic Society of North America, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and the Islamic Circle of North America have all become skilled at media and government relations. The publicized fast-breaking meals (iftar) first held in the White House during the Clinton Administration have become much appreciated by non-Muslims. The only place where I have met in person my own United States Representative and my own county Councilors has been at iftar at Dar al Hijra mosque in Fairfax County, Virginia. When elected officials find it worth their while to sup and greet voters at local mosques, it seems safe to conclude that the Islamic community has achieved public recognition

Universities, Colleges, and Think Tanks

The Washington area is home to numerous universities. The older ones were Christian in their origin. Georgetown was founded by the Society of Jesus before the national government moved from Philadelphia to the bucolic District of Columbia on the Potomac. American University, George Washington University, and the Catholic University of America represent initiatives by Methodists, Baptists, and Roman Catholics respectively in the late nineteenth century to establish influence in the capital of a rising power. Maryland's public university was located in the Washington suburb of College Park. To meet the continuing education needs of Washington's workforce, a new generation of universities has been created over the last fifty years. These include the Nobel-prize-bristling George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia; satellite units of universities headquartered elsewhere, such as the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; and multisite public community colleges and private business schools sprinkled across the metropolitan educational marketplace.

Alongside these teaching institutions stand numerous research institutions, including the Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment, Rand Corporation, and specialized institutes for the study of everything from the Middle East and Asia to public health, Byzantine history, and cryptography. This concentration of expert knowledge bearing on the objective study of Islam is formidable. In addition, two think tanks are committed to the study of Islam by and for believers. One is the International Institute of Islamic Thought, located in Herndon, Virginia and recent donor of the new chair in Islamic studies at George Mason University. The other is the Heritage Trust, funder for two decades of the Graduate School of Islamic Studies in Leesburg and Herndon, Virginia, and now the generous funder of the Al-Alwani Chair in Muslim-Christian Studies in the Washington Theological Consortium.

By the late 1990s, departments of religious studies, Arabic language, and Islamic studies were sufficiently strong in Washington-area universities for a joint Ph.D. program in Islamic Studies to be proposed. This effort reportedly foundered on the predictable issue of which university would confer the degree. One response to the attacks of 2001 on U.S. targets, however, has been to intensify research and teaching in these fields. Employment of Muslim scholars in many of these institutions, and a temporarily heightened interest among a new generation of students, become one more inducement to Muslim-Christian encounter. For Muslim students at local universities, current tensions have reinforced the value of Muslim Student Associations for mutual support.

Worshipping Congregations
Thinking about Muslim Student Associations on local campuses brings me to Muslim and Christian worshipping congregations located in residential neighborhoods across our area.

In the Washington area, as across the United States and Canada, mosque organization keeps evolving. My own visits have been very limited: to the Islamic Center on Embassy Row; to two strong mosques in Fairfax County, Dar al Hijra near Seven Corners and Adams Center near Dulles Airport; and to Masjid Muhammad on 4th Street N. W. in Washington. Unless Washington area mosques differ from those across the United States surveyed by the sociologist Ihsan Bagby in 2001, one would expect to meet imams with more advanced degrees from overseas Islamic universities than from an American university. One would expect to find some mosques, particularly African-American mosques, centered on a strong imam. Predominantly immigrant mosques tend to have a board which makes the decisions and expects its imam to confine
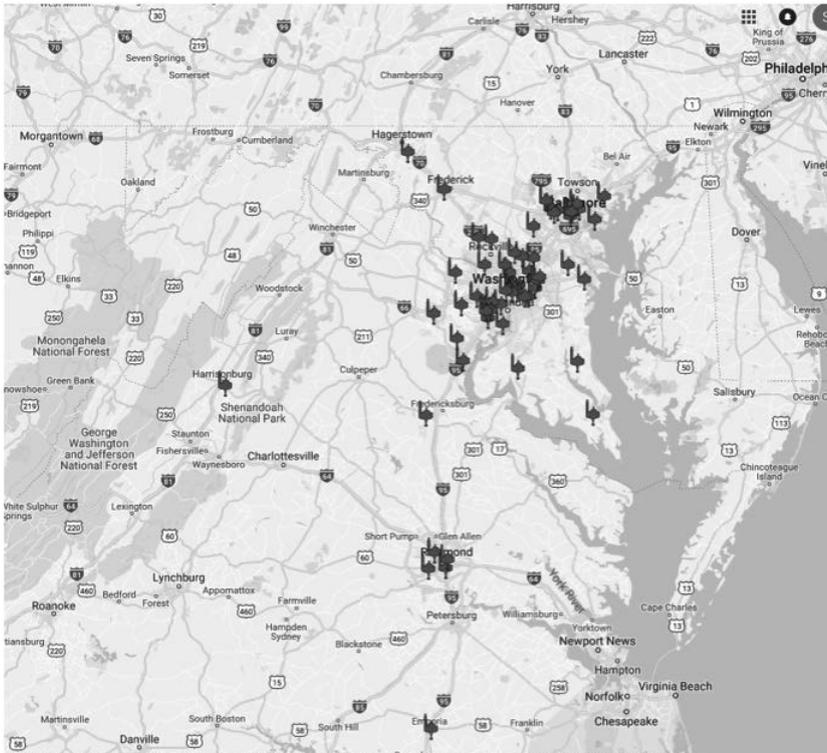
A Google map taken from the Masjid Locator feature of the Muslim Link website (http://www.muslim-linkpaper.com/tml-resources/masajid-locator, accessed 19 December 2018), showing mosques in Maryland, Washington DC, and Northern Virginia. Copyright Googlemaps.

himself chiefly to leading prayers and teaching Qur'an. Bagby reports: "Unpaid volunteers clearly run the vast majority of American mosques. This reflects the dual reality that African-American mosques do not have paid imams, and immigrant mosques do not give their paid imams major leadership responsibilities."[4] It is my own impression that smaller mosques are comprised of a single dominant ethnicity, while the larger mosques are multiethnic.

Worshipping congregations serve to sustain faith and to inculcate faith in the next generation. Congregations conserve and transmit traditions. At the same time, congregations are places where traditions are tested, debated, and sometimes stretched or adapted. Whether women shall serve on the board, teach, and share the same prayer space as men are some of the more publicized current questions. Deeper debates concern what loyalty and financial commitment Muslims should give to a local mosque, how much involvement Muslims

desire in public schools and political life, and how they think about their life in America in relation to the wellbeing and success of the Islamic community in a foreign homeland, and worldwide.

Some of these worshipping congregations choose to offer themselves as sites for interreligious dialogue. I have two vivid memories of the way Washington-area mosques intensified efforts to explain themselves to their non-Muslim neighbors after September 11, 2001. At Dar al Hijra mosque, in the immediate aftermath, I saw members of the congregation mobilized as security guards and inspecting cars at the gate to deter acts of reprisal. Then on the following Saturdays Dar al Hijra mounted a series of open houses to welcome neighbors, offer gifts, and provide information about Islam and about the programs of the mosque.

My second memory is of married students of Virginia Theological Seminary living in the Braddock-Lee Apartments. Over the years they had become familiar with seeing the parking lot of Fairlington United Methodist Church fill up at midday on Fridays with taxicabs, as Muslims arrived for *juma* prayers. With no guidance from me, acting out of their own concern for Muslim neighbors, these Christian students delivered a letter to the Muslim congregation assuring them that they understood Islam to be a way of peace and did not associate their praying neighbors with the self-appointed suicidal perpetrators of holy war.

Non-Muslims will naturally have most contact with those mosques which have decided to go beyond liturgical prayer and Islamic education to involve themselves in community service, outreach to non-Muslim congregations and the media, and political involvement. These mosques constitute a strong inducement to Christian-Muslim, as well as Christian-Muslim-Jewish, conversation in Washington. Many Christian and Jewish congregations across Washington have shown themselves eager to talk. Face-to-face is the best posture for conversation. But behind the friendly face always stands a complex and sometimes conflicted community.

Individual congregations who find themselves, by planning or by accident, engaging in conversation with congregations of another religious tradition do not have to grope along an unmarked path. National organizations like B'nai B'rith, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, the United States Council for Catholic Bishops, and the Islamic Society of North America constantly proffer guidance. Clergy appointed to address issues of unity among Christians in our local judicatories are now often assigned additional responsibility for disseminating advice on interreligious issues. For twenty-five years our area has been served by an organization which self-consciously brings

together representatives from a dozen religious traditions, including Muslims, Christians, and Mormons, to hear glorious annual samples of each other's public music and in small circles to answer individually and personally the question, "What is it I love about being a Muslim (or a Christian, or a Mormon, et cetera)?" This Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington is directed by Clark Lobenstine. Worshipping congregations in the Washington area who are ready for contact with congregations of another religious tradition do not lack for encouragement.

The Role of Theological Education Institutions
The Washington area enjoys one more resource favoring Muslim-Christian encounters.

This is the theological schools which abound in the Baltimore-Washington-Richmond area, and particularly in Washington. The sixteen institutions who currently collaborate in the Washington Theological Consortium represent only a part of the whole number of area schools which educate people for teaching, administering, leading worship, and caring for member of religious communities, from their births through their adult years to their deaths. These sixteen institutions represent distinct schools of thought and different disciplines within their common Christian tradition. For forty years these schools have believed that, for Christians, postgraduate theological study is best done in a pan-Christian, ecumenical setting. Most member institutions believe that a recovery of visible unity is essential to the mission of the one Church. Christians remember that Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane outside Jerusalem on the night he was betrayed to suffering and death for the benefit of all humanity, prayed for his disciples: "As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them even as you have loved me."[5]

The mission of the Church which began with the apostles after Jesus's resurrection and became a worldwide movement in the 19th century, is closely related to the Christian ecumenical movement of the 20th century. In places like China, India, Africa, and the Middle East, churches came to recognize that a divided, competitive, mutually contradicting witness was a scandal before God and a source of confusion among non-Christian onlookers. Hence the movement which continues into our day to recover the visible unity of the Church. Member institutions of the Washington Theological Consortium usually require each degree candidate to take at least one course outside the seminary or college where he or she is registered. Thus students rub shoulders with others whose Christian beliefs and practices differ to some degree from their own.

More recently, Christian theologians like the Swiss Roman Catholic Hans Küng have urged that Christians must go beyond engaging with separated fellow Christians to engage with other religions of the world. The goal is to seek out commonalities, assess apparent differences, and consider how far our differing expressions of truth, right, and devotion may agree in substance even if not in form.

The Canadian liberal Protestant Wilfred Cantwell Smith devoted a lifetime to studying the history of religions. He emerged with the thesis that at bottom our shared experiences of faith are more important than the contrasting content of our beliefs.

The Lebanese Orthodox thinker Georges Khodr taught that the Holy Spirit of God is at work baptizing God-fearing people whom the visible Church will never baptize.

This theological challenge to going beyond Christian unity into a wider field helped the Board of the Washington Theological Consortium decide to welcome over the past ten years associate members including Washington National Cathedral, which describes itself as a house of prayer for all people, and the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, which teaches techniques of meditation and prayer derived from other traditions in addition to Christian. More recently, two affiliate members have been added: the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, which encourages public solidarity in moments of religious-tinged social conflict and collaboration in daily endeavors like neighborhood food banks. Most important for our purposes is the courageous affiliation of the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences with the Washington Theological Consortium.

What inducements to dialogue do theological schools add which are not already at work in governments, universities, research centers, and congregations? They offer stable institutional resources of learned persons equipped for interreligious dialogue. They also offer safe and comfortable settings where such conversations can be pursued. For example, James Wiseman, a Benedictine monk who teaches Christian theology and religious studies at Catholic University, was instrumental in sustaining for ten years a dialogue between Roman Catholic monks and Tibetan Buddhist monks, exploring fundamental ideas such as the emptying of the self.

More specifically, seminaries are seedbeds for pastors. Graduates expect to spend their lives nurturing faith and guiding communities of faith in their relations with bodies of different-believing neighbors, and with American society at large. While Christian seminaries may devote intense effort, for example, to mastering Biblical interpretation, and students in the Graduate School of

Islamic and Social Sciences or the International Institute of Islamic Thought may devote intense effort to interpreting the Traditions of the Prophet, neither group can ever be content with purely intellectual mastery. They must practice what they preach. They care about how their fellow believers and fellow citizens live out their beliefs. They care about outcomes in personal faith. Government or a university research may produce important knowledge about how religious communities behave now or have behaved in the past. Seminary graduates, rabbis, and mosque directors go beyond such historical knowledge or psychological understanding. They ask, "Then what?" They ask, "How does God want us – me and my people – to live our lives now?" Religious leaders have to take responsibility for the still unwritten chapters in the life of their community of believers, in a nation of other-believing and unbelieving fellow-citizens. Pastors feel the urgency of coming to some tenable posture for responding to religiously mixed marriages, the right combining or right separating of our bearing witness and our rendering service to neighbors in need, and right response to the demands of the state for conformity to human laws.

The seminaries and similar schools currently forming leaders in the Washington area assume that the heart as well as the brain will be engaged in any Christian-Muslim dialogue. Analysis has to share the podium with love.

III. Challenges to Dialogue in the Washington Area

Who has Time?
Perhaps the greatest obstacle to worthwhile Muslim-Christian dialogue here in Washington is the difficulty of finding time for conversation. Within institutions with a common purpose, conversation may get scheduled under such names as strategic planning, policy review, or retreat.

As between independent communities, however, each having its own rhythm of life, to get together seems to require either some shared external pressure, such as an outbreak of anti-Muslim graffiti or a dramatic judicial trial, or, more ironically, a calendrical coinciding of feasts, as when Ramadan, Passover, and Easter overlap. Just as traffic moves fast on Washington highways but is also subject to annoying slowdowns, so the busyness of all our lives demands ingenuity and patience from any would-be traffic engineer of inter-religious conversation.

The life work of new Americans is not identical to that of the longer-established Americans. The busy lives of people who are long-rooted in their religious tradition and their place of residence have a different trajectory from the lives of believers who are the first or second generation to embrace a

religious tradition different from that of their ancestors, or who have settled in a society as newcomers. Immigrants and converts have work to do defining their new identity, establishing patterns of life, and realigning their public loyalties. Quickly the next generation is demanding from them answers as to how they, the young, are to live in the faith of their parents and in friendship with agemates who believe differently. Eboo Patel recently described growing up honoring his Indian Muslim immigrant parents in Chicago, mastering the rites and knowledge of their tradition by day. By night with his friends he was living on hamburgers, milkshakes, and the music of MTV. Patel's life work is integration. Muslims who are relative newcomers, either to their own tradition or to Washington, must labor to demonstrate relevance in the face of secularism, as well as legitimacy in the face of majority-expected patterns of dress, diet, and civic duty

Christians who enjoy the status of a historic majority have a simpler kind of work cut out for them. Material wealth and escapist drugs beckon in Washington. Communications and data-processing technology give an illusion of effortless mastery. The glorification of choice as the supreme good leaves all commitments apparently open to doubt. Much of the work demanded of Christian leaders in the Washington area is to contrast the secular view of the world, which Christians themselves adopt during a large part of our waking hours, with the view of the world as God's creation, which we profess ritually and recall explicitly in moments of distress or life change.

Both of us ask, "What is the shape of the good society, the society pleasing to God?" Both of us face a future accounting for the shape we have imposed on our society, both by individual acts and by our behavior in groups. As we work our way through our shared and different tasks, we meet in many settings. We meet at hearings of zoning boards and school boards. We meet as we respond to immigration and security rules of the national government under which we jointly live. We meet in the raising of our children to be members of a society where ethnic and religious boundaries are permeable. Some call all these encounters the dialogue of life.

I am pleased that the Washington Theological Consortium has chosen to name Muslim-Christian dialogue as something that not only happens, but something we can help to happen better. Any student who seeks our Certificate in Muslim-Christian Studies will begin by gaining a fundamental exposure to the beliefs, practices, and religious experiences of the other tradition. The student will learn how the universe looks and how it is possible to be human while holding some fundamental assumptions which differ from one's own.

The student will explore the practical issues that Muslims and Christian

alike face in America, and to which we do not make identical responses: birth, marriage, forgiveness, illness, death, and inheritance. The student will look at relations between believers and their leaders in church and in mosque, and relations between church or mosque and society at large.

Before completing the Certificate, the student will look at means of dealing with social conflicts when religions are one element in that conflict.

I do not believe the motivation for Muslims and for Christians has to be identical in order for their dialogues to be of value. Christians may approach with mixed motives, but somewhere deep down will be the remembered commandment from God, received by Moses and reinforced by Jesus of Nazareth and his apostles, that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. The value of that human neighbor is established for us when we affirm that human nature was esteemed by God as a vehicle and medium which He in His ineffable power could take on in the person of Jesus, fully human and fully God, in order to rescue and restore that human nature.

Islamic motivation will not be rooted in Incarnation faith, but it may well be rooted in the Qur'anic injunction to honor all God's prophets and the people who have listened to these prophets' guidance, and so to extend the territory in which Islam can flourish.

IV. What Outcomes Can We Hope for from Christian-Muslim Studies Carried Out in Institutions where Faith is Honored?

We hope to become more articulate about our deepest values. A frequent report from my students' interreligious encounters is that they not only have come to understand the practices of neighbors they had not grasped or appreciated before. They also emerge with a clearer grasp of some of their own deepest commitments. Sometimes they modify their own ideas or practices.

I offer my own experience. Every time I observe Muslims engaged in liturgical prayer, I am struck by the filling up of the lines. Behind the leader, the first line forms. Whoever arrives third stands shoulder to shoulder with the second. Muslims do not sit with their intimates for salat. They align their chests as the Prophet commanded and become intimate with God and whoever also prays. My own posture when attending Christian public prayer has been affected – as my wife and children can attest, sometimes to their embarrassment. I head for the empty pews in front, trying to fill up the ranks of the seemingly reluctant Christian believers.

After studying Islamic views of prophethood and prophetic success, I have come to realize how important to my own understanding of God and of the fact

of suffering in this world is God's wager in the Incarnation. One result of this deepened appreciation of the mystery and tremendousness of God's act of Incarnation is that I have shifted from a motionless posture at the recitation of the words of the Nicene Creed about Jesus the Christ: "by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and became man".[6] I have adopted an ancient Christian practice that was heretofore not my own. I now bow my head before this unfathomable gift from God.

What kind of neighbor might we hope to be after engaging for a while in this effort of Christian-Muslim dialogue? We may hope to become more flexible in our responses. We may learn to respond differently to the serious and to the overeager, to the open and to the reserved. We may hope to address past offenses and hurts, even if we cannot remove their residues. We will hope to understand when a helping hand is wanted and when it is not. And then, having spoken the truth in love, we must be content to leave the outcome to God. God is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer, the Opener, the Finisher.

Notes

1. *The Muslim Link* (MD, VA, and DC Metropolitan Area Bi-Weekly Newspaper), Feb. 26-Mar. 11, 2010, p.27; www.icna.org/2010/01 on March 11, 2010

2. "Malcolm X." *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*, 2010. Web. 10 Mar. 2010 <http://0-search.eb.com. librarycatalog.vts.edu/eb/article-905; Amir N. Muhammad, *The History of Masjid Muhammad the Early Muslims in the Washington, DC Area* (Washington: FreeMan Publications, 2009), p.17; interview with Saleem Abdul-Mateen, March 4, 2010.

3. For data on language and ethnicity in the population of metropolitan Washington, see the website of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments www.mwcog.org.

4. Ihsan Bagby, "Imams and Mosque Organizations in the United States", in Philippa Strum, ed., *Muslims in the United States: Identity, Influence, Innovation* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2005), p.26.

5. The Gospel according to John, chapter 17, verse 21, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1991).

6. *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), p.358.

3

Making Peace:
Islam and the West

Abdul-Aziz Said

T H E M E : A hegemonic foreign policy strategy of "America the Strong" seeks short-term security using power in ways that ensure lasting resentment and strife. A wiser "America the Brave" strategy addresses root causes of disorder and engages Arabs and Muslims as partners. Locally rooted resources for making peace include religious values, historical memories, culture-specific vocabularies, and indigenous – often informal – processes. Instead of dreaming of Western energy independence, why shouldn't peasants in rural Egypt and residents of the Gaza Strip become pioneers in the global search for renewable energy resources?

I. Introduction: Three Stories

Contemporary Islamic-Western relations are at a point of **crisis** – a moment of danger and challenge, to be sure, but also a time of opportunity.

The more pessimistic interpretation of events is a **story of confrontation**. According to the pundits and scholars who tell this story, current Islamic-Western tensions are only the latest manifestation of a longstanding rivalry between Islam and the West – between civilizations that inevitably manifest opposing identities and irreconcilable values. Each is fated to regard the "other" as inferior and threatening, and to nurse grudges from the distant past as well as grievances from the present.

Those who hold out hope for new beginnings offer a different reading of history and of our present difficulties, and narrate a second story: a **story of compatibility** rather than a story of confrontation. According to the narrators of this story, the West and Islam partake in a common heritage of civilization, and share many religious as well as humanistic values that provide a basis for cooperation. While the story of *confrontation* discounts shared values and attributes

current tensions to a culturally engrained ideological divide, the story of *compatibility* proposes that fear, ignorance, and mundane political motivations drive much of what has been done to exacerbate Islamic-Western relations.

In addition to the story of compatibility, there is also another story, a *new* story that is beginning to be told in settings like this one. I call this the **story of complementarity**. It begins with the story of compatibility's affirmation of common ground and shared values, but also acknowledges differences in value *priorities*. It proposes that mismanaged conflict compromises the most cherished values of each side, and forecloses the possibility of benefiting from the existence of the other in all his or her particularity and uniqueness.

According to the story of complementarity, Islam and the West need each other. Both are here to stay. Westerners and Muslims need to experience them-selves "in relationship" rather than "out of relationship." They need each other to reassess the meaning of their present estrangement, and to discover ways in which each might be enriched by partnership with the other.

II. Preparing for Peace

To reengage in ways that make partnerships for a better world possible, Westerners and Muslims must first ask themselves if they are willing to make **new choices**.

The United States has the power to select between two paths – one likely to polarize the nations of the world further and one capable of transforming the existing transnational disorder. The first path is that of "America the Strong," while the second path is that of "America the Brave."

The path of **America the Strong** is a familiar one. Because its actions are motivated by fear, America the Strong will continue to pursue a hegemonic foreign policy strategy predicated on ensuring its own security in ways that other nations regard as threatening and contrary to their interests. To reinsti-tute order in a manner believed to be in line with its own narrowly conceived interests, the US will continue to support its perceived friends and undermine its perceived enemies based on calculations of short-term power politics. By choosing short-term security, America the Strong will use power in ways that ensure lasting strife and resentment.

The path of **America the Brave** relies on the courage to make short-term, unilateral concessions as well as bilateral and multilateral compromises to ensure long-term global prosperity. This path is one of leadership instead of control. The priority in maintaining security will be to address the root causes of disorder instead of concentrating on strategic advantage.

America the Brave will seek to engage Arabs and Muslims as partners and in doing so set the stage for a new era of cooperative relationship.

US policy in the Middle East is a significant source of Islamic- Western acrimony. US professions of support for democracy lack credibility among Middle Eastern Muslim audiences. Most are convinced that US policies are motivated by a desire to control the region's natural resources by backing repressive allies, undermining strategic adversaries, and supporting change only to the extent that it furthers US interests.

Supporting change in the Muslim Middle East requires appreciating the positive potential of religious activism, which is not merely a source of extremist threats. Changes underway in the domain of religious civic activism can create opportunities for new types of engagement. What is necessary, is a balanced view that does not regard progress as the child of secularity alone, and that acknowledges the role of new religious thinking in participatory governance, public accountability, human rights, and social justice.

Like Americans, **Muslims** also have important choices to make. They have the opportunity to choose between a **defensive**, collectivist outlook that underscores alienation between Muslims and members of other cultural and religious communities, and a more broadly **inclusive** framework that seeks to make traditional Islamic prescriptions for social justice, human dignity, and cultural pluralism more broadly relevant to the contemporary world.

III. Strategizing for Conflict Transformation

1. Cooperative Strategies

1. Rather than conflict management or conflict escalation, we need cooperative strategies of **conflict transformation** that address the underlying sources of current tensions.
2. The US and other Western actors must be willing to **engage with Islamic movements** seeking a stake in the political process.
3. Over the long term, one of the most crucial tasks for peacebuilding is depriving violent extremism of legitimacy.

2. Insist on Negotiated Solutions

1. By working together on jointly formulated proposals and nurturing an interreligious "second track" for dialogue and negotiation, Western and Islamic leaders might make significant contributions to peace by **reframing the conflict over Israel-Palestine** as a feud within the Abrahamic family rather than as an interreligious collision, "crusade" (as seen by Muslims), or "defense of democracy" (as seen by Washington).

2. Rather than seek to manipulate intraregional rivalries such as the Arab-Persian and Sunni-Shi'a divides, Western policy might generate more lasting contributions to security by calling for **collaborative efforts to redress grievances.**

3. "Change from Within" in the Islamic World

1. Fostering incremental "change from within" in Muslim lands is among the most vital tasks for Western-Islamic partnership.
2. Rather than seek to globalize its own models for politics, economy, and society, the US needs to acknowledge that there is more than one way to work toward the goal of a more humane, prosperous, and peaceful society. **Peace** in the Middle East and in other world regions **needs to be locally rooted**.
3. **Localizing peace in Islamic contexts** means making active use of **local peace resources**. Local resources for peace take many forms: religious and cultural value systems, historical memories, culture-specific vocabularies, and indigenous (and often informal) processes.

4. Use Public Diplomacy to Listen as Well as to Speak

1. In the United States after 9/11, one of the more immediate concerns – beyond the tightening of security measures and the formulation of a military strategy – was to ensure that public diplomacy efforts were adequate to "sell" the US and its policies overseas. This concern for **marketing**, however, was not accompanied by a comparable interest in the **salability of the foreign policy product**, or in the utility of public diplomacy for taking the measure of foreign publics and discovering their messages for Americans.

5. Support Religious Peacemaking

1. Interfaith peacebuilding provides invaluable contact between people of faith who inhabit markedly different social and cultural realities. More focused activities can address challenges religious communities share in defining their approaches to issues such as gender, pluralism, and poverty.
2. Given the increasing **vulnerability of holy sites** to acts of violence – Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious leaders should seriously contemplate joint action to build and protect sacred places.
3. **Partnership to protect** holy sites such as churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques could take many forms, including local initiatives in diverse communities and countries. There is room, however, for a global advocacy

campaign, potentially leading to an international convention to protect religious sites.

6. Identify and Implement Intercultural Confidence- Building Measures

1. **Create interfaith structures for peace.** The establishment of Western and Middle Eastern **endowments** to fund cultural events that use visual arts, music, theatre, literature, television, and film to sport and recreation. Particular effort could be made to engage and tap the energies of youth, and to enable young people to share their stories through use of digital media and the internet. To educate children about their communities, endowments could sponsor the production of interfaith stories that could be published in books and also broadcast via television and the world wide web.

2. These efforts could be extended and enhanced through the founding of an **Interfaith Institute of Peace** that would seek to advance the knowledge and practice of faith-based and interfaith peacemaking, and to increase public awareness of peace precepts in the world's many religious traditions.

3. Given the current arguments for environmentally sustainable and renewable energy are being couched in national security terms, there is room for rethinking in this domain as well. The language of "energy independence" reinforces the perception that the only way to improve America's troubled relationship with the Middle East is to sever it. Given the complete national autarky in the domain of energy is improbable, we might as well embrace the logic of **sustainable energy interdependence** and use it as an impetus for further problem solving and relationship building.

4. Projects oriented towards sustainable energy interdependence might take many forms including collaborative research and development initiatives in renewable energy sources. With sufficient international resources and support, peasants in rural Egypt and Palestinians in the Gaza Strip could become pioneers in the global search for sustainable futures.

IV. Conclusion

We need a new strategic doctrine beyond the "war on terror" concept to justify actual wars. By avoiding pessimistic oversimplifications and slogans (for example, a "long war against Islamofascism"), leaders in the West as well as in the Islamic world can set the stage for effective responses to current insecurities.

Establishing peace in the present climate of mutual recrimination will not be easy. Peacemaking, in contrast to warmaking, is proactive and requires deliberate efforts to move: from the superficial to the essential, from morbidity to creativity, from defensiveness to openness, and from the politics of fear and projection to a politics of hope. We need Prospective, not Retrospective. Retrospective does not build a culture of peace.

We need, not rivals, but partners.

4

The Cost of Mediation:
Who Pays?

Richard J. Jones

T H E M E : When parties to a conflict have come to see that there is something good they wish to salvage, and that there are serious damages they wish to avoid, then mediation has a chance. Techniques of mediation developed in the United States or similar societies, however, may not transplant well to a society that places different value on the age, caste, or wisdom of disputants. The Qur'an recognizes *zalama*: self-wronging, wrong against neighbor, and wrong against God. Prophets in the Qur'an bear the burden of warning wrongdoers. Christians affirm that, in the cosmic human dispute with God, God himself took the initiative to mediate – and bore the cost

1. The Question

If a would-be mediator ends up as a target and a victim of the enmity between parties at war, should we view this outcome as a failure in mediation technique, an unfortunate accident, or as an inherent and perhaps even a necessary cost of reconciliation?

This question came to me after I heard and then reflected on the story of Sergio Vieira DeMello.

De Mello was a well-prepared, charming diplomat. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1948, he grew up as the son of a diplomat, living in various foreign capitals, finally marrying a French woman and making his home in Geneva. An official photograph shows a handsome square face, a solid white smile between graying temples, against a sky-blue background of the United Nations flag. De Mello spoke languages fluently and forcefully enough and was on the scene of enough dramatic political events to be described by one journalist as a blend of James Bond and Bobby Kennedy.[1]

Sergio DeMello contributed to reducing human loss and strengthening structures for peace in many conflict situations. When Bangladesh separated from Pakistan in 1971, he worked to repatriate Bengali refugees who had fled to India. In 1972 he participated in reintegrating refugees who had scattered to neighboring states from southern Sudan during that country's first civil war. At the age of twenty-eight, DeMello became head of the UN High Commission for Refugees office in Mozambique. He made his career in that agency, including negotiating with governments in Hanoi and Washington for an end to the exodus of Vietnamese boat people. He was sent by the Secretary General to Rwanda after the massacres of 1993, to the Balkans in the war of the late 90s, and was the de-facto Governor of East Timor for two years after its secession from Indonesia. A journalist observing De Mello in East Timor wrote: "There was obvious warmth, friendliness and charm between Sergio – this Paris-educated, charming, elegant guy – and this guy [Xanan Gusmão] who had been living in jungles for years, and imprisoned for years. The bond between them was so clear, just from the body language, that [De Mello] had earned his trust. It just showed you the enormous importance of the human element in diplomacy."[2]

In May 2003 Secretary General Kofi Annan asked DeMello to serve as his Special Representative in Baghdad for four months. Sergio arrived June 2. On July 22 he reported to the Security Council on the particularly difficult conditions under which the United Nations had to work in American-occupied Iraq. On the afternoon of August 19, 2003 DeMello and twenty-one colleagues lost their lives in a car bombing attributed to the group al-Qaeda in Iraq. It was the bloodiest attack that ever targeted the United Nations. The disconsolate Secretary General said: "I only had one Sergio."

2. The Practice of Mediation

After we grieve, is there anything to be learned from the violent death of Sergio Vieira DeMello? Was it a failure of technique, or a tragic and unavoidable accident? Were these deaths an inescapable cost of undertaking mediation?

When parties are amenable to mediation, when two sides have come to see that there is something good they wish to salvage between them, and when they perceive serious damages they wish to avoid, then mediation has a chance. Experience and training can give a mediator a toolkit of procedures for identifying common interests, establishing rules for dialogue, and encouraging contending parties to take responsibility for arriving at terms they can live with.

In happy mediations, the parties' understandings can shift, negative judgements can be revised, and relationships can be renewed. In more heavily charged and deep-rooted conflicts, like those unleashed in Iraq after the American invasion, mediation might at least help contain the damage.

But what if the parties see no benefit to talking things out? If one party is ready and one is not, or if there are third and fourth and fifth parties to the conflict who refuse to consolidate their grievances, how can the mediator find the middle?

I can easily imagine situations in which my fear or anger would be so great that I might gamble on a faint hope of prevailing through violence, rather than risk having to concede in negotiation things that are too precious for me to let go of. I might be irrational in my intransigence. I might be the enemy of my own best interest. Unfortunately, reason has to compete with will and appetites for control of the human person. People do not always act reasonably and in their own best interest.

Sergio DeMello wrote a doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne on the irrational element in history, but he bet his life on the hope that human beings even high on the passions of war might still respond to the force of reason. He lost that bet.

I have read of societies in which conflict was constrained, or the implementation of an agreement was encouraged, through the voluntary exchange of hostages. Rival rulers each send a son to live at the other's palace, a handy and vulnerable target for being put to death if the enemy ruler fails to keep faith. It occurs to me to wonder whether the mediator might not in some situations fall into a role something like that of a voluntary hostage. A successful 20th-century American labor mediator once advised aspiring mediators: "You are the friend of contesting adversaries. Give them no reason to share you as an enemy."[3] In the case of the UN mission to Baghdad, it seems possible that DeMello's team was seen by one or more party to the conflict as a new, convenient enemy.

3. The Cost of Mediation

When we speak of mediation, we are referring to a range of human responses to human conflict. Abdul-Aziz Said and his former colleague Nathan Funk have warned us against imposing on conflicts arising in other societies the concepts of mediation that have been developed in the United States or a similar society.[4] The wise international mediator does not advertise, "Have technique, will travel". We have evolved our concepts and techniques through very specific experiences of management-labor relations, or peace treaty

implementation after Western civil or international wars, or within the framework of family law in Western societies. Our local wisdom is useful and important to us, but some of it may not transplant well.

For example, considerable hard-won Western wisdom is summed up in the slogan: "Separate the person from the problem". This proverb, local to us, teaches us to set temporarily to one side the status and the emotions of the parties while we focus on the substance of their disagreement. Separating out the person in this way appeals to us analytical problem-solvers reared in a somewhat egalitarian and mobile society. In less mobile, more tight-knit societies, separating the persons from the problem may be not such a wise approach. There the age, caste, and wisdom of disputants may themselves be important components of the dispute. These same traits of age, caste, and wisdom may also condition the effectiveness of the would-be mediator.

And then there is the question, "Who should pay for mediation?" I suspect that the question of who should pay for mediation may never arise in some societies. Mediation in many traditional societies is simply one of the things tribal or village elders do. The role of mediator is part of their status as elder. So whatever economic compensation accrues to elders as elders is presumably due to them when carrying out the particular work of responding to a dispute.

I understand that, in the present-day United States, recognized mediators expect to be paid by the parties who engage their services. Fees vary widely. Some disputants are businesses or individuals of such wealth that they can foresee serious financial loss if they were to enter litigation and lose. Even disputants with less to lose may calculate that the toll in time and emotion they can avoid through mediation is worth paying for. Whether large national firms of retired judges like JAMS (formerly Judicial Arbitration & Mediation Services) or small endeavors like Pastoral Care and Counseling housed in the basement of my neighborhood church in Virginia, the parties who come to these mediators pay fees.

American experience with mediation over the past seventy years has also led to publicly funded arbitration and mediation services. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Internal Revenue Service, The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service for contract disputes — all these pay mediators out of tax revenues.[5] As a society we have embraced the work of mediators on the presumption that their salaries and support are justified by the gain in productivity and social harmony they yield. So the public pays these mediators.

What about mediators who interpose themselves, not in return for salary or fees, but because they understand that God has called them to do this work? I

invite you to ponder four people whose impact on human history derived from their deep conviction that God compelled them to mediate, regardless of cost.

The Prophet Muhammad in 7th-century Arabia is remembered by his biographers as a person respected for his integrity and sense of justice. His prophetic calling made him a negotiator on behalf of his community, a relentless military commander, and an uncompromising ruler. But before his prophetic career, and before leading the departure of his new community from their original home in the city of Makkah, Muhammad had been both a mediator of quarrels and a supporter of peacekeeping agreements.

Long before his experience of being called to speak for God, Makkans gave Muhammad the name *al-Ṣadiq al-Amīn* – the truthful, the trustworthy. He married one of Makkah's wealthiest traders because she found him to be a skilled and honest caravan manager. A recent biographer, Tariq Ramadan, recounts Muhammad's distress over the ceaseless quarrels among the clans of Makkah. Traders and other visitors who lacked clan protection too often became victims of this violence. Ramadan cites the tradition that in his later years Muhammad was pleased to recall having taken part in an unusual pact among tribal leaders "to intervene in conflicts and side with the oppressed against the oppressors... above all other considerations of kinship or power... 'I was present in Abdullah ibn Judan's house when a pact was concluded, so excellent that I would not exchange my part in it even for a herd of red camels; and if now, in Islam, I was asked to take part in it, I would be glad to accept.'"[6]

After about the age of forty, as Muhammad negotiated his God-given quarrel with his fellow Makkans, he was prepared to endure persecution, but he was no longer prepared to compromise. We hear in the Qur'an a self-description that now sounds less like a mediator and more like an arbitrator:

"I am not possessed, nor do I seek among you honors or power. God has sent me to you as a messenger, He has revealed me a Book and has ordered me to bring you good news and warn you. I have conveyed to you my Lord's message and I have given you good advice. If you accept from me what I have brought, this will cause you to succeed in this world and in the hereafter; but if you reject what I have brought, then I shall wait patiently until God judges between us."[7]

The Muhammad in this Madinan stage of his career strikes me less as a mediator and more as an unpaid arbitrator, an arbitrator compelled by God to take the post, and not authorized to make concessions.

My next two examples are unpaid mediators who know themselves to be called by God, and they come as a pair. One is the Sultan of Egypt at the time of the Fifth Crusade; the other is the voluntarily poor man of Assisi named Francis.

Malik al-Kamil Muhammad was a nephew of Saladin, the commander of the

successful Muslim reconquest of Jerusalem from the Latin crusaders. Now a Fifth Crusade had been organized from Christian Europe, this time with the mobilizing of a serious army by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. For Christians, the honor of God and access to Jerusalem, the place on earth where Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead, were at stake – along with a host of more mundane motivations. For Muslims, the integrity of Islamic society and the honor of God were at stake. Diplomats on both sides negotiated, issuing threats and offering concessions.

Francis was a sometime soldier who had personally experienced the cost of war, wounded while fighting for Assisi against the rival town Perugia. Now he had renounced earthly possessions and found himself leading a rapidly prolif-erating lay movement which challenged the Western church to return to Gospel simplicity of life. Humble but fearless, Francis was led to insert himself into one of the major military campaigns urged by the Bishop of Rome to restore Christian rule over to Jerusalem. In late summer of 1219 C.E., the most active theater of war was Egypt, where Western armies were besieging the Nile Delta city of Damietta and aiming for Cairo. Francis first offended the Pope's legate by warning, prophet-like, that to switch from patient siege to active assault on fortified Damietta would be disastrous for the Christian army – and it was. Next Francis set out on foot, accompanied only by one other friar, for the encampment of the Sultan of Egypt, Malik al-Kamil Muhammad.

Malik al-Kamil admitted the strange emissary to his camp. We do not know the Sultan's motives in granting safe-conduct to the two friars. Apparently he was willing to test for himself whether these were authorized negotiators for the enemy, or spies, or madmen. Francis was allowed to speak in the Sultan's camp. He spoke about Christ. No one was converted. We know that the encounter did nothing to avert the Fifth Crusade, despite Francis's deep hopes to make friends of Muslims, and despite an offer from the Sultan to allow Christians access to Jerusalem in return for a cessation of hostilities in Egypt.[8]

As a mediation attempt, the encounter outside Damietta has to be counted a failure. Mediators may know themselves to be prompted and guided by God and still enjoy no success on earth.

