

THE MIND AL-QUR'AN BUILDS

by

SYED ABDUL LATIF

B.A. (Madras), Ph.D. (London)

*Professor of English (Retd.) Osmania University,
and President Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad (India)*

Author of

*The Influence of English Literature, The Concept of Society in
Islam, Muslim Culture in India, The Cultural Basis of a
World Order, The Muslim Problems in India, The Influence of
English Literature on Urdu Literature, Approach to Ghalib etc.*

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FOREWORD

In the brief span of our own lifetime, we have experienced two world wars and are now as a matter of course looking forward to a third. It is true that those who came out victorious in the first, talked of ending all wars and created a machinery of peace, the League of Nations, and when that proved of no avail and they found themselves engaged in another war, a more serious affair than the first, and were triumphant again, they reverted to their talk of ending wars, and set up another machinery, the United Nations Organization, holding out the hope that things would improve and the world return to peace. That peace is still eluding us.

The achievements of science had shattered for us the old barriers of time and space and reduced this globe of ours into but a small house wherein even whispers could be heard from corner to corner. Never before was there so great an opportunity for mankind to come close together and demonstrate that they were all "Children of God" as Christ conceived, or one single family, the "Family of God"¹ as did the Prophet of Islam, "every man, a brother unto every other".² And yet even this small house stands divided, a victim to two powerful conflicting forces, one represented by Soviet Russia, and the other by the U.S.A., curiously both members of one and the same peace organization.

How long is this state of affairs to last? The conflict, it is stated, is one of ideologies. Is it so? Even like the American, the Soviet Bloc have their own vocabulary of peace, making its appeal to the same natural fear of war and wish for security. The Soviet rulers, even as those who hold the reins of Government on the other side, talk

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Salehin to helm the affairs of every country, and in consequence prevented humanity from growing into the Prophet's vision of **one world**, of a fold "every member of which shall be a shepherd unto every other, and be accountable for the welfare of the fold". It is this **shepherd mind** that we need today to make a success of the U.N.O. Else, even this organization will go the way its forbears have gone, strutting for a while as but a clearing house of international espionage. The cause of unity and of civilization is crossed singly neither by capitalism nor by communism which is but a violent reaction to it, but by a hearty interaction of the two, both sustained and encouraged by the self-same spirit of nationalism.

The task of rooting out this evil or of humanizing it is a spiritual function; and it is for the religions of the world to show the way. Of late they have been relegated into the background, and in their place, the idol of **secularism** has been installed everywhere, as if secularism in any form can endure for long without some spiritual basis to it. That basis will have to be furnished by religion ultimately. Else, secularism divorced from spirituality will multiply the evils proceeding from nationalism and vitiate human life still further. A return to the unifying element in every religion is the only refuge for man today, and that is possible only when it is cleared of accretions. The unity of God stressed by religion, is according to the Qur'an, to express itself in the unity of man,⁵ or in a peaceful order of existence for man. That is its true role. It is for those who share this view to study and disclose the potentialities that lie latent in their several faiths to develop the shepherd mind the world needs, and create a band of Salehin in every part of the world who may conjointly endeavour to restore poise to human life and pave the way to one world.

Born to the faith of the Qur'an and grown in its atmosphere, it has been but natural for me, and easy to study the possibilities furnished by it to mould this shepherd mind

for the world of today. Strictly speaking, my study is a study in introspection, a bringing to mind of the values of life which in the course of history have been very largely laid aside by my brethren in faith.. The task has been undertaken in humility and in full consciousness of my limitations. In the pursuit of it, I confess, I have had to tread on delicate ground and try to negotiate with certain deep-seated sentiments entertained by them. My only justification is my urge to lift, as far as I could, the veils that have been allowed to rest on the Qur'an, and to let it speak for itself unhindered any longer by its mediaeval associations. It is now for others better qualified but who are silent so far to take up this task, and correct and amplify and complete the picture which I have tried to delineate here of the mind which the Qur'an aims to mould for man.

In the preparation of the volume, I have received valuable help from two friends. One is an old colleague of mine on the staff of the Osmania University, Hyderabad, Allama Abdul Qadir Siddiqi, for long Head of the Faculty of Muslim Theology, a scholar for whose grasp of the Quranic knowledge I have always held a high regard. Representing as he does the old order of Muslim theologians, he, nevertheless, possesses the talent to enter into the minds of those who would like to make a fresh approach to the sources of theological knowledge. Consequently, I have received considerable encouragement from the sympathetic attitude which he has always displayed towards my lines of thought touching the leading issues of life raised by the Qur'an. The other friend to whom I am indebted is the present Curator of the Asafiyah State Library, Hyderabad, Dr. Muhammad Rahatullah Khan, M.A. (Osmania), D. Phil (Leipzig). He may be accepted as a typical representative of the new order of Muslim scholars who are not quite in sympathy with our mediaeval heritage and are, at the same time, not well satisfied with the trends of modern civilization. The Doctor happens to

be an old pupil of mine in the Department of English studies at the Osmania University, and has retained his old affection for his teacher. He has shown a deep insight into the difficulties of my undertaking and offered me every facility of reference and consultation in his library where most of my work was done. I feel happy to acknowledge that I have freely drawn upon his wide and varied knowledge of the Arabic literature which has been the main subject of his study.

Conscious as I am of my deep obligations to these two friends in the presentation of my thesis, it will be unfair on my part if I should let them share the responsibility that should attach to the expression of views such as have been advanced in this volume. For those views, I alone should be held responsible; for, indeed, they have grown with me and are today part of me.

In conclusion, I have to express my deep thanks to Dr. Yusufuddin, Reader in 'Religion and Culture', Osmania University, for having added a carefully prepared index to the volume.

The regret is felt that, in the transliteration of Arabic terms and names, the diacritical type could not be used for lack of it at the moment.

Hyderabad
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SYED ABDUL LATIF

CHAPTER I

THE QUR'AN IN MEDIAEVAL BONDAGE

THE MIND of the Muslim almost all over the world is at a discount to-day. There is a lag between the life as enjoined on him by the Qur'an, and the life he has devised for himself. There is a lag between the social and political institutions which the Qur'an desires him to install, and the institutions which he has set up for himself and developed in the course of history. There is a lag between the purpose of the present day Muslim and the abiding purpose of the Qur'an—the world purpose. There is, in short, a big lag between the universality of the Qur'an and the isolationist religiosity of the present-day Muslim. If one should probe the lives of those who profess to believe in other sacred books—better the task be undertaken by some ardent follower of each—we shall not be surprised if similar lags meet the eye.

In his *Ihya-ul-'Ulum*, Ghazali records an incident in the life of Khalif Omar.¹ The Khalif was travelling from Madina to Mecca. On the way one early morning, he noticed a flock of sheep at the base of a hillock. A Negro boy was tending the flock. To test whether the teachings of the Qur'an had, at least in their elementary form, ever reached this Negro boy living in a remote corner of Arabia and to what extent he had reacted to them in his individual life, he asked him if he would like to sell one of the lambs in the flock. Promptly a definite 'No' was the answer. "But why?" asked the Khalif. "Why?—Because it is not mine", rejoined the Negro boy. "It is my master's, and I am his slave". "What matters?" said the Khalif. "Take this money, give that lamb to me; and go and tell your master that some wolf snatched away his lamb". The boy stared hard at the Khalif. The poor fellow did not know whom he was staring at. "I can cheat my master

over there on the other side of the hillock. But can I' he stressed, "cheat that Great Master who is overlooking both of us and listening?" The boy was an illiterate boy. He had never read the Qur'an. But the atmospheric influence of its teachings had evidently touched his mind. He must have heard in some manner the Qur'anic words that God "knows what the soul of man whispereth to him" and that He is "closer to him than his jugular vein",² and that "three persons speak not privately together, but He is their fourth; nor five, but He is their sixth; nor fewer, nor more, but wherever they be He is with them."³ He must also have heard that none can give away or sell anything which does not belong to him. What profound impression the reply of this Negro boy must have created on the mind of a man like Omar, that austere and mighty Khalif of Islam, can easily be imagined. "Tears rolled down his cheeks" says the narrative. Tenderly he asked the boy to lead him on to his worldly master, the owner of the flock. On meeting him the Khalif enquired: "How much did you pay for this slave?" "So much", replied the owner. "Here is that much, take it, and set the boy free".

Of course, the boy became a free man and Omar went his way. But the question may as well be asked: How many of us, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, in all stations and walks of life, how many brilliant products of our Universities, how many of those who conduct to-day the affairs of their countries, indeed, how many of those who have subscribed to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have attained that stage of mind or attitude which this Negro boy of 1300 years back had reached or have felt the same sense of God and held themselves responsible to Him in all that they have thought or done in their several lives?

It is this sense of God which the Qur'an aims to inspire in man, and base thereon an order of society every member of which shall be a "keeper or shepherd unto every other",⁴ —a brotherhood co-extensive in its final reaches with the whole of mankind who, in the words of the Prophet of Islam, constitute the "Family of God".⁵ The state of

Medina which he shaped and passed on to the Khalifs grew at first into a democracy different fundamentally in its structure and outlook from that of the ancient Athenians, a democracy composed of individuals who conscious of the dignity of human nature recognised no criterion of superiority between themselves except that of righteous living, and whose earnest aim was to blend harmoniously the material into the sublime or spiritual needs of human nature and vitalize life to disclose a united happiness for all mankind.

This democracy, however, did not last long. Once the state expanded beyond the Arabian frontiers, and assumed the role of an empire, the Khilafat which had started as an elective institution soon transformed itself into a dynastic monarchy. The transition was marked by civil wars. The bone of contention was the Khilafat; and as that office, as instituted, had its own religious function to discharge, the struggle naturally put on a religious colour. This is not the place to judge motives or apportion blame. Indeed it will be idle to do so across the vexatious centuries which intervene. But the result was a schismatic life for Islam. The tendency let loose in the time of the civil wars to drift from the anchorage of the Qur'anic ideals gathered momentum during the dynastic Khilafat of the Ummayids and of their successors the Abbasids and expressed itself, assisted by alien cultural strains, into the proverbial seventy-two sects of Islam. As an offshoot of this tendency and at the same time as its source of nourishment came into play the urge by over-zealous partizans to invoke, where argument failed, the very name of the Prophet, and ascribe to him utterances and actions bodied forth from their fertile imagination in support of their rival claims and standpoints. The earnest among the followers of the Faith grew alarmed at the rapidity of pace with which the stories were coined. Their task was to check this tendency and rescue the Qur'an and the picture of the Prophet from submergence. How onerous was the task may be gleaned from the fact that when Bukhari undertook to sift the authentic from the spurious and codify what seemed to him the genuine Hadith or traditions of the Prophet, he had to discard, out of

nearly 6,00,000 of which, according to Ibn Khallikan, he took cognizance,⁶ all except 7397 according to some authorities or 7295 according to others, as fabrications or not worthy of credence. Indeed, if repetitions under different heads or chapters are to be discarded, the number will be reduced to 2,762.⁷ The criterion applied by him was the veracity of the narrators of the Hadith, and not exactly the character of their contents. The idea evidently was to eliminate the professional manufacturers of Hadith from the canonical list. Yet, there is valid ground to hold, particularly on the basis of internal evidence, that notwithstanding the care and integrity exercised in the choice of guarantors, there are still a number of Hadith in the corpus of Bukhari and of his imitators the authenticity of which needs to be endorsed, if they are to stand, by methods of scientific enquiry and research.

The Hadith literature is held in importance and sacredness generally next to the Qur'an, and in certain circles it takes even precedence over the Qur'an.⁸ It was at first intended to serve as a record of the practice of the Prophet in relation to the commandments of the Qur'an expressed but in general terms. It was to supply clarification and to show the manner of implementing them in every new situation that might arise in the life of the faithful subject always to the imperative demands of unity. But soon, as indicated above, the purpose was, under some urge or other, widened, sometimes recklessly; so much so, that within three centuries of the passing of the Prophet, this new literature gave rise to a number of entire systems of law, theology, and custom, each designated Islam, none of which, however, was precisely the Islam which the Prophet bequeathed to his people on the day of his Farewell Address at Mecca. Thus the faith of the Qur'an which called upon its followers to "hold together to the Cable of God",⁹ and live a united life was itself pressed into the service of a divided life by the very people who professed to believe in it.

To make matters worse, the spirit and purpose underlying the manner of presentation in the Qur'an, the style

and diction, was not properly comprehended during the period when the first commentaries on the Book were undertaken—commentaries which often failed to discriminate the *muhkamat* or verses bearing plain and clear meaning or things to be taken in the literal sense from the *mutashabihat* and *amthal* or similitudes, and figures of speech, between which the Qur'an expressly calls upon its readers to make proper distinction.¹⁰ In consequence, the very essentials of the Faith and practice came to be viewed in the light of the faiths and traditions of the races, both Arab and non-Arab, converted to Islam, from among whom the commentators sprang up, giving to the allegorical or figurative element in the Qur'an either a literal sense or a sense alien to the very spirit of the Qur'anic message. The impact is partly pagan in character reflected in the anthropomorphic touches given to the concept of divinity and its attributes, and partly mystic in its significance as inspired essentially by Neoplatonism, and manifested chiefly in the Ajami or non-Arab attempt to read esoteric meaning into what is basically exoteric or mundane in the Qur'an. Not merely this, the sense of superiority or imperialism engendered in the minds of the Arabs by their sweeping conquests developed the tendency to give to passages in the Qur'an or Hadith touching usages peculiar to the Arabs or certain passing incidents in the life of the Prophet, the force of universal applicability to all times and conditions of existence. Even as in the field of Hadith, there is now a great need for scientific research in the field of interpretation of the Qur'anic phraseology as well, and for distinguishing between the merely incidental and the abiding directions of the Qur'an.

But the net result, the legacy of the past, such as it is, is what has to be faced to-day. The lines of thought laid down a thousand years ago have, in spite of reformatory attempts made every now and then to remould the Muslim mind on Qur'anic lines, vitiated the entire course of Muslim thought and history. The Qur'an is read parrot-like in most Muslim homes. It is explained in every mosque from week to week. Its language is employed in every daily

prayer. But the sense of the word read, recited, or explained is not always the original Qur'anic sense. It is the sense given to it primarily in the times of the Umayyids and the Abbasids, in the middle ages. The religion that passes for Islam to-day—the Islam of the masses and of the ruling classes in every Muslim country is the Islam of the Middle ages and not exactly the Islam of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Its outward form is there, however dishevelled, but the spirit in essential respects is un-Qur'anic. No wonder then that the mind of the present day Muslim—of course there are and must be exceptions everywhere, "the salt of the earth",—is not of the type which that poor illiterate slave Negro boy of the time of Omar endeavoured to represent even in the restricted sphere of his life.

No doubt Mediaeval Muslim History can claim with legitimate pride great advances in the realm of Arts, Sciences and Philosophy. But this achievement had no organic connection with the day to day life of the Muslim. It formed the exclusive concern of the intellectual elite and bore little relation to the social and religious life of the life of the masses who were kept down in ignorance and were simply nose-led by the reactionary 'Ulama or doctors of religion of the times, most of whom were stipendiaries of autocratic rulers whose political interests they had to subserve. The mediaeval mind has persisted to live on and in its several local variations still operative in every nook and corner of the Muslim world.

It is not my purpose to go into the history of this development, although in my discourse a passing reference here and there to its leading features or land-marks may be found necessary in the interests of clarity and emphasis. On the other hand, I shall, in the light of the Qur'an and the uncontested facts of the life of the Prophet endeavour to present, though on a limited canvas, the picture of the mind of man which his function in life warrants him to mould for himself, particularly at this hour, and face the serious complex problems confronting mankind with becoming confidence. My appeal will be to the intellect of man as man and although addressed primarily to those who

claim to follow the Qur'an, is intended to rouse the mood of introspection among others as well, for, the ailment of which the Muslim has been a victim has also in one form or another held under its grip the rest of mankind as well. In the presentation of my subject, I shall, as far as possible, avoid the use of technical phraseology for the simple reason that the Qur'an itself does not use any technical terms and is meant to be intelligible even to that illiterate Negro boy tending a flock of sheep in his capacity as a slave.

CHAPTER -II

THE MOORINGS

THE QUR'AN is essentially a code of human conduct. That is the claim which the Book itself advances.¹ It is meant to offer guidance to those who may be disposed to seek it. It differs from abstract ethics in this that it purports to possess a religious sanction for those who choose to follow it, and covers a wider field of activity than what is envisaged by the latter. That by itself does not divest it of its value to those who may fight shy of religion. For, however wide and deep the religious character of its background, the line of conduct delineated by the Qur'an is to be endorsed in action by a rational approach to it, and is on that account a subject for consideration even by those who may not believe in any established religion, but who nevertheless dislike anarchy in thought and action and recognise the need for some standard of conduct to govern their daily activity. To such, it may be told that the essential purpose of the Qur'an is to develop in man a mind the immediate function of which is to enable him to live in peace with himself and in peace with his external world of relations, although in so doing he is to serve a deeper purpose as well. This wider applicability, which is beyond the purview of abstract ethics or of any exclusively secular concept of life, is warranted by the notion maintained by the Qur'an that death is not the end of life, but that, on the other hand, it is a gateway to a new sphere of activity, marking a further stage in the making of man. "From state to state shall ye be carried forward"² is the vista of possibilities disclosed, and the succeeding life is conditioned by the present. It is the ultimate purpose—the perfection of man—that should govern the character of the life one has to live in the present. The mind which the Qur'an aims to build is therefore to view in one sweep the entire life of

man, the present and what is to follow, and treat it as a single entity, and adjust its movement accordingly. "Your creation and your resurrection are but like a single soul."³

The building of this mind, as well as, its manifestation in every sphere of interest to the mind—the entire cultural course of the Qur'an—is summed up in but a phrase "Believe and work righteously." That is the way to develop the mind favoured of the Qur'an. 'Belief' is thus the force which lends tone or character to the mind, and work in consonance thereof is but a reflection of it in action. Let us, therefore, dwell awhile on what the mind is to be fed on, the beliefs which one has to entertain as sources of his inspiration to righteous work. This is in the nature of things necessary; for to appraise the value of the activity of a mind, it is essential to appraise at first the very character of its foundation, the factors and forces which mould it, the ingredients which enter into its composition, indeed the moorings from which it may not stray.

UNITY OF GOD

The basic concept into which the Qur'an desires to initiate the human mind is the concept of the Unity of God—a concept on which it wishes another concept, the Unity of man, to rest and receive life and sustenance therefrom. **La Ilaha Illallah:** 'There is none worthy of worship except God' is the concept on which such strong stress is laid that the entire Qur'an seems to be nothing else than an exposition of its implications and a commentary of it. The late Rev. C. F. Andrews in one of his writings observes:—

"One of the greatest blessings which Islam has brought to East and West alike has been the emphasis which at a critical period in human history it placed upon the Divine Unity. For during those Dark Ages both in East and West, from 600 to 1000 A.D. this doctrine was in danger of being overlaid and obscured in Hinduism and in Christianity itself, owing to the immense accretions of subsidiary worships of countless demi-gods and herces. Islam has been, both to Europe and India, in their dark hour of aberration from the sovereign truth of God's

Unity, an invaluable corrective and deterrent. Indeed, without the final emphasis on this truth, which Islam gave from its central position, — facing India and facing Europe — it is doubtful whether this idea of God as one could have obtained that established place in human thought which is uncontested in the intellectual world today".⁴

Looking therefore at the low ebb to which human thought and life had descended at the time when Muhammad was passing from adolescence into manhood and from manhood into maturity, the voice in him that expressed itself in this formula was indeed the imperative voice of Humanity out to assert itself, and consequently was heard throughout Arabia, and even across its frontiers during his own life-time. The spiritual implications of the concept of Divine Unity will be touched upon in the later stages of this discourse, but it may be observed here that its pragmatic value to man in his social relations was immense. The idea that there was none worthy of worship except God swept off all distinctions of colour and race, and every hierarchical conception of life, social and political. It was a revolutionary slogan aiming at the emancipation of man. It restored dignity to human nature by placing man next to God and making righteous living the sole test of superiority of one over another.

UNITY OF MAN

Alongside of stimulating in man the sense of human dignity, the Qur'an calls upon him to recognise that "all mankind was at first but one community", that subsequently it "stood divided"⁵ and that it should therefore be man's endeavour to restore its unity.⁶

So great is the importance attached by the Qur'an to the maintenance of the unity of man that the Prophet looks upon the entire mankind as the family of God.

"All creatures of God are His family, and he is the most beloved of God who loveth best His creatures".⁷

"Respect the ways of Allah (or the laws inherent in Nature) and be affectionate to the family of Allah".⁸

The Qur'an observes:

"Whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or mischief in the earth, it shall be as if he hath killed all mankind, and whosoever saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he hath saved the life of all mankind".⁹

The idea so strongly emphasised by the Qur'an over 1300 years ago that mankind was but one and the same species of creation and that the theory of race was a social myth operating for the disunity of man, may now be regarded as a scientific fact. Read the latest and the most authoritative statement of modern scientific doctrine on the subject of race issued by the UNESCO (July 1950). That statement sets forth the conclusions of an international panel of scientists formed by the UNESCO to define the concept of race and to summarise the most recent findings in this field which the world's biologists, geneticists, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists agree are established scientific facts. The text of the statement issued by the experts opens in words reminiscent of the language of the Qur'an quoted above.

