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ISLAM

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ISLAM: AN OVERVIEW [FIRST EDITION]

The root *slm* in Arabic means "to be in peace, to be an integral whole." From this root comes *islām*, meaning "to surrender to God's law and thus to be an integral whole," and *muslim*, a person who so surrenders. It is important to note that two other key terms used in the Qurʾān with high frequency have similar root meanings: *īmān* (from *amn*), "to be safe and at peace with oneself," and *taqwā* (from *wqy*), "to protect or save." These definitions give us an insight into the most fundamental religious attitude of Islam: to maintain wholeness and proper order, as the opposite of disintegration, by accepting God's law. It is in this sense that the entire universe and its content are declared by the Qurʾān to be *muslim*, that

is, endowed with order through obedience to God's law; but whereas nature obeys God's law automatically, humanity ought to obey it by choice. In keeping with this distinction, God's function is to integrate human personality, both individual and corporate: "Be not like those who forgot God, and [eventually] God caused them to forget themselves" (*sūrah* 59:19).

ORIGIN AND HISTORY. Muslims believe that Islam is God's eternal religion, described in the Qurʾān as "the primordial nature upon which God created mankind" (30:30). Further, the Qurʾān claims that the proper name *Muslim* was given by Abraham (22:78). As a historical phenomenon, however, Islam originated in Arabia in the early seventh century CE. Two broad elements should be distinguished in that immediate religious backdrop: the purely Arab background and the penetration of Judeo-Christian elements. The Qurʾān makes a disapproving reference to star worship (41:37), which is said to have come from the Babylonian star cult. For the most part, however, the bedouin were a secular people with little idea of an afterlife. At the sanctuaries (*ḥarams*) that had been established in some parts, fetishism seems to have developed into idol worship; the most important of these sites was the Kaʿbah at Mecca.

The bedouin Arabs believed in a blind fate that inescapably determined birth, sustenance (because of the precarious life conditions in the desert), and death. These Arabs also had a code of honor (called *murūwah*, or "manliness") that may be regarded as their real religious ethics; its main constituent was tribal honor—the crown of all their values—encompassing the honor of women, bravery, hospitality, honoring one's promises and pacts, and last but not least, vengeance (*thaʾr*). They believed that the ghost of a slain person would cry out from the grave until his thirst for the blood of vengeance was quenched. According to the code, it was not necessarily the killer who was slain in retaliation, but a person from among his kin equal in value to the person killed. For reasons of economics or honor, infant girls were often slain, and this practice, terminated by the Qurʾān, was regarded as having had religious sanction (6:137).

In southwestern Arabia, a rather highly sophisticated civilization had existed since the Sabian period, with a prosperous economy and agriculture. The Sabian religion was, at the beginning, a trinitarian star cult, which was replaced, in the fourth century CE, by the monotheistic cult of al-Rahman (a term that appears to have traveled north and found a prominent place in the Qurʾān, where it means "the merciful"). In the sixth century CE, Jewish and Christian ideas and formulas were adopted, with the term *al-Raḥmān* applied to the first person of the Trinity.

As for the Judeo-Christian tradition, it was not only present where Jewish and Christian populations existed (Jews in Medina—pre-Islamic Yathrib—in the south and in Khaybar in the north; Christians in the south, in Iraq, in Syria, and in certain tribes), but it had percolated in the air, generally speaking. Indeed, there had been Jewish and Christian attempts at proselytizing the Meccans, but these were unsuccessful because the Meccans wanted a new religion and scripture of their own, "whereby they would be better guided than those earlier communities" (35:42, 6:157). In the process, the Meccans had nevertheless come to know a good deal about Judeo-Christian ideas (6:92), and several people in Mecca and elsewhere had arrived at the idea of monotheism. Even so, they could not get rid of the "intermediary gods" for whom they had special cults, and there was still no cult for God, whom they called "Allāh," or "the God." In addition to these limitations, there was also a great disparity between the rich and the poor and disenfranchised in the thriving commercial community of Mecca. Both of these issues are strongly emphasized from the beginning of the Qurʾanic revelation, making it clear that the primary background of Islam is Arab rather than Judeo-Christian, although the latter tradition has strongly influenced Islam. In its genesis, Islam grew out of the problems existing in an Arab Meccan society.

Early development of the community. During a twelve-year struggle in Mecca (610–622 CE), the prophet Muḥammad had gathered a devoted group of followers, largely among the poor but also among the well-to-do merchants. Yet his movement seemed to reach an impasse because of the unflinching opposition of the mercantile aristocracy, which saw in it a threat to both of their vested interests—their Kaʿbah-centered religion, from which they benefited as custodians of the sanctuary and recipients of income from the pilgrimage, and their privileged control of trade. After Muḥammad and his followers emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 (the beginning of the lunar Islamic calendar, called the *hijrī*, or "emigration," calendar), at the invitation of the majority of the Arab inhabitants there, he became the head of both the nascent community and the existing polity. However, while he gave laws, waged peace and war, and created social institutions, he never claimed to be a ruler, a lawgiver, a judge, or a general; he referred to himself always as a messenger of God. As a result, not only were Islamic "religious" doctrine and ritual in the narrower sense regarded as Islamic but so were the state, the law, and social institutions. Islam is thus the name of a total way of life and does not merely regulate the individual's private relationship with God.

In Medina, then, the Prophet was able to institute his social reforms through the exercise of the religious and political power that he had been denied in Mecca. After three battles in which Muslims gained the upper hand over the Meccans and their allies, Islam, now in rapid ascendancy, was able to take Mecca peacefully in AH 8/630 CE along with a large part, if not the whole, of the Arabian Peninsula. In Medina, too, the Muslim community (*ummah muslimah*) was formally launched in 2/624 as the "median community," the only community consciously established by the founder of a religion for a specific purpose, as the Qurʾān speaks of those "who, when we give them power on the earth, shall establish prayers and welfare of the poor and shall command good and

forbid evil" (22:41). At the same time, the Qurʾān (22:40) provided this community with the instrument of *jihād* (utmost exertion in God's cause, including peaceful means but also cold and hot war). Finally, Mecca was declared to be the goal of annual pilgrimage for the faithful and also the direction (*qiblah*) for prayer instead of Jerusalem. Both the constitution and the anchoring of the community were complete.

After a brief lapse into tribal sovereignty following the Prophet's death, Arab resistance to the acknowledgment of Medina's central authority was broken by force. The tribesmen's energies were turned outward in conquests of neighboring lands under the banner of Islam, which provided the necessary zeal for rapid military and political expansion. Within a century after the Prophet's death, Muslim Arabs were administering an empire stretching from the southern borders of France through North Africa and the Middle East, across Central Asia and into Sind. Muslim rule in the conquered territories was generally tolerant and humane; there was no policy of converting non-Muslims to Islam. The purpose of *jihād* was not conversion but the establishment of Islamic rule. Nonetheless, partly because of certain disabilities imposed by Islamic law on non-Muslim subjects (mainly the *jizyah*, or poll tax—although they were exempt from the *zakāt*, or alms tax levied on Muslims, the *jizyah* was the heavier of the two, particularly for the lower strata of the population) and partly because of Islamic egalitarianism, Islam spread quickly after an initial period during which conversions were sometimes even discouraged. This was the first phase of the spread of Islam; later on, as we shall see, Muslim mystics, or the Ṣūfīs, were the main vehicles of Islamic expansion in India, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, although the role of traders in the Indian and Indonesian coastal areas and China must not be minimized. Even in the twentieth century, Turkish soldiers brought Islam to South Korea during the Korean War.

Several major developments in this early period affected the religious texture of the Muslim community as a continuing phenomenon. Less than half a century after the Prophet's death, political dissensions over succession led to civil war. A number of groups called the Khārijīs ("those who went out") declared war on the community at large because it tolerated rule by "unrighteous" men; they claimed that a Muslim ceased to be a Muslim by committing a reprehensible act without sincerely repenting, and that other Muslims who did not regard such a person as non-Muslim also became non-Muslim. In reaction to the Khārijīs and the ensuing civil strife, the community (both the Sunnī mainstream and the Shīʿah, or party of ʿAlī) generally adopted a religious stand that not only was tolerant of religious and political deviations from strict Islamic norms but was even positively accommodating toward them. The members of the community who took this stand were known as the Murjiʾah (from *irjāʿ*, meaning "postponement," in the sense of not judging a person's religious worth, but leaving it to God's judgment on the Last Day). The net result of this basic development was that excommunication was ruled out so long as a person recognized the community as Muslim and professed that "there is no god but God and Muḥammad is his prophet."

This formula created or rationalized accommodation for an amazing range of different religious opinions and practices under one God and Muḥammad's prophethood. Oddly enough, the only systematically rigid and illiberal school of doctrine that persecuted its opponents, after it became state creed under the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn in the first half of the ninth century, was the liberal rationalist school of the Muʿtazilah. The emergence of this school was largely the result of the impact on the Islamic religion of the wholesale translations of Greek works of science, philosophy, and medicine into Arabic on the orders of al-Maʾmūn. The Muʿtazilah tried to create necessary free space by insisting on freedom of human will and God's rational justice, but the Muslim orthodoxy, countering with doctrines of the inefficacy of human will and the absolutism of God's will and divine predeterminism, actually provided more accommodation for varying opinions and human actions and thereby halted the growth of the rationalist school.

With the advent of the Abbasids, there were other political, social, and religious changes as well, among them the improvement of the status of the Iranians, who, under Umayyad rule, were denied an identity of their own as "clients" (*mawālī*) of the Arab tribes; and the espousal and implementation of legal measures created by the religious leadership, which had been largely alienated from the Umayyads. All of these developments combined to facilitate the rapid spread of Islam.

Medieval and later developments. With the weakening of the central caliphal authority in Baghdad, the tenth century saw not only the virtual fragmentation of the Abbasid Empire and the rise of *de facto* independent rulers (sultans and emirs) in the provinces but the almost ubiquitous rise of the Shīʿah. While Baghdad came under the political and fiscal "management" of the orthodox Twelver Shīʿah through the Persian Buyid family, Egypt and North Africa came under the rule of the Ismāʿīlī Fatimids. But if the Buyids were able to influence Islamic practices in some ways—such as the observance of ʿĀshūrāʾ, the tenth of Muḥarram (the first month of the Islamic calendar) as the commemoration of the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn at the hands of the Umayyad troops—Fatimid rule, by and large, did not leave much of a trace on later Muslim thought and institutions, despite the fact that the Ismāʿīlīyah had offered a revolutionary ideology claiming to usher in a new world order through the establishment of a universal religion.

