

5

The First Message

The First Message of Islam has been elaborated through specific legislation. It is the message of al-Mu'minin, who must be distinguished from al-Muslimin, though the difference between the two is only of degree and not of essence.¹ Every *mu'min* is not necessarily a *muslim*, but every *muslim* is (in the sense explained above) necessarily a *mu'min* as well.

Islam is both a beginning and an end. Ideas, as also time and place, can be considered spiral in nature. The worshiper, aspiring to the higher levels of Islam, ascends a spiritual spiral, by which after each cycle, when the beginning of the cycle is reached, a new cycle begins at a superior level. The Islamic spiral consists of seven cycles beginning with *al-islam*, followed by *al-iman*, *al-ihsan*, 'ilm *al-yaqin*, 'ilm 'ayn *al-yaqin*, 'ilm *haqq al-yaqin*, and finally, at the end of the cycle, *al-islam*.²

The people to whom the First Message of Islam was addressed are, strictly speaking, al-Mu'minin. The term *al-Muslimin*, as they are often called, may apply to them in the sense of initial Islam, but certainly not in the sense of final, ultimate, Islam.

The Qur'anic verse, "Surely, the true religion for God is Islam" (3:19) clearly refers to ultimate Islam and not Islam in its initial stage. Islam, in its initial stage, was sometimes claimed by hypocrites who embraced Islam to preserve their own lives while deeply resenting the Prophet and his Companions. Such men were tolerated because the Prophet said: "I have

1. This distinction has been discussed in the introductions to the third and fourth editions of this book.

2. On these terms see the Introduction to the Third Edition above.

been instructed to fight people until they declare that *la ilah ila-Allah* and that Mohammed is the Messenger of God, undertake the prayers, pay *zakah* (alms). Once they do they will have secured their lives and property, unless they violate the law. And I leave their sincerity to be judged by God." Islam developed between the two towns of Mecca and Medina, beginning in Mecca [around 610 A.D.]; when it failed to gain acceptance there, the Prophet migrated to Medina [in 622 A.D.], where Islam succeeded. It could not possibly have been accepted in Mecca, and so it was in fact rejected—"And these are similitudes which We set forth for mankind, but only the knowledgeable understand them." (29:43)³

It was not ultimate Islam that succeeded then, but rather Islam at the level of *al-iman*. The Qur'an itself is divided into two parts: one of *al-iman* and the other of *al-islam*, in the sense that the former was revealed in Medina, while the latter was revealed earlier in Mecca. Each class of texts has its own distinguishing features, reflecting the fact that the Medinese Qur'an pertains to the stage of *al-iman*, while the Meccan Qur'an pertains to the stage of *al-islam*. For example, those parts of the Qur'an which use the phrase "O believers," with the exception of *Surat al-Haj* (chapter 22), are Medinese, as are verses where the hypocrites are mentioned or reference is made to *jihad*.

The Meccan Qur'an, on the other hand, is distinguished by several features. For example, every chapter which mentions prostration, or opens with the alphabetical letters, is Meccan with the exception of *Surat al-Baqarah* and *al'Imran* (chapters 2 and 3), which are Medinese. Again, any chapter which uses the phrases: "O, mankind," or "O, children of Adam" is Meccan, with the exception of *Surat al-Baqarah* and *al-Nisa'* (chapters 2 and 4).

These exceptions are due to the overlap between the phases of *al-iman* and *al-islam*. As mentioned above, every *mu'min* is a *muslim* of the initial type, but not necessarily *muslim* of the ultimate type, while every *muslim* of the ultimate type is, and continues to be, a *mu'min*.

The Meccan and the Medinese texts differ, not because of the time and place of their revelation, but essentially because of the audience to whom they are addressed. The phrase "O believers" addresses a particular nation, while "O, mankind" speaks to all people. The verses "You have received a messenger from amongst yourselves who is deeply distressed by

3. The author is referring here to the notion of *hukm al-waqt*, the dictates of the time, religion's response to concrete social and economic circumstances, which is central to the author's own thesis for the evolution of Islamic law.

your suffering, cares for you, and he is tender and merciful to the believers" (9:128) in contrast to the verse "God is truly tender and merciful upon mankind" (2:143) demonstrate the different audiences to which the Qur'an speaks,⁴ that is, the difference between a *mu'min* and a *muslim*.

The hypocrites were mentioned for the first time in Medina, during the ten years of revelation, but never during the Meccan thirteen years of revelation, because there were no hypocrites in Mecca. People were either believers or nonbelievers in Mecca where, since there was no compulsion, the verses of persuasion prevailed. "Propagate the path of your Lord in wisdom and peaceable advice, and argue with them in a kind manner, your Lord is more Knowledgeable of those who stray from His path, and He is more Knowledgeable of the guided ones." (16:125) Many other verses [of the Mecca period] also require the use of peaceful persuasion.

After the migration to Medina, and the abrogation of the verses of peaceful persuasion, the verses of compulsion by the sword prevailed—for example, "And when the forbidden months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you find them and take them [captive], and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent and observe prayer and pay the *zakah*, then leave their way [free]. Surely God is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (9:5) Under this threat of violence some people had to seek refuge by concealing one view and declaring another, thereby introducing hypocrisy into the Islamic community.

The reference to *jiḥād* and the elaboration of its rules is a characteristic feature of Medinese Qur'an and needs no further explanation.

Prostration, as mentioned above, is one of the distinguishing features of the Meccan Qur'an, because prostration [genuine submission to God] is inherent in *al-islam* but not in *al-iman*. The Hadith says: "The slave is closest to his Lord when he is prostrating." The Qur'an also says: "Prostrate and draw nearer [to God]." (96:19) Prostration is an important step in developing toward a higher level of servitude [to God].

Another distinguishing Meccan feature is the opening of chapters with letters of the alphabet. Although this feature is extremely important to the essence of the Qur'an, we must limit ourselves here to discussing its relevance to the distinction between the two messages of Islam.

Fourteen letters, or half the letters of the Arabic alphabet, are used in Qur'anic chapters openings. These are used to open twenty-nine chapters

4. In the first verse tenderness and mercy are confined to the believers, while in the second verse they are conferred upon the whole of mankind.

in fourteen formations, namely: *alif lam mim*, *alif lam mim sad*, *alif lam ra'*, *alif lam mim ra*, *kaf ha' ya' 'ayn sad*, *ta' ha'*, *ta' sin mim*, *ta' sin*, *ya' sin*, *sad*, *ha' mim*, *ha' mim 'ayn sin qaf*, *qaf*, *nun*. All these formations are followed by verses indicating that they are the Qur'an. The clearest example of this is where God says in chapter 2:1–2: "*Alif lam mim*. That is the Book, without any doubt, for the guidance of the God fearing." These two verses are sometimes read while pausing at a different point, making it mean the following: "*Alif lam mim*. That is certainly the Book which contains guidance for the God fearing."⁵ This, however, is not essential here, since under both methods of reading the "Book" refers to "*Alif lam mim*."

The letters of the alphabet have developed since ancient times from extremely primitive forms, to their present form. Man's need to write and communicate preceded his need for customs regulating the daily life of society. These customs, as we explained earlier, curtailed the whims of the individual and commanded respect for certain limitations.

The need for communication and transmission of ideas was dictated by the need to live in society. Animals felt the need for communal coexistence, but only man truly achieved this, because of his ability to communicate. This was accomplished through imitating the sounds of elements and living beings, and man's upright stature and freed hands and head as well as his developed vocal chords were particularly useful in this regard. This faculty of imitation, perfected by man, was the origin of language and writing, and their further development and refinement, from their simple and naive beginnings, up to the near perfect means of the present day.

This faculty of imitation granted by God to man is also the basis of learning and perfection. In imitation there must first be absorption of the original, then harmonization of the means of imitation, that is hands, head, face or eyes—together with the mind. Such endeavors accomplish a certain coordination or unity of the mind and body. Such unification of mind and body is not yet complete, but continues to develop.

Although a need for writing emerged at about the same time as the need for spoken language, it was not as urgent. For a long time gestures sufficed. Writing started with drawings of objects and animals, or illustrations of incidents for those who had not been present. Drawing a picture of an animal was part of the hunting ritual, which also related to the

5. The slight difference in translation is intended to bring out the effect of the difference in the point of pausing. Such difference, however, does not affect the point the author is making in the text.

rituals of faith and worship. Perhaps the hunter believed he would possess the animal in hunting if he possessed its picture in his cave, believing in some type of transference between form and spirit.

The process developed in that the artist began to draw only part of the animal he wished to express, for example, the head of a bull instead of the entire body. Such refinements continued until the present letters of the alphabet emerged, after a long and slow development.

The number of letters of the alphabet varies from one language to another. These are twenty-eight in the Arabic language, beginning with *al-alif* and ending with *al-ghayn*.⁶ This makes Arabic the most perfect language in this regard, as we will explain below.

Counting underwent a similar development. It was suggested and assisted by observation of the fingers and toes. The number of ten became the basis of counting, since the process started by using the ten figures. Numbers, as we know them today, did not emerge until after a very long process of development. In fact, in ancient times the letters of the alphabet were used as numbers, that is, by the Greeks and Romans.

