

IN FRATERNITY

A MESSAGE TO MUSLIMS IN AMERICA



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وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ
أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ



*BEFORE THIS WE WROTE IN PSALMS,
AFTER THE MESSAGE GIVEN TO MOSES;*

*MY SERVANTS, THE RIGHTEOUS
SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.*

THE QURAN 21:105

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CONTENTS

<i>PREFACE</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ISLAM /AMERICA?</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>AMERICAN SOCIETY</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>CHILDHOOD /YOUTH</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>WOMEN</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>MUSLIM MINORITIES AND SHARIA</i> ...	<i>83</i>

PREFACE

Muslim Americans count by the millions. They come from different races, ethnic groups and continents. Steering their way in America in a fashion consistent with being Muslim and being American is a major concern for many of them.

Sometimes there is an obvious conflict between Islamic norms and some lifestyles that have attained recognition as social norms over recent years in America. The choice for Muslims in these cases is easy, as what Islam forbids must be avoided.

Sometimes the picture is not that clear because the conflict is more rooted in national culture and ethnic background. Many people tend to cling to the customs practiced back home and try to cloak them with a religious sanctity. Sometimes it is due to an occult sense of homesickness.

Sometimes it is due to a feeling of insecurity in the ocean of American society. Often, children born and raised in America in these families do not share their parents' dilemma or vision.

Newly converted Americans (commonly called indigenous Muslims) who have accepted Islam as a way of life are also at a loss. How far should they change socially? What should be retained or discarded from their previous life-styles? These are some of the questions that are important to them.

Must there be a conflict between being a Muslim and being an American? And, if so, in what manner should it be resolved without compromising either of the two components of the American Muslim identity?

This booklet addresses these and other issues with which many Muslim Americans are preoccupied.

Islam is not for a special people or a special geographical locality. It is a universal call to all human beings wherever they are and whoever they are.

Hassan Hathout
Fathi Osman
Maher Hathout

*AND THUS HAVE WE WILLED YOU TO BE A
COMMUNITY OF THE MIDDLE WAY SO THAT WITH
YOUR LIVES YOU MIGHT BEAR WITNESS TO THE
TRUTH OVER ALL MANKIND, AND THAT THE
APOSTLE MIGHT BEAR WITNESS TO IT OVER YOU.*

THE QURAN 2:143

CHAPTER 1

ISLAM / AMERICA?

Undoubtedly, many American foreign policy decisions have betrayed the ideals of international justice and fairness alienating Muslim masses all over the world.

Undeniably, a great majority of the American public looks at the realities of Islam through barriers of lingering historical prejudice, biased academia, sensational media, and sad and painful political events.

On the other hand, Muslims have great difficulties in separating America, the people, the civilization, the progress and the pluralism, from America, the foreign policy, the superpower, the monopoly and the heartless competitive capitalism.

But an analytical look at Muslims and at America will show clearly that the distance is being reduced and the barriers dismantled.

There is an opportunity for Islam in America, and there is an opportunity for

America in Islam. There exists mutual suitability between America and Islam and Muslims. A healthy Islamic existence and a positive Islamic contribution to American life is as good for Muslims as for non-Muslims in the United States, as well as in Muslim countries, and as a matter of fact, in the whole world.

The mutual suitability is not something visionary or imaginary. It is practical. And there are several factors that make it possible and real.

Islam means unequivocal commitment to the One Supreme Unique God as the way to achieve peace in its broadest sense, including a sense of contentment and gratification. Peace is an abstract term. It does not only mean an absence of war or tension. It means a balanced interaction between homo sapiens and nature and harmonious ties between

social and physical environments.

The universal message from the One God is one message, carried by all the messengers including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and all other biblical messengers including Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who came to the world miraculously through a direct divine order through the Virgin Mary. The last of the messengers is Muhammad. The *Quran*, the eternal book of guidance, asks Muslims not to discriminate among the Messengers. The divine message, revealed and preserved in the *Torah* and the *Gospel*, was finally perfected, documented and saved in the *Quran*.

Islam is not a new religion in the chronological sense. It is not alien to the Abrahamic tradition or to the "People of the Book" (i.e., the Christians and Jews). It did not come to abrogate but to confirm and

complete the truth.

The human being is the best of divine creation. The protection of the dignity of the human race is a just cause. The homo sapien is not just another creature. He is God's vicegerent on earth endowed with freedom and knowledge as the best methods to adapt to the environment. He is qualified to carry out the trust of God, to act on His assignment, to exercise His prerogatives, enhance His creativity, and rejoice in His freedom and dignity.

Freedom means responsibility, and responsibility demands accountability to the One Almighty who knows both the covert and overt intentions and the circumstances. He alone is the Judge, the Just, the Most Compassionate and Merciful.

Human accountability is actualized upon the intentions and deeds of each person.

However, the Grace of God is always there. The human being is a totality of mind, body and soul. S/he has to find his/her way to God through his/her rationale and natural instincts and the spiritual compass.

The will of God is that people will be different and diversified. Differences of colors and languages are a sign of the magnanimity of God. The Quran tells humanity that people were *“created from a single pair, male and female, and were made into nations and tribes to know one another, not to despise one another. The best amongst you in the eyes of God is the one who is most aware of Him.”* The Quran further states, *“There is no compulsion in religion.”* And, *“If it were the will of your Lord to make people in one form, He would have done so, but His will is that they will always be different.”*

The creed of Islam is based on five pillars.

1) The proclamation that there is no deity but Allah (God) and that Muhammad is His Messenger;

2) The prayers, during which mind, body and soul face the direction of Mecca where Ahraham established the house of worship of the One God. This prayer is performed five times a day;

3) Fasting in the month of *Ramadan*, an Islamic lunar month;

4) Pilgrimage to Mecca at least once per lifetime for whoever can afford it; and

5) Payment of the dues, i.e., rights of the needy (*Zakat*).

A Muslim's life is conducted in all its aspects according to this credence. Moreover, Muslims are divinely urged to organize and elect the leadership to conduct their affairs according to *shura*, mutual counseling with binding respect to the will of

the people either directly or through representation, but never transgressing the boundaries set by God.

Islam gives high priority to the following values.

- 1) The oneness and uniqueness of God
- 2) The sanctity of human life
- 3) The freedom of choice
- 4) The importance of responsibility
- 5) The significance of accountability
- 6) The dignity to human family
- 7) The care for the environment
- 8) The acknowledgment of Christianity and Judaism as God's revealed religions
- 9) The need for fulfillment of the human needs: material, intellectual and spiritual
- 10) The acceptance of pluralism and diversity
- 11) The firm belief in leadership from the people, by the people, and for the people through consultation and representation.