My third example of a mediator who understood himself to be in the service of God was the Swedish diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld. Hammarskjöld was the Secretary General of the United Nations who beginning in 1953 attempted to carry out what he called "preventive diplomacy". Hammarskjold obtained member states' support for international military interventions to replace interventions by one or a few powerful states. He undertook mediation in some of the violent transitions from European colonial government to independent

national government, beginning in Israel and Jordan, and ending in the former Belgian Congo. Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash near the Rwanda-Congo border the night of September 17-18, 1961. He was enroute to Katanga to resolve a conflict between unarmed UN forces and the army of that secessionist southern province.[9]

Hammarskjöld wrote in his diary of his sense of having been called and having answered a call: "I don't know who – or what – put the question, I don't know when it was put. I don't even remember answering. But at some moment I did answer Yes to someone – or Something – and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life in self-surrender, had a goal. From that moment I have known what it means 'not to look back', and 'to take no thought for the morrow'."[10]

The words of this Christian international civil servant give me the impression of a person who did not seek death but could continue to risk his life as an assertive mediator because, in the pattern of Jesus, he had already given away his life.

Muhammad, Malik al-Kamil, Francis, and Dag Hammarskjöld — four examples of the numerous mediators, ranging from elders in traditional societies through volunteer mediators in community conflicts in wealthy societies to retired heads of state spending their prestige to verify election results and coax belligerents to consider less violent options. These God-driven mediators have understood in their own ways that their work is sacred and their reward is not bankable.

4. A God's-eye View of Mediation's Cost

All the mediators I have described, whether they mediate for a fee, or on salary, for love of humanity, or in service to God — all are human mediators. Now, from my Al-Alwani Chair of Muslim-Christian Studies in the Washington Theological Consortium, I wish to shift the discussion to a different dimension.

Beyond the human behavior which social scientists can observe and historians can reconstruct on the evidence, beyond the explanatory theories that our minds can devise to account for successes and failures of human groups in their earthly striving, I hope it is also permissible to wonder about how God sees our efforts at conflict resolution.

Even beyond that, I dare to ask whether there could be a sense in which God makes himself responsible, liable, or even the bearer of the cost of the mediation which our human condition demands.

This is theology. I am out of my depth. But I think the question at least deserves asking:

Does the resolving of human contentiousness carry a cosmic cost?

The Qur'an gives us to understand that human beings live with an enviable and awesome capability. We have been entrusted with the awful, awe-filled capacity to acknowledge that we are creatures, or to deny that we are creatures. At the creation of the world, God offered this capacity to the mountains, but they shuddered and refused. This capacity was offered to the heavens and the earth, "but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it" (Qur'an 33:72). Then God offered this capacity to Man, so that God might receive the free and knowing praise He deserves from that which without Him would have no being. Man accepted. "And the human being carried it." From this Trust, freely bestowed and freely accepted, flows our human capacity to honor God by acknowledging Him, and to dishonor God and traduce ourselves by ignoring, forgetting, or defying our Maker. The Qur'an adds, "He [the human being] was indeed unjust and foolish."[11]

The Qur'an goes on to reveal God's view of our human record. Islamic theology, anchored in the Qur'an, has on the whole been hopeful about our human nature and our responsiveness to our Maker. Man may be absentminded but he responds to reminders and warnings. Man may be weak, but he responds to divine guidance.

When in human societies there has been disregard for the Creator's guidance and disrespect for His creatures, including fellow human creatures, how does God respond to this disregard? God's patience is tested, but in His mercy he sends messenger after messenger, warner after warner, guide after guide, until the coming of the final Clear Warning which is the Qur'an, and the perfect embodiment of human respect for the Creator, namely the final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad.

But God faces still more resistance. The Prophet in his lifetime struggled against the Quraysh idolators — those who preferred to deny to Allah the worship and sovereignty due solely to Him. An unheeding society resists guidance. Persuasion gives way to coercion and armed violence. The Qur'an contains over a hundred occurrences of the root *zalama*, which refers to wrong: self-wronging, wrong against neighbor, and wrong against God, as in worshipping that which is not God.[12] God the All Powerful is heard to pose as a question in *Surah* 7:172: "Am I not your Lord?"

Here is Omnipotence that has incurred the cost of delegating to humans the responsibility for carrying out the divine will for human welfare and care of the creation. The Creator and Lord of the Worlds in His patience seems to take a

posture of waiting. One may hear the tone not only of an interrogator but also of a merciful Sovereign: "Am I not your Lord?"

Thus far I have attempted to sketch Islamic thinking about God's response to human wrong. Now I wish to offer a Christian thought on the cosmic cost of mediation. Would it be thinkable to suggest that God Himself is not only patiently waiting but also actively paying for His mediation to work itself out?

As Christian thinkers ponder human intransigence – from Madison, Wisconsin state budget negotiations, to Baghdad cabinet negotiations, from estranged ethnic groups to estranged marriage partners around the world – we see much that grieves God. The ancient Hebrew prophets have taught us to dare to believe that God, the one and only, the true and living, the almighty and eternal, the source and the end of all that is, the giver of every good gift, grieves at our intransigence.

Because God in the beginning looked on His Creation and pronounced it good, and because God entrusted the earth to the care of human beings to people it and to tend it, Christians understand that God is both grieved and angered at human heedlessness. God was good enough to rescue, discipline, and teach one nation, so that all nations might learn by example how our justice and mercy are to reflect His justice and mercy. God was good enough to send warners and guides – His prophets – and He saw them rejected. Then there came a prophet who was more than a teacher, more than an example, more than a warner. This one, being fully human, could understand human intransigence, suffer human intransigence, and take the cost of human intransigence upon himself. This same one, being also fully God, could break the deadlock of human intransigence and open a way for human beings to do justice and show mercy, not out of their inherent goodness, but out of constant gratitude for God's mercy. Christians affirm that in the cosmic human dispute with God, God took the initiative to mediate. In the Messiah Jesus, God bore the full cost of that mediation.

A fourth-century Christian thinker from Edessa named Ephrem, writing in Syriac, tried to put into words this mysterious nimbleness of God: "Who then, my Lord, compares to you? The Watcher slept, the Great was small, the Pure baptized, the Life who died, the King abased to honor all: praised be your glory."[13]

Can God mediate, and pay the cost of mediation, and still remain all-Glorious?

5. Conclusion

So long as human conflict continues on earth, conflict mediators will be moti-
vated by a range of incentives. Some will do their work with the modest hope
that mediation will diminish human suffering and shift the balance in human
relations away from injustice towards just dealing. Some will be drawn by the
challenge of working in such a vital, unpredictable, creative medium as human
relations. These will be eager to see what will turn out from human conflict.
The deep-lying, worldview assumptions of mediators about human nature and
our destiny in the cosmos will usually go unspoken. My purpose has been to
invite you who are theorists, and you who are brave and creative practitioners
of conflict mediation, to reflect — during some cooling-off period — on the
ultimate ground and end of your work.

For your work, I am grateful. For your work that reflects His work, thanks be
to God.

Notes

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5

Economic Health, Division of Labor, and the Three Dimensions of Islam

Waleed El-Ansary

T H E M E : Instead of regarding economic activity as a human domain separate from the domain of value, Muslims understand that human labor and exchange involve the edification of human nature in all its fullness. Right economic actions combine with right intentions to satisfy human spiritual needs. Markets could not exist without an inner jihad for keeping our promises. Islamic economic law encourages risk-sharing instead of trading risk, thereby preserving virtue and community. Economics cannot be amoral.

In a 2010 article on Islamic economics, Osman Bakar suggests an important analogy between medical health and economic health. He highlights the "difference between attempting to cure a disease by just treating its symptoms and attempting to cure it by treating its root causes."[1] In developing this analogy between medicine and economics, he points out that traditional Islamic medicine is holistic and focuses on treating the root cause of disease, whereas modern allopathic medicine "focuses on the treatment of symptoms." Likewise, he maintains that Islamic economics is holistic in its treatment of economic health and ailments, whereas "modern economics and its related financial system are content with finding remedies to cure what seem to be mere symptoms of its recurring disease."[2]

Indeed, as Robert Foley points out, the modern economic approach bases itself on a view of "modern society as made up of two spheres: an economic sphere of individual initiative and interaction, governed by impersonal laws that assure a beneficent outcome of the pursuit of self-interest; and the rest of social life, including political, religious, and moral interactions which require the conscious balancing of self-interest with social considerations."[3] This is sometimes called the "separate domain" argument.

But if instead the separation of ethics and economics in exchange processes leads to economic instability in the short term and depends on secularized production processes[4] that are unsustainable in the long term, then ethical principles are not only relevant but also necessary for economic health. If so, the real question is not whether an economic system needs virtuous people, but whether the economic system *itself* must be institutionally virtuous for stability and sustainability, and thus whether the "separate domain" view on the role of values in an economic system is valid. Accordingly, Islamic economics is not reducible to a combination of modern economic theory (or theories) and Islamic economic law any more than Islamic medicine is reducible to a combination of conventional allopathic medicine and the Islamic law on doctor-patient relations. Unfortunately, the latter has been the standard approach to Islamic economics in the literature, particularly in light of many economists' assumptions that: 1) modern exchange is compatible with a variety of ultimate ends, whether egoist or altruist, making industrial capitalism spiritually neutral;[5] and 2) economic theory provides the analytical tools to accommodate any rational or internally consistent set of values or tastes, making economic theory spiritually neutral.[6] In this case, "Islamic" (or "Christian," "Buddhist," or any other religious approach to economic theory) would be *at best* a "special case" of modern economics (assuming that religious values are internally consistent).

However, this "special case" argument not only presupposes the separate domain argument, but also that the Islamic sciences of man and nature are irrelevant to (or have few implications for) industrial production and exchange processes, as well as the analytical tools of modern mainstream economic theory. This is a false supposition. Modern economic theory and practice are products of a *mechanistic* rather than *holistic* philosophy of science and world-view, with all this implies for socio-economic equilibrium and environmental sustainability.[7] This paper clarifies the intimate (but currently neglected) connection between the Islamic cosmological sciences and Islamic economic thought. Combining modern economic theory with Islamic law (*fiqh*) to the neglect of the other Islamic sciences of man and nature is not a holistic approach to Islamic economics, but renders such a truncated Islamic economics inadequate for anything beyond the treatment of symptoms. Accordingly, the modern separation of religion and science in the West is the basis for the secular separation between ethics and economics.

The first section of this paper therefore illustrates how the holistic Islamic sciences of man and nature integrate ethics and economics in the traditional Islamic economy in the context of the legal, intellectual, and esoteric dimen-

sions of Islam (often summarized in terms of the hadith of Gabriel that has been used as a model for discussing the essentials of Islam for over 1,000 years [8]). The second section then examines how the secular sciences of man and nature divorce ethics and economics in the context of a mechanistic worldview and production and exchange processes that increasingly erode the moral limits of markets, generating socio-economic instability and the environmental crisis.

I. The Traditional Islamic Economy Integrated Ethics and Economics

In Islam, every aspect of life is sacred, for nothing is outside of the Absolute, and no aspect of life is profane, for everything is attached to God. What would appear to be the most mundane of activities has religious significance. As Muhammad Abdul-Rauf notes, the Qur'an suggests that to struggle for a living is tantamount to defending the faith.[9] The Prophet stressed this fact before the battle of Badr when a young man with a strong physique was running to his shop through the area where the Prophet was marshalling his men. Someone remarked that he wished the youth would use his body and health to run in the way of God by enlisting to defend the faith. The Prophet responded, "If this young man runs with the intention of not depending on others and refraining from begging, he is in the way of God. If he strives for the livelihood of his weak parents or weak children, he is in the way of God. If he tries to show his health out of pride, he is in the way of the devil."[10]

This saying of the Prophet demonstrates clearly the spiritual significance of work from the Islamic perspective, according to which work should be performed as "an act of worship as if [one] were praying."[11] Far from merely serving to maintain one's physical and material wellbeing, work for Muslims involves the edification of human nature in all its fullness, requiring that right action in economic activity be combined with right intention in order to actualize its spiritual dimension. Right intention is primary because of "the fact that one and the same action – we are not saying every action – may be good or bad according to the intention, whereas the inverse is not true: an intention is not good or bad according to the action."[12] The spiritual dimension of work is reflected etymologically in the Arabic word for "reward," *ajr*, which is the root of *ijārah* and *ujrah*, or "wages." Thus, it is said that "the (spiritual) reward (*al-ajr*) is from God and the wage (*al-ijārah*) is from man."[13]

In fact, the Divine Law gives religious meaning to all acts that are necessary for human life, but not those that are simply luxuries.[14] Furthermore, the English word "work" is generally translated in Arabic as either *'amal'* or *'sun'*, with the former meaning "action" in its most general sense (as distinguished

from "knowledge") and the latter referring to "making" or "producing" in the artistic sense (and hence to Islamic production processes). Work is therefore inseparable from the ethical and aesthetic domains of human life, which in turn refer back to the intellectual and spiritual domains from which they derive their principles. In short, work deals not only with physical needs, but also with spiritual needs.

Whereas physical needs are quantitative, quantifiable, and finite, spiritual needs are qualitative, non-quantifiable, and non-finite. It is thus a fruitless enterprise to attempt to quantify the non-quantifiable, or to measure the immeasurable, with an eye to satisfying spiritual needs (even if not acknowledged as such) through physical means. According to all the great spiritual traditions of humankind, no finite reality suffices for the heart of man, which can only be satisfied in the Infinite.

Thus, while money clearly facilitates meeting our quantifiable needs, non-monetary benefits are necessary for addressing our higher qualitative and spiritual needs. Otherwise, attempts to purchase what cannot be bought, such as beauty or love or self-esteem, will create markets for counterfeits that ultimately preclude the fulfillment of the needs to which they correspond. Fulfilling this hierarchy of needs therefore requires both market and non-market institutions that integrate ethics and economics. If this were not possible, we would have to face an awkward question:

> How it ever came about that, in order to sustain his earthly existence, man should be obliged to follow a course of physical action that seems a direct denial of his deepest nature, as if by some ghastly mistake of his Creator it is man's destiny to follow a direction that leads him away from the very thing it is his nature to be? If we are to avoid such a dilemma, we must conclude that in some way work is, or should be, profoundly natural and not something that must be avoided or banished as being beneath our dignity.[15]

If economic activity is not only supposed to help keep us alive, but is also supposed to help us strive towards perfection in fulfilling a hierarchy of needs, then the division of labor and coordination of economic activity required by any economic system should have spiritual and not simply economic significance. Indeed, when finite physical needs are satisfied, the higher aspects of the human being continue to develop, driven fundamentally by the desire for God or to attain our spiritual destiny of ultimate satisfaction.[16]

On the one hand, Islamic law establishes a minimum division of labor to provide necessary and useful goods and services, asserting that some members

of the community must practice each profession to fulfill the needs of society. The division of labor is thus analogous to other collective and civic duties, such as building orphanages and hospitals. If no members in the community fulfill these needs, each member of the community is held spiritually accountable. The division of labor is thus conceived of as a duty, not simply a pragmatic possibility.

On the other hand, the division of labor must leave ample room for human creativity and intrinsic meaning in production, to use and thereby perfect our God-given gifts like good stewards. As Adam Smith noted, an extremely high division of labor employing few of man's faculties could have serious social costs by reducing certain human capabilities. He states:

> In the progress of the division of labor, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labor, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life.[17]

A too-extreme division of labor therefore leads to lopsided development that fails to provide people with psychological and spiritual fulfillment, and it in turn sets the stage for the exploitation of the environment, since man will search for the Infinite in the finite, which we shall return to in the next section (particularly if respect for nature presupposes respect for man). Such disequilibrium can only persist in the short or medium-term, not the long-term. "Equilibrium on the socio-economic plane is impossible to realize without reaching that inner equilibrium which cannot be attained save through surrender to the One and living a life according to the dictum of Heaven."[18]

While Islamic canonical law sets the conditions for making or production, it is the Islamic intellectual sciences with their integral vision of man and his

place in the cosmos that constitute the heart of production, which ultimately is related to the spiritual needs of man. Islamic canonical law is necessary for an integral approach to Islamic development addressing a hierarchy of spiritual and other needs, but it is not sufficient. Islamic intellectual, productive, and artistic sciences are also necessary, because the norms and principles of Islamic art, which are also derived from the Islamic revelation, govern the making of things in an Islamic economy.[19] From this point of view, what man makes, or man's art, should communicate a spiritual truth and presence analogous to nature, or God's art. "The ethical aspect of work in this case embraces also the aesthetic."[20] As Titus Burckhardt explains:

> God is beautiful and he loves beauty (*Allahu jamilun yuhibbu'l-jamal*): this saying of the Prophet opens up limitless perspectives, not only for the inner life, where the beauty loved by God is above all that of the soul, but also for art, whose real purpose, understood in light of this prophetic teaching, is to support the contemplation of God. For beauty is God's radiance in the universe, and every beautiful work is a reflection of it. ...
>
> According to (another) saying from the Prophet, 'God prescribes perfection in everything' (*Inna-Llaha kataba-l ihsana 'ala kulli shay'*); the word *ihsan* which we translate as 'perfection' also has the meanings of 'beauty' and 'virtue.' It is thus a duty of the Muslim to seek perfection in every work, this perfection implying beauty in its turn. The traditional practice of the arts refers to this maxim, and one will immediately understand that on this basis there could be no schism between craftsmanship and art.[21]

Thus, in Islam, the production process is conceived as a spiritual discipline in which what one makes is not only a means of livelihood but also a product of devotion. "Every man is a special kind of artist" in this perspective; the artist is not "a special kind of man."[22]

This approach to the making of things has always been closely wed to the spiritual practices of Islam, because the necessary condition for this approach is consciousness of one's mortality and complete dependence on the Absolute, or "spiritual poverty" (*faqr*).[23] As Yusuf Ibish points out:

> The Damascene weavers, for example, preceded their work by hours if not days of spiritual preparation: prayers, meditation and contemplation were an integral part of the creative process, at the end of which a beautiful design would emerge: outwardly inspiring designs reflecting inwardly the realised harmony with the source of all inspiration. One could say the same

for the calligraphers: purity of soul and nobility of character were regarded as indispensable conditions for the accomplishment of this, the sacred art of Islam *par excellence*.[24]

Islamic metaphysics and sciences of nature apply to everything in the productive sciences—from architecture and urban planning to the art of dress and personal living space. The same applies to the practical sciences dealing with everything from social organization to the treatment of the environment. This link between work, spiritual education, and sacred ambiance forged by the Islamic intellectual sciences is thus crucial to fulfilling the hierarchy of spiritual and other needs and highlighting the interconnections between religion, economics, and civilization from the Islamic point of view.[25] And as Jean-Louis Michon points out, Islamic art is: "the result of the intimate relationship established since the advent of Islam between some forms of artistic production and the precepts and practices of the new religion, born from the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophetic tradition, or Sunnah. ... Armed with these guides, we shall be able to... [see] the main branches of Islamic artistic production and observe how each of them bears the mark of the theological foundations (*uṣūl al-dīn*), the ethical rules (*muʿāmalāt*), and some of the great symbols and similes (*amthāl*) that initiated it and accompanied its development".[26]

Traditional Islamic societies thus provide an ideal model of the integration of ethics and economics as embodied in their organic union of market and non-market institutions. Concerning Islamic law, it prescribes many economic practices that reinforce intrinsic meaning in production and exchange while fulfilling a hierarchy of spiritual and other needs. One of the most important examples of such integration is the institution of *waqf*, or religious endowment, which is historically most responsible for the creation of public facilities, especially schools and hospitals, in Islamic societies.[27] Although endowments often involve the donation of a building or a plot of land, other initiatives funded by these endowments have included the provision of water, the freeing of slaves, taking care of injured animals, and countless other charitable activities. This comprises in part what Adi Setia has rightly called the "Islamic Gift Economy."[28]

Another salient example of the integration of ethics and economics in Islamic societies is the religious tax or *zakah*, which as one of the five pillars of Islam is the main form of almsgiving incumbent upon all Muslims. The *zakah* is a means for purifying one's wealth, and it customarily entails an annual payment of two and a half percent on capital assets held longer than one year. In

traditional societies the funds were paid to the public treasury, which then both distributed them to poor Muslims and channeled them toward projects for public use similar to those funded by endowments, such as the construction and maintenance of schools, hospitals, and orphanages.[29] The purpose of such charitable institutions is to build people up by cultivating a caring and respect-ful atmosphere in which collective commitment to the common good comes naturally. This of course is an ideal that has often been difficult to achieve, especially after the colonial period, but suffice it to say that so long as tradi-tional production processes were strong and Islamic societies were vibrant, Muslims provided history with impressive examples of striving after these ideals.

At the heart of this striving, and thus of the Islamic integration of ethics and economics, is the notion of covenant or agreement (*'aqd*), the centrality of which entails its profound relation to the economic domain *ipso facto*. The Qur'an states: "O you who believe! Fulfill your agreements" (5:1). This verse refers not only to agreements made between people, but also to those made with oneself and above all to the primordial covenant between man and God.[30] It encompasses both work and worship, affirming the responsibility that is part and parcel of true spirituality and thus of ethics as it relates to economics.[31] As Seyyed Hossein Nasr has explained:

> The basis of all work ethics in Islam is to be found in the inescapable moral character of all human action and the responsibility that human beings bear for their actions, not only toward employer or employee, but also in relation to the work itself, which must be executed as well as the "actor," or worker, is capable of doing. Responsibility for the work exists also and above all before God, who is witness to all human action. This sense of responsibility before God for consequences of all action, and hence work in the more limited economic sense, passes even beyond the grave and concerns human beings' ultimate end as immortal beings.[32]

Given this ubiquitous sense of the presence of the Sacred in traditional Islamic societies, no clear distinction is made between religious acts and secular ones. The Islamic ideal is to sacralize all aspects of life, even the most mundane, to the degree that it is possible. Work for Muslims is therefore not only intimately related to questions of correct action, as discussed above, but it should also be a form of prayer. Indeed, to approach work in this way would simply be to conform to the nature of things, to bring ourselves into conscious alignment with it, as according to Schuon, "[A]ction by definition manifests

God, and … the creature can therefore do nothing that does not in some way affirm God."[33]

The profound nature of work in the Islamic perspective even finds outward expression in traditional Islamic cities, the organization of which reflects the rhythms of traditional Islamic life. While in secular societies prayer belongs to the private domain, in Islamic societies it is an all-pervasive reality; work and leisure are organized around prayer, not the other way around. Again, Nasr:

> The very architecture of the traditional city is such that spaces for worship, work, education, cultural activities, and rest are harmoniously interrelated and integrated into an organic unity as far as the relation of these spaces and their function to each other are concerned. The very fact that in a traditional Islamic city people move from the space of the mosque to the place of work and to their home in an easy manner and break the hours of work regularly to perform the daily prayers as well as rest, colors deeply the meaning of work itself. Both the space and the time within which work take place are transformed by the Islamic prayers, and thereby work itself gains a religious complexion that determines its ethical meaning in the Islamic context.[34]

It is as though the prayers set a tempo to which work, social, and family life provide the melody, producing a harmony through which man partakes in the goodness and beauty of the Divine creativity. And it is these divine qualities of goodness and beauty that ultimately ground the ethical dimension of work from the Islamic point of view.

Concerning the effort to guarantee ethics in economic activity, traditional Muslim societies implemented several strategies. On the external level, the *muḥtasib* (controller) oversaw both production and exchange to ensure that the ethical requirements of work were being met.[35] Not only do the Qur'an and Hadith[36] put forth the general principles that determine the ethical dimension of work, but they also contain specific teachings related to buying and selling, which include the necessity of fair weights and measures as well as honesty in claims regarding the quality of goods. On a subtler level, ethicality was maintained through the presence of religious authorities in places of work and trade as well as through the natural mixing of the life of the bazaar with that of the mosque.[37] According to Nasr, "[T]he most important guarantee in this case was and continues to remain the conscience of individual Muslims and the religious values inculcated in them."[38]

In other words, one must have moral principles involving an inner *jihad* (struggle or effort) for markets to exist in the first place, *i.e.* the principle of

justice, or that property rights are respected, the principle of contract, or that contracts (promises) are kept, and the principle of allegiance, or "that one loyally support a government that enforces the principles of justice and contract."[39] Although these principles pertain to the external conditions of work, they ultimately refer back to the reality of God from which they derive their legitimacy and deepest significance, which is to say that in Islam they have a higher ontological and not merely social basis.

In traditional Islamic society, the guilds transmitted the Islamic doctrines and practices on the division of labor, production, and market exchange that allowed man to live in harmony with himself, his fellow men, and nature.[40] We are not suggesting a restoration of the specific practices of Islamic economic history. But this history can serve as a source of inspiration for understanding how Islamic economic principles were previously applied and how we can apply them today to strengthen the ethics of contemporary economic practices. Although the values resulting from the genuine application of these principles no longer exist in any widespread way in many parts of the Islamic world, it is due in large part to the influence of secular modes of thought and practice in Islamic lands.[41] Prior to the late nineteenth century, nearly the entire gainfully occupied population of Islamic towns were members of the guilds.[42] The guilds themselves highlighted their religious origins with important implications for interreligious cooperation:

> … practically every guild identified a particular prophet or saint as being the patron of its particular craft, thus endowing the craft with something of the sacred character of the personage … . For example, the carpenters took as their patron the Prophet Noah: having built the ark, he stands forth as the exemplary master carpenter. The Virgin Mary was adopted by the weavers as their patroness: it was she who wove the swaddling clothes for the child Jesus. The Persian companion of the Prophet, Salman al-Farisi, having been the Prophet's barber, was the patron of the barbers' guild … The Caliph 'Umar was reputed to have said that he would have adopted perfume-making as his profession: if he made no profit, he would at least have with him always a beautiful scent – hence his adoption by the perfumers as their patron.[43]

In fact, the link between the prophets encouraged the existence of interfaith guilds (with Muslim, Christian and Jewish members) as well as promoting harmony between different intrafaith guilds in traditional Islamic civiliza-

tion.[44] There was thus a link between members within a particular guild as well as between guilds, for all had a common origin.

This approach to production and social organization entailed a system of personal exchange in which coordination between members was quite manageable. In fact, traditional craftsmen accepted the duty to supply their goods at just and stable prices, since the division of labor was a duty, not just a right.[45] To avoid over- or under-supply of the market at a particular time, for example, a master craftsman could postpone or accelerate taking on extra apprentices while another qualified craftsman had insufficient or excess work, respectively.

In short, equilibrium in Islamic economies was critical not only for meeting physical needs through reliable employment and steady income but also spiritual needs in light of the deeper dimensions of work. As one traditional economist and philosopher notes:

> If the nature of the work is properly appreciated and applied, it will stand in the same relation to the higher faculties as food is to the physical body. It nourishes and enlivens the higher man and urges him to produce the best he is capable of. It directs his free will along the proper course and disciplines the animal in him into progressive channels. It furnishes an excellent background for man to display his scale of values and develop his personality.[46]

Motivations are thus clearly important in the traditional Islamic economic system, tightly integrating ethics and economics. Even if guilds became corrupt in places such as Western Europe after the Renaissance, as Adam Smith asserts, this does not imply that *all* guilds were necessarily corrupt in *all* places at *all* times. Although the history of the European guilds is beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say here that the corruption of the guilds commenced with the secularization of philosophy, art, and science in the West (the implications of this for economic theory and practice is the subject of the following sections).

Much research has been conducted on Islamic economic institutions and their relevance to modern contexts, particularly with regard to exchange processes and the role of ethics therein, but the interconnections between the intellectual and productive sciences with Islamic law have yet to be fully explored. Bringing ethics to exchange is of course important, but such a collective gesture must rest on a foundation of truly Islamic production processes informed by an intellectual core, which is to say that the view of man put

forward in Islamic metaphysical and cosmological teachings must be brought to bear on production.

Accordingly, the first step in an integral Islamic development program must be recovering the Islamic intellectual heritage, shaping education accordingly, and bringing forth Islamic science and technology.[47] Education is indeed the "greatest resource," for it shapes supply and demand according to Islamic principles, so to speak. On the one hand, the contemporary Islamic educational system must integrate the findings of modern natural science into higher orders of knowledge based on the traditional sciences of nature, and on the other hand, contemporary Islamic productive sciences must integrate technologies that do not dehumanize work into the making of things based on traditional metaphysical principles.

E.F. Schumacher suggests three objectives of work related to this hierarchy of spiritual and other needs in any religious approach to economics:

• First, to provide necessary and useful goods and services.

• Second, to enable every one of us to use and thereby perfect our gifts like good stewards.

• Third, to do so in service to, and in cooperation with, others, so as to liberate ourselves from our ... egocentricity.[48]

In Islam, all three objectives are forms of economic jihad or defense of the faith, applicable to what man does and what he makes,[49] and all three are necessary to maintain the links between ethics and economics. Islamic economic law is relevant to all three objectives in the sense that it defines necessary and useful goods and services while excluding "noxious markets" such as pornography and gambling (or speculation) in the first objective, and establishes the external conditions for fulfilling the second and third objectives. But the intellectual and esoteric dimensions of Islam are also clearly necessary for realizing the latter objectives, perfecting our talents as stewards, and working cooperatively to liberate ourselves from our egocentricity (and as we shall see, Islamic production processes are necessary for economic institutions based on Islamic law in the long-term).

It is therefore important to recognize that economic activity has two aspects: the *transitive* (or objective) aspect and the *intransitive* (or personal) aspect. Work is transitive because it is directed to and transforms some object or service in the external world (the first objective of work). At the same time, work is intransitive in that it contributes to the formation of the worker's character (the second and third objectives of work).

II. Consequences of the Divorce of Ethics and Economics

In the previous section we saw that the integration of ethics and economics is indeed possible, and that the Islamic tradition provides an example of a holistic framework for this possibility. Is such integration necessary to address the environmental crisis, economic stability, as well as questions of human welfare? To answer this, we will investigate the legitimacy of Schumacher's second and third objectives of work outlined above. As we shall see, the answers depend on whether one adopts a holistic or mechanistic approach to the sciences of man and nature.

Human Welfare
All economists recognize the first objective, or the transitive aspect of work, in their emphasis on the provision of goods and services for human welfare. Some economists like Adam Smith recognize the intransitive aspect related to Schumacher's second and third objectives of work to various degrees, acknowledging that different types of work have different effects, as we have seen. But other economists such as David Ricardo and James Mill, the father of John Stuart Mill, opposed this view, denying the existence of harmful effects, and asserted, in the context of their mechanistic worldview, that all types of work are homogeneous in terms of human development.[50] And due to an anthropology that heavily emphasized psychological hedonism,[51] these thinkers also denied the possibility of liberation from egocentricity, leaving only the first objective of work for economics. But from a religious point of view, we are not merely human "havings" and "doings," we are human "beings."[52] Ignoring questions of intrinsic meaning in work and spiritually productive cooperation leads not only to a hypertrophy of the extrinsic aspects of production and exchange, but also to the atrophy of the higher aspects of the human person. An unhealthy preoccupation with the accumulation of wealth is therefore self-defeating, converting it into a sort of misery, because somebody else will always have more.

This became especially clear for E.F. Schumacher in 1955, when he was invited to go to Burma to advise the Burmese government on development. Burma at the time was one of the poorest nations on the Earth, with a GDP per capita of $50. Hence, he expected to find grinding poverty and misery given his assumption, familiar to us all, that wealth, income, and happiness are closely correlated. But instead, he found something else:

I found the happiest people I'd ever met. They were well-fed, beautifully

dressed, and lived in houses that were suited to the climate. And they had time! They had no laborsaving machinery, but they had great bags of time in which to relax and be happy. There seemed to be no strain in Burma. The people there were the most joyous you could possibly encounter. They were living life as it should be lived.[53]

He therefore challenged the notion that happiness was connected with income, pointing out the potentially profound differences between urban and rural poverty:

I quickly realized that the sheer amount of money an individual earns in a year does not necessarily tell you how happy that person is. During the Great Depression, for example, I saw unemployed workers in England whose whole gait showed they were broken men. Yet their actual cash income from unemployment insurance was more than the income of a Spanish peasant whose eyes shone with manliness, who greeted you with open arms, and who asked you into his hovel to share everything he had.[54]

After his travels, which led him to view poverty in a new way, Schumacher suggested that there were four basic levels of income:

Eventually I decided that the absolute bottom level of existence—where you don't have enough to even begin to keep body and soul together—should be called misery. The next level up— where people can reach the fullness of humanity but in a modest and frugal way with nothing really to spare—is actually what should be known as poverty. Then comes sufficiency ... where you do have something to spare. This was the normal condition of Western Europe for centuries during the latter half of the Middle Ages when, as we know, great cathedrals were built and many advances were made in the arts and sciences. And finally, there is surfeit ... which is limitless.[55]

It is this last category to which modern man has largely aspired in his quest for wellbeing and happiness. The linking of welfare to material abundance at the expense of spirituality has resulted in a "philosophy of more" that dooms man to dissatisfaction. While the "vertical axis" of existence terminates in God and thus the supreme fulfillment of the human state, the "horizontal axis" extends indefinitely—it is characterized by a receding horizon of endlessly deferred fulfillment. Insofar as a human collectivity attempts to base public

life, which includes the economic domain, on the horizontal dimension alone, it condemns itself to modes of living that present obstacles instead of serving as supports to the spiritual life and thus to real contentment.

From the traditional religious point of view, the neglect of the issues of meaningful work and cooperation to overcome egocentricity inevitably results in the dissociation of ethics from economics, and it is this dissociation that characterizes modern production processes most fundamentally:

> [I]ndustrialism as such, irrespective of its social form ... stunt[s] personality ... mainly by making most forms of work – manual and white-collared – utterly uninteresting and meaningless. Mechanical, artificial, divorced from nature, utilizing only the smallest part of man's potential capabilities, it sentences the great majority of workers to spending their working lives in a way which contains no worthy challenge, no stimulus to self-perfection, no chance of development, no element of Beauty, Truth, or Goodness. The basic aim of modern industrialism is not to make work satisfying but to raise productivity; its proudest achievement is labor saving, whereby labor is stamped with the mark of undesirability. But what is undesirable cannot confer dignity; so the working life of a laborer is a life without dignity. The result, not surprisingly, is a spirit of sullen irresponsibility which refuses to be mollified by higher wage awards but is often only stimulated by them.[56]

Other critics similarly demonstrate how industrial markets necessarily and systematically deskill work,[57] arguing that, "Only when an individual's body and soul can participate in his work – something never possible in a factory – can the [traditional] principle that *laborare est orare* [to labor is to pray] fully apply."[58]

In contrast to the psychological hedonism of David Ricardo and James Mill, an essentially religious theory of welfare takes into account man's ineluctable need for the Infinite. If it is true that man can only find complete fulfillment in the unlimited reality of God, then it follows that to seek the Infinite in the finite can only result in a profound disappointment, the pain of which often leads people to destructive behavior. In other words, the attempt to substitute lesser objects of desire for the divine Object leads to a vicious downward cycle. According to a saying of the Prophet in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by Imam Muslim, translation by Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, Volume: The Book of Zakat (*Kitāb al-Zakāh*) (referring to the *nafs al-ammārah* or "lower self"), "If the son of Adam were to possess two valleys of riches, he would long for the third one. And the stomach of the son of Adam is not filled but with dust." Indeed, a misdirected search for

the Infinite has stoked appetites that are insatiable and are now busy devouring the beauty of the natural world. The loss of the profound vision of man and his place in the cosmos offered by philosophies embedded in religious traditions has caused large segments of humanity to stray from paths that lead to a sense of the sacred or transcendent Beauty that satisfy men grounded in a living religious tradition. As Frithjof Schuon has explained, "sensible beauties are situated outside the soul, and their meeting with it is more or less accidental; if the soul wishes to be happy in an unconditional and permanent fashion, it must carry the beautiful within itself."[59] To fill the void created by the absence of inward beauty[60] with heedless consumption can therefore be likened to drinking saltwater—it will only make us thirstier. It is precisely such a cycle that has resulted in the current environmental crisis, to which we now turn.

Environmental Crisis
A key concept in mainstream economic thought with regard to the environmental crisis is that of "negative externalities," which simply refers to the negative consequences of activities imposed upon unwilling third parties. A classic example illustrating this is that of a factory polluting a nearby neighborhood, imposing costs on its neighbors "external" to the polluter insofar as it is not concerned with social and environmental responsibility. In situations involving negative externalities, economists maintain that goods (such as clean air in this case) are "underpriced" (or overpriced in the case of positive externalities such as education). The cumulative effect of this is "market failure," or the overuse (or underuse) of goods relative to their true costs, leading to the inefficient use of resources. According to Gus Speth:

> We live in a market economy where prices are a principal signal for guiding economic activity. When prices reflect environmental values as poorly as today's prices do, the system is running without essential controls.... Today's market is a strange place indeed. At the core of the economy is a mechanism that does not recognize the most fundamental thing of all, the living, evolving, sustaining natural world in which the economy is operating. Unaided, the market lacks the sensory organs that would allow it to understand and adjust to this natural world. It's flying blind.[61]

Accordingly, markets can fail to account for a myriad of environmental threats, including marine losses, deforestation, desertification, freshwater system decline, loss of biodiversity, proliferation of toxic pollutants, acid rain, nitrogen excess in fertilization, and so forth.[62] The presence of externalities

therefore reverses Adam Smith's well-known claim that an individual pursuing his own interest will:

> … be led by an **invisible hand** to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.

If externalities are widespread given the social nature of production, consumption, and exchange, then the "invisible hand" may in fact degenerate into an "invisible foot" in which each person pursuing only their own good:

> … will automatically, and most efficiently, do his part in maximizing the general public misery. …. To paraphrase [Adam Smith's] well-known precursor of this theory: Every individual necessarily labors to render the annual external costs of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public misery nor knows how much he is promoting it. He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible foot to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it any better for society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes social misery more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.[63]

Market failure and the invisible foot argument therefore imply the need for regulation, particularly in response to a heedlessness that treats environmental (and social) capital as though it were income. But the political process can also fail due to the corrupting influence of special interests based on a mechanistic worldview, once again reminding us of the need for virtue and refuting the separate domain argument. From this perspective, the ineluctability of virtue vis-à-vis economic equilibrium can be summed up in the question of Juvenal: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* ("Who will guard the guards themselves?").

The public choice literature in economics examining how public choices are made[64] demonstrates that such special interests arise simply because small groups have a greater incentive to organize and lobby than larger groups do, for one's share in the goods thereby procured diminishes as the number of stakeholders increases (just as ten people have a greater incentive to agree on how to divide a million dollars than a million people do). And insofar as these narrowly defined and thus parasitic interests are allowed to proliferate, the

danger increases of an economic "death by a thousand cuts." As Speth explains:

> Political failure perpetuates, indeed magnifies, this market failure. Government policies could be implemented to correct market failure and make the market work for the environment rather than against it. But powerful economic and political interests typically stand to gain by not making those corrections, so they are not made or the correction is only partial.[65]

And as the public choice literature attests, the problem of special interests only worsens over time, since the longer things remain stable, or at least relatively so, the more time special interests have to organize.[66]

In short, the ethical orientation and commitment necessary to obviate the degradation of both people and the environment is generally absent from both the economic and political domains in modern industrial contexts in which work is depleted of spiritual meaning, generating efforts that are "too little, too late." The problem is not simply one of under- (or over-) priced goods, but of an economic system that generates and sustains false prices based on a mechanistic worldview promoting a false self-understanding and understanding of the world. In contrast, an economy based on a holistic worldview generates and sustains true prices by fostering spiritual meaning in work and a true self-understanding that requires that the individual decision-maker consider the well-being of the whole.

