

READING THE MUSLIM MIND

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Prelude

I was born in Egypt during the time of the British occupation. This played quite a role in my life, since the earliest of the earliest of my memories as a little child was my mother's prodding time after time, "When I was carrying you I made a pledge to call you Hassan and devote you to expel the British from Egypt." That registered with me quite powerfully. The result? No care-free childhood and no delinquent adolescence. There was a cause, and a purpose in life!

My generation followed in the footsteps of previous generations in combating the British occupation by whatever means necessary. To the British and their surrogate Egyptian governments we were terrorists, to the rest of the country and the world we were freedom fighters. We were lucky to see the end of the British occupation. When I lived in Britain later on to pursue my studies, I acquired love and admiration for the British people. I realized that people can be very different from the foreign policy of their politicians and statesmen. The same also happened to me much later on when I came to America to make it my home.

Seriousness and resolve fueled my scholastic life. I sailed through my higher clinical qualifications in obstetrics & gynecology, and to ensure a solid academic base I received my Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland; my thesis was "Studies in Normal and Abnormal Human Embryogenesis". I had the satisfaction of achieving my life dream of becoming a university professor, chairman of my department, clinician, scientist and teacher and of attaining high standing in my professional circles nationally, regionally and internationally.

All this however was only one of my two lungs with which to breathe. My other love was the study of religion, primarily my own but others also. My readings were no less extensive than those of formal students of religion, but my background in science and medicine provided me with an invaluable tool by which to think my religion, understand it, and explain it.

Being bicultural and bilingual, I realized that Islam is very widely known in the West for what it is not (sometimes I feel that Muslims themselves ought to take part of the blame). Active slandering and tarnishing of Islam has become a mission and a career of some groups in politics, the media and the entertainment field.

I am a strong believer that it is a basic human right to be known for what one is. I am also a strong believer that peace, harmony and goodwill between people can only be based on correct understanding and not on myth or falsehood. People will then become aware of similarities and differences, and hopefully respect their differences and agree to tolerate and live with them.

This book is a humble contribution in that direction on behalf of the religion of Islam, the faith of one billion of our neighbors on this planet.

I present it in LOVE.

Love is from God. Hate is from the Devil.

Hassan Hathout.

Chapter One: GOD?

I asked my granddaughter, "Do you believe in God?" She almost snapped "Of course," and then, catching her breath, she added, "Mummy says so!" But then I picked up one of her books and asked her "Who wrote this book?", and immediately she read the name of the author. Continuing the argument, I said, "Suppose I tear the front page bearing the name of the author and suggest to you that this book has written itself by itself, that is without a writer, what would you say?" It was of course an emphatic "Impossible", and the rest of the discussion went smoothly and logically that a book is proof of a writer, and similarly the creation is proof of the Creator.

Straight and simple, but it is the central idea in the thinking of a Muslim. It was perhaps a similar intellectual process that led the Patriarch Abraham (also known in Islam as the Father of the Prophets) to find God. Unconvinced with the idols his people carved and worshipped, he started to consider articles of nature for godhood such as the stars, moon, and sun, only to find that all were obedient to certain laws so he pondered on the One who set those laws. The relevant Quranic reportage is most interesting: "So also did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and earth, that he might have certitude. When the night covered him over he saw a star. He said 'This is my Lord' but when it set he said 'I love not those that set'. When he saw the moon rising in splendor he said 'This is my Lord'; but when the moon set he said 'Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.' When he saw the sun rising in splendor he said 'This is my Lord, this is the greatest'. but when the sun set he said 'O my people.. I am indeed free from your (guilt of) giving partners (to the One True God). For me, I have set my face firmly and truly towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Him.'" (6: 75-78)

Yet, the idea of God is not as popular as one would imagine. I was surprised to find that many of my scientist colleagues in the academic circles in Europe and America and not just in the excommunist block were atheist. I myself tried hard to be one at a certain stage of my life. It was in vogue at one time just after the second world war, amongst university students in my mother country of Egypt. I did try to conform with my peers but could never apply myself to the concept of a Godless universe. The issue was finally laid to rest when one evening I opened the dictionary to look up the meaning of a word when an idea dawned on me: suppose someone suggested to me that the unerring arrangement of the words in the dictionary in their alphabetical order, was the outcome of an explosion in a printer's shop that caused the lead letters to be blown up in the air and when they fell down they were found, just like that, to be arranged the way they are in the dictionary. My mind just couldn't take it!

If He is the Ultimate Creator, it follows that nothing could be "more" than Him in any respect, or else He would be "less" than something, He would have limits, and this would be incompatible with being the Ultimate One or the Primary Cause that philosophy refers to. His dimensions in all His attributes can be expressed in terms of infinity. Of course, we cannot

comprehend what infinity really means, but we should acknowledge that this is only natural since we are finite, and the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Our science of mathematics, does indeed acknowledge infinity as a mathematical fact and expresses it with a special sign, " ∞ ", in common use in our teaching of mathematics. God is therefore infinite. He therefore can comprehend us although we, by our finitude, cannot comprehend Him, and we know about Him by knowing His signs and manifestations through His creation. And since infinity cannot be divided by two or three or more (a mathematical fact), it follows that there cannot be God for Jews, another for Christians, another for Muslims, another for Hindus and yet another for the Godless, etc. God is One! It is this Oneness of God that is at the root of the Islamic faith and the belief of Muslims.

When the pronoun "He" is used to refer to God, of course it carries no gender connotations. God is beyond such classification and the question is one of linguistic usage which is both limited and arbitrary. Speaking of languages, it is also noteworthy that some languages (including the English) do not have a word to signify the One Ultimate Creator and capitalize the word God to make the distinction from other (man made) gods, with a small "g". Other languages hold a special name for Him which is Allah in the Arabic language. Whether one reads God (English), Dieu (French), Adonai (Hebrew), or Allah (Arabic)... there should be no confusion. Quite often the question has been posed to me from audiences at my talks, "if you worship God, then who is Allah?" At other times the reference is not as innocent since certain scholars on tape or in writing say that Muslims do not worship God and have a separate god of their own whom they call Allah!

Chapter Two: So What?

SO WHAT ?

GOD IS.

Someone will ask, "So What ?"

Should we really bother whether God is or is not, or is the question merely an academic one attracting only the interest of theologians and philosophical theoreticians? What is the relevance of the existence or nonexistence of God and the practical implications in our actual life as a human society?

Assuming God is, and that He is the Ultimate Creator, a study of His creation immediately shows that we human beings stand out in clear distinction from the rest of the creation that we have so far been able to study. From atom to galaxy all are obedient to the laws governing them. Our constituent atoms and molecules are the same as in Nature and inside us obey the same laws. As they become more complex and form nucleic acid (the self replicating molecule which is the basic ingredient of life), chemistry merges with biology which also obeys its biological laws. In this respect we are astonishingly similar to higher animals. When I was at school we were taught that Man (generic for men and women) was the head of the animal kingdom. Yet, somehow we do not recognize ourselves as animals. Although we share biology

with animals in terms of having the systems of circulation, respiration, digestion, metabolism, immunity, locomotion, sensation, reproduction, etc., we also know that it is not our biology that makes us human beings. Amongst all the species we have studied we are the species who has gone beyond biology. We are suprabiotic beings for whom biology is not the ultimate guide of behavior. We have the same instincts and drives but whereas animals simply respond to these in a simple one-step way, our response is regulated by a complex mechanism that goes beyond inherent programming. Given animals' biology, we went beyond biology into the realm of values, principles and spirituality. Indeed, it is true to say that we are a spiritual creature housed in a biological container which is our body. Those of us whose concern in life is to cater for the needs (and greeds) of their biological component and fall short of the spiritual, might well be described as animals, at least figuratively.

Studying Man, we realize that the Creator endowed us with four cardinal features that are unique to our species:

(1) Knowledge. We have a love of knowledge and seek to acquire more and more of it. Our brain is equipped to observe, imagine, rationalize, analyze, experiment and conclude. We yearn to know past and future and to decipher Nature in and around us, and we record and express our knowledge in various ways.

(2) A concept of good and evil. It would be too simplistic to expect good to always be tempting and evil repulsive. The complexity of human life, the suggestibility of the human mind and its inclination to rationalization and the fact that evil might be very tempting certainly may confound the picture, but the concept is always there.

(3) Freedom to choose. This freedom of choice stems from the "autonomy" the Creator endowed the species with. Obviously this freedom is not absolute and occupies only a space beyond which it ceases to operate. Yet, within this sphere, freedom is a cardinal value that is of supreme importance in human life.

(4) It is this freedom which is the premise for Man's "accountability". It is in our nature that we are held accountable and bear responsibility for our choices. It is not an invention of religion, for even in an atheist society if you break the traffic lights you will be fined. Within the realm of religion, it would imply that unless one was free, then one should not face judgment or the Day of Judgment. Freedom is therefore the core and essence of being human, whether you take it from a religious or a secular point of view. God created a species that will bear responsibility for their actions; therefore, God created a species whose hallmark is freedom. Events that are beyond our sphere of choice or capacity to influence are a matter of "fate", and, of course, we cannot be held accountable for them.

We are therefore the species that leads a life of continual self debate and continual decision making. Quite often we emotionally vacillate between what we know is right and what we know is wrong and have to resort to our will power and our faculty of self-restraint when indicated, or else we fall into wrong and must face the consequences of our acts. Animals are exempt from this continuous battle within oneself; they simply respond to whatever they feel like doing without blame. Scriptures tell us that angels do good all the time, but that is because they do not know what evil is. The others respond to programming, we respond to

choice. This is indeed the nobility of humanity. It explains why God, according to the scriptures, ordered the angels to bow to Adam although they are immune to sin and Adam is not, and they obeyed him, except Satan who refused out of arrogance and became the enemy of God and Man.

Now let us digress a little and cast two looks: one specifically aimed at the Universe at large and the other focusing on Man. The more we scientifically study the Universe the more we realize that we live in a universe of equations so delicately balanced that the slightest imbalance would lead to a cosmic catastrophe.

Now we look at human societies and we see people who live their full life in what we call wrong, evil or sin, and seem to thoroughly enjoy it, and at the end of it they die. Others, by contrast, spend their lives struggling for the truth, fighting for justice and suffering in the cause of their ideals, and finally they die. Can that be all? Can death be the ultimate end to both kinds of life? Something in our innermost feeling refuses to accept it. Where then is the accountability? If death were the end of the story then it would be in conflict with that delicate balance that pervades the whole universe. The only conclusion therefore is that death CANNOT be the end. Death cannot be followed by void but by another life to follow where balance is restored and accountability fulfilled. This is the hereafter that religions tell about, where people will be judged by God, the Ultimate Judge, on the Day of Judgment.

God granted us autonomy and holds us in accountability. We are not perfect creatures, nor were we meant to be. We are required to do our best in the face of difficulty and temptation, and often our "best" is not foolproof. We strive, and our life is a perpetual battle. It is reasonable therefore that God acknowledges our endeavor, appreciates our striving and loves us as His noblest creature. He would certainly love to see us pass the test of accountability, not withstanding our freedom of choice. The best way to do that is to keep us reminded of Him as Ultimate Resort and Lord, of good and evil as He delineates them to us, and of the inevitable Day of Judgment when we will be held accountable. This He has done by selecting certain members of the human family, contacting them in His own way (eg. direct talk, written tablets, inspiration or sending an angel) and giving them the assignment of carrying His message to their fellow humans: worship God and only God, do good and refrain from evil, and always remember your inevitable accountability before Him on the inescapable Day of Judgment. This is the concept of prophethood, and throughout history humanity received a large number of prophets and messengers. Of this long chain some are mentioned by name in the scriptures, some were given scriptures from God, and others were given power from God to perform certain miracles. The last three in this chain of prophets are the principal personalities of the Abrahamic monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Those three figures are all descendants of the Patriarch Abraham, Mohammad by way of Ismail and Moses and Jesus by way of Isaac. Ismail and Isaac were the two sons of Abraham. It is appropriate, however, at this juncture, to point out that for Jews the line of prophets stops with Judaism. To them Jesus was not the Messiah nor was his mother, Mary, the chaste woman she claimed she was. They still await the Messiah and deny Christianity as a divine religion. To the Christians the line ends with Christianity. They acknowledge Judaism as a

divine religion without reciprocity on part of the Jews. Islam, on the other hand, recognizes both Judaism and Christianity as God-sent religions inspite of the fact that neither Jews nor Christians believe Islam to be so, nor that Mohammad was a true prophet and messenger of God. It is part of the faith of every Muslim (the person who professes Islam) to believe in Moses and the Torah and in Jesus and the Gospel, and in the preceding line of prophets. Indeed in the Quran, the scripture of Islam that Muslims believe to be the very words of God, Muslims read: "The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, that which We revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: that you should steadfastly uphold the faith and break-not your unity therein." (42:13)

A short briefing about the Quran now would be of help to the non-Muslim readers before moving on to the following pages. The Quran, Muslims believe, is authored by God Himself, verbatim and literally, and conveyed as such to prophet Mohammad by the angel Gabriel. In its completion, it is a book the size of the Bible, but it was not revealed all at once. It came in short passages addressing various topics or commenting on issues and incidents, and its revelation was completed over the span of twenty three years. Whenever prophet Mohammad received a segment of the Quran and wanted to convey it to his followers, he would make the equivalent of the quote (") and unquote ("), at the beginning saying "God says:" and at the end saying "God spoke the truth." This would immediately be committed to the memory of the people as well as written down on the writing materials then available. When the Quran was completed, Mohammad put it in its final arrangement (not necessarily in chronological order but upon divine instruction), and it has been preserved ever since, in its original language and form, word to word and letter to letter. As a scripture the Quran is unique in this respect. Once translated we do not call it the Quran any more but the translation or the meanings thereof because these would be human language and not the original divine words. The language of the Quran is Arabic, where it is considered an inimitable literary miracle. It challenged the Arabs at the time of the prophet to simulate it but they were awed by it, although they prided themselves in their literary power. Some of the staunchest enemies of Islam at the time embraced it just upon listening to passages from the Quran.

Chapter Three: Islam and the Others

We have already alluded in the previous chapter to the nobility of Humanity and its eligibility to be the favorite creature in God's eye. According to the Quran every human being is honored just by virtue of being human before people are even categorized in terms of creed or breed. The Quran says "We have honored the children of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea, and conferred on them special favors above a great part of our creation." (17:70)

Islam emphasizes the oneness of Humanity as a family. "O mankind: fear your Guardian Lord who created you from a single self and created -out of it- its mate, and made from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women." (4:1)

All people are equally eligible for the basic human rights, including the right to freely chose one's religion without coercion, for

within Islam the space of the "other" is well preserved and protected. Islam is not an exclusive religion, and no human being, clergy or otherwise, is ever permitted to set limits on God's mercy and forgiveness, or to speak on His behalf in assigning rewards or punishment. The ultimate judge is God Himself. "your return in the end is toward Allah.. He will tell you the truth of the things wherein you disputed." (6:164)

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

From amongst humanity, Jews and Christians are the nearest to Muslims and are given the honorary title of the People of the Book. They are the fellow believers in the One God and the recipients of scriptures from Him, the Torah to Moses and the Gospel to Jesus. They share the belief in the line of prophethood, and so many of our Jewish and Christian friends are taken by surprise when they hear that the Biblical prophets are also Islamic prophets. The three religions share a common moral code. The Quran says "Say we believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and the revelation given to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) the prophets from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another of them, and to Him we are submitters." (2:136) The word Islam literally means submission to the will of God.

Muslims are permitted by Islam to eat the food offered them by the People of the Book (unless specifically prohibited like drinking alcohol or eating pig meat) and reciprocate by offering their food to them "The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and your food is lawful unto them." (5:5). A Muslim man is permitted to take as a wife in marriage (the most intimate relation and sacred bond) a Jewish or Christian woman "Lawful unto you in marriage are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when you give them their due dowers and desire chastity and not lewdness taking them as lovers." (5:5) In such a situation it is unlawful for the Muslim husband to try and exert pressure on his wife to convert to Islam, because that would be in conflict with the Quranic injunction "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (2:256) It would indeed be his Islamic duty to ensure her right of worship according to her own faith.

In an Islamic state the legal dictum about the People of the Book is "They have our rights and owe our duties." They are equally eligible to social security and other benefits the state provides. Muslims were warned against acts of bigotry or prejudice towards the People of the Book, and prophet Mohammad himself said, "Whoever hurts a person from the People of the Book it will be as though he hurt me personally."

As a matter of fact, from its inception, the Islamic society was a pluralistic society. As soon as Mohammad immigrated to Madinah to establish the earliest Islamic state, a treaty was written between all the tribes including the Jewish tribes that lived there, establishing religious freedom and equal rights and duties.

Nor is Islam an exclusive religion. It is a universal call to mankind (not an Arab or an Eastern religion as many image it). Although it addressed all people including the People of the Book, their failure to embrace it was no reason to categorize them as enemies or infidels.

As a matter of fact the term "infidel" was of European origin at the time of the Crusades to describe Muslims. Goodness is acknowledged wherever it resides, "Not all of them are alike: of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of God all night long and they prostrate themselves in adoration." (3:113) No individual or a group can claim monopoly of God's mercy or deny it to the others, "Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians, and the Sabians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." (2:62)

Doctrinal Differences

The commonalities that Islam has with Judaism and Christianity are so vast and so different from the stereotype which is held by a major segment of the population in the West. As a matter of fact, Islam is nearer to both Christianity and Judaism than they are to one another since it recognizes both as divine religions whereas the Jews are still awaiting the Messiah, who to them was not Jesus of Nazareth. In this respect it would seem to us that the term "Judeo-Christian" is a misnomer, and in our opinion it was coined, politically, for the sole purpose of excluding Muslims. A more appropriate description of our current civilization would have been Judeo-Christian-Islamic seeing that the three religions are rooted in the Abrahamic tradition and knowing that the civilization of the Islamic era furnished the foundation for the present civilization. It was a civilization where Muslims, Jews, and Christians, and others lived in safety and justice under a system of tolerance and cooperation.

Vast as the commonalities might be, it is beneficial to also be aware of certain doctrinal differences that exist between Islam and the other communities of the Abrahamic faiths. A general outline will be given with no intention whatsoever of confrontation or attacking other faiths but to enable Jewish and Christian readers to clarify and reappraise their position towards Islam, instead of the blanket maligning that caused, and still does, a lot of animosity and ill will based on ignorance and misunderstanding.

Foremost, perhaps, is how Muslims perceive God and express themselves towards Him. God is the eternal, the infinite and the absolute in all His attributes. It is beyond us to imagine a form for Him or express Him in any way that limits Him or reduces Him to less than the infinity He is. The most venerating language is used when referring to God. It is therefore alien to the Muslim mind to read (in the Bible) that God had a walk in the Garden of Eden, or that He assembled the angels and said to them about Adam "Behold, the man is become as one of us", or God doing something then saying I wish I did not do it, or that God worked for six days and then had to rest on the seventh, or that anyone wrestled with God and (almost) defeated Him.