In purely religious terms, indeed, it was not so much Shiism as the rise and spread of Sufism that constituted the new and greatest challenge to Islamic orthodoxy, in terms of ideas and spiritual orientation, and indeed, it was Shiism that suffered most, in terms of following, as a result of the new movement. From modest beginnings as an expression of re-

fined piety on the part of a spiritual elite in the eighth and ninth centuries, Sufism became a mass religion from the eleventh century onward. In its origins as a deepening of the inner "life of the heart," Sufism was largely complementary to the outer "life of the law," which was the domain of the *ʿulamāʾ*, the religious scholars who functioned as custodians of the *sharīʿah* (sacred law) and never claimed to be pastors or custodians of the soul.

In its later development, however, through networks of brotherhoods that spread from the shores of the Atlantic to Southeast Asia, it practically took the place of "official" Islam, particularly in the countryside. Feeding on certain pantheistic ideas of eminent Ṣūfīs and generating latitudinarian, indeed protean, tendencies, it served to convert to Islam large populations in the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Africa, and Indonesia. A long line of orthodox Ṣūfīs, beginning in the eighth and ninth centuries and culminating in the monumental work of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), struggled hard, with a good measure of success, to bring about a synthesis that would ensure a respectable place for Ṣūfīs spirituality in the orthodox fold. After the advent of Sufism, and particularly after al-Ghazālī's success, the number of converts to Islam expanded dramatically, and the number of Shīʿah shrank equally dramatically, apparently because the demands for an inner life that Shiism had satisfied through its esoteric claims were now satisfied by Sufism.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Islam penetrated into the Malay archipelago largely through Arab traders, who went first to the coastal areas of Java and Sumatra and afterward to Malaysia. Shortly after the advent of Islam, however, these lands fell under western European domination. Because the structure of British power in Malaysia differed from Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, in that British overlordship was exercised through regional sultans whereas the Dutch ruled directly, Islam was inhibited in Indonesia: a large percentage of the population of the interior remained *abangan*s, or "nominal Muslims," whose life is still based on ancient custom (*ʿādat*) under a thin Islamic veneer. Recently, however, a large-scale thrust of islamization has changed this picture considerably. In Djakarta, for example, a little more than a dozen years ago, there were only a few cathedral mosques for Friday services, but now the number has multiplied spectacularly; indeed, there is a mosque attached to every government department. This process of "consolidation in orthodox Islam," necessitated by the initial compromises made by Ṣūfīs with local cultures, has been going on for some decades in the Indian subcontinent as well.

In Africa south of the Sahara, Islam appears to have penetrated through both traders and pilgrims. Although, as noted above, Islam spread there through the influence of Ṣūfī orders, one unique feature of African Islam seems to be the combination of Sufism with militancy, the latter acclaimed as the result of the Islamic teaching on *jihād*, although it is also congruent with the spirit of local tribalism.

Africa is the only continent where Muslims are in the majority, while in Europe, Islam now constitutes the second largest religion, mainly comprising emigrants from Muslim lands but a few Western converts as well. In North America, Muslims are said to number around two million, most of whom are emigrants from Muslim countries. But there is also in the United States a significant phenomenon of conversion among local blacks, originating in the social protest movement against white ascendancy. The earliest group, known as the Black Muslims, called itself the Nation of Islam during the lifetime of its founder, Elijah Muhammad, and was a heterodox movement. After his death in 1973 it moved closer to the rest of the Muslim community, taking the new name of American Islamic Mission and receiving financial help from oil-rich Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait. (The organization was dissolved in 1985.) There are also other numerous, though small, Afro-American Muslim groups scattered throughout the United States.

Arriving at a precise estimate of the Muslim population in China presents a serious problem. According to data collected unofficially by Chinese Muslims in 1939–1940 and extrapolations from these data in terms of population growth, Chinese Muslims might number close to one hundred million in the 1980s. The official Chinese figure given in the early sixties, however, was ten million, a figure revised to between fifteen and twenty million two decades later (religion is a factor not counted in the Chinese census). According to the 1979 United Nations statistics, the world Muslim population is just under one billion.

THE SYSTEMATIC CONTENT OF ISLAM With the rise of Islamic legal and theological thought in the eighth century CE, a framework had to be articulated within which religious developments were to be set. The most basic sources in this framework were the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet.

The Qurʾān. The God of the Qurʾān is a transcendent, powerful, and merciful being. His transcendence ensures his uniqueness and infinitude over and against all other creatures, who are necessarily characterized by finitude of being and potentialities. Hence God is all-powerful, and no creature may share in his divinity (belief in such sharing is called *shirk* and is condemned in the Qurʾān as the most heinous and unforgivable sin). This infinite power is expressed, however, through God's equally infinite mercy. The creation of the universe, the fact that there is plenitude of being, rather than emptiness of nothing, is due solely to his mercy. Particularly with reference to humanity, God's creation, sustenance, guidance (in the form of revelations given to the prophets, his messengers), and, finally, judgment, are all manifestations of his power in mercy.

God created nature by his command "Be!" In fact, for whatever God wishes to create, "He says, Be! and there it is" (36:82). But whatever God creates has an orderly nature, and that is why there is a universe rather than chaos. God puts into everything the proper "guidance" or "nature" or laws of

behavior to make each part fit into the entire pattern of the universe. "All things are measured" (e.g., 54:49), and only God is the measurer; hence he alone is the commander, and everything else is under his command. This command, which is a fact of automatic obedience in the case of nature (3:83), becomes an "ought" in the case of humans, for whom moral law replaces natural law. Nature is, therefore, a firm, well-knit machine without rupture or dislocations.

Here it is interesting and important to note that while the Qurʾān patently accepts miracles of earlier prophets (67:2–3), in response to pressure from Muḥammad's opponents for new miracles (e.g., 2:23, 10:38, 11:13), the Qurʾān insists that it is itself the Prophet's miracle, and one that cannot be equaled. As for supernatural miracles, they are out of date because they have been ineffective in the past (17:59, 6:33–35). Nature is, therefore, autonomous but not autocratic, since it did not bring itself into being. God, who brought nature into being, can destroy it as well; even so, although the Qurʾān, when speaking of the Day of Judgment, often invokes a cataclysm that strongly suggests destruction (see, for example, *sūrah* 81), in many verses it speaks instead of a radical transformation and a realignment of the factors of life (e.g., 56:60–63). Finally, the universe has been created for the benefit of human beings, and all its forces have been "subjugated" to them; of all creatures, only they have been created to serve God alone (e.g., 31:20, 22:65).

In its account of the human race, while the Qurʾān holds that humans are among the noblest of God's creatures and that Adam had indeed outstripped the angels in a competition for creative knowledge, a fact testifying to his unique intellectual qualities, it nevertheless criticizes them for their persistent moral failures, which are due to their narrow-mindedness, lack of vision, weakness, and smallness of self. All their ills are reducible to this basic deficiency, and the remedy is for them to enlarge the self and to transcend pettiness. This pettiness is often represented by the Qurʾān in economic terms, such as greed, fraud, and holding back from spending on the poor (as was the case with the Meccan traders): "If you were to possess [all] the treasures of the mercy of my lord, you would still sit on them out of fear of spending [on the needy]" (17:100). It is Satan who whispers into people's ears that they would be impoverished by spending, while God promises prosperity for such investment (2:268). Instead of establishing usurious accounts to exploit the poor, believers should establish "credit with God" (2:245, 57:11, 57:18 et al.).

In its social doctrine and legislation, the Qurʾān makes a general effort to ameliorate the condition of the weak and often abused segments of society, such as the poor, orphans, women, and slaves. People are asked to free slaves on freedom-purchasing contracts, "and if they are poor, you give them from the wealth God has bestowed upon you" (24:33). An egalitarian statement concerning males and females is made, but the husband is recognized as "one degree higher" (2:228) because he earns by his strength and expends on his wife. Polygamy is limited to four wives with the provision that "if you fear you cannot do justice [among them], marry only one" (4:3), and the further admonition that such justice is impossible "no matter how much you desire" (4:129). Kind and generous treatment of wives is repeatedly emphasized; celibacy is strongly discouraged, although not banned outright. The basic equality of all people is proclaimed and ethnic differences discounted: "O you people, we have created [all of] you from a male and a female, and we have made you into different nations and tribes [only] for the purpose of identification—otherwise, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous" (49:13).

In the economic field, the widespread practice of usury is prohibited. The *zakāt* tax is levied on the well-to-do members of the community; it was meant as a welfare tax to be spent on the poor and the needy in general, but *sūrah* 9:60, which details the distribution of *zakāt*, is so comprehensive in its scope that it covers practically all fields of social and state life. In general, fair play and justice are repeatedly advised. Detailed inheritance laws are given (4:7ff.), the main feature of which is the introduction of shares to daughters, although these shares are set at half of what sons receive. Communal affairs are to be decided through mutual consultation (*shūrā baynahum*, 42:38), a principle that has never been institutionalized in Islamic history, however.

One noteworthy feature of the moral teaching of the Qurʾān is that it describes all wrong done against anyone as "wrong done against oneself" (*ẓulm al-nafs*, as in 2:231, 11:101, 11:118). In its teaching on the Last Judgment, the Qurʾān constantly talks of "weighing the deeds" of all adult and responsible humans (101:6–11, 7:8 et al.). This doctrine of the "weight" of deeds arises out of the consideration that people normally act for the here and now; in this respect, they are like cattle: they do not take a long-range or "ultimate" (*ākhirah*) view of things: "Shall we tell you of those who are the greatest losers in terms of their deeds? Those whose whole effort has been lost [in the pursuit of] this life [i.e., the lower values of life], but they think they have performed prodigies" (18:104). The rationale of the Last Judgment is to bring out the real moral meaning, "the weight" of deeds. But whereas the Last Judgment will turn upon individual performance, the Qurʾān also speaks about a "judgment in history," which descends upon peoples, nations, and communities on the basis of their total performance and whether that performance is in accord with the teaching of the divine messages brought by their prophets: many nations have perished because of their persistence in all sorts of disobedience and moral wrong, for "God gives inheritance of the earth [only] to good people" (21:105).