Muslim Americans

The Muslim American community has certain characteristics that make it qualified to contribute the values of the divine message to the country.

Estimated at five million, they come from all corners of the globe. They have the wealth of various human experiences and cultures. Whether they are the earlier immigrants or later immigrants, they have an opportunity of complimenting one another in different endeavors. They come from every social background, and have a variety of skills with a sizeable percentage of professionals and specialists among men and women.

Muslim countries do not have a past history of direct confrontation with the United States in the form of colonialism.

Muslim people in these countries were not under the direct military occupation of US forces like they were under Britain, France, Italy or Holland.

Muslims have not been discriminated against in the United States like they are being suppressed in the Soviet Union or China. Muslims who migrated to this country are not burdened by decades of bitterness and negative memories of the American people. African American Muslims were always in the forefront in the quest for justice. They offer a great source of comfort and support to their immigrant brethren. Muslim Americans, by virtue of their religion, which enhances universality and fraternity of human beings, by virtue of their diversity and plurality, and by virtue of the very nature of the composition of their population, are qualified and ready to take

their place in the American mainstream and to be an active, positive component of American pluralism.

A Look at America

We live in the American age throughout the globe. What happens in America affects the whole world for better or for worse. What is taking place here today may repeat itself tomorrow or the day after in other areas of the world.

The American experiment is the most tangible reality of the modern world. It cannot be under estimated, either in its positive or in its negative aspects. Any enhancement of good and any fight against evil in America will subsequently reflect on the whole world.

America is young, vibrant, strong and

also quite vulnerable. It is a country made by immigrants, aiming at gaining freedom. It harbors great successes and also often fosters contradictions.

There is no doubt that Americans enjoy freedom and have an opportunity to pursue happiness. The majority appreciate free debate, and the country has an unmatched ability to change and to adapt to new ideas. There is an uninhibited questioning of traditional ways and conventional beliefs. Relatively speaking, there is less xenophobia and more tolerance to “the other” compared with other countries of the world. There is relentless scientific research and exploding progress in technology. There is unmatched military might and economic strength.

Hand in hand with that, there are factors which can endanger everything that is good in this experiment.

Freedom is threatened by the iron fist in a velvet glove of special interest groups. The individual is dazzled in the whirlpool of relentless and heartless competition. The materialistic thirst is unquenchable and pushes people to seek unlawful gains.

The artificial tranquility sought in drugs seems to be the rule rather than the exception. The spiritual vacuum is filled by cults and aberrant modes of worship. Justice is costly, and political representation is so expensive that large elements of society are excluded from real participation.

Those who describe America as good or bad fall into the trap of oversimplification that conceals the hard facts.

America has the potential to offer an historical opportunity to Islam and Muslims. To say that America is in dire need of Islam, offered in a pure, clean, and clearly

convincing way, is not an exaggerated statement. The committed, dedicated Muslim Americans who understand Islam as the universal message from God, which they get from its pure sources (the Quran and the clear lessons taught in actions and in words by the last of the messengers) are the ones who may be the bearers of the message their country needs at this critical stage.

Muslim Americans have historic opportunities to have a fresh look at Islam, the universal and eternal word of God, and present it to America and to the world, without the impurities of man-made additions and the taints of habits and unrelated traditions. They have the opportunities to learn from their great heritage without being enslaved to it. They can address their present problems under the shade of the *Quran* and *sunna* (the Prophet's

words and actions) with full objectivity as was done by the great scholars in the past.

In order to be a true representative of the divine call, Muslim Americans must organize their institutions and build up their centers with clarity of vision. Islam is not an eastern ideology. It is a universal religion. Islam is not an ancient cult but an eternal message.

The Muslim institutions' main strategic goal is none other than to be an effective, viable, radiant part of American pluralism. The success does not require a numerical majority. All that is needed is an organized movement, a movement which embodies the teachings of Islam in individuals and organizations, capable of interacting with the American reality to affect its values and to contribute positively in the decision-making process.

The movement has to share Islam hori-

zontally with all elements of the American society and vertically to the upcoming Muslim generations. This general understanding should help Muslims prepare their agenda. The stage has arrived when Muslims must set up the priorities and launch suitable programs and projects corresponding to the American reality in the contemporary age.

*AND TO GOD BELONGS THE EAST AND THE
WEST: AND WHEREVER YOU TURN, THERE IS GOD'S
COURTENANCE. BEHOLD GOD IS INFINITE, ALL-
KNOWING.*

THE QURAN 2:115

*THE AMERICAN
SOCIETY*

*AND IT WAS BY GOD'S GRACE THAT YOU DID
DEAL GENTLY WITH YOUR FOLLOWERS: FOR IF YOU
HAD BEEN HARSH AND HARD OF HEART, THEY
WOULD HAVE INDEED BROKEN AWAY FROM YOU.
PARDON THEM, THEN, AND PRAY THAT THEY BE
FORGIVEN. AND TAKE COUNSEL WITH THEM IN ALL
MATTERS OF PUBLIC CONCERN; THEN, WHEN
YOU HAVE DECIDED UPON A COURSE OF ACTION,
PLACE YOUR TRUST IN GOD: FOR VERILY, GOD
LOVES THOSE WHO PLACE THEIR TRUST IN HIM.*

THE QURAN 3:159

Many Muslim Americans are unclear whether to freely mix and interact with mainstream American society or to remain aloof and isolated in order to avoid, as much as possible, the environment which condones many practices prohibited by Islam.

We, at the Islamic Center of Southern California, were not an exception to this style of thinking. But, we settled down a long time ago and reached a clear decision about our role in this land of plenty. We would like to share our experience and experiments with our Muslim American brethren.

We are part of the American society. Either as born Americans or naturalized Americans, we consider ourselves full citizens of the country. We have no reservations about it. This also applies to those who applied for and received American citizenship.

It is no crime and no shame to accept American citizenship, and there is no reason to be half hearted about it. As a matter of fact, we consider that being American is a significant turn of fate.

A naturalized American or even a born American is free to rescind his American citizenship and go to the country of birth or choice if it accepts him. However, hardly anyone is willing to do that. This is a proof of what we claim.

Those of us who are naturalized Americans would never find it justifiable to enjoy America's goodies, earn America's money, live in its freedom, and sit back cursing America.

From an Islamic point of view, we believe that when we accept American citizenship, a contract is established, by which we become loyal to our new country and protectors of its interests.

Islam emphasizes that contracts should be honored. The best that Muslims may offer to America are their Islamic values and ethical norms.