Another aspect concerns prophets and messengers appointed by God. Muslims believe that these were hand-picked by God both to convey his message and to be role models to their communities. Whenever societies slipped back into idol worship or associated partners with God or deviated from the moral code ordained by Him, those persons were sent to remind and correct the course. If human perfectness were ever tenable they would be its epitome and embodiment. Notions, reported in the Bible, that prophets cheated like Jacob donning

sheepskin to impersonate his hairy twin Esau to their blind father Isaac, cheating the father into giving him the blessing due his brother, and when the father knows he says I can not do anything about it and God Himself condones it, is something at complete variance with Islamic teachings. Nor do prophets commit carnal sin like Lot getting drunk and having sex with his two daughters. The only conclusion open to Muslims is that such things must be human insertions into the scriptures.

The Jews

It is common for Muslims to refer to the Jews as their cousins since Abraham was the common grandfather of Mohammad by way of Ismail and of Israel (Jacob) and his children by way of Isaac. As well known, Abraham's marriage to Sarah was barren until she was well advanced in age. Out of pity for her husband, Sarah insisted that he take her Egyptian maid Hagar, who conceived and gave birth to Ismail. Later on she could not live with the maid and her son and pressured Abraham to banish them so he took them to the place that centuries later became the city of Makkah. The anguish of the mother searching for water after their provisions were exhausted and the unexpected eruption of the well of Zam-Zam is commemorated annually by Muslims amongst the rituals of Hajj (pilgrimage), as well as visiting the Kaaba, the first mosque for the worship of One God, built by Abraham and Ismail during one of Abraham's visits to them. God willed that Sarah also, well into her menopause, would conceive and give birth to Isaac, father of Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel, the father of the twelve Children of Israel.

Muslims feel somewhat dismayed to see that large segments of Jews and Christians do not consider Ismail to be Abraham's son, since Ismail's mother was a maid. In the King James Version of the Holy Bible (Red Letter Edition published by Collins World) the name of Ismail was altogether missing from the glossary, and I could retrieve his story taking Abraham as my key. Time and again Genesis (17:16, 23, 25, 26-21:11) refers to Ismail as "his son", talking about Abraham, thus making it impossible to deny that sonhood. Moreover, tracing the maternal side of the Children of Israel, Genesis tells us that Israel married his two cousins, Rachel and Leah and their two maids, Zilpa and Bilhah, and out of the four of them came the twelve Children of Israel. Yet no one ever claimed that any of them were less the Children of Israel because their mothers were maids! Is there a double standard set against Ismail? When Genesis (22:2) reports that God said to Abraham "Take now the son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of ", Muslims feel that the mention of Isaac's name was deliberately inserted, for at no time was Isaac the only son of Abraham, being thirteen years younger than Ismail, and both being alive when their father died! The commemoration of this trying test of Abraham and his submission to God even to the extent of slaying his only son (Ismail) is annually commemorated by Muslims as one of the rituals of Hajj (pilgrimage). To Muslims, however, both Ismail and Isaac are equally blessed and endeared prophets.

The Quran makes some fifty references to Jews or Children of Israel, apart from mentioning Moses some 137 times and the Torah eighteen times. Generous praise was heaped upon them, as well as a fair share of blame and rebuke. Examples are:

"O children of Israel, call to mind the favor which I bestowed on you, and that I preferred you to all others. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted for her, nor shall compensation be taken from her, nor shall anyone be helped (from outside). And remember, We delivered you from the people of the Pharaoh: they set you hard tasks and chastisement, slaughtered your sons and let your women folk live; therein was tremendous trial from your Lord. And remember We parted the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people within your very sight. And remember We appointed forty nights for Moses, and in his absence you took the calf (for worship) and you did grievous wrong. Even then We did forgive you; there was a chance for you to be grateful." (2:47-52)

"We settled the Children of Israel in an honorable dwelling place, and provided for them sustenance of the best: it was after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schisms. Verily God will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them on the Day of Judgment." (10:93)

It is to be noted that whenever the Jews were rebuked it was as a matter of fact because they did something that the Quran deemed conflicting with the Jewish religion itself.

Due consideration should be given to the fact that for a long period of time the Jews were the only bearers of monotheism in a world that was pagan or idolatrous. It is a credit that the Quran fully acknowledges, but with the arrival of Christianity and later of Islam, the claim of the Jews to have sole monopoly of monotheism loses its ground, and with it the concept of the chosen race that they cling to until today. At least this is what Christians and Muslims feel. Islam in fact does not subscribe to the concept of a chosen race. God says in the Quran:

"You Mankind: We have created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know and cherish one another, (not to despise one another). Verily the most honorable of you in the site of God are the most righteous." (49:13)

People can become better or worse on the basis of righteousness and not by belonging to a certain ancestral line. This is very vividly expressed in the Quranic version of God's promise to Abraham:

"and remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain Commands which he fulfilled: He said "I will make thee an Imam (leader) to the people". He pleaded "And also (Imams) from my offspring!" He answered "But My promise is not within the reach of evil-doers." (2:124)

Another issue stemmed out from the Covenant given by God to Abraham in its Biblical version "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." (Genesis 17:8) The complexity of the

Palestinian problem derives from the interpretation by the Jews that the "seed of Abraham" includes only the Jews; so that any Jews who accepted Jesus and became Christian are to be excluded from the Covenant. The same applies also to those (Jews or Christians) who later embraced Islam, even though they be the descendants of Israel, or the descendants of the other (first) son of Abraham, Ismail. It follows, therefore, that the Palestinian Muslims and Christians do not see themselves as outsiders who have to leave or live as second class citizens in their land, and the land of their ancestors for millennia. They can hardly swallow such statements as the Golda Meir's "There is no such a thing as the Palestinians, they do not exist" (Sunday Times, June 15, 1969) or that of Joseph Weitz, head of Jewish National Fund "Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country." (Davar, September 29, 1967)

Muslims do not see the Palestinian problem as a fight between religions. As a matter of fact it would have been far more religious (according to all religions) to find a peaceful solution. A peaceful solution is one based on justice and fairness which is the only assurance of its permanency. A peaceful solution is far from being a negotiated resultant between the powerful and the weak. A Versailles mentality should not dominate the negotiations, but it takes farsighted statesmanship to realize this. At the time of writing, negotiations are taking place between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and we pray God to guide both sides to this kind of peace. We believe that God has meant this part of the world to be the converging and not the diverging site for the three Abrahamic faiths to manifest the spirit of tolerance and Godliness and celebrate the unity that encompasses their diversity. Both common sense and religion(s) point in that direction if only all sides would open their ears and their hearts to the voice of God. We know there are people on all sides making the same prayers.

A principal difference with Jews, of course, is their stand on Jesus, whom Muslims believe was the true and genuine messenger of God to his fellow Jews. The Quran says "O you who believe, be the helpers to (the cause of) God, as said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples 'Who will be my helpers (to the work of God)?' Said the disciples 'We are God's helpers'. Then a portion of the Children of Israel believed and a portion disbelieved." (61:14)

Those who rejected Jesus and accused his mother of unchastity are rebuked by the Quran time and again, "That they uttered against Mary a grave false charge. That they said (in boast) 'We killed Christ Jesus son of Mary The messenger of God'.. But they killed him not, nor crucified him.. only a likeness of that was shown to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts with no (certain) knowledge but only conjecture to follow. For a surety they killed him not: Nay, God raised him up unto Himself, and God (Allah) is Most Exalted, Wise." (4:156-158). Islam, therefore, completely absolved the Jews from Christ's blood. The view that the one arrested and crucified was other than Jesus (Judas Escariot?) is held amongst a faction of Christians.

Historically, the relation between Muslims and Jews had its fluctuations but never because Islam harbored animosity to Judaism as a faith. Conflict was situational whenever it had its justifiable reasons. However, we should be far from claiming that the history of Muslims has always been a true representation of the teachings of Islam. Particularly under dictatorial rule,

Jews and Christians had their share of maltreatment, but this was not to the exclusion of the Muslim subjects who always were even the most to suffer. In the Muslim world Jews never suffered anything like the atrocities inflicted on them by Christian Europe over the centuries, including the holocaust in this century. It was in Christendom that the Jews were branded as Killers of God and were made to pay for it through one pogrom after another. Even when the enemy was the Muslims, Europe always included the Jews as "collateral damage." The first Crusade was launched by the massacre of thousands of Jews in Europe, with the mischievous rationalization: "We have set out to march a long way to fight the enemies of God in the East, and behold before our very eyes are his worst foes, the Jews. They must be dealt with first" (Kohn N: "The Pursuit of the Millennium", 1957, p.70 - in Bamber Gascoigne's book: The Christians, publ. Jonathan Cape, 2nd ed., 1977, p.113)

In 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain as a product of the victory of Ferdinand and Isabella over the Muslims. Contrary to previous promises, it was made illegal for any Muslim or Jew to practice their religion. Then they were condemned to death or expulsion if they did not convert to Catholicism. Many Jews chose to go to Turkey, then the seat of the Islamic Caliphate and were generously received, the Sultan mocking Ferdinand and Isabella's expulsion of the Jews by saying, "They impoverished their kingdom and enriched mine." The Muslim era in Spain was one during which the Jewish contribution to civilization particularly flourished. In his book My People (also produced as a TV series), Mr. Aba Eban, Israeli scholar, historian and former foreign secretary, stated the Jews in two episodes during their history were treated justly, once in Muslim Spain and the second, currently, in the United States of America. The great Maimonides was the student of the Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averros) of Cordova, and later, when he moved to Egypt, he was the personal physician of Salahuddin (Saladin, of Crusades' fame). Over the centuries, the Jewish citizens of Islamic countries enjoyed security and prosperity. Until this day many Islamic countries house sizable Jewish communities who, in spite of the agonizing repercussion of the Palestinian problem, fare no worse than their Muslim and Christian compatriots.

The Christians

"Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them: then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said 'I seek refuge from you to Allah (God) Most Gracious: (come not near) if you fear Allah'. He said 'Nay, I am only a messenger from your Lord (to announce) to you the gift of a pure son.' She said: 'How shall I have a son whereas no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?' He said: 'So (it will be): your Lord said 'It is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a sign unto people and a mercy from Us'.. it is a matter (so) decreed. So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree. She cried (in her anguish) 'Ah! would that I had died before this.. would that I had been a thing forgotten. But a voice called her from beneath (the palm-tree): Grieve Not! Your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you; and shake toward yourself the trunk of the palm-tree and it will let fall upon you fresh ripe dates. So eat and drink and cool your eye. And if you see any human (person), say

'I have vowed a fast to God Most Gracious so this day I will enter into no talk with any human being.' At length she brought the babe to her people carrying him (in her arms) and they said 'O Mary! You have indeed done an amazing thing. O Sister of Aaron: Your father was not a man of evil nor your mother a woman unchaste!' But she pointed to the babe and they said 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?' He (the babe) said 'I am indeed a servant of Allah (God), He has given me Revelation and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be; and has enjoined on me prayers and zakat (alms giving) as long as I live. And made me kind to my mother and not overbearing or unblessed. So peace be on me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I shall be raised up to life (again).'" (19:16-33)

Such is one narration of the story of Jesus in the Quran. The Quran mentions him as "Jesus" twenty five times, as the "Messiah" eleven times and as only the "Son of Mary" twice. Mary was mentioned by name thirty four times and as "The one who guarded her chastity" twice. We do not intend to give an exhaustive list since a few quotations should be sufficient to express the high esteem in which Jesus and Mary are regarded in Islam. We feel astounded and dumbfounded when we read notable scholars and specialists and, most painful of all, clergy imaging Islam and Muslims as the enemies of Christ. Conversely, many uninformed and misinformed Christians are astonished when we tell them the respect and love we have for Jesus and Mary even though we have doctrinal differences.

"Behold! the angels said: 'O Mary: God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the hereafter'" (3:45)

"Christ Jesus the son of Mary was the messenger of God and His Word that He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him" (4:171)

"And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her from Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples" (21:91)

Rebuking the Jews for not accepting Jesus the Quran says:

"We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers, We gave Jesus the Son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the holy spirit, Is it that whenever there comes to you a messenger with what you do not like, you are puffed up with pride? - some you called impostors and others you slay?" (2:87)

Muslims also believe in the miracles that Jesus performed by God's leave and which the Quran mentions:

"Then God will say: 'O Jesus Son of Mary: Remember My favor to you and to your mother. Behold! I strengthened you with the holy spirit so that you did speak to the people in childhood and in old age. Behold! I taught you the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. And behold! you make out of clay -as it were- the figure of a bird by My leave, and you breathe into it and it becomes a bird by My leave. And you heal those born blind and lepers by My leave. And behold! You bring forth the dead to life by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from you when you showed them the clear signs: and the unbelievers among them said: This is nothing but evident magic'" (5:110)

The tone of praise widens to encompass also the Christians, both early Christians and those at the time of prophet Mohammad who declined the call of Islam, and inspite of the doctrinal differences we shall shortly explain.

"Then in their wake (Noah, Abraham and the prophets from amongst their progeny) We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel, and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy" (57:27)

"And nearest (among people) in love to the believers (Muslims) you will find those who say 'We are Christians'.. because amongst these are priests and monks, and because they are not given to arrogance" (5:82)

Let us now consider some of the areas where Muslims and Christians have different beliefs. Foremost among these is that Muslims, believing in the chastity of Virgin Mary, say that Jesus was "created" by God without a father but do not say "begotten" by God. To them God is beyond such biological characterizations, for He is the eternal and the absolute, expressed in the Quran as: "Say: He is Allah (God) the one; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him." (112:1-4) This literal sonhood of Jesus to God is at variance with the Islamic faith (although it is acceptable to say that, metaphorically, we are all the children of God), also unacceptable is the doctrine that Mary is the mother of God. Both Mary and Jesus are highly honored "human beings", and the fact that Jesus was born without a father does not, according to Islamic doctrine, make him "the only begotten son of God." The Quran relates: "The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him 'Be'.. and he was." (3:59) According to the Quran, Jesus never claimed divinity for himself or for his mother "And behold! Allah will say 'O Jesus son of Mary: did you say unto the people 'Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?' He will say 'Glory to You. Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing you would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart though I don't know what is in Yours, for You know in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what You did command me to say: Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them; when You did take me up You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things. If You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are indeed the Exalted (in power), the Wise." (5:116-118) Muslims therefore identify with such verses in the New Testament as Jesus saying "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but One, that is God" (Mark 10:18)

According to the New Testament, when Jesus was on the cross he cried "Eloi Eloi, lama sabachtani?", translated as "My God, My God, why thy hast forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) Obviously he must have been talking to someone else than himself. The whole concept of the Trinity and the Triune God has no place in Islam: "Say not three; desist, it will be better for you, for God is One God, glory be to Him, (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in heavens and on earth." (4:171) Muslims do not conceive that infinity can be divided or compartmentalized into three or accept the deification of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. They see that Jesus never said anything about three divine persons in a single Godhead and

that his concept of God never differed from that of the earlier prophets who preached the Unity (never the trinity) of God. Moreover, the concept of the Trinity was unknown to the early Christians. Historically, it was decreed to be the creed of the Roman Empire in the Congress of Nicaea in the year 325 CE and was enforced by all the might of the empire under Emperor Constantine. The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967, art. "The Holy Trinity", vol. 14, p 299) states: "The formulation 'one God in three persons' was not solidly established into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the 4th Century."

Another area of variance is the story of the original sin. According to the Bible the devil tempted Eve to eat from the forbidden tree, and then she tempted Adam to do the same: thus committing the sin. They were then punished by being banished in shame to planet earth with more blame befalling Eve as the prime perpetrator, "Unto the woman He said: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16) The Christian teaching is that all human beings inherit that sin, and that every newborn is born in sin.

In the Quranic version the devil tempted both Adam and Eve, they both sinned, they both repented, they both were forgiven, and that was the end of the original sin. "So Satan whispered suggestions to them in order to reveal to them their shame that was hidden from them (before).. he said to the two of them 'your Lord only forbade you this tree lest you become angels or such beings as live forever', and he swore to them both that he was their sincere advisor." (7:20-21) After their repentance, "Adam learnt from his Lord certain words and his Lord forgave him, for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful." (2:37) Adam was then raised to prophethood and the human race was delegated to planet earth as God's vicegerent. Satan swore to follow them and corrupt them, but God promised to provide them with such guidance as to immunize them against Satan's plots, except those who willed to turn their back to divine guidance. Every human being therefore is born pure, and it is later on that our choices blemish us and make us sinners. Sin is not something that children inherit from their parents.

In this respect, Islam emphasizes that accountability is individual. "Whoever receives guidance receives it for his (or her) own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own loss. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another" (17:15) The idea of vicarious sacrifice is therefore alien to Islam, and the claim that Jesus, or anyone else, had to be slain in atonement of human sins is unacceptable. God's forgiveness, in Islam, is to be sought through sincere repentance and doing righteousness, without need for bloodshed. Salvation is granted by the grace of God, "And those who, having done an act of indecency or wronged their own souls, remember God and ask for forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except God? - and never knowingly persist in the sin they have done: for such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord.." (3:135) No sin is too great compared to God's forgiveness. "Say O My servants who have transgressed against their own selves: despair not of the mercy of God, for God forgives all sins, for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful." (39:53) According to prophet Mohammad, God says: "You child of Adam, you approach me with an earthful of sins

then you repent and worship me taking no associates with Me, and I approach you with an earthful of forgiveness."

Devoid of the concept of atonement for sin by the blood of Jesus or of a chosen race (enjoying special privileges with God), Muslims' greatest hope in God's forgiveness, is by being themselves forgivers. The role of forgiveness, whether between individuals, tribes or nations is of the essence of Islam. Even when the law intervenes by meting a punishment commensurate with an aggression, the wronged party is encouraged to transcend justice to forgiveness, "The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation his reward is due from God" (42:40) "And let them forgive, and let them forgo: don't you love that God should forgive you?" (24:22) The seeking of God's forgiveness is a direct relation between the individual and the Creator, without intercession. To go to a fellow mortal for confession upon which he would say something to the effect of "Go my child, you have been forgiven", has no place in Islam. Forgiveness is the domain of God alone, and no one else is ever in a position to play His role. As a matter of fact there is no clergy institution in Islam. Although there is theological scholarship, there is no priesthood. With the hope that God's mercy is boundless, it is up to Him only to handle us with His justice (and He is the Absolutely Just) or with His mercy (and He is the Absolutely Merciful), and all our life we pray He treats us with His mercy rather than His justice. Repentance should also be sincere and serious, and if it resides in the heart it should show in the deeds. It would be a contradiction if someone stole my wallet and repeated "Forgive me God" even a million times. Justice should first be done when a third party is involved.