From this perspective, although mainstream economic theory can point to market and political failure, it misidentifies the source of these problems as residing in human nature *as such* instead of in a particular *Weltanschauung* and its associated science, technology, and production processes.[67] Mainstream economic theory is therefore mistaken not in its assessment of the symptoms of the current situation, but rather in its diagnosis of the root causes and prescriptions to address them, which lie beyond its reach due to self-imposed methodological limitations that incidentally result in false extrapolations of its starting assumptions such as the separate domain argument as well as attempts to substitute technical market solutions for substantive moral debate. Although the obscuration of human nature, or the "primordial norm" (*al-fiṭrah*), resultant from man's fallen state, is exacerbated in industrial societies contributing to the negative feedback loop and resultant downward cycle discussed above, modern man does not coincide with man as such (manifesting the "higher angels" of his nature). The problems of modernity derive from mankind's loss of awareness of a worldview that fosters ethical behavior. But in

order to address the problem, modern man must consult "primordial man," which is to say he must turn back toward God.

It is thus fitting that there should be (and is) an increasingly urgent debate over whether the secular paradigm that has indirectly created industrial production processes (discussed in this section) can generate new technologies quickly enough to solve the accompanying crises related to the environment, depletion of non-renewable resources, and worship of the idols of hedonism, escapism, and egocentricity discussed above. There is no question that the technology must change. The paradigm within which the technology is developed must also change.[68]

If the current paradigm does not correspond to the nature of reality (as discussed in Section I), and as we shall discuss further in the following two sections), then attempting to find a technological "fix" *within* this paradigm will almost inevitably lead to a vicious cycle of technologies with catastrophic side effects, with each "cure" leading to more and more adverse "side effects."

This point can be illustrated with the true story of a man who, having a spot of arthritis in his finger joints, was given tablets by his doctor that resulted in a stomach ulcer.[69] A subsequent operation for the ulcer in conjunction with strong antibiotics interfered with his cardiovascular system to the extent that the doctor felt an obligation to carry out a couple of minor operations. Complications from these operations then required a heart specialist, and in the patient's weakened condition, he contracted a lung infection. The patient died within two weeks of the operations despite the continuous care of three doctors and the hospital staff.[70]

Such reductionism, with all its implications for even our immediate physical health, extends also to the agricultural methods and dietary habits characteristic of modern, secular societies, which in fact are largely responsible for many of the health-related issues that modern medicine is credited (rightly or wrongly) with adeptness in addressing.[71]

In short, if science and technology are based on philosophical presuppositions that do not correspond to the nature of reality, then serious unintended consequences follow for both man and nature. The solution is to recognize the erroneous presuppositions in a fragmented view of man and nature and draw the correct conclusions.[72] This is not to say, however, that technological avenues for attenuating the damage or slowing the decline should not be pursued. It is simply to draw attention to the limitations of science so as to remain within them. Since nature is an open, complex system, science is incapable of modeling it in any comprehensive way and *a fortiori* of controlling it, a fact that science itself admits in the form of the "many-body problem" in physics, for

example. Tarik Quadir has written insightfully on this issue when discussing Seyyed Hossein Nasr's view of the environmental crisis:

> Nasr argues that it is not possible for modern science to know how the innumerable elements in a real ecology interact with each other even at the material level. For instance, Nasr points out that while we can calculate the force of gravitation between two objects in hypothetical isolation easily, to do so in the presence of a third object is immensely complicated, and to do so in the presence of the fourth is nearly impossible. ... If modern science cannot identify the actual interrelationships among the innumerable variables in nature, we have no reason to believe that there could be a technological solution even in the remote future.[73]

The situation of humans with respect to their environment is therefore one characterized by an irreducible uncertainty, one that requires erring on the side of caution.[74] Accordingly, those who hope for a technological fix within the current reductionist paradigm are substituting a secular faith for a traditional one (this is quite literally true in light of the history of the notion of progress).[75] The point here is that these issues involve questions that the economist cannot answer *qua* economist: one must kick this debate up to the philosophical level where it belongs. In fact, economics was originally understood to be a branch of philosophy (returning us to the intellectual and esoteric dimensions of Islam).[76]

But because such arguments may be couched in philosophical terms that many economists are not familiar with, and because different parts of these arguments are found in various writings that do not always explicitly draw their implications for economics, few economists may be aware of or understand the implications of such an interdisciplinary approach. It is therefore necessary to make such arguments explicit (just as it is important to clarify certain details of neoclassical economics for scholars of religion and other thinkers).

Can Communism Offer Anything Better?

One might think that a socioeconomic system based on central command explicitly appealing to cooperative ideals, or the "visible hand" of the state rather than the "invisible" hand of the market, would be better equipped to neutralize negative externalities than systems lacking these characteristics. But in fact the opposite ends up being the case, as evidenced by the dismal environmental record of communist countries. Joseph Dellapenna goes so far

as to argue that the ultimate cause of the collapse of communism was not the commonly cited yearning for democracy, human rights, and a higher standard of living, all of which existed before, but communism's dismal record on the environment crystalizing the sentiment that the regimes had to be overthrown.[77] Indeed, communism attempts to achieve economy-wide cooperation through central planning on the one hand, while undermining the basis for cooperation in the systematic deskilling of work and mechanistic worldview on the other, thereby ignoring the intrinsic connections between the second and third objectives of work (meaningful work and spiritually productive cooperation, respectively). Special interests can take on even more lethal forms in industrial communism than capitalism, since "bureaucrats tend to confuse their own interests, and the interests of their bureaucracy, with the interests of society as a whole."[78] From this point of view, the complete lack of any spiritual dimension in communist political theory is bound to result in both massive market and political failure when put into practice. It is as though communism attempts to achieve Christian charity without Christ,[79] an effort lacking in substance.[80] As Schumacher explains:

> [E]ither you believe in God, then you will pursue politics 'mindful of the eternal destiny of man and of the truths of the Gospel'; or you believe that there are no higher obligations, then you cannot resist the appeal of Machiavellianism - politics as the art of gaining and maintaining power so that you and your friends can order the world as *they like it*. There is no supportable middle position. Those who want the Good Society, without believing in God, cannot face the temptations of Machiavellianism; they become either disheartened or muddleheaded, fabulating about the goodness of human nature and the vileness of one or another adversary. (Everything is the fault of Khrushchev, Nasser or Gaitskell.) Optimistic 'Humanism' by 'concentrating sin on a few people' instead of admitting its universal presence throughout the human race, leads to the utmost cruelty.[81]

Communism and industrial capitalism therefore have more in common than their proponents admit: both neglect Schumacher's second and third objectives of work, and the resulting loss of intrinsic meaning in production and exchange processes promotes conflict rather than cooperation between workers, owners (whether individual or state, as the histories of both capitalism and communism illustrate[82]), and consumers. Although communism opposes spiritual values much more directly than industrial capitalism, their

erosion appears to be unavoidable at a collective level under both systems. Personal reform *within* a system is then rendered powerless to reform the system itself:

> This is of decisive importance. It shows that appeals for good behavior and the teaching of ethical or spiritual principles, necessary as they always are, invariably stay, as it were, *inside* the system and are powerless to alter it: unless and until the preaching leads to significant new types of work in the physical world.[83]

Marxists also argue that capitalism is less efficient than communism in the short-term because of the lack of planning in coordinating economic activity. Barbara Wootton illustrates this point as follows:

> If, during a certain period, there are consumers willing to buy two million pounds of potatoes at twopence a pound, and twopence a pound is the minimum price that will induce potato growers to grow two million pounds of potatoes, then according to the readings of the price mechanism the production of that quantity and no more is justified. If, however, pleased with the results of growing potatoes for twopence a pound, I think of increasing my output by ten thousand pounds, I am apt to forget that I can only still rely on getting twopence so long as some of my competitors make a corresponding reduction in their programs; which, in an unplanned and unorganized industry, it is most unlikely that they will, for they will be as eager as I am to develop a profitable crop, and they will be trying to get my customers away from me just a I try to get theirs from them. The effect will be that between us we shall produce far more than two million pounds, that, in consequence, we shall exhaust the consumers who are prepared to pay twopence a pound, that the price for our product, the expectation of which was the basis of all our calculations, will not be realized, and that our profits will be turned into losses and our joy into wormwood and gall. And yet, presently, when the glut has cleared, we shall be liable to make the same mistake again....[84]

Frank H. Knight, a leading economist of the last century, thought that the market coordination problem, which results from a "'lag' in response of an effect to its cause ... *is* abstractly an argument for central advance planning and control – *if* it could be guided by complete foresight and were free from evils of

its own."[85] But the loss of the second and third objectives of work in central advance planning precludes the possibility of freedom from such evils, as we have seen. In short, the idea of central planning is no less a fallacy than is the fallacy that proper coordination can be provided as an unintended consequence of the pursuit of self-interest— that is, by the development of the ego in light of the secularization of production and exchange processes.

Schumacher argues that it is possible to integrate both freedom and planning only by fulfilling all three objectives of work, generating short and long-term economic equilibrium and transcending conventional oppositions from a higher point of view:

> The true problems of living - in politics, economics, education, marriage, etc. - are always problems of overcoming or reconciling opposites. They are divergent problems and have no solution in the ordinary sense of the word. They demand of man not merely the employment of his reasoning powers but the commitment of his whole personality. Naturally, spurious solutions, by way of a clever formula, are always being put forward; but they never work for long, because they invariably neglect one of the two opposites and thus lose the very quality of human life. In economics, the solution offered may provide for freedom but not for planning, or vice versa.[86]

But only the higher faculties of human beings possess this synthetic power to integrate freedom and order, the lower ones being imprisoned in a play of action and reaction focused exclusively on self-interest. It could be said that only license is opposed to order, while true freedom presupposes it, which is why reconciliation on a level above that of the apparent antinomy is possible. From this point of view, both communist and mainstream economic theories adopt mechanistic rather than holistic approaches to achieving equilibrium.

Exchange is therefore a morally challenging problem, just as the question of work is. If relying on the unintended consequences of market interactions to effect coordination in fact precludes economic stability, the claim that the economic domain is independent from questions of ethics or metaphysics fails, because equilibrium presupposes order. Solving exchange as a moral problem first requires solving work as a moral problem, because fulfilling our need to serve and cooperate with others presupposes that our work helps us perfect our gifts as stewards.

We can sum up the interconnections between the three objectives of work through the following medical analogy. If one possible symptom of heart disease is poor circulation, and if in turn the symptoms of the latter most often

appear in the extremities of the body, it is obvious that such symptoms obstruct attempts to eliminate their cause, as the impairment of one's limbs obstructs the exercise that could help restore health to the heart. Likewise, if the secularization of production processes leads to the degradation of the worker, which in turn hinders attempts to cooperate meaningfully, the resulting unraveling of the social fabric will eventually compromise the basic level of coordination required for the very functioning of production. And while in the short term such feedback might only manifest itself as an undesirable instability, nothing will necessarily prevent it, if left unchecked, from bringing about a complete collapse, in the same way that heart problems can lead to death.

Secularization of Economic Coordination Mechanisms and the Loss of Stability
In addition to the coordination problem for economic stability in industrial capitalism, special interest groups increasingly warp the distribution of income, increasing both economic injustice and instability.[87] Insufficient demand is the inevitable result of an unjust distribution of income, making a reasonably equitable distribution of income is thus crucial for economic stability.[88] But once the goal of cooperating to collectively overcome egocentricity is either disregarded or lost, it becomes inevitable that the seeds of crony capitalism are sown alongside the secularization of production processes. Working in service to and in cooperation with others to overcome egocentricity (the third objective of work) simultaneously becomes all the more critical to maintain an equitable distribution of income and economic stability, but increasingly unlikely given the tendency of special interest groups to gradually inflict the aforementioned economic "death by a thousand cuts." (Moreover, there is a raging debate between mainstream and "heterodox" economists regarding the adequacy of demand for economic stability regardless of special interest groups.[89])

From this point of view, market economies are plagued by a fundamental instability rooted in both a failure of coordination (in turn rooted in a failure of cooperation) and the warped distribution of income that results. In other words, it is the unethical nature of the system itself that constitutes the most basic cause of its fragility. A virtuous system, by contrast, could be called "antifragile," to use the term coined by Nassim Nicholas Taleb,[90] in which systems possess attributes beyond mere resilience or robustness that allow them to improve qualitatively in the wake of whatever shocks they receive,[91] and it is precisely these attributes that are lost in the attempt to reduce the significance of human life to market interactions. The resulting diminishment of the non-market institutions necessary for the integration of ethics and economics

not only thwarts the fulfillment of man's spiritual needs, but also makes humanity's material well-being fragile in a way beyond the threats of nature itself. According to Michael Perelman:

> Since the decisive factor can be trivial, any number of causes seem capable of setting off the crash. We would do better to look at the prior configuration of the economy balanced at the edge of the precipice than to search for the small force that eventually toppled the economy. In fact, rather than asking what causes a depression, we might do better to consider how a market economy manages to avoid crises for extended periods.[92]

From this point of view, non-market institutions rather than strictly market forces are responsible for the stability between crises, relinking ethics and economics in contradiction to the idea that these are (or should be) totally separate domains.

Moreover, Michael Sandel suggests that contemporary market forces increasingly erode non-market values, leading to "the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong. Consider, for example, the proliferation of for-profit schools, hospitals, and prisons, and the outsourcing of war to private military contractors. (In Iraq and Afghanistan, private contractors actually outnumbered U.S. military troops.) ... [or] the eclipse of public police forces by private security firms— especially in the United States and Britain, where the number of private guards is more than twice the number of public police officers. ... [or] pharmaceutical companies' aggressive marketing of prescription drugs to consumers in rich countries. (If you've ever seen the television commercials on the evening news in the United States, you could be forgiven for thinking that the greatest health crisis in the world is not malaria or river blindness or sleeping sickness, but a rampant epidemic of erectile dysfunction.) ... [or] the reach of commercial advertising into public schools; the sale of "naming rights" to parks and civic spaces; the marketing of "designer" eggs and sperm for assisted reproduction; the outsourcing of pregnancy to surrogate mothers in the developing world; the buying and selling, by companies and countries, of the right to pollute; a system of campaign finance that comes close to permitting the buying and selling of elections. These uses of markets to allocate health, education, public safety, national security, criminal justice, environmental protection, recreation, procreation, and other social goods were for the most part unheard of thirty years ago. Today, we take them largely for granted."[93]

Elizabeth Anderson maintains that such economic degradation involves treating something "in accordance with a lower mode of valuation than is proper to it. We value things not just 'more' or 'less,' but in qualitatively higher and lower ways. To love or respect someone is to value her in a higher way than one would if one merely used her."[94] Islamic law, by contrast, requires markets to function in an ethical mode, to protect the public interest, dramatically affecting how necessary and useful goods and services are exchanged. For example, Islamic law prohibits risk-trading, which can lead to serious negative economic consequences (including the financial meltdown in 2007) as well as negative moral consequences (including various form of gambling). Instead, Islamic economic law encourages risk-sharing, managing economic risks without the negative economic and moral consequences of trading risk, preserving virtue and community.

Sandel rightly points out that when "everything is for sale," the "sting of inequality" is much sharper and corrupts and degrades the goods that are being sold.

> That's because markets don't only allocate goods; they also express and promote certain attitudes toward the goods being exchanged. Paying kids to read books might get them to read more, but also teach them to regard reading as a chore rather than a source of intrinsic satisfaction. Auctioning seats in the freshman class to the highest bidders might raise revenue but also erode the integrity of the college and the value of its diploma. Hiring foreign mercenaries to fight our wars might spare the lives of our citizens but corrupt the meaning of citizenship.[95]

The secularization of production processes makes this shift from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society, or the "skyboxification of life" in Sandel's terms, inevitable from the Islamic point of view. A philosophical debate regarding the appropriate place of markets in society and their relation to mechanistic vs. holistic approaches to production is therefore of the utmost importance from an Islamic perspective. Unfortunately, these questions, particularly in regard to secular science and technology, are not often raised. Even addressing the environmental crisis has all too often been sidelined due to a faulty logic that sees crises of stability (recessions, for example) as taking precedence over crises of sustainability, in spite of the fact that they stem from the same causes in the secularization of production processes. Accordingly, recurrent neglect of sustainability simply sows the seeds of new crises of

stability. In short, there is no cause for delay. Facing the present situation without illusions requires that we simultaneously address both symptoms and root causes if any progress is to be made.

III. Conclusion

In Islam, economics is above all a moral code governing modes of production, trade, and exchange to benefit the collective good of society. There is no "invisible hand" that guides individuals' economic activities toward some higher collective good, except the Hand of God guiding those who believe in Him. Islamic economics recognizes no distinction between arts and crafts. The reward of work is not only payment in currency to purchase goods and services, but the satisfaction of providing products and services that are works of artistic beauty and excellence. An economy that does not provide such satisfaction to all of its laborers and managers and professionals cannot meet their basic spiritual needs. Secular economics destroys a quality of life that meets the higher aspirations of human nature. The anxiety and anomie in modern Western (and Westernized) societies begins with the de-sacralization of work (secularization of production processes). It ends in anger, frustration, and possibly chaos when the laborer deprived of the satisfaction of pride in his work also lacks hope for a secure and adequate income and prospects of a fair increase in the income from improvements in the economy.

The question of Islamic production processes is thus central to all other aspects of the Islamic economy and has important interconnections with Islamic finance, laws of partnership, and other aspects of Islamic economic law. Such economic practices and institutions cannot cohabit with secularized production processes in the long-term, just as Islamic ethics cannot cohabit with a secular view of science. The Islamic intellectual and esoteric heritage is therefore central to the foundation of Islamic economic theory and praxis. Economic theory cannot be value-free, for every theory presupposes a view of man and nature requiring metaphysics (whether implicit or explicit) and epistemology.

> The attempt to make of economics a "science" on the order of [modern] physics—that is, a science without a humane *telos*—has not made the discipline more scientific, but only more ideological. The pretense of being a "value-neutral" science has not meant value-neutrality, but rather that values are submerged in neutral-sounding but value-laden terms like "growth." The answer is not to seek even more neutral terms, but to expose

the values inherent in the terms, and to seek terms that are more in accord with humane values.[96]

In short, economics cannot be amoral without becoming immoral.

Notes

1. Osman Bakar, "Economics as a Science: Insights From Classical Muslim Classification of Sciences," *Islam and Civilizational Renewal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 426.
2. Ibid.
3. Robert Foley, *Adam's Fallacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.1.
4. Secularized production processes are based on secularized science, which is the study of the world of nature as an independent or autonomous reality. This is in contrast to sacred science, which is the study of the world of nature in the light of metaphysical principles. On the distinction between secular and sacred sciences, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993).
5. Paul Heyne succinctly articulates the neoclassical position on industrial exchange processes in his *A Student's Guide to Economics* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2000). Available online at http://www. isi.org/college_guide/student_guides/econ.pdf.
6. Regarding the alleged neutrality of the analytical tools of neoclassical economics, see for instance Shaun Hargreaves Heap, Martin Hollis, Bruce Lyons, Robert Sugden, and Albert Weale, *The Theory of Choice: A Critical Guide* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), chapter 1. We have responded to such arguments in "The Quantum Enigma and Islamic Sciences of Nature: Implications for Islamic Economic Theory".
7. Waleed El-Ansary, "The Quantum Enigma and Islamic Sciences of Nature: Implications for Islamic Economic Theory," *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance* (Jeddah: Islamic Development Bank, 2005), pp.143-175. Available online at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228373253_The_Quantum_Enigma_and_Islamic_Sciences_of_Nature_Implications_for_ Islamic_Economic_Theory
8. For an in-depth treatment of each dimension in the Hadith and corresponding Islamic sciences, see Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1994).
9. See for instance Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, *A Muslim's Reflections on Democratic Capitalism* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1984), p.5.
10. Al-Ghazzali, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1982), vol. 2, p.54.

11. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (San Francisco: The Aquarian Press, 1994), p.98.

12. Frithjof Schuon, *The Play of Masks* (Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1992) p.61.

13. See for instance volume 8 on wages in Ali Gomaʿa (ed.), *Takshīf al-Turāth al-Islāmī al-Iqtisādī* (Revealing the Islamic Economic Heritage) (Cairo, Egypt: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1997).

14. "All persons capable of doing so must work to support themselves and those who depend upon them for their livelihood and sustenance, including not only those who work under them and the members of their immediate family, but sometimes also female members and old or incapacitated persons belonging to the extended family circle. This duty is usually incumbent upon the man of the family, but the women are also responsible when external necessity dictates their working outside the home, as can be seen very often in the agricultural sector of traditional society. Whatever is necessary for the continuation of human life gains, according to Islamic teachings, a religious sanction as the very result of that necessity." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam in the Modern World: Challenged by the West, Threatened by Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith with Tradition* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012), p.55.

15. Brian Keeble, *Art: For Whom and For What?* (Ipswich, UK: Golgonooza Press, 1998), p.75.

16. This is one of the meanings of the Divine Name *Al-Ṣamad*, which in the Pickthall translation of the Qur'an is rendered as "the eternally Besought of all!"

17. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776, V.1.178. It is worth noting that Smith's reservation regarding the division of labor does not appear in the first edition of the *Wealth of Nations*, but was added in subsequent editions. Smith seems to have had second thoughts about the salubrious effects of the minute division of labor.

18. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, review of *Ethics and Economics: An Islamic Synthesis*, by Syed Haider Naqvi, *Hamdard Islamicus*, Summer 1982, p.89.

19. See for instance Titus Burckhardt and Ali Michon, *Art of Islam: Language and Meaning* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Inc., 2009); and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1987).

20. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), p.43. He also notes that *ḥusn*, the root of *iḥsān* in Arabic, means both "beauty" and "goodness," whereas *qubh* means both "ugliness" and "evil."

21. Titus Burckhardt as cited in Jean-Louis Michon, "Titus Burckhardt and the Sense

of Beauty: Why and How He Loved and Served Morocco," *Sophia*, Winter 1999, pp.117-119.

22. According to the famous quote of Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist." See Rama Coomaraswamy (ed.), *The Essential Ananda K. Coomaraswamy* (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc., 2004), p.124.

23. For the man who has acquired *faqr*, its immediate consequence is "detachment with regard to all manifested things, for the being knows from then on that these things, like himself, are nothing, and that they have no importance what- soever compared with the absolute Reality." This detachment implies "indifference with regard to the fruits of action… which enables the being to escape from the unending chain of consequence which follows from this action." René Guénon, "*Al-Faqr* or 'Spiritual Poverty'," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter Issue, 1973.

24. Yusuf Ibish, "Traditional Guilds in the Ottoman Empire: An Evaluation of their Spiritual Role and Social Function," *Islamic World Report*, 1999, p.6.

25. This linkage does not mean that it is necessary to master the books articulating Islamic metaphysics and the sciences of nature before Islamic art can be pro- duced. This is because of the importance of the oral tradition in Islam, where metaphysics and the spiritual significance of nature do not have to be articulated in books to be inwardly realized.

26. Jean-Louis Michon, "The Quran and Islamic Art," in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al (eds.) (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), p.1751.

27. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Heart of Islam* (New York: HarperOne, 2004), p.136.

28. Adi Setia, "The Islamic Gift Economy: A Brief Conceptual Outline," available online at: https://islamicgifteconomy.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/the-islam- ic-gift-economy.pdf.

29. Ibid., p.134.

30. This primordial covenant is explained in the following verse of the Qur'an: "And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yea, we bear witness'— lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Truly of this we were heedless'" (7:172).

31. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Modern World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), ch.3.

32. Ibid.

33. Frithjof Schuon, *The Eye of the Heart* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1997), p.15.

34. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Modern World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), ch.3.

35. In accordance with specific teachings of the Qur'an, the functions of the *muḥtasib* included seeing to it that the "weights and measures used in the purchase and sale of articles were carefully tested, that the quality of the material sold matched the standard claimed by the seller, and so forth." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam in the Modern World: Challenged by the West, Threatened by Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith with Tradition* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012), p.58.

36. These are the sayings of the Prophet of Islam.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Fred Wilson, *Psychological Analysis and the Philosophy of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p.4.

40. Brian Keeble, *Art: For Whom and For What?* (Ipswich, UK: Golgonooza Press, 1998), p.4.

41. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Modern World* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), ch.3.

42. Gabriel Baer, *Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times*. In the case of Cairo, Baer explains: "Not only were all the artisans and merchants organized in guilds according to their crafts and trades, but also people engaged in transport (such as donkey-drivers) and in services (such as story-tellers and other types of entertainers). The guild system embraced owners of shops ..., owners of workshops such as starchworkers, makers of wax and candles, makers of dyes, bottles, carpets, etc.; owners of large stores such as salt-merchants, corn-merchants, iron-merchants, etc. There were also guilds of people who worked in their own houses, such as painters and those who worked with sulphur ('because of the bad smell'), as well as of salaried workers (e.g. in the building trade) and government employees, such as employees of the mint ... . Both rich and poor had their guilds: corn-merchants as well as sewermen, saddlers as well as makers of rope. Ibid, pp.5-6. Even the '*ulamā*', or religious scholars, had their own organization that was not dissimilar to the guilds." Ibid, p.47.

43. Yusuf Ibish, "Traditional Guilds in the Ottoman Empire: An Evaluation of their Spiritual Role and Social Function," *Islamic World Report*, 1999, pp.6-7. He adds that, "material work and holy significance were in this manner never allowed to diverge, the sacred was manifested outwardly in the work, and the work was ennobled by the inward presence of the sacred."

44. See for instance Bernard Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds," *Economic History Review*, 1937, pp.20-37.

45. See for instance volumes 17 to 19 on prices (*al-asʿar*; sing. *siʿr*) in Ali Gomaʿa (ed.),

Takshīf al-Turāth al-Islāmī al-Iqtisādī (Revealing the Islamic Economic Heritage) (Cairo: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1997).

46. J.C. Kumarappa, quoted in E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p.59.

47. As Schumacher argues, the modern world "has been shaped by its metaphysics, which has shaped its education, which in turn has brought forth its science and technology." E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*, p.120.

48. E.F. Schumacher, *Good Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp.3-4. It is important to note that Schumacher was greatly influenced by certain Muslim thinkers. See Waleed El-Ansary (ed.), *Not by Bread Alone: E.F. Schumacher and the Perennial Philosophy* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, forthcoming).

49. As Nasr points out in an essay on Islamic work ethics, "Work carried out in accordance with the *Sharī'ah* is a form of *jihād* and inseparable from the religious and spiritual significance associated with it." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam in the Modern World: Challenged by the West, Threatened by Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith with Tradition* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012), p.51.

50. For an excellent survey of classical and neoclassical approaches to work in the history of economic thought, see Ugo Pagano, *Work and Welfare in Economic Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985).

51. The theory that the only motive underlying human action is the desire to experience pleasure and avoid pain.

52. Ram Nidumolu, *Two Birds in a Tree: Timeless Indian Wisdom for Business Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013), p.1, 16.

53. E.F. Schumacher, "Interview with Dr. E. F. Schumacher: Author of the Book 'Small Is Beautiful,'" *Mother Earth News*, December 1976, http://www.motherearthnews.com/nature-and-environment/dr-efschumacher-zmaz76ndztak.asx.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. E.F. Schumacher, *Good Work*, pp.27-28.

57. See for example Ugo Pagano, *Work and Welfare in Economic Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985), especially ch. 1. For a useful survey of neoclassical counter-arguments and the corresponding rebuttal, see Louis Putterman, *Division of Labor and Welfare: An Introduction to Economic Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ch. 4.

58. Rama Coomaraswamy, "Traditional Economics and Liberation Theology," *In Quest of the Sacred*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.) (Oakton: The Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1987). Roger Sworder also provides a remarkable overview of the traditional critique of industrial production processes. See Sworder, "The Desacralization of Work," in Harry Oldmeadow (ed.), *The Betrayal of Tradition:*

Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, Inc. 2005), pp.183-216.

59. Frithjof Schuon, *Esotericism as Principle and Way*, p.94.

60. Such beauty is none other than the beauty of God manifesting itself within us through a combination of individual effort and divine grace.

61. James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p.54.

62. See for example Charles HRH The Prince of Wales, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), ch. 2.

63. E.K. Hunt and Mark Lautzenheiser, *History of Economic Thought: A Critical Perspective* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), p. xiii.

64. See for instance James M. Buchanan and Robert D. Tollison (eds.), *The Theory of Public Choice* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1984).

65. Op. cit., p.53.

66. See for example Mancur Olson's classic work, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Public choice theory refers to the application of economic theory to the problems of political science, particularly collective choice processes.

67. Of course, one can argue that the problem is rooted in the shortcomings of human nature, but this is a human nature unconstrained by an understanding of the human condition as subservient to higher realities, and the ethical constraints that ultimate accountability before God entails.

68. See for example Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Also Osman Bakar, *Tawhid and Science: Essays on the History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (Penang, Malaysia: Secretariat for Islamic Philosophy and Science, 1991), and *Islamic Civilization and the Modern World* (Bandar Seri Begawan: UBD Press, 2014).

69. Ezra J. Mishan, *Economic Myths and the Mythology of Economics* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1986), pp.174–75.

70. Such an example of the inadequacies of secularized medicine (a philosophy and practice of medicine that largely purges well-being of its psycho-spiritual dimensions, or at least abandons holism through compartmentalization) is not put forward for the purpose of denying the merits of modern medical technologies. It aims to point out the fact that such advances often constitute a very relative progress when taken in their greater context and considered in the light of their costs. It is interesting to note the growth of "integrative" medicine, which combines what is efficacious in allopathic medicine with traditional and "alternative" methods in a holistic context.

71. T. Colin Campbell, *Whole: Rethinking the Science of Nutrition* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc., 2013), p.17.

72. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001), p.4.

73. Quadir, Tarik M. (2013-09-16). *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Kindle Locations 412-414). UPA. Kindle Edition.

74. In spite of the very real qualitative differences that distinguish the concepts of risk, certainty, and uncertainty from each other (with all that this implies for decision-making processes), mainstream economics attempts to quantify them for the sake of proposing market solutions to problems that in fact cannot be solved in this way. Situations of uncertainty (like the environmental crisis) demand human responses for which the market cannot serve as a proxy.

75. For example, the positivist cult of Saint-Simon, who "envisaged an assembly of 'the twenty-one elect of humanity' to be called the Council of Newton," acquired "all the paraphernalia of the Church – hymns, altars, priests in their vestments and its own calendar, with the months named after Archimedes, Gutenberg, Descartes, and other rationalist saints." John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern* (New York: The New Press, 2003), pp.30–34.

76 See for instance M.I. Finley on Aristotle.

77. See for instance Joseph W. Dellapenna "Behind the Red Curtain: Environmental Concerns and the End of Communism," Villanova University School of Law Working Paper Series, 2010, no. 152. Available online at: http://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/wps/art152/. And as Speth avers, "Its [communism's] authoritarian political system and highly centralized economic planning produced one environmental disaster after another." Op. cit., p.58.

78. John Medaille, private correspondence.

79. Although some commentators have argued that Karl Marx, for example, refrained from discussing political realities in the light of ethical ideals as a consequence of his materialist reading of history, others have disputed this position (see the entry for Marx in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). As Bertell Ollman has written, "Another major characteristic of communist society is the high degree of cooperation and mutual concern which is discernable in most human activities" (in "Marx's Vision of Communism," http://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/vision_of_communism.php). Also, it is worth noting that the idea of "Christian charity without Christ" has recently been receiving explicit philosophical attention (see for example Ronald Dworkin's *Religion without God*).

80. Alisdair MacIntyre maintains that philosophical ethics is ultimately reducible to one of two options: the "way of Aristotle" involving objective values based on

the nature of things, which is consistent with a religious approach to law and ethics, and the "way of Nietzsche" involving a subjective "will to power" that denies any nature to things. MacIntyre argues that no middle position is intellectually sustainable (see his *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, especially chapter 9).

81. 1960 lecture notes, quoted in Barbara Wood, *E.F. Schumacher: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p.264.

82. See for instance Louis Putterman, *Division of Labor and Welfare: An Introduction to Economic Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

83. E. F. Schumacher, *Age of Plenty: A Christian View* (Edinburgh, UK: St. Andrew Press, 1974), p.12.

84. Barbara Wootton, *Plan or No Plan* (London: V. Gollancz, 1934), pp.151-152.

85. Frank Knight, "Economic History" in Philip P. Weiner, ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1973), pp.57-58.

86. E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful*, p.104. He further explains: "[T]he whole crux of economic life – and indeed of life in general – is that it constantly requires the living reconciliation of opposites which, in strict logic, are irreconcilable. In macro-economics (the management of whole societies) it is necessary always to have both planning and freedom – not by way of a weak and lifeless compromise, but by a free recognition of the legitimacy of and need for both. Equally in microeconomics (the management of individual enterprises): on the one hand it is essential that there should be full managerial responsibility and authority; yet it is equally essential that there should be a democratic and free participation of the workers in management decisions. Again, it is not a question of mitigating the opposition of these two needs by some half-hearted compromise that satisfies neither of them, but to recognise them both. The exclusive concentration on one of the opposites – say, on planning, produces Stalinism; while the exclusive concentration on the other produces chaos. The normal answer to either is a swing of the pendulum to the other extreme. Yet the normal answer is not the only possible answer. A generous and magnanimous intellectual effort – the opposite of nagging, malevolent criticism – can enable a society, at least for a period, to find a middle way that reconciles the opposites without degrading them both."

87. See for instance Mancur Olson's classic, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

88. See John D. Mueller, *Redeeming Economics: Rediscovering the Missing Element* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2010).

89. See for instance John Medaille, *Toward a Truly Free Market* (Wilmington, Delewar: ISI Books, 2010).

90. See Nassim Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (New York: Random House, 2012). However, his philosophical assumptions or axioms are inconsistent with the Islamic perspective on science and technology just as those of most mainstream economists.

91. In the individual domain, it is saintly people who are able to bare the suffering of injustice, whereas for those beset by vice and impurity, suffering only reinforces these qualities, or inflames the ego so to speak, thus exacerbating their spiritual fragility.

92. Michael Perelman, *The Natural Instability of Markets: Expectations, Increasing Returns, and the Collapse of Capitalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp.58-59. Perelman asserts that "the market always stands poised at the edge of a precipice, [so] even a small force can suffice to topple it over the edge," and suggests that "the seeming stability between periods of crises owes more to nonmarket forces than to some economic forces that might tend to create stability." This is because competition under industrial production processes with high fixed costs is self-destructive, inverting the neoclassical argument on the complete autonomy of the market on one hand, while admitting the impossibility of socialist planning and complete subordination of the market on the other. He therefore proposes solutions to the coordination problem within specific industries, which is different than the full-blown socialist approach. However, Perelman fails to address the role of industrial production processes in shaping motives, which undermines his solution from the Islamic point of view. In any case, for a valuable survey of such mixed economic systems, see Louis Putterman, *Division of Labor and Welfare*, chs. 3-5.

93. Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), pp.7-8.

94. Elizabeth S. Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19 (Winter 1990), p.77, as quoted in Michael Sandel, *Justice*, p.95.

95. Ibid, p.9.

96. John Medaille, personal correspondence.

6
Good Work and Good Works

Richard J. Jones

T H E M E : Americans value work. We worry ourselves sick if we are not working. The Bible describes human labor as something good in the God-ordained world, as toil and trouble (though sometimes delightful) in the world distorted by human disobedience, and as becoming finally obsolete in a new world where we rest in God. All human competence and labor here and now can please God, if workers hold in mind God's justice, God's beauty, and God's wholeness.

As far back as the first English settlement at Jamestown in Virginia, up until today, Americans have been inclined to accept the dictum, "He who does not work shall not eat." We have viewed the activity of working as a good in itself, while we argued about the quality and value of particular work done. What constitutes good work is a question worth pondering. Beyond our human valuing of our work, however, lies for believers the question of what constitute good works in the sight of God.

In 1972 a Chicago journalist, Studs Terkel, published three years' worth of interviews with working people, from washroom attendants to lawyers. Terkel's subjects spoke about working with their muscles, working with their minds, working in solitude and working in regimented large organizations, working as newspaper delivery boys and working as airline stewardesses. To summarize the feelings about work which his unscientific sample of Americans expressed, Terkel chose to cite some words from a presidential proclamation by Richard M. Nixon: "The 'work ethic' holds that labor is good in itself; that a man or woman becomes a better person by virtue of the act of working. America's competitive spirit, the 'work ethic' of this people, is alive and well on Labor Day, 1971."[1]

As we exchange goods and services today, as we accumulate capital and negotiate terms of labor, we are no longer preoccupied with the issue of slave labor versus free labor. Nor do I wish to address those shadowy zones of prison labor, military labor, and the coerced labor of women, children, and illegal migrants. I will restrict myself to the sunnier list of occupations we get to choose from when filling out our annual Internal Revenue Service personal income tax declaration. (My Form 1040 is the only place where I ever identify myself as a theologian.)

Here, in this routine income-tax list of human activities which count as labor, there lies an important assumption. For purposes of taxing wage income, the Internal Revenue Code limits its attention to paid labor. It deliberately excludes all the useful and satisfying labor performed by mothers at home, volunteers in the community, and those creative and disciplined persons who devote themselves to sport and to art and to hobbies — for joy and not for pay. I prefer to *include* all these forms of important unpaid labor, along with the work we do for financial gain, when we reflect on good work and good works.

I submit that Americans in particular, and inheritors of the Christian-derived civilization of the West in general, find work, paid and unpaid, to be fundamental. The French student of child development, Jean Piaget, could use work as the prior and more fundamental explanatory category when he said, "Play is the child's work." Adults know about work; they should accord equal importance to what young children do.

The negative corollary to our deep valuing of work is our experience that to be jobless or idle drains us of self-confidence and hope. We may wear ourselves out working, but we worry ourselves sick if we are not working. In this first quarter of 2012 we are into our fourth consecutive year when approximately 9% of the US labor force is not employed and is looking for work. Beyond that 9% there lies an uncounted segment of our labor force who are discouraged, no longer looking, or underemployed. The creative writer who is experiencing writer's block, the parents who are at loose ends because their children have moved out and the house has grown quiet, these too are missing their work, along with those who are missing their wages. Deep inside us is a sense that to work, for pay and for other rewards, is good.

The ancient Hebrew wise men anticipated both our eagerness to work and the distress of unemployment. One, known as the Preacher, complained: "What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also [the Preacher said] is vanity."[2]

Yet neither the Christian tradition nor the Islamic tradition accepts world-

weariness as the last word. Both Bible and Qur'an see human beings as created by God and endowed with capacity to accomplish essential work on earth. Both communities, living by their respective books, understand that human labor has meaning. Work means something in the mind of human beings and in the mind of God.

In the Qur'an, we hear: "Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope."[3] There is some connection between our labor here and our hope for hereafter.

Kenneth Cragg, a Christian translator of the Qur'an, calls attention to a phrase addressed by the prophet Salih to his tribe of Thamud to characterize human beings: "He established you in the earth and made you tenant-masters (*istaʿmarakum fīhā*) there" (11:61) (Yusuf Ali translation: "It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein…"). Cragg understands this verse as teaching us to view humanity as simultaneously tenants and masters here on earth. Cragg hears here a warrant for "our mandate over nature, of which the farmer and the arm, the engineer and the machine, the technician in the laboratory, are the constant symbol, enlisting the natural order to our human control, yielding products, markets, techniques for the fabric of society."[4]

Seven centuries before Cragg, the teacher Ibn Khaldun surveyed human labor and went a step further. Ibn Khaldun was prepared to distinguish necessary labor from noble labor. "Necessary (crafts)" Khaldun said, "are agriculture, architecture, tailoring, carpentry, and weaving. Crafts noble because of their object are midwifery, the art of writing, book production, singing, and medicine".[5] I see some correspondence between Ibn Kahldun's categories of necessary and noble and our distinction between labor for pay and labor for joy.