"Scientists have reached the general agreement in recognizing that mankind is one, that all men belong to the same species — *Homo Sapiens*".

It concludes with the ethical implication of this fact of life covered by the saying of the Prophet:

"Every one of you is a keeper unto every other, and will be accountable for the welfare of his fold".¹⁰

Runs the scientists' conclusions in the following words.—

"Biological studies lend support to the ethic of universal brotherhood; for man is born with drives toward cooperation, and unless these drives are satisfied, men and nations alike fall ill. Man is born a social being who can reach his fullest development only through interaction with his fellows. The denial at any point of this social bond between man and man brings with it disintegration. In this sense, every man is his brother's keeper. For every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, because he is involved in mankind"?

The Unity of man receiving its sustenance from the Unity of God is in its social bearing the leading theme of the Qur'an. To promote that unity, the Qur'an calls upon man first to develop the sense of catholicity in life. Religion was one of the important fields—probably the most important in the days of the Prophet—where conflict thrived. The Qur'an first aimed at the elimination of this conflict. Christianity and Judaism were the religions which prevailed at the time in the Semetic sector. The Qur'an desires the Prophet to negotiate a *modus vivendi* with the followers of the two faiths.

"O People of the Book (Christian and Jewish Scriptures), come to a word fair between us and you, that we worship God only and associate nothing with Him, and do not take each other as Lord to the exclusion of God".¹¹

The condition of association advanced here is that God alone is to be the Lord, and none else.

The privilege is not to be confined to one's relations with Christians or Jews alone. It extends to the followers of all other religions, provided the basic condition is fulfilled—belief in the Unity of God. That such a belief is the basis of all religions is repeatedly asserted by the Qur'an, and that in consequence they should not work in antagonism with one another, but work conjointly for world unity. Addressing the Prophet, the Qur'an says.

"He hath ordained for you that faith which He commended unto Noah, and which we inspire in thee (Muhammad), and which we commended unto Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, saying: Establish the Faith, and be not divided therein".¹²

"Verily we have sent thee with the Truth, a Comforter and Warner; and there is not a People but a Warner hath not passed among them".¹³

"Verily we sent Messengers before thee, of some of whom we have told thee, and of some whom we have not told thee".¹⁴

The Qur'an sums up:

(O; Ye Muslims!) Say that we believe in God, and all that he sent down to us, and all that he sent down on

Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob and their descendents. We believe in all that He gave unto Moses, Jesus and *other Apostles* from their Lord. No distinction do we make between the apostles, and we submit to God".¹⁵

"O Prophets! Ye are but of one order".¹⁶

In building up this catholicity of mind, the Qur'an is careful enough not to let the Arabic speaking people feel that the Arabic language in which the Qur'anic Message is delivered is by any means exclusively sacrosanct or is the exclusive language of God. God expresses Himself in all tongues.

"And we never sent a Messenger save with the language of his fold, that he might make the Message clear for them".¹⁷

So wide is the catholic attitude of mind intended to be stimulated that the Qur'an promises salvation not merely to the people of the Qur'an but to those also among whom other scriptures have been delivered—not merely to these, but to every human being not believing in any established Church but who nevertheless acknowledges the value of Divine unity in human life and recognises responsibility for his actions, and lives uprightly.

"Those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad) and those who are Jews and Christians, — Whosoever believes in God, and the Last Day (he who accepts responsibility for his actions,) and acts uprightly— have their reward with their Lord. There will be no fear upon them, neither shall they grieve".¹⁸

The privilege extends even to those who are not attached to any established faith.

Assuredly, those who say: "Our Lord is God" and act uprightly, there shall be no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. These shall be the inmates of Paradise to remain therein for ever, — the recompense for their *deeds*.¹⁹

The idea underlying this catholic attitude was to eliminate friction between the followers of the different faiths

and rest their relationship on a common belief in the Unity of God consciously operating for the Unity of man.

“O Ye mankind! surely we have created you a male and female, and made you tribes and families that you may identify and care for each other; surely, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one among you most mindful of his duty Allah is knowing, Fully awake”.²⁰

Mark the phrase “To care for each other”. That was, under the plan of the Prophet, the common ground on which all humanity can and should enter to work together for their common good and live as a “Family of God”. That is the way to an abiding fraternal relationship between man and man. The world order on which the Prophet set his heart was to be composed of not merely those who would follow the Qur'an in every detail, but all others who in common would believe in the Unity of God and righteous living in accordance therewith. His supreme insistence on this minimum, a belief in the Unity of God inspiring righteous living in man, was for no other reason than to let that sense of divine Unity transform itself into the sense of the unity of man. It is in this context that the term **Kufr** plays such an important part in the Qur'anic thought. The term has acquired an odium among non-Muslim circles purely through its incorrect grasp by the mediaeval commentators of the Qur'an and its indiscriminate and reckless application by fanatics to all non-Muslims and even to Muslims who differ from them in any respect. For that, the Qur'an is not responsible. A ‘Kafir’ in reality is one who disregards the Unity of God by his thought and action and thereby becomes a force for disunity among men, which in the Qur'anic concept is a denial in practice of Divine Unity. The Qur'an therefore makes no compromise with **Kufr**, for, it is obvious that **Kufr**, the force for disunity, cannot co-exist, much less work hand in hand with the force for unity in any conceivable scheme of things aiming at the unity of man. Barring this ideological difference with **Kufr** in all its forms and wherever found, in other words, with all forces of disintegration or disunity, the basic attitude of the Qur'an towards other faiths is either of seeking a modus vivendi as already indicated or of tacit tolerance and forbearance in the earnest hope and trust

that one day "God will bring them all together" and advance the cause of divine unity working itself out in the unity of man.

"For this cause invite them thou (O Muhammad), and go straight on as thou hast been bidden, and follow not their ways: and say: In whatsoever scriptures God hath sent down, do I believe: I am commanded to deal justly with you. God is your Lord and our Lord: Unto us the result of our deeds, and unto you the result of your deeds: between us and you let there be no strife: God will bring us all together: and unto Him is our journeying"²²

The Unity of man thus is one of the main objectives man has to pursue in life through a programme of righteous work—work in consonance with his belief in the unity of God, and points to the role he has to play in life.

THE ROLE OF MAN

As we have already pointed out, the leading idea of the Qur'an **La Ilaha Illallah**; 'there is none worthy of worship except God', determines man's place in the scheme of creation. It does not relegate him to a position of inferiority to any object of creation. He is not inferior in stature in the scale of Divine values to the Sun or the Moon or other constellations in the heavens which have formed the objects of worship from a distance in the history of man, or to anything in the earth at close range, or again to that body of invisible forces at work in Nature styled 'Mala'ik' or Angels. The Qur'an points out that man is made 'of the goodliest fabric',²³ he whom the 'Mala'ik' were made to offer obeisance',²⁴ and for whom 'whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth are made to do service.'²⁵

Thus raised in the scale of creation and placed immediately next to God, man's importance is further emphasised by investing him with the privilege of living on Earth as the vicegerent of God Himself.

The truth is brought home in figurative language the phraseology of which brings to mind the striking lines of Matthew Arnold entitled "Revolutions":—

" Before man parted for this earthly strand,
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,
God put a heap of letters in his hand,
And bade him make with them what word he could
And man has turned them many times: made Greece,
Rome, England, France:— Yes, nor in vain essayed
Way after way, changes that never cease.
The letters have combined: something was made."

Indeed, something was made; but the poet in sorrow exclaims:

" Ah; an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what he should,
That he has still, though old, to recommence,
Since he has not yet found the word God would.
And empire after empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on;
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And dropped, and slowly died upon their throne "

That was Arnold's approach, evidently inspired by St: John's: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. Here the purpose of man was to find out that Word. On the other hand, the reflex process is what is revealed by the Qur'an. It does not suggest that God merely 'put a heap of letters into man's hand when he parted for this earthly strand and bade him to make with them what word he could'. It affirms that the 'Word' itself was shown to him and its meaning explained, and lest he might forget its structure and composition was transfixed in his nature, bidding him to preserve it therein and not to play with its letters and disturb their arrangement, so that he might live in peace with himself and in peace with his external world of relations.

" And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo, I am about to place a vicegerent in the Earth, they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do mischief and shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?
He said: surely, I know that which ye know not."

- " And He taught Adam *all* the names, then showed the objects to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are in the right.
- " They said: Glorious art Thou: We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Surely, Thou alone art the Knower, the Wise.
- " He said: O Adam: Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I knew the secrets of the heavens and the earth? "26

Thus rendered conscious of the purpose of creation and of the 'Names' or the meaning of things, or the laws of their existence, it followed as a corollary that man should affirm the unity of existence.

- " And when thy Lord took out from the loins of Adam's children their progeny, and made them affirm, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea, we affirm "27

So equipped, man's nature found itself agreeable to bear the trust of vicegerency.

- " Verily we proposed to the heavens and to the mountains to receive the trust, but they shrank from receiving it and were afraid of it. Man alone undertook to bear it "28

The undertaking was on the face of it, not an easy affair. The Qur'an is struck by its very audacity as the continuation of the verse suggests: " Lo! How unfair and harsh was man to himself!—Not aware of what exactly he undertook."29 But the purpose of his creation was nevertheless to carry him "onward from state to state"30 toward perfection. The process was designed for him as part of the divine scheme—an aspect of creative evolution to which fuller attention will be drawn in due course. But to lessen the pang implicit in the ordeal and to help man bear the trust undertaken, and to keep the life intended for him or the letters of the 'Word' revealed to him in proper form, says the Qur'an, a sense of balance was set in his nature and he was told that he would be judged according to the use he makes of it.

- " Allah it is who hath revealed the Word with truth and the Balance "31

"By the Soul and Him who balanced it and infused in the same the sense of discrimination and the power of choosing between the wrong and the right, happy is he who keepeth it pure and unhappy is he who corrupteth it".³²

The truth of the last verse is expressed by the Qur'an in a paradox, each side of which is meant to be equally true:

"Surely, We created man of the goodliest fabric; then we rendered him the vilest of the vile".³³

Every thinker in every age has had to recognise this paradox in human nature. The task of every religion has been to save man from sinking in the scale of life. Says the Qur'an in continuation of the paradox for the sake of clearing the issue raised therein:

"Then we rendered him the vilest of the vile, save those who believe and work righteously".³⁴

Some lay stress on faith or belief as the means of salvation. But 'Belief' alone is not enough in Islam. "Righteous work in consonance therewith" is equally necessary. That is the way to preserve his goodliest fabric and help him discharge his responsibility as the vicegerent of God on earth. This vicegerency, as often proclaimed in the history of man, is not the divine right of churches or of kings to govern men as they liked. On the other hand it is the inherent right of mankind to govern themselves and regulate their lives in conformity with the principle of order and harmony noticeable in divine creation:—

"Turn steadfastly to the path of devotion — the path of Allah — for which man by nature is fitted. There is no altering of the ways of Allah. That is the right religion; But most people know it not".³⁵

It is those who respect the ways of God and scrupulously follow them in life who alone are to be truly regarded as the vicegerents of God on earth. Their function is to be interpreted in terms of the good that they can offer not only to themselves and to fellowmen, but to all living objects on earth who form together in the words of the Prophet "the family of God", every one of whom has a

being from their Maker "and to whom they will be gathered".

"There is not an animal in the earth, or a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you. We have neglected nothing in the book (of our decrees). Then unto their Lord will they be gathered".³⁶

The function of man in his role as the Vicegerent of God on earth is to be discharged not merely to let him live in peace with himself and in peace with the external world of relations, but is to be pursued with an eye on what is called the "Life hereafter". "Unto their Lord will all be gathered" is the prospect which the Qur'an holds out to every one, before Whom every one will have to tender an account of what he or she had done during his or her present life. The idea of a "return to God" has thus been raised by the Qur'an to the position of a cardinal belief for man and is as important to his life as the belief in the unity of God expressing itself in the unity of man through a programme of righteous work or 'Amal-i-Salih.'

THE EQUIPMENT

HOW IS the task to be performed? The answer is summed up in a single word—Islam or “Devotion to Sunnat Allah or the ways of Allah”, for which, according to the Qur’an, “Man, hath been fitted by nature”.¹ In a lucid exposition of this term, as in essence common to all established faiths, Dr. J. H. Bridges, a positivist, follower of Comte, observes in a discourse delivered as far back as 1879:—

The faith of the Mussalman is concentrated in a single word, Islam, devotion, resignation of our own will to the Supreme decree. That word was not limited by Mohammad to his own followers; it was used ungrudgingly of his Judaic and Christian predecessors. There is no fitter word for the religion of the human race. If there is any one word in western language which can translate it fully, it is the word ‘religion’ itself; and that word needs interpretation for ears untrained in Latin speech. The word Islam unfolds itself for us, as for the followers of Mohammad, into the two great and inseparable aspects of life — prayer and work. ‘Pray and give alms,’ said Mohammad, alms-giving in his wide interpretation of it, conceived with admirable wisdom relatively to the simple wants of his time, covering the whole field of doing good to men. ‘Pray and work,’ said the mediaeval saint; pray as though nothing were to be done by work; work as though nothing were to be gained by prayer.

In different ways and under every possible variety of language and symbol, the same thing is said by every spiritual leader of men in every age and country. I find it in Confucius, the founder of the faith that has kept Chinese Society together for five-and-twenty centuries: I find it in the ancient theocracy of Hindostan: I find it in the monuments of Egypt as their secrets are gradually

revealing themselves to modern learning: I read it in the premature effort of Pythagoras, premature, yet profoundly fruitful of momentous result to discipline of life upon a human basis: and last of all, I find it where most men think a monopoly of such knowledge is to be found, in the Hebrew and Christian Bible.

Islam, then, or in the English tongue, devotion - the devotion of our life to the highest; the bringing of our own will into accord with the supreme will; this is the word that sums up the lives of pious men in every age and every country. They have framed for themselves an ideal, a model, a pattern of what their life should be. They have done their utmost to make that ideal a reality. In other words, they have prayed, and they have worked".²

How then is one to bring one's own will into accord with the Supreme will? The task is two-fold. It consists, in the first place, of faith or belief; and in the second, of work in consonance therewith. It is not merely 'Pray and Work', which constitutes the function of man. On the other hand, the Quranic commandment is 'Believe and Work righteously.' Prayer in Islam is more an action of the spirit and is covered by the term 'Work'. The Qur'an emphasises that belief by itself is not enough. Indeed belief without work appropriate to it is static. Mere philosophic perception of the essence of divinity or contemplation is barren, if it does not generate volition or give movement to human life in consonance with the qualities or attributes of that essence. Mere spiritual exercises of the kind which certain religious orders practice, or psychic achievements, however interesting, will not rise above their character as but the exercises of the mind, if they do not contribute to and subserve a dynamic moral existence for man. This dynamic morality again is not possible for one who seeks his individual spiritual salvation through the life of the cloister or the cave, or for one who through abnegation of his body fancies his duty to lie in merely nursing his soul. The vicegerency of God on earth is not possible for such types. On the other hand, it is for him who imbues himself

with divine attributes to the best of his ability and manifests them harmoniously in devoted service to himself and his fellow beings.

The attributes of God are various, as are His 'names. They cannot be numbered, since the fullest comprehension of Divine activity is scarcely possible for man circumscribed as he is by the nature of his being. In the words of the Qur'an, 'to God alone belong all excellent names' for perfection is His only in everything that He attributeth to Himself. With this general attitude towards the conception of Divine attributes, the task before man is to understand the significance to his life of such of them as are specifically brought to mind in the Qur'an. Some of these may come essentially within the purview of mysticism. But a large majority of them suggestive of His knowledge, and power, and justice, and mercy, and His tender concern for the moral purification of man may easily form the subject of social study. Even these make an imposing list, and should lay bare the futility of encasing the Divine Being in any single virtue or attribute, and incarnating Him. God in Islam is above every attribute and manifests them all in harmonious relation with one another. Man's role is to imitate God in His attributes to the extent his nature helps him.

The persistent call of the Qur'an to man is to ponder on the working of the external world of creation. Therein is at work, it suggests, the eternal principle of harmony and balance to urge on man the need for devoted imitation:

"The Sun and the Moon follow a system,
And the planets and the trees bend in adoration,
And the sky, He hath reared it on high,
And Hath set the balance ;
That in the balance ye should not transgress,
But keep it poised and not scant the balance."⁴

"(Blessed is He) who hath created the seven heavens in layers. Thou canst see no disharmony in the handiwork of the Beneficent God. Then look again. Dost thou see any rifts? Then look again, and yet again; Thy sight will return unto thee thwarted and tired."⁵

The essential task of man therefore who aspires to rise in the scale of life and play the role of a vicegerant of God on Earth is to work for harmony not merely in his own life but in that of the world surrounding him. The injunction "Believe and work righteously" has therefore different meanings for the different stages in the scale of life to which man has to rise from step to step to qualify himself for his task in high and higher spheres of activity. Those who undertake this great journey in life in the light of the Quranic directions are not all grouped together under a single category. The Qur'an speaks of several types of travellers traversing the path of Allah, according to the divine attributes they display in their onward march. It gives each type a distinct name. They are to be known by their action; by their work and not by their mere belief. In fact not every one who says he believes in Islam is included in the ranks of the 'Mo'minin' or 'Believers' unless his belief is endorsed by appropriate action. These types are severally addressed as **Salehin, Muttaqin, Muslehin, Muflehin, Muqsitin, Sabirin, Shakirin, Muhsinin, Sadiqin, Siddiqin, Shuhada', Awliya, Muslimin, Muqarribin, Ulul-'Ilm, Ulul-Albab,** and so on. But this is to be observed that one common purpose binds them all, the essential purpose of displaying in their lives the 'balance and harmony' dwelling in the Divine scheme of things.

As against this order favoured of the Qur'an, there stands the opposite order of those upon whom the Qur'an looks with distinct disfavour. They are of those who disturb the 'Balance and harmony' that should subsist in life, and 'create mischief in the earth'. They too are classified by the quality of the evil they display in their activity, designated as **Kafirin, Mushrikin, Zalimin, Mufsidin, Ghafilin, Munafiqin** and so forth.

The types of people favoured of the Qur'an, are by no means exclusive types. They are classified differently simply on the basis of the divine attribute each displays in its activity more noticeably than any other. Indeed, the larger the number of attributes one displays more or less in equal measure, the higher his station in life and the greater his capacity to discharge his responsibilities as the vicegerent of God on Earth.

"He it is who hath placed you as his vicegerents on Earth and hath raised some of you in rank above others, that he may try you in what he hath given you."⁶

Of all the divine attributes with which man has to endue himself for his task, knowledge commands precedence. Its acquisition is a duty on every man and every woman as laid by the Prophet of Islam:

"Acquire knowledge", said he "It enables the possessor to distinguish right from wrong: It lights the way to heaven; it is our companion when friendless: it guides us to happiness, it sustains us in adversity; it is a weapon against enemies and an ornament among friends. By virtue of it, Allah exalteth nations, and maketh them guides in good pursuits, and giveth them leadership: so much so, that their footsteps are followed, their deeds are imitated, and their opinions are accepted and held in respect."⁷

The Ulul-Ilm (those who equip themselves with knowledge or the learned) naturally deserve our primary attention. For, knowledge is the means whereby the qualities, characteristic of the other types, are cultivated.

"God bears witness: There is no God save Him; and so bear witness the angels; and so, the men of learning with mental equipoise"⁸

Such is the value the Qur'an sets on learning. The qualities for instance of **Tawwabin** (those who level up their path by removing all ruggedness therefrom), **Salehin** (those who follow the right path), **Muslehin** (those who set things right), **Muhsinin** (those who do good deeds in a manner calculated to stimulate the thought of good deeds in others and help them to rectify their errors and do good deeds), **Muflehin** (those who reform or improve the condition of society) **Muqsitin** (those who admit the right of every one else and practice equity, and not merely give freedom of action to those who wish to do good deeds, but also help them in so doing), and **Siddiqin** those who meticulously adhere to fact and truth), **Muslimin** (those who conform their will to the Will of God or submit)—the qualities distinguishing these and other types are not possible to develop except for one who is endowed with knowledge. Hence it is that the Prophet of Islam lays its acquisition as a primary duty on every man and woman and

calls upon the seeker to go to the ends of the Earth in its pursuit, even to China, the then known remotest corner of the world."

But one thing the Qur'an makes perfectly clear. Knowledge does not consist in the mere assemblage in one's memory of ideas or material on this or that subject. That does not constitute acquisition. The Qur'an desires correlation and synthesis helpful to a harmonious grasp of the verities underlying them. The Book therefore insists on reflection as an indispensable aid to the proper acquisition of knowledge.