The Qurʾān, therefore, declares unequivocally that God has sent his messages to *all* peoples throughout history and has left none without guidance (35:24, 13:7). These messages have been essentially the same: to reject *shirk* (associating anyone with God) and to behave according to the law of God. All messages have emanated from a single source,

the "Mother of All Books" (13:39) or the "Hidden Book" (56:78) or the "Preserved Tablet" (85:22), and although every prophet has initially come to his people and addressed them "in their tongue" (14:4), the import of all messages is universal; hence it is incumbent on all people to believe in all prophets, without "separating some from the others." For this reason the Qurʾān is severely critical of what it sees as proprietary claims upon God's guidance by Jews and Christians and rejects Jewish claims to special status in strong terms (62:6, 2:94–95, 5:18, et al.). Despite the identity of divine messages, moreover, the Qurʾān also posits some sort of development in religious consciousness and asserts that on the Last Day every community will be judged by the standards of its own book and under the witness of its own prophet(s) (4:41, 16:84, et al.). The Qurʾān protects, consummates, and transcends earlier revelations, and Muḥammad is declared to be the "seal of the prophets" (33:40).

Finally, the Qurʾān states five basic constituents of faith (*īmān*): belief in God, in angels, in revealed books, in God's messengers, and in the Last Day. Corresponding to these five items of belief, a fivefold practical doctrine was formulated very early on. These "Five Pillars" include (1) bearing witness in public at least once in one's lifetime that "There is no god but God and Muḥammad is his prophet"; (2) praying five times a day (before sunrise, early afternoon, late afternoon, immediately after sunset, and before retiring), while facing the Kaʿbah at Mecca; (3) paying *zakāt*; (4) fasting during Ramaḍān (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar year), with no eating, drinking, smoking, or sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset, when the daily fast is broken; and (5) performing the annual pilgrimage to the Kaʿbah at least once in one's adult lifetime, provided one can afford the journey and leave enough provisions for one's family.

The pilgrimage is performed during the first ten days of the last month of the Islamic year. One may perform the lesser pilgrimage (*ʿumrah*) at other times of the year, but it is not a substitute for the great pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj al-akbar*). The pilgrimage has, through the centuries, played an important role, not only in strengthening general unity in the global Muslim community but also in disseminating religious ideas both orthodox and Ṣūfī, for it provides the occasion for an annual meeting among religious leaders and scholars from different parts of the Muslim world. For the past few decades, it has also served to bring together political leaders and heads of Muslim states. In recent years, too, because of new travel facilities, the number of pilgrims has vastly increased, sometimes exceeding two million each year.

Sunnah. The word *sunnah* literally means "a well-trodden path," but it was used before Islam in reference to usage or laws of a tribe and certain norms of intertribal conduct accepted by various tribes as binding. After the rise of Islam, it was used to denote the normative behavior of the Muslim community, putatively derived from the Prophet's teaching and conduct, and from the exemplary teaching of his immediate followers, since the latter was seen as an index of the former. In the Qurʾān, there is no mention of the term *sunnah* with reference to the Prophet's extra-Qurʾanic precepts or example, but the term *uswah ḥasanah*, meaning a "good model" or "example" to be followed, is used with reference to Muḥammad's conduct as well as the conduct of Abraham and his followers (33:31, 60:4, 60:6). The term *uswah* is certainly much less rigid than *sunnah* and does not mean so much a law to be literally implemented as an example to be matched.

Even so, there is clear evidence that the concept of *sunnah* was flexible in the early decades of Islam because, with hardly any written codifications of the *sunnah* (which was used in the sense of an ongoing practice rather than fixed formulas), there was no question of literal imitation. As political, legal, and theological dissensions and disputes multiplied and all kinds of positions sought self-validation, however, the opinions of the first three generations or so were projected back onto the Prophet to obtain the necessary authority, and the phrase *sunnat al-nabī* (the *sunnah* of the Prophet) gradually took the place of the term *sunnah*.

During the second and third centuries AH, the narration and codification of the *sunnah* into *ḥadīth* was in full swing. A report that claims to convey a *sunnah* (or *sunnah*s) is called a *ḥadīth*. It is reported that while earlier people used to accept a *ḥadīth* as genuine on trust alone, after the civil wars of the late first to early second centuries AH, a *ḥadīth* was accepted only on the basis of some reliable authority. From this situation emerged the convention of the *isnād*, or the chain of guarantors of *ḥadīth*, extending from the present narrator backward to the Prophet. The *isnād* took the following form: "I, So-and-so, heard it from B, who heard it from C, who said that he heard the Prophet say so-and-so or do such-and-such." Then followed the text (*matn*) of the *ḥadīth*. A whole science called "principles of *ḥadīth*" developed in order to lay down meticulous criteria for judging the reliability of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*, and the discipline stimulated in turn a vast literature of comprehensive biographical dictionaries recording thousands of transmitters' names, their lives, character, and whether a transmitter actually met or could have met the person he claims to transmit from. The canons for criticizing transmitters were applied rigorously, and there is hardly a transmitter who has escaped criticism.

The experts on *ḥadīth* also developed canons of "rational critique" alongside the critique of the chains of transmission, but they applied the former with far less rigor than they did the latter. Although the specialists divided *ḥadīth* into several categories according to their "genuineness" and "reliability," to this day it remains the real desideratum of the science to work out and apply what is called historical criticism to the materials of *ḥadīth*. The six authoritative Sunnī collections of *ḥadīth* date from the third century AH, while the famous Shīʿī collection of al-Kulīnī, *Al-kāfī* (The Sufficient), dates from the early fourth century. In modern times, the authenticity of *ḥadīth* and hence of the recorded *sunnah* of the Prophet (although not so much the biographies of the

Prophet and historical works) has come under general attack at the hands of certain Western scholars and also of some Muslim intellectuals—and this is happening increasingly—but the *ʿulamāʾ* have strenuously resisted these attacks because a large majority of Islamic social and political institutions and laws are either based on *ḥadīth* or rationalized through it.

Law. The well-known dictum among Western Islamicists that, just as theology occupies the central place in Christianity, in Islam the central place belongs to law is essentially correct. Law was the earliest discipline to develop in Islam because the Muslims needed it to administer the huge empire they had built with such astonishing rapidity. Recent research has held that the early materials for Islamic law were largely created by administrators on the basis of *ad hoc* decisions and that, in the second stage, systematic efforts were made by jurists to "islamize" these materials and bring them under the aegis of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah*. (The content of the latter, in the form of *ḥadīth*, developed alongside this activity of islamization.) This picture is probably too simplistic, however, and it would be more correct to say that the process of subsuming administrative materials and local custom under the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* went hand in hand with the reverse process of deriving law from the Qurʾān and whatever existed by way of the *sunnah* in the light of new administrative experiences and local custom.

Although clarification of this issue requires further research, it is certain that up to the early third century AH the schools of law were averse to the large-scale use of *ḥadīth* in the formulation of law and that, in fact, some scholars explicitly warned against the rise of "peripheral *ḥadīth*" and advised the acceptance of only that *ḥadīth* that conformed to the Qurʾān. However, the need for the anchoring authority of the Prophet had become so great that in the latter half of the second century AH al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819) made a strong and subsequently successful bid for the wholesale acceptance of "reliable" *ḥadīth*—even if narrated by only one person. As a result, *ḥadīth* multiplied at a far greater rate after al-Shāfiʿī than before him. Nevertheless, the followers of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 767) continued to reject a single-chain *ḥadīth* in favor of a "sure, rational proof derived from the *sharīʿah* principles," just as the followers of Mālik (d. 795) continued to give preference to the early "practice of Medina" over *ḥadīth*.

The final framework of Islamic jurisprudence came to recognize four sources of law, two material and two formal. The first source is the text of the Qurʾān, which constitutes an absolute "decisive proof"; the second is *ḥadīth* texts, although these can vary from school to school, particularly between the Sunnī and the Twelver Shīʿī schools. In new cases, for which a "clear text" (*naṣṣ*) is not available, a jurist must make the effort *(ijtihād)* to find a correct answer himself. The instrument of *ijtihād* is analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), which consists in (1) finding a text relevant to the new case in the Qurʾān or the *ḥadīth*, (2) discerning the essential similarity or *ratio legis* (called *ʿillat al-ḥukm*) between the two cases, (3) allowing for differences (*furūq*) and determining that they can be discounted, and (4) extending or interpreting the *ratio legis* to cover the new case. This methodology, although neatly formulated in theory, became very difficult to wield in practice primarily because of the differences of opinion with regard to "relevant texts," particularly in the case of *ḥadīth*.

The fourth source or principle is called *ijmāʿ*, or consensus. Although the concept of consensus in the sense of the informal agreement of the community (for Islam has no churches and no councils to produce formal decisions) has in practice an overriding authority, since even the fact and the authenticity of a Qurʾanic revelation are finally guaranteed by it, there is no consensus on the definition of consensus: it varies from the consensus of the *ʿulamāʾ*, through that of the *ʿulamāʾ* of a certain age, to that of the entire community. There is also a difference of opinion as to whether a certain consensus can be repealed by a subsequent one or not; the reply of the traditionalists is usually, though not always, in the negative, while that of modern reformers is in the positive.

A special category of punishments called *ḥudūd* (sg., *ḥadd*) was established by jurists and includes penalties specified in the Qurʾān for certain crimes: murder, theft, adultery, and false accusation of adultery, to which was later added drunkenness. The theory is that since God himself has laid down these penalties, they cannot be varied. But in view of the severity of the punishments, the jurists defined these crimes very narrowly (adultery, for example, is defined as the penetration of the male organ into the female) and put such stringent conditions on the requisite evidence that it became practically unattainable (for example, in order to prove adultery, four eyewitnesses to the sexual act itself were required). The legal maxim "Ward off *ḥadd* punishments by any doubt" was also propounded, and the term *doubt* in classical Islamic law had a far wider range than in any other known system of law. In addition, Muslim jurists enunciated two principles to create flexibility in *sharīʿah* law and its application: necessity and public interest. The political authority, thanks to these two principles, could promulgate new measures and even suspend the operations of the *sharīʿah* law. In later medieval centuries, the Ottoman rulers and others systematically promulgated new laws by invoking these particular principles of the *sharīʿah*.