I find that the Bible's assessment of human labor traces a U-shaped trajectory. In the beginning, in the world as it was created to be, work was good. God set the man and the woman in a garden to tend it and to enjoy it. Then our disobedience and banishment spoiled work and turned good work into the toil we know at rush hour, and too often on the job: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life… By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until your return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."[6]

Despite this precipitous downward trajectory in work satisfaction, God in His patience and mercy gives humanity chances to reconnect toil with the purposes for which we were made: the arm to farming, our tool-making skill to engineering, our esthetic eye to acknowledge the beauty of our living space in

the universe. Even here in this flawed earthly workplace, despite toil and unfairness, despite failures and heartbreak, despite human wrongheadedness, God has created a space and a time when we can enjoy some of the just rewards He intends for our labor. We can thank God already for "tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us." By these foretastes, we are being prepared to look ahead to a place beyond death "where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting".[7]

Eternal rest and joy are at the far right, upper prong of the U curve. Good work was at the upper-left beginning of the U. Inbetween we pass variously through toil, underemployment, makework, useful invention, and in the best of times through rightful periods in which each man can rest under the shade of a vine he has planted, in a house he has built with his own hands, and no one shall make him afraid. This is the biblical description of human life and labor, moving from a God-ordained world, through a distorted world, to a renewed world of right order, justice, and beauty, where we rest in God. During this interim, living somewhere in the trough between the two high points, how then are we to work? And how are we to think about our work, or our lack of work?

One principle which helps us think about our working lives is the principle of looking to the *ends* for which we have been endowed. The sixteenth-century French Christian John Calvin taught, "The use of God's gifts is not wrong when it has respect to the end for which he created them, namely for our good and not our ruin…"[8] I take this to mean that whatever work contributes to human health, to human flourishing, to human maturity and completion is a right use of our abilities.

We have abilities. Our family and friends see them. Our coaches and teachers help us take our own measure. The vocational counselor tells us. The Psalmist says to God:

> What is man that you should be mindful of him?
> The son of man that you should seek him out?
> You have made him but little lower than the angels;
> You adorn him with glory and honor;
> You give him mastery over the works of your hands;
> You put all things under his feet.[9]

If we have so much capacity, it is meant to be used — to care for the creation in which we have been set, and to care for our fellow human beings, so that they can come to appreciate their Creator and thank Him.

Any work that in any way cares for creation or cares for human beings is good work. We may make use of any means that serves these ends. We may work with our hands and our backs, and we may also labor in cubicles of cool and comfort.

We may organize ourselves in simple subsistence societies, or we may work in bureaucracies where we feel like the tiniest electron on a motherboard of incalculable electronic impulses. A few of us can be the visible head and voice who sets the tone and gives cohesion to a globe-circling enterprise or super-state.

Wherever we fit into the world's workforce, our individual working can be good for us and good in the sight of God, if somehow it contributes to human flourishing.

Protestant Christians in 16th-century Europe rediscovered this goodness of all forms of labor. Their conviction was expressed in the image of a person responding to a summons, or an invitation, or a calling from God. Their reading of the biblical record persuaded them that God may call an individual to any sort of labor. The Protestant movement protested against the illusion that our offerings, our acts of piety and our acts of charity, could ever be good enough to earn the favor of God. At the same time the movement protested against the Church's venerable judgement that a monastic or priestly life vowed to poverty, chastity, and obedience is dearer to God than a life lived in the economy of households, agriculture, manufacture, and commerce.

Martin Luther appreciated the shock value of acting out his convictions. He and Catherine von Bora renounced their respective monastic vows and married. To make his point that God may call a Christian to any line of work that benefits society, Luther asserted that even the hangman could perform his office for the glory of God. In the same vein, I have been told there is an epitaph in an English graveyard celebrating one William Smith who for seventy-five years mended shoes to the glory of God.

Today's ethicists seek to take account of the complexity of our large societies. It may be that automation and leisure in rich countries today are the work-related issues that trouble us, just as slave labor troubled abolitionists in the nineteenth century. But when we focus on the work itself, a Christian will ask of any specific line of labor, "Is this socially useful?" Christian ethicists will ask whether any particular practice, such as electronic social networking, or immunizations, or nuclear deterrence, enhances the universal common good. Every form of labor may properly be questioned.

Those of us who will be getting up tomorrow morning and going to work want to know, "Where does my work fit into God's working of all things together

for the good He intends for His creatures? How does my work fit into God's glory?"

Our motivation at work will be affected by how we see our work collaborating with the work of God. Some Christians seem to go about their work with fear nagging at their heels. They seem unsure that the work they do is work God meant for them to do and they have doubts that their lives are fit to be presented to God. A lovely man named Albert Saliba owned a furniture store in Dothan, Alabama. Every Sunday he used to insist on paying for my breakfast in the parish hall after morning worship. Al explained, "You're my fire insurance." Al was witty, but I detected that part of the motivation for his good work of feeding the clergy might be fear.

Apart from fear, there is necessity. I have encountered many Christians who have not heard or glimpsed any direction from God regarding their everyday duties in the world. What then motivates their work? They work to eat. They work to keep their families clothed. They work because work is expected. Work that might have been good has become for them toil. They work under duress. Or they can find no niche where their work is wanted.

For Christians ground down by toil, or put down by joblessness, the 17th-century English cleric George Herbert wrote a prayer. We sometimes sing this prayer in church:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee.
All may of thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture, 'for thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.
A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.[10]

Christians are meant to understand that we may dedicate not only buildings and ritual objects but we may also dedicate travels, research, work projects, and the sweeping of rooms to the glory of God.

To imagine ourselves working for God does not mean that we are adding to God something He lacks. Our offering does not enhance God. God exists in

glory. Glory is visualized as unapproachable light. Glory is the realm where God exists in Himself. But the earth reflects the glory of God. And so our work may also reflect, may suggest, may insinuate itself, may by His grace be blended into His glory. Our work will be tested, tried, and judged by this infinitely intense brightness. An inspector would not usually find the rooms I sweep and the bathrooms I clean spotless. Yet by His mercy it is possible that some element of our works will be found acceptable in the renewed order God is fashioning for His creation, as we labor towards the upper-right high point of the labor curve.

Having received God's grace through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, collectively and individually, we continue in good works. What will keep us hopeful while we work? We continue working because, as John Calvin taught, God the Holy Spirit makes our wills conceive the love of right, inclines our wills to desire right, stirs our wills to pursue right. Thus "our choice, desire, and endeavor do not fail, but are carried into effect …It is of God that we continue in good works, and persevere in them unto the end."[11]

Calvin also taught us something about work and justice. From his lifelong immersion in the Law of God, the Prophets, and the Gospels, Calvin was persuaded that God has endowed human beings with sufficient understanding and judgement to be aware that the current state of human society falls short of the state of justice which God intends to prevail in the human realm.

God has made a series of promises which let us know what His justice should look like. The just order God desires for human society has a social dimension: human life is meant to be lived on a holy mountain on which the lion shall nestle down next to the lamb, the wolf will eat hay with the ox, and none shall make them afraid. This picture of God's will for peace in heaven guides us to make peace now on earth.

This just order God desires for human society has an economic dimension as well. It is a world in which each man sits in the shade of the vine he has planted and the shelter of the house he has built.

At the right-hand apex of the U-shaped labor curve, this world eventually will melt away, until the just Creator and Employer of all will Himself be all in all, and our labor will no longer be required.

Meanwhile, as rush-hour in Washington reaches its peak, here in this workaday world, we are spared from the necessity of proving ourselves worthy of being here. We do not have to persuade ourselves that our works have been good enough to save the world, or to make us acceptable to God, or to give us worth. Instead, we work under the eye of an Employer, freely, modestly, doing the work He sets before us to do. Our motivation for working is simply that we are aware that our tasks come from Him. He has made us aware of Himself. He

has created us capable of grasping His intent to have a creation which lives in equity, in health, and in beauty. Tending God's garden, making a world that is just, healthful, and beautiful – that is our creaturely job. It matters much less what particular skill or task we pursue. All human competence and labor can please God, if the worker holds in mind God's justice, God's beauty, and God's wholeness.

Returning from this lofty theological excursion to today's rush hour and tomorrow's workday, do we have anything to say to those who are under-employed, or unemployed, or unemployable in our American economy today?

Jesus is for Christians a prophet, and more than a prophet. When he instructs, we heed. We live by his summary of God's will for us, that we should love God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our strength. Inseparable from that whole-self serving of God, Jesus instructs us to serve also our neigh-bor, the people God has placed here on His earth to share time and space with us. He has instructed us to love them as we love ourselves.

How far will this law of love require us to go? Jesus describes for us the cost of loving of neighbor: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

We demonstrate no greater love for our neighbors than when we guide workers – obsolete workers, less-skilled workers, tentative workers hovering at the door of employability, and younger workers-to-be – when we guide any of these into jobs, jobs which demand their best efforts, and jobs which allow them to give themselves away for the common good.

One last act of love will be when we yield to these not-yet-fully-employed workers sufficient space for them to get their own jobs. We can dare to step out of the labor force when our time comes. We can dare to step aside because we trust that God values us otherwise than the labor market does. We can dare to step aside because we trust that God values us otherwise than do those who depend on the prestige of a work-defined social position. We can dare to surrender our status as job-defined and fully-employed people because over our span of God-given years we have used the gifts He gave us, and we have regularly offered up to Him whatever work we have accomplished. We trust God to complete, by other means, including by means of other workers, the good works we have left undone.

We give God the praise He deserves for any good works accomplished. Any good that we have accomplished reflects the goodness of the One who created, restored, and empowered us to do what is pleasing in His sight. We trust God, of His great mercy, to forgive what has been badly done.

In all our works, begun, continued, and ended in Him, we give glory to God.

Notes

1. Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How they Feel About What They Do* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. ix

2. *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, ed. Harold W. Attridge (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), Ecclesiastes 2: 22-23

3. *The Qur'an*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), *Surah al-Kahf*, 18: 46.

4. Kenneth Cragg, *Mosque Sermons: A Listener for the Preacher* (London: Melisende, 2008), p.4, translating *Surah Hud*, 11:61.

5. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.319

6. Genesis 3:17-19.

7. *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), "A General Thanksgiving", p.836; "The Burial of the Dead", p.499.

8. John Calvin, *Instruction in Christianity* ed. Joseph Pitts Wiles, (Redhill, Surrey: Sovereign Grace Union, 1966), p.173.

9. Psalm 8, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.592.

10. *The Hymnal, 1940, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States,* #476.

11. Calvin, p.89. A note about the behavior described in American speech as our work ethic: Thanks to Max Weber, that brilliant 19th-century German theorist of society and of music, and to R. H. Tawney, the English historian, much has been made in the popular history of capitalism of something called "the Protestant ethic". The notion behind this phrase, "the Protestant ethic", is that, when they pondered the mystery of human free will and responsibility alongside the complete power and knowledge of God, the Creator of this universe, some Christians were anxious to be assured that their faith in God was sufficient. Such anxiety expresses itself in the blunt question, "Will I be saved?" One answer to anxious Christians was to invite them to look into their individual lives for indications that indeed God might have predestined them for eternal salvation. They were encouraged to look beyond verbal professions of faith and visible rites. Some theologians suggested that personal prosperity in this life could be a sign that God, purely out of his grace and not as anything earned, intends to bestow on those prosperous individuals the additional gift of eternal life. Weber and Tawney suggested that the desire for these visible reassurances of future salvation helped erode the Christian value long placed on voluntary poverty. In its stead Christians supposedly were taught to value the seeking of high wages, large profits, and interest on debts. Thus Weber and Tawney explained the rise of the Western banking system and accumulation of capital,

preparing the way for an industrial economy. Closer attention to the thinking of John Calvin, the French biblical scholar and leader of the Protestant Reformation in Geneva, sheds doubt on Weber and Tawney's theory of the genesis of modern capitalism. Calvin did not in fact teach that personal prosperity may be taken as a sign of one's having been predestined for salvation by the grace of God. See Eric Fuchs, *La Morale selon Calvin* (Paris: Les Edition du Cerf, 1986).

7

Islamic Law and the Law of the Land

Azizah Y. al-Hibri

T H E M E : A scholar who appreciated Taha Jabir al-Alwani's opinions on Muslim compliance with American law argues that, far from being alien or irreconcilable with American law, Islamic Shari'ah could well guide arbitration bodies in resolving disputes between American Muslims who voluntarily turn to them, once such bodies are staffed by qualified arbitrators. American Muslims should seize the opportunity to bring to the fore previously neglected aspects of the Prophetic model, such as conflict resolution, women's rights, and even animal rights and environmental concerns.

I am honored to contribute my voice to a conversation honoring my very good friend and distinguished scholar, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani.

Let me start by addressing an oft-repeated statement, namely that "Islamic *Shari'ah* deals with all aspects of human life." This statement is usually made to bolster two related claims: (1) that this description is unique to Islamic Shari'ah, and (2) that Islamic Shari'ah is bound to clash with the laws of a secular or non-Muslim country. Both claims are false.

Islamic Shari'ah is no different in its pervasiveness in the lives of its followers than Christian or Jewish Shari'ah. (Incidentally, the simple meaning of "Shari'ah" is "body of law".) For example, Christian Shari'ah sets rules for commercial transactions, such as the prohibition of usury. This, by the way, explains our legal aversion to windfall profits. Additionally, Christian Shari'ah addresses various aspects of marital life in details that vary among the various sects.

Jewish Shari'ah also addresses a broad range of issues, a fact that has necessitated the establishment of Bet Dins in the United States. These are Jewish religious courts that rule on matters ranging from the personal to the commercial.

What is different about Islamic Shari'ah is not its pervasiveness in the lives of Muslims, but rather the view that it is different, perhaps even strange. This view makes its pervasiveness much more noticeable in a society more tolerant of Judeo-Christian traditions. This strangeness is rendered more glaring as a result of recent waves of Muslims immigrants from war-torn countries and areas of conflict. These immigrants usually require some time before they fully adjust to U.S. cultural and constitutional values.

The adjustment is further complicated by the fact that many of these immigrants come from lands that were not ruled democratically. So, they were not familiar with the various democratic tools for advocating and bringing about change. Consequently, they may initially feel oppressed or frustrated by their surroundings. They may even distrust the voting process.

Years ago, I came across a case where an immigrant imam announced to his community that voting in a secular state was prohibited by their religion. Unfortunately, some Muslims do not have sophisticated knowledge of their religion, especially on such matters. As a result, such erroneous statements may have some effect on them. Indeed, in prior decades, some Muslims did not allow their children to attend law school because our American law is secular.

I remember in the 1990's lecturing in mosques and Islamic centers, where I begged families to send some of their children to law school. Today, there are many Muslim lawyers and law students who are active participants in the profession, especially the civil rights movement. Some have also run for office, worked on the Hill, and clerked in U.S. Courts.

So the adjustment process and the mainstreaming of American Muslims are already happening. In fact, we are in its midst. A couple of decades from now, Americans will find it strange that such questions about the compatibility of Islamic Shari'ah and American law even arose as an issue. This is especially true, given Islam's clear similarity to Christianity and Judaism, two American religions whose compatibility with American culture and values were not similarly questioned.

There is of course another major reason for these questions, namely the significant otherization and negative stereotyping of Muslims in our culture. This has become especially true after the 9/11 tragedy. Before then, interfaith relations were advancing very nicely and Muslim scholars and activists were welcome at the national table. After 9/11, a barrage of negative stereotyping blanketed the country and average Americans began to view Muslims as terrorists.

This was quite a serious development that Muslims have had to live with for the last decade. While more reasonable voices are emerging today, our Muslim

children are at this very moment being bullied in their schools and called "terrorist", a situation which has caused them serious emotional distress and damage. Further, they no longer complain to school officials, because they do not believe that such complaints would make a difference.

Complicating this already complex picture is the fact that immigrant Muslims tend to be traditional and hence patriarchal. The more egalitarian approach of our society disturbs and confuses many of them. Some even live in denial. This is the case of the Moroccan immigrant in New Jersey who severely abused his wife and ended up in court. He was backed by an imam testifying (erroneously) as an expert witness that the husband's behavior towards his wife was religiously sanctioned. The judge, bowing to culture, ruled in favor of the husband. He was clearly in error and the court of appeals reversed the decision.

Unfortunately, that incident started an anti-Shariʻah movement across this country that spawned many unconstitutional or redundant state statutes. More importantly, it succeeded in bolstering in the minds of the population the otherness of Islamic Shariʻah and its dangers to our American system.

We all know that American law is supreme in American courts. It is the law of the land. There is no danger of its being trumped by any other body of law, not even the law of the European Union. When other laws are recognized in court, it is due to various considerations within our established legal system, such as comity or the law of the contract.

Islamic law comes into American courts mostly through divorce cases. Since these cases usually involve a marriage contract, the law of contracts comes in and the contract is examined by the court. Such contracts usually include the notion of *mahr,* or marital gift, with which judges are unfamiliar. To understand that notion they turn to expert witnesses. Unfortunately, some-times men who want to avoid payment of the delayed *mahr* find experts who are not well-informed about these matters. They end up misleading the court with their erroneous or incomplete testimony. Some testimonies were so off the mark that their definition of *mahr* conflicted with American values, let alone Islamic ones.

For example, one testimony defined *mahr* as "bride price." This is completely wrong from an Islamic point of view. But the witness had no idea how wrong he was because that was the cultural understanding in his country. In other words, that was the cultural, not the religious, definition, but people often conflate the two.

Given such testimony, it is understandable that some American judges refused to enforce the payment of "*mahr*." On the other hand, in cases where

"*mahr*" was properly defined, judges tended to enforce its payment under American contract law.

What this example shows is not the otherness of Islamic Shari'ah, but rather the lack of knowledge of Islamic law among many American Muslims, and the absence of scholarly Muslim institutions that can fairly arbitrate and resolve problems within the community or even provide reliable expert testimony in civil courts.

There is a real need for Muslims to have their own Bet Dins. Parties could choose to subject themselves to the jurisdiction of these arbitration bodies whose judgments are then enforced by our court system. Any party might refuse to go to these Muslim Bet Dins and opt instead to use the court system of this country. But the existence of these Bet Dins would eliminate the need for expert testimony that could misinform the court and result in creating bad precedents.

Nevertheless, this is not yet a call for establishing Muslim Bet Dins, simply because the preconditions for it do not yet exist. We await the establishment of Islamic institutions that graduate classes of qualified potential arbitrators. These arbitrators would be unburdened by patriarchal cultural interpretations of religion that discriminate against women.

This leads me to one final element in the process of othering Islamic Shari'ah, namely the misguided understanding of many Muslims of their Shari'ah. Shari'ah is often confused by Muslims with their cultural practices and values, some of which are highly reprehensible.

Let me be clear. In Islam, rape is a crime against the woman, so you do not punish the victim. You punish the perpetrator. In Islam, there is no such thing as "honor killing." A husband who accuses his wife of being with another man must take the matter to court, the wife will have equal opportunity to deny the charges, and the case will end in divorce, not death.

Domestic violence is not alright. A woman may divorce her husband if he abuses her even verbally. (Witness the laws of Jordan and Kuwait.) A Muslim woman has a right to divorce similar to that of the man. It is called *khul'*.

A Muslim woman is also fully entitled to education. She is entitled to work and to have full control over her finances. A Muslim woman may not be forced into marriage. Her free consent is essential to the validity of the marriage contract itself. Once married, she is not obligated to do housework or nurse her child, etc..., etc... But few Muslim men and women know all that.

This is why we American Muslims have a world-class opportunity to lead Muslims worldwide by developing an Islamic jurisprudence that is truly Islamic yet suitable for a modern society, such as ours, as well as for the twenty-first

century. We can bring to the fore previously neglected aspects of the Prophetic model, such as conflict resolution, women's rights, even animal rights and environmental concerns.

We can break away from oppressive past cultural customs and enjoy our presence in this land by rediscovering Islam as the modern religion it really is. And if we are told that Islam and democracy are incompatible, or that Islam is a theocracy and thus conflicts with the basic constitutional principle in this country of separation of Church and State, I will simply refer them to my articles on these matters on Karamah's website.[1]

Muslims have been in America even before the United States was born. We have helped build this country, we helped birth its civil rights movement. We are doctors, lawyers, business men and women, engineers, and professors. We shall continue in our efforts.

And as to the attempt to otherize us, I have a simple American answer: We shall overcome.

Notes

1. Visit www.karamah.org. Karamah is Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights. See for example, in the Articles section, "Islamic Constitutionalism and the Concept of Democracy," in Fred Dallmayr, ed., *Border Crossings: Towards A Comparative Political Theory* (Lexington Books, 1999), pp.61- 87. (An earlier version was published in 24 *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 1 (1992), and *Islamic and American Constitutional Law: Borrowing Possibilities or a History of Borrowing?* 1 *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law* 492 (1999).)

8

Religious Law and Civil Law of Marriage in the United States

Richard J. Jones

T H E M E : Many Americans today are questioning the justice of such aspects of American law as sentencing, the behavior of police, and the use of the power to tax. Beyond the narrow issue of the status of Islamic law in civil courts, we are feeling the need to grasp better the "Why?" behind the "What?" of our laws. Christian and Muslim theologians of the fundamental purposes of law, even if they cannot persuade each other about the nature of the ultimate authority behind all law, should be offering in the public square the guiding principles we believe make law true.

I reside in Fairfax County, Virginia and pay property tax to that county. However, the U. S. Postal Service designates my address as Alexandria, Virginia — a city excluded from the jurisdiction of the County of Fairfax. Two assigned addresses, assigned by two authorities — yet I am a one taxpayer and one postal patron living in one and the same house. This dual address creates no actual hardship or confusion. It is more of an amusing anomaly, my private antinomy. For many people in our world, however, living under overlapping jurisdictions and simultaneous belongings has been a source of tension and confusion. Jesus of Nazareth was once tested with one such competing overlap. "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar?", some of his fellow Jews in the Roman province of Syria once asked. He replied, "Show me the coin. Whose likeness is on the coin?" They said to him, Caesar's". Jesus said, "Then give Caesar what is his, and give God what is his."[1]

As Christians today ponder competing claims on us from the public and the private realms, claims from the laws of our religious communities and the law of this land, we continue to ask ourselves, "What did Jesus mean?"

Conflicts do arise in the United States between the law of the land and the laws of particular religious communities. Consider a few past instances:

- Christian pacifists, including Brethren and Quakers, refused to obey the law requiring men of a certain age to register for the draft. Eventually the law was modified to allow conscientious objectors to war to perform alternative service.
- The Jehovah's Witnesses have insisted in court that they will not pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States.
- Mormon law originally sanctioned polygamous marriages, in contradiction to state law prohibiting such marriages. Mormon law eventually accommodated to state law.
- Christian priests have claimed immunity from giving testimony in court about what they have heard from penitents who were privately confessing their sins.

So we are not totally surprised that cases are now coming before state courts in which Islamic law of marriage and divorce is alleged to conflict with some element in the family law of a state of the United States. The parties to a dispute may disagree over who may initiate a suit, admissible evidence, grounds for divorce, and principles for just division of property and child custody. There may be a difference over which body of law the judge shall apply.

What shall we say about situations where religious law and state law both prescribe the duties, privileges, and remedies our personal status confers on us, but their prescriptions do not agree? Legislatures in several states have recently answered by forbidding judges to consider the law of religious bodies, intending Islamic law in particular. Is it self-evident that in case of conflicting procedures or provisions, state law will prevail, simply because the state possesses coercive power?

Or is it possible that the state in our day is itself in such need of legitimation and loyalty that the state needs to listen again to the sources of authority known to religion, including the religion of a minority? Many Americans today are questioning the justice of sentencing, the behavior of police, and even the just use of the tax power. These challenges to principles underlying current administration of American justice suggest to me that, beyond the narrow matter of the status of Islamic law in civil courts, we are feeling the need for a better grasp of the "Why?" behind the "What?" of our laws. It may be time for citizens to hear from theologians of the law.

The Failed "Save Our State" Amendment to the Constitution of Oklahoma, 2011
In 2010, the legislature of the state of Oklahoma recommended that voters adopt an amendment to the constitution. After much publicity, the measure

received the approval of seventy percent of those voting. The thrust of the amendment was to forbid state judges to "consider foreign or Shari'ah law" when deciding any case coming before them. A state senator named Anthony Sykes, the sponsor of the proposed constitutional amendment, was quoted as explaining that it intended to ban courts from considering all religious laws, and that Shari'ah was used only as an example.

The Oklahoma action understandably produced alarm among Muslims. It seemed a precursor to future mistreatment. Muneer Awad, the director of the Oklahoma chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations, brought suit asking relief. He claimed several harms: singling out of his religion for negative treatment, stigmatizing him and other Muslims, disabling a probate court from probating his last will and testament (which contains references to Shari'ah law), limiting the relief Muslims can obtain from Oklahoma state courts, and fostering excessive entanglement between the government and his religion.

The Attorney General of the United States announced that he would challenge the Oklahoma act as contrary to the Unites States Constitution. In January 2011 the Tenth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver affirmed a U. S. Circuit Court order preventing the Oklahoma amendment from taking effect. In the mind of the appellate judges, the amendment clearly failed because it discriminated among religions. It did not treat all religions the same. Neutral treatment of religions, the Appeals Court reminded us, "is the clearest command of the Establishment Clause" in the U. S. Constitution. That clause declares that Congress shall make no law concerning an establishment of religion.

I notice two particularly interesting elements in this case.

I hear an apparent contradiction between two of the harms Mr. Awad said he was seeking relief from. One harm was "excessive entanglement between the government and his religion". The other was limiting the judicial relief he might in the future wish to seek from Oklahoma state courts. Is this common-place in lawsuits, to name multiple harms, hoping the judge will recognize at least one of them? Is it also possible that there is a very human ambivalence, in Mr. Awad as in the broader American Muslim community, between the desire to be left alone and the desire to have the government on our side when we need it?

Part of the Appeals Court's ruling turned, intriguingly, on the use of the word "other" in the Oklahoma act. The proposed constitutional amendment would have prohibited courts from looking to "the precepts of other nations or cultures". (Then it went on to add "Specifically the courts shall not consider international or *shari'ah* law.")

The Appeals Court observed that the word "other" implied that any cultures, including religions, which the legislature considered to be part of *domestic* culture or *Oklahoma* culture would *not* have their legal precepts prohibited from consideration. Only other cultures would have their legal precepts prohibited. The appeals judges reasoned on the basis of grammar. To speak of "other nations" and "other cultures", they said, inherently meant distinguishing these from a known, nearer, local, prevailing, culture or nation. "Other" implies outside, not inside; far off, not near at hand; yours, not mine; theirs, not ours.

I speculate that the judges' alertness to this discriminating word "other" may have been heightened by a generation of social-science theory about the self that is shaped in relation to other selves. "Othering" has entered the vocabulary of preachers and champions of diversity where I live. I take it othering is now considered a wrongful act. This question of identity is big. Am I who others say I am, or am I who God says I am?

We might ask a parallel question about the law of the land that demands our loyalty. Is the law whatever legislators and judges say it is, or is the law what God says it is?

Islamic Divorces and Marriages in American Family Courts
The chief area of life where American Muslims have turned for assistance has been in that most fundamental of institutions, marriage. Marriage law is one area where serious Muslims have on occasion asked American courts to enforce the rulings of Islamic legal authorities, rendered either abroad or in this country. The scholars of Karamah have compiled an interesting collection of cases in which state courts have examined a premarital contract, a divorce decree, or a marriage record issued by an Islamic legal authority. On these occasions, the state courts have had to decide whether to enforce, to refuse to consider, or to interpret for themselves the Islamic legal action that has been presented to them.

Some cases are very international. In a case decided by Maryland's highest court (Aleem v. Aleem, 2011), a wife filed in civil court for a legal separation. The husband filed a counterclaim, filed a motion to dismiss her complaint, and four months later went to the Pakistani embassy in Washington and issued in writing his own triple declaration of divorce. Twenty years earlier, the couple had been married in Karachi, so now the husband turned to institutions of Pakistani family law seeking a divorce from his wife on Islamic terms, including protecting his World Bank pension from his wife. In effect each party to this marriage was seeking a divorce under a different body of law – she under

Maryland family law, he under the Arbitration Board in Karachi which has jurisdiction over marriages. The wife preferred the settlement she eventually got from Maryland courts dividing the marital property and allowing her to reach the husband's pension, valued at a million dollars. Maryland's Court of Appeals upheld the Maryland court of first instance in its decision not to allow the husband to present an expert witness on Islamic law whom he brought from London. The Court of Appeals was confident that it knew enough about Islamic law, e.g., that only the husband has an independent right of *talaq* (divorce initiated by husband). The Court of Appeals declined to grant comity to the Pakistani marriage contract, the comity usually due to the judgements and laws of foreign nations. Maryland seems to have considered that the foreign law conflicted with fundamental policy of Maryland and therefore could not be considered.[2]

In other cases the American state court did see fit to enforce an Islamic contract of marriage. The Circuit Court of the County of Fairfax, Virginia in 2006 entertained a suit for divorce that required considering an Islamic marriage contract made in Virginia. The question turned on provisions for the initial token marriage gift to be paid by the husband, and his paying the later, larger gift mandated in case of the husband's death or divorcing of the wife. One party objected that this contract should not be enforced by the court because it failed to specify the time when the second payment would be due. The court ruled that the marriage contract was "not void for vagueness or for lack of consideration".[3]

In a 1993 divorce case between a Muslim husband and wife, a New York state court found sufficient precedents to allow it to enforce a marriage contract specifying the religious upbringing of their child.[4]

The late Shareefa al-Khatib, well known in Washington, D.C., found several recurring topics likely to be stipulated in marriage contracts between Muslims. Popular provisions included: the right to initiate divorce, amounts of prompt dower and deferred dower, renunciation of the right to take a second wife, remuneration for housework, freedom to work for pay outside the home, agreement of the wife to forego college or work after having children, and specifying the location of residence.

Ten years ago, Asifa Quraishi and Najeeba Syeed-Miller surveyed published cases in American family law and interviewed Muslim attorneys working the field. They found that state courts were hearing an increasing number of cases in which two Muslims disputed their prenuptial agreements, asserted that the requirements for a valid marriage had not been met, asked for a child custody determination, or asked for financial settlements either under Islamic rules of

dower or under American rules of property division and reasonable financial support. Qaraishi and Syeed-Miller observed, "As the population of second-generation and native U.S. Muslims grows and more Muslim marriages end up in U.S. courts for litigation, we may see more cases where the full law-related gamut of marital life occurs here in the USA. In those cases, comity to other nations will not be at issue, and U.S. judges will be faced with the question of how to treat Islamic family law in the context of litigants from one of their own domestic religious minorities."[5]

More recently, Maha Alkhateeb, daughter of Shareefa al-Khatib, has observed that prenuptial marriage contracts between Muslims are often being upheld in U.S. civil courts as enforceable contracts, provided they do not seek to draw the court into discrimination against a religion, e.g., a mandate on the religious upbringing of children, nor, on the opposite extreme, seek to violate public policy of the United States, e.g., permitting polygamy. Stipulations regarding gender roles, performance of household duties, and satisfaction of sexual desires are generally disregarded by civil courts as matters of service agreements, rather than contracts. The clauses most commonly brought seeking civil court enforcement concern *mahr* – a gift given by husband to wife, payable before the marriage, immediately after, over a long period, or at its end – especially when the amount is large.[6]

The Purposes of Civil Law
I admire the patience, the creative analogies, and the clarity of lawyers who labor to fit Islamic legal concepts and procedures into the jigsaw puzzle of American civil law.

I appreciate Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed's once reminding me that Shari'ah includes etiquette: the Prophet Muhammad taught his people to drink water in three sips, not one gulp, and to enter the mosque with the right foot first, not the left. I welcome the principle I have heard from my co-teacher, Dr. Mohamad Adam El-Sheikh, a member of the Fiqh Council of North America, that Islamic law guides American Muslims' choices in those areas where neither civil law directs nor criminal law proscribes. Shari'ah guides Muslims across the vast acreage of permissible moral and esthetic choices where we need God's guidance.

What I most value is these scholars' pointing backward from the facts of any hesitation or dispute between parties to the presumed fundamental posture of submission by all parties to God's guidance. The notion of submitting our human disputes to the will of God brings me back to our need to believe in the legitimacy of human law – whether judge-made, legislature-made, or applied by executive regulations.

When the law has to deny people something they thought was their due, people will retort, "Who says so?" When people shout, or mutter, "Who says so?", they are not asking only, "Who says that's the law?" They are also asking, "Where did this law come from?" And that gets close to the question, "Is this law true?"

It may sound odd to ask, "Is the law true?" Yet we who are willing to be guided do ask. If the law is to be our guide, we have to know that we can trust the guide. The state which enforces the law of the land can have legitimacy in the eyes of citizens only if citizens trust that law's origin.

Christians and Muslims alike have all been warned against idolatry. We are not likely to mistake the state for God. But we do have to believe that the state and its laws we submit to are from God, or of God, or at least acceptable to God.

This is where law bumps into faith. I am not thinking now about an overt meeting at the level of building permits for mosques or prenuptial contracts seeking judicial enforcement. I am thinking rather about a meeting at the level of foundations. I am talking about the ethical foundations – usually unmentioned in the courtroom. At the subterranean level of our unspoken presuppositions and deepest trusting, anything we think we know about the purposes of God for this world bears on the authority, the rightful coercive power, of the state to enforce the law of the land.

If we believe that the will of God is that we do the *halal* and avoid the *haram*, then we need to be assured that this same God is pleased with the patterns prescribed for our social behavior in the law of the land. In civil law as well as Islamic law, in Church canons on marriage as well as civil law of marriage, it is the law behind the laws that we must keep digging for.

Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, and their successors published by the International Institute of Islamic Thought keep asking themselves about the purposes of the law. God, who is compassionate, intends mercy and provides guidance. Therefore laws deducible from Qur'an and the Sunnah are not improvisations. Rather they must serve God's purposes. According to Mohammad Hashim Kamali, a former professor of law at the International Islamic University of Malaysia, Islamic law seeks to "establish justice, eliminate prejudice, and alleviate hardship" among human beings. Kamali says the benefits of God's law, the essential interests it assures, can be enumerated: "faith, life, family, intellect, and property". Society and individuals can survive if faith, life, family, intellect, and property survive. Forbidden behaviors threaten faith, life, family, intellect, and property. Approved behaviors protect religion, protect life, protect family wellbeing, protect knowledge, and protect property.[7]

Others among us believe that the will of God is best summarized in the double commandment that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and strength, and must love our neighbor as ourself. If Jesus was right in giving us this summary of the Law of Moses, then we will test every human act of lawmaking and law enforcement by the degree to which it helps us love God and love our neighbor.

In the U.S. as in other countries, it is not enough to boast of the rule of law if that law merely records the terms of a truce between competing interests. It is not enough to say to litigants, petitioners, and property holders, "Sorry, they had the votes. They made the law. This is the will of the majority. Like it or lump it." Citizens need to be persuaded that the laws we submit to are not only the will of the majority, and not only consistent with precedents. We want to be assured that the law is also in line with the will of the One who has perfect wisdom, has final authority, and is perfect love.

Of course we need enforceable law to keep the peace between contending interests and loyalties. I continue to believe that the U. S. Constitution is useful to constrain the state in its necessary exercise of coercive power to keep order and to protect citizens in their ability to pursue the good life individually and in their voluntary associations. As a Christian who recognizes the reality of sin, I add that we also need law in our land to hold up an honest mirror so we see our faults. And to structure our lives on earth to fit us for living in the eternal presence of God. We want laws that do more than just keep the peace.

If you are an American Muslim, perhaps you will similarly want to remind us that the law of the land should prevent harm to faith, to life, to family, to intellect, and to property. You will scrutinize any civil or criminal law to see if it promises these hoped-for benefits. You may rightly challenge, or seek exemption from, any civil or criminal law that appears to you to damage these goals.

First Principles of Civil Law
We are now getting somewhere close to first principles. And we may never persuade one another fully about our deepest, our unrelinquishable first principles.

Muslims may remain more confident that what God has made most clear to us is His will, and that in the Qur'an and Sunnah this will of God has been spoken and demonstrated, leaving no grounds for indecision. Our part is to submit gladly, choose the *halal* and avoid the *haram*.

Christians may dare to believe that God our Maker has shown us not only His will but also His character. We may believe that in Jesus Christ we have received not only the perfect example of holy human living but also received

the sacrifice made by God so that we might receive the capacity to become holy and acceptable.

Muslim, Christian, and other religious thinkers may never fully persuade each other about the nature of that ultimate authority behind the law. We may have to continue our study of the law of God in separate workshops. But our parallel work to extract principles from our respective bodies of law may possibly make a shared contribution to the way the law of the land operates.

Judges in civil courts, as they apply law in new circumstances and in the light of new knowledge, have to find guiding principles somewhere. I like the authoritative ring of legal principles such as "the best interest of the child" or "justice delayed is justice denied". But where do such principles come from? They are not universally self-evident. Such doctrines in the law of the land are echoes of something deeper, something older. I suggest that those who enunciate such legal doctrines are, even if the term might offend them, theologians of the law.

When some theologian of American law stumbled upon a legal nugget like, "Your right to free expression stops at the point where your fist reaches my nose", I suspect he found this nugget in a mineshaft or a tailings pile previously worked by theologians. The nugget about the nose sounds a lot like some words of Moses and Jesus, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

By the same token, Muslim theologians of the law have dived deep into the voluminous hadiths and the poetic waves of the Qur'an. They have come up holding the *maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, the purposes of the law — nuggets of mercy and guidance — or of the preserving of faith, life, family, intellect, and property.

In time, some theologian of American law scouring the intellectual marketplace may pick up one of these Islamic nuggets. It is conceivable that, after scrutiny, American law might adopt one or more of them to add to purposes of the law previously collected from George Mason, James Madison, or John Marshall.

Once either of us, Muslim or Christian in the USA, has a pithy sample, some nugget that is relevant to an issue currently troubling the public square, we should not hoard it at our separate mine heads. Why not bring them out of the workshop and display them for public inspection? The recent display of the Ten Commandments on a granite stele in the state supreme courthouse in Birmingham, Alabama may have been a clumsy display. Old truth may fare better if expressed in fresh sayings — newfound nuggets. Why isn't a Washington think tank, or any of our university or seminary campuses, a better marketplace for theologians of the religious law to swap first principles with theologians of the law of the land? If there are fresh matters today where

Islamic law is neutral and civil law is stymied – for example, genetic manipulation, or electronic surveillance, or death with dignity – let the public hear what you believe are the deep laws already in place behind the gaps in our explicit law.

The public square is a noisy place. Many hawkers accost citizens and decisionmakers as if we were an atomized population of rational seekers after nothing but self-interest. Christian and Muslim theologians of law have something better to offer. As believers in the one God, we will never plead just for the interests of me and mine. Our guidance cannot go only to the level of hemlines or post-divorce financial awards. God has broader purposes for the law of the land. Whatever we have glimpsed of God's deeper purposes, the deeper purposes of the law, this also must be shouted out in the public square.

Notes

1. Gospel according to St. Matthew, chap.22, trans. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: the Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), p.1789.
2. John H. Mansfield, "Marriage in Pakistan – Divorce in Maryland – A Sequel", Karamah website, accessed February 25, 2013.
3. Abdallah v. Sarsour, 2006 WL 1134034 (Va. Cir. Ct. Mar 20, 2006) Court: Circuit Court of Virginia, Fairfax County, Karamah website, February 25, 2013.
4. Jabri v Jabri, 193 C.E.2d (1993).
5. Quraishi and Syeed-Miller, "No Altars: a Survey of Islamic Family Law in the United States", in Lynn Welchman, ed., *Women's Rights and Islamic Family Law: Perspectives on Reform* (London: Zed Books, 2004), p.211f.
6. Maha Alkhateeb, *Islamic Marriage Contracts: A Guide for Legal Professionals, Advocates, Imams, and Communities* (Peaceful Families Project, 2012).
7. Mohamad Hashim Kamali, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah Made Simple* (London: International Insitute of Islamic Thought, 2008), p.4.