Such usage spread to the Arabic language, where the first nine letters came to represent the nine single numbers, with the tenth letter up to the eighteenth representing the decimals, and the nineteenth letter up to the twenty-eighth representing the hundreds. In this way the last letter of the alphabet came to correspond to the number thousand. This is why we said earlier that the Arabic language is the most perfect language, namely, because of the spiritual significance of the number "thousand." The Qur'an says, "A day with your Lord is like a thousand years according to your reckoning." (22:47) It also says: "We have brought it down in the night of Decree. What do you know of the night of Decree? The night of Decree is better than a thousand months" (97:1-3), meaning a thousand years. The Qur'an also provides: "[It is] from God, Lord of [great] ascents. The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day that is equal to fifty thousand years." (70:3-4)

The whole of the Qur'an is pyramidal in structure, with a base and a peak, and its meanings vary from the base to the peak, becoming more and more refined. At the peak the alphabetical letters are used as openings to some chapters. These letters, in turn, are also pyramidal, varying from a base to a peak.

6. This is the classical order of the Arabic alphabet, which is somewhat different from the order used in modern teaching curriculum in schools, although the letters themselves remain the same under both arrangements of their order.

Letters are of three classes: alphabetical letters, vocal letters, and intellectual letters. The alphabetical letters are the known twenty-eight letters, constituting apparent speech. Vocal letters are infinite, including what is audible as well as what is not perceivable by the senses, constituting the thoughts of the conscious. As to the intellectual letters, they are superior to everything else, being the words of God of which He said: "Say, if every sea became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if a similar amount is brought as additional supply." (18:109) These intellectual letters constitute the thoughts latent in the subconscious mind, at the heart of which lies the eternal truth, with religion on its fringes. Alphabetical, vocal, and intellectual letters are referred to in the verse: "Whether or not you speak aloud, He knows not only what is secret (*sir*), but also what is even more subtle and hidden than that." (20:7) Loud speech corresponds to alphabetical letters; *al-sir*; the secret, corresponds to the vocal letters; while the intellectual letters correspond to *sir al-sir* (secret of the conscience), expressed in the phrase "what is even more subtle than that."⁷ Some of these intellectual letters are not perceivable except by the seventh sense.⁸

Reference to these three levels is also made in the verse "Voices faded in reverence for the Gracious [God], so that you can only hear subdued murmur" (20:108), which refers to the audible and the inaudible, in other words, speech through the tongue and speech through thoughts. As to the *sir al-sir* (secret of the conscience), it is expressed in the verse, "All shall submit to the living and all-sustaining God. And he indeed has failed who holds iniquity." (20:111) Iniquity here means subtle polytheism, which is mental repression, which divides the human personality into conflicting and inconsistent conscious and subconscious.

We have already discussed repression in this book and said that it is caused by fear, and that absolute individual freedom requires freedom from fear. To achieve such freedom from any form or type of fear, it is necessary to organize the community in such a way as to secure the individual against fear of the lack of means of subsistence, oppressive authority, and intolerant public opinion. In order to avoid fear, the individual must also have a comprehensive conception of his relationship to the environment and to the essence of that environment. Only thus will the human mind be liberated from inherited fears which still persist in the subconscious.

7. On this see page 71.

8. See pages 94-95 on the sixth and seventh senses.

We have also discussed the Qur'an's reversed or inverted approach, followed by an outward progressive stage, in teaching the human being in accordance with the verse: "We shall show them Our signs in the material world and within themselves, until it becomes manifest to them that He is the Truth. . . . Is your Lord not sufficient witness upon everything?" (41:53) We said earlier that this means that the diligent worshiper endeavors to abandon offensive action, while perhaps still allowing some offensive speech, in a gradual process of improvement. The next step is to abandon offensive speech, while some evil thoughts may be tolerated at the level of the conscious mind. Aggressive thoughts must then be curbed in the conscious mind, until the purification of thought of the subconscious mind is achieved. At this point there is wholesomeness of the heart, and the ability to see in the clarity of the self the Almighty God. From that point begins the outward progressive approach in education. The diligent worshiper at this stage shall be at peace with himself, with his Lord, and with living beings and things. This is Islam at the peak to which God exhorted *al-muminin* [believers] when He said: "O believers, come into peace (*silm*) all of you, and follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy." (2:208) In this context, "peace" is Islam at its peak.

NATION OF MU'MININ

We have said that the Qur'an was divided between *al-iman* and *al-islam*, as well as being revealed in two parts as Meccan and Medinese. The Meccan Qur'an was revealed first. In other words, people were invited to adopt Islam [in the ultimate sense] first, and when they failed to do so, and it was practically demonstrated that they were below its standard, they were addressed in accordance with their abilities. This offer of the higher standard is the conclusive argument against people referred to in the verse: "And We will surely try you until We make manifest those among you who strive [for the cause of God] and those who are steadfast. And We will make known the truth about you." (47:31) This experiment and consequent practical experience is for the benefit of mankind because God's knowledge does not occur afresh (*hadith*).⁹ The phrase "those who

9. God in His comprehensive and all-preceding knowledge already knew that Islam would be rejected when first offered in Mecca, but He conducted the experiment for our sake, so that we should know with certainty. God's knowledge is ancient and external beyond time, *qadim* and not *hadith*.

strive" means major *jihad*, namely striving to control the self.¹⁰ "And those who are steadfast" refers to endurance of the state of distance from God. "And We will make known the truth about you" means to extract thoughts that are repressed in your subconscious—your *sir al-sir*.

The verses which demonstrate descent from ultimate Islam to the level of *al-iman* are numerous—for example, the verse, "O believers (*mu'minin*), fear God as He ought to be feared, and become true submitters (*muslimin*) before you die." (3:102) When the believers (*mu'minin*) said "which of us can fear God as He ought to be feared?" the Qur'an descended in another verse to the level of "Fear God as much as you can, listen and obey and pay alms, as that is good for yourselves, and those who are rid of their own selfishness are the truly successful ones." (64:16)

When the verse "Those who believe without obscuring their belief with unfairness have security, and they are truly guided" (6:82) was revealed, people found it too difficult to comply with, and they said: "O Messenger of God, which one of us is not unfair to himself?" He replied: "It is not what you mean. Did you not hear what God's true slave (Luqman) said: O son, do not disbelieve in God, such disbelief is great unfairness. The verse means disbelief." The believers were relieved because they knew that they had not disbelieved since the time they came to believe. In fact the Prophet explained the verse to them at the level of *al-mu'minin*, knowing that its explanation at the level of the *al-muslimin* was above their ability, because "unfairness" then means subtle polytheism in the sense mentioned in the verse of the *sir al-sir*. "All shall submit to the living and all-sustaining God. And he indeed has failed who holds iniquity." (20:111)

It is reported about the verse "Those who believe without obscuring their belief with unfairness have security, and they are truly guided" that the Prophet said: "I was told that I am one of them." The Prophet is not merely one of the believers (*al-mu'minin*), as he is the first of the true submitters to God (*al-muslimin*): "Say: 'My prayer and my worship and my life and my death are [all] for God the Lord of all creation. He has no partner. And so am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit (*al-muslimin*).'" (6:163)

We have said that the nation of the First Message are *al-muslimin*. While the Qur'an described *al-muslimin* at the time of Moses as the Jews, and at the time of Jesus as Christians, it describes them at the time of the First Mohamedan Message as *al-mu'minin* or "those who believed." Listen

10. Reference here is to the Hadith where the Prophet describes self-control as the primary and major *jihad* or self-exertion.

to the Qur'an: "Surely, those who believe and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians—who so believe in God and the Last Day, and do good deeds—shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear [shall come] upon them, nor shall they grieve." (2:62) Again, it says "Surely, those who have believed, and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians—who so believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds—on them [shall come] no fear, nor shall they grieve." (5:69) Another instructive verse reads: "O believers (*mu'minin*), believe in God, His Messenger, and the Book that He revealed to His Messenger, and the Book revealed previously. He who disbelieves in God, His angels, books, messengers, and the Final Day, has grossly strayed from the path." (4:136) So He calls them *mu'minin* (believers) and yet invites them to further belief, more *iman*.

The verses: "O believers (*mu'minin*), fear God as He ought to be feared, and become true submitters (*muslimin*) before you die," and "Fear God as much as you can, and listen and obey and pay alms, as that is good for yourselves, and those who are rid of their own selfishness are the truly successful ones" clearly have two different meanings—one setting an original precept and the other a subsidiary one. It is also clear that the real objective is the achievement of the original precept. When it was shown that it was impracticable to do so, it was postponed and the intermediate objective of implementing the subsidiary precept was sought. When the conditions necessary for achieving the original objective, that is to say, when both individual as well as collective human capacities are sufficiently mature, the original precept shall be restored. This is the reason why the original precepts of religion were postponed, and the subsidiary precepts were implemented [as transitional measures] as shall be explained below.

JIHAD IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original view is that a person is free until it is shown, in practice, that he or she is unable to properly discharge the duty of such freedom. Freedom is a natural right corresponding to a duty, namely, its proper exercise. Once a free person is unable to fulfill the duty of his or her freedom, such freedom shall be withdrawn under a law which is consistent with the constitution, that is, a law which reconciles the need of the individual for absolute individual freedom, and the need of the

community for total social justice. As already stated, this is the law of *al-mu'awadah* (reciprocity).

This was Islam's original and fundamental principle. The propagation of Islam began with the verses of persuasion in Mecca where the verse "Propagate the path of your Lord in wisdom and peaceable advice, and argue with them in a kind manner. Your Lord is more knowledgeable of those who stray from His path, and He is more knowledgeable of the guided ones" (16:125) and many other similar verses were revealed. This approach was continued for thirteen years, during which time much of the miraculous Qur'an was revealed, and many men, women, and children were transformed under the guidance of the new discipline. The early Muslims curtailed their own aggression against the unbelievers, endured hurt, sacrificed their comforts sincerely and self-denyingly in the cause of spreading their religion, without weakening or submitting. Their lives were the supreme expression of their religion and consisted of sincere worship, kindness, and peaceful coexistence with all other people.