"We have not created the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them in sport: We have not created them except to bear the truth but most people know it not" ¹⁰

'But most people know it not' is the regretful note that it strikes at every turn. Wherever attention is drawn to the manifestation of life calling for reflection and introspection, expressions such as 'herein are portents', 'herein are signs for folk who reflect', 'for men of knowledge', 'for folk who heed', and 'for folk who understand' echo and reverberate only to emphasize the importance which the Qur'an attaches to reflection as a means of obtaining insight. "Show us the nature of things as they really are" is a characteristic prayer of the Prophet. The first step on the road to it is reflection.

Knowledge, in the Quranic conception covers every field of life—the life of the vast universe working around man in immediate contact as well as remote, and the life of man himself moving onward with a knowledge of his past. An acquisition of knowledge therefore imposes on him the exercise of not merely his intellectual and physical faculties, but his spiritual: and nothing is prohibited to him in Islam except, probably, probing vainly the veil beyond which his reason or intuition has been found incapable of advance. And herein lies the fundamental distinction between the Quranic and the classic Greek culture which forms the essential basis of the modern European civilization. For, while the Greek mind revetted its attention on 'Man-kind' alone or on the study of man as man, the Quranic mind has to take in its sweep the entire Universe, not

merely the world of man, and of his spirit, but the worlds of plants, birds, animals, insects, planets, the worlds seen and the unseen—all interlinked in its consciousness, with each other, and understand and reflect on the laws underlying each creation and grasp the supreme spiritual principle of their linkage so as to fit properly into their unified existence:

"The main purpose of the Qur'an", points out Sir Muhammad Iqbal, 'is to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God and the universe. It is in view of this essential aspect of the Quranic teaching that Goethe, while making a general review of Islam as an educational force said to Eckermann: "You see this teaching never fails. With all our systems, we cannot go; and generally speaking no man can go, further than that". The problem of Islam was really suggested by the mutual conflict, and at the same time mutual attraction, presented by the two forces of religion and civilization. The same problem confronted early Christianity. The great point in Christianity is the search for an independent content for spiritual life which, according to the insight of its founder, could be elevated, not by the forces of a world external to the soul of man, but by the revelation of a world within his soul. Islam fully agrees with this insight but adds that the illumination of the new world thus revealed is not something foreign to the world of matter but permeates it through and through".¹²

The Qur'an gives man full sanction to harness the forces at work both in him and in his external world, the forces of nature, through an appropriate study of them. But it makes one condition. It calls upon man to bear in mind the balance set in his nature, and to exercise the power acquired through knowledge to help him display in his life such other attributes of God as will equip him to 'show affection to the family of God' for which he has been created with the privilege of representing Him on earth by "being a shephard or keeper unto every other". If we may so express, the impersonal power of Nature that Science brings into play is to be given a personality and made conscious of the balance set therein, as in the rest of creation. In other words, it is to be humanised, and "the spirit of God breathed" into it, to use a phrase of the Qur'an. This

is the primary function of human activity and is to be kept in mind in order to appraise the full import of the injunction which sums up all that is required of man: 'Believe and work righteously' informed by knowledge. The wider and deeper this knowledge of one's own self and one's external world of relations, the greater the chance one has to enter the order of the **Salehin, Muttaqin, Siddiqin, Muqarribin** and the rest who in one capacity or another fulfil the role of the vicegerency of God on earth.

The last named type—the **Muqarribin**—those whom God draws to Himself—are those who aspire, in the language of the Prophet's prayer, to the knowledge of the 'Nature of things as they really are'. This knowledge of Reality the fountain-head of life, is to be gained through what is termed in the language of 'suñis' as **Qurb-i-Ilahi**, nearness to God' or 'attendance on God', loosely rendered into English as 'Mystic experience', an acquisitive quality more freely developed in certain temperaments or minds spiritually inclined than in those particularly obsessed with the temporal aspects of life.

"And your Lord saith; call Me and I respond to your call".¹³

"And when my servants ask thee (O Prophet) concerning Me, then I am nigh unto them, and answer the cry of him that crieth unto Me."¹⁴

"Here is a call for a conscious effort, and the response is immediate. Action and reaction here are synchronous. Call God in the name of His attributes and they instil themselves in you and become yours: Call Him in the name of the totality of His attributes and in the name of His essence, which clinches them all in a single unity, and you are touched by that essence and permeated through and through with it. This is the state of **Qurb-i-Ilahi**, or nearness to God or mystic experience. This mystic experience is a search for Reality and while, on the one hand, it is a form of prayer, on the other, it forms a department of knowledge, even as any other region of human experience. But the medium of knowledge is not the intellect of man but what the Qur'an calls the **Qalb** or 'heart'.

"The Sufi's Book", says Rumi in describing the mystic quest after Reality "Is not composed of ink and letters: it

is naught but a heart white as snow. The scholar's possession is penmarks. What is the Sufi's possession?—footmarks. The Sufi stalks the game like a hunter: he sees the musk deer's tract and follows the foot-prints. For some while, the track of the deer is the proper clue for him, but afterwards it is the musk-gland of the deer that is his guide. To go one stage guided by the scent of the musk-gland is better than a hundred stages of following the track and roaming about".¹⁵

'Following the scent' or as the Qur'an calls 'reflection' is the first step in the mystic march to Reality.

Ghazali, himself a notable mystic, traces the process:—

"Prayers have three veils, whereof the first is prayers uttered only by the tongue; the second is when the mind by hard endeavour and by firmest resolve, reaches a point at which, being untroubled by evil suggestions, it is able to concentrate itself on divine matters; the third veil is when the mind can with difficulty be diverted from dwelling on divine matters. But the marrow of prayer is seen when He who is invoked by prayer takes possession of the mind of him who prays, and the mind of the latter is absorbed in God whom he addresses, his prayers ceasing and no selfconsciousness abiding in him, even to this extent that a mere thought about his prayers appear to him a veil and a hindrance; This state is called 'absorption' by the doctors of Mystical lore, when a man is so utterly absorbed that he perceives nothing of his bodily members, nothing of what is passing without, nothing of what occurs to his mind—yea, when he is, as it were, absent from all these things whatsoever, journeying first *to* his Lord, then *in* his Lord. But if the thought occurs to him that he is totally absorbed, that is a blot; for only that absorption is worthy of the name which is unconscious of absorption. The beginning of the path is the journey to God, and that the journey in God is its goal, for in this latter, absorption in God takes place. At the outset this glides by like a flash of light barely striking the eye; but thereafter becoming habitual, it lifts the mind into a higher world, wherein the most pure, essential Reality is manifested, and the human mind is imbued with the form of the spiritual world whilst the majesty of the Deity evolves and discloses itself".¹⁶

The mystic experience is by its very nature incommunicable. It is intensely direct. But it can transmute itself into an idea. This is the function of mysticism or **Qurb-i-Ilahi**. Ordinarily this experience is no more than a mere sense of the unity of existence one feels,

A sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.¹⁷

—*Tintern Abbey*

Sometimes this sense strikes a deeper note and develops into a mood, that 'blessed mood',

In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened: — that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.¹⁸

—*Tintern Abbey*

It is only such a mood, when it becomes habitual, that marks the beginning of what Ghazali styles as the 'journey to God'. Between this stage and the beginning of the 'journey in God' there are diverse mile-stones to reach and pass by. The climax is 'absorption'. The history of Islam can claim countless earnest men and women who having undertaken this journey to God and thence onward in God have disdained to trace back their steps to the temporal world of man. In their several degrees, they have certainly enriched their individual lives with a vision of the Reality; but have been lost to society. They have failed to heed the 'balance set in their nature'. Such are styled the

Majzub or the absorbed. They are not the type who can function, in the Quranic sense, as the 'vicegerents of God on earth'.

On the other hand, there have been quite a galaxy of spiritual stalwarts in Islamic history who mindful of their duty to man have come back to man, and brought with them what knowledge was vouchsafed to them in their mystic journey and spread it among mankind. The supreme example was set by the Prophet who transmuted the closest vision he had of Reality on the night of his spiritual ascent, described in chapter 53 of the Qur'an, into a plan of a new world order. On that occasion, says the Qur'an:

And He (God) revealed to his servant (Prophet) what He revealed

'His (Prophet's) heart falsified not what he saw.

His eye turned not aside, nor did it wander:

For he saw the greatest signs of his Lord."¹⁹

To the Prophet this was not just a vision. It had a meaning. The vision was to transmute itself into an idea of a world order, 'The family of God', every member of which was to be a shepherd unto every other.

Mystic experience, however incommunicable, has in the concept of the Qur'an its own function to discharge as a dynamic source of knowledge stimulating action worthy of the role man has to play as the vicegerent of God on Earth.

CHAPTER IV

THE WILL OF GOD

BELIEVE AND work righteously' is the comprehensive Quranic injunction—work, informed by knowledge.

"Those who believe and do right: Joy is for them, and bliss their journey's end".¹

But is man free to will and free to work? Expressions confront us at every turn in the **Qur'an** proclaiming that nothing happens except as God Wills. And yet responsibility is attached to man's action: and hopes of reward and fears of punishment are held out. And then, as against this, stand out a host of verses calling upon man to exert his mind and choose between right and wrong; and he is told:

"God does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in their hearts".²

"Man shall have nothing but what he strives for".³

"And whatever suffering ye suffer, it is what your hands have wrought".⁴

What is one to make of these apparent contrarities crossing and recrossing each other? Is man after all free to will and act or not free at all: Is there a way out? Such were the questionings which in the early centuries of Islam divided the Islamic society broadly into two warring camps—one called **Qadriyah** or those who believed in the freedom of will, and the other **Jabriyah** or those who believed in pre-determination or absolute divine control and direction of human action.

Although this controversy reached its climax in the days of the Abbasids, the doctrine of pre-determination had already received during the preceding Ummayyid

Khilafat such firm fixity in the Muslim religious thought that no other view had, in the circumstances of the times, the slightest chance to dislodge it.

At best it could be disturbed as was done under the impact of foreign strains; but it could not be supplanted. The determinist outlook not merely triumphed in the conflict, but has ever since clung to the Muslim mind and robbed the **Qur'an** of the corrective it had offered to this aeons' old notion prevailing in some form or other in the East. No wonder then that non-muslim European critics have at times delivered sweeping judgements on Islam. They have called the creed of the **Qur'an** "devoid of love", and its God a "Pitiless tyrant, a tremendous autocrat, an uncontrolled and unsympathising Power". Take a few instances.

Says Palgrave:

"No superiority, no distinction, no pre-eminence can be lawfully claimed in Islam by one creature over another in the utter equalisation of their unexceptional servitude and abasement. All are alike tools of one solitary Force, which employs them to crush or to benefit, to truth or error, to honour or shame, to happiness or misery, quite independently of their individual fitness, deserts or advantage and simply because He wills it and as He wills it".⁶

Observes Sir William Muir:

"In Islam the relation of Allah to the world is such that not only all free will but all freedom in the exercise of the intellect is preposterous. God is so great and the character of His greatness is so pantheistically absolute that there is no room for the human. All good and all evil come directly from Allah... Hope perishes under the weight of His iron bondage and pessimism becomes the popular philosophy".⁷

Says Clarke:

"Islam saw God but not man; saw the claims of Deity, but not the rights of humanity; saw authority but failed to see freedom, therefore hardened into despotism stiffened into formalism, sank into death".⁸

Criticism of the **Qur'an** of the type disclosed here may be unpalatable to a Muslim, but he has to thank himself for it. The initial responsibility for it belongs to the doctors of Muslim theology in the Middle Ages and to their successors as well, who through an inept approach to the Quranic concept of the "Will of God"—the abiding basis for right human activity—have kept the meaning and purpose of the **Qur'an** concealed from the mind of man giving thereby a handle to wilful critics to read rank fatalism in Islam. Sir William Muir and the other writers quoted above would not go behind the interpretation of the mediaeval Muslim theologians on whom they depended entirely for the meaning of the **Qur'an** and make a direct approach to the **Qur'an** and apply the 'scientific method' to ascertain from the **Qur'an** itself what its terms such as the "Will of God" and "Divine Decrees" actually meant. Indeed, they could have turned to the life of the Prophet himself and sought an answer, as another student of the subject, Prof: Ardaser Sorabjee N. Wadia, a Zoroastrian by faith, tried to do in his "Message of Mohammed". Dealing with the charge of fatalism against Islam, the Professor observes:

"If it were so, it is obvious that nowhere would we, or ought we to find a better exemplification of this creed of fatalism than in the life and activities of one who originated and propounded it—namely, of Mohammed himself. Yet, what do we find in the recorded events of Mohammed's life? A buoyant childhood: an active boyhood; an enterprising period of youth, during which he took part in two commercial ventures necessitating long wearisome journeys of months through the dreary, scorching deserts, a restless manhood given wholly to thinking out the deepest problems of life and destiny, involving an endless travail of the soul, and a protracted middle-age which commenced in comparative calm and ended in perhaps the most strenuous period of his life made up of battles, sieges and expeditions. Such a long and vigorous career, crossed and recrossed by the varied moods and tricks of fortune, does not look like one given to mere passive acceptance of things as they are or to sheer indolent acquiescence in events as they happen, which Fatalism rightly so called, presupposes and

enforces. Rather, it has the appearance of a career which believes in actively and courageously working out solely and remaining absolutely resigned to the inscrutable will of God".⁹

Among the factors responsible for the shroud that has rested on the **Qur'an**, the most striking is the dismal failure on the part of our early doctors of religion who laid the foundations of the mediaeval Islam which we have inherited to notice what was so clear that the essential purpose of the **Qur'an** was to explain and interpret to man the **Sunnat Allah**¹⁰ or the ways of Allah; and that for that purpose, it followed a method and a style of its own in the presentation of its subject and employed a diction specifically classified into **Muhkamat** or words to be taken in the literal sense and **Mutashabihat** or what were to be conceived figuratively.¹¹ What absorbed the primary attention of these early theologians, however, was not this **Sunnat** of Allah but another **Sunnat**, the **Sunnat** of the Muslim Arab community, their customs and usages, modelled on what they believed to be the practice of the Prophet, years after the Prophet had passed away—customs and usages of the Arabs codified under several systems of **fiqh**, covering every detail of life. So obsessed were they with this task that they could not give adequate attention to the study and exposition of the **Sunnat Allah** or **Fitrat Allah** or **Khalq Allah** which indeed, according to the **Qur'an**, was the "right religion". For, says the **Quran**:

"Turn steadfastly to the path of devotion (*Din*, religion) to the ways of Allah, (*Fitrat Allah*) — for which He hath fitted man. There is no altering of the ways of Allah, (*Khalq Allah*). That is the right religion; but most people know it not."¹²

Note that the terms **Fitrat Allah** and **Khalq Allah** are used precisely in the same sense as **Sunnat Allah** or way or course or custom of Allah in 35: 41-42—"Ye shall not find any change in the **Sunnat Allah**; ye shall not find any variability in the **Sunnat Allah**". This **Sunnat**, this course is fixed by Allah to maintain order and harmony in life of not only the entire universe, but of every object of creation; and the **Qur'an** takes care to emphasise that this **Sunnat** or

Khalq Allah is indeed **Khalq-ar-Rahman** or devised not by any "uncontrolled and unsympathising Power" or a "pitiless tyrant" but by "One Beneficent"¹³ who however transcendent is yet "nearer man than his jugular vein",¹⁴ and 'responds to the call of every one who calls Him'.¹⁵ It is this **Sunnat** which is the "Will of God", and man has but to conform to it for a life of peace and order.

As we have pointed out above, the **Qur'an** follows a method of its own to explain the **Sunnat** of Allah, and employs a diction appropriate to it. **Fadhakkir bil Quran**, "Explain the **Qur'an** in the manner of the **Qur'an**" is the directive the Book itself gives.¹⁶ The directive was evidently necessitated by the fact that the **Qur'an** had primarily to be explained to the unlettered Arabs of the Prophet's time among whom and in whose language and idiom it was delivered, and that it had to be explained to them in a manner helpful to a clear grasp of its meaning. States the **Qur'an**:

"He it is who hath sent to the unlettered folk an apostle from among themselves to rehearse His signs to them and purify them, and to impart to them a knowledge of the *Kitab* and *Hikmah*, the Book and the wisdom; for aforesaid they were in manifest error".¹⁷

The directive here is to teach or explain the **Kitab**, the Book or the revelations it contains together with the **Hikmah** or the wisdom or purpose underlying them. And this is to be done in a special manner—the manner of the **Qur'an**. But this manner was never a subject of serious study in any Muslim theological seminar. On the other hand, the early theologians either went by the literal meaning of the word, or were engrossed in applying to the interpretation of the Quranic terms, particularly the **mutashabihat**, the formulae of the scholastic philosophy of Greece after the example of the early Christian theologians, as well as, the dialectic poses which they themselves developed in the name of 'Ilm al **Kalam**' or dialectic. Indeed, some of them with a mystic bent of mind read strange esoteric meaning into them impelled no doubt by the notion that **hikmah** in the phrase **Kitab wal hikmah** posited an "inner

meaning" for the words of the **Qur'an**, and that this was clothed especially in the **mutashabihat**. That such could not be the normal connotation of the term **Hikmah** is endorsed by the verse:

"Certainly we sent apostles with clear proofs, and sent down them *Kitab wal mizan*, the Book and the balance, that men may observe equipoise".¹⁸

Here the word 'Mizan' or 'balance' stands in the same relation to the word 'Kitab' or 'Book' in the phrase **Kitab wal Mizan** as **Hikmah** in the phrase **Kitab wal Hikmah** and must be taken to be synonymous with it in import. **Hikmah** is indeed the **Mizan**, the rational basis on which the **Kitab**, the Revelation, is to rest, and help mankind to "observe equipoise" or live a balanced life. Few paused to consider that the **mutashabihat** even as the **muhkamat** were to be explained primarily to the unlettered folk for whom and among whom and in whose language the revelations were delivered, and that consequently these too were meant to be comprehensible to them in the first instance. A figure of speech, if it has any purpose to serve, has but to reinforce graphically what has been stated in plain words, and hence the **mutashabihat**, the figurative language, should not have been allowed to mean anything abnormally different from what had been conveyed in the **Muhkamat** or plain words.

The **Qur'an** is essentially a moral code of conduct as it expressly claims to be,¹⁹ and as such its method of appeal is necessarily direct. Expressions such as "See things for yourselves and reflect"; "Travel in the land and see for yourselves the consequences to those who have rejected";²⁰ "here are signs for men of understanding",²¹ "for folk who reflect"²² repeating themselves tirelessly at every turn, constitute the manner of that appeal. The method is one of observation, and analogy within the easy grasp of man in every stage of intellectual development. The sense of appreciation may of course vary with every stage of intellect; but the common feature is its easy intellegibility.

The basic concept of life which the **Qur'an** furnishes is that the entire world of creation and everything contained therein is sustained by certain definite laws inherent in

each object and in harmony with each other, that these laws of nature, the **Sunnat Allah**, are necessarily unalterable and that man's joy in life should lie in co-operating with these laws and imitating them in his own activity, assisted by the "balance set in his nature".²³ These laws constitute the "Will of God" in the phraseology of the **Qur'an** and man is but to try to the best of his ability to conform to them for a life of peace and order. This, to use the Quranic expression is "to surrender to His Will".²⁴

To bring this fundamental point home, the Quran repeatedly draws attention to the indifference of man to see the things which he can clearly see for himself and reflect. The vast panorama of nature, the beautiful constellations moving in the heavens, giving to earth its alternation of day and night, its light and darkness, the soaring clouds that send down rain from the sky to water the earth, the tiny seed that man sows therein shooting out a luxuriant crop affording him his subsistence, the 'moist germ' out of which he himself grows into being, and a host of similar familiar objects must suggest to him that some "benevolent law" or purpose—**Khalq ar Rahman**—holds together all that he sees or feels through his senses. It emphasises that "the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them are not created in sport",²⁵ but for a serious end, that each object of creation is made subject to the laws intrinsic in its nature in order that it might fulfil its function, and that man "fitted by nature with a sense of balance and discrimination"²⁶ is to conduct himself in accordance with the laws of his own being, and in harmony with the laws governing the rest of creation. "That is the right religion or path of devotion to the ways of Allah," says the **Qur'an**, and for which "man hath been fitted by his nature," but its regret is that man hath proved "unjust", "indifferent", and "hath corrupted the world".²⁷

So, whenever the **Qur'an** asserts that nothing happens against the Will of God, it only means that the law inherent in the object concerned is at work and has its inevitable course and duration. Man's role on earth is to understand these laws and conform to them; and whenever he neglects

to understand and conform to them; the consequence will naturally prove harmful to him. The Quranic way of expressing this is: "We have willed it so". In other words: the law must have its course: the cause must produce its effect. That is the scheme of life divinely devised or determined and man is not free to alter that scheme, the "ways of God". This is the main domain of life where man has but to conform or surrender to the Will of God or the laws of life which sustain it, if he chooses to profit by them of his own free will.