These doctrinal differences are neither trivial nor ignorable, yet it would be foolish and counterproductive to fight one another or hate one another over them. Debate over them should abide by the highest ethics of civilized debate, "And dispute you not with the People of the Book except in the most kindly manner -unless it be those of them who wronged- but say 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is one, and it is to Him we submit (in Islam)" (29:46) Although the views of the Christians in our eyes are no less serious than Islam's views in theirs, Islam is very keen on expounding the common grounds and enjoying their spaciousness "Say: O People of the Book.. come to common terms as between us and you, that we worship none but God, that we associate no partners with Him, that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and Partners other than God: if they then turn back then say 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (submitters to God's will)" (3:64) Beyond that, relations should remain peaceful and friendly.

Having thus covered the religious (doctrinal) aspects, it will not be out of place to briefly survey the geo-political history between Muslims and Christendom. At the onset of Islam the world was dominated by two major powers, the Persian Empire to the East and the Roman to the West. As the Persians were fire worshipers and the Romans Christians, Muslims' sympathies naturally lay with the Christians. A long military conflict raged between the two empires, and the beginning of Islam witnessed a time of defeat for the Christians, but the Quran made the prophecy (which came true) that the tide would change: "The Romans have

been defeated -in a land close by- but they, (even) after this defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious within a few years. With God is the Command in the past and in the future. On that day shall the believers rejoice with (that) victory from God, He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful" (30:2-5).

Years later, however, Islam prevailed in the Arab peninsula and consolidated it into a state and an emerging political power right at the flank of both giant empires. Both saw it as a serious threat and started to instigate hostilities against it utilizing their client Arab tribes and later on their colossal armed forces. The outcome of that inevitable military confrontation was almost miraculous, comparing the meagerness of the Islamic forces both in number and in equipment in relation to their adversaries.

In the East the Persian dynasty came to an end and the people, almost in totality, opted for Islam. In the West the authority of the Roman Empire was driven back, and in less than a century a pluralistic Islamic empire covered more than half of the known world at the time. This was the seat of the Islamic civilization that preserved the Greek heritage from annihilation by the Church and brought forth leaps of progress in the various disciplines of knowledge like medicine, chemistry, physics, astronomy, mathematics (algebra is an Arabic word and the science was invented by Muslims), music, philosophy, etc. apart from the religious sciences and Arabic literature and linguistics. People of all races and religions generously contributed. Europe got its first shock out of the dark ages by seeing a civilization without censorship (religious or otherwise) over the human mind. Arabic was the language of science, and the earliest European universities employed Muslim professors and for many centuries used the books of Muslim authors. Europe knew about the Greek philosophers by translating from Arabic, and when the press was invented most of its production was the translation of Arabic sources.

As the Muslim Empire weakened Europe counter-attacked. Amongst the important historical developments were the Crusades in the East and the victory of Ferdinand and Isabella over Islamic Spain in the West. The latter gave birth to the Inquisition and the religious cleansing of Spain of Muslims and Jews and cleared the way for the discovery of the New World, the reign of the conquistadors and the establishment of state-run slave trade.

The Crusades were an attempt to directly invade the Muslim heartland. At the time the justification was to free the Christian sacred places in Jerusalem from the Muslims, and for over two centuries the Crusades evoked a religious furor that still lingers over the Western mind and shapes Western culture in one way or the other. This continues even after contemporary mainstream Christianity has condemned the Crusades and branded them as being no more than colonialist driven wars that donned the cloak of Christianity while committing such atrocities that are an affront on Christianity itself. The word "crusade" (verb and noun) has settled in the language as a nice word, with a deeply entrenched psychological aftermath. We believe, as well as many Christians both clergy and laity, that Christendom should be re-educated on the Crusades in a spirit of soul-searching and self-appraisal, as already done with a large measure of success concerning the Spanish Inquisition and the German holocaust. A concerted effort to give the "Crusades" its true colours might be a crucial

step in preparation for a New World Order, opening the gates of reconciliation between two blocks of humanity each comprising one billion people and perhaps helping to prevent similar evils from camouflaging a pseudo-religious aura, as in Bosnia and elsewhere in the world.

It is not our intention here to expand on the Crusades any more than a few (sample) quotations from Christian authorship. Here is a Crusader's report of the occupation of Jerusalem by the first Crusade in July 15, 1099: "With drawn swords our people ran through the city; nor did they spare anyone, not even those pleading for mercy. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with blood. What more shall I tell? Not one of them was allowed to live. They did not spare the women or children. The horses waded in blood up to their knees, nay, up to the bridle. It was a just and wonderful judgment of God" (Kohn N., *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 1957, p.68). In 1202 the fourth Crusade took off from Venice and on the way called in at Christian Constantinople where they rampaged the city and inflicted such atrocities that the Pope himself rebuked his own crusaders in a message saying: "It was not against the Infidels but against Christians that you drew your swords. It was not Jerusalem that you captured, but Constantinople. It was not heavenly riches upon which your minds were set but earthly ones. Nothing has been sacred to you. You have violated married women, widows, even nuns. You have despoiled the very sanctuaries of God's Church, stolen the sacred objects of altars, pillaged innumerable images and relics of saints. It is hardly surprising that the Greek Church sees in you the works of the Devil." (Gascoigne, *Bamper: The Christians*, 1977, Publ. Jonathan Cape, London, p.119) If this was what the Crusaders did to Christian Constantinople, one could imagine what they did to the "Infidel" (!) Muslims.

One of the significant milestones of modern times, however, was the radical shift of the views of the Holy See on Muslims that should hopefully work as a catalyst for better understanding between Muslims and Christians. Whereas in 1095 Pope Urban II (also known as Urban the Blessed), who was the first to call for the Crusades, characterized Muslims as "Godless people, idolaters, enemies of Christ, dogs, chaff destined for eternal fire" etc., the *Nostra Etate* of 1965 under Pope Paul VI sees Muslims in an entirely different light. "Upon Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem", the document says, and proceeds to expound that Muslims adore the One God, the God of Abraham with whom the Islamic faith is happy to associate itself, and how they worship, pray and give alms, and revere Jesus and his virgin mother and consider him the prophet and messenger of God.

Ever since the Crusades, the relation between Europe and the Muslim world was distorted by the colonialist agenda of the European countries, and after World War I almost all Islamic countries were in the grips of European colonialism. A long struggle ensued that secured political independence, but colonialism merely took another form, neocolonialism headed by the United States of America, which does not depend on occupation armies but on economic leverage.

Chapter Four: The Anatomy of Islam

The word 'religion' in Western usage falls short of the totality of Islam as a comprehensive system influencing all aspects of life, individual as well as communal. The total address of Islam to its followers is called the Shari'a, and it is only arbitrary to divide the Shari'a into the three compartments of (ritual) Worship, Moral Code and Legal System, since these are closely interrelated and integrated. What is moral for the individual constitutes the norm for communal morality; and moralities do not live in a legal vacuum. The inner self (conscience and intentions) and the outer self (deeds and observable behavior) should be in harmony and not conflict, and the system of worship prepares the individual to attain this reality of Islam. Anything less is fraudulent and counterfeit.

A- General Outlay - The Shari'a

The Sources of The Shari'a

The primary source of the Shari'a is of course the Quran, the literal word of God. The Quran deals with a full range of issues ranging from the establishment of the creed (chapters I, II, and III) to defining the absolute moral standards and codes of permissible and impermissible behavior. It delineates the articles of worship, and lays down the framework of a comprehensive legal system relating to family law, economic rules, penal code, social conduct, treaties, ethics of war and peace, pattern of government (the Shura is considered the Islamic forerunner of democracy), human rights, relations with other nations and other religions, inheritance, (Zakat) taxation, etc., so that it is true to say that there is hardly an affair of life that lacks some reference in the Quran. Yet the ultimate and final rules in the Quran pertain only to the issues of Creed (Aqeeda) and Worship (Ibadat), whereas the third area of law and other human interaction (Moamalat) is, with a limited number of exceptions, covered with general and flexible guidelines. The constants of the Shari'a in Moamalat are therefore limited, which allowed the science of Jurisprudence (derivation of rulings) to arise and flourish, accommodating various schools of thought and amassing over the centuries a wealth of opinions that suited various places and times and proved that the Shari'a is neither static nor exhaustible.

The second source of the Shari'a is the Sunna (Tradition) of prophet Mohammad in what he ordered, forbade, did or acknowledged in his capacity as prophet. The Sunna sometimes explains the Quran, illustrates it, details some generalities and complements it in some areas. The sciences of Sunna especially the process of authentication of the sayings of the prophet are perhaps the most exact branch in the science of history in general. The tracing of the chain of reporters and witnesses and, above all, making sure that a reported Sunna conflicts neither with the Quran nor with established fact and common sense establish the Sunna as a science of precision.

The third source of the Shari'a operates when an issue is not specifically settled by the Quran or the Sunna. Analogy is resorted to through a process of deductive reasoning that equates a new issue with one already decided by the Quran and/or Sunna. "Ijtihad" is the term

indicating the utilization of available evidence (religious, scientific, statistical, social) to think out the best course to be taken provided it does not conflict with the Quran or Sunna or the goals of the Shari'a that will shortly be presented. The Shari'a therefore is not a rigid set of rules to be copied and applied any time any place, and allows for human ingenuity to address changeable situations by progressive legislation. During the evolution of the science of Jurisprudence certain juridical rules were established to enable derivation of new rulings. Examples of these are "Necessities overrule prohibitions" For example, pig meat is unlawful to eat, but if it is the only food available for a traveler lost in the desert, it becomes permissible as long as necessary. Other rules include "The choice of the lesser of two evils if both cannot be avoided", "Public interest to take priority over private interest", "Harm is to be removed" etc. The overall rule, given no conflict with the Quran and Sunna, is "Wherever welfare goes, there goes the statue of God."

Goals Of The Shari'a

The supreme goal of the Shari'a is the welfare of the people in this world and in the hereafter. Broadly speaking, the needs of the community are classified into dire necessities, ordinary necessities and complementary needs (that make life more enjoyable), in this order of significance. Topping the list is the first category which comprises the widely known "Five Aims of the Shari'a" whose objective is the preservation and protection of: (1) Life, (2) Mind, (3) Religion, (4) Ownership and possessions, and (5) Procreation and preservation of the species. Each of these is divided into sets and branching subsets until seemingly small details are reached, and each is serviced by appropriate moral and/or legal rulings. Resisting all temptation to step into the deep waters of this immense subject, we can glean the essential ideas from each category to hopefully clarify the picture.

(1) Life

This includes the right to life and the duty to protect it. It entails the prohibition of killing and defines the permissible exceptions such as legitimate war or judiciary sentence. To seek treatment when ill and to avoid ill health by avoiding whatever leads to it are Islamic duties, hence the dietary rules, encouragement of physical fitness by exercise, the laws of cleanliness of person, home, street, and environment. The principles of quarantine were established when Mohammad instructed: "If there is pestilence in a city don't go in if you are out or get out of it if you are already in." Encouraging agriculture is commendable. Teachings of prophet Mohammad include a) If the Day of Judgment comes and you have in your hand a shoot to implant, hurry and implant it if you can, b) Whoever cultivates a land will be rewarded for every soul eating from its harvest, even birds and animals, and even a thief who steals from it, c) No trees should be cut or burnt as a means of warfare. Ecological awareness and respecting the environment are mandated (The water cycle is described in the Quran and its conservation and nonpollution is ordered by Mohammad. 'No bird or animal is to be killed except for food' is one of his instructions, as is kindness to animals and refraining from overburdening them.) One of the impressive teachings of Mohammad is: "God has not created an illness without creating a cure for it.. some already known and some are not", an impetus for continuing the search.

(2) Mind

The mind is the hallmark of a human being. It is our instrument to know good and evil and to explore nature within and around us. Thinking, pondering and reflection are religious duties, and the Quran condemns those who were given minds but do not use them. Freedom of thought and statement are basic human rights. The pursuit of knowledge is not only a right but also a duty in Islam. Scientific research, in juridical jargon, is called "the revealing of God's tradition in His creation" and is a duty on those who are able to do it. Censorship over the mind is rejected, and no human being can claim authority over another in this respect. The first word ever of the Quran is "Read" and the Quran says "They are not equal those who have knowledge and those who haven't, nor are light and darkness equal." "Of His servants the learned heed Him most", the Quran says. Not only from censorship should the mind be protected but also from repression, fear, anxiety and stress. Anything that numbs or kills the mind is abhorrent, hence the consumption of alcohol and drugs are absolutely prohibited in Islam, not even in social proportions!

(3) Religion

Many authors give religion first place, but obviously without the integrity of life and mind religious tasks become superfluous. Freedom of religion and worship is a basic human right, and we don't mean to Muslims only. It is against Islam to coerce anyone to embrace it, and the Quran says: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256) Houses of worship should be built. When Muslims are attacked on account of their religion they have the right and duty of defense.

(4) Ownership and Possessions

The right of ownership is inviolable and there is no objection or limit on the amassing of wealth provided it is secured by lawful ways. Unlawful ways of collecting wealth are delineated, including usury, cheating and fraud, stealing, monopoly, etc. The rights of capital are coupled with its duties including taxation and contribution commensurate with the needs of society. The Zakat tax is mandatory and roughly equals 2.5% of money hoarded over the span of one year, with other formulas for earnings from agriculture, animal husbandry, real estate or industry. Every individual is the joint responsibility of the whole community and no one can behave like an isolated island. Rules of commercial dealings and exchanges are delineated.

(5) Procreation and Offspring

Authentic marriage through a solemnized and documented marriage contract is the only legitimate way of pairing off to form a family and beget children. Purity of lineage and the right to know with certainty one's parents and one's progeny is a must. The Shari'a spells out certain relations that make the marriage of a couple impermissible. The mutual rights and duties between spouses, and between parents and children are detailed. Sustaining the family is the obligation of the husband, whereas the financial contribution of the wife is her option. Extramarital (including premarital) sex is sinful, and may also become a legal offense if

witnessed by four witnesses. Family laws and the laws of inheritance are detailed. Family planning (natural or medical) is permitted but not if it entails the killing of a life (abortion). Women have the right of independent individual ownership, the right of inheritance, the right of education and the right to work as compatible with the integrity of the family. Men and women are equal, and obligations (and prohibitions) of Islam apply to them equally. The pursuit of fertility and treatment of infertility is legitimate but only as admissible by the Shari'a. The fetus has the right to life, inheritance and reception of a will or an endorsement. Breast feeding is encouraged, optimally for two years. Western style adoption is censored but fosterage or endorsement is encouraged as a charity, devoid of the lie of claiming true sonhood or daughterhood. The child is told the truth about his/her origin. After growing up, if that child proposes to marry a biological child of the family, the proposal cannot be denied on the basis that they are brother and sister, since in reality they are not.

Church And State

It was a wise decision for Europe to separate church and state. The near monopoly of the early church over all aspects of life had no basis in Christianity as taught by Jesus. Its power to obstruct freedom of thought and scientific progress is reflected in many well known historical examples. Later on, America followed the same line for the same reason, as well as to avoid one faith having a heavy hand over the others and thus interfering with freedom of religion. Many of the early immigrants to America were in fact fleeing the religious intolerance and persecution that afflicted European Christianity.

As we perceive it, the separation of church and state is consistent with the essential ideals of Christianity for its primary purpose was to purify the human soul and ennoble the human character, but not to pursue the organization of the state. Jesus' Kingdom was not of this world. When asked whether to pay taxes to the Roman Empire he took a coin with Caesar's engraving on it and said: "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." Muslims in the United States, like all others, appreciate the idea of pluralism that ensures the freedom of religion for all without bigotry or persecution, which as a matter of fact coincides with the Islamic teachings in this respect.

Perhaps it is timely here to express a reservation felt by many Muslims, Christians and Jews in America and the West. They feel that the principle of separation of church and state has been wrongly exploited, and manipulated to exclude the heeding of God in the daily life of people in an attempt to cast away His universal values of morality and human decency. The debate "Is God dead" has been raging in American media over the past three decades, that influenced many attitudes. Many of those who believe that God is not dead, have ceased to acknowledge His authority to tell us what to do with our lives, as individuals and as a nation. Calls for moral behavior or against pronography and licentiousness and other social ailments are often accused of violating the separation of church and state. The slogans "One nation under God" and "In God we trust" are becoming hollower by the day, and if things continue moving in the same direction, we anticipate that constitutional amendments to delete them will be implemented before long.

A universal reaction in the West when people hear that Muslims in Islamic countries want to be ruled by the Islamic laws, is one of disapproval and dismay. Conditioned by European history that led to separation of church and state, they automatically abhor the idea and translate it as a regression to dark ages where Europe toiled under the repressive authority of the church. This conclusion is not correct, because the two situations are not the same. When we study the case of Islam, we find that the principle of separating church and state is obviously inapplicable. Whereas in Christianity there is no state, in Islam there is no church, which makes it impossible to project one situation on the other. Although there is scholarship, there is no clergy in Islam, nor an institution of priesthood. The fact that some graduates of Islamic studies in some Islamic countries wear a special outfit is not a religious requirement and does not really make them priests or raise them any degree above the rest of the Muslims. It did not exist at the onset or early times of Islam and is a rather late phenomenon as society recognized special garbs for special groups like the military and police uniform or the white coat of the doctor. Religious knowledge and studying are open, and interpretation is not the monopoly of certain group, although of course scholastic specialization is considered and respected but not sanctified. Nor is it part of Islam that those religious scholars should conduct the government, for obviously they lack the technical expertise in the various divisions of the executive branches. Office should be held upon personal qualification and posts are open to both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens.

Reviewing the goals of the Shari'a even at the level of the brief bird's eye view we gave here, it is obvious that their implementation goes beyond the area of individual behavior into the realm of government. The Shari'a, the constitution, is the source of legislation and the foundation from which laws are to be derived. Although secularism in Christian societies is not incompatible with Christianity, the same cannot be said about Islam, for this would entail ignoring, inactivating or replacing much of the dictates of the Quran and Sunna, contradicting the basic creed of Islam. Appreciation of these facts should clarify the fact that what is agreeable to Christian societies might not be so to Muslim societies, each within the freedom of religion and the right to self-determination. Neither Islamic nor Christian nations should impose their views on one another, but unfortunately this is not the case as the West, unilaterally, seems to be bent on preventing Muslims from self-rule in accordance with their own religion. It supports both secular dictatorship or dictatorships that identify themselves as Islamic but are abysmal on human rights, basic freedoms of men and women, and government by the people for the people, the hallmarks of real Islamic government. As a matter of fact there is hardly any state now that can qualify to be the perfect representation of the Islamic state. Whenever sound democratic process is about to lead to the victory of an Islamic party, a paradoxical and embarrassing alliance between the major democracies and the reigning dictatorships immediately intervenes to abort the attempt without considering giving it the chance to prove or disprove itself. Alas! The democracies are more keen on the status quo than they are on democracy itself.