God says: "I have created *jinn* (spirits) and people for no reason except that they may worship Me." (51:56) And He favored people with the mind, body, and comforts that enable them to worship Him and appreciate His Grace. He also says: "God enjoins *al-adl*, justice, *al-ihsan*, the doing of good to others, and benevolence to the next of kin, and forbids indecency, lewdness, manifest evil, and transgression. He admonishes you that you may take heed." (16:90) Again, God says "and that you slay not your children for fear of poverty—it is We who provide for you and for them—and that you approach not foul deeds, whether open or secret; and that you slay not the self, which God has forbidden save in accordance [with the demands of] justice. That is what He has enjoined upon you, that you may understand." (6:151) All this the Qur'an produced in the new religion, and the Prophet and his Companions delivered by their words and example, all to the best interest and advantage of their people.

Nevertheless, their people persisted in worshiping the stone they carved, severing relations with the next of kin, destroying life, and burying girls alive,¹¹ thereby abusing their freedom, and rendering it liable to be withdrawn. Since at that time there was no law except the sword, the sword was used to that effect [abridging freedom]. Thus,

11. In pre-Islamic days, the Arabs used to bury their daughters alive to avoid any shame they might cause to them, if taken by their enemies, and to avoid having to defend and feed them generally.

implementation shifted from the verse, "Then remind them, as you are only a reminder. You have no dominion over them" (8:21–22) to the verse "except he who shuns and disbelieves, on whom God shall inflict the greatest suffering." (88:23–24). It is as if God said, "We have granted you, Mohamed, dominion over anyone who shuns and disbelieves, so that God shall subject him to minor suffering at your hands through fighting, then God shall also subject him to the greatest suffering in hell." "It is to Us that they shall return. Then We shall hold them to account." (88:25–26) Thus the two first verses were abrogated or repealed by the two second verses. In this way, all the verses of persuasion, though they constitute the primary or original principle, were abrogated or repealed by the verses of compulsion (*jihad*). This exception was necessitated by the circumstances of the time and the inadequacy of the human capability to discharge properly the duty of freedom at that time. Hence the Prophet said: "I have been instructed to fight people until they declare that *la ilah ila-Allah*, and that Mohamed is the Messenger of God (etc.). Once they do, they will have secured their lives and property, unless they violate the law. And I leave their sincerity to be judged by God."

Some Muslim scholars believe that Islamic wars were purely defensive wars, a mistaken belief prompted by their keenness to refute claims by the Orientalists that Islam spread by means of the sword. In fact, the sword was used to curtail the abuse of freedom.

Islam used persuasion for thirteen years in propagating its clearly valid message for the individual and the community. When the addressees failed to discharge properly the duties of their freedom, they lost this freedom, and the Prophet was appointed as their guardian until they came of age. However, once they embraced the new religion and observed the sanctity of life and property, and the social claims of their kith and kin, as they had been instructed, the sword was suspended, and abuses of freedom were penalized according to new laws. Hence the development of Islamic Shari'a law, and the establishment of a new type of government.

In justifying the use of the sword, we may describe it as a surgeon's lancet and not a butcher's knife. When used with sufficient wisdom, mercy, and knowledge, it uplifted the individual and purified society. God said to this effect: "We have sent Our Messengers with the clear signs, and revealed with them the Book and the scales, so that people should maintain the fair balance, and decreed iron with much hardship and benefits to people, so that God may discover who supports Him and His Messengers sincerely. God is All-Powerful and Self-Sufficient." (57:25) "We have sent Our Messengers with the clear signs" indicates the con-

clusive proof of the validity of their messages, "and revealed with them the Book" refers to the principle that *la ilah ila-Allah*. "The scales" means the Shari'a to adjudicate between slave [man] and the Lord on the one hand, and between one slave and another on the other hand, "so that people should maintain the fair balance" that is to say, be fair in their dealings.

The part "and decreed iron with much hardship and benefits to people" signifies that We have enacted fighting with the sword in order to curtail the freedom of those who abuse it, so that the sword brings them to their senses, thereby allowing them to earn their freedom and benefit from their life. That is, of course, besides other benefits which may be derived from iron, which we need not enumerate here. The part "so that God may discover who supports Him and His Messengers sincerely" is to discover out of practical experience for man's own benefit, because fighting is hateful and difficult. In other words, the object was to see who would endure the hardship of war for the sake of God and in support of the oppressed, by maintaining the fair balance between each individual and himself, and between himself and others. "God is All-Powerful and Self-Sufficient" implies that He is so powerful that He needs no support from anyone else, and nothing can be gained from Him except through His own Grace.

What can be gained from Him in this context is victory. So the verse refers in a subtle way to another verse: "O believers, if you support [the cause of] God, He will help you and will make your steps firm." (47:7) So if you support the cause of God by supporting His Prophet in order to maintain the balance, God shall help you and give you victory over your own lower selves.¹² In other words, if you stand by the cause of God in minor *jihad* (fighting), He shall support you and give you victory in the major *jihad* (self-control) where one is helpless without God's help, and no one can give you victory except Him. To "make your steps firm" means tranquility and peace of mind, and includes, of course, physical courage in battle.

In treating ailments of the heart it is wise to begin with gentle means, and to resort to strict measures only when absolutely necessary, deferring drastic treatment to the very end. Suffering death by the sword in this life is really an aspect of suffering hell in the next life, since both are punishments for disbelief. Whoever adds to his own disbelief by inciting

12. On the superior and lower self, ignorant and intelligent selfishness, see the beginning of chapter 3.

others to disbelief or to shun the path of God must be suppressed before he takes up arms in the cause of disbelief. God says: "Those who spend their money in order to shun the path of God shall spend it, achieve only sorrow, and still be defeated. The infidels shall be gathered in hell, so that God may distinguish the bad from the good and set the bad apart and cast them all in hell. These indeed are the losers. Tell the infidels that if they repent, they shall be forgiven for what they have done, but if they persist, then they shall be dealt with as were similar people before them. Fight them to prevent chaos, and so that all religion is rendered unto God; if they give up, then God has insight in what they do." (8:36–39)

When we consider God's expression, "the infidels shall be gathered in hell, so that God may distinguish the bad from the good," we can readily appreciate that the cause of suffering is disbelief. "God has no need for your suffering if you are thankful and believing, God is all-thankful and all-knowledgeable." (4:147) The part of the above text, "Fight them to prevent chaos" means so that there will be no disbelief, its propagation, or the shunning of the path of faith. "[S]o that all religion is rendered unto God" reflects the original purpose of fighting: "Your Lord commanded [that you] worship none but Him." (17:23) This is the design which He shall accomplish regardless of the wishes of the infidels.

In another verse God says: "Fight them to prevent chaos, and in order to render religion unto God; if they desist, then there can be no hostility except against the wrongdoers." (2:193) The wrongdoers are of two levels. On one level there are those who worship other than God, and persist in doing so, while on the other level there are those who appear to submit to God in obedience, but transgress upon the rights of other people and do them injustice. The verse decrees that freedom be withdrawn from those who abuse it, such withdrawal being proportionate to the degree of abuse: for the disbelievers the law of war, and hardship of iron, while to the transgressors, the law of peace and adjudication of rights. This is the meaning of the expression "then there can be no hostility except against the wrongdoers."

Postponement from the original principles to the subsidiary principles signifies descent from the level of *al-islam* to the level of *al-iman*. This is referred to in the verse "And We have revealed to you the Reminder [the Qur'an] so that you may explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them, and that they may reflect." (16:44) The phrase "we have revealed to you the Reminder" means the whole of the Qur'an including the original principle—*al-islam*—as well as the subsidiary (*al-iman*). "So that you may explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them"

means to detail through legislation, and to explain, in various other ways, to the believers (*al-mu'minin*) what has been brought down to their level. "[T]hat they may reflect," means that perhaps such reflection, while implementing the subsidiary principle, may lead them to the original principle they were unable to implement at the beginning. Here is a subtle reference to the ascent up the various levels of Islam, starting with initial Islam, and ascending by means of clear thinking, guided speech, and sincere action: "Unto Him ascends the pure words, being elevated by good deeds." (35:10)

Thus we reach an extremely important conclusion: many aspects of the present Islamic Shari'a are not the original principles or objectives of Islam. They merely reflect a descent in accordance with the circumstances of the time and the limitations of human ability.

SLAVERY IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original principle is freedom. But the Islamic religion was revealed to a society in which slavery was an integral part of the socioeconomic order. It was also a society that was shown in practice to be incapable of properly exercising its freedom, and therefore its individual members needed guidance; hence the consequent enactment of *jihad*. In Islamic *jihad*, the Muslims first had to offer to the unbelievers the new religion. If they refused to accept it, they had the second option of paying *jizyah*¹³ and living under Muslim government, while practicing their own religion and enjoying personal security. If they also refused the option of *jizyah*, the Muslims would fight them and if victorious take some of them as slaves, thereby adding to the number of those already in slavery.

The rationale of such servitude is to be found in the principle of reciprocity (*al-mu'awadah*). If an individual is invited to become the slave of God but refuses, such refusal is symptomatic of ignorance that calls for a period of training. The individual prepares to submit voluntarily to the servitude of God by becoming the slave of another person, thereby learning obedience and humility, which are becoming of a slave. Reciprocity (*al-mu'awadah*) here rules that if a free person refuses to become the slave of God, he may be subjugated and made the slave of a slave of God, in fair and just retribution: "And whoso does an atom's weight of evil will also see it." (99:8)

13. *Jizyah* is a personal poll tax taken from *dhimmis*, mainly Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule.