The Qur'an sometimes speaks of men who refuse to follow the right course and persist in that attitude, and have grown hardened therein. The Book refers to them in this wise: "They have minds, but reflect not; they have eyes, but they see not; they have ears, but hear not."²⁸ Here again the reference is to the neglect—determined neglect—of the "balance set in the nature of man". The law of life will then have its course, "we have sealed their minds their ears, their eyes."²⁹ That is the Quranic style of expressing the consequence..

Sometimes the Qur'an speaks of men who in their pursuit of a wrong course or in the course of their neglect of some law of life, pause and foresee the nature of the consequence to follow and wish to retrace their steps or resolve to conform to the law which they have so far neglected. Then that law or force so courted acts in them with a revived vitality to their advantage. Fate or the impending consequence is altered. The process is one of repentance and forgiveness. "He guideth to Himself him who turneth to Him",³⁰ or to the laws of life, to God's ways "Whosoever committeth a sin, committeth it to his own hurt",³¹ stresses the Qur'an, but adds characteristically: "Your Lord hath prescribed for himself a law of mercy, so that if any one of you commit a sin through ignorance and afterwards turn and amend, He surely will be Gracious, Merciful."³² "If man but takes one step towards God," adds the Prophet, "God takes two to meet him."³³

The point to note here is that the initiative for movement and reform should lie with man. That is the law—His

Will. So it is with individuals, and so with nations. "God doth not change the condition of a people unless they change that which is in their hearts".³⁴

That such is the meaning or import of the Quranic expressions: "We have willed: We have decreed" and so forth with reference to man's freedom to will and act, is unmistakably clear from the following verses which are couched in the plainest language, the Muhkamat, which are to be taken in the literal sense.

"Those who strive in our way, we shall show them the way".³⁵

"Whosoever followeth the right course, it is only for the good of his own soul that he doth so; and whosoever followeth the wrong course doth so to its own hurt. No soul charged with its own responsibility shall bear another's responsibility".³⁶

"I will not suffer the work of any among you that worketh, whether male or female, to be lost".³⁷

"By the soul and Him who balanced it and infused into the same the sense of discrimination and the power of choosing between the wrong and the right, happy is he who keepeth it pure and unhappy is he who corrupteth it".³⁸

It must be clear by now, that the Qur'an places no restrictions on man's movement either in thought or knowledge or action save those which should suggest themselves to him through a proper exercise of what the Qur'an calls the "sense of balance set in the nature of man". The proviso is of primary importance. One must know one's limits and at the same time appreciate the appropriateness of a move in a given situation. That is the way to exercise the balance properly.

"O Allah: I seek refuge from every desire that cannot be sated and from that prayer that thou may'st not entertain",³⁹ is the caution which the Prophet himself observed. This sense of balance or the law of harmony which, as the Qur'an proclaims binds and permeates the entire universe, is in the sphere of human life the supreme moral law which through man's own free will must permeate all his activity

both in relation to himself and in relation to his external world, and guide his energies harmoniously to, the highest aim. That is the way to "believe and work righteously".

The "sense of balance" is the unerring force in man to which all his activity is to be referred. It should suggest to him that even as he is to conform to the general laws of nature for a life of order, even so, he is to respect the laws of life that work in his very soul to give inward peace. "There are signs even in your soul".⁴⁰ They too constitute "the will of God" and one is to conform to them also. Conformity implies exertion, and exertion one has to bear if he chooses to move forward from state to state towards perfection as is the purpose underlying his being.⁴¹ The truth is brought home by a reference to the process of evolution at work in nature. The seed sown in the earth struggles hard and long against resistance of diverse sorts before it appears in the form of delicious fruit. Even the moist germ which gets into the womb of a prospective mother, what travail does it not pass through before it emerges into its human form! Similarly, observes the Qur'an, man's movement towards moral and spiritual perfection is fraught with inevitable discomfort on the way. The discomfort is to test him and to press him into a better mould. "We try you with evil and with good, by way of an ordeal".⁴² That is the law of existence, His Sunnat, his habit or practice, and one has to bear it or "surrender to it." That is in man's own interest. It will elevate him. To question it is to deny oneself the opportunity of advance.

In the failure to invoke his sense of balance and view life's experience in proper perspective, lie the roots of what man calls "misery". This weakness is common to most people; for, deep in the heart of man there dwells a restless thirst for bliss and he expects the world to quench it. Man makes his will the measure of his rights; but the world takes its own course. Disappointment follows, and he "rails at God and Fate."

"The world's course proves the terms
On which man wins content;
Reason the proof confirms—
We spurn it, and invent
A false course for the world, and for ourselves, false powers.

"Riches we wish to get,
Yet remain spendthrifts still;
We would have health, and yet
Still use our bodies ill;
Battered by our own prayers, from youth to life's last scenes.

"We would have inward peace,
Yet will not look within;
We would have misery cease,
Yet will not cease from sin;
We want all pleasant ends, but will not use harsh means.

"We do not what we ought,
What we ought not, we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through;
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier powers."⁴³

— *Empedocles on Etna.*

The world's course which Empedocles speaks of here is the law of life, the way of God or His **Sunnat**, as the **Qur'an** styles it. It proves the terms on which man wins content. Reason confirms the proof. But man spurns it and invents for himself a false course. He makes a fool of himself—"A fool of his own woe". Folly brings its own suffering. That is fate, the law of life, the decree of God, **Taqdir**. "Whatever suffering ye suffer" points out the **Quran** it "is what your own hands have wrought".⁴⁴

Fate or **Taqdir** is used in the **Qur'an** in three broad senses. Firstly, there is the field of what we may term the Divine initiative or of the operation of the laws of Nature—**Fitrat Allah** or **Khalq Allah** or **Sunnat Allah**. They are signs of a plan of existence necessarily conceived in advance

or pre-determined even as every human plan is pre-determined before it is put into action, with this difference that whereas man's knowledge of the nature of things entering his plan being limited, he changes it as experience warrants him, whereas God's knowledge of everything being perfect, occasion cannot arise to alter the course he adopts. God does not alter his ways or the laws of nature or the fundamental bases of life, of its ebbs and flows. They form the exclusive domain of divinity, and man as man has no ground to question them, because he cannot grasp from his perspective the working of these laws or the reality about them. He is simply to believe that they are but *Khalq-ur-Rahman* or the "laws devised by God, the Lord of Compassion", and must necessarily be good. His responsibility lies only in the nature of the use he makes of these laws. Every reaction to them is *Taqdir*.

Secondly, there is the field of human initiative. "Whoever followeth the right course, he doth so for the good of his own soul, and whosoever followeth the wrong course doth so to its own hurt".⁴⁵ "Our own acts" for good or ill, are mightier powers. That too is *Taqdir*. Man here is the maker of his own fate. The balance set in the nature of man or the sense of discrimination ingrained in him must, in all circumstances, be the final guide in distinguishing between what he ought and what he ought not to do. The *Qur'an* has laid down certain definite injunctions touching human conduct, as may easily be endorsed by reason and experience. They denote certain principles of life operating for peace and order, and indicate what one has to avoid in life and what to observe. These directions or commandments reflect the principles of harmony subsisting in the world of nature and for that reason may be taken to signify the Will of God, and one has to conform to them; also. Conformity with them and non-conformity produce opposite results. Both are styled *Taqdir*.

And lastly, there is the reaction on our life of the deeds of others. Sometimes they bring us joy. The joy may seem unexpected. But the very talent to feel the joy proceeding from the good deeds of others is the result of a

process of righteousness in ourselves. Even that is **Taqdir**. Sometimes the deeds of others bring us pain and suffering:-

" Though of ours no weakness spoil our lot,
 Though the non-human powers of nature harm us not,
 The ill-deeds of other men make often our life dark ".⁴⁶

— *Empedocles on Etna.*

Taqdir in this context expresses itself in one of two ways. It may be that those who have thus suffered had not in proper time anticipated the rise of evil tendencies in others and exercised proper check on them by every reasonable means open to them or to use the Quranic phrase "did not restrain wrong doing", or it may be that they knowingly abstained from interference. They have to pay the penalty for the failure to do so. This holds good in domestic as well as national and international life. Much of the suffering in this world, including the suffering wrought by wars is preventable by people who through indifference or a false sense of tolerance which in certain situations amounts to criminal unconcern with what is going on around them, allow evil to prosper. Suffering is the result not merely for the wrong doer but also for those seemingly innocent, who have failed to prevent wrong doing. That is the law of life or **Taqdir**. Neglect of duty to check evil in time in others is in reality participation in the evil.

Here comes in the injunction of the **Qur'an**, the injunction designated as **Jihad**, another term which, as **Kutb** already noticed, has come to be an odium among non-muslim circles not fully conversant with the Quranic connotation of it. The term literally means 'exertion' or striving against all that is evil, whether in thought, or feeling or action. That is an essential condition of a peaceful life; so much so, that the highest and the most trying form of it is the **Jihad** against one's own evil ways. To fight evil desires rising from within and let life run on lines which bring inward peace is by no means an easy affair. Fighting with arms those who are out to disturb the peace of the world or bent on the destruction of the good in life is **Jihad**,

as commonly understood, but the Jihad with one's own self is indeed a hard task. Hence it is called 'Jihad-e-Akbar', the greatest of Jehads. To abstain from this Jihad in one's own personal case is to let the 'Self' disintegrate. Likewise to abstain from remonstrating with the evil around by thought or deed as the case may demand or warrant, is to be a party to the disintegration of corporate happiness for man. The ill-deeds of other men involve us in the result of their ill-deeds whenever we abstain from putting a check on them. The question of one's life getting dark on that account shall not arise as Empedocles fancies it does. It is on the other hand a penalty one has to pay for letting others freely to indulge in evil deeds.

There is another side to this very problem. We remonstrate against evil. We exert and do Jihad against it. The utmost what one should do is done, and yet evil triumphs bringing suffering with it. Even that is **Taqdir**. But that should not "darken our life" as such a feeling would betray the sense of frustration and defeatism in life. The **Qur'an** warns us against the growth of that feeling. One is to bear it and turn failure to moral victory. That is righteous action or 'Amal-i-Saleh'.

"By Time, verily, man's life is at a discount, save of those who have faith, and do the things that be right, and enjoin truth on one another, and enjoin steadfastness".⁴⁷

"We test you with evil and with good, as an ordeal".⁴⁸

The suffering involved in the upholding of truth is a test and these who bear the ordeal elevate themselves in the scale of life and enter the ranks of the **Sabirin** or those who endure. The ordeal is implicit in the march onward from state to state towards Reality.

It was in a situation like this, that Christ in the agony of his soul on the night at Gethsmane cried out "O my Father! If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"⁴⁹ —words worthy of a Prince among the **Sabirin**; those who endure steadfastly.

Lastly, when all is said on the subject that what is called Taqdir is in some form or other the name for a stage in the process of human activity, the **Qur'an** reserves to God a realm of activity on which man as man has no meaning to enter—the realm of 'Divine Veto.' However, endowed with knowledge, however circumspect, man cannot always be certain of the result he anticipates. A stage does come when all that is humanly possible is done, and yet the result is not as anticipated or to one's liking. In the world of morals and of moral justice, the good intention is what matters and must bring its own satisfaction. That is one's real reward. In the material sphere the result may not be pleasing at first; but God knows what its final form is to be.

"It may be you dislike a thing which is good for you and it may be you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows, ye know not".⁴⁹

"To God belong the secrets of the heavens and the earth. All affairs are referred back to Him; devote thyself then to His service and put thy trust in Him. Thy Lord is not regardless of what ye do".⁵⁰

The task then before man is to do a thing that be right and leave the rest to God. He has but to conform his ways to the ways of God, his will to the divine will and to bear and endure the ordeals of life with truth and steadfastness. **That is the cardinal message of the Qur'an.**

After all, life on this side of the grave is not the whole of it. The life beyond also matters. It is a continuation of it. "Your creation and resurrection are but a single soul".⁵¹ The result of one's good deeds may not be discernible in this life; but it will be crystal clear in the next. Only, man has to do all that is possible for him to do to live in conformity with the will and ways of God leaving the rest to Him, in fervent love and trust and hope. That is the way to live in Islam. No wonder Goethe exclaimed. "If this be Islam, do we not all live in Islam"⁵² and, Carlyle a soul akin to Goethe echoed the cry:

I say, this is the only true morality known. A man is right and invincible, virtuous and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely while he joins to the great Law of the World, in spite of all superficial laws, temporary appearances, profit-and-loss calculations. And his first chance of co-operating with it, or getting into the course of it, is to know with his whole soul that it *is*, that it is good, and alone good! This is the soul of Islam, and it is probably the soul of Christianity".⁵³

Asks the Qur'an:

" Whither then are ye going ?

Verily this is naught but a reminder to all mankind :

To him among you who willeth to walk in a straight path :

But will it, ye shall not, unless as God willeth it, the Sustainer of the worlds ".⁵⁴

How then is one to will as God willeth, or to join to the great Law of the World?

CHAPTER -V

AMAL-I-SALEH

IT MUST be clear by now that human life, according to the Qur'an, is to express itself in a system of activity promoting peace and harmony in life, and that subject to that end in view and in conformity with the principles underlying it, man has every freedom to will and act. And there is the assurance to every individual: "On no soul do we lay a responsibility greater than it can bear".¹

According to the **Quran**, man has a dual responsibility to discharge. One is in relation to himself, the other is in relation to his external world. The one is to acknowledge in thought and action, what is styled as **Huquq Allah** or the rights of God; the other is to acknowledge equally well **Huquq-al-Ibad** or **Huquq-an-Nas**, or the rights of the external world of creation. The former has to express itself in a process of self-development—physical, intellectual and spiritual. In other words, man's primary responsibility is to invite God, so to say, exercise His right to dwell in the individual and urge him to use properly the balance set in his nature. The idea is in conformity with the Quranic exhortation: "Believers: If ye help or co-operate with God, God will help you, and set your feet firm."² The other responsibility lies in developing social conscience and in caring for the welfare of others. This is respecting in one's life and activity the rights of others. The two terms may as well be styled as "obligations to one's self" and "obligations to society". The two types of responsibilities are not to be regarded as exclusive. They are merely two facets of one and the same attitude towards life, of the same activity proceeding from it and signify the character of the mind one has to develop. It is this mind which matters in determining responsibility for every human action. "Actions rest

on motives',³ says the Prophet, because motive is the index to the mind or to the manner in which the mind chooses to exercise the balance set in the nature of man and expresses itself in action. It is why every stress is laid on purity of motives. And this purity is promoted by a proper exercise of the "balance" aiming at a harmonious blending of the **Huquq Allah** with the **Huquq-al-'Ibad** or the obligations to self with the obligations to society, or by identifying one's own interests with the interests of the world at large. Such is **Amal-i-Saleh** or righteous work.

The culture of Islam is but an expression of this process. The directive inspiring the process is summed up in the words of the Prophet: "Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God".⁴ The obligations to one's self and the obligations to others are here placed side by side to form integral aspects of one's activity in life. Whatever one's role either in one's family circle, or in society at large, one has to be mindful of this dual responsibility. To be so mindful is **Khair** or 'Good,' and not to be so mindful is **Sharr** or 'Evil'. The distinction is to be upheld in every sphere of life's activity—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, economic and political. It is this distinction which underlies also the principle distinguishing the **halal**, the permissible or the lawful from the **haram** or unlawful, and which also forms the basis of the injunction calling upon man to "enjoin the right conduct and forbid the wrong". The distinction applies to individual, as well as to corporate life, and cuts across both **Huquq Allah** and **Huquq-al-'Ibad**. Righteous work in the context of the commandment "Believe and work righteously" has no other meaning for man except to bear this distinction in mind in all activity, whether it concerns his own self or his relations with his fellow beings or his conduct towards dumb creatures. The personal virtues of kindness, purity, chastity, love, affection, truth, respect for covenants, forbearance, forgiveness, trust-worthiness, justice, mercy and the like are not mere luxuries to be indulged in at convenience but are indispensable for a righteous living. And the opposite

qualities such as hate, cruelty, indecency, fornication, adultery, dishonesty, falsehood, treachery, hypocrisy, spite, defection, unfaithfulness, and exploitation of the weak which work for the disintegration of society are not only vices but positive sins in Islam, and are therefore not merely to be strenuously avoided but firmly discountenanced.

Such is the wide interpretation given by the Qur'an to **Amal-i-saleh** or righteous work—work that helps man to live in peace with himself and in peace with his fellow beings and the rest of creation. To so live is to live in Islam which itself means 'Peace'—peace realized in the devotion of all our faculties to the Will of God which as we have explained already, is nothing but the law of life devised in His infinite goodness to work for harmony expressive of the unity of existence. The duty of every Muslim is to see that every little act of his conforms to this law of harmonious living.

"Verily my prayers, and my sacrifice and my Life and my death are all for Allah".⁶

Life thus viewed, every action of man assumes a spiritual significance. It is this significance which distinguishes **Amal-i-saleh** from every other form of human activity. The spirit underlying it, whatever the field of expression, the **Huquq Allah** or **Huquq-al-Ibad**, is the result of a harmonious interaction of the twin spiritual faculties in man—the sense of God, and the sense of fellow-feeling. It is this which supplies the emotional background to the display in every situation of a third faculty, the sense of "balance set in his nature",—essentially an intellectual force—and gives to the resultant action the quality of righteousness which the Qur'an speaks of. To pursue the path of righteousness or of **Amal-i-saleh** is in reality to respect the ways of Allah, and to show affection to the 'family of Allah' or in the phrase of Carlyle to join to the "Great law of the world". It is along this path that we meet the **Salehin** and the **Muttaqin**, the **Sabirin**, the **Ulul Absar** and the **Ulul Albab** and the rest of the noble types, of men and women who form the very salt of the earth. Whenever the devout Muslim raises his voice in his prayer to God to say "show

us the right path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed", it is this path of true righteousness or *Amal-i-saleh* that he desires to be shown, and guided therein. The highest aim which a nation or community may, on the analogy of the individual, aspire to is not material or political superiority over others as seems to have had a fascination for ambitious people throughout history. The very idea of a distinction on this basis between one community and another is excluded from the concept of international life favoured by Islam, the concept of a "fold, every member of which shall be a shepherd or keeper unto every other". The criterion of superiority must lie in the character of the corporate righteousness displayed. Prayed the Prophet both for himself and his followers:

"O Allah! Make us guides in the path of Life, and keep us guided ourselves therein - neither going astray, nor leading astray".⁸

An attitude such as this is possible when one has blended his sense of *Huquq Alah* with that of *Huquq-an-Nas* or *Huquq-al-Ibad*, an attitude in the development of which every one is recommended by the Prophet to seek divine help:

"O Allah! I seek Thy refuge from misleading others, and from being misled by others; from betraying others into error, and from being betrayed into error by others; from doing any wrong to others; and from being wronged by others; and from drawing others into ignorance, and from being drawn into ignorance by others".⁹

"O Allah! I seek Thy refuge from any wrong that I may do to others, and from any wrong that others may do to me, from any harshness that I may show to others, and from any harshness that others may show to me; and from any sin that Thou mayst not forgive".¹⁰

I have quoted from the prayers of the Prophet just to reach by the quickest route the mind favoured of the **Quran**; for, a prayer is the surest index to the mind of one who prays. It affords an insight into the working of his mind, his thoughts and feelings and the very object of his life. There is no prevarication, no hiding or suppression of truth, no luxurious display of poetic fancy when man stands face to face with the Creator of his being to lay bare before

Him his heart, and give an account of his mundane struggles, his achievements and disappointments, and to ask of him the things that matter. His prayer, at such a moment, is an expression of a pressing feeling, and is for that reason naturally simple and direct. The note that he strikes in his outpourings points to the character of the mind that he has developed.

In Islam, the prayer that one offers whether singly or in congregation, whether at the appointed hours of devotion or at any sudden call or urge from within to turn to his Lord in the midst of his daily work is all couched in the phraseology of the Qur'an or that of the Prophet's own utterances preserved in the **Hadith**. Even when the suppliant expresses himself in his own tongue, the form of prayer is dictated by the same source. The same attitude toward his Master, the same conception behind the words used, the same spiritual atmosphere generated by them are revived in his mind, and nothing that he says is not covered by the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet.

"O Allah! Make Islam most pleasing to me",¹¹ is one of the Prophet's prayers. It is a brief utterance; yet, how comprehensive! The suppliant here asks for the path of Islam to be smoothed for him, to be made most pleasing,—the path of Islam which is the path of devotion, of strenuous struggle with evil and of bringing our own will into accord with the Supreme Will, or of devoting all our talents to the service of the highest in life. He asks for a life disciplined in the ways of Allah or the laws intrinsic in our nature working for peace. It is a duty in the discharge of which few there are who can claim not to have faltered. Yet, a true Muslim is to ask of God to make such a trying task most pleasing to him.