One of the charges leveled against the demand of Islamic nations to be ruled by Islamic laws pertains to the status of Christian and Jewish minorities who are citizens of those countries.

This objection is being played upon and blown up by both media and politics although in reality it has no standing whatsoever. It is a sparsely known fact that the Islamic system, uniquely, leaves it to Christian and Jewish communities to run their affairs of a legal nature in accordance with the guidelines of their own religions. Such issues, however, are few, and pertain to family issues (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and the like). Otherwise, with neither conflict with their Books nor alternative therein, the minorities will not be wronged to stand equal with the majority before the law the majority claims (out of religious conviction) in keeping with sound democratic principles.

We will not be completely honest, however, without voicing a few remarks and apprehensions about the question of implementing the Shari'a. In various instances we see it has been relegated to the realm of sloganism and emotionalism. Some overenthusiastic youth have transformed it to a confrontation with followers of other religions. The Shari'a, however, requires them to behave in a completely opposite way, aiming at dissipating fears and alleviating anxieties and exhibiting the ethics of good citizenship in a practical way, a task we know that mainstream Muslims and the great majority of Islamic movements are actively pursuing although with hardly any coverage in the media or in professional political circles in the West.

Islamic political parties that decide on the democratic option are also in need of a word of advice here. Although they wage the electoral battle under the attractive banner of Islam, they should also present the electorate with the detailed programs they have prepared to realize the goals of the Shari'a. The word 'Islam' is not a magic word that will solve the complex economic, social and political problems that burden their countries. Intense technical and specialist studies should be made to work within the Shari'a towards appropriate solutions. Prospectively, those who opt for democracy are required by Islam to be honest to their declarations, and not commit the treachery of exploiting democratic rhetoric until they are in power, and then it is gone with the wind. The worst case scenario is for some Islamic parties to ride over democracy to power, then fail to deliver their promises, then refuse to acknowledge their failure erroneously thinking that their personal failure will be ascribed to failure of Islam, and so they deny the nation its right to remove them by rigging or abolishing the following elections, and then, alas, it is just another dictatorship! Islamic parties are yet to be tested on that, and it is unfair to prejudge them without trial. Their adversaries, however, who hold to power against the will of their people, have been proven a failure and it behooves the major democracies of the world not to support them. If Islamic parties ever come to power, we advise them not to do the same, for it is not only Islamic laws that are needed, but above all, Islamic character and integrity as well.

Some famous examples who claim, even boast, that they rule by the Shari'a are in our opinion lacking in honesty or in knowledge about the Shari'a or in both. Reducing the Shari'a to a selected few items of its penal code without regard to its total context is a big fraud. Meting harsh punishment on petty crimes without any attempt at addressing the massive corruption in the ruling circles or their greedy exploitation of the nation's resources in total absence of accountability can never pass as Islamic. In Islam the ruler is accountable to the nation, and is

considered its servant and not its master. Besides, the Shari'a is to be implemented from beginning to end and not from end to beginning. Islam curbs crime by three defense lines: the cultivation of Islamic conscience (education and guidance), the prevention of the causes that might lead to crime (social and economic), and then comes legal punishment; in that sequence. And then, the law knows no ceiling. It is against Islam to judge the commoners and the enfeebled and let the nobility get away with violations.

Democracy

The question is quite often posed these days whether Islam is compatible with democracy. It is striking to note that those who say it is not are such a heterogeneous group, they hardly share anything else. Just as groups of Islamic intelligentsia at the turn of the century were fascinated by the West to such a degree that they called for the adoption of the good as well as the bad in the Western experience, the present time witnesses such disillusionment with the moral decline and the political injustices of the West that many reject, by way of reaction, all that is Western, including democracy. Secular dictators of Islamic countries, of course, abhor democracy by virtue of being dictators and have vested interest in featuring democracy to their Muslim masses as un-Islamic. Dictators who wear Islamic garb and claim to be Islamic also propagate the view that democracy is alien to the Islamic faith and have in their retinue and payroll religious scholars that are willing to play that Machiavellian role.

Traditional adversaries of Islam in the West, both in the media and political circles, are also relentlessly bent on featuring Islam as an anti-democratic religion that has no room for democratic values. The aim of course is to further alienate Islam from the psyche of the Western public opinion, making it both possible and palatable to demonize Muslims in a way that facilitates the acceptability by public opinion of the harsh ways and unjust positions by their governments towards Muslims. They often raise up the issue of the lack of democracy in the majority of Islamic countries. What they do not mention is that the only effective support of the dictators against the democratic aspiration of their peoples in the Middle East is provided by the Western democracies.

It is perhaps not feasible to compare the Islamic system that came into being early in the seventh century with the democratic institutions of the West, that began to evolve many centuries later, and as we see them today. Nor are the Western democratic systems an exact replica of one another but simply share the principle and ideology of democracy. The Quran (fourteen centuries ago) spelled out explicitly the principle of "Shura", which means that issues are to be decided by joint deliberation and consultation. The practical applications of this principle in the earliest days of Islam (the time of the prophet and his immediate successors) qualify it to be considered the forerunner of democracy. Only in his capacity as prophet was Mohammad to be obeyed without reserve, but outside the area of conveying and explaining religion as he received it from God, Mohammad himself made it clear that he was an ordinary human being who could not foretell the future or claim to have more knowledge over ordinary people in their respective areas of artisanship or trade. On the eve of the battle of 'Badr', the first and historically the most significant military encounter between Islam and the Arab alliance of idolaters, the prophet drew a military plan entailing deployment of his

meagre troops in a certain fashion. But then one of his followers would ask him "Is this positioning revelation from God so that we have to abide by it without question, or is it an opinion of strategy and plan?" When Mohammad answered that it was indeed the latter, his companion gave his sincere criticism and offered an alternate plan which the prophet accepted and adopted; the outcome was a resounding victory.

Years later, the enemies dispatched a large army to attack the Muslims in Madinah. It was Mohammad's opinion to remain at Madinah and meet the enemy there, but discussions revealed that the majority preferred to march out and make battle with the enemy at Mount Uhud well outside Madinah. Mohammad yielded to the majority opinion in compliance with the principle of Shura. Muslims achieved an initial victory until the battalion of archers positioned at the mountain top thought that the battle was over and rolled down to join the chase, disobeying clear orders the prophet had given them earlier never to leave their positions no matter whether it was victory or defeat. This caught the eye of Khaled ben el Waleed (a military genius leading a cavalry regiment of the enemies) who took a stealth circle to the mountain top and rolled down on the Muslim infantry so upsetting the balance that the best the Muslims could do was a graceful retreat after incurring heavy losses. Although there was fault twice on part of the Muslims, Quran was shortly revealed addressing Mohammad "And it was of the mercy of God that you dealt gently with them (your followers): had you been harsh or thick of heart they would have dispersed from around you. So pardon them and ask (God) for their forgiveness and maintain Shura with them." (3:159) This Shura is to pervade all walks of life at all levels, even to the detail mentioned in the Quran that the decision to wean a suckling infant should be taken by mutual shura and consent of both parents.

When the prophet died it meant the conclusion of the prophethood, but he had to be succeeded by a head of state. This was done in a meeting in open debate, with more than one contender, until Abu Bakr the closest companion to the prophet, was chosen by consensus to be first caliph. On that occasion, established Islamic principle was reiterated and emphasized, foremost of all by the caliph himself, the significant rules in which are:

- 1- The post is filled by the mandate of the people (Abu Bakr immediately proceeded to seek the opinion of others who were not in the meeting to make sure they concurred).
- 2- The appointment was conditioned (obey me as long as I obey God - the caliph declared).
- 3- The right of the people to give the mandate is coupled with their right to withdraw it (Abu Bakr declared that if he went wrong then the people owed him no obedience).
- 4- The ruler was the nation's employee, hired by them to fulfil the duties of his office (seeing that Abu Bakr in his earliest few days pursued the management of his business to make his living, the people imposed on him to take a salary equal to the earnings of an average Muslim, neither rich nor poor, in lieu of working full time).
- 5- The head of state was no hostage to the elite or nobility or interest groups. His words were: "The weak amongst you is strong with me until I secure what is due to him, and the strong amongst you is weak with me until I take from him what is due on him."

In short, it looks like the antithesis of what we see in the majority of Islamic countries nowadays. We have no doubt that if things evolved in the same direction ever since, as the

Islamic empire expanded and the Islamic civilization developed in maturity and sophistication, that the Muslims would have achieved a form of government that endorses the best in modern day democracies while free from their shortcomings. Things went on in a very promising manner for sometime. The second caliph (Omar) further alerted the nation of its duty to support him when right but to correct him if wrong, to which a man answered, "If you go wrong we will correct you even by our swords." The caliph's comment was, "You are no good if you don't say it, and we are no good if we don't accept it."

Unfortunately the trend was broken in one of the saddest, if not the saddest, incidents in Islamic history. Caliph Uthman had to face a rebellion accusing him of nepotism and was assassinated. Caliph Ali was a cousin of the prophet, his son-in-law, and a very beloved person to him. He also possessed outstanding personal merits, and when he was chosen for caliph, the notables and masses poured in to give allegiance. However, the governor of Syria (now part of the Islamic empire) refused to give the pledge and eventually marched towards Madinah at the head of a large army. The apparent pretext was on how to deal with the assassins of the late caliph, who was a relative of Moawya, the governor of Syria (both from the Umayyad tribe) and who demanded direct revenge rather than resort to lengthy due process. On the battlefield the victory was Ali's, but Moawya was a resourceful man, and in his camp were some very cunning men so he could secure a tricky arbitration. Some disgruntled people targeted both for assassination but only succeeded in killing Ali. The nation was shocked, but after negotiations Hassan, Ali's son and successor, consented to yield authority to Moawya to avoid further bloodshed and gave his allegiance.

A short while later Moawya, well entrenched in authority, shocked the nation again by forcing from them a pledge to his son, Yazid, as successor after him, resorting to the technique of punishment and reward. Hussein, the second son of Ali, headed a revolution against Yazid (both Moawya and Hassan had died). The inhabitants of Iraq had promised Hussein their support, but under the trickery and brutality of the central government they deserted him. Rather than flee or capitulate, Hussein and seventy loyal followers faced Yazid's army of several hundred thousand soldiers and bravely fought to their death at Karbala. This proved much later to have been the first nail in the coffin of the Umayyad dynasty which reigned for some two centuries.

This was also the birth of Shiism as a movement, hard-liners who called themselves the proponents of Ali (the Arabic word is the Shi'a of Ali), that actually started as a political dissidence but where it is not possible to separate politics from religion since the strive for justice is a religious dictate. As time went on Shiism took the form of an Islamic sect, centered around the belief that eligibility to the caliphate should belong to Ali then consecutively to his progeny (eldest son in succession). They acquired many secondary views as they broke into several sects, the major being the Twelver Shiites who believe that the twelfth of the successors (Imams), who mysteriously disappeared as a child, will come back one day as the awaited Mahdi and reign in justice. The Shiites constitute some ten per cent of the Muslims, the remainder are traditionally called the Sunni's. The Shiites tend to hold a grudge against the Sunnis for early acquiescence to the unjust authority, but all believe in the one Quran and

the prophethood of Mohammad. It is a palpable fact that the Sunni's also hold the same sympathies and sentiments towards Ali and his sons, Hassan and Hussein, and their households. Every year the Shiites commemorate the Battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Hussein, many of them slashing themselves in mourning and in remorse that their forebears deserted Hussein at the critical moment.

And now enough for history even though I tried to make it extremely brief and back to the issue of democracy. That sad historical episode was the precedent for transfer of power from hand to hand not by the pledge of the nation but by sword and gold. This seemed to plague the history of Muslims ever since. Despots always could find scholars to rationalize while others stood in opposition and paid with their lives or freedom. Things went well when the caliph was good and went bad when the caliph was bad, which was more often than not. In either case the authority of the people and their rights over the ruler were eroded. Islamic civilization, however, flourished because there were people who believed it was a religious duty to seek knowledge, to excel in science and establish civilization. Government encouraged them in all aspects but left little room for writings on the rights of the people versus the ruler and means of controlling him. Given the genius of Islamic civilization in all walks of knowledge writings on the constitutional rights of the nation were powerful and marvelous but scant.

To our Muslim brethren who convulse and contort against democracy, we would like to say that democracy was never one of the ailments of the Muslim nation, but always the affliction was despotism and dictatorship. We would be blind if our history fails to reveal to us this fact. To those who accuse Islam of being intolerant to democracy, we say you are wrong, but there is a major difference. In a Western democracy God can be vetoed or outvoted if His opponents can muster a majority vote. Under Islam the constitution is based on the Shari'a so any legislation that conflicts with it will be unconstitutional. Within that context the democratic process takes its course one hundred per cent. The contemporary Islamic resurgence is beyond the widely publicized images of inflammatory extremism or violent statement or despotic secular or religious (!!) governments. A broad enlightened and quiet mainstream has discovered the realities of the religion and awakened to the lessons of history. It is not fueled by hollow sloganism. After all, Islamic scholars have decreed for a long time that a non-Islamic state that observes justice is better than an Islamic state riddled with tyranny and injustice.

B. The Inner Self:

The Five Pillars of Islam

Chapters I & II dealt with the articles of Faith, defined in the words of prophet Mohammad: "That you believe in God, His angels, His Books, His messengers, the Last Day, and you believe in fate (that which you have no control on) whether good or bad." In our presentation we did not present them as a 'dogma' just to be blindly accepted but tried to base them on the logic of an intellectual process of thinking. The way of the Quran always was to challenge the human mind to think and to point to signs and pose questions to convince rather than to impose.

The creed of Islam with its articles of faith is generally the same as that of the other Abrahamic religions, Christianity and Judaism. Indeed Islam describes the previous messengers of God and their followers as "muslims" (small m) following "islam" (small i), the literal meaning of islam being submission to the will of God. Having displayed in this chapter the general map of the Islamic religion and its Shari'a, this section deals with an aspect that is more specific to Islam, which is the system of worship. It is so central to Islam since it focuses on the individual Muslim in order that the Islamic collectivity be made of healthy units, or in other words, the building be made of healthy blocks.

Mandatory worship in Islam comprises five areas, as described by prophet Mohammad. "Islam is built on five pillars: the declaration (bearing witness) that there is no god but God (Allah) and that Mohammad is His messenger, the establishment of prayers, the payment of the Zakat (tax), the observation of the fast of Ramadan and the Hajj (pilgrimage) if affordable." On another occasion, when the prophet was asked to give a definition of Islam, he named those five pillars. Needless to say people do not live in pillars only for the pillars are there to carry a whole building. Those who reduce Islam to the area of ritual worship naturally lack the understanding of the comprehensive and total nature of Islam and the symbolism which these rituals are supposed to reflect on life in general. A brief comment on each of the pillars will now be given. They constitute the bare minimum of requirements (obligatory articles), worship in any amount or form and charitable pursuits are open without limit, down to the detail of meeting people with a smiling face or removing dirt from the road as Mohammad taught. Practically all details of life can, upon one's intention, belong in the area of worship.

(1) The Declaration (Shahada)

The simple 'I bear witness there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is His messenger' is the password into Islam. Uttering it before two witnesses is all the formality required from new embracers of Islam. It is also included in the call to prayer (adhan) and repeated during all prayers. And yet it is more than a verbal formality, for when you take God as your God it means that you take Him as the shaper and guider of your life, undistracted by other influences be they people, things or moods and desires. And as you profess that Mohammad is His messenger it means a pledge to abide by the instructions and teachings given by Mohammad and to acknowledge their divine source. In Islamic jurisprudence and literature over the ages lengthy works have been written on the far reaching implications of 'No god but God and Mohammad is His messenger.

(2) Prayer (Salat)

Ritual prayer is a distinct entity from prayer in its wider sense, that is communicating your feelings to God at any time in any place and asking for His guidance, help and forgiveness, an ingredient of life which is highly commendable whether in Islam or other religions. Ritual Islamic prayer takes a special form and content, where both body and soul are harmoniously involved. It is given five times a day at early morning, noon, after-noon, after sunset and night. They are performed at any place (home, mosque, park, work place, etc.) by an individual or together with one or more Muslim men and/or women, one of the men then leading the prayers as an 'imam'. A prayer takes a few minutes to perform. Only the noon

prayer on Friday is mandated to be a collective (group) prayer, at the mosque and is preceded by a sermon (Khutba). The Imam (prayer leader) is not a priest nor need be the same person every time, but considerations of scholarship and knowledge of the Quran and the religion are exercised in choosing him (doctors, teachers, business people and others as well as religion scholars are commonly featured in bearing this responsibility). For prayer one has to be clean, having performed an ablution (wudou) entailing cleaning by water of mouth, nares, face, ears, forearms to the elbows, wiping head and ears and washing the feet. An ablution may take one through several prayers but has to be repeated if the person passes urine, stools, flatus or falls asleep. Sex necessitates a full bath. Women are exempted from prayers during their menstrual (or puerperal) flow, and at its cessation a bath is necessary (Tuhr).

Each prayer is practically an audience with God. Facing in the direction of the Kaaba (the first mosque ever, built by patriarch Abraham and his son Ismail for the worship of the One God, at the site which long later became the city of Makkah in Arabia), the prayer is opened by saying "Allah Akbar", ie. God is Greater (than all else), and practically you are turning your back to all the universe and are addressing God. One of the constant readings during prayer is the Opening Chapter of the Quran that reads "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. You only do we worship and to You only we cry for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, those whose lot is not wrath, and who go not astray." (1:1-7) Bowing down and prostrating oneself (to God) interjecting "Glory to my Lord the Great", "Glory to my Lord the Highest", "Allah listens to those who thank Him" and what fills one's heart by way of supplication, the prayer is concluded in the sitting position by reiterating the affirmation of the faith, the Shahada, and seeking God's peace and blessings on Mohammad and Abraham and their people and followers. Only around the Kaaba mosque in Makkah do Muslims stand in circles for their prayers (quite an impressive scene). All the world over they are in straight lines, leaving no gaps, and facing Makkah. Women usually occupy the back lines, not necessarily a requirement of religion but an esthetic preference, since women would feel comfortable with no men behind them during the movements of bowing and prostration.

Prayer, obligatory and spontaneous, is an immense spiritual treasure to be tapped. It inspires peace, purity and tranquility and instills companionship with God. It amazingly reduces the hustle and bustle of life to tame proportions. By their spacing to five times a day, including its beginning, prayers tend to maintain a therapeutic level and practically leave no room for mischievous thought or deed.