In this way, circumstances and human capacities of the times necessitated propagation of Islam via methods including enslavement, a custom inherited from the more primitive pre-Islamic era. It was neither possible, nor desirable, at that point, for the law to abolish slavery by a stroke of the pen. The needs of the enslaved individuals, as well as the social and economic needs of the community, necessitated the maintenance of the system, while developing it continuously, until every enslaved person would be emancipated. Such period of development is a transitional period during which the slave learns to stand on his own, and earn his honest living within a community that had [also] learned, during the same transitional period, to dispense with the awful exploitation of the slaves in ways that abused their dignity and suppressed their human integrity, as had been their miserable lot during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance.

Islam, in fact, enacted strict regulations for slavery, specifying rights as well as duties for slaves who previously had duties and no rights. Atonement for many sins was granted in exchange for the emancipation of healthy and believing slaves. Islam also enforced any agreements between slave and master whereby the slave achieved emancipation after fulfilling certain agreed conditions, thereby achieving full citizenship. Islamic law, moreover, prescribed proper treatment for all slaves. The Prophet said: "Your slaves are your brethren whom God subjected to you, so feed them of your own food, and clothe them of the same material from which you clothe yourselves."

CAPITALISM IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original principle is the common or joint possession of property amongst the slaves of God, so that each one takes according to his needs, the basic needs of a traveler [passing through this life to the next true and lasting life]. This principle was adhered to, in an exemplary way, by the only true Muslim of the time, the Prophet. Islam, however, came to a people with no experience of this principle of sharing, understanding only the concept of private property. No government had made claims on their property, and they found it difficult even to pay *zakah* from their "own" property. The reluctance was the reason for their apostasy from Islam when the Prophet passed away.¹⁴ It is with respect to such people that God says:

14. The reference here is to some Muslims who repudiated their faith and refused to pay *zakah* upon the Prophet's death. Abu Bakr, the first *Khalifa*, or successor of the Prophet, had

This life is merely play, and amusement. If you believe and fear God, He shall reward you, and not ask you for your property. If He asked you for your property, that would expose you, as you would refuse and display your grudge and malice. Here you are being invited to spend property in the cause of God, and some of you fail to do so. He who fails to spend is withholding himself. God is Rich; it is you who are poor. If you fail, God shall replace you with other people who shall not be like you. (47:37-39)

The phrase "This life is merely play and amusement" means that it is a period of heedlessness, ignorance, and childish irresponsibility. "If you believe" in God and His Messenger, "and fear Him," by avoiding disbelief, polytheism, and major sins, "He shall reward you" for such good deeds. The phrase "[He shall] not ask you for your property" means He shall not ask you to give up everything as alms. "If He asked you for your property, that would expose you as you would refuse," means that if He asked you to give up everything, you would fail to comply with such a difficult order, "and display your grudge and malice" or express your hidden love for property, weakness of faith, and dormant polytheism. "If you fail, God shall replace you with other people who shall not be like you" is a subtle reference to the coming of the superior true submitters to God (*al-muslimin*) following *al-mu'minin*. This is the reason why current Islamic legislation regarding property does not reflect Islam's real objective, but gradually introduces Muslims, without undue hardship, to the true Islamic concept of property. Thus, *zakah* was introduced and made one of the pillars of the faith, through the grace of God.¹⁵

INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original precept is complete equality between men and women, as indicated by their equal responsibility before God in the Day of Judgment, when the scales of deeds are set. God says: "Nor does any bearer of burden bear the burden of another, no matter how overburdened, and not even of a kin. You are to warn [those] who sincerely fear God and perform the prayer. And he who pays alms (*zakah*) is cleansing

to fight and force them back into the community through what is known as *hurub al-ridah*, the apostasy wars.

15. In other words, God allowed Muslims to maintain private ownership of property and demanded payment of *zakah*, a minute proportion, as a stage in preparing them for socialism as will be explained in the next chapter.

himself, and to God [you] shall all return." (6:164) He also says: "Today each soul is rewarded for what it earned, without unfairness. Surely God is swift at reckoning." (40:17) God also says: "Every soul is pledged for what it has earned." (74:38)

But Islam was revealed at a time and to a people who went so far as to bury girls alive in fear of the disgrace if they were taken as spoils of war, or to avoid the burden of having to feed them in time of drought and famine. God describes the phenomenon: "When one is told that he has had a daughter born, his face darkens with suppressed grief. He hides himself from the people because of the bad news he has had. Shall he keep it in spite of disgrace or shall he bury it in the dust? Verily, evil is that which they judge." (16:58–59) Thus, neither society as a whole, nor women in particular, were ready for the ultimate good Islam had for women. A transitional period was necessary for both men and women individually, as well as for society as a whole to develop. Hence, the law gave women half what men had in inheritance and testimonial competence. Women had to submit to men as fathers, brothers, and husbands: "Men are guardians over women because of the advantage they have over women and because [men] spend [on women] of their wealth." (4:34) Early Islamic legislation was, in fact, a great leap forward for women, in comparison to their previous status. Nevertheless, it was far below Islam's ultimate objective.

POLYGAMY IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original precept is marriage between one man and one woman, without dowry or divorce. Prohibition of polygamy is implied in the verse "and if you fear you will not be able to do justice [among your wives] then [marry only] one" (4:3), when read with the verse, "And you cannot maintain [perfect] balance between wives, however much you may desire it." (4:129) Prohibition of divorce is also suggested in the Hadith: "The most hateful permissible thing to God is divorce." The subtle implication being that since God hates divorce, He is bound to prohibit it when that is possible and practicable. God always achieves what He wants.

Islam's rejection, on principle, of the concept of dowry was based on the fact that the dowry represents the price of a woman at a time in history when women were taken in one of three ways: as spoils of war, by kidnapping, or by purchasing them. As such, the dowry is a mark of

women's inherited insignificance that must be discontinued when women's dignity and integrity are realized through the implementation of Islam's original precept. Prior to Islam women were granted virtually no dignity or respect. Marital relationships were not based on human consideration and kindness. A man would marry as many as ten or twenty women to bear his children and work for him.

Another feature of pre-Islamic society was the fact that the number of women exceeded the number of men, since many men perished in wars. So Islam limited polygamy, but did not immediately impose monogamy, since under that system a great many women would have remained unprotected and unprovided for spinsters. Early Islam limited a man to four wives, as God says: "Marry of women as many as may be agreeable to you, two or three or four; and if you fear you will not be able to do justice [among your wives] then [marry only] one." (4:3) Then comes a subtle hint of the difficulty of maintaining fairness between wives in the verse: "And you cannot maintain [perfect] balance between wives, however much you may desire it. But incline not wholly [to one] so that you leave [the other] like [a thing] suspended. And if you are reconciled and act righteously, surely God is Most Forgiving [and] Merciful." (4:129) Thus it [Shari'a, or early Islamic legislation] descended from "perfect" justice which is required in the original religious principle, because that was premature for society as well as individual men and women. Instead, relative justice was accepted in Shari'a. The phrase "And you cannot maintain [perfect] balance between wives, however much you may desire it" continued to add: "But incline not wholly [to one] so that you leave [the other] like [a thing] suspended." In this way, the required balance was restricted to material things and did not include emotional attachment. That leniency made polygamy possible and bearable, since it was unavoidable at that stage in [mu'minin] society.

Justice in this context is limited in the same way freedom may be limited: that is, as a right, it has a corresponding duty, and anyone failing to recognize the duty is denied the right. Women at that time were too backward to be equal to men. Thus, relative justice was beneficial both for women and for society at the time. Polygamy, however, was a transitional stage leading to eventual complete equality between men and women, at which point "balance" and justice would include emotional attachment as well. In this way, the precondition of "if you fear you will not be able to do justice [among your wives]" operates to prohibit polygamy, except under certain contingencies, specified by law, and subject to the consent of the aggrieved party [the wife].

DIVORCE IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original precept is the continuity of the relationship between spouses. Thus, a man's wife is his corresponding part, the manifestation of his self outside himself. She is the totality of outward signs corresponding to the man's self in terms of the verse: "We shall show them Our signs in the material world, and within themselves, until it becomes manifest to them that He is the Truth. Is your Lord not sufficient witness upon everything?" (41:53) But we lack the insight to select our second half correctly. We are like a blind person who sits with pegs in his hands, some of which are square, others rectangular, triangular, circular, semicircular, and in other sectors of a circle, and with a surface in front of him, on which there are holes, each corresponding to one of the pegs he holds in his hands. He attempts to fit the right peg into the right hole, and succeeds once while failing to do so several times. He may even fail to fit the peg in any hole altogether. In fact, this example does not quite describe our efforts to select a spouse. A blind person in the above example is better off, and more likely to succeed, than anyone of us trying to make this choice. So, when one misses by placing a circular peg into a square hole, for example, he needs a second chance to repeat the experiment all over again. Divorce is permitted in order to give us such a second chance.

When Adam and Eve fell through sin and were expelled from paradise, they descended to earth separated, and began to look for each other: Adam looking for Eve, and Eve looking for Adam. After much search, Adam found Eve without really finding her, and Eve found Adam, without really finding him. From that day to the present, each Adam is looking for his Eve, and each Eve is looking for her Adam. The doors of misguidance are wide open, while the doors of guidance are narrow. But thanks to God, we are receiving more light every day through which the circle of misguidance is receding, while the circle of guidance is widening. The light of faith is not enough, and it was not enough for *al-mu'minin* to make the right choice. Once God completes His light and the sun of Islam arises, then there will be no mistake in the choice that needs correction through divorce, as counterparts meet and complete union is achieved, "every people shall know their drinking place." (7:160)

Marriage in Islam is an eternal relationship. Legal marriage under Shari'a is an attempt by which a man and a woman seek to achieve the relationship which used to exist between Adam and Eve, when Eve was taken out of Adam: "O people, fear your Lord Who created you from a

single Self and of it [too] He created a mate, and from the twain spread many men and women; and fear God, in Whose Name you appeal to one another, and [fear Him particularly respecting] ties of kinship. Verily, God watches over you." (4:1) Divorce recognizes man's tendency to err and learn from his mistakes. The Shari'a rule allowing divorce will be ultimately abrogated when there is no longer any need for it.