It is towards this end that every prayer of Islam is directed. Mark the character of the following two prayers which have found their way into the regular daily worship of a Muslim. One is the common prayer of Islam and the most compulsory with which every service begins, and the other is what enters into his vespers:

"All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the day of requital! Thee do we worship, and of Thee alone do we seek help. Show us the right path, the path of those whom Thou has blessed and not of those with whom thou art displeased, nor of those who have gone astray. Amen!"¹²

This prayer repeated several times every day serves as a recurrent reminder to a Muslim of the character of life that he is to pursue—a life of righteous conduct. The same note is struck in his vespers:

"O Allah! Guide me to be of those whom Thou hast guided and preserve me to be of those whom Thou hast preserved, and befriend me to be of those whom Thou hast befriended, and bless me in what Thou dost grant me, and protect me from the evil of everything that Thou may'st prescribe for me; for surely, Thou alone canst prescribe what Thou desireth, and none can over-rule Thee. Surely, he whom Thou befriendeth is never disgraced. Blessed art Thou, our Lord, and Exalted!"¹³

It must be noted that every Islamic prayer is a resolve to conform with Divine aid to the ways of God or **Sunnat Allah** in order that one might discharge one's obligations to one's own self and one's obligations to others—the **Huquq Allah** and the **Huquq-al-Ibad**.

"I ask of thee the qualities which move Thy grace and forgiveness. I ask of thee protection from doing harm to any one and I ask of thee the chance of doing good to everyone".¹⁴

"O Allah! I ask of thee steadfastness in every pursuit. I ask of Thee the intent for good action and the power to thank Thee for Thy benevolence and to render Thee devoted service. I ask of Thee the tongue that speaketh truth, and the mind that erreth not and the gift of true fellow-feeling. I seek Thy refuge from the evil of everything that Thou knoweth; and I ask of Thee the good that lieth in everything that Thou knoweth; and I seek Thy refuge from every sin of which Thou hast knowledge. And verily Thou knoweth all that we cannot know".¹⁵

Note the spirit of the following prayer:

" O Allah! Improve my spiritual life, for that is to be my refuge ; and purify my material life for I have to live it, and prepare me for the life to which I shall have to return; and keep me alive till it is good for me to be alive, and call me back when it is good for me to die. Lengthen my life in every goodly state, and turn death into bliss before any evil state supervenes " 16

Death should thus have no terror for man. What one should fear is wickedness or evil life; and it is against this that one has to seek Divine protection. In whatever man may ask for, he is never to forget his primary need for purity of life.

" O Allah! Bless me always with the joy of Thy sight and the pleasure of beholding Thy countenance unharmed by anything harmful and undisturbed by anything disturbing " 17

" O Allah! Ask of Thee a pure life, and a pure death, and a returning unto Thee that shall not call for reprehension or disgrace " 18

The prayers given above, as all others contained in the Quran and the Hadith, reveal the yearning of a type of mind every move of which is directed by an all absorbing sense of God on the one hand and by an equally powerful sense of responsibility resting on it on the other, to render in a life hereafter an account of its activity in the present.

The thought of this life hereafter which according to the Quran is "Life Indeed", is to be kept so constantly in view that the present is to be regarded as but a preparation for it, and for that reason raised, as already observed, to the position of a cardinal belief in Islam as important to the life of man as every other cardinal belief to be expressed in righteous work or **Amal-i-Saleh**.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE HEREAFTER

IN SOME form or other, the belief in the life hereafter is common to all Faiths. What that Life in reality is can be known only when one enters upon it. It is certainly not a return to earth again or what is called a 'rebirth' in flesh and blood. Life according to the Qur'an is not a cycle. It is a linear line and is to "express itself every moment in fresh glory". The description of the life to follow is given in the stories which have found their way into the **Hadith** literature and which have exercised a fascination for the mediaeval mind among Muslims. But except in a few cases, no parallel in the Qur'an. The Quranic method is to convey just a vision of it, and that by means of what are specifically called *amthal* and *mutashabihat*, parables, similitudes and metaphors, essentially symbolic in import; for, the life beyond is something which man in his present environment can scarcely comprehend or understand.⁴

The vision conveyed by means of *amthal* and *mutashabihat* is intended to be satisfying to the intellect alike of men of insight and of the less gifted. The righteous shall have a life of peace and the unrighteous one of disquiet. That is the impression which they are meant to convey. And as the similitudes offered are necessarily to be drawn from the life of comfort known, the picture of comfort provided is that of gardens beneath which rivers flow, of fountains of milk and honey, of pleasant society and so forth. But there is always a corrective to the picture clinging to the vision. The gardens of Heaven are different from those of this world. The fruits are not subject to seasons. The water of rivers does not petrify; it tastes differently. The companions are not set in corporeal frame, they are made of purity, and do not age.⁵ They do not hold vain

discourse.⁶ The entire vision is rounded up by a **Hadith-i-Qudsi**, which emphasises that these **amthal** or similitudes cannot afford even a glimpse of reality: "God says: He has prepared for his righteous servants what no eye hath seen and no ear hath heard and no mind of man hath conceived".⁷ Likewise the **amthal** touching the life in Hell all drawn from the field of corporeal suffering, are meant to symbolize the condition in which the soul of the unrighteous will find itself in its new setting. The Qur'an itself affords clarification. "What will convey to thee what the Consuming Fire (Hell) is;" asks the Qur'an; and itself furnishes the answer: "It is the fire kindled by God which leapeth up over the hearts".⁸ The verse likens Hell to a mind in spiritual distress.

The picture of Heaven and Hell, which the Qur'an conveys through its **amthal** is that of two different states of the human soul set in an environment different from that in which its present life is lived. A conversation of the Prophet with a messenger from Heracleus, recorded by Imam Fakhruddin Razi in his **Tafsir-i-Kabir** under verse 3:127 throws light on the view advanced. Referring to the verse "And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Paradise as wide as are the Heavens and the Earth prepared for those who are righteous",⁹ the Roman representative asked: "Where does Hell exist if Paradise extends over the heavens and the earth"? Quietly the Prophet parried: "Glory be to Allah: Where is the night when the day comes"?¹⁰

I may proceed a step further. According to the Qur'an every one will have to pass through Hell.¹¹ It is contended by the orthodox commentators that the text refers to a bridge over Hell which, as stated in a Hadith,¹² one has to cross on the Day of Judgment—an idea which curiously runs parallel to what prevailed in early Zoroastrianism.¹³ The Qur'an, may it be pointed out, makes no mention of such a bridge whatsoever. Even so, the contention that Hell and Heaven are but two different states of the soul in the life hereafter is upheld by the very Hadith which provides a bridge across Hell: for, to the Faithful, Hell

will say: "Cross the bridge, O true believer, for thy light hath put out my fire". The issue is clarified by Jalaluddin Rumi, the poet and mystic in his Mathnawi II, 2554-2568:

"At the gathering for judgment the Faithful will say, "O Angel, is not Hell the common road,
Trodden by the believer and the infidel alike?
Yet we saw not any smoke or fire on our way".
Then the Angel will reply: "That garden which ye saw
as ye passed,
Was indeed Hell, but unto you it appeared a pleasance of
greenery.

"Since ye strove against the flesh and quenched the
flames of lust for God's sake,
So that they became verdant with holiness and lit the
path to salvation:
Since ye turned the fire of wrath to meekness, and murky
ignorance to radiant knowledge;
Since ye made the fiery soul(nafs) an orchard where
nightingales of prayer and praise were ever singing,
So, hath Hell-fire become for you greenery and roses and
riches without end".¹⁴

Whatever the nature of Hell or Heaven, it is to be admitted that life in either sphere must eventually subserve an ultimate divine purpose common to all mankind who according to the Qur'an mark a distinct stage in creative evolution. For, it is clear that Hell and Heaven whether they are mere states of the soul or otherwise cannot remain so for all times. That would be stagnation and the stultifying of the purpose of evolution. Hence it is that the Qur'an takes care to disclose the purpose. "From state to state or from one plane to another shall ye be surely carried onward".¹⁵ It is a promise held out to the righteous and the unrighteous alike. And how is this to be fulfilled?

The Qur'an makes it repeatedly clear that the righteous on earth and the unrighteous will have to carry with him to the next stage in life the reactions of his deeds indelibly impressed on his soul. His action, his thought, his speech, his feeling, his imagination—nay, even his fancy will cling

to his neck tenaciously and mark the character of the life he has lived.

“ And every man's deed have we fastened about his neck: And on the Day of Resurrection will we bring forthwith to him a book which shall be proffered to him wide open: ‘ Read thy book: there needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day ’.”¹⁶

In ways peculiar to the new stage of life will every one be made to realise the beauty or the ugliness of the life he has pursued in the past, but which through ignorance, perversity or wilful disregard of the “Signs of God”, he had refused to see for himself while he had still the time and opportunity to make amends guided by the “balance set in his nature”. The beauty of his past life or its ugliness is brought face to face with him in the stage after death in a form which in his fresh set-up he will behold with joy or look upon in helpless anguish.

In the Quranic view, the life beautiful is to march onward towards perfection. Likewise, the life ugly has first its own process of purification to go through. For the one, there is freedom of movement, for the other, there is the handicap of the self to overcome. The situation of the one is styled as *Qurb*, nearness to God: the other, *Bu'ad* or distance from God. It is this distance which is but a reflection of its unrighteous life on earth, the distance so to say that he had assumed towards God in his earthly life. “He who has been blind here shall be blind in th' hereafter. and wander yet more from the way”.¹⁷ It is the resultant distance from the very ‘countenance of God’ that will be galling to the soul of man. To use the scriptural terms it would be “Hell” for him as “Heaven” for the other. “The most favoured of men”, said the Prophet, “will be he who shall see his Lord's countenance and His Glory, right and day, á felicity which shall surpass all the pleasures of the body as the ocean surpasses a drop of perspiration”.¹⁸

In this connection let me observe that in the Quranic sense Hell and Heaven begin for man in this life; for whatever good he does or evil, at once becomes part of him

and begins to give him a foretaste of Heaven or Hell to follow. The good deed will promote spiritual elevation; the evil deed, its own downward feeling. If man could but realise the ugliness of his deed before his death and feel sincerely repentant, and retrace his steps, there is always the grace of God to bring him peace of mind.

"And we will surely cause them to taste the mild chastisement close at hand before the great chastisement that overtakes, that they might turn to us in penitence".¹⁹

"He it is who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons the evil deeds".²⁰

That is the way to burn out impurities or pass through Hell in order to fit oneself to enter Heaven. Realisation of the ugliness of sin is naturally painful. It is mental and spiritual torture, or, in the language of the Qur'an 'Hell-fire'. The process of purification is needed not merely for the habitual transgressors but even for those essentially righteous who at times fall off the righteous track; for, no human being is infallible. In their case, while they are equipped in every other way to enjoy freedom of movement towards perfection, they will have to drop before their march begins that which would retard their progress. In the imagery of the Qur'an, they have to enter heaven by a passage through Hell, even as others.²¹ The essentially righteous finish this course in their present life by a painful realisation of the nature of whatever error they might have fallen into. It is a process of repentance in time and of forgiveness and of spiritual cleansing before death. It is to them will the words be addressed:

"O thou soul that art at rest!
Return to thy Lord, well pleased and well pleasing
Enter thou among my servants;
And enter thou my Paradise".²²

They will have no further need to pass through this mill of purification, for they have already gone through it in their present life. The process will certainly await those who have deliberately neglected their opportunities while they had the time to do so. It is they who shall have to pass in their next stage through the ordeal and in the

language of a Hadith "made clean" before they are allowed to enter Heaven to resume their march towards perfection.²³

From "state to state shall ye be carried forward", is then the plan of life, as visualised by the Qur'an. The 'life beautiful', will be carried forward from state to state till it reaches perfection or 'beholds the very vision of God'. The 'life ugly' naturally will lag behind, and have to make up a long leeway before it can emerge into the life of free movement. How long the process of purification will last is a matter with God. The term "abad", loosely rendered into English as "Eternal" on the analogy of the Judaic and Christian concept is in the Quranic sense just a period appropriate to the sin requiring purgation as fixed by God according to His own sense of time and His own sense of values. Else we shall have to face the Thought of 'duality', or a multiplicity of undying units possessing or claiming the quality of co-existence in eternity with God, a thought running counter to the Quranic concept of 'Tawhid', as also to the assertion of the Qur'an that all created objects shall have an end one day. Surely, Hell and Heaven and man enter the list.

That such is the meaning implied by the term **abad** as used by the Qur'an in respect of the process of purification in Hell is manifest from the more explicit terms used to specify the duration. Verses 22 and 23 of Ch. 78 speak of Hell as a "home of transgressors to abide therein for years". **Ahqab** is the term here used which is plural of **Huqub** which according to the Arabic English Lexicon by E. W. Lane means a period which may range from one year to eighty years, denoting at best a long time. Again, verses 109-110 of Ch. 11 of the Qur'an discountenance the idea of a life in Hell without end. Here, while the blessed shall abide in Paradise "as long as the Heavens and the Earth endure with whatever imperishable boon thy Lord may please to add", life in Hell "shall last as long as the Heavens and the Earth endure unless thy Lord willeth otherwise; Verily thy Lord doeth what He chooseth". Note that life

in Hell and Paradise cannot be eternal, since it cannot survive the Heavens and the Earth which have one day to disappear. Note also the phrase "unless thy Lord willeth otherwise", and view it in the light of the interpretation given to the 'Will of God' in Chapter IV of this volume, and it will be clear that life in Hell is to be commensurate with one's transgressions in this life. For, indeed, that such is the import of the phrase, is clear from the following verses:

"He who shall bring with him good deeds shall receive ten-fold like thereof; while he who shall bring with him evil deeds shall receive *only the like thereof* and they shall not be treated unjustly".²⁴

Every ordeal in Hell to be undergone in consequence of an evil action has thus a limit set to it. For, to prolong the agony beyond the limit warranted by the character of the evil done or for ever will clearly be injustice, and the verse promises that "none shall be treated unjustly." Adds the Qur'an:

God truly will not wrong any one of the weight of an atom; and if there be any good deed, He will multiply it, and from His presence shall be given a great recompense.²⁵

The general attitude towards the problem of Hell, notwithstanding the graphic symbolism employed to reveal the hideousness of sin and its consequences, is one of pity transformed into an ultimate force for mercy. "My mercy triumphs over My displeasure, have I inscribed on my Throne," says God, according to a Hadis-i-Qudsi of the Prophet.²⁶ The Qur'an itself records the divine affirmation: "My mercy encompasseth everything." And that should help one to reject once for all the theory of an eternal Hell so strongly upheld even today by our orthodox theologians. Let me quote a few **Hadith** of the Prophet in support of the contention.

Imam Muslim records a Hadith touching those for whom none will come forward to intercede on the Day of Judgment and for whom through His own infinite sense of mercy will God declare Himself the intercessor:

"Allah will then say: The angels and the Prophet and the faithful, they will have interceded for the sinners and now there remains none to intercede for them except the most merciful of all merciful ones. So, He will take out a handful from fire and bring out a people who never worked any good".²⁷

Kanz-ul-Ummal records two sayings of the Prophet:

"Surely a day will come over Hell, when it will be like a field of corn that has dried up after flourishing for a while". "Surely a day will come over Hell when there shall not be a single human being in it".²⁸

In the **Sihah** there are on record the following sayings of the Prophet:

1. "When a period will pass over the inmates of Hell, the Lord Compassionate will put his foot on it and Hell will break down and disappear".²⁹
2. "Hell will always desire more and more sinners to pour in but a time will come when God the Almighty will thrust his foot into it to see if that could not satisfy it. When Lo! Hell will cry out 'Enough, enough! I seek refuge in Thy Might and in Thy compassion' and will cease to exist. Heaven will always have a vast unoccupied space. God will people it by a new type of people who will thereafter dwell therein".³⁰

The idea is to let the inmates of Hell pass on into Heaven after they have gone through a process of purification.

That the companions of the Prophet were aware of this attitude of the Prophet towards the problem of Hell, may be gathered from a saying of Khalif Omar recorded in **Fath-ul-Bayan**. **Fath-ul-Bari**, **Durri-Mansur** and **Had-il-Arwah** of **Ibni-i-Quyyum** which runs:

"Even though the dwellers in Hell may be numberless as the sands of the desert, a day will surely come when they will be taken out of it".³¹

The notes of warning in the Quran against sinful life and the description of the consequences to follow which form part of the **Kitab** have a **Hikma** attached to them. This **Hikma** or purpose is obviously to create in man the

sense of horror for sin. They are there to desist him from it, and to induce in him the sense of repentance if he is already involved therein. Repentance is sure to meet with forgiveness; for, God is oft-forgiving, oft-returning and gracious is He to those who return to him. The idea is to eliminate from human life every form of resistance which sin offers to spiritual development or purity of life. To realise the nature of sin and to resolve to make amends is no doubt a trying process. But it is better one goes through it here rather than in the hereafter, where in the stage of transition called **Barzakh**, one will have to realise the hideousness of sin and burn out all impurities attached to one's soul on its account. This process of purification is an expression of Divine mercy. The sooner man repents whether here or there, the earlier is the dawn of forgiveness on him in either setting. The everlasting condemnation to Hell is repugnant to the **Hikma** underlying all references to sin and its consequences. That will be arguing against the principle of movement implicit in the verse: "From state to state shall ye be carried forward." At the same time it will be imposing a limit on the exercise of Divine mercy. God definitely refuses to agree to any limit:

"O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of God's mercy; for, God forgiveth *all* sins. He indeed is Gracious, Merciful"³²

The principle of movement "from state to state onward" is brought to mind repeatedly by the Qur'an to warn those who would not believe in death opening a new life. The Book reminds man of the most obscure conditions in which his first life began and emphasises that as even from a lower stage to a higher, man's development has been marked, even so, after death the movement upward will continue.

For, He it is who hath formed you by successive stages.³³

And it is he who hath created man of water.³⁴

And God hath caused you to spring forth from the earth like a plant.

Hereafter will He turn you back into it again, and will bring you forth anew.³⁵

"From it (earth) have we created you, and unto it will we return you, and out of it will we bring you forth a second time".³⁶

"Now of fine clay have we created man:
Then we placed him, a moist germ, in a safe abode;
Then made we the moist germ a clot of blood:
Then made the clotted blood into a piece of flesh;
Then made the piece of flesh into bones;
And we clothed the bones with flesh;
Then brought forth man of yet another make—
Blessed therefore be God, the most excellent of Makers!
Then after this ye shall surely die:
Then shall ye be waked up on the day of Resurrection".³⁷

"This is He who.....began the creation of man with clay;
Then ordained his progeny from germs of life, from despised water:
Then shaped him, and breathed of His spirit into him".³⁸

"Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?
Was he not a mere embryo in the seminal elements?
Then he became a clot; then (Allah) shaped and fashioned
And made of him a pair, male and female.
Is not He able to bring the dead to life".³⁹

"And surely from state to state will ye be carried forward".⁴⁰

The statements of the Qur'an quoted above and similar statements therein have stimulated the formulation of several theories touching the evolution of man and his destiny. But it is the biological character of these statements which has attracted special attention. Tracing the interest Muslim thinkers have evinced in the subject, Sir Mohammad Iqbal concentrates on the attitude assumed by the mystic poet, Jalaluddin Rumi and observes by way of endorsement:

"It was only natural and perfectly consistent with the spirit of the Qur'an, that Rumi regarded the question of immortality as one of biological evolution, and not a problem to be decided by arguments of a purely metaphysical nature, as some philosophers of Islam had thought. The theory of evolution, however, has brought despair and anxiety, instead of hope and enthusiasm for life to the

modern world. The reason is to be found in the unwarranted modern assumption that man's present structure, mental as well as physiological, is the last word in biological evolution, and that death, regarded as a biological event, has no constructive meaning. The world of to day needs a Rumi to create an attitude of hope, and to kindle the fire of enthusiasm for life. His inimitable lines may be quoted here:

"First man appeared in the class of inorganic things,
 Next he passed therefrom into that of plants
 For years he lived as one of the plants,
 Remembering naught of his inorganic state so different;
 And when he passed from the vegetive to the animal state,
 He had no remembrance of his state as a plant,
 Except the inclination he felt to the world of plants,
 Especially at the time of spring and sweet flowers;
 Like the inclination of infants towards their mothers,
 Who know not the cause of their inclination to the breast.
 Again the great Creator, as you know,
 Drew man out of the animal into the human state.
 Thus man passed from one order of nature to another,
 Till he became wise and knowing and strong as he is now,
 Of his first souls he has now no remembrance,
 And he will be again changed from his present soul".⁴¹

Interesting and attractive as is the vision of the evolution of man presented to us by Rumi and endorsed in scientific terminology by Sir Mohammed Iqbal who claims to be the disciple of "Pir-e-Rumi," the point should not be overlooked that the primary purpose of the Qur'an is not to present to the world of man a factual account of the rise and development of man as might be endorsed by the discoveries of science. The statements of the Qur'an touching the subject do lend themselves to biological interpretation; but they certainly do not substantiate the view advanced by Rumi that before man assumed his present form he had to live in succession as an inorganic substance, a plant, and an animal, or that he would replace his present form by that of an angel and so forth. Evidently he was influenced by Ibn-i-Maskwaih (d. 421-A.H.) who in his *Fawz-al-Akbar*

equally inspired by the same Quranic statements has enunciated a theory of the origin of man forstalling the modern scientific view. The Qur'an does postulate that man is the result of an evolutionary process and that this process will continue even after what is called **death**, but does not posit or specify any distinct progressive stages therein such as specified by Rumi.