(3) Zakat (the Alms Tax)

Giving money for charity is highly commendable, and the sky is the limit, but Zakat, the third pillar of Islam, is different because it is obligatory and is given in a calculated amount. In general terms, what remains over and above the meeting of needs and expenses, and is hoarded for the full span of one year, is liable to Zakat at the amount of two and a half per cent. Idle money would therefore be penalized by attrition over about forty years which is an incentive to put money to work and thus serve public interest. Other gains and profits have their respective formulae, such as proceeds from industry, agriculture and animal husbandry,

real estate, etc. as thoroughly detailed in specialized references. Zakat is the right of the poor in the wealth of the rich and is neither optional charity nor philanthropy. In an Islamic state it is collected by the government and is a primary source of budget, to be complemented as necessary by other legislated taxation. It may be given to voluntary Islamic institutions or directly to the needy where Islamic law does not operate (as in the case of Muslim minorities all over the world or under secular rule). Needy non-Muslims may be included as beneficiaries. Zakat represents the unbreakable bond between members of the community, whom prophet Mohammad described to be "like the organs of the body, if one suffers then all others rally in response." Literally, the word zakat means 'purification' in Arabic, meaning that you purify your money by giving out of it. As Muslims pay the Zakat they have the genuine feeling that it is an investment and not a debit.

(4) Fasting of Ramadan

The month of Ramadan is part of the lunar calendar, and since this is eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, Ramadan comes eleven days earlier every year which allows fasting in various seasons and weather throughout a life time. From dawn to sunset there is no food or drink (not even water), but then food and drink are allowed. There are exemptions for situations of health and travel. Sex is also banned during day time, and one should not exhibit anger or other misbehavior. Ramadan is not a month of starvation since nutrition and hydration are ensured at night although it is recommended to be taken in a mood of asceticism. As one conquers the daily habits and endures hunger and thirst, Ramadan furnishes a first class drill in self-restraint and will power (and what would humanity be if the faculty of self restraint is gone?)

Fasting is a very enriching experience as one transcends the needs of our material component and cherishes the spiritual. The month feels like going "into maintenance" and is almost like charging your batteries for the rest of the year. Intensified worship and charity are a feature of the month. At its conclusion Muslims celebrate one of their two Eids (the other at the conclusion of the pilgrimage season) by a special collective morning prayer and a mood of festivity with family and friends.

(5) The Hajj (Pilgrimage)

Islam relates so profoundly to the monotheistic mission of Abraham that its fifth pillar (Hajj) is none but a ritualistic commemoration of the Patriarch. Throughout his belief in the One True God and submission (islam) only to His will, Abraham stood the test of confronting authority (King Nemrod who argued that like Abraham's God, he could give and take life by ordering a prisoner killed and another spared. When Abraham retorted that God brings the sun from the East and challenged him to bring the sun from the West, the King was just confounded), and confronting public opinion and their religious leaders when he destroyed their idols, was arrested and condemned to die by fire, but God saved him "We said O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham." (21:69) A more taxing test, however, was when Abraham, upon the nagging of his wife Sarah agreed to take Hagar and their son Ismail and banish them in the desert, "and the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son." (Genesis 21:11) When Abraham abandoned them at the site of the future city of Makkah, their

provisions became nearly depleted and the mother went through the ordeal of fetching for water in panic and near despair, until the Well of Zam-Zam unexpectedly erupted. Abraham periodically came to visit, and on one of those visits he was ordained by God to build, with the assistance of Ismail, the first mosque for the worship of God, and to call the believers on an annual season of pilgrimage (hajj) to visit that mosque in worship. The most strenuous test for Abraham was no doubt the divine command to slay his own son, that he finally brought himself together to obey, followed by God's will to spare the boy and ransom him with the ram.

The pilgrimage therefore started with Abraham and Ismail and continued unbroken ever since. Unfortunately, however, the people after many generations slipped again into paganism, and transformed the House of God into a house for idols. Each tribe of those pagan Arabs took an idol, gave it a name, and placed it in the Kaaba. The pilgrimage season remained in observance, but instead of worshipping God it became a season of merriment and festivities, booze and vice, and new rituals were improvised like encircling the Kaaba in the nude while clapping, singing and whistling. It was a great financial bonanza for the people of Makkah, whose economy was based on the season and on two annual caravan journeys for transit trade between East (Africa and Asia) and West (Syria and beyond to the Byzantine Empire). A clergy arose to speak on behalf of the god's and accept offerings and pledges.

For thousands of years that state of affairs continued on this (Ismail's) side of the seed of Abraham. Out of the distant progeny of Ismail, from the powerful tribe of Qureish, Mohammad was born in the year 570 C.E. His father died before he was borne, and his mother in his early childhood. Mohammad was raised by his grandfather, and when the latter died, by one of his uncles. As he grew up he became the focus of respect and admiration of all the community, and at quite an early age he was nicknamed "the honest." At the age of twenty five he married a wealthy widow, Khadija, whom he had worked for as caravan trade manager and who valued his character. She was fifteen years his elder, but they lived happily in monogamous marriage for the next twenty eight years until she died. He never shared with his people the worship of the idols or the various wrongs or ineptitudes that were the very life of those pre-Islamic (jahiliyya ie. taken to ignorance) Arabs.

He habitually visited a cave at the top of a mountain near Makkah to reflect and meditate, and during one of those visits the Angel Gabriel appeared to him and conveyed the divine assignment of prophethood, and gave him the first revelation ever from the Quran that read: "Read! In the name of thy Lord who created.. created man out of a leech-like clot. Read; and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful. He who taught with (the use of) the Pen. Taught man what man knew-not." (96:1-5) The month was Ramadan, and the night was the Night of Power (Qadr). Mohammad was over-awed, and hurried home shivering and trembling, where his wife comforted and tranquillised him saying: "By Him who dominates Khadija's soul, I pray that you will be the prophet of this nation. You are kind to your kin, generous to the guest, helpful to the needy and truthful in your speech, so God will not let you down."

The angel visited again, and again until Mohammad went about his ministry. Although it was the truth and the turning from polytheistic idolatry back to the pure monotheism of Abraham,

nothing could be more threatening to the alliance between the rich and powerful and the clergy, whose very existence depended on the status quo. For thirteen years Mohammad and his followers were persecuted, until they emigrated to their base in Madinah and permitted (by the Quran) to hit back. Eventually Mohammad's army conquered Makkah, declaring general amnesty, but they destroyed the idols, purifying the shrine of Abraham from paganism and restoring the religion to its pure source. Pilgrimage went on at its specified season, and the fifth pillar of Islam was decreed upon every Muslim man and woman once in a life time for those who are physically and financially able to afford it. After this lengthy explanation, is it not reason enough for a heart to ache on reading some of those specialists, experts and scholars (clergy and orientalist) who described pilgrimage simply as "a pagan ritual incorporated by Islam"?

The pilgrimage season comes with the twelfth month of the lunar calendar, which is called the month of the hajj (Zul Hijja), already known when Islam came, since it was an Abrahamic event. Men have to wear a pair of white unsewn body garbs, without any other (under) clothing except perhaps sandals and a (pocketed) belt. It is a universal dress and they all look alike without any class distinctions and mingle together in full brotherhood and prompt eagerness to offer help to one another whenever possible, transcending all differences in colour, language, race, ethnicity, degree of education.. .. only the goodness of humanity shows and the purity of the belief that humanity is ONE family worshipping ONE GOD. The women wear ordinary clothes that cover the whole body except the face and hands. There is no segregation, and families and other groupings try to stick together so none would drift and be lost amongst the millions.

Rituals include worship at the Mosque of Abraham and circumambulating the Kaaba, several to-and-fro walks between the hills of Safa and Marwat where Hagar had frantically ran in search of water for her son, the assembly around Mount Arafat in prayer and supplication, stopping at the three sites where the devil tried to tempt Abraham against slaying his son and throwing pebbles at them symbolic of conquering the temptation. The highlight is the collective prayer and sermon of the Eid (of sacrifice) followed by sacrificial slaughter of a ram (donated to the poor but part goes to family and friends) following upon the tradition of Abraham. Muslims who are not in hajj also celebrate the Eid by the collective prayer (and sermon) and the sacrificial offering of a sheep, and the Eid lunch is a happy occasion to rejoice in. In view of the large number of animals sacrificed at the hajj near Makkah, that cannot be possibly consumed there and then, the Saudi Arabian authorities established a meat packaging plant (upon securing the necessary fatwa or religious opinion) to preserve and can the meat for leisurely shipment to the poor and needy in the Islamic world. Their other efforts to accommodate, manage, and facilitate the mass movements of the pilgrims (at least two million) within the tight schedule of time and space are to be commended.

C. Islamic Morality

A Taste of the Quran

Islamic morality is the same as Christian morality and Jewish morality in their pure form as prescribed by the Torah and the Gospel and devoid of this latter day revisionism that allows

certain (religious!) circles to play havoc with the moral heritage and change the moral code in such a way that made the immoralities of yesterday look like the moralities of today, and indeed coating them with new (nice) nomenclature such as "love", "gay", "relationship", "boy/girl friend", "lover" etc., hoping a nice name might camouflage (or help promote) the old stuff.

Instead of embarking on enlisting and discussing individual issues, we thought it a better investment of this section to introduce the reader directly to the source, by displaying a number of quotations from the Quran and the Hadeeth (sayings) of the prophet Mohammad. It is an area that the Western reader is particularly lacking in and separated from by layers upon layers of negative indoctrination by so called experts and specialists. So many times did we read or hear on radio and television how the Quran orders Muslims to lie or cheat or kill the non-Muslims, and that Mohammad was a ruthless villain drunk with his own ambitions and fondness for lust and sensuality. We try to counter, and sometimes we succeed in getting an answer published or even getting an apology, but the flow continues. Yet, at our varied initiatives, more and more people are getting to know the truth about Islam, and once a minimal critical mass of individuals are able to differentiate the false from the true, it will be the end of the campaign of malevolence and stereotyping upon which many have made their career.

Islamic morality is not merely a list of "do's" and "don'ts". It aims at building the personality that knows and accepts the role of Man as God's vicegerent on earth so that he/she is willing to manage the nature within and the nature outside him/her in harmony with the Owner's manual. We here forward some excerpts, with no other order than that in which they came to our memory.

I. Tasting the Quran

(1) "And the servants of (Allah) the Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them they say "Peace!". And those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrate and standing. Those who say 'Our Lord! Avert from us the wrath of Hell, for its wrath is indeed an affliction grievous. Evil indeed is it as an abode and as a place to rest in. Those who, when they spend are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) in between those (extremes). Those who invoke not with God any other deity, nor slay such life as God has made sacred except for just cause; nor commit adultery, and any that does this (not only) meets punishment, (but) the chastisement on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy: unless he repents, believes and works righteous deeds, for God will change the evil of such persons into good, and God is Oft-Forgiving, Oft-Merciful. And whoever repents and does good has truly turned to God in repentance. Those who give no false witness, and if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable avoidance. Those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, droop-not down at them as if they were deaf and blind. And those who pray: 'Our Lord, grant unto us spouses and offsprings who will be the comfort of our eyes, and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous.'" (25:63-74)

(2) "Be quick in the race for forgiveness and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous: Those who spend freely whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger and pardon all people, for God loves those who do good. And those who, having done an act of indecency, or wronged their own souls, remember God and ask for forgiveness for their sins: and who can forgive sins except God?, and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in that (wrong) they have done. For such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens with rivers flowing underneath: an eternal dwelling, how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)." (3:133-136)

(3) "Behold, Luqman said to his son admonishing him. 'O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah (God): for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing'. And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him. And in years twain was his weaning. Hence (O man): 'Show gratitude to Me and to your parents, to Me is the final goal. But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which your mind cannot accept, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with kindness, and follow the ways of those who turn to Me, in the end the return of you all is to Me and I will tell you all that you did. 'O my son' (said Luqman), 'if there be but the weight of a mustard seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, God will bring it forth, for God is Subtle and Aware. O my son! establish the prayer, enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong; and bear with patient constancy whatever betides you, for this is firmness (of purpose) in the conduct (of affairs). And swell-not your cheek (for pride) at people, nor walk in insolence through the earth, for God loveth-not arrogant boasters. And be moderate in your pace, and tame your voice, for the most detestable of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass.'" (31:13-19)

(4) "Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means, resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen (who had done them injustice), those in want and who have left their homes in the cause of God. Let them forgive and overlook: do you not wish that God should forgive you? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful. Those who slander chaste, unsuspecting and believing women are cursed in this life, and in the hereafter for them is a grievous chastisement." (24:22-23)

(5) "It is not righteousness that you turn faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the freeing of slaves.. to be steadfast in prayer and give Zakat, to fulfil the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in suffering, adversity and times of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing." (2:177)

(6) "Verily, for all men and women who have submitted (to the will of God), for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for truthful men and women, for truly patient and constant men and women, for humble men and women, for charitable men and women, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in the remembrance of God: for them has God forgiveness and great reward." (33:35)

(7) "God commands justice, the doing of good and giving to kith and kin, and He forbids indecencies, evil and offence; He instructs you that you may receive admonition. Fulfil the covenant of God when you have entered into it, and break-not your oaths after you have confirmed them: indeed you have made God your surety, for God knows all that you do." (16:90-91)

(8) "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them: but address them in terms of honor. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say 'My Lord, bestow on them your mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'" (17:23-24)

(9) "It may be that God will establish friendship between you and those whom you (now) hold as enemies, for God has power (over all things) and God is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful. God forbids-you-not with regard to those who do not fight you for your religion nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loves those who are just." (60:7-8)

(10) "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witness to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is closeness to piety; and fear God, for God is well acquainted with all that you do." (5:8)

(11) "O you who believe: Let not some men among you deride others, it may be that the latter are better than them. Nor let some women (do the same) to other women, it may be that the latter are better than them. Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other. Nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness (to be used of one) after he has believed, and those who do not desist are indeed doing wrong. O you who believe! avoid a lot of suspicion for suspicion in some cases is a sin. And do not spy on each other. Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs: would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother and be abhorred by you? But fear God for God is acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful." (49:11-12)

(12) "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do (thou) also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for He is the One that hears and knows (all things)" (8:61)

(13) "Nor can goodness and evil be equal, so repel (evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and you was enmity become as it were an intimate friend." (41:34)

(14) "Have you seen him who gives the lie to the religion? Then such is the one who repulses the orphan and does not prompt the feeding of the indigent. So woe to those who are praying (but) absent-minded about their prayers. Those who want (but) to be seen, but refuse to provide contributions." (107:1-7)

(15) "Woe to those that deal in fraud; those who when they have to receive by measure from others, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to others, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be raised up on a mighty day, a day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?" (83:1-6)

II. The Prophet Spoke

(1) "None of you (truly) believes until he wished for his brother what he wishes for himself."

(2) "Whosoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart - and this is the weakest of faith."

(3) "Your Lord said: O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with an earthful of sins and were you then to face Me ascribing no partners to Me, I would bring you an earthful of forgiveness."

(4) "God does not look at your bodies and figures but looks at your hearts and your deeds."

(5) "People are equal like the teeth of a comb. You are all from Adam: and Adam is from dust. There is no priority for white over black, nor Arab over non-Arab except by piety."

(6) "The strong is not the one who is good at wrestling. The strong is the one who controls himself when angry."

(7) A young man asked the prophet: 'Who of all people is most worthy of my kindness?' The prophet answered "Your mother". The man asked: 'Then who? (is next)'. The prophet answered: "Your mother". The man asked again 'Then who?', and the prophet answered "Your mother". The man asked yet again 'Then who?' And then the prophet answered "Your father"!

(8) "The best of you are the most kind to their wives. And I am the best amongst you."

(9) The prophet was asked: "Can a believer ever be a coward?", and he answered "May be". "Can the believer be niggardly?" the prophet was asked and he answered "May be". But when asked "Can the believer be a liar?" the prophet answered "No. Never!"

(10) "In a hot summer day a man found a thirsty dog at the edge of a well, unable to reach the water. He said to himself "This dog must be suffering from thirst as I am now." The man went into the well, filled his shoe with water and offered it to the dog to drink. God was pleased with him, and granted him forgiveness of all his sins."

(11) "The signs of the hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he promises he brakes (the promise) and when entrusted he betrays the trust."

(12) "Your Lord says: 'When My servant comes close to Me as much as a span of the hand, I come to him as much as a forearm; and when he comes to Me as far as a forearm, I come to him as far as the outspread arms; and when he comes to Me walking, I come to him running."

(13) "Angel Gabriel advised me continuously to take care of the neighbor till I thought that God is to make him an inheritor."

(14) "When the Day of Judgment takes place, a call will be heard saying: 'Where are those who used to forgive other people? Come forth toward your Lord and receive your rewards. It is for every forgiver to be admitted to heaven."

(15) "O God! I seek refuge in You from wrong and sorrow. I seek refuge in You from cowardliness and stinginess. And I seek refuge in You from debt and from being overpowered by people."

- (16) "When an abomination settles among a people and they further publicize and promote it, then surely God will cause in them illnesses that were unknown to their forebears."
- (17) "Liquor (alcoholic drinks) is the mother of evils."
- (18) "I am amazed to the affairs of the believer because all his affairs are in his favor. If he receives a good thing he is grateful (to God) and this is good for him; while if he is struck with adversity he is patient and it is good for him."
- (19) "When a child of Adam dies, he is completely cut off (from this world) in the hereafter except for three things (whose blessings shall reach him): a perpetual charity, useful knowledge put to good cause, and a pious child praying for him."
- (20) "The most hateful to God of the things He has made lawful is divorce. The believer should (if at all possible) not abandon his believing wife: if she has some aspects that he does not like, she sure has also other aspects that he likes."
- (21) "Seven people are sheltered by the shade of God on the Day of Judgment, when there is no shade but His: a just leader, a youth raised in the obedience of God, a man whose heart is devoted to mosques, and two brothers (or sisters) whose fraternity is for God, a person who remembered God in his privacy and tears flooded his eyes, a young man seduced by a woman of beauty and status but he said 'I fear God', and a man who gave to charity in silence so that his left hand does not know what his right had spent."
- (22) "Whoever has eaten raw onion and garlic then he better keep away from the group prayer at the mosque (because of the offensive smell)."
- (23) "A group of travelers shared a ship, some on the upper deck and some below. The ones above had direct access to water when they needed it, but the others had to climb up for that. The latter considered digging a hole in their quarters for direct access. If the ones above let them do it then all will be drowned, whereas if they prevented them even by force then all will be saved."
- (24) "The upper hand (ie. the one that gives) is better than the lower hand (that takes)."
- (25) "Support your brother whether right or wrong." Then he was asked: "We support him if right but how come support him if he is wrong?!" The prophet answered: "Prevent him from doing wrong: for this is his real support."
- (26) "Nations before you met their destruction because when the son of nobility stole they acquitted him, but when the weak stole they punished him."
- (27) "Work for this world as if you are to live forever; and work for your hereafter as if you die tomorrow."
- (28) Some poor Muslims complained to the prophet: "The affluent have made off with the rewards: they pray as we pray, fast as we fast, and they give away in charity from their money (and this we can't match)". The prophet said: "Has not God made things for you to give away in charity? Every praise to God in His perfection is a charity. Every thankfulness to God is a charity. Every utterance that there is no God but God is a charity. To enjoin good and forbid evil is charity. And each time you make love to your wife is a charity." They said: "The one of us satisfies his sexual desire and is rewarded for it?!" He said "Do you (not) think that if

he were to act upon it unlawfully he would be sinning? Likewise, if he has acted upon it lawfully he will have a reward."