Those who were born non-Muslims and then converted to Islam are grateful to God for showing them the right path. They did not inherit Islam; they earned it. They chose to be Muslims perhaps against pressures or sacrifices, and they consider it the best thing that ever happened to them. They are Americans, and no attempt is made to alter or modify their patriotic feelings and pride. Some Muslim circles tend to imply that the process of Islamization should essentially lead to Arabization or Pakistanization, etc. It is regrettable that there exists a confusion between ethnicity and religion.

We at the Center do not ask new Muslims to change their names, their code of dress or

social habits that do not contradict Islam.

The Islamic Center of Southern California is an American, non-profit organization registered under California state law. It abides by the law of the land and communicates in the language of the land. It is open to Muslims of all backgrounds who are welcome to worship and participate in its educational, social and other activities.

Ethnic overtones are discarded as well as differences in sects and political factions. People are free to exercise their differences outside the center.

We gather as Muslims, and we are bound by Islam as revealed in the *Quran* and taught by the authentic *sunna* of Prophet Muhammad. We are united on issues of common concern. We do not allow divisive factors to creep into the community.

But how do we view the Muslim world?

Being Muslim makes us part of the Muslim *umma*. We love the people there and share their concerns. We are supportive of their just rights. Whatever we can do to help them we do that as part of our duty. But all this is to be taken in a wider context. We do not have to support anything that takes place in the Muslim world in conflict with the spirit and teachings of Islam.

Any denial of human rights, dignity and freedom is alien to Islam. Our ideological bond to Islam supersedes other bonds, be they biological or geographical. It is to the straight path of justice and God-heeding that we wish to see all countries guided to, including America, the Muslim world and virtually all humanity.

It is also important to bear in mind that Islam is a universal call. It is not an Arab religion or an eastern or Middle Eastern cult.

In the words of God, the message of Muhammad was and is universal:

"We have sent you not but as a mercy to the worlds." (Quran: 21/107)

It is an inclusive duty of every Muslim to make Islam known to those who do not know it. We cannot escape that duty in America. *"Say, this is my way, I call unto Allah upon clear vision, I and those who follow me."* (Quran:12/108)

We shall never be able to attempt that if we isolate ourselves from the society. In this respect we have a triple motivation.

The foremost is the responsibility placed upon us by God to make Islam known to the people we live with. We have found that the majority of the American people know little about Islam. They have misconceptions and mistrust. This state of affairs cannot be reconciled with the fact that at present there

are millions of Muslims residing in America. Who should bear the sin of leaving the majority of Americans with a very ugly and false picture of Islam?

The second motivation is that now America is our mother country. Our children and grandchildren after us will live in this country. If we feel that the environment is morally decadent, then we should take an interest (even on selfish grounds) in cleaning it for our sake and theirs.

The third motivation is a sense of duty towards our country. To be American is not to blindly accept America as it is, but to strive to make it cleaner and better by using the available freedom, the constitutional rights and the democratic process persistently and relentlessly towards reaching that goal. The current civilization carries in its body the seeds of its own destruction. It is largely true

that nothing can save the present civilization except moral values. Never before was America (and the world) in more dire need of divine guidance. Never before was this guidance as accessible as it is now. The need is there, and the commodity is easily available. What remains is a capable "communication" strategy. Can we do the "communication" if we stay outside the American life?

We have, therefore, decided to make our positive contribution to the American life whenever we have an opportunity.

Our youth take food to the homeless. We are in touch with organizations fighting drugs, alcohol, pornography, abortion and licentiousness. We participate in dialogues with the followers of other religions and creeds on religious, cultural, social and educational issues.

We never refuse to visit schools, universities, associations and institutions or be visited by them if this bears an opportunity for the truths about Islam to be known. Even personal relations at or outside work, providing the good example of a Muslim, is part of our duty. We are keen to be amicable and persuasive, for if we behave in a repellent way, then it is Islam we are repelling people from.

We are very conscious of God's description of the message entrusted to the Prophet Muhammad. The *Quran* clearly states: "*We have sent you not but as a mercy to the worlds.*" This is the ultimate goal of Islam.

It would be an act of shortsightedness if we focus on the tree and fail to see the forest. Focusing on secondary and tertiary issues without bearing the goal in mind is not the wisdom a Muslim is advised to exercise.

"To be a mercy to the worlds" is our message that we clearly read in the *Quran* and the *sunna* of Prophet Muhammad.

Prophet Muhammad was a man with a very loving nature. At the worst hours of oppression and persecution by the enemies of Islam at the town of Taif, God sent him Angel Gabriel with His greetings and the offer, that if Muhammad wished, the mountains of Mecca would be crumbled over the nonbelievers' heads. Muhammad's answer was: "Leave me alone, Gabriel. May you, God, please forgive my people, for they do not know."

On another occasion, he would look at two men who were staunch enemies of Islam, but who had the basic human attributes and integrity that he admired, and say: *"May it please you, God, to support Islam by one of the two Omars? (committing to God)."*

The prophet taught that every person is born on the state of *fitra* (the purity of nature) with no inherent evil. Every human being is a potential worshipper of God. We express our love and affection to others and not hatred when we wish them to see the light of Islam. Probably no one will have the opportunity to see the light of Islam if Muslims remain in total isolation from others. Similarly the light will remain overshadowed if what others see and hear from Muslims evokes hatred and bitterness. The prophet was especially talented in winning friends to Islam, and this is the *sunna* we have opted to follow.

*CALL YOU ALL MANKIND UNTO YOUR
SUSTAINER'S PATH WITH WISDOM AND GOODLY
EXHORTATION, AND ARGUE WITH THEM IN THE
MOST KINDLY MANNER: FOR, BEHOLD, YOUR
SUSTAINER KNOWS BEST AS TO WHO STRAYS
FROM HIS PATH AND BEST KNOWS HE AS TO WHO
ARE THE RIGHT GUIDED.*

THE QURAN 16:125

*CHILDHOOD/
YOUTH*

AND LO, LUQMAN SPOKE THUS UNTO HIS SON,
ADMONISHING HIM: O MY DEAR SON! DO NOT
ASCRIBE DIVINE POWER TO AUGHT BESIDE GOD:
FOR BEHOLD, SUCH A FALSE ASCRIBING OF
DIVINITY IS INDEED AN AWESOME WRONG!