9

The Qur'an and the People of the Book

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T H E M E : When the Qur'an calls a particular segment of humanity "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitāb*), who is meant and how are they to be regarded? In contrast to commentators who have stretched the term to include the scriptured Zoroastrians and Hindus, this close reading of Qur'anic verses containing the term *ahl al-kitāb* finds that only the Jews and Christians of Makkah and Madinah are meant. In contrast to commentators who found that the Prophet's attitude towards Jews and Christians shifted from favorable and conciliatory in Makkah to negative and harsh in Madinah, this reading finds that earlier and later chapters alike praise some members of both groups for their God-consciousness and condemn other members of both groups for their disobedience. In its broadest sense, *kitāb* is God's guidance.

In our turbulent world of religious, cultural and political violence, distrust and misunderstanding, interfaith relations are of paramount importance and value and one of the urgent and salient tasks of those who aspire to promote peace, reconciliation and mutual understanding. Along with the dark sides of our religious histories and theologies, we have, fortunately, significant resources for addressing in constructive and healthy ways the pressing problems and issues that we all encounter. In this context, the relations between Muslims and adherents of other religious traditions occupy a crucial place in shaping the dynamics of relations between different important parts of the religious and political world. Among the most pertinent categories employed to ponder over, formulate, and form these relations, the designation of "people of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) is a major and indispensable category that from an Islamic perspective has to be taken seriously. The central status that this designation has in determining how Islamic communities can or should shape their relations with non-Muslims is highlighted by the inclusion of this important

category in all significant sources on interfaith discussions where one side of the relations is Islam.

This chapter offers a brief study of what *ahl al-kitāb* means in the Qur'an and what kind of attitude is expected from Muslims to take towards those so described. Of course, one can discuss the issue of *ahl al-kitāb* in the context of hadiths, or in the legal writings of Muslim scholars, or from historical or theological perspectives. These are other interesting approaches that do not fall within the scope of this inquiry. The most obvious reason for giving prominence to the Qur'an as the source from which we ought to acquire our understanding of the term *ahl al-kitāb* is that the Qur'an occupies the most authoritative status among various sources of knowledge and inspiration in Islam. All other sources, from hadith to theology or jurisprudence, are to be understood in the light of the Qur'an's enunciations. For example, the Prophet is quoted as saying that whatever in my Sunnah is contrary to the Qur'an has to be "thrown on the wall".

The Meaning of the Word Kitāb
Now we turn to the main questions of who "the people of the Book" are in the Qur'an and what kind of attitude it prescribes for Muslims to take in relation to the people who are instances or referents of *ahl al-kitāb*.

The first thing to consider here is to see what the notion of '*kitāb*' means in the Qur'an. The term '*kitāb*' has as its root k-t-b, which is normally taken to mean 'to write' and therefore *kitāb*, as the noun from that root, means 'writing'. However, a quick survey of Qur'anic verses in which this word and its cognates are used brings to our attention that the word does not necessarily denote typical writing which normally requires using something by which to write, like a pen or pencil, or on which to write, like paper. One of the common and frequent usages of the word in the Qur'an is prescription. For example, in 2:183 we read: "O believers, prescribed (*kutiba*) for you is the fast, as it was prescribed for those that were before you - haply you will be God-conscious."[1] In another verse, 3:53, God is supplicated by asking, "Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger. Record us (*faktubna*) with those who bear witness." Obviously, God is not expected to write. What is meant here is to ask God to "make" or "include" us among those who bear witness. Also in 3:181 '*sanaktubu*' is used from the root k-t-b which again obviously does not denote writing but rather "preserving." The same thing can be found in other verses such as 4:81 and 7:156. In an interesting verse, 58:22, the Qur'an talks about a group of believers whom God "has written faith upon their hearts", which can mean to "fix' or "strengthen". In a couple of verses, interestingly, God in the

Qur'an talks about Himself as "(*kataba*) inscribed for Himself mercy" (6:12, 54). In 58:21 we read: "God has written, 'It is I and My messengers who must prevail': Surely God is All-Strong, All-Mighty." It is again obvious in these instances that '*kataba*' (wrote?) is not to be taken literally. These observations indicate that there are many nuances in the word *kitāb* and its cognates in the Qur'an that have to be taken into consideration if we want to obtain a clear picture of what *kitāb* means in the Qur'an.

More broadly, the Qur'an conceives of itself along with the Torah and the Gospel as a book. This is a recurring theme whose implications we need to explore to understand what the term "the people of the Book" means in the Qur'an. Daniel Madigan has done a commendable study on "the Quran's self-image"[2] which can help us here to get a better sense of what *kitāb* means in the Qur'an. His general conclusion derived from a close analysis of the Qur'an is that "the *kitab* is a symbol for God's knowledge and authority, a token of the promise of continuing divine guidance." In his view, *kitāb* means a process in the Qur'an rather than a product, a verbal noun rather than a concrete noun.

This understanding of the term *kitāb*, which does justice to the multivalent uses of it in the Qur'an just surveyed, has important implications for our conception of *ahl al-kitāb*. The emphasis is on the ongoing guidance that God has given to humankind at various points in history in different ways rather than a fixed canon or closed corpus. It is, in Madigan's words, 'the symbol of a process of continuing divine engagement with human beings – an engagement that is rich and varied, yet so direct and specific in its address that it could never be comprehended in a fixed canon nor confined between two covers.'[3]

We should bring this understanding of *kitāb* to bear when we now come to reflect on who *ahl al-kitāb* are according to the Qur'an. There are around thirty verses where the Qur'an talks about 'people of the Book', around twenty-five times when it mentions 'those that were given the Book', and a couple of places where there is mention of 'those to whom the Book has been bequeathed'. In some verses this fundamental insight is emphasized as "We have sent among you a Messenger of your own to recite Our revelations to you, purify you and teach you the Scripture, wisdom, and [other] things you did not know" (2:151, 3:48, 164). In all these cases it is much more satisfactorily meaningful and relevant to understand '*kitāb*' as guidance and constant engagement of God with humans. Thus 'people of the Book' generally means any community that has received divine guidance through messengers. Taken in this broad sense, the term can perhaps include any human community, because according to the Qur'an "To every people (was sent) a messenger" (10:47). Or "For We assuredly sent amongst every People a messenger, (with the Command), 'Serve Allah, and eschew Evil'" (16:36).

However, the term *ahl al-kitāb* has come to refer more specifically to the older revealed religions that have holy scriptures, such as Judaism and Christianity. In addition to these two traditions, in the Qur'an there are references to Majus (22:17), taken to refer to the adherents of Zoroastrianism, and Sabaeans (2:62, 22:17). There are discussions among scholars as to whether or not these two traditions are included in the term *ahl al-kitāb*. Given the historical fact that Muslims have been engaged with Jews and Christians, and interfaith relations normally take place in the contexts of Abrahamic religions, we should focus our attention on what attitude the Qur'an prescribes for Muslims to take towards people from these two important religious traditions.

Undoubtedly, there are positive and affirming verses about Jews and Christians in the Qur'an, just as there are verses admonishing or reprimanding them. Generally speaking, the affirming and positive references occur more in relation to Christians than to Jews. The most important insight derived from a close study of these verses indicates that there is no wholesale rejection or affirmation of the beliefs and practices of Jewish and Christian traditions in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is talking about different Jewish and Christian communities with different doctrinal views and moral tendencies at different times and contexts, some praiseworthy and some rejected. No thorough affirmation or condemnation of Judaism or Christianity can be attributed to the Qur'an.

The Most Important Verses Containing Ahl al-Kitāb
Bearing this broad remark in mind, I wish to pay close attention to the most important verses regarding *ahl al-kitāb* in the Qur'an. In this survey, I keep an eye on the chronological order in which the relevant verses were revealed to the Prophet. This is because some scholars have suggested that the Prophet's attitude towards Jews and Christians tended to shift from positive and conciliatory in Makkah to a negative and harsh one in Madinah. My finding is that there seems to be no tenable ground for making such a case.

Perhaps the first verse occurs in 28:51-55, where we read:

> We have caused Our Word to come to them so that they may be mindful. Those to whom We gave the Scripture before believe in it, and, when it is recited to them, say, 'We believe in it, it is the truth from our Lord. Before it came we had already devoted ourselves to Him.' They will be given their rewards twice over because they are steadfast, repel evil with good, give to others out of what We have provided for them, and turn away whenever they hear frivolous talk, saying, 'We have our deeds and you have yours. Peace be with you! We do not seek the company of foolish people.'

What is admired here by the Qur'an is that among the people to whom God gave guidance there are those who believe in the Qur'an, recognize it as truth, and consider themselves as those who submit or devote themselves to God. There are also many admirable moral behaviors attributed to them. The interesting thing in this verse and many similar ones is that the Qur'an talks about them, on the one hand, as "people of the Book" and on the other, as "those who in some ways recognize the truth" in the Qur'an or in the mission of the Prophet.

The wonderful study by Jane Dammen McAuliffe on Qur'anic Christians[4] examines how different prominent Muslim commentators on the Qur'an understood this verse and seven others in which the Qur'an seems to be praising the people of the Book in general and Christians in particular. The general tendency among the commentators is to interpret these positive references as commending those who converted to Islam such as the Negus, 'Abdullah bin Salām, or Salmān al-Fārsī. However, one very obvious question is never dealt with by our exegetes: if the people praised in this verse are those who converted to Islam as a new religion, why does the Qur'an still talk about them as 'people of the Book'? In this verse and similar ones there is absolutely no textual hint at the presumed conversion. Verses 29:46-47 prohibit the Muslims from disputing with the people of the Book save in the fairer manner, except with those of them who act unjustly. The main idea here seems to be making a distinction between two groups of *ahl al-kitāb*: those who are morally upright and those who do oppression and injustice to the Muslims. The remainder of the verse reads as follows: "Say, 'we believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God are one, we are devoted to Him'". Although this verse was revealed in Makkah, it still differentiates within the people of the Book, judging some of them to be upright and some to be oppressors. This leads us to reject the idea put forward by some scholars that the Prophet took a positive attitude toward Jews and Christians in Makkah and an aggressive one against them in Madinah.

As we shall see, this view is further undermined by the same discriminating position that the Qur'an takes in Madinan verses. Verse 2:62 is well-known for its enormously pluralistic attitude towards Jews, Christians and Sabaeans. It says: "The believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans - all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good - will have their rewards with their Lord. No fear for them, nor will they grieve." Some Muslim commentators believe that this verse was abrogated by 3:85 where the Qur'an says: "If anyone seeks a religion other than Islam it will not be accepted from him, he will be one of the losers in the Hereafter." Elsewhere[5] I have argued that the context of this verse clearly shows that the "islam" here (with small *i*) refers to submission to

God rather than the particular religion founded by Prophet Muhammad in history. Therefore, insofar as adherents of other religions and also Muslims submit to God, they are muslims (with small *m*).

Furthermore, Muslim scholars generally maintain that abrogation applies only to legal issues, and the question here is not a legal one. Perhaps this can explain why Allamah Tabataba'i does not discuss the issue of abrogation at all in his commentary on this verse and prefers to stress that "the criterion and reason for moral nobility and ultimate felicity is a genuine faith in God and the Last Day and good deeds.... None of these names (religious affiliations) benefit their bearers and no quality leads to salvation except adherence to humble submission to God (*'ubūdīyyah*)." Moreover, the validity of other religions mentioned in 2:62 is again explicitly reinforced by 5:69 which no commentator, as far as I know, has taken to have been abrogated.

Verses 2:105 and 109 point to a particular moral deficiency, i.e. jealousy, leading some people among *ahl al-kitāb*, namely those who are not faithful, to dislike anything good sent down to the Muslims. Verse 2:109 specifically mentions that many of the people of the Book wish they could turn you (Muslims) back to disbelief even after the truth has become clear to them. Again like 2:105 the Qur'an is cautious not to generalize. The disapproval is directed to those to whom the truth has become clear and who yet try to turn the Muslims back to disbelief. In his commentary, Tabataba'i here talks about some Jews in Madinah who did not want any revelation to be sent down to Muslims out of their fear that they may lose their privilege of having a scripture.

In a couple of interesting verses the Qur'an denounces exclusivism of some groups among the Jews and Christians of the time of revelation. 2:111-113 say:

> They also say, "No one will enter Paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian." This is their own wishful thinking. [Prophet], say, "Produce your evidence, if you are telling the truth." In fact, any who direct themselves wholly to God and do good will have their reward with their Lord: no fear for them, nor will they grieve. The Jews say, "The Christians have no ground whatsoever to stand on," and the Christians say, "The Jews have no ground whatsoever to stand on," though they both read the Scripture, and those who have no knowledge say the same; God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning their differences.

The emphasis is again clearly on the devotion to God and good moral deeds as the main constituents of a guaranteed and safe future. To forestall Muslims from thinking that they may be exempt from the admonition mentioned in

response to the exclusivism of some among the people of the Book, the Qur'an is quick to underscore in 4:122-125 that:

> We shall admit those who believe and do good deeds into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain forever – a true promise from God. Who speaks more truly than God? It will not be according to your hopes or those of the People of the Book: anyone who does wrong will be requited for it and will find no one to protect or help him against God; anyone, male or female, who does good deeds and is a believer, will enter Paradise and will not be wronged by as much as the dip in a date stone.
> Who could be better in religion than one who directs himself wholly to God, does good, and follows the religion of Abraham, who was true in faith? God took Abraham as a friend.

Commenting on 2:111-113, Tabataba'i underlines that "true felicity revolves around genuine faith and the devotion or submission to God", implying clearly that no religious affiliation, even to Islam, can be ultimately sufficient for one's salvation.

The most striking aspect of the Qur'an's view of the people of the Book is the discriminating attitude found in many verses, such as 3:69, 72, 75-77, 100, 110; 57:27; 59:2; 5:59, 64-66, 68-69, 80.

Verse 3:69 reiterates what we already saw in 2:105 and 109: 'Some of the People of the Book would dearly love to lead you [believers] astray, but they only lead themselves astray, though they do not realize it.' What is rejected here is the attempt of some of the people of the Book to lead Muslims astray. The criticism or opposition is not directed to their religion *per se*. In the immediately following verses, the same outlook can be clearly seen. In 3:72 a group of the people of the Book are criticized for believing in what has been revealed to the Muslims at the beginning of the day and then at the end of the day rejecting it. The problem is obviously with their hypocritical attitude toward the Muslims to weaken their faith and community. In this passage of the Qur'an we come across very interesting verses where the discriminating attitude expresses itself very clearly. This is what the Qur'an says in 3:75-77:

> There are People of the Book who, if you [Prophet] entrust them with a heap of gold, will return it to you intact, but there are others of them who, if you entrust them with a single dinar, will not return it to you unless you keep standing over them, because they say, "We are under no obligation towards the gentiles." They tell a lie against God and they know it. No indeed! God

loves those who keep their pledges and are mindful of Him, but those who sell out God's covenant and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come. God will neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Resurrection – He will not cleanse them [of their sins] – agonizing torment awaits them.

What is admonished here is the moral failure of some of the people of the Book who do not return the loan that they have received. What undergirds that refusal is their belief that they have no moral obligation or responsibility in relation to the gentiles. But those who are not blemished by these deficiencies in their belief and conduct are highly praised by the Qur'an as being *muttaqī* (God-conscious), which is among the noblest moral and spiritual qualities that are expected from any pious human.

The other important problem in the thought and behavior of, again, some of the people of the Book in these verses, which is mentioned in other verses of the Qur'an, is that they "sell out God's covenant and their own oaths for a small price", meaning that they do not take their own religion seriously. The other harsh criticism here directed toward 'a group' of the people of the Book is that 'they attribute lies to God and they know it.'

What can clearly be understood from theses verses is that the Qur'an distinguishes within *ahl al-kitāb*. It praises some as God-conscious and criticizes some for their moral deficiencies, wrong beliefs, attributing lies to God and other negative qualities that no religion would approve.

In verse 3:100 again some of those who were given the scripture are said to want to turn the Muslims into disbelievers when God's revelations are being recited and His messenger is living among them. This sheds light on the previous verses, 98 and 99, where the Qur'an seems to be talking about the 'people of the Book' in general. The context clearly shows that only a group of them are thought to try to turn the believers away from God's path and try to make it crooked while they know what they are doing.

The same discriminating approach with regard to 'the people of the Book' is stressed in 3:110, 113-115 where we read:

…If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them. For although some of them do believe, most of them are lawbreakers – … But they are not all alike. There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These

people are among the righteous and they will not be denied [the reward] for whatever good deeds they do: God knows exactly who is conscious of Him.

In these verses faith (*īmān*) is attributed to some among *ahl al-kitāb,* while many others are thought to be lawbreakers or sinners. There is nothing inherently wrong in their religion. What is rejected is their sinfulness or law-breaking (*fisq*). There are very interesting mentions of some of *ahl al-kitāb* here, where they are described as upright, righteous, faithful, quick to do good deeds, and most importantly from a Qur'anic perspective, God-conscious (*muttaqī*). There can be no more explicit reference to laudable religious qualities ascribed to any human being from the Qur'an's point of view than what can be found in these verses in relation to some among *ahl al-kitāb*. After a couple of verses the same outlook is reiterated again in 3:199.

A particular verse commending Christians occurs in 57:27 where the Qur'an says:

We sent other messengers to follow in their footsteps. After those We sent Jesus, son of Mary: We gave him the Gospel and put compassion and mercy into the hearts of his followers. But monasticism was something they invented – We did not ordain it for them – only to seek God's pleasure, and even so, they did not observe it properly. So We gave a reward to those of them who believed, but many of them were lawbreakers.

What is praised here is compassion and mercy in the hearts of the followers of Jesus, and also a moderate monasticism that they invented to seek God's acceptance. Of course, there is also a mild criticism that they did not observe it correctly. But then again at the end there is a discriminating emphasis differentiating those who believed from many who were sinners. There seems to be no essential criticism but rather a rejection of sinfulness and perhaps of excess in their monastic life.

The whole of chapter 98 talks about "those who disbelieve among the people of the Book and the idolaters " (98:1). Here again there is a clear distinction between the *ahl al-kitāb* in general and those among them who disbelieved. In his commentary, Tabataba'i explicates that the word *min* (from or among) is to be taken to mean discrimination or differentiation (*tab'īẓ*) rather than description (*tabyīn*). In almost all relevant Qur'anic verses there is a '*min*' which means 'among' them (*ahl al-kitāb*). In Chapter 98, which is discussed here, the '*min*' occurs in the very first verse. The same distinction can also be seen in 59:2.

The last group of verses to be briefly studied are taken from *Surah* al-

Māʾidah (the Feast) which is chapter 5 of the Qurʾan, but chronologically it is the 112th *Surah* revealed to the Prophet in Madinah. Since these verses are among the last ones revealed and there are many references in them to *ahl al-kitāb*, they deserve considerable attention.

Verses 13 to 19 contain the following main points: Many people among the Jews broke their pledge and consequently God hardened their hearts. They distorted the meaning of revealed words, and many of them were traitors. Still, the Prophet is instructed to overlook these and forgive them. Also among the Christians there were those who forgot some of what they were told to remember and as a result God stirred up enmity among them. Here again the Qurʾan in both cases does not generalize and talks about a group among *ahl al-kitāb*. What can be drawn from these verses is that the Qurʾan does not essentially reject these religions but rather identifies and condemns particular problems in their behavior such as distortion, treachery, or forgetting what they were not to forget. The following verse seems to be stating that, as a result of these problems, God has sent the Prophet to make clear to them much of what they have kept hidden of the scripture. This occurs, according to the Qurʾan, "after a break in the sequence of messengers" lest the people say "no one has come to give us good news or to warn us" (5:19).

No one can doubt that in 5:17 there is an unequivocal rejection of any identification of God with the Messiah, the son of Mary. Scholars have talked about whether this is an apt description of Christian belief about Jesus or only one particular belief held by some Christians at the time of the revelation of the Qurʾan. For our purpose, what seems to be interesting here, however, is that verse 17 goes on to emphasize God's power, control, and creation, which are not compromised or discarded by any interpretation of divinity attributed to Jesus in the varied understandings of Him in Christianity.

Continuing in *Surah* 5, we come across verse 59 which says: "Say [Prophet] 'People of the Book, do you resent us for any reason other than the fact that we believe in God, in what has been sent down to us, and in what was sent before us, while most of you are disobedient?'" Here again what is censured by the Qurʾan is the resentment of people and disobedience to God ascribed to many of *ahl al-kitāb*, not all of them. There is no essential rejection of Christianity as a religion. Verse 5:62 emphasizes again that the problem with "many among (*ahl al-kitāb*)" is that they vie in sin and enmity and they consume the unlawful. In 5:64-66 the same attitude is taken with respect to the Jews:

The Jews have said, "God is tight-fisted," but it is they who are tight-fisted, and they are rejected for what they have said. Truly, God's hands are open

wide: He gives as He pleases. What has been sent down to you from your Lord is sure to increase insolence and defiance in many of them. We have sown enmity and hatred amongst them till the Day of Resurrection. Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God will put it out. They try to spread corruption in the land, but God does not love those who corrupt. If only the People of the Book would believe and be mindful of God, We would take away their sins and bring them into the Gardens of Delight. If they had upheld the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have been given abundance from above and from below: some of them are on the right course, but many of them do evil.

What is important here is that verse 64 again differentiates among the Jews by saying that "what has been sent down to you from your Lord is sure to increase insolence and defiance in many of them" – not all. Again what is criticized is defiance, insolence and, perhaps, according to Tabataba'i in his commentary on the verse, that the Jews wanted to mock Muslims by stating that God's hands are chained.

Verse 65 and 66 make it more clear that the problem with *ahl al-kitāb* (or, in light of our study, more accurately some of them) was that they had lost faith and God-mindfulness to the point of even not upholding and practicing their own religion. Verse 66 ends with a similar emphasis: "some of them are on the right course, but many of them do evil." Tabataba'i's commentary here is, "What I have said in terms of *ahl al-kitāb*'s deficiencies and problems do not apply to all of them as there are moderate and mild-tempered people among them in whom none of these defects and corruptions can be found."

Verse 68 more or less repeats what is enunciated in verses 64-66, again differentiating "many of them" to whom what has been sent down to the Prophet increases insolence and defiance. 69 is highly interesting as it reiterates and reinstates 2:62, which we discussed earlier. Tabataba'i here emphasizes that nothing is beneficial for human ultimate happiness except faith in God and the Last Day and good deeds. No religious affiliation in and of itself can lead to salvation. What is most significant about this verse is that this occurs in *Surah* 5, which is among the latest verses revealed to the prophet. Thus the verse vigorously undermines any claim that Muhammad became aggressive towards *ahl al-kitāb* when he established himself in Madinah. The pluralistic and general tenor of this verse is so obvious that, I think, it leaves no room for any claim to exclusivity in the name of the Qur'an.

Verses 80 to 83 of *Surah* 5 contain harsh censure of the Jews and strong praise of the Christians:

> You [Prophet] see many of them allying themselves with the disbelievers. How terrible is what their souls have stored up for them: God is angry with them and they will remain tormented. If they had believed in God, in the Prophet, and in what was sent down to him, they would never have allied themselves with the disbelievers, but most of them are rebels. You [Prophet] are sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with God; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, "We are Christians," for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance, and when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes over-flowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]. They say, "Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses...."

The first point here is again the discriminating approach: "you see many of them", rather than a wholesale rejection of Judaism as a religion. Second, the condemnation is due to the Jews' alliance with disbelievers rather than any-thing inherently evil or abhorrent in their tradition. The Christians are praised because 'there are among them priests and monks', in one rendering, or people devoted to learning and ascetics, in another, and also because they are not arrogant.

At the end of this cluster of verses, there is a verse which seems perplexing. It says: "And when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]." (5:83) This and similar verses may be taken to mean, as some commen-tators have speculated, that the praise of the Christians in these verses is due to their conversion to Islam. The previously mentioned study of Jane McAuliffe enormously exacerbates our perplexity here. She concludes her analysis of the exegetical works of Muslim scholars on Qur'anic Christians in this way:

> Briefly put, these are the Christians whose scripture is the uncorrupted *Injil.* These are the Christians whose persistence in the truth allowed the proper response to the historical appearance of Muhammad's prophethood...(they) are Christians who either accepted the prophethood of Muhammad and the revelation entrusted to him or would have done so had their historical circumstances permitted.

I would like to offer my humble understanding of how the perplexity can be removed. One important question that the interpretation of the commentators

studied by McAuliffe has to find an answer to is why the Qur'an so frequently and constantly designates these praiseworthy people as *ahl al-kitāb*. Shouldn't there be some clear textual evidence that these praises are reserved for those who have converted to Islam and are, therefore, no longer *ahl al-kitāb*? In all the verses examined here, and similar ones, there is invariably an emphasis that these people are among, or a group of, *ahl al-kitāb*. If this designation *ahl al-kitāb* has any significance at all, then those people could not have abandoned their own religious tradition and converted to Islam. The interpretation of the Muslim exegetes studied by McAuliffe leads her to the view that the persons referred to in the Qur'an as Christians (*al-nasariy)* "are neither the historical nor the living community of people who call themselves Christians."[6]

One important problem preventing these Muslim exegetes from coming to a pluralistic understanding of the relevant verses is that they generally think that the positive verses about *ahl al-kitāb* were later abrogated. Thus positive references to Christians "Quranic Christians", to use Jane's McAuliffe's term, should be understood as referring only to those people who embraced Islam as the new religion. There are many formidable problems surrounding this idea of abrogation. Moreover, if one or two positive verses are abrogated, what other hermeneutical device might we find to undermine the pluralistic tenor of so many others? Furthermore, if the positive verses are so seriously circumscribed as to include only those groups among *ahl al-kitāb* who converted to Islam, such as the Negus, ʿAbdullāh Ibn Salām, or Salmān al-Fārsī, then what is the relevance or significance of these many verses for us today?

More fundamentally, the traditional Muslim scholars who have thought and written about these verses in an exclusivist spirit have, I think, mistakenly taken the term "*islam*" in 3:19 and 85 to refer to the historical religion established by Prophet Muhammad. The logical corollary of this mistaken view is to think that wherever in the Qur'an there is any praise of *ahl al-kitāb* that must be limited to those who converted to Islam as the new religion. In the article mentioned above, I have argued that this is not a tenable interpretation of those verses. What the Qur'an means by "*islam*" in those verses is submission to the truth of God that in different ways can manifest itself in various religions.

What seems to be underlying this untenable interpretation is a kind of theological tendency that finds the truth which Muslims find in Islam to be so easily accessible to non-Muslims that if they do not convert to it then there is something essentially wrong in their sincerity and religiosity. This understanding fails to observe that adherents of other traditions are equally comfortable in their own religious house and do not see any reason why they should convert to another tradition. This interpretation fails to see that truth, especially religious

truth, is so complex and multifaceted that to expect others to readily find the truth that one finds in one's own religion seems to be both immature and unreasonable.

Turning to the last verse of the Qur'an that led us to these general theological and hermeneutical remarks, I would like to offer the following interpretation of the positive verses of the Qur'an where, for example, in 5:83 we read that: "when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]". What I understand is that these are Jews or Christians that have not converted to Islam, hence they are still called *ahl al-kitāb*, and nevertheless, they could see elements or seeds of truth, piety, and religiosity in the Qur'an or the conduct of the Prophet.

Conclusion

To sum up, I think interpretations of *ahl al-kitāb* along the suggested lines can be conducive to interfaith engagement. They recognize the truth and salvific efficacy of other religions whose beliefs and practices are different from ours but still fully meaningful and religiously and morally inspiring for them. The traditional understanding of *ahl al-kitāb* is exclusivist and hence a hindrance to interfaith relations. A more rational interpretation of the text offers a great help to interreligious engagement, as it reinforces the common bonds of belonging to God's guidance (*kitāb* in its broadest sense) and at the same time allows for different understandings of that guidance according to our different religious traditions. Interestingly, this rational interpretation happens to coincide better with the literal understanding of the positive verses about *ahl al-kitāb*, whereas the traditional interpretation seriously limits the verses to the few examples of groups of *ahl al-kitāb* converted to Islam.

Notes

1. The translation of the Qur'an used in this chapter is *The Quran* by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, 2004).
2. Daniel Madigan, *The Quran's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton University Press, 2001), p.191.
3. Ibid., pp.178, 191.
4. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Quranic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.287.
5. Seyed Amir Akrami, "Particularity and Universality in the Qur'an", in David

Marshall (ed.), *Communicating the Word: Revelation, Translation, and Interpretation in Christianity and Islam* (Georgetown University Press, 2011).

6. McAuliffe, p.287.

10

People of Scripture:
A Christian Response

Pim Valkenberg

T H E M E : To word the question as "Who Are 'the People of the Book'?" suggests a broad category ... Jews and Christians. In fact, however, the Qur'an confines its use of this category to Jews and Christians. This does not exclude the possibility of a broader human group, but as this Christian scholar reads the Qur'an he does not find a broader group to be in fact addressed. And yet the notion of *ahl al-kitāb* contains a deliberate vagueness that suggests that it is not clear in advance who belongs to it and who does not belong to it. This is exactly the main theological point that the Qur'an wants to make and that the Christian can recognize as an important message paralleled in the New Testament.

My response to Dr. Akrami's chapter on *ahl al-kitāb* will concentrate on two aspects. First, I want to respond to what he has to say about the meaning of the term "People of the Book" or – as I prefer to say – "People of Scripture." Second, I want to discuss a couple of the central texts in two *Surahs* of the Qur'an that explicitly engage in discussion with Christians as part of the People of Scripture. In my discussion of these texts, I will mainly use an Islamic author in whom both Dr. Akrami and I are interested, namely the Iranian scholar 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, whose *al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (published in 1973) is considered by many as one of the most important contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an.[1]

Translating "*Ahl al-Kitāb*" as "People of the Book" or "People of Scripture"

The Arabic words *ahl al-kitāb* are usually translated by Muslim and Western scholars as "People of the Book". Christians, Jews and Muslims also use this term quite often when they want to indicate what the three religions have in common: they are "people of the Book". So it can be used as a parallel to what is

sometimes called "the heavenly religions" in Islamic theology, or nowadays more frequently "Abrahamic religions." Yet I would like to go back to the Qur'anic origins of this expression, since I think that the stress on what the three religions have in common does not do justice to the polemical context in which this term is used in the Qur'an.

The Arabic words *ahl al-kitāb* together form what grammarians call a *status constructus*, or a construct state, in which a noun (*ahl,* meaning "people" or "family") is modified or specified by a second noun, in this case *kitāb* which basically means "something written." Since both words are quite common and have many shades of meaning, it is important to first have a closer look at each separately. The word *ahl* basically means "people" or "family". However, in the first part of a construct state it can also mean "worthy of" or "deserving of." The recent *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* gives two examples: *ahl al-dhikr* meaning "those who have knowledge" (Qur'an 16:43), and *ahl al-nār* meaning "the inhabitants of hellfire" (Qur'an 38:64).[2]

The same dictionary gives no less than thirteen meanings for the word *kitāb,* of which the most important are: written document; letter; divine record of all that takes place, or of each individual; revelation, particularly revealed books such as Torah, New Testament and Qur'an; teachings; decree; appointed time.[3] So it is quite clear that the word *kitāb* often indicates a divine origin. In the words of Daniel Madigan, author of the entry on "book" in the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, "In Qur'anic usage the word represents a quintessentially divine activity and applies only rarely to human writing."[4] Because of this relationship with divine revelation, Madigan argues that the translation "book" does not do justice to the complex background of this element of the construct. In its place, the translation "scripture" may do more justice, even though it may also import Jewish and Christian understandings of Scripture into this Qur'anic usage.

At this point it is relevant to add that the Qur'an often refers to itself as a *kitāb*. It often displays such self-referentiality in the opening lines of many *Surahs* that seem to contain an important proclamation about itself, for instance the beginning of what Madigan calls "the text proper" in Qur'an 2:2: "that is the *kitāb* about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those who are God-fearing."[5]

Let me give Madigan's conclusion: "the term *kitāb,* then, does not indicate that the Qur'an is to be understood as a closed corpus of text, codified in writing; it used that language of itself long before it was either closed or written. The Muslim community used the same term while at the same time preserving the text primarily in oral form. The word *kitāb* rather expresses a claim as to the origin of the words on the Prophet's lips: they are *kitāb* because they come from

God, from the realm of God's knowledge and authority, as these are symbolized by writing."[6]

It would be interesting to pursue this further and investigate the fact that the Qur'an, despite its self-identification as *kitāb,* has been received and transmitted mainly in oral form. So the experience of the Qur'an was from the beginning, and for many Muslims still is, mainly an aural or an acoustic experience, as Angelika Neuwirth states, or – in the lapidary expression by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "the Qur'an is primarily sound, not script."[7] However, we leave this aside for now and concentrate on the meaning of the combination *ahl al-kitāb.*

Let me begin with a few simple data. The combination of these two words, *ahl* and *kitāb,* can be found in thirty-one verses of the Qur'an. Similar constructions such as "those to whom the Scripture has been given" can be found as well, so that the basic idea is mentioned in the Qur'an about twice as often.[8] Most of these references seem to occur in the context of discussions, first with the Bedouin tribes in Makkah, and later predominantly with Jews and/or Christians in Madinah.[9]

I think that Angelika Neuwirth gives us the most enlightening approach to what exactly is at stake in these discussions. According to her, the first text that mentions this discussion comes from a Makkan *Surah,* 29:46 "[Believers,] argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, 'We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God is one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him'."[10] Neuwirth says: "The name *ahl al-kitāb* introduced here for adherents of other religions may come as a surprise, because it seems to evoke a characteristic shared by the Qur'anic community. Even though at this place there is not yet a suggestion of devaluation implied, the expression might represent a self-reference by Jews and/or Christians that may be suitable precisely as an indication of the most important distinction: the written status of the Jewish-Christian [revelation] over against the oral status of the Qur'anic Word of God."[11] So, according to Neuwirth, the term is used without negative connotations in this early text, but at the same time it already shows the presence of a debate between Jews and Christians who both claim to possess a written and therefore authoritative version of God's revelation, and the community of the Qur'an that claims an equal authoritative status for its revelation that has not yet been written down.

In the later *Surahs* that were revealed to prophet Muhammad in Madinah after his *hijra* or migration (622 C.E.) from Makkah, the references to *ahl al-kitāb* become more numerous and more polemical in nature. Some of these polemics

are clearly directed at the Jews – for instance in the second *Surah al-Baqarah* – while others are clearly directed at the Christians – for instance in the third *Surah Āl ʿImrān* – while still other texts are not so clearly addressed to one of the two groups.[12] In these texts, it becomes clear that the term *ahl al-kitāb* acknowledges that Jews and Christians have been given a Scripture by God, but that does not imply that they can claim possession of this Scripture. Quite the contrary, they have not lived up to what God entrusted them with. This is indicated in expressions such as "cast off the Book of God behind their backs" (2:101); they "knowingly conceal the truth" (2:146) and finally they "conceal the Scripture that God sent down and sell it for a small price" (2:174). So, the words *ahl al-kitāb* do not so much indicate what Jews and Christians possess, but what they often have lost.

In translating the term, I would like to follow the suggestion by Daniel Madigan to use "Scripture" instead of "the Book", for two reasons. First, "Scripture" better expresses the theological notion involved in the Qur'anic term. Second, it avoids the reference to an object that is usually in one's possession, since this is what the Qur'an explicitly denies. For that reason I prefer "People of Scripture" over "People of the Scripture", since the definite article still suggests an object in one's possession, while the polemical suggestion of the Qur'an is that Jews and Christians no longer have it since they have hidden it or sold it or even distorted it or written it with their own hands (Qur'an 3:78; 2:79).[13] To quote Daniel Madigan once more, "*Ahl al-kitāb* should probably be understood as those who have been given not *possession of* but rather *access to* and *insight into* the knowledge, wisdom and sovereignty of God."[14] While the Qur'an recognizes this access and insight, it gives the term a polemical twist at the same time, which is, according to Dr. Sidney Griffith, an often overlooked dimension of the Qur'an's rhetoric.[15]

I realize that I may thus far have suggested that the term "People of the Book" is almost a polemical term. That is not incorrect, but at the same time the ambiguity that the Qur'an displays when addressing the Scripture People also implies that it often makes distinctions. This "partitive attitude" has been noticed by Dr. Akrami in his chapter: "The main idea here seems to be making a distinction between two groups of *ahl al-kitāb*: those who are morally upright and those who do oppression and injustice to the Muslims."[16] Some of the positive texts have a negative exception, for instance the text from *Surah* 29 that we quoted: "[Believers], argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly." More often, the Qur'an distinguishes positive behavior in the middle of a generally critical approach — most clearly so toward the end of the third *Surah*: "Some of the People of the Book

believe in God, in what has been sent down to you and in what was sent down to them: humbling themselves before God, they would never sell God's revelation for a small price. These people will have their rewards with their Lord: God is swift in reckoning."[17]

One of the hotly contested areas in the tradition of Muslim exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsīr*) is the question whether these "good" People of the Book are still Jews or Christians, or in fact only those Jews and Christians who have converted to Islam.[18] It might be better to say that the term "People of Scripture" is not a polemical but rather a dialectical term. The Qur'an recognizes the claim by Jews and Christians that they possess the *kitāb*, but it uses this against them: if indeed you possess what has been revealed to you by God, then you should behave accordingly and trust God's ability to reveal rather than your own tradition. In this sense, the Qur'an's critique might come close to the critique of religion by the famous dialectical Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth.[19]

My conclusion on this first issue: I think that the usual translation "People of the Book" may bring two misunderstandings and should therefore be avoided. The first misunderstanding is that "Book" is something written, while the word *kitāb* connotes divine origin and authority rather than written display or storage.[20] The second misunderstanding is that "People of X" seems to imply that these people do have possession of X, which is what the Qur'an doubts. That is why some translators do not use the common "People of the Book" but variants such as "People of the Scripture" or "People of earlier revelations".[21] Therefore, the term "People of Scripture" is preferable as a term that most clearly indicates the divine origin of the *kitāb* while not prejudging the exact relationship between the *kitāb* revealed and the people receiving it.

People of Scripture in *Surah Āl ʿImrān*, Interpreted by al-Tabataba'i

There are two main reasons to concentrate on texts about the People of Scripture in the third *Surah* of the Qur'an. In the first place, this *Surah* alone contains 12 out of the 31 references to the People of Scripture in the Qur'an. In the second place, it is one of the *Surahs* that is believed to be directed specifically towards Christians. More specifically, the famous Muslim *mufassir* or commentator al-Ṭabari mentions sixteen references to *ahl al-kitāb* that may be identified as Jews or Christians, thirteen that may be identified as Jews (sometimes in combination with Jews or Christians) and only two that may be identified as Christians. One of these two is the text from *Surah* 29: "argue with the People of the Book only in the best way" (29:46). The other evidently refers to Christians since it discusses Christian doctrine: "People of the Book, do not

go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His Word directed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and his messengers and do not speak of a 'Trinity' – stop [this], that is better for you – God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust."[22]

While the texts that I will discuss from the third *Surah* are by tradition said to refer either to Christians or to Jews, the context and the contents of this *Surah* make it most likely that at least some of them refer to Christians, even though Jews are not excluded here.