The Qur'an divides the movement into two broad periods. Firstly, there is the period when man is fashioned and receives consciousness, or to use the language of the Qur'an "has the breath of God breathed into him". This is the period which the Qur'an refers to in the verse: "It is He who hath formed you by successive stages".⁴² The period beginning with this moment and continuing thereafter "crossing the line of what is termed 'death' is the second period in the life of man. It is that which the Qur'an has in view when it asserts: "Surely, from state to state shall ye be carried forward". The entire movement may have a biological character. But the purpose of reference to it by the Qur'an is essentially ethical and it is that which has to be kept here in view. It is to emphasise that even as from a lower stage to a higher stage man's development has been marked in the process of his making, ever so, thenceforward the movement upward has to continue. Only in this latter stage the upward motion has to assume the character of a conscious movement.

During the early period no responsibility is attached to man in the making, because he is not conscious of the movement. The question of responsibility arises the moment consciousness begins to be at play. The first stage in this period which closes with what is called 'death' is the basic stage of preparation for all subsequent stages. It is the stage of freedom of will and action or of willing co-operation with the laws of life "helped by the balance set in the nature of man". What follows is but a continuation of it: "your creation and resurrection are but like a single soul". Even in this stage, the march onward is conditioned by a conscious effort appropriate to every new move. This is implicit in the urge one will feel there for Light and more and more of it. "Our Lord!

perfect for us our light", will be the perennial prayer of the aspirant.⁴³ Every fresh instalment of light acquired or vouchsafed is thus a new state of life accompanied by death, that necessary concomitant of life, the birth pang ushering in a new state of existence. "It is We who have decreed that death should be among you."⁴⁴ "Blessed is he who hath created death and life to test which of you is best in point of deed".⁴⁵ Throughout, the ethical purpose persists,

It is this aspect, the ethical, which the Qur'an desires to emphasise for the guidance of man, and not exactly the biological. That this aspect has not been lost sight of by Rumi notwithstanding his biological obsession as displayed in his lines quoted by Sir Mohammed Iqbal, is clear from a re-statement of the same biological process in the following lines:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar,
 With angels blest; but even from angelhood
 I must pass on: all except God doth perish
 When I have *sacrificed* my angel-soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
 Proclaims in organ tones: "To Him we shall return"⁴⁶

Here the biological process, even as Rumi conceives, is rendered dependent upon a conscious effort, upon the "sacrifice" of a lower nature in search of a higher.

How to discard or sacrifice in this present life the lower nature in search of a higher, or, to secure in this very life the privilege of an easy movement in the next, is the question which presents itself for consideration. The answer is already given by the Qur'an: "Believe and work righteously". But what is righteous work as warranted by a belief in the 'life-hereafter'?

It may be recalled that the Qur'an assigns to man "the vicegerency of God on earth". Be it noted that the term

is not repeated or applied to him in relation to his life hereafter. The reason is obvious. The belief in the unity of God and in the truth of the divine message delivered from time to time through His messengers is to express itself in the unity of man, or in a peaceful order of existence for him. The function of Vicegerency has a meaning only in relation to this specific purpose. It ceases with death, for the character of life hereafter assumes a change. It has no longer the same sociological or economic or political background for the display of its activity. There, God does not need to speak to man through "visions or from behind a veil, or through a messenger".⁴⁷ On the other hand, he comes face to face with Reality and finds his own way guided by whatever light his past existence might throw before him, intensified by further light vouchsafed to him, as a recompense, in his new surroundings. There, neither the wealth nor the power of the past will avail. There will be there little talk of democracies or parliaments, or elections or of any schemes of world security. The most powerful and exalted in this life who have lived unrighteous lives may have to step aside to let their own erstwhile valets, who have lived righteous lives, pass by in their onward march. "The blind in this world will carry their blindness into the next" says the Qur'an "and will be further away from the road".⁴⁸ It is this road that matters. The Qur'an desires man to enter on this road in this world itself, so that he may equip himself with the requisite talent to have a freer passage thereon when he resumes or pursues it in the next. "Life of this world is but a play of passions", adds the Qur'an, "the next world is **Life indeed**".⁴⁹ This "Life indeed" is to begin in this world itself.

The "Life indeed" is marked by an yearning on the part of the traveller in the next for light and more of light. "Perfect for us, O Lord, our light" will be according to the Qur'an his constant prayer—the light that must lead him on into the very presence of Reality, "the countenance of God", the very "Light of the Heavens and of the Earth", as the Qur'an terms it.

"God is the Light of the Heavens and of the Earth. The similitude of His Light is as it were a niche wherein is a

lamp, the lamp within a glass, the glass as though it were a pearly star. It is lit from a blessed Tree, an olive tree neither of the East, nor of the West, the oil whereof were like to shine even though no fire were applied to it; Light upon Light; God guideth to His Light whom He will".⁵⁰

The yearning for light has to begin in this life; and this is possible only for those who feel what is called "Huzur-al-Qalb" or "the sense of God" in every situation. Prayed the Prophet in a moment of ecstasy:

"O Allah pour light into my heart. Pour it into my eyes, and into my ears. Pour it to my right and pour it to my left. Pour it in front of me and behind me and give me light. Pour light into my nerves and into my flesh, and into my blood, and into my hair and into my skin, and into my tongue and into my soul and increase my light, and transform me into light, and surround me with light. O Allah Bless me with light".⁵¹

The injunction "believe and work righteously" has a special meaning for one who feels the sense of God in all that he feels or does. The sense of God marks the difference between those who do a thing because it has to be done, is a duty imposed, because it brings them reward or because it has to be done to avoid discomfort in life, between these and those who do a thing not exactly for the recompense that it may bring, but because a good deed, however trying in its accomplishment, is good in itself and is pleasing to God, a thought in which he finds comfort and peace of mind. It is this sense that marked, though in a restricted sphere, the life of the Negro boy introduced in our opening chapter which one has to develop here if one is to equip oneself for the onward march from state to state in the next sphere of existence. To such men or women Paradise has no abiding attraction. Like that great sage of Bagdad, Shaikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, they aspire to leave Paradise behind once they reach it and march onward beyond it towards greater light and greater perfection.⁵²

But few may possess or develop the talent so to live the life hereafter or the "Life indeed" even in their earthly environment. But no life according to the Qur'an is worthy of the name, if it does not, in one form or another, partake

of this aim in life, and that is not possible unless one develops, in some degree or other, the sense of God that we have spoken of, a sense which develops and thrives in inverse proportion to the elimination or subjugation of the sense of "self" with which man is usually obsessed.

Total elimination of the sense of 'self' is not, however, the standard of conduct recommended by the Qur'an for the generality of mankind. That is the urge of a certain type of mind which seeks for its bliss "absorption in God" or 'Fana fillah', to use a Sufi term. No one may deny one the privilege of such an urge. But the experience, mystic as it must be, of the absorption in God is of value to society only to the extent it transmutes itself into an idea as we have observed in a previous chapter, such as may have a social or spiritual value for mankind. What the Qur'an desires man to achieve is not the total forgetfulness of his sense of the self but a happy blending of it with the sense of God in him, or the keeping of an even balance between the two. That is **Taqwa** or balanced life. It is that which characterizes the **mind Al-Qur'an builds**, a mind which looks upon life as a gift from God, as a trust and a sacred privilege to be lived in the presence of the "Divine Countenance", and guided by the light emanating therefrom, indeed transformed into light, so that one might be an example and guide to those struggling in darkness.

CHAPTER VII

UMMATAN WASATA

IN THE preceding pages an attempt has been made to afford a bird's-eye view of the type of mind which it is the purpose of the Qur'an to evolve—a mind which gives to the world its **Salehin** and **Muttaqin**, its **Muqsitin** and **Muflehin**, its **Sadeqin** and **Siddiqin**, and the rest of the order referred to already, who live and work in full consciousness of the sense of God developed in them. It is to a band of people with a mind so moulded—the comrades or companions of the Prophet, and those who followed in their foot-steps that the Qur'an addresses the appellation **Ummatan wasata** a community standing midway between two extremes, or living a balanced life, and serving as a "pattern unto others, even as the Prophet was a pattern unto them".¹ The term but denotes the character which this mind has to assume on the organizational or corporate plane.

It was this **Ummatan wasata** which the Prophet organized into a state, the very first state in Islam, an organization which was intended to serve in the fullness of time as a nucleus of a world order. When we say that the Prophet organized his people into a state, we mean that he had time only to lay the foundations of it by giving them the sense of unity which they needed, leaving the task of raising the edifice thereon to posterity. His primary or immediate concern was to develop the personality of the individual and equip him with the talent to live in peace with himself and in peace with his external world of relations. And this, he did in the sure confidence that with the creation of the right type of men and women, a political structure appropriate to the corporate living of such individuals would evolve itself on right lines as a matter of course.

From the circumstances of its birth and its early nourishment, it is by no means easy to designate this state by any one of the terms applied to the different forms of government known to history. It was certainly not theocracy; for here, there was no sacerdotal caste to exercise political authority under the immediate direction of God, a form of government which prevailed particularly among the Israelites till the time of Saul. The Qur'an cannot countenance sacerdotalism in any form. The nascent state left behind by the Prophet did undoubtedly develop during the regimes of the first round of Khalifs, the 'Rashidin,' certain distinct qualities foreshadowing in practice the leading aspects of a thorough-going political and economic democracy, but in its theoretic approach to its democratic method of government, it would not accept the basic postulate of modern democracy that the sovereignty of a state vested in its people. The Qur'an proclaims that all sovereignty belongs to God and to God alone.² For that same reason, the new state could not be styled kingship either, much less a dictatorship, for, neither the Prophet nor the Khalifs (Rashidin) would assume a title specifically reserved for God, or claim the right to dictate. The Prophet had simply to follow, even as every other member of the organization, the regulations revealed to him from time to time,³ or as suggested themselves to him in consultation with his companions.⁴ The same attitude was observed by the Rashidin, although in their attempt to deal with new situations not covered specifically by either the Quranic regulations or the practice of the Prophet, they made a free use of the principle of consultation favoured of the Qur'an, of regulating their affairs by 'counsel among themselves.'⁵ The principle is styled **Ijtehad**. The body of people consulted by them, the **Shura**, were men of known integrity and experience enjoying the confidence of the people, the **Ijma**.

How then are we to designate a state whose function was to maintain by democratic methods the supremacy of law, the basic part of which as laid down in the Qur'an was regarded as divinely ordained? The answer is to be sought in the specific purpose which this basic part of the State

law had to serve. From its very nature, it was there essentially to supply a distinctive cultural background or a spiritual tone to the corporate life of the Ummat or the Muslim community. It was against this ideological background that all secular affairs were to be regulated, not by any theocratic machinery, but by counsel among its members. The form given to the new state was no doubt that of a democracy, but it was a democracy clearly distinguishable in its outlook and responsibility from the earlier types, the Athenian and the Roman, designed primarily in the interests of privileged classes. The voice of the 'demos' composing the republic of Athens, for instance, had its counterpart in the "Ijma" or consensus of opinion among those who formed the Arabian republic. The difference lay in the sense of responsibility with which the voice of the people was exercised and the administration of the state was carried on. The responsibility of the people of the Arabian republic in giving their assent to any act of administration was in the first instance no doubt to themselves as in Athens, but it was to be coloured and directed by their sense of an ultimate responsibility to a higher power than themselves viz., God, the true Sovereign of their state. That sense had to govern the conduct of the 'Shura' or the body of the Khalif's counsellors, and the conduct of the Khalif himself, as of every officer of the state appointed by him in every department of administration.

The new republic of Arabia was thus a republic of God-fearing people and its administration was carried on, in accordance with the Quranic notions of justice and equity, by a band of *Sa'ihin*, by men of known upright character affording the fullest opportunity to every citizen to live an upright life. The mere fact that the background against which this republican life was sustained is traceable to the teachings of a religion cannot justify its being designated as a religious state or theocracy. In fact no state, however professedly secular, can endure without some sort of an ethical or spiritual background to its activity. Only, it has to keep the distinction clear between the principles which form the background and the manner and method of putting them into execution. The latter is essentially a secular

function, whereas the former is there to give a particular cultural or moral tone to it.

The distinction is implicit in the Quranic view of life which divides its function into **Huquq Allah** and **Huquq an Nas** or **Huquq al Ibad**, 'obligations to God', and 'obligations to Society'. The former, the **Huquq Allah**, such as beliefs, prayers, and the need for purity of mind and body are primarily personal concerns of the individual, unless a deliberate public disregard of them should prove a source of nuisance to others. The latter, the **Huquq an Nas** or obligations to society, on the other hand, form the essential jurisdiction of the state. These relate largely to secular affairs and secular relationships between man and man and have naturally to be regulated by secular means or methods of administration. The "Rashidin" in view of the nascent stage through which the Ummat had to pass did keep a mild form of patriarchal watch on the observance of the **Huquq Allah** and whenever necessary ever interpreted them in their application to new conditions of life in consultation with their compeers. But this by no means constituted their office into a spiritual headship of the community. The **Huquq Allah** and **Huquq an-Nas** were binding on the Khalif as they were on any other members of society, the approach to the one reflecting itself in the approach to the other.

Mark the view which Abu Bakr took of his office as the first Khalif of the new state. Said he in his very first address to his people:

"My fellowmen! I call God to witness. I never had any wish to hold this office; never aspired to possess it. Neither in secret nor in the open did I every pray for it. I have agreed to bear this burden lest mischief might raise its head. Else, there is no pleasure in leadership. On the other hand, the burden placed on my shoulders is such as I feel I have not the inherent strength to bear, and so cannot fulfil my duties except with Divine help".

"You have made me your leader, although I am in no way superior to you. Co-operate with me when I go right; correct me when I err; obey me so long as I follow the commandments of God and his Prophet; but turn away from me when I deviate".⁶

It was an experiment in democracy which the first Khalif here promises to embark upon inspired by an ever present sense of God in him. But he died within three years of his accession to the Khilafat. His work was taken up by Omar and energetically pursued. But even he had not many years to give to the experiment. He was assassinated by a migrant from Persia in the 10th year of his regime. After him came Usman followed by Ali both of whom were assassinated in turn apparently as a sequence to partizan rivalry. It is these first four Khalifs who are styled the 'Rashidin', the rightly guided. The period covered by their Khilafat does not occupy more than thirty years. It is this period which may properly be called the period of democratic experiment in Islamic polity, the spirit underlying it rising to a climax in the time of Omar and reaching its final susidence in the assassination of Ali.

The state was regarded by the Rashidin as the state of the people, and was run for the benefit of the people as a whole. No one had any special privilege attached to his person. The Khalif was at best the first among equals; so much so, that when food and cloth had to be rationed in Madina, he had but to receive his share just as an ordinary citizen. Every man and every woman had the right to question him on any matter touching the state affairs. No one was above the law. Omar had once to appear before a subordinate judge appointed by him to answer a charge. Similarly, Ali had to plead a case of his against a Jew, and it was the Jew who was awarded the decree. The economic system of life formulated by the Qur'an laying a special emphasis on the uplift of the economically depressed under which a special levy was to be collected from the rich for the relief of the poor, was rigidly enforced by the state. The exchequer of the state was considered the treasury of the people, the surplus, if any, accruing at the end of a year going back to the people in the form of annuities distributed on the basis of individual needs. The Quranic injunctions governing the status of women as independent economic units functioning in their own individual rights were scrupulously respected and upheld.

Security of life and of property, and freedom of conscience were guaranteed to non-Muslim minorities who were styled **Dhimmi**, "the protected of God and the Prophet" "Beware! on the day of judgment" had the Prophet proclaimed, "I shall myself be the complainant against him who wrongs a Dhimmi or lays on him a responsibility greater than he can bear or deprives him of anything that belongs to him".⁷ Indeed, so mindful was he of their welfare that a few moments before he expired, the thought of the Dhimmi came to him. He said: "Any Muslim who kills a Dhimmi has not the slightest chance of catching even the faintest smell of Heaven. Protect them: They are my Dhimmi".⁸ In a moment of like remembrance, Omar, as he lay assassinated, exclaimed: "To him who will be Khalif after me, I commend my wish and testament! The Dhimmi are protected of Allah and the Prophet. Respect the covenants entered into with them, and when necessary fight for their interests and do not place on them a burden or responsibility which they cannot bear".⁹

"When Jerusalem submitted to the Caliph Omar", states Sir Thomas Arnold in the **Preaching of Islam**, "the following conditions were drawn up:

"In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, the following are the terms of capitulation, which I, Omar, the servant of God, the Commander of the Faithful, grant to the people of Jerusalem. I grant them security of lives, their possessions, and their children, their churches, their crosses; and all that appertains to them in their integrity, and their lands and to all, of their religion. Their churches therein shall not be impoverished, nor destroyed, nor injured from among them; neither their endowments, nor their dignity; and not a thing of their property; neither shall the inhabitants of Jerusalem be exposed to violence in following their religion; nor shall one of them be injured." ¹⁰

Adds Arnold:

"In company with the Patriarch, Omar visited the holy places, and it is said while they were in the Church of the Resurrection, as it was the appointed hour of prayer, the Patriarch bade the Caliph offer his prayers there, but he thoughtfully refused, saying that if he were to do so, his followers might afterwards claim it as a place of Muslim worship" ¹¹

In the conduct of war, even as in the other spheres of activity, the Rashidin never lost sight of humanitarian considerations enjoined by the Qur'an. "The self-restraint of the conquerors and the humanity which they displayed in their campaigns", observes Arnold, "must have excited profound respect and secured a welcome for an invading army that was guided by such principles of justice and moderation as were laid down by the Caliph Abu Bakr for the guidance of the first expedition into Syria:

"Be just; break not your plighted faith; mutilate none; slay neither children, old men nor women; injure not the date palm nor burn it with fire, nor cut down any fruit-bearing tree; slay neither flocks nor herds nor camels, except for food; perchance you may come across men who have retired into monasteries, leave them and their works in peace".¹¹

The democracy of the Rashidin which certainly displayed in that dark period of human history qualities such as these of a model state, 'Ummatan wasata' might have grown by now, had it had a free life, into a veritable "fold" of the Prophet's vision, indeed developed into a world-federation of autonomous communities, every constituent member whereof being a "shepherd or keeper unto every other". But that was not to be. The tragedy of Islam is that this tender plant was not allowed to grow. It was cut down by the hands of its own followers within a few years of the passing away of the Prophet, and replaced in the very name of that Faith by varying forms of despotism. But while it lasted, however brief the period of its existence, it functioned, at least during its brilliant moments, consciously as an Ummatan wasata.

The Ulama or Doctors of religion of the present day refer to the Prophetic regime as Hukumat-i-Illahi or divine governance or theocracy. They extend its application to the regime of the Rashidin Khalifs as well, although the circumstances of the time of the Rashidin were not precisely the same as of that of the Prophet. They go a step further. The Rashidin had to follow the commandments as laid down in the Qur'an in the light of the practice or 'sunnat' of **the**

Prophet as personally or directly known to them being themselves, the Prophet's companions. That was their approach to the basic law of Islam. But our Ulama will apply the term to what was devised after the Rashidin by the legists of the second and third centuries of the Hijra, on the basis, on the one hand, of the hearsay or oral Prophetic tradition and of the practice of the Rashidin, and on the other of interpretations placed on the text of the Quranic injunctions by the exigentists of the times. This form of law is called "fiqh" and is divided into several schools or "Madhahib", each secure in its role as the infallible and unalterable law of Islam. The curious feature of this output is that while it is itself in many respects the result of Ijtihad on the part of its framers, it is interpreted to deny the exercise of this privilege to those coming after them, notwithstanding the fundamental directive of the Qur'an to regulate their affairs by "counsel among themselves". At least that is so in the major spheres of life. It is this law called 'Shariat', as formulated by the mediaeval legists, which is the law of Islam for our Ulama and which they desire every Muslim State to revive and enforce at the present day.

In its resuscitated condition, this Hukumat-i-Ilahi or divine governance is intended to take a form under which, since God does not choose to appear before man in any visible form to regulate human affairs, the voice of the Ulama who assign to themselves the sole right to interpret the divine law of Shariat, shall finally prevail. Such a government clearly will be class dictatorship very much like the dictatorship of the sacerdotal order under the Israelite form of theocracy and should be regarded as repugnant to the spirit and purpose of the Qur'an.