AND GOD SAYS WE HAVE ENJOINED UPON MAN
GOODNESS TOWARDS HIS PARENTS: HIS MOTHER
BORE HIM BY BEARING STRAIN UPON STRAIN,
AND HIS UTTER DEPENDENCE ON HER LASTED
TWO YEARS: HENCE O MAN BE GRATEFUL

TOWARDS ME AND TOWARDS YOUR PARENTS AND
REMEMBER THAT WITH ME IS ALL JOURNEYS'

END. REVERE YOUR PARENTS, YET WOULD THEY
ENDEAVOR TO MAKE YOU ASCRIBE DIVINITY, SIDE
BY SIDE WITH ME, TO SOMETHING WHICH YOUR
MIND CANNOT ACCEPT AS DIVINE, OBEY THEM NOT;
BUT EVEN THEN BEAR THEM COMPANY IN THIS
WORLD'S LIFE WITH KINDNESS AND FOLLOW THE
PATH OF THOSE WHO TURN TOWARDS ME IN
THE END, UNTO ME YOU ALL MUST RETURN AND

THEREUPON I SHALL MAKE YOU TRULY
UNDERSTAND ALL THAT YOU WERE DOING IN LIFE.

O MY DEAR SON,
VERILY, THOUGH THERE BE AUGHT OF BUT THE
WEIGHT OF A MUSTARD-SEED, AND THOUGH
IT BE HIDDEN IN A ROCK, OR IN THE SKIES, OR IN
THE EARTH, GOD WILL BRING IT TO LIGHT: FOR,
BEHOLD, GOD IS UNFATHOMABLE IN HIS
WISDOM, ALL-AWARE. O MY DEAR SON BE
CONSTANT IN PRAYER, AND ENJOIN THE DOING
OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND FORBID THE DOING OF
WHAT IS WRONG, AND BEAR IN PATIENCE
WHATEVER ILL MAY BEFALL YOU, THIS, BEHOLD, IS
SOMETHING TO SET ONE'S HEART UPON. AND
TURN NOT YOUR CHEEK AWAY FROM PEOPLE IN
FALSE PRIDE, AND WALK NOT HAUGHTILY ON
EARTH: FOR BEHOLD, GOD DOES NOT LOVE
ANYONE WHO, OUT OF SELF-CONCEIT, ACTS IN A
BOASTFUL MANNER. HENCE BE MODEST IN THY
BEARING, AND LOWER YOUR VOICE: FOR,
BEHOLD, THE UGLIEST OF ALL VOICES IS THE
LOUD VOICE OF ASSES.

THE QURAN 31:13-19

IN FRATERNITY

Our children and grandchildren are our guaranteed biological link with the future. But are they going to be our Islamic progeny?

Islam did not come to America only in our generation. It came before, more than once, and disappeared. It came with the slave trade as Muslims were kidnapped from Africa and shipped to America to work on the plantations. Some of them tried hard to cling to Islam, but the hostile conditions and abhorrent treatment were too much for their endurance and most of them lost their Islam almost within one generation.

In the period between and around the two world wars, there was a sizeable immigration to America from the Middle East. The immigrants included many Muslims. The goal of the migrating community was to secure a fortune in this land of plenty. Many

of them were quick to get rid of their Muslim identity. They changed their names and those of their children. They embraced the existing materialistically geared social customs and norms. They did not care whether their new identity was in tune with Islam or not. They were lost and their new surroundings completely digested them. They multiplied in numbers, but their descendants remained completely outside the realm of Islam.

America now witnesses the third wave of Muslims. It is a wave that runs in the millions and includes highly educated committed Muslims. Their presence is already felt and is growing.

Will Islam stay or will it disappear -- as happened before - by the end of this generation? The answer is entirely dependent on whether our children will or will not grow up as Muslims.

The situation in America is quite different from that in the mother countries of many naturalized Muslim Americans. We cannot live Islam through yielding to our environment. Nor can we depend on social conditions to groom our youngsters as Muslims as is the case in mother countries. In those countries it is of little importance whether a person is observant of Islam or not. The issue is whether Muslims are aware that they are Muslims and know the Islamic standard. In America, to stick to Islam runs against many social norms, lifestyles and peer pressure.

To retain Islam our children have to be specially prepared. They should be taught how to swim against the current. They need to know what to accept and what to reject from a full spectrum of social and moral values. This cannot be attained by chance. It

requires a well-planned, intelligently executed and very broad process of upbringing. They should also start at an early age, and no age is too early. We have often seen parents taking it for granted that the children would grow up as Muslims like themselves or that they would perhaps always remain children. Their first eye opener is when the daughter wants to date or even gets pregnant, or the son is caught in drugs, drink or sexual disease. In their panic the parents suddenly wake up and frantically send for help to deal with their crisis situation or to hurriedly form an Islamic youth group. Although logic says it is too late, we do not accept that any stage is too late.

AND NOW WE SHALL TRULY RELATE TO YOU THEIR STORY: BEHOLD, THEY WERE A GROUP OF YOUTH WHO HAD ATTAINED TO FAITH IN THEIR LORD: AND SO WE DEEPENED THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE RIGHT WAYS AND ENDOWED THEIR HEARTS WITH STRENGTH, SO THAT THEY STOOD UP AND SAID TO ONE ANOTHER: OUR LORD IS THE LORD OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. NEVER SHALL WE INVOKE ANY DEITY OTHER THAN HIM: IF WE DID WE SHOULD INDEED HAVE UTTERED AN ENORMITY. THESE PEOPLE OF OURS HAVE TAKEN TO WORSHIPPING OTHER DEITIES INSTEAD OF HIM, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO ADDUCE ANY REASONABLE EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR BELIEFS, AND WHO COULD BE MORE WICKED THAN HE WHO INVENTS A LIE ABOUT GOD.

THE QURAN 18:13

Upbringing/Education

The process of Islamic upbringing is quite different from that of Islamic education. Both are essential, but the former is more crucial. At the Islamic Center we have established a pre-school and an elementary school, and a second school will be added in the near future. We also run a Sunday school.

The newly formed *Noor* Foundation (Light) is a new educational effort conceived and implemented by some of our sisters. The children go to regular schools, but after school hours a bus takes them to a Muslim home where one of the rooms (or the garage) is transformed into a classroom, as nice looking as any classroom elsewhere, with no compromise on good taste and aesthetics. A

trained teacher gives them lessons in the *Quran* and the Arabic language (the *Quranic* language) two hours a day, two days a week. It is heart-warming to watch those children memorizing and reciting sizeable passages of the *Quran*, struggling with their young American tongues and phonetics. During the process, they learn how to worship and acquire the habit of observing regular mandatory prayers.