(29) The prophet was asked about the best (in heeding God). He said: "To heed Him as if you see Him.. for even though you don't see Him, He sees you."

(30) "Be mindful of God, you will find Him before you. Get to know God in prosperity and He will know you in adversity. Know that what has passed you by could not have befallen you, and that what has befallen you could not have passed you by: And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship."

Chapter Five: Live Issues

We will devote this chapter to provide an Islamic perspective on selected topics that have received publicity and/or debate in recent times. The topics have been chosen only by way of example to show the relevance to some of the major contemporary issues moving away from the area of abstract theory. Since Islam is a religion of life at large and is not confined to worship or the house of worship, it shares the concerns of society at large, of which Muslims are a part and would naturally wish to share their values with others in an attempt to jointly find appropriate solutions or concepts. The subjects we propose to discuss are:

- (1) The New World Order
- (2) Family and The Sexual Revolution
- (3) Euthanasia
- (4) Jihad
- (5) Bio-Medical Ethics

(1) THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The declaration of a New World Order has been prompted recently by the precipitate fall of communism although for several decades Islamic literature criticized both communism and capitalism and expected neither to endure. Comparative works were made to demonstrate where each fell short in comparison with an independent system derived from the teachings of Islam.

It will be too rash to conclude that the collapse of communism attests to the fitness of capitalism. As a matter of fact, both share the drawback of being materialistic ideologies, catering to a species that has more than the material side. They both committed another error albeit in opposite directions, and that is the assumption that the individual and the society are in irreconcilable conflict. Communism crushed the individual in favor of society. But what is the society but the individual multiplied? The result was inevitably a crushed society.

Capitalism on the other hand extolled individuality and overprotected it from the claims of society. That imbued the individual with justifiable selfishness, and when this was projected outward its various expressions were classism, corporatism, nationalism, racism, slavery and colonialism. The cornerstone of capitalism is that the only function and sole destiny of capital is to grow and keep growing without limits. When local markets are fully saturated new ones

are sought overseas and in the Third World. There is obvious (perhaps willful) blindness to the fact that it is impossible to attain infinite growth on a finite planet. In the feverish race for dollars and more dollars coupled with the planned and active encouragement of patterns of consumerism and planned obsolescence - not to satisfy needs but rather to satisfy comforts, pleasures, and luxuries - natural resources, many irreplaceable, are violated at an accelerating pace. This overkill not only targeted the resources but even the Third World as the vital market and the sacred cow.

Not only are they stripped of their natural resources and raw materials at a meager price (compared to the exorbitant prices they pay to buy the finished products of those materials), they are even prevented from carrying out such projects that might improve their lot and make them less dependent on First World imports. To prevent the Third World from total death by exanguination, they are regularly injected with fresh capital in the form of loans and aid in order to maintain their buying power, to the favor of Western capital. Alas, only a tiny fraction of that aid goes to address the needs of the people. The major part goes to the home-grown elite who form the ruling class and their retinues and who undertake the maintenance of the status quo. They prevent the public debate of the terms and conditions of the loans and aids, block any attempt at supervising their management and establishing accountability for their mismanagement, oppress labor right and allow lax safety procedures, and keep a total ban on unearthing the appalling corruption that has become the hallmark of government in the Third World including much of the Islamic World. This seems to explain two paradoxes. The first is that in many Middle Eastern countries where the more money the West pumps into a country, the poorer it becomes and the deeper in debt. The second is the total betrayal by the major democracies of democratic movements who seem close to gaining power by following the sound democratic process. Invariably the democracies side with the dictators against the democratic aspirations of their people and when necessary support them even with the use of military power. The statement "stability" that is the declared aim of every Western intervention means in real terms the keeping of the best exploitative opportunities for foreign capital even if they are the worst possible for the masses. They and future generations will inherit a rising debt that the GNP is unable to service, let alone pay. This state of affairs is both known and bitterly felt by the people. They see its results in their homes, families and children. They call it injustice and they try to change it, but they are brutally suppressed. Western politics participate in this suppression, and to justify it in the eyes of their people, ready made formulae and terminologies are promptly available (such as eroding the stability or blatant aggression on our national interests.) Until recently it was convenient to call those justice seekers "communists" Since the collapse of communism the new label is "Islamic fundamentalists".

With the gigantic media machine, owned by large corporations and big capital, designed to manipulate and shape public thinking, the masses in the West have so far been easy to swallow the bait and, unsuspectingly, sanction the means and ways of their policy makers. And yet, this is not the worst about the submissive and unsuspecting nature of the people in the West. What they are even slower to grasp is that the voracious appetite of capital and its

(greedy practice in the Third World is not confined to those far and away places inhabited by those strange and exotic people, but they would not flinch from doing the same at home and to own citizens whenever prompted by the dictates of that sacred principle: growth and more growth, capital and more capital, dollars and more dollars! What else can explain the shifting of major chunks of industry to South East Asia and elsewhere where cheap labor (financially and humanly) can produce cheaper final product which, however, will not be sold cheaper when shipped back home to America. During the process millions of American workers are laid off and join the ranks of the unemployed.

This road of unbridled capitalism cannot just go on indefinitely and all evidence shows that it will hit a dead end before long, evidence that has been ignored and curtailed and attacked and screwed up, but it is there whether its opponents like it or not. The golden-egged goose of the resources and the sacred cow of the Third World shall not survive for long. Unless there is radical change of course before it is too late, this planet will cease to be sustainable!

What we feel should be called for, however, is not a change of rules but a change of heart. As long as the good old mentality of materialism reigns there is no hope except for a little symptomatic treatment that might delay the inevitable for a brief time but will not prevent it. As long as the prevailing thinking goes in terms of we versus them, North versus South, exploiter versus exploited, rich versus poor, white versus coloured and masters versus slaves (at least servants) there is no hope in the future. The ship of humanity will sink even while the passengers in deluxe and first class cabins further amass more valuables and luxuries.

It is farfetched to believe that the politicians and the financiers of the world will have the vision, wisdom and ability to undergo this dramatic self-change. It is also a pity to see them staying the ominous course and leading humanity so close to the edge of the abyss. The only hope is a massive education campaign of the public who as voters remain the final arbiters at the end of the day. If a demand is created for a new way then the politicians will either change or have to get out of the way of change.

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

(1) Man is not the supreme being of this universe but is under the Supreme Being, God! Without God everything becomes possible, as Dostoyevski said, and anything can be rationalized and justified. When man dethroned God he slipped into self-worship. The role of man in this universe is to be God's vicegerent and trustee, so equipped as to be capable of having full mandate over nature but to manage the planet in accordance with the Creator's instructions and not upon man's own impulses and temptations. Neither science (a tool yet in its infancy) nor arrogance (a killer trap) should delude man into playing God... if only man were wise enough.

(2) Ultimate ownership is God's by virtue of being the Creator. Our ownership is a second level ownership. We are free to own and to increase our wealth by lawful means practically without limits as long as we are aware that capital has its rights but also has its duties. The function of capital is not merely to grow ad infinitum but also to fulfil obligations towards society. The assumption (by both communism and capitalism) that there is an inevitable conflict between individual and society does not exist in Islam where the premise is an equilibrium between both and a delicate balance that keeps everybody happy. This balance is not maintained merely by the strong arm of the law, but, of even more importance, by the pleasing of God that breeds happiness in giving. God is always in the equation and is a living reality, a notion of absolute meaninglessness in a materialistic ideology. This new philosophy is achievable and attainable, but of course not under a value free educational system, the tidal wave of media indoctrination, or a society tolerant of injustices. Society is so intercomplementary and integrated that nobody is allowed to live in isolation, either at the epic of riches or at the nadir of poverty.

Over fourteen centuries ago Omar, the second caliph of Islam, decreed that if a man in a town died out of poverty the citizens had to pay his ransom as if they killed him. The community is like "One body.. when one organ suffers the others rally in support", as the prophet said. Every citizen has the right to live at a threshold level of comfort (not merely subsistence), and since living on charity is discouraged, it follows that individual rights include the right to gainful employment. Labor-saving technology is therefore allowed as an answer to labor shortage, but never to economize on jobs and throw the laborers into unemployment. Man takes priority over the machine and the juridical rule is that collective welfare takes priority over individual welfare. This does not mean arrest of technological progress but that it should go hand in hand in dealing with its consequences. Workers are enabled and encouraged to buy shares in their companies in order to blur the polarization between labor and capital and to have a vested interest in the progress of the company.

In Islam the premise is that God remitted the sustenance of the poor in the wealth of the rich.. and in a new world order the principle may be carried over to international proportions. Another rule in Islam is that money as an instrument cannot breed money unless coupled to some kind of production, hence usury is unlawful in Islam. In recent decades much has been written on usury-free banking, and indeed a number of banks not only in Islamic countries but also in Europe and America have pioneered the experiment.

(3) The ONENESS of humanity as a single family sharing the common grandparentage of Adam and Eve should be emphasized and taught to the children from a young age together with the inherent equality of human beings. It is unfortunate that both science and religion were misused in Europe (and America) to concoct evidence of the natural superiority of the white (or Aryan) race over the others. Such evidence is now dead and buried, but the legacy continues. Until now, in most churches in the West until now Jesus is imaged as a white blond man with blue eyes and not like the rest of the Palestinians. The evidence of racism in the West practically pervades all aspects of life, and we dare say the will to change it is yet to gather sufficient momentum. An uphill battle for civil rights in America has been going on over

the past decades, and in spite of palpable progress one cannot say that the bitter taste of slavery has been washed away. Equality is not a set of legal specifications but primarily a state of mind.

So far the black man in America has not heard the word "Sorry" from the white man for the chapter of slavery that tarnishes the history of the white civilization (the yellow - Japanese - Americans did receive an apology and reparations for their internment during World War II.) Racial tensions continue to erupt, and although regrettable, they often find justification like the Los Angeles riots in the near past. Every time there is a call and a few efforts to improve the economic lot of the blacks, although good, it misses the root etiology. Neither bullets nor dollars will come up with permanent and real solutions. Only when everyone in the depths of their hearts feel and believe that every other human being is a dear and equal brother or sister will real change occur. This cannot be decreed by law, but it is a function of education. There is every reason, and not just this racial issue, for an educational revolution in schools and all other educational channels to restructure the human mentality on new lines which hopefully lead to a new unified and compassionate humanity putting life into our slogans of freedom, fraternity and equality, not only within national borders (and to hell with the others) but on a global scale.

This should be coupled by a real effort at development of the Third World. It has been estimated that the subsidy Europe pays to its farmers is enough to cause such a turn around in the Third World as to eliminate the problem of hunger the world over. Such an idea was summarily scoffed at in a (philanthropic) meeting of former ministers and prime ministers from various countries that was held in Europe. Neither the stoppage of subsidy nor the developing of the Third World were considered a live option, the former for political expediency and the latter as political strategy.

(4) Another human faculty that has been rapidly eroding and needs to be restored is the faculty of self-restraint. Although it is the principal distinction between man and animal, the mentality of modern times seems to have played havoc with it. A young man who was arrested shooting at passing cars on a free way and killing some people had only this to offer as explanation "I felt like killing someone." This is not a lone example. Statistics on crime clearly indicate that this has become a social phenomenon rather than an exception as anyone watching the news bulletins or reading the papers can confirm. The lack of a sound value system and the appalling lack of resistance in the face of impulses and temptations are underlying factors, and the key to change can be found with education and the media. If there is a Day of Judgment, as Muslims and others believe, then one cannot envy the media moguls when they are faced with their role in publicizing and promoting violence, pornography and licentiousness. Speak of the unspeakable, then speak of the unspeakable, and it naturally becomes speakable. Our young then explore and experiment until it becomes a social addiction.

Unfortunately, some states are setting in subtle ways the example to its youth of recourse to naked power especially when they are strong beyond limits and their adversary is weak beyond limits. The fig leaf called values and principle often falls down when the military giant

cracks down on some aggression with all its might and practically against no resistance; when a worse aggression follows the same giant pulls back because "the task would not be easy". Regard to human life is abysmal both as we attack it or refrain from protecting it. One of the powerful but revealing phrases said during the Gulf War was that of a military leader: "We are not in the business of counting bodies", but that, of course, meant the bodies of the other side.

(5) War and Peace - The rules of war in Islam are very clear and were explicitly delineated by prophet Mohammad himself. First it has to be of a defensive nature, or to remove oppression wherever it might be, following what is now called a just cause. Alliance to stop aggression was expressed in the Quranic verse: "If two parties among the believers fall into a flight, make you peace between them: but if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of God. But if it complies then make peace with justice and be fair, for God loves those who are fair." (49:9) Alliance with non-Muslims for a just cause is all right. An example is the treaty with the Jews of Madinah to defend it jointly against the disbelievers at the time of the prophet. Another example is the reference by the prophet to a treaty long before Islam between the tribes of Makkah to join together in supporting the oppressed, and his comment "That was an alliance before Islam but if -in Islam- I would have been invited to it I would have joined it." The prophet's explicit instructions to his armies were strict in that they should only fight against belligerents not against women, children, old people. Non-Muslim religious people in their hermits or houses of worship should not be harmed, nor enemy trees cut or set on fire as a war measure, nor animals be targeted or slaughtered except for food. When one reviews these stipulations it becomes obvious that they cannot be practicable under conditions of modern warfare. Perhaps World War I was the last where fighting was fairly confined to military personnel. Starting with the Spanish Civil War in the thirties the rules began to change as evident in World War II, the Korean War and the Viet Nam War. The two atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki speak for themselves as does the carpet bombing of the Vietnam war and its "free fire zones", killing not only people, animals and plants but also the soil itself.

Some people would therefore take it that those Islamic war ethics are now theoretical and cannot hold in our modern age, perhaps like many other Islamic precepts. Their logic is obvious. Muslims and others, however, look at the issue from another perspective. Since modern warfare is so devastating, then war itself should cease to be an option in conflict resolution. War should be obsolete ust like slavery! Surely humanity at this epic of civilization never attained before, and as it goes into the second millennium and heralds and celebrates a New World Order, are capable of devising another instrument of peace making than war. Perhaps independent courts of justice can settle differences between nations. In the near past Egypt and Israel fought over the Sinai. When a disputed pocket of land later on presented an obstacle, it was settled peacefully through international arbitration without a drop of bloodshed. After all, war does not differentiate between right and wrong but only shows who is stronger and possesses more destructive power. It is a bad omen that the New World Order was announced on the occasion of an overwhelming military strike. Subsequent decisions raise

suspicion that what was new in the New World Order was no more than the old order except that it is presided over by one adversary instead of two.

It is certainly no big deal to establish courts of law capable of honest and impartial handling of conflict (this excludes the United Nations and its Security Council). The success of such an idea revolves totally around one pivot, viz that the civilized countries decide to be.. .. civilized! It takes truth, and nobody would ever say they are against truth, but they are. Truth is a value; and regrettably politics have no heed for values, and this is the real threat the world faces. Will the strong accede to justice as decided by law or continue the theme that might makes right? Will the military-industrial complex give up the doctrine of living under a war system that has to justify itself by some war or another every now and then? Can justice be accepted in apportioning the cake of the world resources and the cost of replenishing them? Of course not, that would be blasphemous to the masters of the current order unless things change, and change will not come from above. It will come from below upwards, from the grass roots.

(6) The Ecology - For the sake of making dollars to buy their food, service their debts, arm their military and police to protect their dictators and satisfy the insatiable appetite of their rulers and elite, the poorer side of humanity in developing countries are depleting their natural resources.

On the affluent side of humanity, and with the same goal of making more dollars to make the rich richer, to enhance their consumeristic patterns, increase their luxuries and indulge in their pleasantries, the industrialized world are violating, poisoning, polluting and killing the ecology. This happens at a time where our science and technology are capable of influencing the biosphere in a dramatic and unprecedented way. And it happens at peace time, apart from the devastating and permanent damage that a full scale modern war is capable of causing. We borrow from the future at an extravagant rate, whereas sane and reasonable estimates tell us that we are incurring a debt our future generations will not be able to pay. Remedial measures and workable suggestions have been prescribed, but the obstacle, as expected, has always been those who hold the reins of power, the custodians of unbridled, greedy, selfish, gluttonous, short-sighted capitalism. As the Quran says "There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle you, and he calls God to be his witness about what is in his heart, yet is he the most contentious of enemies. But when he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading mischief and destroying tilth and progeny; and God loves-not mischief." (2:204-205)

Of real significance, however, is that the ecology movement outside the sphere of politics is gaining momentum. On Earth Day 1990, one hundred million people in 140 countries showed up for the largest grass-roots demonstration ever. These cannot be ignored by the politicians or else they loose their votes. May be it is time to establish an international ecological agency, and world governments would participate in it with the prior agreement to voluntarily heed its recommendations, recommendations that, of course, should not be oblivious to the question of justice.

(7) Population Issues - The world population is growing at a pace that far exceeds that of available resources. Concerns are therefore quite legitimate about the population explosion, and since most of the population increase occurs in the Third World, the latter has been accused of irresponsible behavior and targeted for blame by the West. Disciplinary action has been considered, and a number of countries that provide aid, including the U.S.A, entertained the idea of linking that aid with fertility regulation and family planning achievements. Worse than that, in an article titled "Would Machiavelli now be a better guide for doctors than Hippocrates?" (World Health Forum, vol. 14, 1993 p. 105), Dr. Jean Martin reviews some Western opinions that question the advisability of some vaccination and other programs in the Third World since they allow the children to live, impact the resources and eventually repeat the cycle of famine and death; in other words, this is a call to setting limits on the reduction of mortality in the Third World. A shift from humanitarianism to "pragmatism" sounds logical, hence the inclusion of Machiavelli's name in the article.