After the concrete and systematic establishment of the schools of law during the fourth and fifth centuries AH, original legal thought in Islam lost vitality; this development is known as "the closure of the door of *ijtihād*." It was not that new thinking was theoretically prohibited but rather that social, intellectual, and political conditions were unfavorable to it. However, a procedure known as *talfīq* (lit., "patchwork") was introduced whereby, if a certain provision in one legal school caused particular hardship, a more liberal provision from another could be borrowed, without necessarily taking over its reasoning. Thus, given the impracticality of the Ḥanafī school's regulation that a wife whose husband has

disappeared must wait more than ninety years before remarrying (according to the reasoning that the wife must wait until her husband can be presumed dead through natural causes), the Mālikī school's provision that such a wife may marry after four years of waiting (Mālik reasoned that the maximum period of gestation, which he had himself witnessed, was four years) was taken over in practice.

Of the four extant Sunnī schools of law, the Ḥanafī is prevalent in the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq; the Mālikī school in North Africa extends from Libya through Morocco; the Shāfiʿī, in Southeast Asia, with a considerable following in Egypt; and the Ḥanbalī school, in Saudi Arabia. Within Shīʿī jurisprudence, the Jaʿfarī (Twelver Shīʿī) school prevails in Iran. At one time, the "literalist" (Ẓāhirī) school was represented by some highly prominent jurists, but it has practically no following now, while the Khārijī school is represented in Oman, and to a limited extent in East and North Africa.

It must finally be pointed out that when we speak of Islamic law, we mean all of human behavior, including, for example, intentions. This law is therefore very different from other systems of law in the strict sense of the term. Islamic law does not draw any line between law and morality, and hence much of it is not enforceable in a court, but only at the bar of conscience. This has had its advantages in that Islamic law is shot through with moral considerations, which in turn have given a moral temper to Muslim society. But it has also suffered from the disadvantage that general moral propositions have very often not been given due weight and have been selectively construed by jurists as mere "recommendations" rather than commands that must be expressed in terms of concrete legislation: the result has been an overemphasis on the specific dos and don'ts of the Qurʾān at the expense of general propositions. For example, the Qurʾanic verse 4:3, permitting polygamy up to four wives, was given legal force by classical Muslim jurists, but the rider contained in the same verse, that if a person cannot do justice among co-wives, then he must marry only one, was regarded by them as a recommendation to the husband's conscience that he should do justice.

Theology. At an elementary level, theological speculation in Islam also began very early and was occasioned by the assassination of ʿUthmān, the third caliph (d. 665), but its rise and development was totally independent of the law, and the first great theological systems were constructed only in the third and fourth centuries AH. The first question to become the focal point of dispute was the definition of a true Muslim. The earliest political and theological schism was represented by the Khārijīs (from *khurūj*, meaning "secession"), who contended that a Muslim ceases to be a Muslim by the commission of a single serious sin such as theft or adultery, no matter how many times that person may recite the profession of faith, "There is no god but God and Muḥammad is his prophet," unless he or she repents sincerely. They held that ʿUthmān and ʿAlī (the fourth caliph) had both become *kāfir*s (non-Muslims), since the former was guilty of serious maladministration, including nepotism, and the latter had submitted his claim to rule to human arbitration, even though he had been duly elected caliph. The Khārijīs, who were exemplars of piety and utterly egalitarian, and who believed that the only qualification for rule is a person's goodness and piety, without consideration of race, color, or sex, were mostly bedouin, which largely explains both their egalitarianism and their fanaticism. They were "professional rebels" who never united but always fought successive governments in divided groups and were almost entirely crushed out of existence by the middle of the second century AH.

While the Khārijīs were not a systematic theological school, a full-fledged school, that of the Muʿtazilah, soon developed from their milieu. These thinkers, who emerged during the second and third centuries AH, held that while grave sinners do not become *kāfir*s, neither do they remain Muslims. Their central thesis concerned what they called "God's justice and unity," which they defended to its logical conclusion. God's justice demands that human beings have a free and efficacious will; only then can they be the locus of moral responsibility and deserve praise and blame here and reward and punishment in the hereafter. They carried this belief to the point of holding that just as God, in his justice, cannot punish one who does good, neither can he forgive one who does evil, for otherwise the difference between good and evil would disappear. This position certainly offended religious sensitivities, since the Qurʾān repeatedly mentions that God will forgive "whom he will" (2:284, 3:129 et al.).

For the Muʿtazilah, God plays no role in the sphere of human moral acts, except that he gives man moral support provided man does good by himself; God's activity is limited to nature. All anthropomorphic statements in the Qurʾān were interpreted by the Muʿtazilah either as metaphors or as Arabic idioms. They rejected *ḥadīth* outright because much of it was anthropomorphic and refused to base law upon it on the ground that *ḥadīth* transmission was unreliable. They further held that good and evil in terms of general principles (but not the positive religious duties) were knowable by human reason without the aid of revelation but that revelation supplied the necessary motivation for the pursuit of goodness. In conformity with this view, they believed that one must rationally ponder the purposes of the Qurʾanic ordinances, for in laying these down, God had a positive interest in furthering human well-being (*maṣlaḥah*). This presumably means that law should be rationally grounded; there is, however, no evidence that the Muʿtazilah ever attempted to work out a legal system.

On the issue of God's unity, the Muʿtazilah rejected the separation of God's attributes from his essence, for this would entail belief in a multiplicity of eternal beings, amounting to polytheism. They did not deny that God is "living," "knowing," and "willing," as divine activities, but they denied that God is "life," "knowledge," and "will," as

substantives. The development of this particular doctrine was possibly influenced by Christian discussions on the nature of the Trinity, and how and whether three hypostases could be one person, because the terms in which it is formulated are all too foreign to the milieu of pristine Islam. As a consequence of this doctrine, the Muʿtazilah also denied the eternity of the Qurʾān, the very speech of God, since they denied the substantiality of all divine attributes. When their credo was made state creed under Caliph al-Maʾmūn, they persecuted opposition religious leaders such as Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), but because of these very doctrines—denial of God's forgiveness and of the eternity of the Qurʾān—they became unpopular, and Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861) brought Sunnism back to ascendancy.

What is in fact called Sunnism means nothing more than the majority of the community; it had its content defined in large measure as a reaction to the Khārijīs and the Muʿtazilah, for Sunnī orthodoxy is but a refined and sophisticated form of that popular reaction that crystallized against these groups. There, no small role was played by popular preachers and popular piety, which had already found its way into *ḥadīth*. In doctrinal form, this reaction can be described as Murjiʾism (from *irjāʿ*, "postponement"), the belief that once adults have openly professed that there is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is his prophet, if there is no reason to suspect that they are lying, mad, or under constraint, then such people are Muslims, irrespective of whether their deeds are good or whether their beliefs quite conform to orthodoxy, and that final judgment on their status must be "postponed" until the Last Day and left to God.

In conscious opposition to the Khārijīs and the Muʿtazilah, the Murjiʾah were content with minimal knowledge of Islam and Islamic conduct on the part of a believer. On the question of free will, they leaned heavily toward predestinarianism, and some were outright predestinarians. There is evidence that the Umayyad rulers supported the Murjiʾah, apparently for their own political ends, since they were interested in discouraging questions about how they had come to power and set up a dynastic rule that abandoned the first four caliphs' model and high moral and political standards. However, it would have been impossible for these rulers to succeed if popular opinion had not swung toward the Murjiʾah, particularly in reaction against the Khārijīs.

The chief formulator of the Sunnī creed was Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935), a Muʿtazilī who later came under the influence of the traditionists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and turned the tables on his erstwhile preceptor and fellows among the Muʿtazilah. For al-Ashʿarī, people cannot produce their own actions; rather, God does, and neither man nor nature has any powers or potencies before the actual act. At the time of the act, for example, when fire actually burns, God creates a power for that particular act. Thus God creates an action, while human beings "appropriate" or "acquire" (*kasaba*) it and thereby become responsible for "their" acts. The Ashʿarī theologians are, therefore, atomists in terms of both time and space, and they reject causation and the entire idea of movement or process. God is under no obligation to do what human beings call justice; on the contrary, whatever God does is just. Justice involves reference to certain norms under which the agent works; since God has no norms to obey, there is no question of doing justice on his part. He also promised in the Qurʾān that he will reward those who do good and punish those who do evil, and this is the proper and only assurance we have of the fate of human beings; if he had chosen to do the reverse, no one could question him. It also follows that good and bad are not natural characteristics of human acts, but that acts become good or bad by God's declaration through the revelation that he has been sending since Adam, the first prophet. It is, therefore, futile to probe rationally into the purposes of divine injunctions, for these are the result of God's will.

On the question of divine attributes, al-Ashʿarī taught that these are real, although they are "neither God, nor other than God." God has an eternal attribute of "speech," which al-Ashʿarī called "psychic speech," manifested in all divinely revealed books. Although the Qurʾān as God's "psychic speech" is eternal, as something recited, written, and heard it is also created: one cannot point to a written copy of the Qurʾān or its recital and say "This is eternal."

A contemporary of al-Ashʿarī, the Central Asian theologian al-Māturīdī (d. 944), also formulated an "official" Sunnī creed and theology that in some fundamental ways was nearer to the Muʿtazilī stance. He recognized "power-before-the-act" in man and also declared good and bad to be natural and knowable by human reason. Whereas al-Ashʿarī belonged to the Shāfiʿī school of law, which was based principally on *ḥadīth*, al-Māturīdī was a member of the Ḥanafī school, which gave greater scope to reason. Yet, in subsequent centuries, the former's views almost completely eclipsed the latter's, although in the Indian subcontinent such prominent thinkers as Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) and Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762) criticized Ashʿarī theology. The reason behind this sweeping and enduring success of Ashʿarī theology seems to be the overwhelming spread of Sufism (particularly in its pantheistic form), which, in theological terms, was much more akin to Ashʿarī thought than to that of Muʿtazilah or even the Māturīdīyah, in that it sought to obliterate the human self in the all-embracing and all-effacing self of God, the most important nodal point of this conjunction being al-Ghazālī.