The process of upbringing is an art, optimally combined with education but regrettably not always so. Sound education should cope with both cognitive and behavioral aspects. A teacher who handles the children in an authoritarian way, often resorting to shouting and harsh rebuking to correct the children might actually be inflicting harm on the children.

Those who cater to Muslim children's

education must pay utmost regard to this psychological factor. Early childhood is the formative phase in a person's life. Islamic morals and ethics should be given priority, and we have seen many Muslim men and women, in and out of the teaching profession, who lack or forego them. A non-fading smile on the face is a mandatory tool of both teaching and *dawa* (a process of introducing Islam to people). Besides the bare essentials of cognitive knowledge, we believe that the major goal of child education is the acquisition of good habits, good taste and basic moral codes such as truthfulness, honesty, cleanliness, unselfishness, sharing and caring, neatness and a loving attitude towards fellow human beings, animals and nature.

The Youth

Our youth group is perhaps our most important single activity although not usually in the limelight. It accepts youth between 12 and 21. This group is very important for more than one reason. These youngsters are subject to immoral temptations and peer pressure, and, if they are to abide by Islamic teachings, they have to resist these as well as the call of their own instincts. And they are also the bearers of the torch of Islam after the current parent generation is gone. Amongst them are the Muslim intellectuals and the Muslim activists of the future. If they grow up to be committed Muslims, they will be much more capable than their parents in revealing the truths of Islam to their fellow Americans. They were born and raised in

America. They speak without an accent, and know the ins and outs of American life and are part of the American mentality. They are genuine, proud Americans aspiring to save, serve and guide their country. But what will happen if they do not grow up as Muslims and discard Islam as they leave the nest? This is not an apprehension but a fact that has been observed quite often in many places.

It might mean that this third wave of Muslims will also break and vanish as the two previous waves did. It might mean the current multi-million generation of Muslims would prove infertile, living and dying, but not leaving Muslims behind them. It might mean that the hundreds of mosques built or under construction will have to be sold some time in the future for the lack of a congregation.

A major issue, indeed a serious one, the

immigrant Muslim Americans will face is: Did our decision to come to America and make it our home result in a wider acquaintance of more people with Islam, or did it result in our own children getting out of Islam? - an outcome we could have avoided by staying back home.

One of the most detestable actions that could be conceived is to make coming to the Islamic Center an unpleasant experience to the young people. We hear it time and time again from parents across the country: "Our children hate to come to the Islamic Center." Some parents force their children to go to the Islamic Center. How short-sighted we are! Our children have to be convinced and motivated if we want them to make use of the institutions set up in the name of Islam for the future generation of Islam.

This is the United States of America, and

everybody knows that parental authority ceases to function beyond a certain age. The social and legal patterns are quite different from the way they are in, say, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan or wherever. What works out fine in other settings might not be suitable in America, and if someone insists on copying and imposing it, the results might be tragic. Unfortunately, such negative association is often established so that when the time comes, a farewell situation emerges, not only to parents, but also to “their” Islam.

It is the duty of wise parents to improvise the necessary adaptation and accommodation to the new situation in a new country. Parents who are still torn apart between two cultures, the old and the new, should bear in mind that their children are the fruit of only one culture, the American. It would be unwise to let children be torn between the American

culture and their parents' traditions.

This does not mean that Islam is to be compromised or changed. Islam is one and will never change. However, the strategies, tactics and methodology should be flexible within the framework of Islam. This is not an innovation or a new claim in Islamic thinking or in Islamic jurisprudence.

It is a known fact that Imam al Shafie lived in Baghdad (Iraq) and wrote his *madhab* (juridical encyclopedia), and when he moved to Cairo he had to rewrite the *madhab* in view of the different environment and the new social reality.

Parents should not confuse ethnic habits and Islamic religion. It is Islam we want our children to follow, even though they live in a new culture and a new social environment. This is not a claim to betray our roots and amputate ourselves from our cultural

heritage. A tree that loses contact with its roots becomes a mere log of wood incapable of fruition. The cultural heritage should be an inspiration and a stimulus of pride and self-respect but never a cage wherein to imprison the present and the future.

If the youth do not find it pleasant to come to the Islamic Center, there is something wrong that needs to be corrected. That “something” is not the youth, even though some of them are in need of reform. It is not Islam that keeps them away. Rather it is our own behavior that is alienating our own children from our mosques and centers.

We accept newcomers as they are and leave it to their corrective and constructive peer interaction to achieve the desired result, even if it has to “cook on a mild simmer” and therefore take a longer time. The mere fact that the youth are in the center of their own

free will is itself a positive indication. For many of them are free not to come, and we often ask the question: if this young person is not in the Islamic Center on the weekend, a vacation from school, where else would he or she be? And the obvious answer makes us thank God for the mere fact that they have opted to come to the Center voluntarily. It is an indication that at least we have an opportunity to breed Muslims who would carry Islam after us and not merely to breed men and women seeking their fulfillment in other goals.

Our youth group is autonomous and enjoys its own self-government through an elected board and an elected chairperson from amongst themselves. Not pressured by the elders, the youth find no reason to feel animosity or reservation against them. Many of them find in the center the comfort they

lack in their own homes. It is no wonder, therefore, that independence does not have to be expressed by them as a form of rebellion. Their relations with their adult supervisors and teachers are friendly and open. Their educational program is varied, eventually comprehensive. Knowledge is not given in a bucket-filling manner but rather in intellectual interaction that leaves the student convinced and convincing and firmly rooted in Islam.

The beginning of the beginning is to establish beyond doubt the existence and the oneness of God. The role of man in the universe is explained as well as the relation between God and man, and God's messages ending with Muhammad, whose message Allah expressed in the Quran in the great words: "*We have sent you for none else but as a MERCY to the worlds.*"

The central place of good manners and moral standards in Islam is emphasized and expressed by the Prophet in the *hadith*: "Verily I was sent for the purpose of fulfilling good manners." The program includes *Aqeedah* (Belief), *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence), *Quran*, *Hadith*, *Ibadat* (Worship), History, Comparative Religion, Contemporary Ideologies, Skills Development, Social Ailments and much more.

Our youth group is mixed. Boys and girls attend classes together. The atmosphere is clean, the supervision is adequate and the situation is not shockingly new to them as high school and university students. The contrast to their school is that it is a gathering held under the umbrella of Islam, where mutual respect and proper demeanor are practiced.

In opting for this policy we had another

consideration in mind. It has been our observation after a keen study that there is a marriage crisis amongst the new Muslim American generation. In America no one marries a stranger. The policy of rigorous segregation of Muslim boys and girls will inevitably mean that they attain the age of marriage without knowing one another. While the horizon of the Muslim young man is occupied by his female American non-Muslim university colleagues, the Muslim girl remains unknown to her fellow Muslim young men. The Muslim young man would, therefore, make his selection from amongst the non-Muslim girls known to him and is lost to a possible Muslim girl.