That there is a problem, nobody can deny. That there is need to avail families who wish to use them (without coercion) of safe, reliable and accessible contraceptive methods is also a fact, and Islam has no qualms with that. Our only reservation is that putting the blame of the population problem solely and squarely on Third World countries is not telling the whole truth, for the issue is really multifaceted. It ignores the fact that the birth of one baby in the United States "imposes more than a hundred times the stress on the world resources and environment as a birth in, say, Bangladesh", wrote Paul and Anne Ehrlich of the Department of Biological Sciences at Stanford University, in National Geographic Magazine. They drew the distinction that while population problems in poor nations keep them poor, population problems in rich nations are destroying the ability of the earth to support civilization (Michael Henderson: Hope for a Change. Grosvenor Books, Salem U. S. A., 1991, p.24).

The way to reduce population growth in the Third World was debated (especially at the World Population Conference at Bucharest, 1974). Although historical precedent (studying what did happen in Europe that brought down fertility rates) and common sense (a known phenomenon is that insecurity is a natural stimulus of fertility) indicated that development is the cause and not the outcome of reduced fertility (development is the best pill), yet the capitalist countries put a disproportionately high emphasis on fertility regulation in the Third World. The matter is indeed more than philanthropic or an altruistic regard for the welfare of humanity. In the Summer 1991 issue of Foreign Affairs a report (originally prepared for the US Army Conference on Long Range Planning) by Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute, warns against the implications of the proportional increase in numbers of the Third World nations for the international political order and the balance of world power. After three generations, he notes, eight great grand parents in the West will share only four or five descendants against over three hundred for much of Africa and the Middle East; therefore, the leading countries of today will be the little countries of the future.

The National Security Study Memorandum 200, a study of "Implications of Worldwide Population Growth for US Security and Overseas Interests" (dated Dec. 10, 1974, classified by Harry C. Blaney III, declassified July 3, 1989 Executive order 12358, Released / US National

Archives June 26, 1990) is a very educative document, revealing the complex political, economic and military implications and the solid realities of the world in which we live. Population factors might be the seeds of revolutionary actions and the expropriation or limitation of foreign economic interests. Poverty, population growth and population youth would urge development, induce review of foreign investment terms and conditions, and even boost military growth if conscription to the military is seen as a viable alternative to unemployment. The document sometimes imparts the feeling that industrial countries are already waging a pre-emptive war against underdeveloped countries.

It would seem to us that a New World Order should be geared to the needs of our global village, for that is what our planet is becoming. It should not presuppose the inevitability of dividing the world into "haves" and "have-nots", and hence the inevitability of a fight to the death between them. It requires of the rich to be humble, content and willing to give up many luxuries that their life-styles incorporate. They are not vital necessities. The reward is the happiness of providing the vital necessities for the major part of the human family. What else can be more conducive to happiness? God must be brought to the equation!

(2) FAMILY... AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

Prophet Mohammad said: "Women are the other half of men." The unit of humanity is not a man or a woman. It is a man and a woman in that unison that makes them a family (just like the smallest part of water is not oxygen or hydrogen but both united). Like Judaism and Christianity and many other religions, Islam decrees that the pairing off of a man and a woman to make a family constitutes a sacred bond that the Quran calls "a stout pledge", that has to be documented and authenticated by the "marriage contract" or wed-lock. It signifies the commitment of the spouses to one another and establishes their mutual rights and responsibilities as well as those vis a vis their children. Children have the right to legitimacy (birth under a marriage contract and having and knowing their father and mother), loving care as they are raised, being nurtured and catered for both physically and spiritually, and the right of education and getting them equipped to face life and bear its responsibilities as mature and useful citizens. As the parents attain old age or get incapacitated some way or another, it is the children's religious duty to look after them and cater to their comfort without feeling impatient or distressed about it. It is a right towards God. Of course it is the perpetual insurance for the future of the children as they themselves grow up and become parents and attain old age. This solidarity of the family and strength of the family ties is of paramount importance in Islam. It spreads even beyond the nuclear family along the widening circles of blood ties. The Quran calls it "the relation of the womb". It is both a duty and a rewardable charity to be kind to those blood kindred through friendly care or financial support if needed. Even after parents have died, it remains one's duty to pray for them, and even to maintain the ties with their friends, show them courtesy, and offer help if needed.

In Islam, marriage subserves two functions, and it is only marriage that lawfully subserves them. The one is to fulfil the yearning of the one half to its other half and their becoming one, both physically and spiritually. "Amongst His signs is that He created for you -from amongst you- consorts, with whom to dwell in tranquility; and He laid love and compassion between

you." (30:21) The other function is to procreate and have a progeny; "God made for you - from amongst you- consorts, and out of your consorts made for you children and grandchildren; and bestowed on you from His bounty; would they then believe in the vain things and deny the blessings of God?" (16:72) Marriage is the only legitimate venue for sex and reproduction. Trespassing outside marriage is a grave sin, and it can also be a legal offense in Islam if witnessed by four witnesses who identify the perpetrators and testify to have seen a complete sexual act. To satisfy these legal criteria must be a very rare event, and it seems it was meant to be so.

It is noteworthy that the same moral principles used to prevail also in America and the West, but with the slippage of more and more people into atheism or microtheism, change was inevitable. Atheism is when God is denied. Microtheism is when God is acknowledged but with reduced Godliness. We worship Him but on our own terms. We visit the houses of worship usually on weekends, but we do not allow God out to tell us what to do with our private or public lives. This erosion of faith set the stage for the "sexual revolution", as all religious values became subject to radical revision.

The sexual revolution did not start as recently as we think in the sixties. Nor was it the outcome of a passive natural social change. It was the result of intelligent planning, hard work and perseverance. It all started with the extreme fascination with science and its technological capabilities, in the wake of banishment of the church from delving into public life. The human mind became the Ultimate arbiter of all human affairs, and all time-honored values were subjected to its new rulings. In their haste and superficiality, however, people missed the obvious fact that the human mind itself, and by its own admission, is an imperfect instrument, and that with its limitation it cannot pass such ultimate judgments as those concerning the absolute moral standards. The mere fact that the mind diligently seeks more knowledge and pursues further research is a confession that there is so much it remains ignorant about. Had the human mind thought it was complete, then it would have ceased its pursuits and spared the research budgets; but the case is as the Quran describes it, "Of knowledge, it is only a little that was communicated to you." (17:85)

To further replace God by man, a movement arose between the two world wars called "Morality without Religion", accusing religion -and not human error- of causing enmity and conflict between people. They pretended the same moralities could be attained without necessarily ascribing them to religion and called them "unattached moralities". But as religion moved out of focus God was dethroned, and new codes of morality were issued wherein the immoralities of yesterday became the normalities of today, and secular humanism could at last frankly declare that human values must be made by human beings and without relevance to any non-human or supernatural reference. With the shift towards materialism such values as honor, chastity and purity became empty words and nonviable currency. A full range of indoctrination worked to stretch the boundaries of freedom to include license, and in a society that emphasizes individuality, every human whim became a human right. It was another setback when the tidal wave that hit society deluged also many of the traditional custodians of religion and protectors of its values - the clergy. These were the Trojan horse, because instead

of leaving the religious camp to the libertarian camp, they started working on religion itself by new re-interpretations and new exegesis of the texts to render lawful and permissible what has been unlawful and reprehensive along the whole history of those religions. Many of those clergy themselves fell prey to the germs they were supposed to fend off. Some even interpreted the institution of "celibacy" as refraining from marriage but not from having sex, as we read in News Week some time ago.

The result, as expected, is this chaotic sexual conduct of whole societies. Without the values of chastity outside marriage and fidelity within it, came the desecration of sex as a very special bond between a man and a woman, mass and promiscuous sex, spur posses, rapes, unwanted pregnancies ending in abortion or unwanted children stripped of their right of legitimate double parentage, and children begetting children. Further, family trust is eroded when even in stable families some 15 percent of the children are not their fathers' added to all this are health hazards due to the epidemic spread of sexually transmitted diseases, whether new diseases or the recurrence of old ones we thought have been conquered long ago. Their causative organisms have acquired resistance to known antibiotic therapy, and with rising promiscuity they are exacting a heavy toll on the community, especially the youth.

We Muslims do not have any confusion or vagueness about what is lawful in our religion and what is unlawful. The Quran remains in the original text that was revealed, word to word and letter to letter. The Quran is the divine words: and any translation or rendition in any language including Arabic (the Quranic language) cannot be called Quran. The moralities and the immoralities specified in the Quran will remain so forever, and cannot be diluted or manipulated or rationalized. There are no clergy, or scholars who can claim to be endowed with the right or ability of special interpretation. This does not mean that all Muslims are therefore virtuous people who do not sin. Of course, Muslims violate their own religion by committing sins and abominations, but at least they know it is sin, and it will remain on their conscience until they desist and repent to God. The real challenge, however, faces Muslims who are citizens of Western communities where the children are raised under social and moral norms that conflict with the teachings of Islam. Muslims are not alone in this, because there are also Jews, Christians and others who uphold the same divine moralities and make every effort to endow their children with them. Cooperation is already in progress and more is encouraged between Muslims and those who believe similarly, be they clergy or lay individuals or associations.

Our way with our children follows an early introduction to God (see Chapter One), and that when we believe in Him it means we accept and abide by His rules. If we follow His rules we do not bother if the others do not, for when one is on the side of God then one is in the majority. This breeds the confidence that resists peer pressure and the vagaries of temptation. "They all do it" ceases to be an excuse. The vaccination approach aims at building up immunity long before the child is exposed to disease: be it physical or moral. Just like a soldier is prepared to battle before and not during the battle, future hazards and catches are discussed with the child so that he/she would decide in advance what position to take when the time comes whether the offer is smoking, drink, drug or sex.

Fortunately, the preaching of premarital chastity entails more than an order to obey (of course the teaching is that when God orders, we hear and we obey). Discussions with Muslim and non-Muslim youth presented the case equally powerfully even along purely intellectual lines. "Who believes in equality of the sexes?", and it is a unanimous vote "Who believes in justice?", and again it is a unanimous agreement. The proposition is then introduced that any relationship between two partners, the consequences of which are not equally shared by both, cannot constitute justice; and they all agree. In a situation of liberal sex, the consequences are not equally shared, because the female side is the loser all the way, whether she is deserted, or gets pregnant and goes for abortion, or gives birth and signs away her baby for adoption or ends with a fatherless baby to support alone for the rest of her life. (When we observe the consequences and ask the question,) "Can this be justice?" the general shout is "No!".

The homosexuality movement was a fairly late comer on the wagon of the sexual revolution. Homosexuality, of course, is not a new invention as it has always been there in practically all cultures and among all people but, one would guess, in more limited proportions. It had its lobby whose activities followed more or less subtle ways, but its influence mushroomed only over the past decade or so. I do remember academic conferences where some scientific papers were given, upon rigorous scientific methodology, to prove by scientific experiment the safety of anal sex. That was in the early seventies, and to me the findings were so contradicting to simple common sense that I began, for the first time in my academic life, to doubt the honesty of some scientific researchers. Shortly thereafter, the American Psychiatric Association declared that homosexuality was no more to be considered an illness to be treated but merely an orientation or a sexual variant. The rest is history.

A "Gay Bowel Syndrome" was described in the medical literature, and later it was AIDS that made the news and its relation to homosexual behavior being established. Very soon the AIDS problem was pushed out of the medical arena and its rules and regulations for handling infectious diseases. It became a political issue, and the homosexual lobby further grew into a political power capable of intimidating office bearers and political figures and gaining the support of many in the media, the arts and the clergy. Instead of AIDS being contained it spilled over to blood recipients, drug addicts, the fetus in utero, heterosexual contacts with wives and others and accidental infections. It became a global epidemic that is spreading at a serious pace. To the AIDS patient we have empathy and compassion and hopefully the best available medical and nursing care. To those not infected we recommend the preventive approach. This is not the condom, for there is no such a thing as safe sex. It is chastity until marriage, and fidelity within marriage.

The debate about homosexuality is ravaging. "Be what you are" they say, "and do not be ashamed of it". Many unsuspecting youth started to experiment, to discover what they really are. Consent is a requisite, and the lobbies in Scandinavia are trying to bring down the consent age to four years. A 'Gay Pride Day' is annually observed in California with media coverage, a 'Gay Pride Month' in some school districts has been established to remove bigotry and prejudice, and two-man or two-woman households are being presented as alternative

forms of family. Recently, science began exploring a possible anatomical or genetic basis for homosexual orientation. We Muslims are not impressed, and to us the matter is that simple. We do not make our religion, but we receive it and we obey it. We cannot impose anything on anyone, but to us the Quran and the teachings of prophet Mohammad clearly and explicitly condemn homosexual practices. Whether you have the orientation or not, whether you harbor the gene or not, your feelings and desires shall not dictate your behavior. You might be dying to do something (be it homosexual contact or heterosexual with a partner who is not your wife or taking an alcoholic drink or an urge for a violent action or a desire to steal something that is not yours), what you feel need not be what you do. "It is not for a believing man or woman if a matter has been decided by God and His messenger, to have a choice of their own. If anyone disobeys God and His messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path." (33:36). Every human being has an undisputed gene without which they cannot be a human being: it is called the "gene of self-control"!

(3) EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia gained a legal foothold in Holland. It went to the ballot box in two states in America but was defeated. Its lobby is getting more active. Islam has definite views on euthanasia.

HUMAN LIFE

The sanctity of human life is a basic value as decreed by God even before the times of Moses, Jesus and Mohammad. Commenting on the killing of Abel by his brother Caine (the two sons of Adam), God says in the Quran: "On that account We ordained for the children of Israel that if anyone slay a person -unless it be for murder or spreading mischief in the land- it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Quran 5:32). The Quran also says: "Take not life which Allah made sacred otherwise than in the course of justice" (Quran 6:151 and 17:33). The Shari'a went into great detail in defining the conditions where taking life is permissible whether in war or in peace (as an item of the criminal law), with rigorous prerequisites and precautions to minimize that event.

IS THERE A RIGHT TO SUICIDE?

Not in Islam. Since we did not create ourselves we do not own our bodies. We are entrusted with them for care, nurture and safe keeping. God is the owner and giver of life and His rights in giving and in taking are not to be violated. Attempting to kill oneself is a crime in Islam as well as a grave sin. The Quran says: "Do not kill (or destroy) yourselves, for verily Allah has been to you most Merciful" (Quran 4:29). To warn against suicide prophet Mohammad said: "Whoever kills himself with an iron instrument will be carrying it forever in hell. Whoever takes poison and kills himself will forever keep sipping that poison in hell. Whoever jumps off a mountain and kills himself will forever keep falling down in the depths of hell."

EUTHANASIA - MERCY KILLING

The Shari'a listed and specified the indications for taking life (ie. the exceptions to the general rule of sanctity of human life), and they do not include mercy killing or make allowance for it. Human life per se is a value to be respected unconditionally, irrespective of other circumstances. The concept of a life not worthy of living does not exist in Islam. Justification of taking life to escape suffering is not acceptable in Islam. Prophet Mohammad taught: "There was a man in older times who had an infliction that taxed his patience, so he took a knife, cut his wrist and bled to death. Upon this God said: My subject hastened his end, I deny him paradise." During one of the military campaigns one of the Muslims was killed and the companions of the prophet kept praising his gallantry and efficiency in fighting, but, to their surprise, the Prophet commented, "His lot is hell." Upon inquiry, the companions found out that the man had been seriously injured so he supported the handle of his sword on the ground and plunged his chest onto its tip, committing suicide. The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics endorsed by the First International Conference on Islamic Medicine (Islamic Organization of Medical Sciences, Kuwait, 1981, p.65) includes: "Mercy killing, like suicide, finds no support except in the atheistic way of thinking that believes that our life on this earth is followed by void. The claim of killing for painful hopeless illness is also refuted, for there is no human pain that cannot be largely conquered by medication or by suitable neurosurgery...".

There is still another dimension to the question of pain and suffering. Patience and endurance are highly regarded and highly rewarded values in Islam. "Those who patiently preserve will truly receive a reward without measure" (Quran 39:10). "And bear in patience whatever (ill) may befall you: this, behold, is something to set one's heart upon" (Quran 31:17). Prophet Mohammad taught "When the believer is afflicted with pain, even that of a prick of a thorn or more, God forgives his sins, and his wrongdoings are discarded as a tree sheds off its leaves." When means of preventing or alleviating pain fall short, this spiritual dimension can be very effectively called upon to support the patient who believes that accepting and standing unavoidable pain will be to his/her credit in the hereafter, the real and enduring life. To a person who does not believe in a hereafter this might sound like nonsense, but to one who does, euthanasia is certainly nonsense.

THE FINANCIAL FACTOR

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

This logic is completely alien to Islam. Values take priority over prices. The care for the weak, old and helpless is a value in itself for which people are willing to sacrifice time, effort and money, and this starts, naturally with one's own parents "Your Lord decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one or both of them attain old

age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt but address them in terms of honor. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say: my Lord, bestow on them Your mercy even as they cherished me in childhood" (Quran 17:25-25). Because such caring is a virtue ordained and rewarded by God in this world and in the hereafter, the believers don't take it as a debit but as an investment. In a materialistic dollar-centric community this logic is meaningless, but not so in the value-oriented God heeding community of the faithful.

When individual means cannot cover the needed care, it becomes, according to Islam, the collective responsibility of society, and financial priorities are reshuffled so that values take priority over pleasures, and people derive more pleasure from heeding values than from pursuing other pleasantries. A prerequisite of course is a complete moral and spiritual re-orientation of a society that does not hold to these premises.

CLINICAL SITUATIONS

In an Islamic setting the question of euthanasia usually does not arise, and if it does, it is dismissed as religiously unlawful. The patient should receive every possible psychological support and compassion from family and friends, including the patient's spiritual (religious) resources. The doctor also participates in this, as well, and provides the therapeutic measures for the relief of pain. A dilemma arises when the dose of the pain killer necessary to alleviate pain approximates or overlaps with the lethal dose that might bring about the patient's death. Ingenuity on the part of the doctor is called upon to avoid this situation, but from a religious point of view the critical issue is the doctor's intention: is it to kill or to alleviate? Intention is beyond verification by the law but according to Islam it cannot escape the ever watchful eye of God Who according to the Quran "knows the treachery of the eyes, and all that hearts conceal" (Quran 40:19). Sins that do not fulfil the criteria of a legal crime are beyond the domain of the judge but remain answerable to God.

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

The seeking of medical treatment from illness is mandatory in Islam, according to two sayings of the prophet: "Seek treatment, subjects of God, for to every illness God has made a cure", and "Your body has a right on you." But when the treatment holds no promise it ceases to be mandatory. This applies both to surgical and/or pharmaceutical measures, and, according to a majority of scholars, to artificial animation equipment. Ordinary life needs which are the right of every living person and which are not categorized as "treatment" are regarded differently. These include food and drink and ordinary nursing care, and they are not to be withheld as long as the patient lives.