As a concession, on the one hand, to the theocratic concept of government sponsored by the Ulama and, on the other, as an yielding to the pressure of the democratic idea of the present day, a tendency is asserting itself in several parts of the Muslim world to resuscitate the form of democracy tried by the Rashidin. But is that possible without reviving at the same time the atmosphere of the time of

the Rashidin, vanished long since, wherein alone the Rashidini form might thrive. And even if it were possible, could it comfortably fit into the world atmosphere of today? That would be pushing life 1300 years back and living in isolation which again is not possible. This apart, be it remembered that the Rashidin and their counsellors were men who had lived with the Prophet and had a direct or personal knowledge of the Prophetic tradition or of how and in what spirit he regulated the secular affairs of his people and gave them the character of an 'Ummatan wasata. But how to reach that knowledge at this distant hour or have a clear vision of it without lifting the mediaeval shroud that rests thereon? In other words, are we of the present times prepared to erase from our memory all that is un-Quranic which we have inherited from our past with its early civil wars, its theological schizms, its autocracy and feudalism and the rest of its blemished features and re-discover for ourselves the Islam of the Prophet and the exact Rashidini form which rested thereon? That will call for a bold investigation into the character and content of our traditional sources of theological knowledge, and of the early history of Islam.

The investigation is necessary whatever the purpose for which it may be employed. The Rashidini form, when discovered will have to be given a shape such as it might have assumed today, had it had a natural development undisturbed by the disturbances to which it succumbed before it could begin to live a full life. Else, we shall be reverting to a state of life that might not well fit into the present set-up of the world. We shall have to re-orientate the primary attitudes of Islam in the context of the present day needs of the world; and this is not possible without clearing the debris that has blocked the view.

The task is by no means easy. It is indeed a task conjointly to be undertaken by competent scholars drawn from all over the world who may have the courage to apply the historic and scientific methods to the exegeses of the Qur'an and the literature on **Hadith** and **fiqh** and sift the purely **Sunnat-i-Arab** or the customary law of the Arabs as has

found its way into **fiqh** from the **Sunnat Allah** as actually implemented by the Prophet in the circumstances of his times, sift the genuinely Prophetic tradition from the seemingly so forged by rival political parties and warring sects of the first two centuries of the Hijra in defence of their jarring claims and conveniently foisted on the Prophet, and at the same time sift the temporarily expedient from the lasting or universal in application. It is only then that we may have a full and clear picture of the organizational life of the 'Ummatan wasata' as raised by the Prophet.

The task will not end there. The restoration of the original picture or of the re-discovery of the Islam of the Prophet will be the right hour for a proper re-orientation of the Islamic thought in terms of the complex needs of the modern world. For, without this prior restoration, every attempt at re-orientation will be but a patch-work as was the case with every attempt at Ijtehad made so far, whether in the distant past or in recent times. The stumbling block in the way has always been the dross that has been allowed to cling to the gold in the Hadith literature. Much of this is Judaic, Magian, Nestorian, or Neo-platonic in origin wilfully attributed to the Prophet giving rise to beliefs and practices so alien to the essential spirit of the Qur'an. Until the gold is sifted from that which is foreign to it and a single authorized corpus of Hadith literature and an equally authorized exegesis of the Qur'an are prepared by the joint efforts of competent scholars enjoying the requisite confidence of at least the governments of independent Muslim countries, an attempt at re-orientation of the Islamic religious thought and codification of a common basic **fiqh** for the entire Ummat is not likely to produce the desired result.

Till such a concerted attempt is made to rescue Islam from its mediaeval bondage and to re-order Muslim society everywhere on a unitary or common cultural basis, the least that may be expected of Muslims in every country, if they are to absorb the shocks of today and survive, is to develop the sense of God or the sense of humanity in all their thought and activity and co-operate on that basis with all the progressive trends of the present day world. Indeed if

they are to be guided by the spirit of the Qur'an, they will have to seize these trends, and give them the Quranic touch which they apparently lack. For it is the lack of it that has converted these otherwise progressive trends into engines of destruction and brought about two hideous world wars in our own life-time, and look like inflicting a deadlier wound on mankind in no distant future, if that touch is not restored to them in proper time. After all, these trends, whatever their immediate stimuli, or the purposes to which they are employed by different nations in different regions of the world, are in consonance with the essential spirit of the Qur'an and indeed traceable for certain stages in their historic progress directly to its teachings.

Let the Muslims reflect. The world is marching towards a democratic order of life for all mankind—a purpose so dear to the Qur'an. It has begun, notwithstanding the impediments blocking the way, to socialize the good things of the earth—another purpose sponsored by the Qur'an. The world of science is unravelling for man the hidden forces of nature with intensive avidity and pressing them into his service—a crying call issuing forth and reverberating from every corner of the Qur'an. There should, therefore, be no difficulty for Muslim countries in falling into line with these leading trends of the modern world. Should they do so with little reference to their spiritual moorings or just to advance their own interests unmindful of the world purpose of the Qur'an, the well-being of all humanity, they will go the way the rest of the world are going and share the consequences. If, on the other hand, they should cultivate on the group plane, the sense of God on which the Qur'an lays its supreme stress as the mainspring of all life sustaining activity, even as they have to do on the individual plane, in other words, lay even emphasis on the **Huquq Allah** and **Huquq an-Nas**, on the obligations to themselves and obligations to mankind, they may still develop into an *Ummatan wasata*, and serve as a balancing factor between the exaggerated opposites of the world of today.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TASK AHEAD

WHAT are the possibilities? How to seize the trends of the modern world and fall into line? The Muslims are not a small community: they number between 350 to 400 million, composed of different geographical nationalities and cultural groups with varying political status attached to each. Their habitat extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a gigantic belt stretching across two continents, Africa and Asia, with several off-shoots running into the North and the South, a belt possessing both economically and politically an immense strategic importance dividing along a lengthy stretch of it two rival worlds, the Anglo-American and the Soviet, and yet lying within the easy compass of their rival influences. Some of the countries covered by this belt are already under the Russian zone, particularly the Central Asian. The rest, the vast majority, probably with the exception of Turkey, are still un-committed either way. None of these countries may be said to be economically well off. The people in most of them live a mediaeval life steeped in ignorance and poverty. The little modernism or Westernism that has crept into these countries is confined to certain classes of society. And it is the seamy side of it that has attracted them in most cases. The redeeming feature of this situation is that a powerful wave of political consciousness has now over-spread the entire belt affecting every stratum of society and brought into the fore a new class of leaders with varying degree of earnestness and intellectual equipment. It is on their shoulders falls the burden and the responsibility of directing the new awakening into proper channels.

The task before the Muslim countries is to develop their natural resources, and fight the poverty, ignorance

and mediaevalism of their people and equip them to be a force for the peace of the world as expected by the UNO of which a good many of these countries are members. But how to make this possible without adequate technical and financial aid from outside? Will this come forth with no strings attached to it? And then what is the character of the peace to which the UNO aspires and for which they have to co-operate with the rest of its members?

The UNO came into being under a Charter adopted by the United Nations Conference and the International Organization which met in San Francisco in the year 1945. Under this Charter the member nations of the organization have pledged themselves to promote universal responsibility for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, language or religion, and have through their General Assembly approved (1948) what is styled as "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" running into 30 articles as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, by enumerating the basic rights of man in detail, civil, political, economic, social, religious, and cultural, calling upon every individual and every organ of society to strive, by teaching and education, to promote responsibility for those rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance. In short, the Declaration is stated to present the "sum total of human rights as contributed in the course of history by all peoples, all nations, and all civilizations". The twin aim of this declaration is on the one hand to equip the individual to live a free life considered successively as (1) a physical organism (2) a moral personality, (3) a worker, (4) an intelligent being, and (5) a member of a community and of a polity, and on the other to help the individual so equipped to make his contribution to international amity or the peace of the world.

To the student of the Qur'an, not one word, in the preamble or in the objectives of the Charter and not a single article in the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will seem unfamiliar. Under a creed

which places man next to God, and brushes aside all distinctions of race, colour and birth and calls upon all mankind to live together as a family of God, or as a "fold every member of which shall be a shepherd or keeper unto every other and be accountable for its welfare", the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must follow as a basic corollary, or an extension of the Quranic programme. But a mere declaration of them will not carry humanity far. Several questions call for attention from the Quranic standpoint.

Firstly, what is the impulse underlying the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in pursuance thereof? In other words, is the scheme conceived in the interests of, or for the good of humanity as a whole, or is it in practice to subservise the interests of any country or group of countries?

Secondly, looking at the list of rights covered by the Universal Declaration, is it possible for any country claiming to be civilized at the present hour to say with confidence that all the rights are observed by it, so that it may serve as a pattern for the rest? It is obvious that the initiative for implementing them must come from the Government or legislature of each country. Is the system of political life in every country such as may place in high offices the type of men who may have the urge and the high-mindedness to respect the Declaration, and implement its provisions?

Lastly, a world order which is the aim of the two documents argues a common purpose acceptable to all the countries of the world. As things stand, the world is divided, broadly speaking, into two camps—the Soviet and the American. A world arrangement, whatever its form, will be possible only on the basis of some sort of a reconciliation at first between the two contending ideologies or by building a half-way house for mutual co-operation. Is such a re-conciliation possible?

Let us look into these questions.

What is the impulse or motivation underlying the Declaration? We know that it is the U.S.A. which is largely

responsible for the idea.. That was the power which emerged the strongest, as the result of the last world war, strong enough to influence the policies of a majority of nations. The Declaration purports to be part of a plan of achieving world peace. But what is the nature of peace sought? The question is prompted by man's sad experience of all high sounding schemes in the past of helping mankind which eventually degenerated into imperialisms. It is therefore a natural questioning. And where is one to go for an answer except to the U.S.A., for, it is clear that no peace formula has the chance to make headway unless it fits into the policy of that country.

Let me quote from an important utterance made by a responsible member of the Foreign office of the U.S.A a little after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly. Addressing the National Convention of the Young Democratic Club of America, Mr. George C. McGhee, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asian Affairs, said:

"If we are to achieve the primary objectives of American foreign policy viz., the preservation of our national security and of the opportunity to maintain our way of life, we must continue to help free nations to resist Soviet expansion, seeking at all times to minimize the present conflict and keep it out of the military phase. But such a goal is only a minimum objective. It alone will not rally the people of the world to our common purpose, or cope with the complex of problems which face the free world today—the problem of emerging independent states throughout the world which seek for their peoples the opportunity to live a freer and better life—the problem of growing realisation among vast populations that they are not playing a role in international affairs commensurate with their material resources or their great human and spiritual qualities "

We must meet the challenge of these dynamic factors. When we do so we are faced with the inevitable necessity of assisting the peoples of the free world to promote their social, economic, and political well being. Only thus can we attain the voluntary association of all

democratic peoples for their progressive development and self-defence. Only thus can we achieve the degree of collective security and international co-operation upon which our future existence as a free nation depends".

The emphasis is on the national security of U.S.A. and on her way of life. All else—collective security, international co-operation, emergence of independent states throughout the World with democratic constitutions, and financial assistance to one and all to promote their social, economic and political well-being are to subserve the two primary objectives of the American policy. What is significant is that in the pursuit of its plan of assistance to other countries, the U.S.A. adds Mr. McGhee, will not favour neutrality of any kind whatsoever on their part, but will "expect them of their own free volition to join the American free world in opposition to the Soviet expansion".

That the American policy of aid to other countries is dictated even today by the same consideration is manifest from the observation made as recently as the 13th March 1952 by no less a person than Mr. Dean Acheson, United States Secretary of State, while addressing a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives engaged on a consideration of President Truman's 7,900 million Dollars Mutual Aid Programme. Referring to the results of the recent general elections in India he said:

"The advice of all our observers on the ground is that unless the newly independent government under Prime Minister Nehru can show substantial progress in economical development over the next five years, the likelihood is that in the next elections the democratic forces will be engaged either by the extremists of the Right or by the Communists. I venture to say with considerable confidence that, if India succeeds in this tremendous effort, it will have won its fight against Communism".¹

The instinct for self-preservation is a natural instinct and there should be nothing repugnant to international interests in the American urge to maintain her national security. In fact, in so far as it comprehends incidentally the well-being of other nations too, particularly of those who are still undeveloped, the policy may even be regarded

as a distinctly humanistic contribution to the concept of self-preservation. It is only when one realises and in fact made to realise, through official statements such as those quoted above, that it is all directed to organise opposition to Soviet expansion that the question forces itself for attention: Are the countries which accept or are inclined to accept economic aid under the different American plans to qualify for no better task than to combat Soviet expansion and help the U.S.A. keep the world divided into two huge armed camps—one the "Free world" subserving the national security of the U.S.A. and her standard of life, and the other dominated by the occupants of the Kremlin? Let us hope that such really is not the aim of the U.S.A.

There is another aspect of the problem which needs to be carefully looked into. Communism, one may combat in one's own country, for diverse reasons with or without American co-operation. But should co-operation imply necessarily complete identification with the capitalist ideology of America? The Islamic world, for instance, is pressed on one side by Communism, and on the other by Capitalism, none of which in its present form may be to its taste. Both may be evils in its eyes. But does the need to combat one of the two evils necessarily argue complete identification with the other evil? Looking at the proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference on Middle East Affairs held in March 1951 sponsored by the Middle East Institute of Washington, issued in the form of a series of addresses presented at the Conference under the title of "Islam in the Modern World", I am struck by the following passage which the preface to the volume contains:

"To the people of the United States the question is important because the Islamic world—aside from the geographically strategic position it occupies—comprises one of the most significant and potentially most powerful bodies of population still uncommitted in the struggle between the Western democracies on the one hand, and Soviet Communism and states under its domination on the other. The Islamic world is inclined, for a variety of reasons, to the side of the democracies; at the same time there are potent forces not only blocking its complete identification with them but beckoning to the other camp. A direct attack upon the low economic level which the vast majority of the Islamic peoples live is

not the complete answer; too often the ideological conflict is forgotten. In the long run the West can win only if it can convey a faith that the values it holds to be true point the way to a better life".

The writer of the preface will not feel satisfied if the Islamic peoples simply repel the call of Communism by raising their economic level. On the other hand, a complete alignment on the side of the West is demanded; and this, not by retaining or developing their own individuality but by total acceptance of the Western values of life. The proposal, however well intentioned, overlooks the psychology of the Muslim peoples and the character of their history. One may be too ready to fight Communism by a direct attack on one's own poverty. The West may take the Muslim easily so far; but to aim at carrying him beyond and converting him for all times to Western values of life, unless they are in conformity with the ideology of Islam, is to indulge in illusions. The Muslims, I dare say, will be prepared zealously to work for democracy and world values of life such as have found expression in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which in the context of the present day developments of life I have characterised as but a corollary of the basic creed of Islam. But they are not likely to swallow the Western values of life such as have so far travelled into the East. The East knows these values mainly through the several forms of colonialism and imperialism which the West has evolved, and no part of the world has had a better taste of them than the countries of North Africa and the Middle East. Observes Prof. Hitti:

"Unfortunately during the last decade or two, in particular, the impact of the West has not been all for the good. There is a striking contrast between the humanitarian ideas professed by Western missionaries, teachers, and preachers, and the disregard of human values by European and American politicians and warriors; a disparity between word and deed; an overemphasis on economic and nationalistic values. The behaviour of the so-called advanced nations during the last two wars waged on a scale unknown in history, the ability of Western man to let loose these diabolic forces which are the product of his science and his machine and which now threaten the world with destruction; and, with particular relation to the Near East, the handling of the

Palestine problem by America, England, France, and other nations—all these have worked together to disillusion this man of the Near East who has been trying to establish an intellectual rapprochement with the West. It is these actions of the West which alienate him and shake his belief in the character of the Western man and his morality on both the private and the public levels."²

The right course to make the Muslims of these countries grow into a force for democracy and for world peace is therefore to refer these purposes to their own values of life. For whatever the evils to which the present day Muslim may be subject either as the result of his inherited mediaevalism or of any newly acquired Westernism, deep in his heart, he feels an innate attachment to the Qur'an and to the memory of his Prophet, and nothing is likely to succeed with him unless it has an ultimate reference to them. That sense of loyalty to his cultural moorings is at the basis of his politics and no one has the chance of winning him except through that door.

Turkey, be it remembered, went completely West in a moment of intellectual strain brought about by a combination of very adverse circumstances. In 1924 it abolished the Khilafat which had for centuries served as some sort of a nexus for the Islamic world. The same year it dispensed with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the religious courts. Soon after, it changed its legal codes and closed its schools of theology. In 1925 it abolished the Fez. In 1926 it erected the first statue of Ataturk. In 1928 it amended the Constitution by deleting every reference to Islam as the religion of the State. The next year the teaching of religion was abolished. In 1933 the faculty of theology in its University was closed. In 1934 the wearing of the clerical dress was forbidden and in 1937 secularism was written into the Constitution. Officially, the break with its established religion was thus complete.¹

But did Islam leave Turkey? Or did the Turks feel no need for it any longer? Under the improvised outward show it did appear so to an outsider. But at the heart of the Turk, it pulsed as strong as ever before. The new Turkish rulers in their zeal to modernize their State, desired to modernize their religion as well. But their method

was awkward. The Turkish people could go and did in fact go the whole hog with their leaders in democratizing their State, as the move, far from being repugnant to their sentiment, was in the best traditions of Islam. But they could not march forward equally well with them or willingly in the field of religion. If the urge to modernize Islam had taken the form of a plan to rescue it from its mediaeval bondage, and release the Quranic values of life to function again, Turkey would undoubtedly have led a revolutionary movement of *Ijtehad* throughout the Muslim world, and checkmated the further inroads into the Muslim countries of Western capitalism and colonialism, and succeeded in reviving for the modern world the Quranic view of a stable economic order wherein Capital shall not develop the sting to provoke Communism.

All this was possible for the Turkey of 1924 when it had declared itself a republic. It was still a name to conjure with in the Islamic world. But its rulers missed the opportunity. In their eagerness to modernize their religion, a task for which none of them was either intellectually or spiritually fitted, they but played with its ritual, as if Islam was nothing else than ritual, by attempting to Europeanize the form of Muslim worship. A Committee appointed by them in 1930 was inspired to suggest "Turkish as a language of worship; prayers written down so that they could be read; the use of vocal and instrumental music, modern as well as traditional; preaching missions, pews, cloakrooms, wearing of clean shoes permitted in Mosques", and so on.⁴ But this committee quickly had to be abolished. The reason was that the Turkish mind with its inherent attachment to the Prophetic tradition could not relish such an innovation or go that way. The abolition of the Committee unmistakably pointed to the coming reaction: and that has now set in. States Mr. John Kingsley Birge, Director, Publications Department, American Bureau of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Istanbul Turkey:

"Within the last few years, there has been a trend in quite the opposite direction. Recently, certain concessions have been made to the demands of the orthodox Muslim

leaders. The first of these is the instituting of controlled religious education. The original idea was that religious classes for the fourth and fifth grades were to be voluntary. Only those who brought letters from their parents asking that they take these classes would be permitted to take them. They would be taught by the school teachers outside of school hours. Through careful planning it was anticipated that religious education would not get back into the hands of fanatical element, which might seek to restore the old religious law and do away with the reforms of the Republic. *This year the religious education has been made compulsory.* Parents must now present letters asking their children not to take classes, if they are to be excused. A second concession has been the establishing of a theological faculty at the University of Ankara. It is claimed that the faculty is going to be thoroughly modern and scientific. If it is to be that, comparative religion must be taught. If it is to be modern and scientific, both textual and historical criticism must be permitted. And if they are, will not the theological faculty be subjected to the same pressures the exponents of liberal Christianity experienced in the last century? ".⁵

Adds Mr. Kingsley:

"Until this past year, it was required by law that the call of prayer also be given in Turkish. But this reform never really took hold. *The call to prayer is now given in Arabic.* I don't remember having talked with a single Turk who likes the Qur'an read in Turkish. The Qur'an is still read in Arabic, with no translation, no explanation, It is simply words in a language that the Turks do not understand at all. And yet the warmth of real emotion is conveyed by the words intoned in Arabic".⁶

I have cited the example of Turkey just to emphasise that even in a country the government of which had deliberately planned to go completely West, her people would not allow themselves to lose sight of their cultural moorings. The thoughtful members of the community in almost every Muslim country have been seriously thinking of dropping mediaevalism of their own volition and of reorientating their social thought on the basis of the Qur'an with a view to meeting the complex needs of the modern world.

And if in this attempt they have to apply textual and historical criticism to the study of their sources of theological knowledge, as Mr. Birge thinks the new theological faculty of the University of Ankara may have to do, the gain will be all the greater for Islam. If this should take a concerted form as suggested already, it may lead to a common basic *fiqh* for all Muslims, and the return of Turkey to a reorientated *Shariat*. If once the gold is sifted from the dross, and the Muslim comes into his own, I dare say, the Islamic world will not hesitate to accept whatsoever that is in consonance with the Qur'an from the democratic life of the West and feel ready to give something to it in return which the West clearly lacks, something which may spiritualize not merely its notions of democracy, but its economic foundations as well. If the U.S.A. is anxious to prevent communism from spreading into the Muslim countries, let her in good-will co-operate with them in developing their economic level. The rest may be left to themselves; for to go beyond and try at the same time to win them to Western values of life, whatever they are, will prove a tedious and in the long run a thankless task. The better course is to win the countries of the free world to the world values implicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which they are all pledged; and this is possible not by a tireless scheming against a rival world but by a process of self-purification.