THE VEIL (AL-HIJAB) IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

Islam's original precept is *al-sufur*.¹⁶ The purpose of Islam is chastity, emanating from within men and women, and not imposed through closed doors and long robes. There is no way to achieve inner chastity, however, except through education and discipline, and this requires a transitional period when chastity is encouraged through the veil, hence the rule imposing it. The original precept is that which prevailed between Adam and Eve before they committed their first sin:

O Adam, live with your wife in Paradise, eat whatever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you become wrongdoers. The devil whispered to them in order to reveal to them what had been concealed from them of their private parts, so he said: Your Lord forbade you this tree in order to prevent you from becoming angels or immortal. He swore to them that he was giving them good advice. He thereby misled them in vanity, and once they tasted the tree, they discovered their private parts and started to cover them with leaves from Paradise. Their Lord called them: Did I not forbid you from approaching that tree, and warn you that the devil is your enemy? They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, if Thou forgive us not, and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost. He said: Descend, some of you shall be enemies for each other, and you shall settle and enjoy life on earth for awhile. He said: On it you shall live, and die, and out of it you shall come. O children of Adam, we have given you clothing and feathers to cover your private parts, but chastity emanating from the fear of God is better, all this is of the signs of God that they may remember. O children of Adam, do not allow the devil to lead you stray as he expelled your parents from Paradise, stripping them in order to show them their private parts; he

16. *Al-hijab* as required by Shari'a is the covering of all of the woman's body except her face and hands. *Al-sufur*, on the other hand, permits more exposure, provided modest and decent dress is maintained in general.

and his tribe can see you, while you cannot see them. We have made the devils friends for those who do not believe. (7:19–27)

The phrase “in order to reveal to them” means to show them “what has been concealed from them,” through clothing of light,¹⁷ “of their private parts.” The phrase “he thereby misled them in vanity” means he advised them in falsehood until they committed sin. Once they fell, “they discovered their private parts, and started to cover them with leaves from Paradise,” that is, they began to cover their private parts with fig leaves. From that day began the veil (*al-hijab*). It is therefore the consequence of sin, and shall accompany it until they vanish together, God willing. The verse, “O children of Adam, we have given you clothing and feathers to cover your private parts” signifies that We have created for you, and imposed upon you, the weaving of cotton, wool, and other material to cover your private parts. The phrase “chastity from fear of God is better” implies the clothing of true belief (*tawhid*), chastity, and modesty implanted into your hearts is better than clothing of cotton. But “all this is of the signs of God” means that cotton clothing is one of the signs of God and His wisdom of legislation “so that they may remember” the state of cleanliness, innocence, and chastity they had, before committing sin, and return to it. The last verse clearly demonstrates our argument with respect to *al-hijab*.

Al-sufur is an original principle in Islam, because it is consistent with the original principle of freedom. As stated above, the original principle in Islam is that everyone is free until he or she abuses his freedom, when that freedom is withdrawn according to a law that is consistent with the constitution, as explained above.

One can see the wisdom of *al-hijab* in the verse: “And such of your women as are guilty of [any] flagrant impropriety, call to witness four of you against them; and if they bear witness, then confine them to the house until death overtakes them or God opens for them some other way.” (4:15) When there is sufficient evidence of misconduct short of adultery, calling for the penalty (*hadd*) of fornication, then a woman’s freedom is withdrawn by denying her *al-sufur*; and she is held at home until she dies, unless she has clearly benefitted from her confinement and begins to behave well, that is, would no longer abuse her freedom of *al-sufur*.

Al-hijab is therefore a rational penalty for the abuse of freedom of *al-sufur*. This is the original principle in Islam. *Al-hijab*, as practiced at

17. That is to say, unawareness due to fundamental and original innocence.

present, is a continuing abrogation of the freedom of *al-sufur*, designed by Shari'a to be a safeguard for the immature believers (*al-mu'minin*). Only true submitters (*al-muslimin*) can shoulder the responsibility of *al-sufur*, hence they are not subject to *al-hijab*.

SEGREGATION OF MEN FROM WOMEN IS NOT AN ORIGINAL PRECEPT IN ISLAM

What may be said of *al-sufur* applies to desegregation or mixing between men and women. The original precept in Islam is the desegregated community of men and women, which is at the same time free from the permissiveness that afflicts present-day desegregated societies.

These examples demonstrate the divergence between the primary and subsidiary precepts of Islam, and that the First Message lowered the standards of the Second Message, in order to suit the times and serve its society. It [the First Message] takes account of human weaknesses and limited capacities, and was undeniably necessary in early Islam.

6

The Second Message of Islam

The Second Message is Islam. The Prophet himself imparted this Second Message without elaboration or detail, except for such overlaps between the First Message and the Second Message as *'ibadat* and *hudud* [worship practices and the specified penalties]. God says: "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My grace upon you, and sanctioned Islam as your religion." (5:3) That day was the day of *'arafah* on *hajjat al-wada'* (the farewell pilgrimage) of the eighth year of *hijrah*, which was a Friday. This verse is the last verse of the Qur'an to be revealed, and is the ultimate word of the Divine Message.

God has accepted Islam for mankind so that we may accept it, because anything that is not initiated by Him cannot be undertaken by us. God says: "Then He forgave them in order that they may repent." (9:118)¹

Many people considered the phrase "Today I have perfected your religion for you" as implying that Islam itself has been fully achieved by mankind on earth on that day. The verse: "And We have revealed to you the Reminder [the Qur'an] so that you may explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them" (16:44) was also taken to mean that the Qur'an has already been finally and conclusively explained. Nothing, however, is further from the truth than this view. "Explanation" of the Qur'an has been only in terms of [expedient] legislation, the Shari'a, and interpretation to the extent appropriate for the time of such explanation

1. That is to say, people's repentance is initiated by God before it can be undertaken by them.

and in accordance with the capacity of the audience and the abilities of the people.

The Qur'an can never be finally and conclusively explained. Islam, too, can never be concluded. Progress in it is eternal: "Surely, the [true] religion with God is Islam." (3:19) "With God" [is eternal] beyond time and space. Progress into Islam by means of the Qur'an is progress towards God in infinitude (*al-ittlaq*). As such it has not been, and can never be, fully and conclusively explained. It is its revelation into *al-mashaf* [Arabic text] as a Book that has been concluded, but its explanation has not.

This is how one should understand the difference between "revealed" and "explain" in the verse "And we have revealed to you the Reminder [the Qur'an] so that you may explain to mankind that which has been sent down to them, and they may reflect." According to the prevailing understanding of Muslim scholars, the two notions are synonymous, while in fact they are not. The level of understanding in the phrase "that which has been sent down to them" does not refer to the whole of the Qur'an but only to the part subject to explanation, namely the First Message, and sections where the First and the Second Messages overlap.

The Qur'an was revealed with dual meanings. God says in this connection: "God has revealed the best speech in a Book of similar and dual meanings, from which the skin of those who fear their Lord creeps! Then their skin and hearts soften to *al-dhikr* [remembrance through worship of God]. That is the guidance of God with which He guides whomsoever He wishes, and he whom God misguided has no other guide." (30:23) The word "similar" implies that there is some similarity between the Qur'an at its base and at its peak, its front and back. Its *zahir* and *batin*, "dual meanings," refer to its two levels of meaning: a distant meaning with the Lord, and a nearer meaning that has come down to the slave [of God].

The whole of the Qur'an is of dual meanings: every verse and word and even every letter has a dual meaning. The reason for this is that the Qur'an is the Lord's speech to His slave. The similarity in the Qur'an is due to the similarity between the Lord and the slave, expressed by the Prophet in the Hadith, "God has created Adam [man] after His Own image." God expresses the same meaning in the verse: "O people, fear your Lord, Who has created you from a single Self." (4:1) That "single Self" means His Own Blessed and Exalted Self.

The word *Islam*, for example, has a near meaning exposed by the Qur'an in the verse, "The Bedouins said *amunna* [we believe], tell them you have not believed, but say *asslummna* [we submit] and *al-'iman* [true

belief] did not enter your hearts yet.” (40:14) This is what we termed initial Islam which, we said, is not taken by God as significant. Islam has a further meaning which lies with God in infinity. To this further meaning comes the reference in the verse: “Oh believers [*mu'minin*], fear God as He ought to be feared and become true submitters [*muslimin*] before you die.” (3:102)

It goes without saying that no one fears God as He ought to be feared except God Himself. This is, therefore, a methodology of ascent to God through many levels of servitude, humility, and submission. Servitude is infinite, just like Lordship. Absolute servitude to God requires absolute knowledge of God, and this only God can achieve. “Say no one knows what is in heaven and earth, the Unknown, except God.” (27:65) The Unknown here means God Himself, so it is as if He said, “No one knows God except God Himself.” In our book *Rasalat al-Salah*, which may be consulted in this context, we have shown how servitude [to God] is freedom.