In the intellectual field, as we shall see, Sufism grew at the expense of theology and utilized the worldview of the Muslim philosophers. On the moral and spiritual planes, however, the powerful corroboration of theology and Sufism stimulated the vehement reaction of the jurist and theologian Ibn Taymīyah (d. 1328). Struggling all his life against popular Ṣūfī superstitions, against worship of saints and their shrines, and against Ashʿarī theology, he tried to resurrect the moral activism of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah*. He regarded the Muʿtazilī denial of God's role in human actions as an

error but considered the Ashʿarī denial of human free and effective will as extremely dangerous and, in fact, stated that pantheistic Ṣūfīs and the Ashʿarī theologians were considerably worse than not only the Muʿtazilah but even the Zoroastrians. He held that the Zoroastrians' postulation of two gods was undoubtedly an error but argued that they had been forced into this belief by the undeniable distinction between good and evil that both Ashʿarī theology and pantheistic Sufism virtually obliterated, leaving no basis for any worthwhile religion. (As we shall see, a similar argument was conducted within Sufism by a later Indian Ṣūfī, Aḥmad Sirhindī.) Ibn Taymīyah sought to solve the perennial problem of free will versus divine omnipotence by saying that the actual application of the principle of divine omnipotence occurs only in the past, while the *sharīʿah* imperatives are relevant only to the future. His teaching remained more or less dormant until the eighteenth century, when it inspired the Wahhābī religious revolution in the Arabian Peninsula.

Sufism. The mainspring of Sufism lay in the desire to cultivate the inner life and to attain a deeper, personal understanding of Islam. Among the many proposed etymologies of the word *ṣūfī*, the most credible is the one that derives it from *ṣūf*, meaning "coarse wool," a reference to the kind of garb that many Ṣūfīs wore. The first phase of this spiritual movement was definitely moral, and the works of most early Ṣūfīs, those of the second and third centuries AH, show a preoccupation with constant self-examination and close scrutiny of one's motivation.

Ṣūfī doctrine. The dialectic of the trappings and self-deception of the soul developed by Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 898) in his *Khatm al-awliyāʿ* (The seal of the saints) provides one extraordinary example of spiritual insight, but this strongly moral trend continues from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) through al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) to his pupil al-Junayd (d. 910). The essence of their doctrine is moral contrition and detachment of the mind from the "good things" of the world *(zuhd).* But from its very early times, Sufism also had a strong devotional element, as exemplified by the woman saint Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawīyah (d. 801). The goal of love of God led to the doctrine of *fanāʾ* or "annihilation" (that is, of the human self in God). There were definitely Hellenistic Christian influences at work here. But the annihilation ideal was soon amended into "survival (*baqāʾ*) after annihilation," or (re)gaining of a new self, and this formula was given different interpretations.

Most Ṣūfīs taught that, after the destruction of the human attributes (not the self), mortals acquire divine attributes (not the divine self) and "live in" them. The firm view of the orthodox and influential Ṣūfīs al-Junayd was that when a person sheds human attributes and these attributes undergo annihilation, that person comes to think that he or she has become God. But God soon gives that person the consciousness of otherness (not alienation) from God, which is extremely painful and is only somewhat relieved by God's also giving the consolation that this is the highest state attainable by human beings. Yet there were also Ṣūfīs who, most probably under the influence of Hellenistic Christianity, believed in human transubstantiation into God. In 922, al-Ḥallāj, a representative of this school, was charged with having uttered the blasphemous statement "I am God" and was crucified in Baghdad. Yet, a somewhat earlier mystic, al-Bisṭāmī (d. 874), who is said to have committed even graver blasphemies, was never touched by the law. It may be, as some contend, that the real reasons behind al-Ḥallāj's execution were political, or it may be related to the fact that al-Ḥallāj was in the capital, Baghdad, whereas al-Bisṭāmī lived in an outlying province.

This example of such divergent interpretations of a fundamental doctrine should warn us that with Sufism we are dealing with a truly protean phenomenon: not only do interpretations differ, but experiences themselves must differ as well. However, under pressure from the *ʿulamāʾ*, who refused to acknowledge any objective validity for the Ṣūfī experience, the Ṣūfīs formulated a doctrine of "spiritual stations" (*maqāmāt*) that adepts successively attained through their progressive spiritual itinerary (*sulūk*). These stations are as objectifiable as any experience can be. Although the various schools have differed in the lists of these stations, they usually enumerate them as follows: detachment from the world *(zuhd),* patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*) for whatever God gives, love (*ḥubb*), and pleasure *(riḍā)* with whatever God desires.

After the violent death of al-Ḥallāj, another important doctrine of the dialectic of Ṣūfī experience was developed by orthodox Ṣūfīs. According to this doctrine, the Ṣūfī alternates between two different types of spiritual states. One type is the experience of unity (where all multiplicity disappears) and of the inner reality. In this state the Ṣūfī is "absent" from the world and is "with God"; this is the state of "intoxication" (*sukr*). The other state, that of "sobriety" (*ṣaḥw*), occurs when the Ṣūfī "returns" to multiplicity and is "with the world." Whereas many Ṣūfīs had earlier contended that "intoxication" is superior to "sobriety" and that, therefore, the saints (*awliyāʾ*) are superior to the prophets (who are "with the world" and legislate for society), the orthodox Ṣūfīs now asserted the opposite, for the goodness of saints is limited to themselves, whereas the goodness of prophets is transitive, since they save the society as well as themselves.

On the basis of this doctrine, al-Ḥallāj's famous statement was rationalized as "one uttered in a state of intoxication" and as such not to be taken at face value. But it was al-Ghazālī who effected a meaningful and enduring synthesis of Ṣūfī "innerism" and the orthodox belief system. A follower of al-Ashʿarī in theology and of al-Shāfiʿī in law, al-Ghazālī also studied thoroughly the philosophic tradition of Ibn Sīnā (known in the West as Avicenna, d. 1037), and although he refuted its important theses bearing on religion in the famous work *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), he was influenced by it in important ways as well. He then adopted Sufism as his "way to God" and

composed his *magnum opus*, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (The Revivification of the Sciences of the Faith). His net accomplishment lies in the fact that he tried to infuse a new spiritual life into law and theology on the one hand and to instill sobriety and responsibility into Sufism on the other, for he repudiated the Ṣūfī *shaṭaḥāt* (intoxicated utterances) as meaningless.

Within a century after al-Ghazālī's death, however, a Ṣūfī doctrine based on out-and-out monism was being preached by Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240). Born in Spain and educated there and in North Africa, Ibn al-ʿArabī eventually traveled to the Muslim East; he lived for many years in Mecca, where he wrote his major work, *Al-futūḥāt al-makkīyah* (The Meccan Discoveries), and finally settled in Damascus, where he died. Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings are the high-water mark of theosophic Sufism, which goes beyond the ascetic or ecstatic Sufism of the earlier period, by laying cognitive claims to a unique, intuitive experience (known as *kashf*, "direct discovery," or *dhawq*, "taste") that was immune from error and radically different from and superior to the rational knowledge of the philosophers and the theologians.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, known as Unity of Being *(waḥdat al-wujūd),* teaches that everything is in one sense God and in another sense not-God. He holds that, given God, the transcendent, another factor that in itself is not describable "either as existent or as nonexistent" comes to play a crucial role in the unfolding of reality. This factor is neither God nor the world; it is a "third thing," but it is God with God and world with the world. It is the stuff of which both the attributes of God (for God as transcendent has no names and no attributes) and the content of the world are made. It is eternal with the eternal and temporal with the temporal; it does not exist partially and divided in things: the whole of it is God, and the whole of it is the world, and the whole of it is everything in the world. This "third thing" turns out finally to be the Perfect or Primordial Human Being (who is identified with the eternal, not the temporal, Muḥammad), in whose mirror God sees himself and who sees himself in God's mirror. This immanent God and Human Being are not only interdependent but are the obverse and converse of the same coin. There is little doubt that Ibn al-ʿArabī represents a radical humanism, a veritable apotheosis of humanity.

This monistic Sufism found certain devoted and distinguished exponents in Ibn al-ʿArabī's school, in both prose and poetry, the most illustrious and influential representative of the latter being Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), whose *Mathnavī* in Persian has been hailed as the "Qurʾān in the Persian language." Through poetry, moreover, it has had a profound and literally incalculable influence on the general intellectual culture of Islam, in terms of a liberal humanism, indeed, latitudinarianism, and among the lower strata of Islamic society even antinomianism. A striking feature of this antinomianism, where orthodoxy was unashamedly scoffed at and ridiculed for its rigidity and narrow confines, is that it was tolerated by the orthodox only when it was expressed in poetry, not in prose. Also, because of the latitude and broad range of Ṣūfī spirituality, from roughly the twelfth century to the impact of modernization in the nineteenth century, the more creative Muslim minds drifted from orthodoxy into the Ṣūfī fold, and philosophy itself, although it remained rational in its methods, became mystical in its goals.

I have already noted the severe reaction against Ṣūfī excesses on the part of Ibn Taymīyah in the fourteenth century. It may be mentioned here that for Ibn Taymīyah the ultimate distinction between good and evil is absolutely necessary for any worthwhile religion that seeks to inculcate moral responsibility, and further, that this distinction is totally dependent upon belief in pure monotheism and the equally absolute distinction between man and God. He sets little value on the formal fact that a person belongs to the Muslim community; he evaluates all human beings on the scale of monotheism. Thus, as seen above, he regards pantheistic Ṣūfīs (and, to a large extent, because of their predestinarianism, the Ashʿarīyah as well), as being equivalent to polytheists; then come the Shīʿah and Christians because both consider a human being to be a divine incarnation; and last come Zoroastrians and the Muʿtazilah, since both posit two ultimate powers.

Later, the Indian shaykh of the Naqshbandī order, Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), undertook a similar reform of Sufism from within. His massive *Maktūbāt-i Aḥmad Sirhindī* (Letters), the main vehicle of his reform, besides the training of disciples, was twice translated into Ottoman Turkish and was influential in Turkey; in the Arab Middle East, his reformist thought was carried and spread in the nineteenth century. Sirhindī, who accepts Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophical scheme at the metaphysical level, introduces a radical moral dualism at the level of God's attributes and, instead of identifying the temporal world with the stuff of divine attributes, as Ibn al-ʿArabī does, regards that world as being essentially evil, but evil that has to be transformed into good through the activity of the divine attributes. The basic error of the common Ṣūfīs, for him, is that instead of helping to transform this evil into good, as God wants to do through his attributes, they flee from it. The spiritual heights to which they think they are ascending are, therefore, a pure delusion, for the real good is this evil, "this earth," once it has been transformed. But this realization requires a constant struggle with evil, not a flight from it. It is a prophet, then, not a saint, who undertakes the real divine task, and the true test of a person's ascent to real spiritual heights is whether he or she reenters the earth in order to improve and redeem it. Despite the efforts of Ibn Taymīyah, Sirhindī, and other figures, however, Ibn al-ʿArabī's influence has been, until today, very strong in the Muslim world, not just on Sufism but on Islamic poetry as well.