To discuss some of these texts more closely, I follow one of the most prominent contemporary *mufassirūn,* or exegetes, of the Qur'an from a Shi'i perspective. (Thus this chapter and Dr. Akrami's which precedes it share one common foundation.[23])

The *tafsīr* I choose is called *Al-Mizān,* or "the balance", written by 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i and published in the 1970s.[24] Mahmoud Ayoub, himself a Shi'ite theologian, uses this commentary as one of his sources in his English anthology *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters,* of which the second volume discusses the third *Surah.*[25] Dr. Ayoub characterizes Tabataba'i's commentary as addressed to young Muslim intellectuals, one that approaches the Qur'an "from philosophical, sociological and traditional viewpoints."[26] Jane Dammen McAuliffe included Tabataba'i as well in her anthology on *Qur'ānic Christians* and discusses his contribution in somewhat more detail.[27]

Tabataba'i was born in 1903 in Tabriz and studied in the holy city of Najaf in Iraq where he concentrated on philosophy. Later he taught in Qum, where he combined the study of philosophy with a mystical approach as exemplified in the works of Mulla Sadra. He also wrote about comparative mysticism and comparative study of religions. His exegesis tries to respect the connections between separate verses more than is usual in the *tafsīr* tradition, and he is attentive to both grammatical and philosophical aspects. He discusses traditional exegesis through hadith literature, but does so in a separate section.

Rather than elaborate on the approach to the Qur'an that Tabataba'i defends in the preface to his commentary, let me go to the first of the texts on the People of Scripture from the third *Surah, The House of 'Imrān.* A rather famous verse from this *Surah*, 3:64, is known as the "Common Word" verse and has given its name to a recent dialogue initiative by a large group of Muslim religious leaders in response to Pope Benedict's Regensburg address. This verse and the recent Muslim-Catholic Forum founded in response to it deserve attention.

The text of the "common word" verse in the Qur'an is as follows: "Say: 'People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords.' If they turn away, say: 'Witness our devotion to Him.'"[28]

Even though the translation "a common word" has become fairly common, I prefer to translate the Arabic words *kalīmatin sawā'in* as "an equitable statement" or "a statement of justice".

In this verse Muhammad is summoned to urge the "People of Scripture" to come up with a statement corresponding to some of the central tenets of the Muslim faith: we worship only one God, without partners, and no one is to be taken as Lord except God. Yet at the same time the verse apparently foresees a situation in which such corresponding statements will not be possible, since it continues with: "If they turn away, say: witness that we are those who have surrendered to God." The last word is ambiguous in the original text, since the word *muslimūn* may mean "those who have surrendered to God" but also "Muslims". It is clear that this text talks about two parties, and it is also clear that they try to agree but probably will not succeed in doing so, since the verses immediately before that mention the possibility that the other party will turn away.

This invitation to come to an equitable statement is the final word in a discussion between Prophet Muhammad and a delegation of Christians from Najrān who visited him in Madinah to investigate the new religion's opinion on Christ. After some discussion on Christology and the identity of the real *muslimūn,* those who submit to God, Muhammad invites the delegation to surrender to God, but they state that they have already done so by being Christians. Muhammad retorts – according to Al-Wāḥidī's traditional reading – that three things prevent them from being real *muslimūn*, namely: claiming that God has a son, worshipping the cross, and eating pork.[29] According to Al-Wāḥidī, Muhammad proposes to let God decide between them in an ordeal (*mubāhala*), that is associated with verse 61 – but when the Christians refuse, Muhammad invites them to the so-called "common word."

According to a later tradition, Muhammad uses the situation in which the Christians from Najrān are not certain of their case to impose a tax on them.[30] It is quite clear that this later tradition is used as a justification of a situation in which Christians recognize Muslims as their superiors by agreeing to pay the *jizya* tax. Yet in the Qur'an, they turn away and evade the challenge. This evasion is evoked in the common word verse once again: "If they turn away, say: witness that we are those who have surrendered to God." When the common word verse is read in the light of that tradition, it presents in fact a verbal equiv-

alent of the *jizya* tax: Christians are to recognize that Muhammad has spoken the truth about what it means to be *muslimūn,* those that submit themselves to God. If Christians and Muslims have a word in common here, it is because Christians accept that the Muslims have rightly confessed the true word of God's oneness. Therefore, some Muslim exegetes refer to the Muslim creed or *shahāda* as an explanation of what is meant here.

But what does Tabataba'i say about this verse? He discusses verses 64-78 in which the words *ahl al-kitāb* are used seven times as one textual unit. Differing from the tradition that I just quoted, he states that the words refer to all the People of Scripture in general and not just to Christians.

Another interesting aspect is that he draws attention to the ethical meaning of the "common word:" to come to a word means to unite on the meaning of a word by acting upon it.[31] He says: "The verse calls the People of the Book not to the theoretical, but practical monotheism." So it is about what submission to God demands in practical life. In fact, Tabataba'i gives a political interpretation of this verse: no one should be dominating another — only God is Lord. This seems to be relevant in a situation in which the Shah still ruled in Iran, before the revolution. At the end of his commentary on this verse, Tabataba'i says: "Lordship exclusively belongs to Allah, there is no lord but He. Thus, if a man puts himself under the authority of another man like himself …, such a proposition … can never be accepted by him who has surrendered himself to Allah."[32]

Verse 65 immediately follows with another address to the People of Scripture: "Why do you argue about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospels were not revealed until after his time? Do you not understand?" This is one of the verses that reflects on a situation in which the Jews and the Christians disagree about the heritage that they claim. They claim to be followers of Scripture, but in fact they have no knowledge of what they claim.

I have explained that the claim of possessing knowledge of revelation is in fact what is contested in the term *ahl al-kitāb.* So their claim that Abraham was a Jew or a Christian "sprang from ignorance, not obliviousness."[33] This means that they did not possess the right knowledge about Abraham. At this point, Tabataba'i makes clear that the word *muslim* in "Ibrahim was a *muslim*" does of course not refer to a follower of the Prophet of Islam – that would be a similar form of ignorance – but to someone who submits to God.

After these two verses, the People of Scripture are addressed once again in four consecutive verses, 69-72, as follows: "Some of the People of the Book would dearly love to lead you [believers] astray, but they only lead themselves astray, though they do not realize it. People of the Book, why do you deny God's revelations when you can see they are true? People of the Book, why do you mix

truth with falsehood? Why do you hide the truth when you recognize it? Some of the People of the Book say [to each other], 'At the beginning of the day, believe in what has been revealed to these believers [the Muslims], then at the end of the day reject it, so that they too may turn back'."[34]

This seems to be one of these chiasmic sentences where the outer parts address a part of the people of the book who act unjustly towards the believers by leading them astray and rejecting the truth that they first seemed to endorse. In the middle part, two questions are addressed to the Scripture people in general: why do you deny the truth? Why do you mix truth with falsehood?

In his commentary, Tabataba'i stresses the significance of verse 70, which he translates as "why do you disbelieve in the communications of Allah while you witness (them)?" He points out that disbelieving God's communications is something different from disbelieving God. They reject the Divine Knowledge after it has been clarified to them because they disbelieve that the hand of Allah is open.[35] This seems to refer to God's ability to bestow communication and grace on whom He wants, while the Jews want to reserve this for themselves – see Qur'an 3:73: "All grace is in God's hands; He grants it to whoever He wills." In his chapter, Dr. Akrami points to a similar metaphor in *Surah* 5, this time addressed to the Jews who say that God is tight-fisted. Quite the contrary, counters the Qur'an, "it is they who are tight-fisted and they are rejected for what they have said. Truly, God's hands are open wide: He gives as He pleases."[36] So, that means that their disbelief is in fact a refusal to believe that God is still able to communicate. Again, Tabataba'i focuses on the practical meaning of this: it is not about the verses of the scriptures, but about the religious realities that they hide. The last verse, suggesting that a part of the people of the book accepts in the morning what they reject at the end of the day, is interpreted as referring to the change of the *qibla* (direction of the prayer) from Jerusalem to Makkah, and this refers to the Jews who did not agree with that.

What I like in Tabataba'i's commentary is that he makes a theological point: those who refuse to share their religious heritage in fact refuse to believe that God can still communicate with human beings. Who are we to say that God's revelation is closed, as we Christians pretend?

The final two references to the People of Scripture in this part of *Surah* 3 come in verse s 75 and 78. In 75 a clear difference is made: "There are People of the Book who, if you entrust them with a heap of gold, will return it to you intact." But there are others who will not return it because they say that they are under no obligation towards the gentiles. "They tell a lie against God and they

know it!" Again, in a kind of parallel, in 78: there are some who "twist the Scripture with their tongues … they say that it is from God when it is not. They attribute lies to God and they know it."

So the metaphor here is that the People of Scripture have been entrusted with something very precious that gives them knowledge, but some of them refuse to share it with others – they claim that it is only for them. In doing so they willingly twist what has been given to them. For Tabataba'i this refers to the Jews who call themselves a chosen people and make their religion a racial religion. According to him, the small price for which they sell the revelation is the *dunya,* the world, or earthly gains and prosperity.

Finally, what about the distortion of the Scripture? I agree with Dr. Akrami that Tabataba'i does not refer to concepts such as *naskh* or abrogation (according to which a later revelation in the Qur'an abrogates an earlier revelation) or *taḥrīf* or falsification (according to which Jews and Christians changed the letter or the meaning of the revelations given to them), since these are much later concepts that cannot be found in the Qur'an – at least, not in the way in which the later tradition interprets it. Instead, Tabataba'i says that they "recite the lies which they have invented against Allah in the same tone and style which they use for the Book."[37] Applied to the Christians, the criticism is that they recite the Creed as if it were part of the revealed truth, or they read the Trinity back into the *Injīl* (Gospel) that has been revealed to Jesus according to the Qur'an.

All of these texts come from the same part of the third *Surah*, and yet it is difficult to find one common thread in them. Consequently, the commentators have given different identities for the *ahl al-kitāb* in these verses. They seem to be not very specific or at least to allow several possible contexts.

Yet the main message in these texts is clear. It can be summarized thus: the fact that you have received a Scripture does not mean that you have anything to boast of. It means that you received a certain knowledge of God's guidance, but with that knowledge comes a certain responsibility to remain faithful to God. For the Qur'an, this includes the openness to accept that God can give new guidance to confirm the truth of previous Scriptures, and to guard and watch over them.[38]

After this concentration of seven texts about the People of Scripture, they are addressed in four more verses later in *Surah* 3. Verses 98-99 contain the following: "Say, 'People of the Book, why do you reject God's revelations? God witnesses everything you do'. Say, 'People of the Book, why do you turn the believers away from God's path and try to make it crooked, when you yourselves [should be] witnesses to the [truth]? God is not heedless of anything you do.'"[39]

Again, the context seems to be polemical: the People of Scripture not only reject God's revelations, but they try to lead the believers away from the truth. Muslim tradition situates these texts in the conflicts between the believers and the Jewish tribes in Madinah. In line with this tradition, Tabataba'i asserts that these verses address dietary laws: some Jews wanted the believers to abide with their stricter rules concerning *kashrut*.[40]

A little further on, the believers are again mentioned in opposition to the People of Scripture: "[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God. If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them ..." (3:110). This text seems to clearly distinguish between the community (*umma*) of the believers and the People of Scripture who do not believe. This is one of the texts that seem to reflect a separation that most Muslims would place in the Madinan period, while some modern scholars such as Fred Donner have recently suggested that this separation might in fact have taken place only much later.[41]

In his commentary, Tabataba'i states that the community of believers is better if and insofar as it forms a unity, and therefore "if the people of the Book too were like that it would have been better for them, but they are divided and disunited."[42] This reflects a warning that the Qur'an often associates with Jews and Christians: their disunity, both among themselves and towards one another, speaks against them, because it shows that they did not remain true to what they have received. In this regard, the Qur'an certainly agrees with many ecumenical Christians who consider lack of unity as a blemish on the face of Christ's church.

Despite all these negative texts, the two final texts seem to emphasize more positive aspects of the People of Scripture. The first one is in 3:113-114: "But they are not all alike. There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds." Part of Tabataba'i's commentary is about the question as to whether these verses exclusively focus on the Jews or not. The major point here is that there are differences among the People of Scripture in ethical and religious behavior. Some of them are upright, which means "firm in obeying the command of God." It means that they stand firm in belief and obedience. Tabataba'i remarks that these verses mention the basic criteria that God will use to pass judgment and that some of them will gain their rewards with God. But it is not clear to what group exactly this text refers. Several groups are mentioned, most of them Jews such as Abdallah ibn

Salām and other converts from Judaism.

So apparently they need to be converts in order to be saved.

Let me quote Mahmoud Ayoub on this: "Behind this question … is the unwillingness of early *tafsir* masters as well as later commentators to accept these [positive] verses in their literal sense. They have interpreted them to refer to the Muslims of the Prophet's society generally, or at least to those of the people of the Book who accepted Islam."[43] This interpretation is a basic myopia in the *tafsīr* tradition from which Tabataba'i unfortunately does not distance himself. Whether this group is a Jewish or a Christian group is not so relevant; what is relevant is that they converted to Islam. Fortunately, several modern Muslim interpreters come forward with a more inclusive interpretation, and Dr. Amir Akrami is certainly among them, even though he states his case very carefully by saying that Tabataba'i "neither approves nor disapproves of leaving the verse open to a more inclusive interpretation."[44] We could connect this to several verses in the Qur'an that say that those who believe in God and the Last Day and act righteously will receive their reward with God.[45]

A Christian interpreter of the Qur'an might be inclined to interpret the words "upright community" (*ummatun qā'imatun*) among the People of Scripture as referring to those who pray during the night, standing and bowing while they recite the Scriptures. This could very well refer to the liturgy of the hours as prayed by monastic communities. It is possible to connect this with some other verses that talk about Christian monastic communities in a positive way, such as 5:82-84.[46] Of course, Muslims might refer here to their prayer postures as well, but at least we can say that there seems to be some common validation of human prayer in the form of recitation of God's revelations.[47]

The final text comes towards the end of the *Surah*, (3:199) and it is a positive text as well, at least for a part of the People of Scripture: "Some of the People of the Book believe in God, in what has been sent down to you and in what was sent down to them: humbling themselves before God, they would never sell God's revelation for a small price. These people will have their rewards with their Lord: God is swift in reckoning." The element that I see as common in this text and the previous text is the idea of humbleness, both in prayer and in ethical behavior. Again, this is the same combination that is made in the text from *Surah* 5, another *Surah* that addresses the claim of the People of Scripture in discussion with Christians. But in all cases, the Muslim tradition has explained the idea of the "People of Scripture" away by making the persons referred to converts to Islam. In the case of verse 199, for instance, the *tafsīr* tradition connects this verse with the *Najus,* the Negus from Abyssinia, because there is a tradition that says that the Prophet quoted this verse when hearing about his

death. At least this would imply that the Negus was not a Muslim, since, as Tabataba'i mentions, some others blamed Muhammad that he prayed for someone not of their religion. However, the most important thing, according to Tabataba'i's commentary, is that God's reward is not reserved for a particular nation or tribe. He also adds that this verse removes the evils attributed to the People of Scripture in the previous verses, and praises them in a particular manner.[48]

I think his overall theological point is a valid one, and Christians will be able to recognize it: we make a mistake when we claim that we possess God's revelation in such a way that we can position ourselves over against others. The Qur'anic critique implied in the concept of the "People of Scripture" uses a theological argumentation against this claim: God's ability to give grace once more outweighs our religious traditions, even if they are based on a long history of covenantal love. In itself there is nothing wrong with the claim to be God's chosen partner or to believe in God incarnate. Yet if this claim becomes a shield against listening to others and their message about God, thinking that we already know everything about God, it is a basic lack of faith in God who is "always greater", as both Muslims and Christians know.

To quote Tabataba'i for the last time: "God's hand is still open." I am grateful for the opportunity to listen to Dr. Akrami and to learn from him and Allamah Tabataba'i. Their insights have helped me to start to see that there is a critique of religion in the Qur'an that has much in common with the famous *Religionskritik* by the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth. It is a good reminder that the ecumenical and the interreligious dimensions of the Washington Theological Consortium that organized the al-Alwani lectures can lead to fruitful cross-fertilizations.

Notes

1. I accessed an English translation of the first *Surahs* of this commentary through www.shiacource.com/almizan/
2. Elsaid M. Badawi, Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic – English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) s.v. *ahl,* p.61.
3. *Arabic – English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage,* s.v. *kitāb,* pp.796-98.
4. Daniel Madigan, "Book" in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān,* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, vol. I (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp.242-51.
5. Madigan, "Book," p.249. See also Daniel Madigan, *The Qur'ân's Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

6. Madigan, "Book," pp.250-51.
7. Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein Europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010), p.169; Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.1-20, quotation p.6.
8. M. Sharon, "People of the Book," in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān,* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp.36-43 enumerates 31 verses; Sidney Griffith, in *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013) mentions "some fifty-four times" (p.29). Ismail Albayrak, "The People of the Book in the Qur'ān," *Islamic Studies* 47:3 (2008), pp.301-325, gives a list of 33 similar expressions on page 302.
9. See Albayrak, "The People of the Book in the Qur'ān," pp.305-308 (Makkan period) and pp.308-318 (Madinan period).
10. Qur'an 29:46; English according to: *The Qur'an. A New Translation* by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 2010) p.255.
11. Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike,* p.145: "Die hier eingeführte Benennung der Angehörigen anderer Religionen als *ahl al-kitāb* muβ erstaunen, da sie ein auch von der koranischen Gemeinde geteiltes Charakteristikum abzurufen scheint. Weil an dieser Stelle noch keine abwertende Einschätzung mitschwingt, könnte der Ausdruck eine Selbstbezeichnung der Juden und/oder Christen wiedergeben, die vielleicht gerade als Hinweis auf den wichtigsten Unterschied gelegen kam: die jüdisch-christliche Schriftlichkeit gegenüber der koranischen Mündlichkeit des Gotteswortes".
12. Albayrak, "The People of the Book in the Qur'ān," p.308.
13. Albayrak, "The People of the Book in the Qur'ān," p.311 gives more references.
14. Madigan, "Book," p.247.
15. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic,* 24; see also Id., "*Al-Naṣara* in the Qur'ān: A Hermeneutical Reflection," in: *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in its Historical Context 2*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp.301-22.
16. See Chap. 10, p. 81. For a recent elaboration of this idea, see Jerusha Tanner Lamptey, *Never Wholly Other: A Muslima Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
17. Qur'an 3:199 translation Abdel Haleem.
18. See Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters,* volume II: *The House of 'Imran* (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp.414-15.
19. I have elaborated this aspect in my article "Comparative Criticism: Qur'ān and Karl Barth" in *Frankfurter Zeitschrift für islamisch-theologische Studien* (Special

Issue 1, 2017), based on my al-Alwani lecture (February 2014) and a lecture in Frankfurt, Germany (September 2014).

20. See Madigan, *The Qur'ân's Self-Image,* p.75.

21. "People of the Scripture" in *The Glorious Qur'an* translated by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall (Elmhurst N.Y.: Tahrike Tarsila Qur'an 2006); "People of earlier revelations" by the translators of Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān* (*fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān),* translated and edited by Adil Salahi and Ashur Shamis (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1999, rev.ed. 2003).

22. Qur'an 4:171 translation Abdel Haleem. I would prefer to translate *wa lā taqūlū thalāthatun* as: "Do not say 'three'" since the word *thalātha* means "three" and not "Trinity" (which would be *thālūth*).

23. Dr. Amir Akrami also used Tabataba'i's work in an interesting article that has recently been published as part of the *Building Bridges* series of dialogues. See Seyed Amir Akrami, "Particularity and Universality in the Qur'an", in: David Marshall, ed., *Communicating the Word: Revelation, Translation, and Interpretation in Christianity and Islam* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991), pp.85-89.

24. The full title is: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut 1973-74). The English translation can be accessed at www.shiasource.com/al-mizan/

25. Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters. Volume II: The House of 'Imrān* (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992).

26. Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters. Volume I* (Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), p.7.

27. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge - New York - Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.85-89.

28. Translation according to M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: English Translation and Parallel Arabic Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.59. My discussion of this verse has been developed for a conference about the Common Word process at Mater Dei Institute in Dublin, December 2013. See, my article, "A Common Word or a Word of Justice?" in *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through A Common Word* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.192-203.

29. *Al-Wāḥidī's Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Great Commentaries on the Holy Qur'an) translated by Mokrane Guezzou, (Louisville KY: Fons Vitae, 2008), p.44.

30. *Al-Wāḥidī's Asbāb al-Nuzūl,* p.49.

31. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* on 3:64-78, English translation on www.shiasource.com/al-mizan/.

32. Ibid., page 9 of 42.
33. Ibid., 12 of 42.
34. Qur'an 3:69-72, translation Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an,* pp.59-60.
35. Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* on 3:64-78, page 16 of 42.
36. Qur'an 5:64 (part), transl. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an,* p.119.
37. Ibid., 31 of 42.
38. See Qur'an 5:48 *muṣaddiq / muhaymin.*
39. Translation Abdel Haleem, p.63.
40. Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* on 3:98-101.
41. See Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010).
42. Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* on 3:102-110: page 16 of 22. He discusses quite a few traditions concerning divisions, also in the Muslim community.
43. Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters, vol. II: The House of 'Imran,* pp. 298-99.
44. Akrami, "Particularity and Universality in the Qur'an," p.5.
45. See, for instance, 2:62 where the believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabians are mentioned together.
46. Qur'an 5:82-83 "You are sure to find… that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians' for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance, and when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]. They say, 'Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.'"
47. See Oddbjørn Leirvik, "Prostrate and Erect: Some Christian-Muslim Reflections on Religious Body Language", *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 16 (2006), pp.29-40.
48. Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* on 3:190-199, page 6 of 9.

11

Violence in the Name of Religion

Anthony C. E. Quainton

T H E M E : We are bemused to read today of young men and women responding to the call of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), just as in 1095 C.E. we might have been surprised at the young men and women, many of them poor and uneducated, who signed up for Pope Urban II's crusade to retake Jerusalem from Muslim hands. Followers of both our religions are by and large content to live peaceably within their own communities, yet both our sacred texts urge us to go forth to spread the revealed word. We cannot predict whether internal inconsistencies will weaken radical Islamist movements. We cannot know whether the hedonistic and materialistic excesses of Western societies will undermine our values of freedom and equality. A firm and consistent policy of containment might eventually lead to a more peaceful relationship between political Islam and liberal democracy. Violence in the name of religion is not the answer.

I am not an academic expert on either violence or religion. However, in the course of my long Foreign Service career I did serve in two Muslim countries, Pakistan and Kuwait, and in a complex multi-religious society, India. On the violence side, I had the misfortune to be the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism in the Carter administration and the Assistant Secretary for Security in the Clinton State Department. The violence we were then most concerned about came from a religion in which virtually no one still believes: communism in its Marxist-Leninist iteration. However, violence in the name of religion is a topic in which I have been interested for some time as a Christian struggling with the violent challenges of the modern world.

For Christians (and for Muslims), the story we are considering can be said to have begun in 1095 in Clermont, France. There, in the presence of several hundred nobles and clergy, Pope Urban II exhorted his audience to set forth on

a great crusade to recapture Jerusalem from the Muslim Turks. His audience responded with the now famous cry *Deus vult, Deus vult.* "God wants it, God wants it." So began an extraordinary period of bloodshed involving the deaths of thousands of Christians both rich and poor from all over Europe and of their victims, the Muslim occupiers of the Holy Land. All were promised a place in heaven should they have the misfortune to die for their faith.

Those far-off events have their echoes in the modern call by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for the reestablishment of an Islamic caliphate. The crusaders set out to establish a Christian state in and around the Holy places where Christians could be protected and their faith made secure. Defeating the so-called infidel became a moral obligation for Christians then, as it is for jihadist Muslims now.

Of course the violence between Christians and Muslims goes back at least four hundred years before the crusades, as Islam advanced from its foundational homeland on the Arabian peninsula to include all of Christian North Africa and the Middle East as well as the Iberian peninsula. On the northern side of the Mediterranean that battle continued well into the late 17th and early 18th centuries, culminating in 1698 in the famous battle of Vienna where the Turks were definitively turned back. The reconquest of formerly Christian lands, the *Reconquista,* as it came to be known in Spain, was for centuries an objective of Christian rulers not only in Spain but also in the Holy Roman Empire. That is a story too long and complicated to recount here, but it is well to remember that fighting between Christians and Muslims in the name of religion is not something invented by al-Qaeda or ISIL but has its roots deep in the history of the Western world. Even in recent times it was exemplified by Greeks killing Turks in the aftermath of the First World War and by the infamous Armenian massacres of 1915-16.

One can, of course, argue that a thousand years of wars of religion had nothing much to do with religion, but with the ambition of Christian and Muslim rulers anxious to defend their territory and power. Defending their faith against an enemy force that both sides considered to be made up of infidels was a secondary goal. But whatever the truth of that assertion, there is no doubt that violence in the name of religion has been with us for a very long time, and given the natural human propensity to violence is likely to be around for a long time to come.

It is well for both Christians and Muslims to remember that violence in the name of religion is not just, or even primarily, about the competition between Islam and Christianity. Hindus and Muslims committed terrible atrocities against each other in 1947 at the time of partition. Sunnis and Shi'ites have

fought each other in various parts of the Middle East, with each side characterizing the other as heretical. The recent bombings of Shi'ite mosques in Yemen and Iraq are but the most recent examples.

Similarly, the wars of religion which followed the Protestant Reformation, whose 500th anniversary we will celebrate or commemorate in 2017, led to some of the bloodiest battles in European history, as each side struggled to dominate the political landscape in the name of its branch of Christianity. In the great lakes region in Africa, the most baptized region in the world, Christians have been fighting each other with extraordinary ferocity: Tutus versus Hutus in Rwanda, Nuer versus Dinka in South Sudan, and so on. Of course, much of this sectarian conflict which on the surface seems to be about religion is more often about power, control of territory, or long-festering rivalries and animosities between clans and tribes. As Akbar Ahmed has pointed out in his book, *The Thistle and the Drone,* it reflects a struggle between central authorities and peripheral tribal centers of power. The groups on the periphery often are religious minorities which the center seeks to control and in some cases eliminate.

When many of today's Christians were growing up, one of the foundational hymns was "Onward Christian Soldiers." Those soldiers were "marching as to war with the cross of Jesus going on before." That hymn is no longer in most hymnals, having been deleted to strike out the implied violent militancy of the Christian faith. Of course, the hymn does not call for war, but calls on Christians to go forth "as if" they were going to war – that is with faith, conviction and commitment.

Another more popular hymn, now sung with great enthusiasm by Catholics and Protestants alike, also has a martial theme. "Lift High the Cross" exhorts Christians in the following language:

> Come, brethren, follow where our Captain trod, our King victorious, Christ the Son of God. Led on their way by this triumphant sign, the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine. Each newborn soldier of the Crucified bears on the brow the seal of him who died. This is the sign which Satan's legions fear and angels veil their faces to revere.

The images are clear. Christ is our Captain. We are exhorted to be engaged in conquering evil. Each one of us is a "newborn soldier", and in the language of the modern hymn of the civil rights struggle, "We shall overcome". The enemy is not Islam but the Devil, although there are those who have concluded that Islam is satanic, with the unfortunate result that this exhortation to conquer

Satan's legions has been extended to the forces of jihadist Islam.

Recent developments seem to suggest that we are entering a new and more virulent phase of the use of violence in the name of religion. We watch with horror the beheadings, rapes, and torture in the name of Islam by fanatics fighting under the banner of ISIL. We hear the call for a universal caliphate, and wonder where that call might lead. We are bemused to read of young men and women joining ISIL's cause, just as we once might have been surprised at the young men and women, many of whom where poor and uneducated, who signed up for the First Crusade in 1095 and the subsequent crusades.

So if the history is grim and the present is awful, what are we Christians and Muslims to do? What is the transformation that will enable us to put behind us this propensity to violence which seems all too evident in our respective societies and faiths? One commonly suggested solution is an intense reading and analysis of each other's scriptures. It is safe to say that very, very few Christians have read the Qur'an in its entirety. (Indeed there are very few Christians who have read every word of the Bible.) I suspect that most Muslims have not read the Bible, Old and New testaments alike, from cover to cover. While I certainly think we need more scriptural literacy and to be much better informed about each other's faith, I am not certain that a superficial reading of scripture would solve all our problems. Both sacred texts are filled with noble and inspiring words, but both contain exhortations to fight. There are ample examples in the Judeo-Christian tradition of how God sanctions violence by the Jews against those who are the indigenous occupiers of the Holy Land. Jesus states explicitly that he has come not to bring peace but a sword. Biblical scholars are skillful in explaining away the violence, but the truth is that outsiders reading the Old and New Testaments are not likely to come away with the picture of the totally peace-loving religion we repeatedly invoke.

One of the reasons that tensions between Islam and Christianity continue to fester lies in the fundamental nature of both religions. Unlike our friends in the Buddhist, Hindu or Confucian traditions, we confidently assert that we are the possessors of the ultimate truth, revealed to us in sacred books through the words of our respective prophets. Christianity adds the incarnational element of God having become man in order to reform the world and conquer sin. Both religions deeply believe in their own righteousness and in the obligation to engage in what we Christians call evangelization, the spreading of our faith to those who do not share it. Our sacred texts urge us to go forth to spread the revealed word. Unfortunately, that leaves us very little room for compromise and where there is no compromise, violence is often the result.

One might argue that in both the Christian and Muslim worlds the process

of secularization has undermined this temptation to evangelize. We are too busy making money and living the good life to propagate our faith. Indeed, followers of each religion in our society are by and large content to live peacefully within their own communities without recourse to violent proselytism. Yet the recent burning of churches in Pakistan, the abduction of Assyrian Christians in Iraq, and attacks on the Copts in Egypt and Libya suggest that we still have some distance to go before the use of violence in the name of religion can be put behind us.

A recent book by Professor John Owen of the University of Virginia entitled *Confronting Political Islam* deals with many of these issues and asks, "How are we to confront this challenge?" Professor Owens offers an answer: be flexible, be patient, and be true to ourselves. This is altogether reasonable advice. He argues that the key to understanding political Islam is to recognize its diversity and to deal with it according to that diversity. He calls for a containment strategy reminiscent of George Kennan's strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union after World War II. Kennan's strategy also called for patience, not expecting rapid transformation but waiting for the internal contradictions of the Communist worldview to emerge. It is, of course, an open question whether there are comparable internal inconsistencies in the radical Islamic position, although one can clearly argue that its goals conflict with the modernizing force of market-oriented capitalism, which has advanced the prosperity of millions of global citizens, including many in the Muslim world itself.

How that force will impact the evolution of Muslim thinking is far from clear.

At the heart of Professor Owens's argument is the exhortation to Western societies to be true to their highest values of freedom and equality. He argues that the impact of secular societies which has produced greater openness, greater prosperity, greater freedom, and greater well-being will eventually undermine the most stringent and unforgiving aspects of political Islam. That is a hope that I share. However, we must also recognize the risk that the hedonistic and materialistic excesses of the modern Western world will in fact only engender greater resistance among Muslim advocates for a purer, more disciplined society. Professor Owen does not expect a conversion of Islamists to Western values in their totality, but he argues that a convergence over time is possible.

While the victory of one side over the other is theoretically possible, it seems unlikely in our lifetime at least. The answer may indeed be to adopt a firm, consistent, and uncompromising containment, which might eventually lead to a better and more peaceful relationship between political Islam and

liberal democracy. It remains to be seen if that patient strategy can withstand the political pressures for more violent responses on both side of this great debate. The calls for war against the Ayatollahs in Iran heard recently in both Tel Aviv and Washington should remind us that for some on our side violence is the only real way to defeat the forces of violent political Islam. The growing polarization between radical jihadist Islam and militant forces in the West certainly raises the question about whether a gradualist approach can succeed. One can only hope that it will.

Violence in the name of religion is surely not the answer.

12

Violence in the Name of Islam: Origins, Developments, and Promising Transformations

Amr Abdalla

T H E M E : It would be a mistake to suppose that today's desire to recover the pure or illustrious past is confined to Muslims who are poor or who lack Western education. High educational attainments are a moderate or high factor among radical militants. In each Middle East nation where central government has recently been weakened, the ensuing violent struggles for power have included an appeal to religion. To promote justice and peace, governments must apply the rule of law and use military force only against clearly defined militant targets. Political leaders must insist, by nonviolent means, on correcting injustices inflicted upon Muslim peoples. Educators should refute the idea that a civilization must also be an empire. Education also occurs in prisons.

My experience as a government prosecutor in Cairo between 1978 and 1986 gave me some insight into the religious element that helps explain the militant jihadism we are living with in the world today. I will attempt to describe the ideological source of today's violence, together with the realpolitik forces which have created opportunity for this ideology to spread. I will end by offering some avenues of response to this ideology which may be grounds for hope in pursuing peace with justice.

The Ideological Dimension
Today's militant jihadism is an answer to the question, "How did we go wrong?" It grows from Muslims' conviction that for six hundred years Islam was victorious and preeminent as both a civilization and an empire. (Civilization and empire are too often equated — an error I will address in my conclusion.) Militants demand a recovery of that lost glorious past.

The historical memory of military victory over strong enemies early in the life of the Islamic community remains a potent legacy today. By God's inspiration, Muhammad, the Prophet of Makkah, supported only by his wife Khadija and a few friends, overcame his own Quraysh tribe's resistance to the truth about the One God — and God's concern for the poor, a message which threatened their pagan livelihood. From his refuge in Madinah, the Prophet succeeded in uniting, by allegiance or alliance, the tribes of the entire Arabian peninsula. He became their spiritual and temporal ruler. Within fifty years of his death, the Prophet's followers had brought provinces of the great Byzantine and Persian empires under their righteous government. In time a civilization inspired by Muhammad's message and life stretched from Spain to India, covering two-thirds of the known world.

Of course there were conflicts and failures over the centuries of Islamic rule – a subject which deserves serious historical study. Mongols and crusaders inflicted blows. Internal decay weakened Islamic societies. European economic strength began to rival and eventually, via nation states and the Industrial Revolution, to surpass that of Muslim countries. The Arab world, and the whole Muslim world, suffered shock at seeing Egyptian society surrender to the science and administration brought in 1798 by Napoleon Bonaparte's takeover.

During a century or two of European dominance, Muslims pondered their response to the Western challenge. Some responded by seeking to adapt their religion to the patterns of modernity. Others insisted that Islamic weakness resulted from having strayed from the pure practice of the earliest generation of followers of Muhammad.

It would be a mistake to suppose that today's desire to recover the pure or illustrious past is confined to Muslims who are poor or who lack Western education. My experience as a prosecutor in Cairo began in 1978 in one of the districts of the city where I dealt with thieves, murderers, and rapists. Every prosecutor in that sector kept an ink pad on his desk so that defendants could mark the record of their interrogation with a print of their thumb.

Five days after I moved to the Office of the Prosecutor for National Security — which dealt with state security, espionage, and terrorism — the assassination of President Anwar Sadat occurred. I spent the next five years primarily interrogating members of Islamic Jihad, the organization responsible for the assassination and related crimes. These people turned out to be mostly college graduates, people shaped by modern ideas. I never had to use an ink pad, as they all were well educated! It turns out that high educational attainments are less frequent among the non-militant, non-radical majority of Muslim citizens,

while high educational attainments are a moderate or high factor among radical militants. The militants are not crazy. The ideology which sustains them has internal logic. In their analysis, a particular narrative of the glorious Islamic past provides a measure of the corruption of their own society. Justice requires whatever violence is necessary to end the present corruption and weakness of their society.

One component of all calls to restore Islam is some concept of *jihad*. Jihad can be understood and taught as a personal and internal struggle to submit one's will to the will of God. Jihad can also be understood as the necessary struggle, ordained by God, to defend the community of the faithful from oppression and extermination at the hand of external enemies. Militant jihad in our time calls Muslims to do their duty against both the nominal, corrupted followers of the Prophet, including political regimes, and against foreign non-Muslim supporters of those regimes and foreign purveyors of moral corruption.

The Realpolitik Dimension
International and regional interests have colluded with this ideological dimension of militant jihadism. The collusion burst into full view with the events of the year 1979.

First came the successful revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, replacing the Western-oriented and secular-minded Pahlavi regime with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Next came the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, which removed Egypt from its leadership role among Arab states actively boycotting and seeking to weaken the State of Israel. Last was the Soviet Union's invasion to support a failing Communist government in Afghanistan.

In response to these three changes in the governments of Middle Eastern nations, new forces were unleashed. The new regime in Iran sought allies for extending into other countries its anti-Western version of Shi'a Islamic observance. In an effort to counter Iranian influence, the armies of Saddam Hussein's secular-minded government in Iraq were unleashed against the Shi'a power-house, Iran. The result was a ten-year bloodletting on both sides.

In Egypt, those opposed to making peace with the State of Israel and those opposed to the dominance of public policy by the Egyptian military and the application of un-Islamic laws and practices made common cause. President Anwar Sadat was assassinated.

In Afghanistan, localized tribal armies allied themselves with an ideologically inspired group who had taken the name The Students (*Taliban*). Together they attracted support from militant jihadists of other nationalities, most

notably Ayman al-Zawahiri of Egypt and Osama bin Laden of Saudi Arabia. Because they were resisting Soviet forces in Afghanistan and offered a promise of weakening an overextended Soviet Union government, the United States and Saudi governments also lent support to The Students. An outcome which continued after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was the availability of numerous experienced fighters still mobilized for *Jihad Internationale.*

The Realities Today

Today the Middle East continues to face numerous challenges. Rapid population growth produces need for infrastructure, schooling, and employ-ment beyond what national economies can meet. The failure to satisfy the demands of its Palestinian population keeps the Arab-Israel conflict alive. The ever-extending reach of telecommunications, including the internet, offers opportunity for both productive economic activity and for subversion of exist-ing political and business structures.

Beginning in central Tunisia in December 2010, then spreading to Egypt, the wave of popular pro-democracy protests called the Arab Spring forced Presidents Ben Ali of Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, after decades of rule, to resign. In Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria, however, similar uprisings led not to stability but to bloody and protracted civil wars.

In each nation where the grip of central government has been weakened, we have seen an appeal to religion in the ensuing violent struggles for power. In Bahrain, members of the marginalized Shi'a majority of the population allied themselves with human rights activists and suffered loss of jobs, imprisonment and torture, as well as destruction of some of their mosques when the govern-ment prevailed. In Iraq, the ascension of Shi'a political leaders, in government or at the head of private armies, in succession to the secular Saddam Hussein regime, has provoked violent Sunni reactions. Operating in northern Iraq and Syria against the struggling governments based in Baghdad and Damascus, a militarily and financially competent Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL, or in Arabic *Daesh)* terrorizes non-Sunni and non-Muslim populations.

Glimpse of Hope

Despite the rampant disorder in the Middle East and the heightened militancy of jihadist groups, there are reasons to hope. Steps can be taken to promote justice and peace.

Governments can contribute to transforming the radical militancy which invokes the name of Islam. Government must apply the rule of law against those suspected of committing terrorist acts, but it must use military force only

against clearly defined militant targets and must take responsibility for, and show great sensitivity to, civilian casualties resulting from military actions. Governments must refrain from extralegal practices such as torture. With the aid of vigilant and independent public media, governments must ensure clear and honest transparency of legal actions and military operations.

Political leaders must insist, using nonviolent means, on correcting injustices inflicted upon Muslim peoples and nations. Political leaders must not compromise on injustice. They must develop approaches which expose Western double standards, but in a manner that convinces Western people and governments — appeal to their sense of justice and fairness! The media and nongovernmental organizations can help develop a culture of nonviolent resistance to national governments' oppressive practices — insist on pluralism and participation as foundational Islamic principles!

Religious institutions, alongside non-governmental organizations and governments, must make the principles and values of the supposed glorious Islamic past relevant to our time. Teachers of Qur'an should explore and promote the neglected verses, focusing on tolerance and peaceful coexistence even in times of conflict. Interpretation is not concerned only with legal answers. Beyond the traditional role of the male imam, more creative approaches to education and information dissemination can be found.