The Muslim girl is liable to remain a spinster. We know of many instances where the girl was sent to the mother country for the sake of marriage, or where a Muslim

groom was imported to America to marry her, but in either case, the cultural gap and different mentalities ended in divorce, often, after begetting one or more children.

By growing up in a clean, healthy mutual acquaintance, aware of one another's personalities, modes of thinking and inclinations, there is an opportunity for informed mutual selection and happy marriage.

Perhaps this is not the way in other lands, but what suits other lands might not be fitting in America. We see no evil in our policy, but those who oppose it should be willing to consider it the lesser of two evils. This is in accordance with the *sharia*. So far, twenty-four successful marriages have been contracted from amongst the members of our youth group.

*Raise your children in a
different way than you were,
For they are born for a
different age than you live...*

"IMAM ALI IBN ABI-TALIB"

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN

VERILY FOR ALL MUSLIM MEN AND WOMEN, AND ALL BELIEVING MEN AND BELIEVING WOMEN, AND ALL TRULY DEVOUT MEN AND TRULY DEVOUT WOMEN, AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE TRUE TO THEIR WORD, AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE PATIENT IN ADVERSITY, AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO HUMBLE THEMSELVES BEFORE GOD, AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO GIVE IN CHARITY, AND ALL SELF-DENYING MEN AND SELF-DENYING WOMEN, AND ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO REMEMBER GOD UNCEASINGLY: FOR ALL OF THEM HAS GOD READIED FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND A MIGHTY REWARD.

THE QURAN 33:35

God made men and women equal, even though they are not identical. The “dos” and “don’ts” of Islam are addressed to men and women. The prescribed punishment for breaking Islamic laws is the same for a man as for a woman. Men and women have the same basic rights and responsibilities.

Women must contribute to the cause of Islam and the running of the organization by offering their thinking and their energies on an equal footing with men. We put no barriers on board membership for Muslim sisters as long as they are duly elected by the general membership which comprises men and women. We find no Islamic premises for excluding women from meetings, lectures and cultural activities. In meetings and conferences, if family members choose to sit together, we respect their choice and do not impose a policy of segregation. It is our

conviction, as well as practical observation, that decency and a healthy Islamic conscience are more effective in upholding morality than mere physical barriers. The extreme obsession with sex and pervasive pre-occupation with it is based on ethnic habits and not on Islamic teaching.

At the time of the Prophet, women attended prayers and classes at the mosque. They often requested an additional all-women session with the Prophet to inquire about certain purely feminine questions not fit to be asked in the presence of men.

We do not, therefore, conceive of a scenario of a Muslim conference in America that accommodates men in one hotel and their wives in another. It is appropriate in our thinking to keep a husband and a wife together in the same hotel in the same room. To try and draw the cloak of Islam on this

planning is an insult to Islam.

We cannot dream of an Islamic meeting where men gather in a valley and their wives gather in another behind a hill separating both, with walkie-talkie as the only medium of communication. If a participant wants to contact his wife the message is relayed to the walkie-talkie operator, who gives it to his wife, and she then passes it to the wife of the first man. If the ladies are meeting in an open place where any passerby can see and watch them, would it not be more Islamic to have the wives present under the protection of their husbands against any possible inconvenience caused by an imprudent alien? Or are only Muslims singled out for mistrust and suspicion? Islam teaches people to observe the lowering of the gaze and the guarding of one another's chastity. Islamic teaching and preaching uphold modesty.

They encourage a respectable appearance which carries the message that the person is not party to the licentious practices that a permissive society accommodates. The Islamic Center endorses the views of the mainstream scholars about the "*awrah*" (modesty). But beyond teaching and preaching we are not in a position to impose or enforce our views upon people. We are not willing to exclude, penalize, boycott or abuse those who do not comply. We are certainly hopeful that everyone would come to our programs and hear about Islam more and more, again and again, and every time would find it a pleasant experience and a time well spent.

The idea of woman as an inferior creature is alien to Islam as we clearly read about it in the *Quran* and the *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad. In the pre-Islamic *Jabiliyya* (a

period of ignorance of the true divine message) this idea abounded until Islam came and corrected it.

This idea existed over a long period of Christian history arising from the belief that Eve tempted Adam to eat from the forbidden tree and was the direct cause, therefore, for the banishment of humanity from heaven to earth in punishment. Implied in this historical anecdote is the idea that her sin is to be borne by all human generations until eternity.

Islam tells us that Satan tempted both Adam and Eve, and they both sinned. Later, they repented and were forgiven. Afterwards Adam was assigned prophethood, and the human race was sent to populate this earth as God's vicegerent, held in honor by God and availed of His guidance and given the knowledge and freedom of choice that are the

basis of the accountability of human beings.

The concept of a perpetual original sin, under whose shadow every human being is supposedly born and at the causative center of which Eve (and her daughters) stands convicted, does not exist in Islam. Every human being is born in a state the *fitra* (the natural purity that the *Quran* makes synonymous with Islam), and no one - boy or girl, man or woman - is accountable for more than his/her personal individual free choices.

We accept people as they are and start with them from where they are. We welcome non-Muslims to come in and know about Islam. They are encouraged to visit, listen and ask questions. It is our duty as Muslims to make the truth about Islam known to them. When they come to us they help us perform our duty. We do not put any obstacles in their way. On the contrary, we

welcome and encourage them. The results are very positive.

The mosque has its etiquette and norms. We believe that everybody knows them, and we have never encountered any need to interfere and remind people of their responsibilities towards their worshipping house. Women occupy the lines at the back, and the aesthetic reasons are obvious. Never did a man during prayer turn around in order to watch the women. The group morality makes it unnecessary to switch the lights off in the ladies' area or to build an iron, brick or cloth curtain to shut women off. The general feeling is that prayer is being attended by Muslims and not by wolves.

Our mosque enjoys the same safety found in the holy mosque in Makka and the Prophet's mosque in Medina and elsewhere where men and women attend prayer in one

open space.

Islam heralded both the emancipation of the woman and her equality to man. Islam gave the woman status, the right of individual ownership unhampered by husband, father or brother, the right of inheritance and the right - and duty - to bear and participate in the concerns of the community.

The equality of men and women does not mean that they are similar. There are certain functions that only women can do (foremost are childbearing and rearing), and naturally these will be central to the woman's role. But this does not mean that she has to confine herself to that role only.