Ṣūfī orders. Up to the twelfth century, Sufism was a matter of limited circles of a spiritual elite that might be aptly

described as "schools" with different spiritual techniques and even different spiritual ideologies. From the twelfth century on, however, they developed into networks of orders, involving the masses on a large scale. Systems of Ṣūfī hospices—called variously *zāwiyah*s (in Arabic), *tekkes* (in Turkish), and *khānagāh*s (in Iran and the Indian subcontinent)—where the Ṣūfī shaykh lived (usually with his family in the interior of the building) and guided his clientele, grew up from Morocco to Southeast Asia. Although in some of the hospices orthodox religious disciplines such as theology and law were taught along with Ṣūfī works, orthodox education was generally carried on in the *madrasah*s, or colleges, while only Ṣūfī works were taught in the Ṣūfī centers.

Ṣūfī orders can be divided into those that are global and those that are regional. The most global is the Qādirī order, named after ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166), with branches all over the world that are tied only loosely to the center at Baghdad. Somewhat more regional are the Suhrawardī and the Naqshbandī orders. The latter, which originated in Central Asia in the thirteenth century, formulated an explicit ideology early in its career to try to influence the rulers and their courts, with the result that they have often been politically active. One of its branches, the Khalwatīyah, played a prominent role in modernizing reform in Turkey during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Several of the Ṣūfī orders have been associated with guilds and sometimes, particularly in Ottoman Turkey, have been directly involved in social protests and political rebellions against official oppression and injustice.

Another broad and important division is that between urban and "rustic" orders. The former, particularly the Naqshbandī order and its offshoots, were refined and close to the orthodoxy of the *ʿulamāʾ*, with the result that an increasingly large number of the *ʿulamāʾ* gradually enrolled themselves in these urban Ṣūfī orders, particularly the orthodox ones. By contrast, many of the rustic orders were without discipline and law (*bī-sharʿ*), especially in the Indian subcontinent, where they were often indistinguishable from the Hindu *sādhūs* (monks). With the spread of modernization, Sufism and Ṣūfī orders have suffered greatly; in Turkey, they were suppressed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s, and their endowments were confiscated by the government. It is interesting to note, however, that since the mid-twentieth century some orders have experienced a revival in the industrial urban centers of Muslim lands, probably in reaction to the excessively materialistic outlook generated by modernization, while in Central Asia their underground networks are waging anti-Soviet activities in an organized manner. Correspondingly, in the West, several intellectuals, such as Frithjof Schuon and Martin Lings, have actively turned to Ṣūfī devotion to escape the spiritual vacuity created by their own overly materialistic culture.

Sects. There are two broad divisions within the Muslim community, the Sunnīs and the Shīʿah. The theological views and the legal schools of the Sunnīs—the majority of the community—have been dealt with above. The Shīʿī schism grew out of the claim of the Shīʿah (a word meaning "partisans," in this context "the partisans of ʿAlī") that following the Prophet, rule over Muslims belongs rightfully only to ʿAlī, Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, and to his descendants. This doctrine, known as "legitimism," was opposed to the Khārijī view that rule is open to any good Muslim on a universal basis and to the Sunnī view, which was no more than a rationalization of actual facts, that "rulers must come from the Quraysh," the Prophet's tribe, but not necessarily from his clan or house.

The Shīʿah, in early Islam, were primarily sociopolitical dissidents, sheltering under the umbrella of "the house of the Prophet" but actually representing various elements of social protest against Umayyad Arab heavy-handedness and injustices. But it was not long before they began establishing an ideological and theological base for themselves. Until well into the third century AH, Shīʿī theology was crude and materialistic: it asserted that God was a corporeal being who sat on an actual throne and created space by physical motion. Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 814?), among the best known of the early Shīʿī theologians, is reported to have said that God was "a little smaller than Mount Abū Qabīs." There were several other early Shīʿī theologians who attributed some kind of body, including a physical body, to God, but beginning in the latter half of the ninth century, Shīʿī theology was radically transformed, inheriting and asserting with increasing force the Muʿtazilī doctrine of human free will against the Sunnīs.

In the thirteenth century CE, through the work of the philosopher, theologian, and scientist Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1273), philosophy entered Shīʿī theology, a process that was further facilitated by Ṭūsī's student, the influential theologian al-Ḥillī (d. 1325). In his work on the creed, *Tajrīd al-ʿaqāʾid* (Concise Statement of the Creeds), which was subsequently commented upon by both Shīʿī and Sunnī theologians, Ṭūsī describes man as "creator of his own actions." Ṭūsī, however, rejects the philosophical thesis of the eternity of the world. Here it is interesting to compare this Shīʿī development with the Sunnī position that was articulated about three-quarters of a century earlier at the hands of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), who expanded the official Sunnī theology by incorporating into it a discussion of major philosophical themes. But whereas the Shīʿah accepted many philosophical theses into their theology, al-Rāzī and other Sunnīs after him refuted all the philosophical theses point by point, thus erecting a theology that was an exclusive alternative to philosophy. Against this background is probably to be understood the fact that while philosophy was exorcised from the curricula in the Arab world from the thirteenth century on and declined sharply in the rest of the Sunnī world, it reached its zenith in Shīʿī Iran in the seventeenth century and continues unabated until today, although many of the orthodox Shīʿah continue to oppose it.

In law, the Twelver Shīʿī school has long been recognized as valid by the Sunnīs, despite differences, the most

conspicuous being that Shīʿī law recognizes a temporary marriage that may be contracted for a fixed period—a year, a month, a week, or even a day. Among the Shīʿah, the nearest school to Sunnism, particularly in law, is that of the Zaydīyah in Yemen, whose founder Zayd ibn ʿAlī (d. 738), a brother of the fifth imam of the Shīʿah, was a theology student of the first Muʿtazilī teacher, Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 748).

But the most characteristic doctrine of the Shīʿah is their esotericism. This has a practical aspect called *taqīyah*, which means dissimulation of one's real beliefs in a generally hostile atmosphere. This doctrine, apparently adopted in early Islamic times, when the Shīʿah became a subterranean movement, as it were, in the wake of political failure, subsequently became a part of Shīʿī dogma. But in its theoretical aspect esotericism is defined by the doctrine that religion, and particularly the Qurʾān, has, besides the apparent, "external" meaning, hidden esoteric meanings that can be known only through spiritual contact with the Hidden Imam. In the early centuries of Islam, this principle of esotericism was probably unbridled and fanciful in its application, as is apparent from the ninth- to tenth-century Qurʾān commentary of al-Qummī. But as Shiism was progressively permeated by rational thought, esotericism became more systematic, even if it may often seem farfetched (as in certain philosophical interpretations of the Qurʾān). As pointed out earlier, the Ṣūfīs also patently practiced esotericism in understanding the materials of religion, particularly the Qurʾān; the ultimate common source of both Shiism and Sufism lies in Gnosticism and other comparable currents of thought, and, indeed, Ibn al-ʿArabī's interpretations are often purely the work of his uncontrolled imagination.

Beginning from about the middle of the tenth century, when the Sunnī caliph in Baghdad came under the control of the Shīʿī Buyid dynasty, there were public commemorations of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn at Karbala on the tenth of Muḥarram (ʿĀshūrāʾ). These ceremonies caused riots in Baghdad and still do so in some countries such as Pakistan and India today. The commemoration is traditionally marked by public processions in which participants lamenting the death of the Prophet's grandson beat their breasts and backs with heavy iron chains. Scenes of Ḥusayn's death are re-created in passion plays known as *taʿziyah*s, and he is eulogized in moving sermons and poetry recitals. Fed from childhood with such representational enactments of this event, a Shīʿī Muslim is likely to develop a deep sense of tragedy and injustice resulting in an ideal of martyrdom that is capable of being manipulated into outbursts of frenzied emotionalism, like the spectacular events of the Iranian Revolution.

Shīʿī subsects. In the first and second centuries of the Islamic era, Shiism served as an umbrella for all kinds of ideologies, with a general social protest orientation, and the earliest heresiographers enumerate dozens of Shīʿī sects, several with extremely heretical and antinomian views. The main surviving body, the Ithnā ʿAsharīyah, or Twelvers, number probably between fifty and sixty million people. All other sects (except the Zaydīyah of Yemen) are regarded even by the Twelvers themselves as heretical extremists (*ghulāt*). The main one among these, the Ismāʿīlīyah, or Seveners, broke with the Twelvers in a dispute over which son of the sixth imam was to be recognized as the latter's successor: the Twelvers refused to recognize the elder son, Ismaʿil, because he drank wine, while the Seveners did recognize him (thus the name Ismāʿīlī) and continue to await his return.

The Ismāʿīlīyah established a powerful and prosperous empire in North Africa and Egypt from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. Prior to this, the Ismāʿīlīyah had been an underground revolutionary movement, but once they attained political power, they settled down as part of the status quo. Since the late eleventh century, they have been divided into two branches: the Nizārīyah, commonly known by the name Assassins, who were active in Syria and Iran, and in recent years have been followers of a hereditary Aga Khan, and the Mustaʿliyah, who are mainly centered in Bombay. Ismāʿīlī philosophy, which is reflected in the *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʿ* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity), produced by a secret society in the late ninth century, is essentially based on Neoplatonic thought with influences from Gnosticism and occult sects.

The Ismāʿīlī sect, which was organized and propagated through a well-knit network of missionaries (*duʿāh*), adheres to a belief in cyclic universes: each cycle comprises seven Speakers, or Messengers, with a revelation and a law; each Speaker is followed in turn by one of the seven Silent Ones, or Imams. The last imam, when he appears, will abrogate all organized religions and their laws and will institute a new era of a universal religion. During the leadership of the third Aga Khan (d. 1957), the Ismāʿīlī community started drawing closer to the mainstream of Islam, a trend that seems to be gaining further strength at present under Karim Aga Khan's leadership: Ismāʿīlī intellectuals now describe their faith as the " Ismāʿīlī *ṭarīqah* [spiritual order] of Islam." There are other "extremist" subsects within the Shīʿah, including the Druze, Nusayriyah, and ʿAlawīyūn. Of these, the Druze are the most prominent. This sect arose in the eleventh century as a cult of the eccentric Fatimid ruler al-Ḥakīm, who mysteriously disappeared in 1021.