Old doctrines need to be revised. Educators should refute the confused idea that a civilization must also be an empire. They should highlight positive aspects of Western civilization that are compatible with Islamic principles. They can assert, on an Islamic basis, principles of equality between genders and across ethnic/racial, religious, and national groups. They can promote a sense of respect for diversity, while encouraging the preservation of a progressive Islamic identity. They must develop mechanisms to help people identify rigid oppressive traditional norms and practices that are mistaken for being Islamic.

Economic planners should explore successful models of development in such societies as Singapore, Costa Rica, and Malaysia, seeking to develop policies that would make possible more upward social mobility. Education planners, including in religious institutions and nongovernmental organizations, should emphasize, at all educational levels, Islamic principles of peaceful coexistence with all other groups.

Education occurs also in prisons. During their imprisonment after assassinating President Sadat, some of the leaders of Islamic Jihad started to debate their violent doctrine with some learned scholars of Islam. They also used their time in prison to reread the Qur'an and literature. These men with the highest

credentials as militants had now gone deeper into the Qur'an than mining it for simple slogans. They had begun to share, and even publish, commentary on the Qur'an, offering insights into the Qur'an's great themes of human mercy, just dealing, taking counsel, and peacemaking under the eyes of God. I have some of those writings in my possession and am eager to disseminate them as widely as possible. These formerly violent militants now had the chance to reach perhaps over 20,000 younger militants in prison via de-radicalization workshops.

To the extent that any of these endeavors I have named can be boldly pursued, there is hope of countering today's threat of violence in the name of Islam.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUBbjn5UyjPhiNkZHeRHscw

Towards Transformation of Radical Militancy in the Middle East

Approaches	Who does it?
Religious Approaches	
Expand religious interpretations beyond legalistic textual ones. Explore and promote the "neglected" verses focusing on tolerance and peaceful coexistence even at times of conflict.	Religious institutions, NGOs and governments
Promote modern and Islamic-based conflict resolution processes that emphasize non-violence and peaceful means of resolving disputes.	
Develop more creative approaches to education and information dissemination in the religious context beyond the traditional role of the male Imam.	
Make principles and values of the "glorious past" relevant to modern time.	
Cultural Approaches	
Promote a sense of respect for diversity, while encouraging the preservation of a progressive Islamic identity.	Religious institutions, NGOs and governments
Highlight the positive aspects of Western civilization that are compatible with Islamic principles.	
Assert principles of equality between genders, and across ethnic/racial, religious and national groups, on Islamic basis.	
Develop mechanisms to help people identify rigid oppressive traditional norms and practices that are mistaken for being Islamic.	
Political Approaches	
Insist on correcting injustices inflicted upon Muslim peoples and nations using non-violent means. Do not compromise on injustice.	Governments and NGOs
Develop approaches to expose foreign policy double standards in a manner that convinces peoples and governments in the west. Appeal to their sense of justice and fairness.	Governments and NGOs
Develop a culture of non-violent resentment of national governments' oppressive practices. Insist on pluralism and participation as foundational Islamic principles.	NGOs and Media
Reject simplistic stereotyping images of Muslims, and insist on addressing causes and rationales of Muslim violence.	Western NGOs

Developmental Approaches	
Explore successful models of development in newly developed societies (such as Singapore, Costa Rica and Malaysia) in order to develop policies that would make upward mobility possible.	Governments and NGOs
Emphasize Islamic principles of peaceful coexistence with all other groups in all educational levels.	Religious institutions, NGOs and governments
Legal and Military Approaches	
Apply the rule of law against those suspected of committing terrorist acts.	Governments
Refrain from extra-legal practices such as torture.	
Use military force against clearly defined militant targets.	
Take responsibility for, and show great sensitivity to, civilian casualties as a result of military actions.	
Ensure clear and honest transparency of legal actions and military operations.	Governments and media

Factors Contributing to Radicalism and Militancy in the Middle East

Religious Factors		
Image of a glorious Muslim past that is replicable today.	High	High
Textual dichotomous interpretations of Islamic Sources.	Low	High
Strong attachment to Islam as a way of life; practicing religious duties such as five prayers daily and Ramadan fasting.	High	High
Hatred of non-Muslims.	Low	High
Cultural Factors		
Resentment of certain aspects of Western lifestyles.	Medium	High
Resentment of Muslims' adopting Western lifestyles.	Medium	High
Adopting a highly legalistic and conservative Muslim life style.	Low	High
Political Factors		
Strong sense of injustice and violation of the Muslim world by foreign governments, especially in Palestine.	High	High
Perceived Western foreign policy double standards.	High	High
Resentment of national governments as unIslamic.	Low	High
Resentment of national governments as corrupt and autocratic.	High	High

Developmental Factors		
Sense of relative deprivation (poverty coupled with raised expectations).	Low/ Medium	High
Belonging to urban disenfranchised groups.	Medium	High
High educational attainments.	Low	Medium/High
Personal Factors		
Record of tendency towards deviance/anomie.	Low	Low
Receptivity to peer influence towards political and social militancy.	Low	High
Unspecified psychological/Individual Factors.	Varied	Varied
Personal grievance against national government or other "enemies".	High	High

For both tables: Amr Abdalla, 2004 (updated 2014). Please give proper credit when using or duplicating.

13

African Nationalism and Its Effects on Interreligious Relations

Sulayman S. Nyang

T H E M E : Invoking Taha Jabir al-Alwani's claim, "I am a child of Adam and Eve", and his readiness for interreligious dialogue, a former Gambian diplomat reminds us that Moses led his people out of Africa, Jesus as a baby was a refugee in Africa, and the disciples of Muhammad were welcomed by Christians in Ethiopia. Successful post-colonial African state builders like Nyerere, Nkrumah, and Senghor resisted efforts to mobilize people according to tribe or religion. The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabab in Somalia are new developments in African history. Human groups must study their old texts and learn their deeper history.

This life is very short, and you are now reading the words of someone who has come very close to the demarcation line between the living and the dead. When you read the Torah, you read the New Testament, you read the Qur'an, you really try to understand death. Dr. Taha al-Alwani knew this very well. He was a great man, and I have spent many moments with him. When he started the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Leesburg, Virginia, I was the one who gave the address when his students were graduating for the first time. God in His wisdom decided he would leave; I could have been gone myself before he did, God has a reason to have done that.

As we begin to ask about interfaith dialogue in the context of Africa, and how the colonial and post-colonial narrative contributed to interfaith dialogue, I take this as my point of departure: that Dr. al-Alwani was one of those intellectuals who came to America from the Middle East and was a giant. When we began to investigate Muslims in the U.S., John Esposito ran the Center, I was co-director of that project, and we got money from the Pew Charitable Trust – they gave money to Jews, Christians, African-American Christians, evangelical Christians, Latinos, and others.[1] Dr. al-Alwani wrote a

major piece in that book.[2] He tried to explain dialogue between Muslims and the American experience. It is a classic now, one of the classical narratives he left behind. So when we come today, and we are celebrating his name, and we talk about Muslim-Christian dialogue in Africa, we have a very important point of departure.

When we talk about interfaith dialogue in Africa, in the context of colonialism and post-colonial Africa, you have to go back to Africa—what I call in my life "my friend". Africa becomes a very interesting point of departure for us as human beings, if you look at the African continent as the theater for the Abrahamic narratives. If you are Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, you may not see it that way, but there are ways in which the relationships between these three religions are very much linked to the continent of Africa.

If you are Jewish, every year you have your Seder celebration. It takes you back to the story of Adam and Eve— and you heard how Dr. al-Alwani said, "I am a child of Adam and Eve." That is a narrative we all embrace. So I am comfortable with that metaphor for Africans. You cannot be a Jewish person unless you go back to the Torah, and you have to go back to Moses leading his people out of Africa. They don't say Africa, they say he came out of Egypt, but Egypt is a part of Africa. So you can see how very important narrative is. When you talk about Africa and interfaith, you can see the beginning of our drama in Africa.

Then when you talk about Christianity — I always make this point to Christians — Jesus Christ was a refugee in Africa. He came to this Africa as a baby, as a refugee. If you talk about dialogue, dialogue was in Africa when he came as a refugee. Now we have Syrians who are refugees going to Europe in recent times, and I said to some of my students who are looking at Africa and interfaith dialogue, "When Jesus Christ was on the cross, he spoke in Aramaic, and Aramaic is in trouble right now in Syria". So when you really look at interfaith dialogue, and how interfaith dialogue is very important for us to understand, we have to know human beings can learn to live together as human beings.

When you go back to Africa, you can see how the continent of Africa serves as a point of departure for the Hebrew people, for the Christians, and for Muslims—as Muhammad himself was a refugee. That's why all these religions engaged in interfaith dialogue are caught in a refugee problem: the use of the refugee narrative. Christ and the refugee narrative. Muhammad's disciples who went to Ethiopia and were welcomed by Christians—a refugee narrative. So when you talk about interfaith dialogue you have to pay close attention to the refugee phenomenon, and how the refugee phenomenon gradually begins to provide the foundation of any meaningful dialogue. We are reading right now

that most of the Syrians who went to Germany and Europe have to learn what it means to be a refugee. They were so secure in their positions in Syria; lo and behold they are now forced to assimilate.

So when you look at Africa, you can see how the refugee and the mega-phenomena are going to follow you even on your theological, historical, and sociological narrative. Go back to Africa. If you look at the African situation today, you can see how the impact of African nationalism on interfaith dialogue became very evident to so many African leaders. If you look at Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who was a Catholic leader, he added to interfaith dialogue in Africa. When Nkrumah became the leader of Ghana, he came to realize that if you allow the Ghanaians to be divided along ethnic lines, you will never unite them. If you allow them to begin to polarize as Protestants or Catholics, you are going to have a problem. That is why he called himself a "non-denominational" Christian. Nkrumah had some problems with other people, but when you look at interfaith dialogue, he tried to get along with all the people in Ghana. Ibrahim Inyass (also Niass) of Senegal was very close to Kwame Nkrumah. He was very prominent in Senegal. He might have had some problems with Senghor in Senegal, but Ibrahim Inyass got along with Kwame Nkrumah. Kwame Nkrumah made it very clear to him that if you are going to create Africa for African unity, you have to be very careful about ethnicity, racism, or any other division.

Kwame Nkrumah realized that if you are going to create a new kind of nationalism, you need a new ethics and a new way of dealing with all the people. That was one of the reasons that Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana came up with a book called *Consciencism*.[3] *Consciencism* became his guideline to understand how to negotiate with other people. So when you really look at African nationalism and its impact on interfaith dialogue, you can see how African leaders came to realize that if they are going to really create any kind of unity among themselves, they have to go back and look at their own scriptures, and see how they can deal with one another.

This is where the Adamite metaphor becomes very full. One thing that helped these African groups, who were organizing themselves against colonialism, was to recognize their humanity, that they are the children of Adam. Today I tell the young kids, you millennials in American society, "You are very affected by DNA, so you do not go back to Adam to see the basis of unity among us all. Today DNA is the way you try to find yourself united by science, because you are all the prisoners of a STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. And that is how you define your narratives." Whereas the Christians and Jews and Muslims—they all hang on to the role of Adam and Eve. That is

how they find and define themselves. When we talk about the African national-ist narrative and its impact on interfaith dialogue, we see how African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), and Leopold Senghor (Senegal) were all Catholics. All three of these African intellectuals who had a great influence on African thought were Catholics. They have provided us with some of the best leaders; unfortunately we have Mobutu (Zaire) and others also. That is the dilemma we inherited from these two narratives: you have the best leaders who are Catholics, and the worst leaders who are Catholics. So when we come, we begin to find out how we are going to hear it, and how we are going to dialogue among ourselves.

When we talk about dialogue, interfaith dialogue is a very important area. One thing I learned in the days I spent with interfaith dialogue in the United States, is that we dialogue not to dilute our religions but to dilate on the points of convergence and divergence. To dilate on the points of convergence and divergence is very important in terms of bringing together.

Now this metaphor becomes very powerful in the African context, because when you look at the African leaders, they find out that if they were going to unite their people, they had to have a narrative. That is one of the reasons why people like Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, and Julius Nyerere came to realize that if you are going to promote dialogue, you have to make sure that your people do not divide themselves along racial lines. Kwame Nkrumah welcomed many Jews from South Africa when they had apartheid. That is part of the Ghanaian story. You have in Ghana many Africans from South Africa and from Zimbabwe—people like Mugabe (later Prime Minister of Zimbabwe). Many of them were welcome in Ghana, and then some of them became so successful that they went back. This now creates another narrative with regard to how these politicians who tried to build bridges among themselves to get state-building and nation-building now deal with specifically religious issues.

People like Kwame Nkrumah were condemned because of his inclination toward Marxism, but he realized that he had to deal with other people from different religions. So in Ghana for example you have the FraFra and other people who were Muslims; he had to deal with them. And then he had to deal with Muslims from all parts of Africa. This created a front row. That is one of the reasons why if you look at the de-colonization movement in Africa, you can see how the interfaith dialogue began to develop among the leaders. From my own experience in Gambia, a small country, some of the politicians who came at the time of independence began to try to polarize the society along religious lines. It did not work out, because some of them wanted to introduce religion as a way of dividing the country. In the end, it became evident to many politicians that

we have to have dialogue among the people. If you go to Nigeria, you will find how some American sociologists look at this universe, and see clearly that in this universe, Christians and Muslims are almost equally divided. That is why one of the American sociologists will talk about the "hegemony of culture", meaning that people do not divide along ethnic or religious lines, they divide simply because of cultural difference. It they are united by their culture, whether they are Christian or Muslim or of traditional religion, they do not divide. That becomes very important in developing interfaith dialogue among the universe. This becomes evident in the cultural events. If you go to their weddings, they all come together. That narrative becomes very important to build bridges among people of different religious backgrounds that they share a common culture.

If you go to Gambia, you can see that phenomenon. Ali Mazrui, who did the Public Broadcasting System series "The Africans: a Triple Heritage,"[4] was trying to explain religions in African societies. When he came to Senegal, Leopold Senghor was a Catholic. He belonged to a minority, but he was ruling Senegal for twenty years. How can this happen? It's because of the culture. The people do not discriminate themselves on the basis of religion. They identify with you because you have a common culture. And that culture is important for dialogue as you begin to learn dialogue.

Now when you look at the United States, you find that, until recent times, the Muslims who came here were very much part of the American war against communism. I call them the children of the Cold War. That was one reason Muslims were not marginalized in American history. That is one of the reasons why, when Reagan went to see Gorbachev in Reykjavik in 1986—you can see the video now—he said, "I am coming from a land where there are churches, synagogues, and mosques." But the reality is this: if you are really looking at interfaith dialogue through history, you have to understand the politicians and what they do. What is their focus? Then you have to see how religious leaders are interested in dialogue.

When you come to look at interfaith dialogue in terms of communities—different churches, synagogues, and mosques, negotiating in America or in the Muslim world — there are a number of issues you have to pay close attention to. Dr. al-Alwani was very concerned about how Muslims, theoretically speaking, engage in this dialogue. If you are Muslim you know the history of Muslims in Spain. The Arabs were in Spain longer than Europeans have lived in this country—from 711 to 1492. That is a long time. From Europeans arriving in Jamestown in 1607 until now — that is still less than the number of years Arabs lived in Spain. So what I try to tell people who are engaged in interfaith

dialogue, and they are trying to understand the Afghan situation and other parts of the world, what you have to recognize is that when you look at inter-faith dialogue and those Muslims who are very concerned about it, you can see where Dr. al-Alwani was heading toward the end of his life. That we are human beings, we live on one planet. I have to accept who I am and who the people are on this planet with me.

Two last points I want to leave you with.

When you look at African nationalism and its impact on interfaith dialogue, and you see African countries today, we have Boko Haram in Nigeria, we have Al-Shabaab in Somalia: these are new developments in African history. All the interfaith movements are now in serious crisis in Africa: in Somalia, in Kenya, in Central Africa. Even the Pope who went to Central Africa had to deal with that crisis. They did not have those crises before. You have elements who are using religion to divide the people. These are extremists who came into being as a result of the crisis you have in Afghanistan and now the chaos in the Middle East, with regard to Syria; because these did not exist before, even among the Arabs. Because if you really look at these narratives, especially in the Middle East and the manner in which religion is beginning to manifest itself in the world, you can see that in many ways the end of the Cold War created this crisis. Because the very people the United States supported to fight against the com-munists in Afghanistan then turned against America. That is the price we are paying today.

So when you talk about interfaith dialogue, you have to pay attention to how human beings have tried to communicate with one another, and create bridges. When you are in America and you engage in interfaith dialogue, your imams, your rabbis, and your Christian pastors must learn to live together as Americans and make sure that they do not allow extremists to take over. That is one issue we have to deal with today.

The second issue that is very critical today is this: human beings have to rec-ognize that if they do not go back to their old texts and study their texts and see the history of their texts, then they will not be able to engage with any mean-ingful dialogue with other human beings. Whether you look at Africa or America or the world, when I look at the interfaith movement, I see that we have made tremendous progress. Not long ago the National Council of Churches invited a number of scholars — Jewish scholars, African-American, some who are Puerto Ricans, and more. We were all in Santa Fe, New Mexico, trying to address five hundred years since Columbus, and what that means for interfaith dialogue. Then the Muslims had their scholars there—I was there, and another one from the Caribbean—all of us were trying to see five hundred

years after Columbus. What happened to all of us? How can we build bridges for interfaith dialogue?

I can really say that in America today the interfaith movement is alive. Dr. Taha is a living witness, though gone. He was working very hard to do something about it, as I witnessed, and I know many others who will testify to what he did.

So we conclude this narrative. Let us go back home and begin to ask ourselves questions. Are we making progress or not making progress? Some students say to me, "Dr. Nyang, we have a guy called Donald Trump, what does he mean to you?" The big problem is the American people are watching. I leave it to them to decide what is going to happen.

Notes

1. Zahid H. Bukhari et al., *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hopes, Fears, and Aspirations*, with contributions by John Esposito, Sulayman S. Nyang, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, and Mumtaz Ahmad (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).
2. Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, "Toward a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Reflections" in Bukhari, et al., pp.3-37.
3. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (New York: International Publishers, 1980).
4. An award-winning but controversial series, based upon his book *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Little Brown and Co., 1986).

14

Interreligious Dialogue and Governance in Africa: Response to Sulayman Nyang

Kwasi Kwakye-Nuako

T H E M E : We have made religion the task of church-going, mosque-going, and temple-going, but death stares all of us in the face. Where tribal sentiments explode, some see religious conflicts. The purpose of religion is to understand "Why am I here?", "What am I doing?", and "Where do I go from here?" In the past, Africans sat to deliberate on their conflicts, then said, "I am going to ask Grandma", and they came up with wise settlements. We need to take up again the conflict resolution methods previously used throughout the continent.

Dr. Sulayman Nyang has presented a wonderful overview of postcolonial nationalism in Africa and its impact on interfaith dialogue. I will offer a Christian view.

I must say upfront that my Christianity is a borrowed concept. However, serving in the Christian church and the academy come together to help me to think about the world we live in and how we can make this world a better place. Sometimes while we wear badges we are influenced by the badges we wear, instead of our making the badges do what is right for us.

Looking at what Dr. Nyang has shared with us, it seems to me that African nationalism is still an ongoing process. Decolonization has taken a new form in Africa. It will be helpful for us to ask ourselves a simple question, what has necessitated this situation whereby Africans are always fighting for some-thing—and I might add people of African descent—always fighting for what other people get for free. I think the whole notion of missions in Africa comes out of this construct. So, the nationalism that Africans are pursuing is an inter-esting phenomenon that we need to delve more deeply into to try to find whether there is any cause for what is happening. People have created the construct, and people are trying to make it work.

If we see what is going on, the leaders that Sulayman alluded to were all trying their best, but what happened is that Africa is still in turmoil. If we look at the continent, especially when we come to the area of Christianity, we see the work of Christian missionaries who came into the continent from different countries and did not practice in Africa the things that they held as important in their own countries. The lives that the missionaries enjoyed in their own country were not the lives they allowed the Africans to enjoy when they were with them. Their compounds, their churches, and their parsonages were separated from the community, yet they claimed they were building community among the people. Regardless of the institutions that Christians helped found to serve people, they were not seen as part and parcel of the culture of the people because they were driven apart from what the people were really interested in. The societies and the indigenous elites the missionaries created sought to protect their privileged position and saw the march to political independence as a threat to their interests. It is no wonder that the freedom fighters saw the mission-founded Christians and their leaders as opposed to the African decolonization process. So going to school and learning English, and sometimes forgetting about the *lingua franca*, made one become a good scholar in the eyes of the missionaries, but a poor student in terms of one's relationship with one's own community.

Looking at this strand, we can now make sense of the emergent African "Christianities," which include the Pentecostals and the charismatics and others. What is going on? It seems to me we need to accept the fact that, even though Africans have professed to be Christian for decades, and the continent is poised to be the new bastion of Christianity, as Phillip Jenkins has written about so well,[1] why are African people struggling so very hard today? Why do the people still struggle to make ends meet when they have embraced the religion that teaches love and compassion, fraternity and sacrifice? I am raising these issues for us to think about the Christianity that we have read about and seen in churches in Africa, for people to grapple with the issues and seek ways to bring about liberation throughout Africa. Sometimes we get comfortable with what we hear from the media, and we are at a loss as to what is going on. We need to go back and look beyond what we are seeing, and ask ourselves the questions, "If these are the issues going on, could we still look deeper to see better things?"

So what is going on? We have talked a lot about colonialism and its impact, and we can spend a lot of time speaking about this. I think it is fair to say that its impact on the African has really affected how Africans see themselves. As we talk about African Christianity and the ability of Africans to emancipate them-

selves, we cannot turn away from the forms of governance that also contribute to the precarious situation we are discussing. We have patterned governance along the lines of the American example without fully understanding its ideological underpinnings. So we see that on the continent, as Sulayman said, people have lived together regardless of faith. Muslims and traditionalists lived together long before the advent of Western Christians in sub-Sahara Africa. They co-existed without much difficulty. Why is it that now there is conflict in Nigeria with Boko Haram, why is Al-Shabaab all over Eastern Africa, and splinter groups of fundamentalists creating conflict?

I think we need to look at the causes of these fervors that are taking place. Half of it is foreign policy. It assumes that each person it impacts cannot really stand on his or her own feet. But all the things that are good for Americans may not be good for the African. This is the seedbed of all these fervors. Dr. Nyang alluded to what went on in Afghanistan. Who raised up Osama bin Laden? So, if we are to talk about the nationalist struggles among Africans today—as Christians, Muslims, and traditionalists who can sit down together—we also need to think about our contribution from this part of the world to the confusion. If we do that, we will see that they already have a culture that beams and embraces and allows them to sit and discuss issues of mutual benefit to them. But when there are pressures from abroad—as when governments in Africa must have their budgets approved here in Washington, D.C. by the International Monetary Fund, or when IMF conditions for hiring and freezing of wages decided by fifteen people—the conversations between Christians and Muslims are diverted from meaningful dialogue about what is good for the human being.

The other thing I would like to mention is that because of the impact of colonialism, African governments have been weaker since their inception at independence. The governments are not getting stronger. The state that controls the military, police, and other forces, is incapable of helping the people in times of need. When religious people try to deal with social issues and religious relations when the governments are weak, the conversation tends to be more a monologue than a dialogue.

If we are really committed to interfaith dialogue in Africa, we must resurrect the intrinsic nature of Africans that saw the sacredness of life and embraced the wholistic worldview of tolerance that existed before the march toward independence.

What independence has contributed to the continent now is the maze of confusion based on trying to be who we are not—by copying from the West. The kind of religiosity that has crept into the lands—for example the so-called

charismatics—they have no respect for anybody because their literal under-standing of the Bible and its attendant arrogance stifles any meaningful conversation. It becomes difficult for them even to talk to the mainline churches about matters of major importance in the same Christian faith. So when such Christians engage peoples of other faiths, it is often a monologue, as they wave the Bible at people to compel all others to convert into their faith. That does not go well for interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue requires mutual respect—the acceptance of our person-hood. The African worldview embraces human beings as human beings. These views must be re-cultivated. I think we need to focus on a discussion of the importance of life, and reexamine life in a new light. This life should not be based on capitalism, but on life rooted in what makes us humans—which is the basis of *Ubuntu*. We also need to look at discussing various religious beliefs that we have. We can sit and talk about all the issues that are important to us; however, some people are very ignorant about other religions close to them.

There are such efforts being made in many African countries. In 2011 the Parliament of Ghana passed an act to have a peace council. The Catholic Cardinal in Ghana was the chair. The head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Movement and the chief Imam of Ghana, together with other Christian and civil leaders served on the Council. So one can see that there is an attempt on the part of the government to bring religious leaders into a conversation about peace, where-by they were able to avert conflict around the elections in 2012 and after.[2] We can see that there are efforts being made elsewhere in Africa. In Benin, there is an ongoing interfaith dialogue where Christians and Muslims are working together. They have a radio station where people call in and talk about issues of importance to them. It is moderated by imams and pastors, whereby people are given a fair shot to discuss issues.

This is something that requires our effort. We need to go beyond the nice conversations and delve deeper into the core of our humanity to find out how best can of help to one another, without allowing religion to become an imped-iment to our progress. The whole purpose of religion, as you know, is not just going to church. The purpose of religion is to understand our place in this cosmos, asking the important questions and trying to find answers to them. Why am I here? What am I doing? Where do I go from here? We have literally made religion become the task of church-going, mosque-going, temple-going, losing the existential questions we must ask ourselves, and the attempt to find the answers. When we go back to the basics, and we address these concerns, we will see that there is nothing holding anyone back, as we all deal with the same questions that affect our lives.

Whether we are Christians, Muslims, or Jews is immaterial when death is staring at all of us. Crime doesn't respect our religious heritage. If we are to be serious about working for a humane society, we need to focus on what makes us human, and the questions that we ask everyday so that we can find solace in our lives. African conflicts continue. Some of the tribal sentiments explode, and some people see such occurrences as religious conflicts, but the people refer to them as tribal conflicts. My purpose here is not to apologize for those who espouse such views; they should know better and realize that might does not make right.

In the past, people sat and deliberated and shared the idea, "I am going to ask Grandma," and Grandma always gave the right response to their questions, and they came up with a wise settlement. We need to take up again the traditional conflict resolution methods previously used throughout the continent, and begin to dialogue among ourselves in ways that will enhance life and a brighter future of the continent. Otherwise, the path punctuated with conflicts will not lead anyone to any desired destination.

Notes

1. Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
2. William A. Awinador-Kanyirige, "Ghana's National Peace Council." Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, policy brief, August, 2014. Available online: http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/2014-augustpolicy-brief-ghana-national-peace-council.pdf

15

The Qur'anic Foundation of Interreligious Tolerance

Abdulaziz Sachedina

T H E M E : Taha Jabir al-Alwani taught us to pay attention to the ways we are being inspired to love and to care for other humans. There is an inbuilt fundamental pluralism in Islam. There are different ways of reading the Qur'an; there are different ways of reading the Sunnah. "Compete with one another in doing good" recognizes that there is no theological way to resolve religious differences. We await the divine reckoning, when God will inform all humans about the matters we were disputing. In the meanwhile, we have a model for the exercise of political power. The Fourth Caliph, Ali, dispatching Malik bin Ashtar to exercise minority rule over Christian Egypt, gave him this instruction: "Infuse your heart with mercy, lovingkindness, with your subjects. For they are of two kinds, either they are your brethren in religion or your equal in creation. You cannot treat them as inhuman, because they have been created like you... Errors catch them unaware, deficiencies overcome them, so grant them your pardon.... to the same extent that you hope God will grant you pardon and His forgiveness."

Shaikh Jabir al-Alwani stands out as one of the fine scholars who argued about the different ways in which we, as members of different communities, could come together in terms of our spiritual connections and our common spiritual and moral destiny as human beings.

To speak today about pluralism in religious communities is not an easy thing to do. Many religious peoples reject the idea of pluralism, because that somehow dilutes and compromises their exclusive claim on the truth. People have a claim on the truth, and a claim on the truth is always somehow singularly controlled by a particular group. This claim inherently happens to be the exclusive foundation of faith community's entitlement to exclusive salvation, in general. So within faith communities there is hardly a discussion about

religious pluralism as an important method of coexistence with other religions, because such an idea appears to them a kind of compromise to their monopoly over the truth of religion.

Taha Jabir al-Alwani introduced a very important idea about coexistence among faith communities—and I have been inspired by his work. My book *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*[1] is a kind of continuation of his conversation with religious communities. I have heard him appear on a panel at Georgetown University, and at George Mason University, and at George Washington University. The idea of tolerance is something that I have also pursued with my Jewish colleague and friend, Prof. David Novak, who always says that he is not confined to Jewish tradition in searching for truth and moral conduct.

As he maintains, he has also learnt good things from Christianity and Islam. In other words, according to him, we are not living in exclusive circles; rather, we are living in overlapping circles, whereby we have a common area that we share with other traditions and we appreciate each tradition and uphold those values in our own communities. When we speak to secular scholars in academia, we are attached to the idea of co-existence based on a common understanding of the faith traditions. However, it's worth keeping in mind that a common ground shared with other communities is very much the work of hermeneutics provided by scholars of religious texts that are held as normative by the faith communities.

It is this process of hermeneutics that we learn from Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani's appropriation of the classical texts, as he undertook to disclose the fundamental texts that have provided the laws of apostasy in Islam. His interpretation deals with the old question: How do we deal with people who disagree with official creed within the community and are declared as apostates by the religious law? Should we mete out capital punishment? How exactly are we to negotiate our exclusive space with these dissenters to accommodate coexistence with differing opinions?

My concern is to share with you the pluralistic culture of tolerance and the sources of and impediments to the future of interfaith relations. I am not an idealist who believes that once we speak about co-existence our communities will come together and live together in peace. I don't think that is going to happen in a long while, until and unless the minds of the people are changed to accommodate the reality of religious and cultural diversity. Some recently retrieved ways of understanding the scriptures oppose tolerance.

You and I know quite well that the situation with religious minorities in the Middle East or any other country is not satisfactory. The condition is not confined to Muslim countries; even the Christian and Buddhist communities in

different places have succumbed to their exclusionary religious vision. Whether we go to Sudan, to Iraq, to Iran, or to any of the countries where communities and their leaders are trying to handle the situation of interfaith relations, the instances reported by various communities is disheartening and demands immediate solutions to the violent conflicts inflicted upon innocent bystanders. In many cases, the leaders have had to deal with their national constitution that does not have provision to defend the rights of the minorities. How exactly those constitutional rights are going to be protected is a big issue in the Muslim world. Partly it is the legal rulings of Islamic jurisprudence as such, where we encounter difficulties in communicating the need for tolerance on the basis of the rules and the regulations that betray the spirit of the Qur'an and the Prophet's message. The legal heritage is very much geared toward dividing the communities into believing and non-believing communities. And that is not the way a modern nation state can define its commitments to all citizens regardless of their differences in gender, race and creed.

In a global society, people are trying to live together as communities of human groups who share something in common. They have differences, they do not want to give up their own identities, and yet there is a need for a common ground that can provide the necessary cohesion in society. Consequently, I really am reflecting upon the sources that I read — classical Islamic, Jewish, and Christian sources — to be able somehow to bring these sources to inform me about the potentialities they have for a new egalitarian spiritual order. In my research in these sources I know one thing for sure: pluralism is not a modern issue. It has been there in history at all times.

If you study the history of Baghdad in the eighth and ninth centuries you will discover the fact that there was a Jewish quarter in Baghdad; there was also a Christian quarter in Baghdad. In today's Jerusalem, by the way, you can still find those communal quarters. In ancient cities like Damascus and Cairo, they still preserve the multifaith aspects of the Abrahamic communities. And you often wonder, "How did they live together?" Modern politics must be regarded as the main culprit in dividing the communities. Isn't it time to demand from politicians the resolution of the intercommunal conflicts that have plagued modern peoples, demanding from their people something uglier than what they are naturally inclined to produce in advancing co-existence? It is mind-astounding to realize that modern power structures and political identities are employed to perpetrate divisions and conflicts.

When I search the classical religious sources in Islamic tradition, like all religious heritages, I find a complex body of wisdom in all of them. In Islam, I find a tradition that has been built upon by many generations. It is founded

upon sacred Scriptures. The Qur'an is telling us about human heritage and the common moral ground shared by all to inform them about good and bad. The codified teachings (Sunnah) are further reinforcing those teachings and are informing us about common historical roots and resources humanity share. The commentaries that can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad are telling us exactly how that conversation about the common moral ground took place. The Prophet did not come into a vacuum of religions. There were other religions being practiced in Makkah; there were other religions that existed in Madinah. Therefore, for Islam there was a need to establish a kind of working relationship with different religious groups. Yes, one group was going to dominate because of the collection of the humanity that was accepting that message. The majority that would belong to the new message was bound to create problems for the minorities. The Qur'an had to provide the guidelines for interfaith relations. And yet, the Qur'an is underlining for us the specific identity of its own community and the need for this new community to strike a conversation with other traditions. The way the Qur'an approaches the problem calls for understanding the pluralistic ethos in Abrahamic religions. There is a clear instruction in the Qur'an 3:84: "Say: 'We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam).'" Inform them that we have a common goal for all our peoples who trace their spiritual connection to the common patriarch, the first unitarian (*muwahhid*), Abraham. More importantly, in order to unite and to fulfill God's purposes we need to have that common message that would unite us for that end. In other words, the Qur'an comes quite openly in terms of different religious communities relating with one another. What I find to be very important to keep in mind is that wisdom is available today in the classical sources of the Muslims. And those sources are telling us exactly how that global community should be built.

When the Muslim community was founded in the seventh century, there was a question. Would the experience of the sacred divide us from other peoples, or would it be something that would help the community to build just relationship with others? In other words, there was a very deep understanding of what the Qur'anic scholars identify as *taqwa* with which all humans have been created: *taqwa* is moral, spiritual awareness. Human beings need to cultivate that awareness in order for them to relate to the other people. Moral spiritual awareness in the Qur'anic terminology suggests that spirituality is the vertical relation to our Creator; whereas, morality is the guidance that nurtures

horizontal relations among people. You may claim your connection with God, but the validity of that claim to connection depends upon your ability to relate to other human beings across. How would you do that? This is something that I find in the spiritual practices, in the rituals that Muslims established for the community. From the congregational prayers to the final once in life experience of the pilgrimage to Makkah, Muslim piety simply advances human beings to relate to one another in fairness and justice.

I also find this spirit of connectedness, quite interestingly, in theological teachings. I do not separate theology at the expense of ethics. I regard ethics to be theological ethics, ethics that are based on a religious understanding of how God has provided us means of establishing the relationship that we are talking about. Theological teachings in Islam are, strictly speaking, dealing with how to teach Muslim minds to be aware not only of the divine presence, but also to be aware of the presence of other human beings horizontally. What are they demanding from you? If they are members of your own community, what do they demand from you? If they are members of the larger human community, what are their expectations from you? This brings me to the ethical reflections that are integral to shaping an ideal human community.

Ethical reflections are thoroughly religion-based. They are based on the understanding that God has provided me with innately inspired information about how I should relate to other human beings. If He did not do so, why would He create me with other human beings? Why can't He create me separate, in an isolated area where I can live on my own? One of the goals of creation is to relate to other human beings. How am I going to do it, if I am totally unaware of my obligation to them? Does religion teach me to hate them because they do not happen to be part of my community — or to disagree with them and to play them down? How exactly am I going to deal with this critical question for human wellbeing? Reflections on ethical issues in the Qur'an are deeply engrained with the sense of justice and fairness. This is the point of Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani's religious thought: teaching me to pay attention to the ways in which I am being inspired to love and to care for other humans. The question for us to ponder at this stage is: What exactly are ethical reflections on the Qur'an going to reveal to us ordinary beings? Where should one look for them? My contention is that they are to be located in the social practices of the community – in the ways community teaches its membership to live in peace and harmony with others.

We must keep in mind that, in Islamic tradition, there is no single "church" representing and holding the entire religious knowledge and tradition within its purview. We don't have an institution like "church"; we don't have an *ecclesia*

that defines for us the limits and the boundaries of the faith, or the limits and the boundaries of the official creed. Islam doesn't do that. This absence of the church creates one problem, though, namely, there are rifts between professed belief and operative belief in historical circumstances. Essentially, the political and social history of the Muslim peoples reveals the realism that major events present. History is telling us: "Muslim behavior at certain points in their conduct with non-Muslims did not comply with what Islam is teaching. There were times when Muslims went against what Islam taught them about mercy and compassion towards entire nature." So we find the usual discrepancy between the ideal and the real, as in most of the world religions.

Now, it is important to emphasize that the absence of the church genuinely creates the possibility of pluralistic interpretation of the tradition. In fact, because of the absence of an official institution speaking for the entire community and its tradition, in Islam pluralism is built into the religious system itself. So today in the Muslim community, if someone tells you, "What I am telling you about Islam is the only way to think about Islam," then he or she is totally mistaken. The reality is that there are different ways of interpreting and understanding Islamic sources. There are different ways of reading the Qur'an; there are different ways of reading the Sunnah. There is an inbuilt fundamental pluralism in Islam. Even the language of the scripture is pluripotent. It leads you to different hermeneutical moves and conclusions. The more you read the Qur'an, the more (as a religiously reflecting person) you find there are gems hidden. Sometimes it misses your vision, sometimes you get them. So these religious principles that the religious leaders have used at different times to generate harmony and good relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are very much inspired by the revealed sources such as the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an is asking people to reflect. It is reminding them to think about the issues they encounter in the light of the guidance provided by the revelation.

In our search for coexistence among different faith communities, we can identify three orientations that arise from the Qur'an. These are the three orientations that are adopted by people at various times to solve the issues arising from religious diversity.

According to the Qur'an, there could be an *exclusivist* dimension to religion, whereby I can say that it is only my religion and my community that has received the message of truth and, hence, exclusive salvation. Exclusionary here implies the sense that there is only one way of understanding an absolute truth that is derived by interpreting the dominant view of the sacred in the community's self-regarding perception. In other words, that reality and that dominant sacred paradigm are available at one particular moment cherished by the community as limited to itself.

This moment level becomes exclusionary. It declares that this is the only way humans will understand the oneness of the divine. No compromise is possible with this fundamental and absolute claim about the Oneness of God. This is the only way humans are going to understand the religious truth about God.

But the Qur'an presents also an *inclusive* understanding of other faith communities. The Qur'an acknowledges that there have been many viable religious traditions presented to humanity at different points in history. Accordingly, even when only one is the culmination of the others, and probably considered superior, the inclusivist view could be the historical paradigm that one follows as a Muslim, as a Christian, as a Jewish person. In all of these, you have this historical dimension of being superior that is controlling the way you look at the tradition one belongs to. However, at the same time, you are not denying others that they might have their own tradition. This is what I have identified as an inclusivist vision of the Qur'an.

There is also in the Qur'an a *pluralist* vision. The truth is not an exclusive possession of any one tradition, or one community. Although we tend to regard this as a modern inclination, whereby we want to dilute the claims of the particular claim to religious truth, it is actually embedded in the Qur'an. We will see how the Qur'an speaks about it. When you look at the Qur'anic vision of the human community, it strikes us that the Qur'an is engaged in formulating religious-political space for each faith community. Each community should have its own space. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that throughout Islamic history you do not have explosion of anti-Semitism in Muslim communities. I challenge anybody to go into the history and look at any period, including the history of Ottoman empire. I don't mean there was no religious or ethnic discrimination among Muslims; however, there was no anti-Semitism, never. It was impossible to experience anything like what European history witnessed in the last century. This is partly due to the pluralist vision of the world in the Qur'an. Let us see what the Qur'an says:

Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion" (*Surah* 109:1-6) .

"To you your religion, to me my religion." How can you have your religion and I cannot have my religion? What this simply conveys is the principle of coexistence: Let's live together. In other words, there is already an idea that the world is going to operate at different levels, with different peoples, with different temperaments, and different spiritual inclinations. Are we going to condemn people who are disagreeing with us in our own spiritual inclinations?