Looking at the women's role in the early days of Islam, it is noteworthy that the first person ever to take up Islam after the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a woman (his wife, Khadijah). The first martyr of Islam

was a woman (Sumayya, mother of Ammar-ibn-Yasser). The top secret of the *Hijra* (The Prophet's migration to Medina,) was entrusted to five or six people only, including a young lady (Asma, the daughter of Abu-Bakr). Women had the right to work. Not only was Khadija a well-accomplished merchant, but the medical corps of the army of the Prophet was an all-women corps comprising women, well-trained in the healing art, as known in those days.

The circle of the woman's role could even be wide enough to accommodate her as a warrior. During the battle of *Uhud*, one of the healer-ladies, Nusaiba bint Kaab, responded to the critical military developments by throwing away her nursing gear, taking up sword and shield, and actively engaging in the fighting. After the battle her lot was not rebuke or chastisement. The

Prophet praised her saying: "*Never did I look right or left but she was there defending me and fighting before me.*" Even after the Prophet's death, Nusaiba joined the battle against Musailama, who claimed prophethood, in which she was seriously wounded. Women were as active in the public arena as to be party to the Pledge (*Bai'a*) given to the Prophet before the *Hijra* to Medina, they took part in the *Hijra* to Ethiopia. On the political scene, she had her full presence. In the crisis that followed the Treaty of *Hudaybiya* between the Prophet and the unbelievers (*kafir*) of Makka, where Muslims protested the humiliation of having to turn back to Medina after coming all the way to the ritual of *Umra* in Makka, it was Um-Salama, the wife of the Prophet, who aborted the crisis by advising the Prophet to go ahead and slaughter his sacrificial sheep, so that all

Muslims would follow suit and do the same thing as they see their Prophet doing.

Even the role of "opposition" was taken by the woman. When Caliph Omar, the second Caliph after the Prophet, was making a speech at the mosque trying to curb excessive marriage dowry, in a mosque packed with men, it was a woman's voice that spoke up against him. The woman forwarded a quotation from the Quran, so that the Caliph had nothing to say but, "The woman is right and Omar is wrong."

Those early days also saw the woman in public office. Omar ibn al-Khattab appointed a woman, Al-Shaffaa of the Makhzoom tribe, for the *Hisba* judiciary (equivalent to the judge for the court handling commercial law). It should therefore be a normal practice, that when we organize Islamic conferences, especially those dealing with

“women”, “family” or “childhood” - but not limited to them - to see Muslim women actively participating as speakers and discussants. It is certainly a misunderstanding if we think that excluding women makes us more adberent to Islam.

We would like to call to the attention of our Muslim brethren that very early in our history the nation fell into the grips of despotism. This negatively reflected on the course of the history of the Muslim nation and nibbled off at many of the newly acquired liberties that Islam bestowed on the human race as shown in the early Islamic era. The invasive despotism soon trickled down to households and managed in many places to reverse instead to promote the status and freedoms accorded to women, as it did with the status and freedoms accorded to the people at large vis-a-vis their despotic ruler.

We submit to our Muslim brethren that no nation and no movement can attain success without full and equal participation and cooperation between its two halves: men and women. No runner can hope to enter the race skipping on one foot and suspending the other. The thinking, planning and carrying out of the message of Islam should not be a matter of maleness or femaleness but a matter of brains, sincerity and intelligence.

We do not intend to sound like a branch or an echo of "Women's Lib," or similar movements or organizations that arose in the West as a justifiable reaction to centuries of oppression of women by men. We see no need for such a defensive reaction in Islam as long as Islamic rules and spirit are observed.

The Islamic situation is not men against women. The unit of humanity is neither man nor woman but the family that stems from a

man and a woman unified by the knot of marriage. The husband is the head of the family and the wife is its heart, both vital and complementary . The *abadith* (the Prophet's sayings) recommending women to be loyal and obedient to husbands are plenty. But also plenty are the *abadith* exhorting men to be kind, gentle and respectful to their wives. Unilateral quotations of *abadith* giving guidance towards one direction while oblivious to *abadith* emphasizing the other direction will not be an honest portrayal of Islamic teachings, and the just balance should be maintained. If this is not reflected in family life, it should be considered as a breach of Islam that needs to be corrected.

We do implore our Muslim brethren to prove to the American community, by offering the good example, that a Muslim home is not just a house but an ideal home

and that the Muslim family ties are the strongest and the most conducive to happiness of all of its members, based on mutual love and respect and the heeding of the guidance of Islam.

I SHALL NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE LABOR OF ANY OF YOU WHO LABORS IN MY WAY, BE IT MAN OR WOMAN: EACH OF YOU IS AN EXTENSION OF THE OTHER. HENCE AS FOR THOSE WHO FORSAKE THE DOMAIN OF EVIL, AND ARE DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMELANDS, AND SUFFER HURT IN MY CAUSE, AND FIGHT FOR IT, AND ARE SLAIN, I SHALL MOST CERTAINLY, EFFACE THEIR BAD DEEDS, AND SHALL MOST CERTAINLY BRING THEM INTO GARDENS, THROUGH WHICH RUNNING WATERS FLOW, AS A REWARD FROM GOD: FOR WITH GOD IS THE MOST BEAUTEOUS OF REWARDS.

THE QURAN 3:195

IN FRATERNITY

*MUSLIM MINORITIES
AND SHARIA*

*"GOD DOES NOT BURDEN ANY HUMAN BEING
WITH MORE THAN HE IS WELL ABLE TO HANDLE."*

THE QURAN: 2:286

Muslims believe and have emphasized that Islam is the final message of God which suits every time and place.

However, non-Muslims ask how can a law which was given fourteen centuries ago fit in the age of nuclear energy, computers, space satellites and shuttles?

Law is supposed to reflect social needs and address concerns which are always changing. If Muslims are not able to present the case of the Islamic law clearly and convincingly, non-Muslims will fail to see the merits of *Sharia* and its ability to cope with human changes whether conceptual or practical.

Muslims must explain the dynamism of Islamic Law vis-a-vis human change in a clear and understandable way. They should not feel upset or offended by continuous arguments and objections, since these

arguments stick to the common idea about law and its function and have been influenced by the modern developments in Judaism with regard to the Jewish law as indicated in the *Torah*, and in Christianity with regard to the separation of state and church.

Islamic Law in its divine sources - the *Quran* and the *Sunna* - mainly represents general principles and only certain limited particular rules which the Lawgiver has revealed to emphasize the general principles.