Later sects. In more recent times, there have been two noteworthy sectarian developments, one within Shīʿī Islam in mid-nineteenth-century Iran and the other within Sunnī Islam in late nineteenth-century India. During an anticlerical movement in Iran, a certain Muḥammad ʿAlī of Shiraz claimed to be the Bāb, or "Gate," to God. He was executed by the government under pressure from the *ʿulamāʾ* in 1850. After him, his two disciples, Subḥ-i Azal and Bahāʾ Allāh, went different ways, and the latter subsequently declared his faith to be an independent religion outside Islam. While the origin of the Bahāʾī religion was marked by strong eschatological overtones, it later developed an ideology of pacifism and internationalism and won a considerable number of converts in North America early in the twentieth century. In

Iran itself, Bābīs and Bahāʾīs are frequent targets of clerical persecution, and many of them have been executed under the Khomeini regime.

The Sunnī sect called the Aḥmadīyah arose in the 1880s when Ghulām Aḥmad of Qadiyān (a village in East Punjab) laid claim to prophethood. He claimed to be at once a "manifestation" of the prophet Muḥammad, the Second Advent of Jesus, and an avatar of Kṛṣṇa for the Hindus. It is possible that he wanted to unite various religions under his leadership. After his death, his followers constituted themselves as an independent community with an elected *khalīfah* (successor; i.e., caliph). When the first caliph died in 1911, the Aḥmadīyah split in two: the main body carried on the founder's claim to prophethood under Aḥmad's son, Bashīr al-Dīn, while the other, the Lahore group, claimed that Ghulām Aḥmad was not a prophet, nor had he claimed to be one, but rather that he was a reformer or "renovator" (*mujaddid)* of Islam. Both groups have been active with missionary zeal, particularly in Europe and America. In 1974, the National Assembly of Pakistan, where the main body had established its headquarters after the creation of the state, declared both groups to be "non-Muslim minorities."

Modernism. In the eighteenth century, against a background of general stagnation, a puritanical fundamentalist movement erupted in Arabia under Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792). The movement called for a return to the purist Islam of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* and its unadulterated monotheism, uncompromised by the popular cults of saints and their shrines. Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb married into the family of Saʿūd, a chieftain of Najd, who accepted his teaching and brought all Arabia under his ruling ideology. At the same time, in the Indian subcontinent, Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi, a highly sophisticated intellectual (said to have been a fellow student of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb during his stay in Medina), also advocated a return to pristine Islam although, unlike his Arabian contemporary, he was a Ṣūfī at a high spiritual level.

In the nineteenth century a reformist militant group called the Jihād movement arose out of Walī Allāh's school, and three more movements followed in Africa—the Sanūsī in Libya, the Fulbe in West Africa, and the Mahdists in the Sudan. Although these three movements emerged from different environments, common to all of them was a reformist thrust in terms of the recovery of the "true pristine Islam" of the Qurʾān and the Prophet, particularly emphasizing monotheism; an insistence upon *ijtihād*, that is, rejection of the blind following tradition in both theology and law in favor of an attempt to discover and formulate new solutions to Islamic problems; and finally, resort to militant methods, including the imposition of their reformist ideologies by force. In addition, these movements generally brought to the center of consciousness the necessity of social and moral reforms as such, without recourse to the rewards and punishments of the hereafter. In other words, all three were characterized by a certain positivistic orientation.

While these premodernist reform movements laid great emphasis on *ijtihād*, in practice their *ijtihād* meant that Muslims should be enabled to disengage themselves from their present "degenerate" condition and to recover pristine Islam. Also, it is a general characteristic of all fundamentalist movements that in order to "simplify" religion and make it practical, they debunk the intellectualism of the past and discourage the growth of future intellectualism. In such cases education becomes so simplified that it is virtually sterile, thus leaving little possibility for *ijtihād*. Of the fundamentalist groups I have described above, the progenitors of the Indian and Libyan movements were sophisticated and accomplished scholars, but the leaders of the other three had only a modicum of learning and were primarily activists.

Nonetheless, these movements signaled real stirrings in the soul of Islam and paved the way for the intellectual activity of the Muslim modernists—Muslims who had been exposed to Western ideas and who, by integrating certain key ones among them with the teaching of the Qurʾān, produced brilliant solutions to the crucial problems then faced by Islamic society. The influence of premodernist reformism upon the modernists is apparent from the fact that they keep the Qurʾān and the tradition of the Prophet as ultimate referents for reform while criticizing or rejecting the medieval heritage. Thus, although their individual views regarding, for example, the relationship between faith and reason differ, all of them insist on the cultivation of positive sciences, appealing to numerous verses of the Qurʾān that state that the entire universe has been made subservient to good ends of humankind and that we must study and use it.

In the political sphere, citing Qurʾān 42:38, which says that Muslims should decide all their affairs through mutual consultation (*shūrā*, actually a pre-Islamic Arab institution confirmed by the Qurʾān), the modernists contended that whereas the Qurʾān teaches democracy, the Muslims had deviated from this norm and acquiesced to autocratic rule. Similarly, on the subject of women, the modernists argued that the Qurʾān had granted equal rights to men and women (except in certain areas of economic life where the burden of earning and supporting the family is squarely laid on men), but the medieval practice of the Muslims had clearly departed from the Qurʾān and ended by depriving women of their rights. Regarding polygamy, the modernists stated that permission for polygamy (up to four wives) had been given under special conditions, with the proviso that if the husband could not do justice among his co-wives then he must marry only one wife, and that finally the Qurʾān itself had declared such justice to be impossible to attain (4:129).

Of the half-dozen most prominent names in Islamic modernism, two were *ʿulamāʾ*-trained along traditional lines: Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839–1897), a fiery activist with a magnetic personality, and his disciple, the Egyptian shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1845–1905). Three were lay intellectuals with modern education: the Turk Namik Kemal (1840–1888) and the two Indians Ameer Ali (d. 1928) and

Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877–1938), while the Indian Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), the most radical of them all in theological views, was a premodern lay-educated scholar. Yet, despite their differences and the fact that none of them, except for al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, ever met any of the others, they shared the basic tenet—*à la* premodernist reform movements—that medieval Islam had deviated on certain crucial points from the normative Islam of the Qurʾān; this argument runs through all the issues that they discuss.

However, while these modernists sought reform within their own societies, they also waged controversies with the West on the latter's understanding of Islam, and some of them, particularly Iqbāl, argued about the West's own performance on the stage of history. Iqbāl bitterly and relentlessly accused the West of cheating humanity of its basic values with the glittering mirage of its technology, of exploiting the territories it colonized in the name of spreading humanitarian values, which it itself flouted by waging internecine wars born of sheer economic savagery, and of dewomanizing the women and dilapidating the family institution in the name of progress. Iqbal was an equally strong critic of the world Muslim society, which for him represented nothing more than a vast graveyard of Islam. He called the whole world to the "true Islam" of the Qurʾān and the Prophet, a living, dynamic Islam that believed in the harnessing of the forces of history for the ethical development of mankind.

Iqbāl and others, such as the Egyptian Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), proved to belong to a transitional stage from modernism to a new attitude, perhaps best described as neofundamentalism, for unlike the fundamentalism of the premodernist reform movements, the current neofundamentalism is, in large measure, a reaction to modernism, but it has also been importantly influenced by modernism. This influence can best be seen on two major issues: first, the contention that Islam is a total way of life, including all fields of human private and public life, and is not restricted to certain religious rites such as the Five Pillars (to which the Islam of the traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ* had become practically confined); and, second, that cultivation of scientific knowledge and technology is desirable within Islam.

Besides emphasis on technology (although Iran appears to pay only lip service to science and technology), neofundamentalists have, on the one hand, oversimplified the traditionalist curriculum of Islamic studies, and, on the other, embarked upon a program of "islamization" of Western knowledge. Besides these points, the most basic factor common to the neofundamentalist phenomena is a strong assertion of Islamic identity over and against the West, an assertion that hits equally strongly at most modernist reforms, particularly on the issue of the status and role of women in society. This powerful desire to repudiate the West, therefore, leads the neofundamentalist to emphasize certain points (as a *riposte* to the modernist, who is often seen as a pure and simple westernizer) that would most distinguish Islam from the West. Besides the role of women, which is seen to lie at home, the heaviest emphasis falls on the islamization of economy through the reinstitution of *zakāt* and the abolition of bank interest (which is identified with *ribā*, or usury, prohibited by the Qurʾān). No neofundamentalist government in the Muslim world—including Iran and Pakistan—however, has been successful in implementing either of the two policies, while the Libyan leader Muʿammar al-Qadhdhāfī has declared that the modern banking institution is not covered by the Qurʾanic prohibition of *ribā*.

Neofundamentalism is by no means a uniform phenomenon. Apart from the fact that there exist, particularly in the Arab Middle East, extremist splinter groups of neofundamentalists that are strikingly reminiscent of the Khārijīs of early Islamic times, on most crucial issues, such as democracy or the nature of Islamic legislation, even the mainstream elements are sharply divided. While in Libya, for example, Muʿammar al-Qadhdhāfī has taken a most radical stand on legislation, repudiating the precepts of *ḥadīth* as its source and replacing them with the will of the people, the current rulers of Pakistan and Iran show little confidence in the will of the people. The most interesting attitude in this connection is that of the religious leaders of Iran: while almost all reformers since the mid-nineteenth century—including Shīʿī thinkers such as Ameer Ali—have insisted that there can be no theocracy in Islam since Islam has no priesthood, the Iranian religious leaders are asserting precisely the opposite, namely, that Islam does have a priesthood and that this priestly class must rule, a position expounded even prior to the Islamic Revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini, the chief ruler of Iran, in his work *Vilāyat-i faqīh* (Rule of the jurist, 1971).

Finally, the phenomenon of international Islamic conferences in modern Islam is also to be noted since, in the absence of political unity in the Muslim world, these help the cause of unity of sentiment, if not uniformity of mind. The beginnings of this phenomenon go back to the 1920s, when conferences were held in Cairo and Mecca to deliberate on the possibility of reinstituting the caliphate after Atatürk abolished it with the secularization of the Turkish state. But from the mid-1940s on, as Muslim countries gained independence from European colonial rule, the sentiment for international Muslim gatherings became progressively stronger. In the mid-1960s all the national and international private Islamic organizations became affiliated with the semi-official Saudi-sponsored Muslim World League (Rābiṭat al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī), headquartered in Mecca; the league finances Islamic causes both in the Muslim world and in Western countries, where large numbers of Muslim settlers are building mosques and Islamic centers and developing Islamic community life, including programs for education.