Islam is a method of ascent to servitude, and the Qur'an is the Book which leads the way. This quality of the Qur'an is the reason it was revealed, as indicated in the verse, “And, indeed, We rendered the Qur'an for the sake of *al-dhikr*, remembrance through worship, is there anyone who would take heed?” (54:17) The Qur'an reminds us of servitude which we have accepted and then forgotten:

And [remember] when thy Lord brought forth from Adam's children—out of their loins—their offspring and made them bear witness against their own selves saying, “Am I not your Lord?” They said: “Yes, we admit this.” [This He did] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “we were surely unaware of this.” Or [lest] you should say, [it was] only our fathers [who] associated co-partners [with God] in the past and we were merely a generation after them. Will Thou then destroy us for what those, who lied, did? And thus do We make clear the Signs, [that they may be admonished] and that they may return [to God]. (7:172–74)

So that they may return to God in servitude and submission, through Islam.

As the Qur'an is the methodology of ascent to God, “We said: Go forth hence, all of you. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them [shall come] no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (2:38) Since the Qur'an is that guidance, then it has its

beginning with God, and its end with us. If we proceed properly through its levels, we shall recover the paradise we lost through the sin of Adam, and ascend into infinity (*al-itlaq*). God said of the Qur'an: "*Alif lam min.*" That is certainly the Book which contains guidance for the God fearing." (2:1-2) Of those who fear God who are guided by the Qur'an, He said: "Those who fear God are in paradise, and a river, on a seat of truth, with the Most Able King." (54:54) These are levels or grades, beginning with paradise, then the river, then the seat of truth, and finally with the Most Able King in infinity. Such levels vary from physical paradise—which is the paradise lost through sin, to the Absolute in His *itlaq*. The Qur'an guides to all this, hence it is inexhaustable: "Say, if every sea became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if a similar amount is brought as additional supply." (18:109) For this reason it is false to assert that the Qur'an may be finally and conclusively explained. The Qur'an is God's *dhat* [Self or Soul] which has descended, out of pure grace, to levels comprehensible by the slaves, thereby becoming the Qur'an in its various levels of descent: *al-dhikr*, *al-Qur'an*, and *al-furqan*.² *Al-furqan* was the most effective form of Arabic expression to indicate the two levels of *al-Qur'an* and *al-dhikr*. The Qur'an was rendered into the form of Arabic expression so that we might understand-from God. God says in this respect: "We have rendered it into Arabic so that you may understand." (43:3) This verse and other similar verses have misled many Muslim scholars into believing that the Qur'an itself is Arabic, in the sense that its meanings may be exhaustively understood through the Arabic language. It is not so, as we have explained when discussing Qur'anic chapters starting with letters of the alphabet, above.

Being so supreme, Islam has never been achieved by any nation up to the present day. The nation of muslimin has not yet come. It is expected to come, however, in the future of humanity. Its day of emergence shall be the day of the ultimate pilgrimage, the day when the Divine statement "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My grace upon you, and sanctioned Islam as your religion" (5:3) is realized in practice.

Mohamed, in his time, was the pioneer of the muslimin to come. It was as if he came to his nation, the nation of the *mu'minin* from the future. He was not one of them, as he was the only Muslim amongst them. "Say: My prayer and my worship and my life and my death are [all]

2. These terms refer to the Qur'an at different levels of knowledge and understanding of the truth in its *batin*, beyond the superficial *zahir* meaning of the text.

for God the Lord of all creation. He has no partner. And so am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit [*al-muslimin*]." (6:163) Abu Bakr, the second best man, was the most superior of all the believers (*al-mu'minin*), yet there was a huge gap between him and the Prophet. It was to future *al-muslimin* that the Prophet referred, when he said:

"How I long for my brothers who have not come yet." And Abu Bakr said: "Are we not your brothers, O Messenger of God?" He replied: "No, you are my Companions!" Then he said again: "How I long for my brothers who have not come yet!" Then Abu Bakr said: "Are we not your brothers, O Messenger for God?" He said: "No, you are my companions!" Then He said for the third time: "How I long for my brothers who have not come yet!" They asked: "Who are your brothers, O Messenger of God?" He said: "A people who come at the end of time, of whom the active one shall have seventy times as much reward as you have." They asked: "Seventy times as much as we have or they have?" He replied: "As you have." They asked: "Why?" He replied: "Because you find assistance in doing good, and they find no assistance."

THE MUSLIMS (AL-MUSLIMIN)

The Muslims, as a nation, have not yet come, but the Prophet prophesied their coming, towards the end of time, when circumstances are suitable, and God's promise is fulfilled: "And he who seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers." (3:85) On that day all people shall embrace religion and find no alternative, because religion provides the only answers.

We believe that the earth is preparing for the emergence of the Islamic Shari'a of the true submitters (*al-muslimin*), which shall establish the new civilization. In view of the bankruptcy of contemporary social philosophies, there is no alternative. As stated at the outset of this book, the whole of humanity today is in an ideological wilderness, with Western civilization lost and bankrupt,³ and with issues of democracy, socialism, and individual freedom persistently demanding answers. Yet there is no answer except through the cross-fertilization of Western civilization, or to be more precise, Western material progress, with a new spirit, namely, the

3. As indicated above, the author includes both the Marxist and liberal traditions when he refers to Western civilization.

spirit of Islam. Islam appears to be the only ideology capable of resolving the existing conflict between the individual and the community and between the individual and the universe, as we have already demonstrated.

We should not confuse the name *Muslims* with the traditional name given to the present nation. We have already stated that the present nation derives its name from the initial Islam. Actually, present Muslim society is the nation of the *al-mu'minin* [believers]. No nation up to now has deserved the name *al-muslimin*. Any mention of Islam with respect to previous nations refers merely to initial Islam, except for the pioneers of humanity who achieved ultimate Islam, or rather a degree of the ultimate Islam, as the ultimate Islam can never be exhaustively achieved. Such pioneers are, therefore, the pioneers of the nation of *al-muslimin* which has not come yet. God says in this connection:

And [remember the time] when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House [praying]: "Our Lord, accept [this] from us for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Our Lord, make both of us submissive to Thee and make of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning [with compassion, and art] Merciful. And, Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise." And who will turn away from the religion of Abraham but he who makes a fool of himself. Him did We choose in this world, and in the next he will surely be among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, "Submit," he said, "I [hereby] submit to the Lord of the worlds." The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons,—and Jacob [also—saying] "O my sons, truly God has chosen this religion for you; so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of complete submission" Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons, "What will you worship after me?" They answered, "We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves." (2: 127–33)

The phrase "Our Lord, make both of us submissive to Thee" refers to ultimate Islam, and they [Abraham and Ishmael] were in fact *muslimin* [in this sense of ultimate Islam]. But the phrase "and make of our offspring a people submissive to Thee" indicates, in the short run, a Muslim nation in the sense of initial Islam, which shall evolve and develop into the ultimate Islam. Their prayers have been answered. Abraham advised his

sons that there is no god except God, *la ilah ila-Allah*, and so did Jacob: "O my sons, truly God has chosen this religion for you; so let not death overtake you except when you are in a state of complete submission"—that is to say, remain holding fast to the creed and maintain that *la ilah ila Allah* until your death. Their answer, "we will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves," refers to the initial Islam.

God also said: "As I inspired the disciples [of Christ] to believe in Me, and in My Messengers, they said: We do believe, and You shall bear witness that we have submitted (*muslimin*)." (5:111) Their Islam here is synonymous with *al-'iman* [faith], as required in the revelation. God in the revelation required them to believe. When they did believe and declared this, they thought that their *'iman* was Islam, so they said: "You shall bear witness that we have submitted (*muslimin*)." A knowledgeable person can hear the Lord replying: "Do not say we have surrendered, but say we believe." They had not surrendered in the sense of the ultimate Islam. They merely surrendered in the sense of the initial Islam.

The disciples were Muslims in the sense of initial Islam, since even the first stage of ultimate Islam requires moving out of the law for the community as a whole, and entering upon *Shari'a fardiyah*, the law for the individual. Individuality is achieved only after perfect compliance with the law for the community, until one is able to properly exercise his absolute individual freedom. The ultimate Islam is the level of individualities.

Individuality cannot be achieved by anyone who is divided within himself. When the conscious mind is no longer in conflict with the subconscious, unity of being is attained, and this is characterized by wholesomeness of the heart, clarity of thought, and beauty of body, thereby realizing a full and comprehensive intellectual and emotional life. "The next life is the ultimate life if they only know." (29:64) Ultimate life, free from defects, disease and death, indeed the opposite of death.

To restore unity to one's being is for an individual to think as he wishes, speak what he thinks, and act according to his speech. This is the objective of Islam: "O believers, why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful to God that you say what you do not do." (61:2-3)

THE GOOD SOCIETY

This superior state can only be reached through a two-fold method: first, the good society, and secondly, the scientific educational method to

be adopted by the individual in order to liberate himself from inherited fear.

The good society is one that is based on three equalities: economic equality, today known as socialism, or the sharing of wealth; political equality or democracy, or sharing in political decisions which affect daily life; and social equality which, to some extent, results from socialism and democracy, and is characterized by a lack of social classes and discrimination based on color, faith, race, or sex. In the good society, people are judged according to their intellectual and moral character, as reflected in their public and private lives and demonstrated in the spirit of public service at all times and through every means. Social equality aims at removing social classes and differences between urban and rural life by providing equal opportunities for cultural refinement. The criterion of social equality is that marriage [the most fundamental and intimate relation] is possible between any man and any woman. This is the accurate test of social equality.

A good society also enjoys tolerant public opinion, permitting different life-styles and manners, as long as these are beneficial to society.