COMMENTARY

The discussion of euthanasia cannot be isolated from the total ideologic background of a certain community. Muslims, believing in God and in a divinely prescribed Shari'a will naturally

have different views from others who do not believe in God, or those who acknowledge God but deny Him any authority to tell us what we should or shouldn't do. In much of contemporary Christendom the concept of separation of church and state is being pushed to mean the exclusion of God from human affairs although they are not the same.

The earlier experiencing of euthanasia in Nazi Germany earlier this century left us with some eye openers. It was endorsed, pioneered and implemented by medical practitioners of the highest order of intelligence and professional status. Once the concept of "a life not worthy of living" was condoned and accepted the foundation was laid for those kinds of decisions which eventually led to the horrors that followed. Fifty years later, the euthanasia lobby has regrouped in the Netherlands and is targeting Europe and America. Their opponents question the alleged free consent of the patient, who already under great personal distress, must additionally feel the duress of the burden his or her illness and treatment is placing on the patient's family psychologically and financially. Consent given by the family is open to the possibility of conflict of interest. The battle draws and the outcome remains to be seen; but this is a conflict which is avoided in Islam because of a broader, firmer theological strength.

(4) JIHAD

This word has been in frequent use in the Western press over the past several years, explained directly or subtly, to mean holy war. As a matter of fact the term "holy war" was coined in Europe during the Crusades, meaning the war against Muslims. It does not have a counterpart in Islamic glossary, and Jihad is certainly not its translation.

The word Jihad means striving. In its primary sense it is an inner thing, within self, to rid it from debased actions or inclinations, and exercise constancy and perseverance in achieving a higher moral standard. Since Islam is not confined to the boundaries of the individual but extends to the welfare of society and humanity in general, an individual cannot keep improving himself/herself in isolation from what happens in their community or in the world at large, hence the Quranic injunction to the Islamic nation to take as a duty "to enjoin good and forbid evil." (3:104) It is a duty which is not exclusive to Muslims but applies to the human race who are, according to the Quran, God's vicegerent on earth. Muslims, however, cannot shirk it even if others do. The means to fulfil it are varied, and in our modern world encompass all legal, diplomatic, arbitative, economic, and political instruments. But Islam does not exclude the use of force to curb evil, if there is no other workable alternative. A forerunner of the collective security principle and collective intervention to stop aggression, at least in theory, as manifested in the United Nations Charter, is the Quranic reference "...make peace between them (the two fighting groups), but if one of the two persists in aggression against the other, fight the aggressors until they revert to God's commandment." (49:9)

Military action is therefore a subgroup of the Jihad and not its totality. That was what prophet Mohammad emphasized to his companions when returning from a military campaign, he told them: "This day we have returned from the minor jihad (war) to the major jihad (self-control and betterment)."

Jihad is not a declaration of war against other religions and certainly not against Christians and Jews as some media and political circles want it to be perceived. Islam does not fight

other religions. Christians and Jews are considered as fellow inheritors of The Abrahamic traditions by Muslims, worshipping the same God and following the tradition of Abraham.

The rigorous criteria for a "just war" in Islam have already been alluded to, as well as the moral and ethical constraints that should be abided by. Modern warfare does not lend itself to those moral standards; and therefore, war should be replaced by some other alternative for conflict resolution. An enlightened and resolute world public opinion can overcome and subdue war oriented mentalities.

The key is a change of heart. Just as there is a constructive role for forgiveness in interpersonal relations, so might this be possible in international relations provided justice, and not force, is the final arbiter.

We have to acknowledge again, for the sake of honesty, that historically all traditions, Muslim, Christian, Jew as well as others, had their lapses in honestly following the valued ideals of their religions or philosophies. We all made mistakes, and we still do. Muslims are no exception, and time and again religion was exploited by ambitious tyrants or violated by ignorant mobs. This is no reflection on religion, but it shows how desperately humanity is in need of better education, more enduring concern for human dignity, rights and freedom, and vigilant pursuit of justice, even at the price of curbing political and economic greed.

(5) Bio-Medical Ethics

This section enumerates some areas that have been in the forefront of the field of bio-ethics, and on which Islamic consensus has been fairly established.

I) Reproductive Issues

A- Fertility Regulation

Contraception

Islam permits contraception as long as it does not entail the radical separation between marriage and its reproductive function. Since the time of the prophet contraception has been practiced, but he made it clear that it should be a joint decision between husband and wife. The general recommendation is for the Islamic nation to procreate and grow in numbers, but quality and not sheer numbers was well emphasized by Mohammad. One of his very prophetic sayings was: "There will come the day when other nations will fall upon you like hungry eaters upon a bowl of food." When asked whether this would be due to lack of numbers he said "No. On that day you will be so many, but (quality wise) like the froth on the surface of the torrent."

Throughout Islamic history jurists permitted family planning for a number of reasons: health, socio-economics, etc. up to merely preserving the beauty of the woman's body. Both natural and medicinal methods of contraception are acceptable, provided the method is not harmful and does not work as an abortifacient. Family planning should be the choice of the individual family without coercion or pressure. Countries that adopt a population policy may resort to wide campaigns of education to ensure the accessibility of contraceptive technology, but the decision rests with the family.

Reservations about population programs designed by Western countries for the Third World were referred to earlier. There is a consciousness about a "demographic warfare" to strip

populations of their sheer power of numbers or to reduce majorities to minorities in some areas. There is also alarm about contraceptive material banned from use in their (Western) countries of origin while at the same time they are abundantly exported to Islamic and Third World countries, compromising on safety standards. More investment in developing resources and a willingness to transfer necessary technology on part of the West remains to be seen.

Breast Feeding

This has a prominent place in Islamic teaching. As a family planning method it is not a reliable prescription for the individual family; but it has been estimated on a group (collective) basis to be a more potent contraceptive than all other methods put together, measured by the drop in fertility rate in a community of suckling women. The Quran mentions breast feeding and recommends that its natural course is the span of two years. In Islam, however, breast feeding is more than a nutritional (or family planning) process. It is a "value" and a special bond, so much so that a woman other than the natural mother who breast feeds an infant acquires a special status in Islamic law which is called "suckling parenthood", and this woman is called the infant's "mother in lactation". To accentuate its value, "lactation motherhood" is given the status of natural motherhood in certain legal rulings concerning marriage. The result is that such a mother's natural children are considered "lactation siblings" of the nursed infant, who therefore may not marry any of them.

The Intra-uterine Device

If the device acted to cause abortion it would not be acceptable. Its action, however, was explained on the basis of preventing implantation. The current generations of the device contain a copper wire that releases spermicidal copper ions, or include the hormone progesterone that thickens the mucus in the canal of the womb so it cannot be penetrated by sperm. Both actions put the device in the category of contraception and not abortion. This was confirmed by a release from the World Health Organization

Abortion

There are no "pro-life" and "pro-choice" lobbies in Islamic communities, with a raging battle such as takes place in America. Islam views abortion very differently from contraception, since the former entails the violation of a human life. The question that naturally arises is whether the term "human life" includes the life of the fetus in the womb. According to Islamic jurisprudence it does. Islam accords the fetus the status of "incomplete zimma". Zimma is the legal regard that allows rights and duties, and that of the fetus is incomplete in the sense that it has rights but owes no duties. Some of these rights of the fetus are:

- (a) If a husband dies while his wife is pregnant, the law of inheritance recognizes the fetus as an inheritor if borne alive. Other inheritors would receive their shares in accordance with the prescribed juridical proportions, but only after the share of the unborn is set aside to await its birth.
- (b) If a fetus is miscarried at any stage of pregnancy and shows signs of life such as a cough or movement and then it dies, such fetus has the right to inherit anything it was legally entitled to inherit from anyone who died after the beginning of the pregnancy. After this fetus dies, what it has inherited is inherited in turns by its legal heirs.

(c) If a woman commits a crime punishable by death and is proven pregnant, then the execution of the punishment shall be postponed until she gives birth and nurses her baby until it is weaned. This applies irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy, however early, denoting the right of the fetus to life from its beginning. It applies even if the pregnancy was illegitimate, which shows that the fetus conceived out of wedlock also has the right to life. All sects and juridical schools unanimously uphold this ruling.

There is also a money penalty for abortion even if it was inadvertent. This is called the "ghorra". If aggression or willful action causes abortion, suitable punishment by the court is also imposed.

The question of the beginning of life has been discussed since early times, since the admissibility of abortion hinged around the existence of life (some old jurists permitted abortion before four months, others before seven weeks, of pregnancy, on the assumption that life had not started in the pregnancy.) Some ten centuries ago, a notable scholar called Al-Ghazali rightly described a phase of imperceptible life, before the phase that the mother could feel in the form of fetal quickening. Recent juridical congresses reviewed the subject taking into account the applications of modern technology, and concluded that the stage of an individual's life that can be called its beginning should satisfy ALL the following criteria: (1) it should be a clear and well-defined event; (2) it should exhibit the cardinal feature of life: growth; (3) if this growth is not interrupted, it will naturally lead up to the subsequent stages of life as we know them; (4) it contains the genetic pattern that is characteristic of the human race at large, and also of a unique specific individual; and (5) it is not preceded by any other phase which combines the first four. Obviously, these postulates refer to fertilization.

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

Sterilization

Unless done for a clear medical indication this operation is generally frowned upon. It is permitted, however, for women with a reasonable number of children and who are approaching the end of their reproductive life. Voluntary and informed consent should be given by both the husband and wife, giving no promises of a guaranteed successful reversal of the operation if they later change their mind. No government policy should pressure people into undergoing sterilization. The doctor has the right to decline performing the operation if not convinced that it is in the best interests of the patient.

B- Treatment of Infertility

The pursuit of pregnancy is legitimate and individuals may resort to the necessary means provided they do not violate the Shari'a.

Artificial Insemination

This is permissible only if the sperm belongs to the husband (AIH). Donor's semen (AID) may not be used since procreation is legitimate only within the marriage contract and the elements (the couple) that are party to it.

In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF)

This technology, commonly known as the test tube baby technology, is Islamically acceptable as long as it is between husband and wife, ie. within the boundaries of the marriage contract. The marriage contract should be valid and live. Since divorce or widowhood bring the marriage contract to a conclusion and they are then no more husband and wife, it follows that a woman may not be impregnated by the sperm of her ex-husband kept in deep freeze in a semen bank. Intervention of a third party other than husband and wife and the bearers of their genetic material (sperm and ovum) is not permissible because this would be an intrusion into the marriage contract binding the pair. "Alien sperm," or an "alien egg", or an "alien womb" (to carry a couple's embryo) is not allowed.

Surrogate Motherhood

Surrogate Motherhood, where a woman carries in her womb the fetus of another couple, is absolutely unacceptable to Islam. It results in the dichotomy of motherhood into genetic and biologic whereas these should be one. It also entails a pregnancy outside the legitimacy of a marriage contract. Competition between the two mothers (!) has led to legal and other problems in America. A contract deciding the fate of the baby is certainly dehumanizing as it treats the baby as a commodity. The implications might prove to be far reaching since the human female for the first time in history is willingly going into a full pregnancy (and delivery) with the prior intent to give away the baby. Because this is done, in the majority of cases, for a negotiated price, it reduces "motherhood" from a "value" to a price. If this becomes established practice, the long term effects on intergenerational bonds will be devastating.

II Organ Donation and Transplantation

The Quran says: "and whoever saves a life it would be as if he saved the life of all the people." Perhaps there is no better way to implement this concept than in the area of saving lives by transplanting donated organs to replace failing vital ones. This conclusion, however, had to be reached after some synthesis of Islamic rules. Basically, violating the human body, whether living or dead, is against the rulings of Islam. It would follow that incising the body of a living donor or of a cadaver and obtaining the organ to be donated, would be impermissible, had it not been for the invocation of two juridical rules that readily solve the impasse. The first is the rule of "Necessities overrule prohibition." The second is the "choice of the lesser of the two evils if both cannot be avoided." Since the saving of life is a necessity that carries more weight than preserving the integrity of the body of donor or cadaver and since the injury of the body of the donor is less evil compared with leaving the patient to die, the procedure of organ donation and transplantation is sanctioned. It should not pose danger on the donor, as far as medically ascertainable. Rules of free consent devoid of all kinds of pressure should be observed as the donor (or next of kin of deceased donor) indicate their willingness.

Transplantation of Nervous Tissue

This has recently shown some promise in the treatment of certain diseases. It is lawful if the source is the adrenal gland medulla or an animal fetus, or a human fetus spontaneously miscarried when it dies naturally. It is unlawful to sacrifice a living or viable human fetus for the purpose. In lawful abortion (such as to save the mother's life) the fetus may be used. Creating fetuses or performing abortion for the purpose of transplantation is unlawful.

The Anencephalic Fetus

This refers to a congenital abnormality where the vault of the skull and the brain hemispheres are absent. It might be borne alive, but will eventually die after a variable period that might extend to several days. As long as it lives, it should not be used as a source of organs for transplantation. Artificial termination of its life is unlawful. It may be maintained by artificial resuscitation to keep its tissues healthy, until its brain (stem) dies and then it is allright to take its organs.

Transplantation of Sex Glands

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

III Definition of Death

The definition of the moment of death has its bearing not only on medical issues such as the feasibility of removing artificial animation or the taking of a singular vital organ for transplantation (such as the heart), but also of juridical issues such as the beginning of the waiting period a widow has to wait after her husband's death before remarrying (four months and ten days, or if pregnant, the end of pregnancy), and the apportioning of legacy shares if two or more inheritors should die in succession.

Recent juridical congresses accepted a new definition of death based on total brain death (including the brain stem) even though some physiological functions are still maintained by artificial animation. The new definition was made possible through a process of "analogy" to an old juridical rule that recognized the concept of a fatal injury. Centuries ago, it was decreed that if a person is stabbed leading to extrusion of his bowel, this was considered a fatal injury even though the victim continued to show movement and other signs of departing life, technically referred to as "the movement of the slain." If a second aggressor then finished up the victim causing (complete) death, still the murder charge would be addressed to the first aggressor, and the second is charged but not with murder. Persons with brain death whose body organs/systems remain, nevertheless, artificially maintained, were given the status of the movement of the slain", seeing that return to life is scientifically impossible. It would be no crime therefore if the animation is switched off, or if the (fresh and live) heart is taken for transplantation to a patient whose heart is damaged beyond recovery.

IV Genetic Engineering

Genetic Engineering has particularly attracted lengthy discussions amongst Islamic scholars because of a phrase in the Quran about "changing God's creation." According to the Quran, after Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin by eating from the forbidden tree, he was dismayed to see them repenting and being forgiven and honored by their mission to planet Earth as God's vicegerent. Satan asked the Lord to grant him another chance to prove that humans are not that trustworthy after all. If allowed to test them on earth, Satan disclosed some of his plots to confound them saying: "Verily of Thy servants I shall most certainly take my due share, and shall lead them astray and fill them with vain desires. And I shall command them so that they cut off the ears of cattle (in idolatrous sacrifice), and I shall command them and they will CHANGE GOD'S CREATION." (4:119) The regard for this verse among Islamic scholars and medical practitioners also affects their decisions on such issues as sexual conversion operations.

Fortunately, however, the consensus is that this Quranic verse cannot be invoked as a total and radical ban on genetic engineering. If carried too far it would conflict with many forms of curative surgery that also entails some change in God's creation.

Many ethical issues are raised by scientific development of genetic engineering. The creation of new virulent bacteria for use in biological warfare was a serious concern of the early seventies when the technology of recombinant DNA was first described. Such an application is clearly wrong. Applications such as the diagnosis, amelioration, cure or prevention of genetic disease are acceptable and even commendable. Gene replacement is essentially transplantation surgery albeit at the molecular level. The pharmaceutical possibilities of genetic engineering will open tremendous vistas in treatment of many illnesses and the possibilities in agriculture and animal husbandry might be the clue to solving the problem of famine the world over.

The main concerns about genetic engineering lie in the area of the unknown and unsuspected future. The possibility of grafting new genes not only in somatic cells but also into germ cells thus affecting coming generations, could later be associated with tragic self-perpetuating mutations. The hazards of atomic radiation were not apparent for some time, nor could the damage be repaired, and the stakes with genetic engineering are far more serious. The introduction of genetic material from one species into another, practically means the creation of a new species with mixed features. If pursued with man's inclination for seeking the unknown until it is known and the unachievable until it becomes achievable then mankind may be confronted by patterns of life yet to appear on the biological stage. Science might think that everything is under control while the case is not really so. Further, manipulating the human progeny might be extended beyond combatting disease to the cultivation of certain physical characteristics considered desirable leading to elitism and discrimination against (normal) individuals who lack those characteristics. Worse still is the manipulation of behavior if genes determining behavior are isolated. The principle of tampering with the human personality and its capacity for individual responsibility and accountability would certainly be condemned by Islam. The technology itself, attracts large capital for investment, and its

investors will inevitably seek maximal financial return. Many scientists have already exchanged their ivory towers for golden ones and the spirit of open and altruistic cooperation for trade-secrecy and patenting forms of life.

Moral concerns have been voiced that bear on equity, justice and the common good. Perhaps it is time for a comprehensive public debate and the prospective formulation of an ethical code for genetic engineering. A long story is in the waiting, and it is just beginning to unfold!

EPILOGUE

It would be a pity if this book stopped at the stage of giving the reader the information it contains. Even if the reader believes every word I wrote and ends at that, I will feel far short of success. Unless the cognitive stage moves on to a psycho-motor stage, mission remains unaccomplished. Unless knowledge generates a feeling (in the heart) which reflects in behavior, it will remain sterile knowledge like a tree that bears no fruit.

In my late sixties, and after life-long study, reflection and insight in my Islamic faith, I feel my heart bursting with love. It is just nonspecific love that has no address attached to it. Hearts cannot harbor a vacuum and must be filled with love, hate or indifference. I feel love towards my fellow humans, animals, birds, trees, things, Earth, and the universe in which we live, and deep in my heart I wish it was contagious. Love cannot be a replacement for politics, economics, industry, management, labor, business or even war. But people invariably have to start off from a launching pad. So far this has been predominantly selfishness, greed, creed, insensitivity, me-firstness etc. which regrettably works both at the individual and also at the international level. If this could change, then all will be happy, even those who would sacrifice their life-style.

The philosophy of love as a basic motivation is not new, but in our times most people do not embrace it. It extends across religion and race, hence the importance of reaching out and joining one another. To be in the minority is no deterrent, if the curve keeps rising. It is a human need that humanity feels. People are fed up with the old ways, and there is a spiritual thirst that yearns to be quenched. As soon as a minimal critical mass materializes, it will generate a chain reaction with a sweeping power. The world will change, but we better work on it from now on, actively and diligently.

I conclude with the Islamic greeting: Peace be upon you.