At the same time, since the 1969 Muslim Summit Conference held in Rabat, Morocco, an Islamic Secretariat has been set up in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, as the administrative center for the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) on the state level. Besides holding summit meetings, this organi-

zation maintains a developmental economic agenda through which interest-free development banks have been set up, financed principally by oil-rich Arab countries to help poorer Muslim countries (this is in addition to the aid given to non-Muslim countries). All these conferences, whether organized by the OIC or the World Muslim League, discuss political problems affecting the Muslim world and try to formulate a common response to them, through the United Nations and its agencies or through other channels.

Islam's attitude to other religions. According to Qurʾanic teaching divine guidance is universal, and God regards all peoples as equal. Every prophet's message, although immediately addressed to a given people, is nevertheless of universal import and must be believed by all humanity. Muḥammad himself is made to declare, "I believe in any book God may have revealed" (Qurʾān 42:15), and all Muslims are required to do likewise. This is so because God is one; the source of revelation is one, and humankind is also one. The office of prophethood is, in fact, indivisible.

Muslims, however, have, from earliest times, considered Muḥammad to be the bearer of the last and consummate revelation. Nevertheless, there is a tension within the Qurʾān itself on this issue. In keeping with its fundamental teaching that prophethood is indivisible, the Qurʾān, of course, invites Jews and Christians to Islam; it insists on the unity of religion, deplores the diversity of religions and religious communities, which it insists is based on willful neglect of truth, and denounces both Jews and Christians as "partisans, sectarians," with "each sect rejoicing in what itself has" (30:32).

On the other hand, it states that although religion is essentially one, God himself has given different "institutions and approaches" to different communities so that he might "test them in what he has given them," and that they might compete with each other in goodness (5:48), which implies that these different institutional arrangements have positive value and are somehow meant to be permanent. In fact, the Qurʾān categorically states that whether a person is a Muslim or a Jew or a Christian or a Sabian, "whosoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds, they shall have their reward with their Lord, shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they come to grief" (2:62; see also 5:69). This tension is probably to be resolved by saying that it is better, indeed incumbent upon humankind to accept Muḥammad's message, but that if they do not, then living up to their own prophetic messages will be regarded as adequate even if it does not fulfill the entire divine command.

The organization of Muslims as a community—which was inherent in the message of the Prophet—set in motion its own political and religious dynamics. The Qurʾān itself, while strongly repudiating the claims of Jewish and Christian communities to be proprietors of divine truth and guidance, frankly tells Muslims also (for example, in 47:38) that unless they fulfill the message they cannot take God for granted. Soon after the time of the Prophet, however, the community came to be regarded as infallible, and a *ḥadīth* was put into currency that the Prophet had said "My community shall never agree on an error." This development was necessitated partly by intercommunal rivalry, but largely by the internal development of law, since the doctrine of legal consensus had to be made infallible.

In his last years, the Prophet decided on the policy of forcible conversion of Arab pagans to Islam and gave religious and cultural autonomy to Jews and Christians as "people of the Book" (although Jews were driven out of Medina by Muḥammad and later from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula by ʿUmar I). Muslims had to determine for themselves the status of Zoroastrians, Hindus, and Buddhists when they conquered Iran and parts of Northwest India. It was decided that these populations were also "people of the Book" since they believed in certain scriptures, and consequently they were allowed to keep their religion and culture, like the Jews and Christians, on payment of the poll tax (*jizyah*). In contrast with their stance toward Jews and Christians however, Muslims were prohibited from having social intercourse or intermarrying with these other groups.

Indeed, when the community became an imperium, further developments took place that had little to do with the Qurʾān or the *sunnah* of the Prophet but rather were dictated by the logic of the empire itself. The law of apostasy, for example, which states that a Muslim apostate should be given three chances to repent and in the case of nonrepentance must be executed, has nothing to do with the Qurʾān, which speaks of "those who believed and then disbelieved, then once again believed and disbelieved—and then became entrenched in disbelief" (4:137; see also 3:90), thus clearly envisaging repeated conversions and apostasies without invoking any penalty in this world. It is, therefore, important to make these distinctions and to treat historic Islam not as one seamless garment but rather as a mosaic made up of different pieces.

There are numerous other laws that are the product neither of the Qurʾān nor of the Prophet's *sunnah*, but of the Islamic imperium, such as the inadmissibility of evidence of a non-Muslim against a Muslim in a criminal case. In this legal genre also falls the juristic doctrine that the world consists of three zones: the Abode of Islam (*dār al-Islām*), where Muslims rule; the Abode of Peace (*dār al-ṣulḥ*), those countries or powers with whom Muslims have peace pacts; and the Abode of War (*dār al-ḥarb*), the rest of the world. This doctrine was definitely the result of the early Islamic conquests and the initial Islamic law of war and peace resulting from them. But during the later Abbasid period, the concept of *jihād* was formulated in defensive terms, because the task then was the consolidation of the empire rather than the gaining of further territory through conquest. To this general problem also belongs the consideration advanced by several Western scholars that Islam cannot authentically be a minority religion because the presumption of political power is built into its very texture as a religion. What is true is that Islam requires a state to work out its sociopolitical ideals and

programs, but this does not mean that Muslims cannot live as a minority; indeed they have done so throughout history. The Qurʾān, in fact, envisages some sort of close cooperation between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and it invites Jews and Christians to join Muslims in such a goal: "O People of the Book! Let us come together on a platform that is common between us, that we shall serve naught save God" (3:64).

SEE ALSO African American Religions, article on Muslim Movements; Aḥmadīyah; ʿAlawīyūn; Arabian Religions; Ashʿarīyah; ʿĀshūrāʾ; Assassins; Attributes of God, article on Islamic Concepts; Bābīs; Bahāʾīs; Caliphate; Creeds, article on Islamic Creeds; Darwīsh; Domestic Observances, article on Muslim Practices; Druze; Elijah Muhammad; Eschatology, article on Islamic Eschatology; Falsafah; Folk Religion, article on Folk Islam; Free Will and Predestination, article on Islamic Concepts; God, article on God in Islam; Ḥadīth; Ḥaram and Ḥawṭah; Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Muḥammad; Iʿjāz; Ijmāʿ; Ijtihād; Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ; Imamate; Īmān and Islām; Islamic Law, articles on Personal Law and Sharīʿah; Islamic Religious Year; Islamic Studies; Jamāʿat-i Islāmī; Jihād; Kaʿbah; Kalām; Khānagāh; Khārijīs; Madhhab; Madrasah; Malcolm X; Maṣlaḥah; Modernism, article on Islamic Modernism; Mosque; Muḥammad; Muslim Brotherhood; Muʿtazilah; Nubūwah; Pilgrimage, article on Muslim Pilgrimage; Qarāmiṭah; Qiyās; Qurʾān, article on Its Role in Muslim Practice and Life; Ṣalāt; Ṣawm; Shahādah; Shiism, articles on Ismāʿīlīyah and Ithnā ʿAsharīyah; Sufism; Sunnah; Tafsīr; Taqīyah; Ṭarīqah; Taʿziyah; Ummah; Uṣūl al-Fiqh; Wahhābīyah; Worship and Devotional Life, article on Muslim Worship; Zakāt.

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FAZLUR RAHMAN (1987)
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ISLAM: AN OVERVIEW [FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS]

The "Preface" to the first edition of *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987), edited by Mircea Eliade, highlighted the "radical change of perspective" and the "impressive advances in information and understanding" that had affected religious studies and that underlined the impetus behind a new *Encyclopedia*. In his entry, "Islam: An Overview," Fazlur Rahman sought to capture and synthesize some of these changes and advances in rewriting an understanding of the Muslim strand in the religious history of humankind. His continuing influence on scholarship in the field is a testimony to his contribution to *The Encyclopedia of Religion* and to wider scholarship on Islam.

Fazlur Rahman belonged to a small group of Muslim academics who received training in two different contexts: a traditional Muslim one (primarily from his parents and also from private tutors) and a modern, Western academic experience. He became over time one of the most prominent representatives of bringing to the study of Islam a scholarly approach and to an interested world a reflection of an "enlightened" Islam. In the course of his academic life he faced open hostility from those who rejected and undermined his approach and a level of indifference or even suspicion from modern Muslim intellectuals, who having adopted a more secularized view, regarded his emphasis on the relevance of faith as misplaced.

These footnotes to the article, as it were, engage some of the issues he raised in the light of further advances, changes, and challenges in current scholarship, and also suggest additional perspectives that take into account developments in the ongoing history of Muslims and scholarly discourse in the wider academic world.

The first set of questions arises with regard to the uses and meanings of the term *Islam*. This remains a major concern of contemporary scholars and a significant topic of debate. This has highlighted the need for a clearer distinction between *Islam* understood as a defined faith tradition, that is to say as a theologically organized system of beliefs and rituals, on one hand, and the historical contexts and developments that have engaged Muslims in articulating their faith on the other. The historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson proposed a set of concepts such as *Islamdom*, *Islamicate,* and the like to differentiate various historical representations of Islam. Although Fazlur Rahman was aware of the necessity of such distinctions (he mentions the need to "treat historic Islam not as one seamless garment but rather as a mosaic made up of different pieces") the logic of his stance awaits a fuller development, precisely to avoid the kind of reductionist stance that the editors of the first edition clearly wished to avoid.

In the same article, Fazlur Rahman stated that, "Islam is . . . the name of a total way of life and does not merely regulate the individual's private relationship with God." Such a view builds on the concept of the precedent set by the Prophet to create institutions and manage the community's growth and development as a Prophet, not merely as a ruler, a lawgiver, a judge, or a military head. This interpretation, which has been supported by many modern Muslim interpreters, had been challenged by several of his contemporaries including, Ali Abderraziq, Maʾruf Rusafi, and more recently Mohamed Arkoun, among others. According to their perspectives, the kind of leadership exercised by the Prophet in his life was to be understood as an "exceptional" and historically contingent moment in history. It was much later, and very gradually, that the fusion of religion and temporal matters (including politics) was constructed, first by the invention of the title "caliph" ("successor" of the Prophet), and during the Abbasid dynasty later, with the definition