Public opinion has its own judgments over and above those of the law and may be more effective than legislation itself in deterring deviants and offenders. Public opinion may, of course, condemn any type of conduct it disapproves, but it must always do so only by nonviolent means, since violence usually results in one of two evil responses: counterviolence or hypocrisy. Sometimes public opinion can be enacted as legislation if this is consistent with the constitution as described above [that is, legislation that reconciles the individual need for absolute individual freedom and society's need for complete social justice].

ECONOMIC EQUALITY: SOCIALISM

There is no room here for detailed examination of socialism, and we propose to expand this theme in a book entitled *Islam is Democratic and Socialist*.⁴

Socialism means that people share the wealth of the earth. Since society began, socialism developed along with capitalism. Capitalism, or individual ownership, was for a long while the basis of society, and

4. This book, to which the author refers several times in this chapter, was never written and published as such. The author did, however, cover this subject in numerous essays and public lectures, some of which have been published in book form in Arabic.

evolved until it reached its present level. Socialism developed in a similar manner, but at a much slower pace, because capitalism is a natural prelude to socialism. Again, socialism derives from the rule of law that safeguards the rights of the weak, while capitalism derives from the law of the jungle, of the dominance of the strong. Naturally, the law of the jungle precedes the law of justice and compassion.

Socialism, in its most primitive form, began as the envy felt by the "have nots" towards the "haves." Possession of, for example, light, strong, and sharp stone tools or weapons, a spacious and secure cave, or a beautiful, loving, obedient, and healthy wife prompted the historic struggle between the "haves" and the "have nots." This struggle will continue until there is absolute equality between all individuals in sharing of the wealth of the earth.

Before scientific socialism appeared on the scene, primitive socialism already organized a sharing of certain types of common wealth. As it was expressed by the Prophet, "People are partners in three things: water, pasture, and fire." This could be taken as approval, indicating that we should implement socialism in general when goods are abundant through proper exploitation of natural and industrial resources.

Socialism reached its scientific phase only recently, and became so popular with the various peoples of the world that many claim it today, whether they really mean it or not. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the terms "socialism" and "communism" had made their appearance with respect to public ownership of immovable property. Robert Owen, a rich industrialist who is generally regarded as the founder of modern socialism, first used the term "socialism" around 1820. Owen believed it was possible to achieve social change through slow and orderly constitutional development, as opposed to the violent horrors of ill-prepared revolution.

The word "communism" is derived from a Latin word meaning "common" or owned by all, and was used for the first time around 1835 by French secret revolutionary committees. These committees aimed to overthrow the middle class by force and establish a new economic order of common ownership and government by the proletariat.

Karl Marx later formulated and developed the various theories and practices of socialism and communism. He preferred the term communism for his system because it was associated with the notion of violent social change. His ideology was based on four principles:

1. The course of history is determined by economic forces.

2. History is nothing but a record of class struggle.
3. Government is only a tool used by one class to suppress the other classes.
4. Violence and force are the only means of achieving any fundamental change in society.

In accordance with these principles, Marx continued to criticize the socialist experiments supervised by Robert Owen. He described them as unscientific and unrealistic because history, in his view, was governed by scientific laws, and no fundamental social change could ever be achieved without the use of force and violence. He scorned Owen's view and those of other socialists that social change could be achieved through comradeship, cooperation, and slow development. He described other socialists' approach as idealistic socialism, while referring to his own system as "scientific" socialism, or "communism."

When we speak of "scientific socialism," we do not mean Marx's approach. In fact, Marx's socialism was not truly scientific because it suffered from a basic error, which we shall deal with in detail in our forthcoming book, *Islam is Democratic and Socialist*, God willing.⁵

Scientific socialism, in our view, is founded on two concurrent principles: first, increased production from such resources as minerals, agriculture, animal wealth, and industry by means of science, technology, and administration; and second, equitable distribution involving the setting of maximum and minimum limits to personal incomes in such a way that the minimum limit is guaranteed to every citizen, including children, old people, and the disabled, at a level sufficient to sustain dignified human existence. The gap between maximum and minimum income must not be wide enough to create a higher class which refuses to marry from the low-income class. In order to increase production, ownership of the means of production must be prohibited to a single individual or a few individuals, whether associating for production or distribution. No citizen should own anything individually except a house and surrounding garden, furniture, a car. The key here is that no one should be allowed to own anything that permits the exploitation of one citizen's labor to increase the income of another. Individual ownership, even within such narrow boundaries, should not be ownership of property

5. The author addressed some of the issues in a public lecture which was later published in a booklet entitled *Al-Marxiyah fi Al-Mizan* ("A Critique of Marxism"), which has not yet been translated.

as such, but rather ownership of the benefits derived from property, and all property remains in the ownership of God and the community as a whole.

As production from resources increases, the equity of distribution is perfected, and differences are reduced by raising both minimum and maximum incomes. But the gap between minimum and maximum incomes is gradually narrowed in order to achieve absolute equality. When such absolute equality is achieved through the grace of God, and as a result of abundant production, we shall achieve communism or a sharing of the earth's wealth by all people. Communism thus differs from socialism in degree, in the sense that socialism is a stage in the development towards communism.

The Prophet experienced ultimate communism, where his own personal law was in accordance with the verse of ultimate *zakah*: "When they ask you what to give away, say all that you do not need" (2:219), meaning all that you do not immediately need. He also spoke of *al-Ash'ariun*,⁶ at the level of communism where he said: "When *al-Ash'ariun* had difficult times, or were traveling, they would spread a piece of cloth, place all the food they had on it, and share it amongst themselves in equal shares. Those are people to whom I belong, and they belong to me." This is the concept of the nation of *muslimin* that is yet to come. The *sufis* appreciated this, so they imagined the whole earth, with all its wealth, as a table brought down by God to His creation, telling each of them to carry the supplies of a traveler, and continue the journey towards Him. The earth is like a laid table, with meat, bread, vegetables, sweets, with ten people sitting around it. Everything on the table belongs to all of them, and no one owns a piece of meat, for example, until he holds it with his fingers and takes it into his mouth.

When the Qur'an tells us of paradise, it says: "And they say: 'All praise belongs to God Who has made good to us His promise, and has given us the earth to inherit, we shall make our abode in the Garden wherever we please.' How excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers." (39:74) This is, in fact, a model of the ultimate paradise to be realized on earth when, as the Prophet said, "Justice shall fill the earth in the same way it was previously full of injustice." This is what Marx dreamed of, but failed to find the way to achieve. It can only be achieved by *al-muslimin* who are yet to come, and then the earth shall enjoy a

6. A tribe in southern Arabia.

degree of fulfillment of the verse: "The God-fearing are in gardens and springs. They will be told: Enter therein, in peace and security. We cleansed what was in their breasts of hatred, so they became brothers sitting together, never to feel hardship or be removed therefrom." (15:45–48) This is the degree of communism to be achieved by Islam with the coming of the nation of *muslimin*, whence the earth shall light up with the Light of its Lord, and God's Grace is conferred upon its inhabitants, when there shall be peace, and love shall triumph.

POLITICAL EQUALITY: DEMOCRACY

Again, we will not discuss democracy in detail here, as it will be discussed in our book *Islam is Democratic and Socialist*. Just as socialism is the product of the struggle between the "haves" and the "have nots" in the material sphere, democracy is the product of the struggle between those same extremes in the political sphere. Its purpose is the sharing of power. Democracy parallels socialism; they are as two wings of society. In the same way that a bird does not fly with one wing, so does society need the two wings of democracy and socialism.

Socialism, which requires greater social awareness, is preceded by democracy which, in the beginning, may be exercised by only a few enlightened individuals. Scientific socialism also needs, as a base, the riches of developed capitalism as well as the advances of modern technology. Primitive, native socialism, however, has its origins in ancient history.

Democracy was born in Athens, the most culturally advanced of the Greek city-states. Each of those cities had its own independent government. As the city-states were small, it was easy for the entire population to participate in government through public assemblies. Greek democracy was, therefore, direct democracy, with no need for an elected house of representatives or executives of modern democratic governments. In Greece officials were elected annually, and elections were often conducted by poll. The Athenians believed that participation in public affairs was the right and duty of every citizen. (However, they did not regard women and slaves as citizens). Pericles, their greatest orator, speaking on behalf of Athenian democracy in the funeral oration following the war against Sparta in the year 430 B.C., described Athenian democracy as follows:

[Our government] favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way; if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish the spleen; while the magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbor, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

. . . We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it. Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters, for, unlike any other nation we regard him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless. We Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.⁷

Athenian democracy, as described by Pericles, continued to grow and develop in various parts of the world after the city's demise. This type of democracy manifested certain principles and a distinctive approach to

7. These extracts, corresponding roughly to the part quoted by the author in Arabic, are quoted here as translated by Joseph Gorse, in *The Complete Writings of Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1934), pp. 104–5.

life—recognizing the dignity of man and attempting to manage human affairs in accordance with justice, truth, and popular acceptance. Modern democracy has established certain principles, the most important of which may be summarized as follows:

1. Recognition of basic equality between all individuals.
2. The value of the individual as above that of the state.
3. Government as the servant of the people.
4. The rule of law.
5. Appeal to reason, experiment, and experience.
6. The rule of the majority, with utmost respect for rights of the minority.
7. Democratic method and procedures used to achieve objectives.

Democratic methods and procedures are not an end in themselves, but rather means to an end that lies behind them. The object of democracy is not simply to establish legislative, executive, and judicial organs, since all these are but means to realize the dignity of man. Democracy is not merely a way of government; it is also a way of life. The individual human being is the end, and everything else is a means to that end. The respect and high regard which people have for the democratic approach to government are due to the fact that it is the best approach to achieving the dignity of the individual.