Already six years have passed since the Charter of the United Nations was signed, and over three years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was subscribed to by the nations of the World. And yet the task of implementing their provisions and of bringing physical, moral and intellectual freedom to the common man has not made much headway. It is true that a commission of Human Rights was set up to devise ways and means of implementing the Declaration. But for one reason, or another, the efforts of the Commission have not been allowed to bear fruit. The military operations in Korea and South East Asia and the problems arising out of the affairs in the Middle East and North Africa resulting in international tensions and the adoption of security measures in different countries are cited as a ground for the restriction of liberty in several parts of the world and the slow progress made

in implementing the Declaration. But the actual reasons are deeper than that. Says M. Rene Cassin, Vice-Chairman of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights:

"The primary difficulty is in converting the rights and freedoms proclaimed into binding legal obligations. The second difficulty is to decide which international organisation should be entrusted with supervising the progress made by each state in the field of human rights and with considering any complaints that may be made against one state by another on the ground that it has violated the rights. A third difficulty consists in deciding who is entitled to appeal to any committee of appeal that will need to be appointed in the event of any violation of human rights in a given country. Should the appeal be made only by another signatory State, or should the right of petition be extended also to individuals (even against their governments) and non-governmental organisations? The importance of the point at issue can be easily perceived. Either out-dated procedures should be maintained, or else there must be juridical revolution, enabling a private individual to appeal to an international body against any administrative measure, verdict or law of his own country, which, in his view, violates any of the human rights".⁷

These and several other difficulties, though of a minor character, are there before the United Nations. To what extent they could be tided over depends on a straight answer to the question. To what extent will "sovereign" states consent to waive their "sovereignty" in the interests of world-wide advancement of human rights such as might form the basis of a stable world order? In the imagery of the Qur'an, will they be prepared to hand back the "sovereignty" of the "Earth" to God to whom alone it belongs and live together like a "fold every member of which shall function as a shepherd or keeper unto every other"? Looking at the type of interests at work behind the governments of modern democracies and at the type of men which their systems of franchise place at the helm of affairs, it is not easy to say that the right answer will come forth from such governments in right time.

What is the way out? So long as the Anglo-American bloc remains obsessed with the bogey of Communist expansion or finds it to its advantage to keep its ghost alive

and devotes all her energy and resources to gathering friends to fight its battles, the conflict between the two blocs will only gather increasing intensity keeping the world divided against itself. The right method to wean away the common man from Communism, if that is truly the real purpose, is to offer him a suitable alternative to the Soviet remedy which makes so powerful an appeal to the poverty and distress of the common man. That is the way to stem the tide of Communism. After all, the common man nowhere requires a Rolls Royce to roll in to mark his conception of a decent or human standard of living. He will not mind an over-dose of the so-called good things of life to others, so long as he is not on that account denied his minimum human satisfaction. And that minimum, God's earth will easily provide everywhere, if governments pledged to the Universal Declaration join hands and earnestly undertake to afford requisite facility. It is by the so-called free world re-ordering its own life making it attractive enough for the common man and by the sheer force of example that it can not only stem communist expansion in the Free World, but reclaim the human mind in the Communist zone itself to a better life than what Communism offers.

The Communist view inherently is a hunger creed. Under the pressure of hunger and want, man may agree to anything that promises to afford him immediate relief. But once hunger is satisfied and physical wants cease to exercise their pressure, human nature which does not always subsist on material nourishment alone will ask for something else for its satisfaction. That "something else" will clearly be something spiritual in character. There will be a call for it. That will be the time for the "Free world" to renew old friendships and forge lasting links, provided in the meantime it has in its own turn reconstructed its own life by giving to it the balance that it needs between its material needs and its sublime and furnish a pattern for the Soviet world to copy. That is the way to "one world"—not the policy of encirclement, nor any other. The Russian will one day turn to the demands of the spirit feeling fagged by his thirst for material comfort. Of that one may feel certain. In what way he will

falter back to God is for the future alone to reveal. But that he is growing mellowed with the advance of time is evident from the freedom allowed to the Eastern Units of the U.S.S.R. peopled by Muslim races to follow their own religion without disturbing the Communist economic frame-work. Indeed, whatever the State policy there, one does come across in Russia men and women who are not entirely lost to God.

Take a leading instance furnished from the very life of Marshal Stalin as recorded by Mr. Churchill on page 433 of Volume IV of his work on the Second World War entitled "The Hinge of Fate". Mr. Churchill during his visit to Moscow in 1942 was explaining to Stalin what was styled as the "Torch Plan" of allied military operations. At a certain stage in the exposition of the scheme, says Churchill, "Stalin whose interest was now at a high pitch said: "May God prosper this undertaking!" That was the manner of his assent to the plan and should serve as an index to the inward state of the Russian mind.

It may not be idle, therefore, to hope that one day the present Communist of Russia may feel impelled to reconsider his position in relation to the spiritual demands of life and fall into line with the rest of the world in his own way, if only those who today in self-interest are bent on rooting out Communism from the world reconsider their own position in relation to the principles of Communism by toning down the angularities of their own system of life and prepare themselves to meet the Russian Communist half way. As a step forward towards such a consummation, proper consideration may be given to the latest proposal of Stalin to live and let live in the spirit of mutual co-operation. At least it will give a moment of peace and an opportunity for introspection and self-reformation for both. The proposal was made in reply to the question of a group of American newspapers and radio editors addressed to him in the beginning of April this year. The question was: "On what basis is co-existence of capitalism and communism possible?". The reply ran:

"Peaceful co-existence of capitalism and communism is quite possible if there is a mutual desire for co-operation, if there is a readiness to fulfil the undertaken obligations, if there is observed the principle of equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States".⁸

The policy of 'live and let live,' if agreed to, may as well be pressed into the service of a higher purpose than a mere temporary suspension of the existing tension between the two blocs which apparently could be the immediate objective of such a proposal. The respite to be so aimed may be employed by each to re-orientate its own ideology with a view to effecting a lasting compromise between the two.

It may not be forgotten that communism is but a violent protest against the type of capitalism such as the industrialised West has developed. If the capitalist countries are really anxious to remove the ground for the communist protest, they shall have to re-order their own economic life so as to make it satisfying to the common man in both the blocs. Else, however harsh the methods by which the communist way of life is being organised today, or however trying they are to the present generation of communists, the generation to follow will reap the reward and come to place such an implicit faith in the communist plan of life that nothing is likely to shake it thereafter. Speaking of the system of collective farming for instance, Mr. Churchill reflects:

"I record as they come back to me these memories and the strong impression I sustained at the moment of millions of men and women being blotted out or displaced for ever. A generation would no doubt come to whom their miseries were unknown, but it would be sure of having more to eat and bless Stalin's name. I did not repeat Burke's dictum, "If I cannot have reform without injustice, I will not have reform". With the world war going all round us, it seemed vain to moralise aloud".⁹

How will the capitalist democracies meet the challenge of the coming generation of communists to whom the communist way will seem but a natural order of life and worthy of being upheld at all costs? It is now in the experimental stage, and may yet be replaced if a more

agreeable substitute, a something which may signify a compromise between capitalism and collectivism, can be assured in time for the common man all over the globe. Else, the leaders of today in modern democracies will be leaving for their children a crop of troubles too difficult for them to surmount in their own days.

That a material modification of the Russian Communism is possible is manifest from what has been attempted in China which has definitely leaned towards the Russian Bloc. Observes Alan Winnington:

"In liberated China, all basic and decisive industries are state-owned, but private capitalists are encouraged and helped to enter and expand secondary and consumer industries, and are given every protection. Conditions of labour are fixed between the trade unions and the owners of industry and the basis of benefits to both labour and capital; and any worker whether employed by publicly or privately operated concerns, will joyfully tell you how much better off he is and what he personally is doing to increase output. Numerous capitalists also have told me that conditions are better now than ever before and they are all ploughing back as much capital into the industry as they can" ¹⁰

When within the framework of the Russian ideal a clear departure from it such as this is permissible, it should not be difficult to admit the possibility of Communism in its varied form subsisting alongside of Capitalism with all its varied growing socialistic touches. It is for the UNO to bring together the leaders of the rival groups to thrash out a plan of co-existence on the basis of mutual co-operation. So far as Russia is concerned, signs are not wanting to encourage the thought that notwithstanding the Iron curtain that she has raised for herself—signs such as the convening in April last of an International Economic Conference representing as many as forty nine countries—she is inclined to seek some honourable way out. If the urge is genuine and is reciprocated, it may stimulate in due course the need for some sort of a synthesis which in its turn may slowly pave the way to one world. Whether such a hope will in fact ever be realised, the future alone will show. But if things ever move that way, the countries comprising the Islamic belt, provided they return to

the economic ideology of the Qur'an so utterly neglected at the present moment by the Muslims themselves, might feel competent to make a worthy contribution to the process of the synthesis envisaged. For, that ideology in the initial stages of its operation presented itself as a synthesis of the contending economic forces that were at work in the time of the Prophet, forces which in the industrial atmosphere of today have assumed the form of capitalism and communism. At any rate, they can maintain a balance between the two, as is the view advanced by that eminent scholar who has devoted his lifetime to the study of Islam, Prof. Gibb of the University of Oxford:

"Within the Western world Islam still maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites. Opposed equally to the anarchy of European nationalism and the regimentation of Russian Communism, it has not yet succumbed to that obsession with the economic side of life which is characteristic of present-day Europe and present-day Russia alike. Its social ethic has been admirably summed up by Professor Massignon: "Islam has the merit of standing for a very equalitarian conception of the contribution of each citizen by tithe to the resources of the community; it is hostile to unrestricted exchange, to banking capital, to state loans, to indirect taxes on objects of prime necessity, but it holds to the rights of the father and the husband, to private property, and to commercial capital. Here again it occupies an intermediate position between the doctrines of bourgeois capitalism and Bolshevist communism".¹¹

The social ethic of Islam is rooted in the Prophet's concept of mankind constituting but one community, a Family of God, "a fold every member of which shall be a shepherd or keeper unto every other".¹² Under such a concept, exploitation in every form becomes impermissible. This is one of the basic postulates on which rests the economic order of life for mankind proposed by the Qur'an.

Another basic postulate is this: "All that there is in the Earth and the Heavens belongs to God".¹³ No plan of production and distribution is valid in Islam unless it accords with this assumption. Man is given the freedom to extract out of the earth all the good things of life that he needs. But the stipulation is that all produce is to be

pooled and made available to one and all, to the entire mankind. It should be enjoyed not merely by those who have exerted themselves to extract the good things of life from the earth but by those as well who, for one reason or another, are incapable of exertion. The condition is implicit in the Islamic concept of mankind as a single family.

The problem of the poor, of those who cannot earn their living through infirmity or old age or for similar reason, has been an eternal problem of human society. The utmost that could be thought of prior to the advent of Islam was to leave them to subsist on what is called "charity". But Islam would not leave such helpless people to the vagaries of charity. It gives them the right to a share in the wealth of the community. Whatever is produced or extracted from the earth is not the result entirely of human labour, asserts the Qur'an repeatedly. God also has a hand in the production. The very forces of nature which man presses to his service are clear signs of divine co-operation. God is thus a co-worker with man; in fact, the prime worker. "Believers! Help God and God will help you and set your feet firm".¹⁴ As co-worker, therefore, a share of every produce must lie at God's disposal. And this the Qur'an assigns to those who cannot make an independent living of their own—the orphans and the unprotected widows, the infirm and the decrepit, the travellers in distress, and people who have been deprived of the means of sustenance or the opportunities of work through natural calamities over which they have had no control, the slaves seeking freedom and the debtors who cannot afford to pay off their debts.¹⁵ They are all regarded by the Qur'an as a "trust" of God, in as much as the maintenance of every being brought into existence by God is declared to be a divine responsibility.¹⁶ The Qur'an therefore makes it obligatory on those who earn or produce to pass on to the state a specific portion of their savings as God's share to be distributed among the above category of the members of society.¹⁷ The Quranic way of expression is: "Give a part of your wealth in the way of God" (*fi sabil-illah*).¹⁸ and "for the sake or for the love of God" (*'ala hub-bihi*).¹⁹ So great is the stress laid on this levy called Zakat, that the compulsory injunction of prayer is always

clubbed together with the insistence on the payment of this levy; so much so, that when in the time of the first Khalif, Abu Bakr, some of the Muslim Arab tribes refused to pay Zakat to the State exchequer, he had to wage a jehad against them till they yielded.²⁰

The care of the weak and the economically depressed members of society is thus a state responsibility in Islam. The Quranic plan is to afford to every member of the State at least a minimum of human comfort, for, in the words of the Prophet, the birth right of "every human being is a house to live in, a piece of cloth to hide his nakedness, a loaf of bread and a jug of water"²¹ words meant but to emphasise that the economy of a state should be so planned as to allow every citizen the opportunity of living a life free from want.

While thus guaranteeing adequate help to those who could not make a living of their own, the Quranic plan allows full freedom of initiative and enterprise to the rest to increase their wealth, and raise their standard of comfort by all legitimate means. Hoarding, in consequence, is condemned, and free circulation enjoined.²² The only condition imposed is that no one should take advantage of another's weakness in monetary dealings with him. The Qur'an therefore prohibits all forms of exploitation and speculation in commercial transactions, but permits every form of free enterprise, large or small, individual or collective, which has no unsocial strings attached to it. Further, as a deterrent to all urges of exploitation or aggrandisement, the Quranic plan, while assuring every citizen the fullest opportunity of acquiring wealth, makes it impossible for wealth to accumulate in but few hands; and this it does by enforcing a law of inheritance which makes it impossible for a property left behind by a deceased to go to any single or specific member of the deceased's family. It is distributed among all near relations—wife or husband, sons and daughters, mother and father, and failing these to collateral near relations.²³ Indeed, if the property is large enough to keep every relation in law to live in comfort with the share accruing to him or to her, a third of the property is recommended to be willed away, particularly "in the way of Allah" (fi sabil-Allah) as defined already.²⁴

In defining the relation that should subsist between the employer and the employed, care was taken to uphold the dignity of labour, and protect its interests. In the time of the Prophet, labour was of two kinds—the slave, and the free. The former composed of captives and of those who had sold or mortgaged their freedom in moments of economic distress, and had to live a life of great discomfort. The Prophet turned his first attention to them. This system of slavery was prevalent throughout the then known world, and was such an integral part of the economic life of the Arabs, that it could not be set aside at one stroke. What the Prophet therefore attempted was to humanize the system and prepare the ground for its total abolition.

To begin with, he made the bondsman a member of the family of his master, and gave him several privileges including the right to own property, and redeem himself if he so chose to. "Those who happen to be your bondsmen," ran the Prophet's directive, "are your own brothers. God has placed them under your authority. It is meet that he who is in authority over his brother should feed him with the food that he himself eats, and clothe him with the stuff that he himself wears. Do not ask him to do a thing which is not physically possible for him to do; and if such a thing is to be done, do you yourself assist him in his task."²⁵ Not merely this, every means was devised to procure his freedom. For every little moral lapse on the part of the rich or of those who maintained slaves, or for every small dereliction of religious duty, the atonement prescribed was the redemption of a slave. And where the chances of lapses were few, the urge for spiritual development was invoked to help the process of redemption. "What is spiritual ascent?" asks the Qur'an, and itself gives the answer. "It is to redeem a slave."²⁶ "Nothing pleases God," adds the Prophet, "better than to free a slave."²⁷

The cumulative effect of the Prophetic care for the slave was so great that slavery had to lose its sting, and restore the slave to a place of honour in society. The story of Islam furnishes examples of individuals drawn from the slave class rising even to the headship of Muslim states. Indeed, one of the loved companions of the Prophet, Bilal, who had the privilege to call the Prophet and the faithful five

times a day from the Mosque at Madina, to 'salat' and 'falah', to the path of 'prayer' and of 'progress', and who was to add to his early morning call the rider, "prayer is better than sleep", this first 'Muazzin' of Islam, was a redeemed Abyssinian slave.

The free labourer was a subject of equal concern to the Prophet. "Pay the labourer his wages before his perspiration dries", was his injunction.²⁸ He regarded every worker as **Habib Allah** or a friend of God.²⁹ The story is told of a labourer who happened to pay a visit to the Prophet. His hands were deeply darkened and scarred. Asked as to the cause of disfiguration, the man said that he worked for his living in a quarry and had to hew down rocks for his employer. The Prophet looked at him tenderly, and taking both his hands into his own, kissed them.³⁰ The entire trend of the Prophetic directions touching the subject of labour is one of strict enjoining on the employer to be fair and considerate in his dealings with the employed and never to be tempted to exploit his position.

The basic purpose underlying all these arrangements³¹ is to let man use his earnings or his wealth with a steady eye on the twin obligations enjoined on him by the Qur'an viz., the **Huquq-Allah** and the **Huquq al-Ibad**, or obligations to self, and obligations to society. The standard of living recommended by the Qur'an is not to be expressed in extravagant material comfort or in self-indulgence. On the other hand, it is to be an expression of satisfaction of the normal material needs of life blending harmoniously with the spiritual, the latter arising out of one's desire to fulfil one's obligation to society or by foregoing extravagant comfort "in the way of Allah", or for the comfort of the comfort-less. That is "righteous" living in Islam the only human standard of living acceptable to God. If Muslim countries of the world are ever to maintain a balance at the present day between the exaggerated opposites developed by Europe—Industrial capitalism and Russian communism—they will have to make an earnest move to revive the Quranic economy and offer it to both the European ideologies to enter upon as a common ground or a half-way house between the two. If they could but do that, they may have a further chance of service to the

cause of humanity by reconciling as Prof. Gibb suggests the apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition, and bridging the gulf between the East and the West:

"But Islam has yet a further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and co-operation. No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavour so many and so various races of mankind. The great Moslem communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small Moslem communities in China and the still smaller community in Japan show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and the West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with the East. If they unite, the hope of peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced; but if Europe, by rejecting the co-operation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both".³²

These words were written some twenty two years ago; but they have the same significance in the world situation even of today. There is no doubt that if the Islamic world and the world of Western democracies come close together, the gain will be reciprocal. Indeed, Prof. Gibb asserts that "for the fullest development of its own cultural and economic life, Islam cannot do without the cooperation of European society; for the fullest development of its cultural life, particularly of its spiritual life, Europe cannot do without the forces and capacities which lie within the Islamic society."³ But will the Western democracies prepare the ground for the type of cooperation envisaged here?

At the moment a large part of the Muslim world is in a state of internal tension resulting from causes which vary from country to country. Some of these causes are of their own creation. But there are others which are traceable to their association with the West. Will the Western democracies, wherever and to the extent they are concerned, do

all that they can to ease the prevailing tension and forge fresh relations with them in amity and good will? Will they at the same time, in mutual interest, offer to the Muslim countries requisite economic and technical aid of which they stand in great need at this hour, and allow them the opportunity to raise their economic level and be a force for the peace of the world?

In what manner the Western democracies will respond to the demands of the situation in the Islamic world, the near future is bound to disclose. But whatever that response or its character, one thing should be perfectly clear to the Muslims. They will have to mould their destiny themselves, guided by the light their Faith affords them. That light will never fail them if they earnestly seek it. The present state of tension, I regard, is a blessing in disguise. It is a sign of a powerful awakening among them and must take them forward in the march of life. Aid or no aid from outside, an honest reversion to the Quranic economy will even within their limited resources, give them a stable economic life and a human standard of living to one and all.

But is a return to the Quranic economy possible for the present day Muslim without equipping himself beforehand with a mind acceptable to the Qur'an, a mind which could lay an equal emphasis on the **Huquq Allah** and **Huquq al-Ibad**, obligations to self and obligations to society, and work for an order of life "every member of which shall be a shepherd unto every other"? This shepherd mind is the imperative need of Muslims as of the rest of mankind. It thrives, as the history of Islam has demonstrated, more agreeably in the atmosphere of democracy than in any other. But the democracy envisaged by the Qur'an is a democracy of Salehin, of men who give poise to life and protect it from every form of exploitation. Can the world of today resolve itself into a network of such democracies, each functioning as a shepherd unto every other? That is the call of the Qur'an, the order of life that it favours. The world at large, may not listen to it betimes and

pay heed. But the Muslims cannot afford to neglect it: they will only do so at their peril. If the present generation of them everywhere could drop their inherited mediaevalism, and display the sense of God in their individual and group activity, by seriously betaking themselves to a democratic way of life in the spirit of the Qur'an, they may yet develop the necessary talent to withstand the shocks of time, and make a worthy contribution to the peace of the world.

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