Are we going to do that? The Qur'an says, "No." There is a communal and specific place where you can claim your own area; that's your space. But if you don't want to accept that principle, then God has shown the path you can follow as your own. You have the freedom to follow the path, or you can reject the path, it is your choice. According to what you choose you face the consequences. In other words, there is no adamant requirement that all of us should be spiritually cloned in the same way, sharing the same spiritual genome.

Now when you reflect on that message in the Qur'an, you come to a very different understanding about God-centered pluralism. I am talking about the Qur'an here. I have been asked by some skeptics about this pluralistic message, "Are you making it up because you are a more liberal thinker?" I have assured my audience that I am not making it up. Let us check what the Qur'an says in *Surah al-Ma'idah*, 5:48 (translation by A. J. Arberry, with my insertions):

> To every one of you [religious communities] We have appointed a right way (*shir'ah*) and an open road (*minhaj*). If God had willed, He would have made you one nation (*ummah*); but that He may try you in what has come to you [in the form of scriptures]. So be you forward in good works; unto God shall you [human beings] return, all together; and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance.
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> (Insertions in square brackets are my own. This is the translation I have carefully garnered from A.J. Arberry's which in my opinion is the most reliable translation.)

So each community is, so to speak, autonomous in its way and in its conduct. "If God had willed, He would have made you one nation." There would be no differences, and all the religious wars would be rendered meaningless. God would have cloned all of us, to use bio-medical language, to be spiritually the same. He did not do so. Why wouldn't He do that? So that "He may try you, in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works." That is the only way you can show something objectively: good works, moral conduct. In other words, compete with one another in moral behavior. "Unto God shall you return, all together; and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance."

I assure you in certain terms that I have not distorted the translation. So God sent each community Scripture, law, their own rituals, their own belief system: Why did He do that? The reason that comes to mind spontaneously is that human beings need to stop condemning each other on the pretext of holding false doctrines and practices.

What should we do about the differences in each community's theologies and practices? That's where ethics comes in. "Compete with one another in

doing good" in the world is the prescription for living together in harmony and peace. The point is that in the final analysis human beings will face death and all will return to God at the end of the temporary sojourn on earth. At that point there will be divine reckoning and God will inform all humans about the matters we were disputing with one another. Surely, communities have shown time and again that there is no way of resolving interfaith differences, because everyone is sticking to his guns saying, "My way is the correct way; your way is not correct." The Qur'an makes it clear that this is the prescription for destruction, and as such that kind of exclusive theology is not going to work. You need to learn to co-exist with each other.

How would you do it? What is the common ground then? The common ground is what God has inspired you with. God has inspired you with good deeds. He has inspired you to do something good: do that! Compete with one another in feeding the poor, and looking after the orphans, and stopping the wars, and stopping the destruction of the world. Don't try to kill one another, right? That is Qur'anic pluralism.

I am not over-reading it, right? I need some assurance from you, those of you who are Arabists! They can tell me if I am torturing the Qur'an with my imposed meanings. I assure you once again that I am not engaged in producing a liberal estimation of the Qur'anic text. I am not engaged in playing games with the Qur'an; I have no politics. I am not standing up for any community leadership position; no, I am not. I am least interested in the politics.

If the Qur'anic model of pluralism or co-existence were to be enacted, what kind would it be? A theological or an ethical pluralism? That is my question. If theology is the source of ethics, well and good. My belief in God who creates me with the sum ideas of how I should live together with other human beings would be very helpful. But if theology tells me that anybody who does not believe like you is damned to hellfire, than I do not need that theology. That theology cannot do anything.

It is very interesting — it is my challenge — that until now we have not been able to create a common theology of interfaith relations. Because the moment we do it, we have to sacrifice our exclusive claim to the truth, which is theological. Is it theological that I believe in certain things and nobody else believes in those things? Therefore I am not going to compromise my creed. The moment you say, "I am not going to compromise," you are in conflict with a religious environment in which your idea is not floating well. It is going to be rejected.

The second question that comes up is, "What is the role of religion, then, in the public square?" John Rawls taught us that in order for any society to be successful in democracy, in observing the democratic rights of the people, we

need overlapping consensus. If you bring comprehensive doctrines into the public space, you are going to hurt the public. The public will be fighting forever over doctrinal matters. But if you bring a common understanding of what do we need as public, what do we need to live a better life, then that would be forcing us to look at the ethical requirements of how do I relate with you. Let me be very clear here. I am not using "ethics" in a very abstract way; I am using ethics as a source of regulating interpersonal human relationships. How do I relate to you? If I claim you are my brother, what obligations do I have toward you? If I claim to be a fellow neighbor near your house, what am I supposed to do for you?

This takes me to the Christian idea of *agape*, of "love thy neighbor." "Love thy neighbor" is the foundation of Christian ethics. That's what Christianity is essentially engaged in teaching; and, let me hasten to say that, that is what Islam is endeavoring to teach. If that is what we all want to do, we better make a common cause of upholding justice and fairness. That's the significance of the command: "So be you forward in good works." If you remain indifferent to the injustices that are happening around you, then you are morally complacent. Moral complacency does not work in a good society. You cannot be indifferent. Today immigration is a big issue for our country. You and I can keep very quiet: "It's none of my business; I am not an immigrant; I am a citizen here." No, you better start worrying about other humans who need a place to feel secure. If we don't take a moral position on the issue, then we must realize that there are immigrants whose fundamental human rights will be violated. Moreover, if you do not stand up for those violated rights, then you are missing the point of upholding justice at the ethical level.

What I am talking about here is the interaction between normative tradition and practical decisions. The Prophet was once asked a very interesting question: "O Prophet of God, tell me about religion, everything." The response given by the Prophet is worth remembering: "You obey God, and be kind to everything that God has created." This is the foundational teaching of Islam. I am talking about interaction between human beings; if it is not informed by kindness, how else is it going to be informed? In the absence of a common theology of interfaith relations, what are we left with?

A culture of tolerance depends on the ethical sensibilities that God has provided us. Each one of us is inherently equipped to know the right from the wrong. In the Qur'an there is quite a clear statement saying that on the Day of Judgment you might say, "I didn't believe in this and that, I didn't believe in you O God." But God will say, "Did you know that you were supposed to treat your neighbor fairly and justly? Weren't you supposed to do that?" In other words,

"You are still morally responsible to me, even if you did not believe in Me—so far — so what! Okay, don't believe in Me; there are thousands who do not believe in Me, I don't care. But if you misbehave with your fellow human beings, I am going to catch you. I will not let you go." That is the kind of language the Qur'an is using. No, we will not be spared in terms of our responsibility towards fellow human beings.

So we come to a very tough question. All the things that I am talking about in the Qur'an, you might say, "Oh, isn't that idealization of what Islam teaches? How about these ISIS people? They are killing recklessly, how are you going to explain that?" This is a very critical question. "How are you going to talk about terrorism? Isn't terrorism inspired by Islamic thinking about jihad, fighting, holy war, dying in the path of God?" It is quite normal for you to ask me then, to probe me, to say, "Well, well, well, wait a minute. We do not accept what you are telling us. Tell us about this violent record that we find in Muslim society. This is what you Muslims have done in history, isn't that right?"

In response I am going to turn to a very sensitive document that has inspired Muslim jurists for ages. Even now, when they read this, they say, "Oh my goodness, we need to be careful about it." This is the document that was offered by ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Caliph of the Muslims. And the document was offered to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is a very important document, preserved in the historical sources.

There was a Christian priest who came to the Caliph and said, "You need to guarantee something to us, because we are inhabitants of Jerusalem." The worry was about the Muslim conquerors, whether they would treat Christians justly as a minority or whether they would take over their churches and convert them to mosques. The Caliph said, "No. You are guaranteed your life, your goods, and your churches, which will neither be occupied, nor destroyed." Imagine the kind of problem Egypt could face today if Muslims were to take over Christian churches. I am aware that Coptic churches are being bombed today; or in Pakistan or somewhere else the lives and the institutions of other faith communities are threatened by Muslim militants. When I hear about these violations there is always this critical question that comes to my mind: "What happened to the instructions given by Caliph Umar?" Because these were the most explicit instructions: "As long as you do not endanger the well-being of the people…"

Don't we say in America, "As long as you don't engage in risking the state, you are tolerated in this part of the world?" I still remember my leftist graduate student at the University of Virginia, who was constantly checked by the FBI, who regarded him as a threat to the American state. In other words, all

societies, including ours, have constant fear of those who might threaten the well-being of the state. We are talking about institutions. Institutions need to remain immune from careless and continuous threat, even by some of their own citizens, right?

Here then, you come to a very different understanding. The Qur'an is identifying other Abrahamic communities as the "Peoples of the Book." Hence, the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, maybe Sabians, are regarded as those who have received guidance from God. All of these peoples are included in "Peoples of the Book." Interestingly, when Muslims conquered India, a new *fatwa* was issued that even the Hindus are the Peoples of the Book. In other words, they should also be tolerated like the other monotheists. I don't mean to say they were treated as equal citizens, I will be honest about it. However discriminatory it sounds to modern ears, they were treated as second-class citizens with lesser rights than the domineering community. To be sure, in any medieval city in the Muslim world the "Peoples of the Book" were not treated as equal citizens. Citizenship in its modern meaning was absent. Nevertheless, the *Ahl al-Kitāb*, Peoples of the Book, were accorded autonomous existence—their own system, their own religious institutions, their own organizations—and nothing would be touched by the Muslims.

Let us examine the last piece of evidence that goes towards establishing the veracity of my contention that the dominant paradigm of social organization was coexistence and acknowledgement of an inherent measure of equality among all humans. My point of reference is a legal document. I want to be very clear here that the legal documents I have examined are dealing with the politics of the time. Legal life is very much the life that is experienced by the politicians and by the citizens. Obviously, in practical terms, one observes a discrepancy between the ideal and the real. One can observe that there are moments of total intolerance in Muslim societies. It is possible to ascribe this to a particular understanding of the world. The world in the legal writings of the Muslims, in the jurisprudence, including Imam Al-Shāfiʿī and all the other founding Imams of the legal schools, is divided into *dār al-Islām*, and *dār al-harb*. The world is either under the domination of Muslim rulers, or they are under non-Muslim rulers. In the latter domain there is potentially an area that must be conquered by military expeditions. This is the *dār al-harb* (abode of war). These were legal constructs, and there was a problem with the legal constructs, because they were feeding into the political policies of the state. The state needed to understand when to defy the non-Muslim powers that were threatening its boundaries. And they were required two or three times a year to

engage in subduing the enemy by fighting them. It is very important to keep in mind that politics creates difficulties for many of the religious ideals.

We find that to be true even today. I have spoken to my Jewish colleagues, when we were sent as a peace mission under the sponsorship of an international organization to build bridges of understanding between Jews, Christians, and Muslim Palestinians in Jerusalem. We were there for fifteen days in a Pontifical Institute in Jerusalem. We were working with the religious communities. The Palestinians for obvious reasons refused to come. Their refusal was based on their being constantly humiliated by the security apparatus of Israel. They could not accept seats in this intercommunal dialogue. In dialogue, as we all know, everybody should be equal. The Palestinians strongly felt that they were not treated as equal. That contention was a blow to the goals of the exercise we were engaged in. Hence, we ended up talking to the Christians and the Jews. Sometimes the Sufi teachers would come, but Sufi teachers did not represent the majority of Palestinians either.

In that kind of situation, we were looking at a very different political realm and political practicalities and policy-making, and we became fully aware of lots of problems. I want to make it clear that I am aware of the historically problematic parts of the religious applications, and the religious laws' application; I do not want to deny that, I do not want to whitewash them. Muslims had the chance to rule; sometimes they left good examples of the policies of the state, at other times they totally failed to uphold the dignity of fellow humans. I want to avoid self-glorification and claims that sound so hollow to the students of history: "This was a glorious period!" I don't want to engage in apologetics; I want us to understand the reality of the situation in promoting religious pluralism.

I have been constantly searching for a political-religious document that could serve as a template for the development of the culture of toleration among world religions. Where do we go to find a document that will work for you and me today? We are Jews, Muslims, and Christians living in North America. We want to establish a good community relationship between all of us.

My last piece of evidence is a historical document. My Jewish and Christian colleagues have often asked me whether the document I cite is part of a private conversation ascribed to the caliph. And I have repeatedly emphasized that the document is a policy statement by the Fourth Caliph, Ali, when he was dispatching his governor to Egypt. The governor, Malik bin Ashtar, was being sent to a place where Muslims were a conquering minority, in a country that was Christian.[2]

If Muslims had ruled with the attitude of "We are not going to deal with the Christians because they have already lost their path—there is no salvation for them," then the matter would have been resolved very clearly by violence against the Christian majority. There would have been some kind of genocide, and the killing of the Christians would have solved the problem politically for Muslim authority.

But here are the instructions of the Caliph, and I want you to know that I do not play with the translation. The instructions begin by an admonition: "Infuse your heart with mercy, loving-kindness with your subjects." The governor is being told the way he should exercise his political authority. "For they are of two kinds, either they are your brethren in religion or your equal in creation." This is Ali, the Fourth Caliph, sending instructions to the governor who, as the Caliph's representative, must follow these instructions to the word. "You cannot treat them as inhuman, because they have been created like you; they share with you the creation. Errors catch them unaware, deficiencies overcome them, so grant them your pardon and your forgiveness, to the same extent that you hope God will grant you pardon and His forgiveness."

This is one of those statements, by the way, which the United Nations recently has sent to Arab governments around the world: "Have you forgotten this teaching of your Caliph Ali? You better follow this." You can check the United Nations website and trace the letter of Ali to Malik bin Ashtar to check out how many versions have been sent around the world.

Muslims need to re-awaken to the idea of equality in the very creation of all human beings, because one of the problems with religious communities is that they are self-righteously exclusionary. Doesn't the Qur'an remind Muslims with the following message: "You are the best community that has been brought forward for humanity to guide them" (Qur'an 3:110).

Does this mean, "I don't want to share my salvation with anyone; I am the best"? That is not how Taha Jabir al-Alwani would interpret it. "Because you are the best, you share the greatest responsibility"—that is how he interpreted it. He said, "No, you have a bigger burden, to show that you are a truly moderate community (*umma wasata*). As a moderate community you show the example of what you carry in your life."

Where would this equality of creation be located? Could that be in theology? Or, does it take its God-given position in religious ethics? My conclusion is that we have to bring in the religious ethics to teach us what to do. That is what the Qur'an is saying: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it**;** And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (91:7-10).

We are innately inspired with goodness and badness, and the ones who choose to be good are the ones who are saved. In other words, it is talking about the human creature: because you have been created this way, you have been inspired with religiously ordained responsibility. How are you going to live in the human community? Are you going to live in the human community with a sense of superiority, that you are superior to others? That is not what God has created us for. Drawing the larger conclusion from this statement of the Qur'an, it is not a matter of superiority and inferiority; it is not "me saved, you damned" which is going to work.

Have you seen the discussions by John of Damascus about the theology of the Saracens (Muslims)? It is worth reading to see what kind of debate was taking place in Damascus in the 8th and 9th centuries. And this was between John of Damascus and Muslims. John was engaged in polemics against Muslims and occupied in proving the falsehood of Islam's claim to be God's religion. Throughout the history of communities we have polemics trying to prove that the other claimant to exclusive salvation was wrong. Such theology was not interested in building bridges of understanding. It sole ambition has remained falsification of the opponent's claim to salvation.

In the final analysis, we are left with religious ethics that can bring us all under the tent of Abraham to share the common ground of "competing" to do the good. Human beings today cannot afford to uphold theologies of hatred and claims of superiority. Quite to the contrary, they must engage in relating to one another as "neighbors" and those "created in equality."

Notes

1. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford University Press, 2001).
2. https://www.al-islam.org/richest-treasure-imam-ali/imam-ali-s-letter-malik-al-ashtar-richest-treasure

16

Religious Faiths in a Pluralist Society

Daniel A. Madigan[1]

T H E M E : There are no borders in the ecosphere we all inhabit. Likewise, because we are a single humanity, we cannot pretend that the vision we have of what constitutes human flourishing is a private matter – for oneself alone, of for just one's own family, or for one's community. God does not have multiple projects for humanity. However, what we believe and profess about God is very varied. If we intend to be one nation under God, we must allow our belief to be questioned by the differently believing as well as those who share our mind. We must also find the courage to admit that we have long failed to live up to our ideals. We must stop acting like salespeople. We are supposed to be the free samples.

I am going to the run the risk here that you might think I am conforming to the stereotype of the nitpicking and logic-chopping Jesuit. Anyone who likes to dig into the full Oxford English Dictionary will see there that the words "jesuitical" and "talmudic" are synonyms. However, I don't think what I am doing is just overwrought speculation about the meaning of words. I am intending to focus carefully on some of the words that were given to us as our topic: *Religious Faiths in a Pluralist Society*. Each of those words is freighted with great meaning; and we recognize that each of them is extremely complex and open to various interpretations.

Now people from both ends of the political spectrum recognize, either with horror or with glee—depending on which end of the spectrum you stand on— that the project of building a pluralist society is at least under great strain if not under great threat, not only in this country but in many parts of the world. Some want to coerce or even to eradicate the other—the religious other, the ethnic other, the ideological other. Some are satisfied with just excluding or marginalizing the other in order slowly, perhaps using legal means, to create the kind

of pure society that they hanker for. However, I hope the current critical state of our world will not cause us take our eyes off the question of what kind of pluralist society we want to build after this crisis is over. What do we mean when we say we want to build a *pluralist* society? We must have a long-term vision of the societies we are trying to build. In a situation of conflict, everyone feels compelled to take a stand or take sides, and we can be lured into thinking that the definition of a pluralist society is clear enough that everyone ought to understand what it means: difference, diversity, multiplicity—all the buzzwords of the pluralist vision.

I have spoken before about the difference between plurality and pluralism. *Plurality* is a simple fact: there is a plurality of religions; there is a plurality of ethnicities; a plurality of languages and cultures, etc. *Pluralism*, on the other hand, is an attitude, a policy. To say that one is pluralist is somehow to accept that plurality. It may not be a particularly positive acceptance; perhaps just a shrug of the shoulders, as if to say "It doesn't matter how many religions we have since none of them is true." Or pluralism can sometimes be a theological commitment, in which we say that God allows this plurality, even that God *desires* this plurality. Or it might be a decision in which one says, "I have my own position, but I am going to treat every other position with the same openness with which I treat my own position" — a relativizing point of view. Alternatively, a certain kind of pluralist might say that truth is so complex, so multifaceted, that each religious vision contributes just part of the whole. Others might consider themselves pluralist because they believe that religious commitments are simply questions of personal taste, and therefore not to be disputed about. There is a whole range of things that "pluralist" might mean, so we should not be too quick to think that we know exactly what a pluralist society might be like.

One of the common ways of conceiving pluralism and pluralist societies presents them as being very desirable and very global. However, this way seems to me a kind of balkanization. Let me explain what I mean. "Balkanization" is usually applied to the breakup of multi-ethnic states that results from post-imperial situations, for example after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and its control of southeast Europe, or after the end of French, Belgian, British and other imperial regimes in Africa and South Asia. There is a move to set up separate states where conflicts over religion, or language, or tribe and so on are managed by creating a patchwork of separate countries. One manages plurality by establishing borders, and effectively admitting that there is little we can do about this except to allow each group to operate within its own sphere. The borders are drawn so that the other will not impinge, and you

strengthen the border and the sense of identity so that the separation will not be challenged. For a time it often works.

Often it seems that this is the kind of pluralist society that is being spoken of in the U.S. We think of our society as an imaginary patchwork of different religion traditions, and we cannot actually do anything about the multiplicity except to keep each one in its place. We may define a certain minimum common space that is agreed to by everyone — or almost everyone — but after that we say, "Okay the rest is your business: your ritual, your theology, your customs and culture, your understanding of God and humanity." We set up boundaries that we think of as make our religions more or less impervious to one another, thinking that that will somehow enable a peaceful co-existence, and that we will be able to go ahead in that way to create the ideal pluralist society. No one impinges on what is sacred to anyone else.

However, I want to suggest that we have something to learn here from our experience with ecology and environmental protection. There are, I think, only two people left who still think that it makes any sense at all to make environmental protection regulations at the county level, or the state level, or even at the national level: Donald Trump and Scott Pruitt. But we all know that it makes absolutely no sense to balkanize our approach to the environment, because we inhabit a single ecosphere. The belching chimney of a coal-fired power station in Kentucky has its effect on the rising sea level in the Pacific Ocean, with catastrophic results for the people whose homes may be thousands of miles away from Kentucky, but which are mere inches above that rising sea level. There are no borders in the ecosphere: it is common to us all. I would suggest that this insight about the environment — it's something we are all coming to realize — ought to inform the way we think of religious pluralism. How does the kind of religious "balkanization" I have been describing help us? Everyone is put in their own defined religious "territory" and occasionally we meet together and tell each other about those territories. We say, "Oh you believe in love? We believe in love too; that's very nice!" Or "Peace; we have peace too!" We show one another the museum-pieces of our high religious ideals. But just like in museums, one may look and admire, but one must not touch.

Actual human life is a little messier than that, as people in the southeastern Europe, the original Balkans, have found out. There is what we might call an ecology of human society, and because we are a single humanity, we cannot pretend that the way we act or the vision we have of what it means to be human, or what constitutes human flourishing, or what an ideal society looks like are only personal or private matters for myself alone, or for just for my family or

for my community. Since we share one world, there is a single ecosystem of human living. We are not entitled— and this is my key point—to retreat behind religious and ethical borders and claim some kind of sovereign immunity.

I believe God has one project for humanity. I cannot be convinced that God has multiple projects for humanity, in the sense that God would say, "You are Chinese. Okay, I have decided that you will be Buddhist or Confucian or Daoist; you won't actually believe in God, but you will have these kinds of scriptures, and this understanding of what it is to be human, that understanding of the self." Or that God would say, "You are Indian. I have decided you will be Hindu, and these are your scriptures," and so on—as though somehow God has already determined that different races would live according to these quite distinct visions of humanity and divinity, indeed of all reality.

I can understand why some Muslims would hesitate to read *Al-Mā'ida* verse 48 as an affirmation of what most people would call religious pluralism. When God says in the Qur'an that for each of us He has established a law and a way of life, it is difficult to see how that diversity might include the sort of substantial differences of belief that actually distinguish different religions from one another. Many will note superficial similarities among religions or simply project an imagined unity onto them, repeatedly claiming that "all religions teach *x*" or "all religions believe *y*." Only people who are not really paying attention to what religions are teaching, and what religious believers are claiming, think that religions are all the same. We may indeed all be the same as human beings, with the same origin, the same dignity and the same destiny.

However, what we believe and profess is very varied, and we have an obligation to take one another's beliefs seriously. To take them seriously does not mean to leave them alone—like museum pieces. It means allowing those beliefs to challenge our certainties and interrogate our settled positions.

The things about which we differ are not just marginal. They are matters at the heart of what it means to be human, because our understanding of God is intimately entwined with our understanding of what human life is and what constitutes human flourishing. If we want to be polysyllabic about it, in Christian circles we call this theological anthropology—a technical way of saying that what we understand about humanity is inextricably linked with what we believe about God. For a believer, there is no anthropology that is not a theological anthropology. Theology is not simply about other things, up there, sometime in the future. It is about here and now. Theology is about God as Creator, and of course we all participate in God's continued creating of our world. So our theological anthropologies are at the heart of what we have to say to one another.

Therefore, a pluralist society cannot be a society simply with a patchwork of separate religious communities, like states—each with its own separate under-standing of the divine and the human, each with its sovereign independence and the right not to be questioned—because we share one human ecosystem. What one person believes about race or slavery or gender or ethnicity or war or peace or health and well-being, has its effect on all of society. We do not live isolated human lives.

Because our belief has its effect on everyone, then we are all answerable to one another. We have to be accountable to one another. Most of us have come to recognize that, with regard to the state of our natural environment, we have a right and a duty to call each other to account for the way we are living, for the way we are driving, for the way we are generating power, for the way we are mining, for where we are smoking, for how we are disposing of our waste prod-ucts. So too we have a right and a duty to call each other to account for the way we treat one another; for the attitudes we take and the way we speak to one another; for the injustices we can sometimes unknowingly be involved in; for the rights of others that have a claim on us. This is certainly not just a case of the majority ruling, or the traditional culture dictating to others. The majority is just as much in need of challenge as anyone else. This engagement is a long, complex process that requires patience and humility. Dominant cultures have to be open to challenge and change as a result of the encounter with different insights into the nature of human relationships. A pluralism that simply separates difference rather than engaging it sells humanity short.

There is another reason why we cannot simply work with a kind of patch-work pluralism. That is because each human being's identity is socially formed—I don't want to say "socially constructed," because that makes it sounds a bit too post-modern. What I mean is that our humanity is formed in society. Each person's identity is a crisscrossing, an intricate web of relation-ships with family and friends, of culture, of nationality, of religious belief, and any number of other things. There is no way of placing a simple label on a person, for example: Muslim or Christian.

I, for example, am an Australian; but not all Australians are Christian. I am not a citizen here in the US; I am what the Internal Revenue Service likes to call so warmly a Non-Resident Alien. I am a priest. Obviously not all Australians are priests, and not all priests are Jesuits as I am. Who I am is a crisscrossing of all those factors, and of the places I have lived—in Asia, in Australia, in the Middle East, in the U.S., in the UK, in Italy. All are terribly important to me, including the friendships I treasure, the competencies I have gained, the hospitality I have received. It will not surprise you to know that not all Jesuit priests are students

of Islam! The identity of each of us—of every person reading this essay—is a unique intertwining of so many relationships, so many factors, that it would make no sense at all for me to say, for example, of one of my colleagues at Georgetown, "Oh, he is a Muslim" as though that explains anything much. Though we might be of different religions, he and I are both university professors—which puts us in a privileged minority together, sharing a certain language and style, wielding a certain authority. We are both white men—another privileged group we benefit from belonging to. Our differences are real, but none of the differences or of the commonalities defines us. We are both unique and can only really be understood on the basis of the intertwining relationships that make us who we are. There are a lot of things that can be said of a person, but the idea that the religious label somehow gives us very much information at all is rather shaky.

So this approach to pluralism that I have very often found operative in conversations in the U.S. and in Australia—the idea that we create a patchwork, with a space to be Muslim here, and a space to be Christian over there, and other spaces for other religions—the kind of quarters that Abdul Aziz Sachedina described in the old city of Jerusalem for instance—such an idea will not do. No, we inhabit one single human ecosystem, and as members of that human ecosystem created by God, each of us is unique. We are not defined by being members of one class, one nation, one religion, one ethnicity. There is no patchwork; there is only intertwining, and interweaving. There is not a single piece of this world that God has left static and monochrome. There is no place that God is not continually embroidering and interweaving into a whole.

The actual faith identification of the religious person, the religious label of which he or she might from time to time lay hold, is only one element of a person's identity. Now don't get me wrong, I do not mean that it is only an incidental element, as if you could leave it out and it would not make much difference—although for some people that is true. You will often hear people interviewed and they will say, "I was brought up Catholic, now I am *x*." Their religious label is not significant in their sense of who they are.

Although I say that a person's faith identification is only one element of identity, for some people that single element can be the defining element. There is, however, more than one sense in which a thing can be a defining element of one's identity. The first sense is that the defining element is a pervasive element. That is to say it runs through everything about one; it is not simply a compartment. I hope that for me, for example, being a Christian, being a Catholic, being a Jesuit—all those things are pervasive elements in my identity, not separable from one another. Each suffuses who I am.

For some people, however, religious identity is a defining element of their identity only in the sense that it is useful for marking borders of exclusion. I think we all know people like this; they define themselves by a religious or national identity, but there is no real content to it. It only defines who is outside, who is the other. In many situations, we use religion as a border-defining element not because it pervades and truly shapes our identity, not because it informs and guides everything we do—how we are scholars or how we are doctors or how we are teachers or how we are artists—but simply because it gives us a definition of who is on the outside. We hear plenty of examples of this in contemporary European and American public discourse: "We are a Christian culture; accepting so many Muslims refugees is a threat to our identity!" If these cultures were Christian in any real sense, then the gospel imperative to welcome the stranger and assist the needy would trump any considerations of cultural homogeneity. If Christian identity were more than skin deep for such people, then they might take seriously Jesus' repeated warning that anyone who seeks to save his own life will lose it, but anyone who is prepared to lose his life for the sake of the gospel will find it (Luke 9:23; 17:33).

Our religious traditions—particularly when we talk about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—went through this process of trying to define the borders early on. Daniel Boyarin has written most tellingly on this subject with regard to the so-called parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism, i.e., the gradual development of the sense that there must be a clear border here; the idea that you could not claim, for example, that you are a Jewish Christian.[2] You must either be a Jew or a Christian. Now most people's lives did not actually work that way, and for a long time people did not fully recognize the borders, until the authorities on both sides started to police those borders. We came to see difference rather than commonality.

We see in the Qur'an and in the Islamic tradition something similar going on. Are the Christians fellow believers, or are they not believers? Where are we going to draw the line? Who are the *mu'minin*? What is the difference between being a *mu'min* and a *muslim*? So we see at the beginnings of many religious traditions an attempt to understand where the border lies. Professor Sachedina mentioned John of Damascus. John is an example of this, trying to make clear how he sees Islam as falling on the wrong side of the borderline, as being a heresy like the other Christian heresies.

The tendency in the patchwork pluralism that I have been talking about is for our religious identities to be considered borderline identities; they serve principally for working out who is different, who is not me, who is to be excluded or controlled.

In the U.S. people rather blithely talk about "one nation under God," though Congress, responding to a groundswell of opinion, added "under God" to the pledge of allegiance only in 1954. It struck me, as I was writing — that is not a bad definition of *umma*, is it? What is the Islamic *umma* but one nation under God? That's the real question for all of us as believers: what does it mean in any modern nation state to be one nation under God? Even though I did not grow up saluting the flag and saying that, I am glad that any people would pursue the goal of being one nation under God. But what does that mean?

We have such a range of answers to that question, and they are theological answers, as well as ethical answers. I agree with Professor Sachedina that we cannot really divide theology from anthropology, as all theology includes an anthropology. All theology is in some sense anthropological—because God is *khāliq,* God is Creator, and so we are living in God's world, in the world God is continuing to create. For that reason, is not all theology also necessarily political? Because we have different answers to the question of what it means to be a nation under God, and yet we are living together in a single human ecosphere, we have both a right and a duty to challenge one another and to accept to be challenged. I hope that what happens in this country is not that the majority of people, who currently identify as Christian, will simply say that it is okay for Muslims to be here as long as they know their place. I hope the day will come when the majority is prepared to listen to the challenge that Muslims propose, just as we have listened to the challenge, particularly in the last sixty years, that Jews have proposed to us. I hope we will take seriously the challenges of the other, without simply reducing everything either to a kind of patchwork of separate realities, or to a melting-pot in which everything is simply one alloy.

It is very common to hear people say, "Oh, that's your truth." This is the patchwork mentality again. But what about Truth with a capital-T? *Al-haqq?* There is one truth. If God is one, and God is *al-Haqq*, then there is only one truth. There is not your truth, my truth, their truth. And it is going to take work for us to learn to seek truth together, not simply to put it in the too-hard basket, or to say, "That's your truth; that's okay for you, but my truth is separate and different." This work will require humility from us. For every believer, there is no more important political question than what it means to be one nation under God. To address this question together, we need two kinds of humility — here I am going to draw on the work of a friend and colleague, Catherine Cornille.[3]

First is epistemological humility. We need to have a certain humility about what we can know and the possibility for human language fully to express the truth about God. There are limits. It will take time. It will, as the Qur'an says, be a goal that will only be reached when God reveals to us at the end the truth of the

matters about which we differed (Qur'an 5:48). However, that does not mean that in the meantime there is not a conversation to be had—indeed a struggle to be had—in order to try to get closer to the truth.

In my current work I find the most important thing is the theological challenges that Islam poses to Christian theology. Every one of those questions—about Jesus, about the Trinity, about scripture—is a perfectly valid question. Every one of those questions has been asked also by Christians, and they continue to be asked by Christians. So it is not simply a case of saying, "I have my private space here—my theological space—and I will keep saying these things about God without taking into serious consideration what Muslims ask." The questions posed by the other are real questions. Given that there is only one God, and only one "ecosphere" of human living, we have to listen to one another in this, even if we know that we will never fully grasp the truth of God.

This kind of epistemological humility—humility about what we can fully know—is not just relativism. Rather it is realism about the limits of the human mind and the limits of human language. And it represents a respect for the God who is always beyond. As the Qur'an says of God in *Surah al-Ikhlās* (112:4), there is nothing at all remotely comparable to God. God is not just a being who happens to be infinitely more powerful and vastly more mysterious than the rest of us. God is not one of us, and we will never grasp God with our language. However, even though we cannot grasp the truth of God, that truth can grasp us and transform us.

The other kind of humility that our task requires is a moral humility, an acknowledgement that, in spite of all great ideals we profess—we have an undeniable history of moral failure. It's not all history either; our failures are contemporary. A genuine moral humility is demanded of all of us, to acknowledge the fact that we have a longer history of failing in our ideals than we have a glorious history of living up to them. Could we find the honesty and courage to acknowledge to one another not only that we ourselves have sinned but that we are entangled together in webs of oppression that stretch across centuries—and this not just in our conflicts with one another, but in our common failure to do justice in the world?

We are involved together—historically and even today—in unjust economic structures, in exploitative trade of oil and arms and drugs, in the trafficking of persons and the exploitation of labor, in self-interested and coldly calculating alliances, in aggressions and domination that we dress up in the garb of civilization and religion, in crimes destructive of humanity that we justify by appeal to humanity's Creator. We too often despise those who are different in

race, ethnicity, gender and belief, and we begrudge the world's poor the little they need just to stay alive.

This kind of humility also demands of us that we stop acting like salespeople. I heard this wonderful line from a Methodist preacher in Rome about eighteen months ago. He said that we are always carrying on as if we are salespeople, as though we are selling a nice new subdivision: "Come and buy here, come and join our gated community," as though we as Christians were salespeople for the kingdom of God. "We are not salespeople," he said. "We are supposed to be the free samples." We are supposed to be living examples, giving people a taste of what a human life might be like when it is truly lived "under God."

If we are not doing that—whether as Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, whoever—if we are not living as free samples of the particular kind of humanity under God that we believe is the truth of our humanity under God, then we are wasting our breath. Together as Muslims and Christians we can learn how to live (and offer freely to others) that particular way of being human that flows from belief in the God of Abraham. So far we have not done a great job of living out that humanity transformed according to the desire of God as revealed in the Abrahamic tradition. God willing, we will increasingly do so.

Notes

1. My thanks to Dr Richard Jones for editing the transcript of my lecture.
2. Daniel Boyarin, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to which is Appended a Correction of my Border Lines)." *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 99, Number 1, Winter 2009, pp.7-36 (Review) Published by University of Pennsylvania Press DOI: 10.1353/jqr.0.0030
3. See Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008). Cornille summarizes her position in Cornille, Catherine. (2013) "Conditions for InterReligious Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue* (ed C. Cornille), John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, UK. doi: 10.1002/9781118529911.ch2.

AFTERWORD

Paris, San Bernardino, Brussels, Istanbul, Ankara and Lahore – across the continents the murder and mayhem in these cities and the unending foreign interventions combined with the brutal ethnic and religious wars across large parts of the Muslim world create the impression that we are living in a deeply fractured world. It seems as if those scholars like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington who had been talking of a Clash of Civilizations perhaps had something significant to say after all.

Fortunately, there is also an equally strong counter to that argument in those who passionately believe in the Dialogue of Civilizations. Perhaps the greatest challenge that faces those who promote dialogue across cultures and faiths is a general lack of information of the "other". In spite of living in the age of information and technology there is a surprising amount of misunderstanding and distortion of facts. That is why the Dialogue of Civilizations is such an important and urgent need to build bridges and promote understanding.

This excellent collection is a good example of the Dialogue of Civilizations. In it we are privileged to share the thoughts and experiences of an extraordinary group of distinguished diplomats, scholars and activists of different backgrounds. The contributions are scholarly and provocative. We are enlightened on an entire range of topics that are as relevant as they are current to our world – from scholarly discussions of what the Shari'ah, or religious law in Islam, means to a comparison of the zeal of the First Crusaders to that of members of ISIS.

It is my hope that people will read this book to acquire knowledge but also as a call to action. If we believe the world is indeed fractured, then we can do no better than to heed the great Judaic saying, which lies at the heart of the Abrahamic faiths, urging us to go out and heal a fractured world: *tikkun olam*.

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APPENDIX

I AM A MUSLIM
Testament of *Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani*

Translation by Ali Altalib, grandson of Taha Jabir al-Alwani

I SANCTIFY JUSTICE, CELEBRATE FREEDOM, AND HONOR HUMANITY. While demonstrating gentleness with the weak, I remind the strong that there is always someone who is stronger than them. I advise the rich to fulfill the rights of the poor, while I remind the poor that the rich among them have been entrusted with God's wealth to fulfill the rights of the poor. I love goodness and gentleness and reject evil. I invite to piety and reject violence. I cling to the rope of guidance and uphold the truth. I fight lies and deceit and forbid corruption. I seek reconciliation to the extent possible. I yearn for peace and despise war. I love humility and strive for a good life. Death beckons, yet I believe that this is a bridge I must cross, to cross from a fleeting life to one that is eternal. I desire the best ending and seek refuge in God from the contrary. I love heaven and detest hellfire. I seek security and hate instability. I hate authoritarianism. I am not profane, destructive, or corrupt.

My lineage extends to Adam and Hawwa, for Adam is my father and Hawaa is my mother. All members of humanity are my sisters and brothers. I do not disdain, betray, or humiliate a single human being. Rather, I work to guide human beings, to light their path and walk with them along the path to paradise. I seek to be a roadblock between them and falling into hellfire. I love the universe and belong to it. I love all my neighbors in the universe, including its trees, plants, rocks, animals, mountains, and rivers. God, most Majestic, has created me from this earth. To this earth He will return me, and from this earth He will restore me once again. To this earth I belong, and for its cultivation I call. My desire is to elevate the truth; my goal is to spread peace and security in it. My means is to struggle with my own soul in order for peace to be realized and security to prevail. I invite to God, to Whom is my ultimate return. Peace is my objective. Security is my desire. Terrorism is my enemy. Conflict is my adversary. Inner peace is my pursuit.

Do you recognize me? Do you know on this earth anyone who parallels this description?

I am a Muslim.

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Reaffirming our joint spiritual journey to God, and spiritual responsibility towards humanity is the burden we all share and the antidote to bigotry, prejudice, and all those ideologies that betray mankind's sense of compassion and justice. Wholeness – despite our persisting fine differences – for society and for persons is the theme of this Muslim-Christian dialogue sustained for six years in Washington, D.C.

The power of faith is the power to unite and the recognition of commonalities through the medium of communication is one path to achieve this, and one element of Iraqi legal scholar Taha Jabir al-Alwani's greater vision. In 2007 a conversation began between John W. Crossin, a priest of the Order of St. Francis de Sales seeking to open the door of the forty-year-old Washington Theological Consortium – heretofore all-Christian – and Ahmed Alwani, son of Taha Jabir al-Alwani. The younger Alwani was seeking an institutional partner for his father's project of relating Islamic scholarship to Western social sciences.

- Must religious emotions and ideas fuel social conflict?
- Who pays the cost of mediating conflict?
- What is the right way to value human labor?
- Who and what is meant by the Qur'an's reference to the "People of the Book"?

Addressing these divisive issues, Muslim and Christian thinkers in pairs dig down toward their respective ultimate convictions. Occasionally the pair concurs. Always they elucidate their fine differences.