Exploitation of human beings through usury and unfair transactions, and transgression against the human life, body, dignity or property represent the main cases of particular rules in *Sharia* as revealed by God in the *Quran* and *Sunna*. In any voluminous work of *Sharia*, more accurately called jurisprudence or *fiqh*, a reader can easily find out that the writings or

explanations given by jurists are not restricted to these limited rules revealed in the *Quran*. Successive generations of jurists, through the human techniques of intellectual inference and elaboration called *ijtihad*, added a lot of explanations.

Examples of these are: analogy or *qiyas*, preference or *istihsan*, and consideration of general interest or *maslaha*. The outcome of such human techniques cannot be a part of the permanent divine law, since it merely represents human intellectual efforts which may change to cope with the changeable conceptual and practical circumstances in different times and places. However, such a legal change which has to cope with the human change cannot be practiced arbitrarily, and cannot mean a suspension or violation of the rules of *Sharia*.

God, who has "*perfected your religion for*

you and completed His gift to you," (Quran 5: 3) has allowed the necessary mechanism for the change of law in relation to any one particular case from within to cope with the changing human needs, while the general principles suit all times and places and can respond to changing human needs and provide a deep and wide basis of justice on which different laws can be developed to cope with particular circumstances. These general principles represent a permanent and rich source which cannot be ignored or rejected, such as: "*God commands justice and kindness and caring about one's relatives; while He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason (or common sense) and forbids transgression,*" (16:9) and "*those whose affairs are (conducted through mutual) consultation among themselves.*" (42:38); "*We have conferred dignity on the Children of Adam and transported*

them around on land and sea and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life and favored them far above most of Our creations." (17:7); *"We have made you into nations and tribes so that you may come to know one another, verily, the noblest one in the sight of God is the one who is the most conscious of Him."* (19:13); *"No coercion (is allowed) in matters of faith."* (2:256); *"And whatever (wrong) any human being commits rests upon himself only; and no bearer of burdens bears another's burden."*

The *Sunna* - the sayings and practice of the Prophet - also provided many general rules of justice, from which a few examples are:

"No harm is allowed to be caused by anyone whether unintentionally or deliberately, initially or retributively." *"The deeds are judged according to one's intentions."* Besides, traditions of the Prophet make learning an obligation upon

every individual, for which the authorities have to provide the necessary means. The Muslim authorities are held responsible for helping any family whose supporter left with no resources or with crippling debts which should be paid back.

Such general principles of justice, of which the *Quran* and *Sunna* include a great and invaluable variety, provide for any society a permanent deep and wide source for different laws which respond to the changing needs and circumstances. As for the rules for particular cases that came in the *Quran* and *Sunna*, they are limited in number and they only deal with general civil and penal cases to prevent the violation of basic human rights. Muslim jurists figured out from analyzing the rules of *Sharia* in the *Quran* and *Sunna* that they all aim to secure and develop the physical and moral existence of the human

being and what is related to that in the fields of life and dignity, family and children, human intellect, freedom and sanctity of faith, as well as property.

However, changing circumstances have to be considered if they affect the implementation of certain particular rules. The general goals of Islamic law are to secure the interests and fulfill the needs of human beings, and it has repeatedly stressed how it aims at removing hardship and pressure from human life "*God wills that you shall have ease and does not will you to suffer hardship,*" (2:185) "*God does not want to impose any hardship on you.*"(5:7; also 22:78)

Sharia has repeatedly emphasized the principle that everyone is responsible within the limits of his/her own ability. God requires the believer to carry out what he can do and forgives him/her about what they can not do:

"...but if one is driven by necessity - neither coveting it nor exceeding the immediate need, he will have no offense against him." (2:173)

Cases of necessity and pressure are not restricted only to individuals, but also include communities and societies. A collective unavoidability of something forbidden by *Sharia*, makes it tolerable and forgivable, "*umum al-balwa*." Such a valuable juristic rule was derived directly from the *Quran* and *Sunna* as the above-mentioned texts prove. The Prophet taught that the Muslims should keep on the right direction and be in practice as close as they possibly can to the teachings of God ("*saddidu wa qaribu*") since perfect and complete abiding by all the rules of *Sharia* may be impossible for certain individuals or the community in a certain time or place. The general principles of Islamic Law and the limited number of its particular rules can

suit all changing circumstances. The enormous space which has been left for the human intellect to work out new laws (which has been called technically “the practice of *ijtihad*”) assures the capacity of *Sharia* to meet emerging needs and changes. The enormous details which were presented in juristic books are mostly a human intellectual product through the known techniques of *ijtihad*.

Caliph Omar was a pioneer in making Islamic Law cope with changing circumstances. With his authority as a Caliph he enforced views which might seem different from that which had been dominant such as, considering a pronouncement of three divorces all at once as a final and irrevocable decision in this respect in order to discourage haste in a serious matter like divorce.

Later, Imam Shafie (d.204 H./819), as mentioned, changed many of his own views

and even his own books when he came from Iraq and lived in Egypt. Consequently, he had within his juristic approaches what was described as “old” and “new,” and his works had versions related to Baghdad and others related to Egypt. While some of his followers restricted themselves to the new version and views, assuming that they had abrogated the older ones, others would follow the older if it seemed to them stronger and more convincing or consider both as equal options.

Shafie might have changed his thinking in Egypt when there was new evidence or interpretation, but also that change might have happened according to a new experience in the Egyptian society. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751./1350) stated in his valuable work *Ilam al-Murwaqqi'in* that “the change of rules over time is merely a change of time and circumstances and not a change of evidence

and argument." Reviewing the juridical developments from Abu-Hanifa (d.150 H./767) to his later followers as Ibn al-Humam (d.861 H./1456) and ibn-Abidin (d.1252 H./1836), and in the various traditions of the *Maliki* School from Medina to Fez and Cordova, it becomes obvious to us how the preceding Muslim jurists coped with changing circumstances in different times and places. Contemporary Islamic jurisprudence has to follow the same dynamic mechanism of *Sharia* to respond to current needs and to refute practically such a mistaken view that *Sharia* (in the voluminous juristic heritage which developed over long centuries according to changing circumstances) is merely one closed book and a permanent code of laws that cannot be revised or changed in the 15th century of *Hijra*. If this was essential for Muslims in

general at all times and places, it is even indispensable and inevitable for the present day Muslim minorities in developed and over developed countries where the differences between the past and the present are enormous. The need for fresh thinking in order to live Islam in the contemporary world where so many new problems and innovations are present is very pressing.

*Those who are present
should convey my message
to those who are not'*

Prophet Mubammed (Bukhari)

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