There remain, however, some inadequacies in the present democratic approach, although these are much less pronounced than the deficiencies of Marxism. We leave its detailed examination for our coming book, *Islam is Democratic and Socialist*.

The dignity of man is derived from the fact that he is the most capable of all living things in learning and developing. The value of democracy is that it is the type of government most capable of providing opportunities for man to realize his dignity and honor. In a dictatorship, however, the government denies individuals the right to experiment and assume responsibility, thereby retarding their intellectual, emotional, and moral growth. In contrast to dictatorship, democracy is based on the right to make mistakes. This does not mean that individuals are encouraged to make mistakes for the sake of making mistakes, but rather it is recognition of the fact that freedom requires a choice between various modes of action. Democracy implies learning how to choose, choosing well, and correcting previous mistakes. In fact, all self-discipline and the true exercise of freedom are a series of individual actions in choice and implementation. In other words, freedom of thought, freedom of speech,

and freedom of action all require that one accepts responsibility for mistakes in speech and action in accordance with law that is consistent with the constitution.

Democracy is therefore the right to make mistakes, as we learn from the Hadith of the Prophet: "If you do not make mistakes, and then ask for forgiveness, God shall replace you by people who make mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and are forgiven."

Human dignity is so dear to God that individual freedom is not subject to any guardianship, not even that of the Prophet, irrespective of his impeccable morality. God says: "Then remind them, as you are only a reminder. You have no dominion over them." (88:21–22) Reference here is made to the polytheists who refused to worship God and tended the idols, worshipping them and sacrificing to them. Even the Messenger Mohamed, who was not seeking power for himself and whom God described in the Qur'an: "You are of great moral character" (68:4) [was not allowed to have dominion even over such a backward people]. This indicated that no man is perfect enough to be entrusted with the freedom of others, and that the price of freedom is continuous individual vigilance in safeguarding such freedom. In fact, individual freedom is a fundamental right with a corresponding duty, namely, the proper exercise of such freedom.

Since the society of *al-mu'minin* was incapable of exercising individual freedom in choice and action, the Prophet was appointed as a guardian to prepare them for the responsibility of absolute individual freedom. While exercising such guardianship, he insisted on giving them the right to make mistakes, whenever possible, without subjecting them to undue hardship or difficulty. In that way he was preparing them for democracy, for which they had to be sufficiently mature and intelligent. Such was the order of God when He said: "And it is by the Great Mercy of God that you are kind towards them, and if you had been rough and hard-hearted, they would surely have dispersed from around you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them; and when you are resolved, then put your trust in God. Surely, God loves those who put their trust [in Him]." (3:159)

This is the verse of *Shura* [consultation], and consultation, whenever mentioned, whether in this verse or in the following verse—"those who answered the call of their Lord, and perform the prayer, and their affairs are [decided] by *Shura* [mutual consultation] and pay alms from what We have provided for them" (42:38)—does not refer to democracy. *Shura*,

however, was a necessary stage in preparation for democracy, in due course.

Shura is not an original Islamic precept, but rather a subsidiary one. It is not democracy, but rather the rule of the mature individual who is preparing the nation to become democratic. The original precept of democracy is based on the verse, "Then remind them, as you are only a reminder. You have no dominion over them." (88:21-22)

By the same token, *zakah* is not a socialist practice, it is rather capitalist and is based on the verse, "Take alms out of their wealth, so that you may cleanse them and purify them thereby. And pray for them; your prayer indeed is [a source of] tranquility for them. And God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." (9:103) Thus, *zakah* is not an original precept of Islam, but rather a subsidiary one. Its purpose is to prepare people psychologically and materially for socialism in due course. The original precept which the verse of *zakah* abrogated is that which reads, "When they ask you what to give away, say all that you do not need" (2:219), as explained above.

The Second Message calls for a return from the subsidiary verses to the original verses, which were temporarily abrogated because of circumstances and material and human limitations. We must now elevate legislation by evolving and basing it on the original Qur'anic verses. In this way we shall welcome the age of socialism and democracy and open the way to absolute individual freedom through worship and humane dealing with other people. This is the Shari'a law of the nation of the Muslims (*muslimin*) that is yet to come, as the earth is now preparing to receive it. It is the duty of the people of the Qur'an [present-day Muslims] to pave the way for *al-muslimin*. And that is the purpose of this book.

SOCIAL EQUALITY: ERASING CLASSES AND DISCRIMINATION

Social equality is the most difficult type of equality to achieve in practice. Since economic and political equality are the preludes to social equality, the latter has not yet been accomplished. It cannot be achieved in the future except through hard work, discipline, education, correction, and change of what is almost natural human behavior. It will represent the peak of civilization, when man moves away from his base animal drives and develops a superior moral character. The law of the jungle—the law of violence and oppressive force—will then be replaced by the law

of justice, truth, and compassion—thereby improving the quality of human relations. Consensus will replace force, justice exploitation, freedom oppression, and intelligent community awareness selfish individual drives.

The object of social equality, as in the case of economic equality, is the individual. As stated previously, the individual is the object of all social endeavor, through the means of Islam and the Qur'an. Society is also another method, being the best method yet devised by humanity. The individual who is the object of all means is the individual human being as such. Not even the lowest human being should be made a means to another end. This is why there should be no discrimination on the grounds of birth, race, color, faith, or sex. God says in this connection: "O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of God, is one who is the most righteous among you. Surely, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (49:13) The phrase "the most honorable among you, in the sight of God, is one who is the most righteous among you" means that regard is paid to knowledge and moral character. Righteousness is knowledge of God and action in accordance with such knowledge. The phrase "God is All-knowing, All-Aware" means that He acts in accordance with such knowledge. The Prophet said: "All people come from Adam, and Adam is made out of dust. God pays the highest regard to the most righteous."

Absence of social discrimination against the weak and removal of distinctions between individuals and classes are the true signs of civilization. A society which safeguards the rights of the weak, respects their dignity, secures freedom and honor for women, protects children, and is considerate, merciful, and loving to them, is a truly civilized and advanced society.

The family is the first society, and in it the individual learns proper social behavior, respect for law and authority, compassion, forgiveness, and love. The family can best provide education and prepare individuals to be good members of society and of the world at large.

The mother is the foundation of the family; she is the queen of that kingdom. But unfortunately this is not usually recognized. The mother has been, and still is, oppressed; her role in the home has always been, and still is, that of a servant. We believe this has harmful consequences for the upbringing of children and far-reaching, detrimental consequences in the life of society as a whole, at every level.

We have already discussed the question of absolute equality between men and women. But we must emphasise that social equality will not come about spontaneously, as a natural result of progress. It requires planning and the intelligent development of society, through education (*ta'lim*) and guidance and discipline (*tarbiah*). Education differs from guidance in that the purpose of education is to enable the individual to gain professional skills suited to his talents and useful to society. Education provides individuals with scientific, technical, administrative, and technological skills, thereby promoting the modernization of society. Education brings specialization and organization, in order to provide for the needs of society. This involves discrimination between men and women, as well as between men and men, so that skills and abilities can be efficiently utilized for the benefit of the community. Such discrimination as occurs in selection of the civil service or administration of society does not necessarily imply social discrimination or inherent superiority of one individual over another.

Accordingly, women and men are recognized as equal even though they may be given different roles in society. Thus, when a woman is being trained to become a mother, her service to the community is not considered less valuable than the service rendered by her brother who is trained to become an engineer, physician, or legislator. There is no limit to training for good motherhood. The more a girl learns, the more valuable she becomes as a mother. It is in the best interests of society that all individuals [men and women] learn some specific task, and preferably one that is both manual and intellectual. That is also in the best interest of the individual himself [or herself], because one's intellectual and moral value does not mature unless he [or she] can perform some type of manual work. God says: "Unto Him ascend the pure words, being elevated by good deeds." (35:10) All these considerations are relevant to the objectives of education.

The objective of guidance and discipline (*tarbiah*) is to liberate the mind and heart from illusion and falsehood. Through freeing the heart from fear and clarifying thoughts from illusions, one achieves a full and comprehensive intellectual and emotional life which is the object of every living being. Discipline can transform man from savagery to civilization, through refinement of individual habits. Thus, an individual will learn to eat, drink, sleep, sit, speak, and behave in all spheres of his life, public and private, in a civilized fashion, without offending others in any way, manner or fashion. He will try to leave everything in a better state than

he found it. Guidance and discipline in all these spheres is learned in schools and clubs, in public places, and even through the media such as radio, television, cinema, theater, the press, books, magazines, lectures, and various types of art. Art forms may be employed to inspire individuals to higher types of behavior.

Society suffers from a state in which most of its members are either adolescents or children, and there are few mature members capable of facing up to the truth. (The tendency of childhood is to play and behave according to the whims and desires of the moment, as well as to escape from anything that may cause failure, pain, or social rejection.) A society characterized by wishful thinking and failure to distinguish between conflicting desires on a rational long-term basis is in need of guidance. Guidance and discipline, in contrast to education, do not emphasize specialization or discrimination between men and women. The need for guidance and discipline is shared by all individuals, including children, limited only by the individuals' ability to receive, assimilate, and implement. We have already discussed the Islamic approach to guidance and discipline and there is no need for repetition here.

Guidance and discipline confront individuals with their responsibility and assist them to shoulder such responsibility in order to become mature individuals. The difference between children and adolescents on the one hand, and [mature] men and women on the other, is that men and women act freely and accept responsibility for their action, while adolescents and children either refuse to act in fear of the consequent responsibility, or act and try to evade and escape responsibility for their action.