

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

I. *AL TAWHĪD* AS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

At the core of religious experience stands God. The *shahādah* (confession of Islamic faith; the witnessing that there is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger; witness; witnessing) asserts: "There is no god but God." The name of God, "Allah," which simply means "The God," occupies the central position in every Muslim place, every Muslim action, every Muslim thought. The presence of God fills the Muslim's consciousness at all times. With the Muslim, God is indeed a sublime obsession. What does that mean?

Muslim philosophers and theologians have battled it out among themselves for centuries, and the issue culminated in the arguments of al Ghazālī and Ibn Sīna. For the philosophers, the issue was one of saving the orderliness of the universe. The world, they argued, is a cosmos (a realm in which order and law prevail), where things happen by a cause and causes cannot be without their proper effects. In this stand they were heirs to the Greek, the Mesopotamian and the ancient Egyptian legacies of religion and philosophy. Creation itself was these traditions' passage from chaos to cosmos. The Muslims entertained the highest ideas of transcendence and nobility of the divine Being, but they could not conceive of that Being as consistent with a chaotic world.

The theologians, for their part, feared that such an emphasis on the orderliness of the universe necessarily renders God a *deus otiosus*; that it leaves Him little to do once He has created the world and built therein the clockwork mechanism necessary to set everything in causal motion. They were right. For a world in which everything happens according to a cause and where causes are all natural—i.e., in and from the world—is one in which everything happens necessarily and hence is a world which does not need God. Such a God would never satisfy the religious feeling. Either He is He by Whom everything is, by Whom

everything happens, incapable of initiating or controlling it or there is some other god besides Him, who is the real cause and master of all. Hence, they rejected the philosophers' view and invented the doctrine of "occasionalism." This is the theory that at every moment of time, God recreates the world and thus makes happen all that happens therein. They replaced the necessity of causality with the trust that God, being just and righteous, will not deceive but will see to it that the right effect will always follow upon the right cause. The upshot of the matter was not the establishment of causality, but of divine presence, and of accommodating causality to that presence. The theologians carried a sweeping victory over the philosophers.¹

Behind the theologians' position stands the Muslim's experience, where God is not merely an absolute, ultimate first cause or principle but a core of normativeness. It is this aspect of God that suffers most in any theory where God becomes a *deus otiosus*; and it is the Muslim's responsiveness to this core of normativeness that the philosopher's theory throws out of joint.

God as normativeness means that He is the Being Who commands. His movements, thoughts and deeds are all realities beyond doubt; but everyone of these, insofar as man conceives of it, is for him a value, an ought-to-be, even when, in the case where it is already realized, no ought-to-do flows from it. Besides being metaphysical, God's ultimacy is not, for the Muslim, isolable from or emphasizeable at the cost of the axiological. Were we to allow the Muslim here to use the category of "the value of knowledge," he would say the value of the metaphysical is that it may exercise its imperativeness, its moving appeal or normativeness.

God is the final end, i.e., the end at which all finalistic nexuses aim and come to rest. Everything is sought for another which in turn is sought for a third and so on, and hence demands the nexus or chain to continue until a final end is reached which is an end-in-itself. God is such an end, an end for all other ends, a chains of ends. He is the ultimate object of all desire. As such it is He Who makes every other good; for

¹ This is evidenced by the poor reputation which "philosophy" (i.e., the tradition of abstract thought begun by al Kindī and continued by al Fārabi, Ikhwān al Ṣafā, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd) and philosophers had enjoyed, by the names by which they were called (e.g., **Hillīyīn**, **Manāṭīqah**, **Mashshā'un**, **Riwāqiyūn**), and by the treatment the philosophers and their books were given throughout Muslim history. No doubt this sad fate was due to the philosophers' distance from the basic intuition of the *ummah*. For an excellent analysis of the Hellenic roots of Muslim "philosophy" and of its rejection by Islamic thinkers, see: 'Alī Samū al Nashshār. *Manāhij al Baḥth 'ind Mufakkirīn al Islām wa Naqd al Muslimīn li al Mantīq al Aristūṭalīsī* (Cairo: Dār al Fikr al 'Arabi, 1367/1947).

unless the final end is posited, every link in the chain is undone. The final end is the axiological ground of all chains or nexuses of ends.

It follows from this conception of God as the ultimate, finalistic terminus and axiological ground that He must be unique. Obviously, if this were not the case, the question would have to be raised again regarding the priority or ultimacy of one to the other. It is of the very nature of a finalistic end to be unique, just as it is the nature of the ultimate cause of chain to be unique. Ultimacy precludes the possibility of the ultimate's dependence upon another.² It is this uniqueness which the Muslim affirms in his confession of faith, "There is no god but God." In the long history of religions, the Muslim's assertion of God's existence would have come late. Indeed God had told him in the Quran that "there is no people unto whom He had not sent a prophet,"³ and that "no prophet but had been sent to teach the worship and service of God."⁴ But the assertion of the uniqueness of God is new. It brought a refreshing iconoclasm at a time and place where dualism and trinitarianism were the higher, and polytheism the lower, state of religious consciousness. And, in order to purge this consciousness for once and for all, Islam demanded the utmost care in the use of language and precepts appropriate to the unique God. "Father," "intercessor," "savior," "son," etc., were utterly banished from the religious vocabulary; and the uniqueness and absolute transcendence of the divine Being were stressed that no man may claim any relation to God which all other men cannot claim. Islam held as a matter of principle that no man or being is one iota nearer to God than any other. That all creation is creaturely, that it stands on this side of the line dividing the transcendent from the natural, is the necessary presupposition of God's axiological ultimacy.

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَهِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (الأنبياء: ٢٢)

² If there were more than one god... Heaven and earth would have collapsed into disorder and chaos. Praised be Allah, Lord of the Throne, Transcendent beyond all their descriptions of Him (21:22).

... وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (فاطر: ٢٤) وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا... (النحل: ٣٦) ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا نُزُلًا كُلَّ مَاجَاءٍ أُمَّةً رَسُولًا كَذَّبُوهُ فَأَتَيْنَا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ... (المؤمنون: ٤٤)

³ There is no *ummah* but unto it We have sent a prophet to warn (35:24)... unto each *ummah* We have sent a messenger (16:36)... One after another We sent Our messengers to the peoples of the world, though they were belied and rejected (23:44).

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ... (النحل: ٣٦)

⁴ Unto every *ummah*, We have sent a messenger to teach them that service is due to Allah alone, that evil ought to be avoided (16:36).

The relevance of this "unicity" of God to the religious life of the person is easier to grasp. Man's heart always harbors lesser deities than God, and the human intention is nearly always beclouded with desiderata of varying orders of rank. The noblest intention is, as Kant had taught, the purest, i.e., purified from all objectives of "*die Willkur*." And the purest, Islam after all *Willkur* objects are removed and banished.

To perceive God as core of normativeness, as an end whose very being is imperativeness and desirability, is not possible unless there are beings for whom this normativeness is normative. For normativeness is a relational concept. For it to be, there must be creatures for whom the divine command is both perceivable (and hence knowable) as well as realizable. Relationality is not relativity and should not be understood as implying that God is dependent upon, or needful of, man and his world. In Islam, God is self-sufficient; but this self-sufficiency does not preclude the creation of a world in which men find the imperativeness and realize its ought-to-bes. At the core of the Islamic religious experience, therefore, stands God Who is unique and Whose will is the imperative and guide for all men's lives. The Quran has put it dramatically. It portrays God as announcing to His angels His intention of creating the world and placing therein a vicegerent to do His will. The angels object that such a vicegerent who would kill, do evil and shed blood is unworthy of being created. They also contrasted such a vicegerent with themselves, who never swerve from fulfilling the divine will, to which God answers, "I know something which you do not know."⁵ Obviously, man would indeed do evil for that is his prerogative as a free being. But for anyone to fulfill the divine will when it is perfectly in his power to do otherwise is to fulfill a higher and worthier portion of the divine will. The angels are ruled out precisely because they have no freedom to violate the divine imperative. Likewise, in another still more dramatic Quranic passage, God offered His trust to heaven and earth, mountains and rivers. These were struck with fear and panic and

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّیْ جَاعِلٌ فِی الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةً ۚ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَیَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ اِنِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (البقرة: ۳۰)

⁵ When your Lord announced to the angels that He was about to create a vicegerent for Him on earth, they said: "Would you establish on earth a creature that sheds blood and works evil, while we do nothing but adore and praise You?" Allah answered: "Yea, I have a purpose (for what I am about to do) which you do not know" (2:30).

rejected the truth. But man accepted the trust and assumed its burden.⁶ The trust, or divine will, which no heaven-and-earth can realize is the moral law which demands freedom from the agent. In heaven-and-earth, the will of God is realized with the necessity of natural law.⁷ It is His inalterable *sunnah* or pattern which, implanted in creation, causes creation to run as it does. Natural law cannot be violated by nature. Its total fulfillment is all that nature is capable of doing.⁸ But man, who boldly accepts the trust, is capable of doing as well as not doing the will of God.⁹ Only he, therefore, of all creatures, satisfies the prerequisites of moral action, namely freedom. Moral values are more conditioned than the elemental values of nature since they presuppose them. Equally, they presuppose the utilitarian or instrumental values and therefore stand higher than either of these. Evidently, they are the higher part of the divine will which necessitates the creation of man and his appointment as the vicegerent of divinity on earth.

Because of this endowment, man stands higher than the angels, for he can do more than them.¹⁰ He can act morally, i.e., in freedom, which

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَنُ ...
(الأحزاب: ٧٢)

⁶ We offered Our trust (*amanah*) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains. They shied away from it in fear, panic-stricken. But man accepted to carry it (33:72).

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ (القدر: ٤٩) ﴿ وَمَا مِنْ دَآءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَیَّ اللَّهُ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرُّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعُهَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ (هود: ٦) وَالشَّمْسُ تَحْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيرِ لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (س: ٣٨-٤٠)

⁷ Everything We have created and prescribed for it its measure, its character and destiny (54:49)... No creature creeps on earth but Allah provides for it its sustenance. He knows its purpose and destiny. For it is He Who prescribed them in His eternal order (11:6)... The sun rises and sets, traversing its orbit exactly as the Almighty has ordained. And the moon passes regularly through its phases, returning to its original thin crescent form. Neither sun nor moon overtakes the other; neither night nor day deviates from their preordained courses. Each moves in the orbit Allah has ordained for it (36:38-40).

⁸ Ibid.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ مِمَّنْ آمَنُوا بِهِ فَرَحَّبُوا وَمَنْ سَلَ فَإِنَّمَا يَتُضَلُّ عَلَيْهِهَا ...
(الزمر: ٤١)

⁹ We revealed to you the Book in truth, that you may proclaim it to the world. Whoever decides to be guided by its guidance does so to his own credit. Whoever rejects its guidance does so to his own discredit (39:41).

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا ... (البقرة: ٣٤)

¹⁰ And We commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. They did... (2:34).

they cannot. Man equally shares the necessity of natural causation in his vegetative and animal life, in his physical presence as a thing among things on earth. But as the being through whom the higher part of God's will can be realized, he stands absolutely without peer. His is a cosmic vocation, a genuine *khilāfah* (vicegerency) of the divine order.

It would indeed be a poor, uncoordinated work on the part of God if He had created such a cosmic creature as man without enabling him to know His will; or placing him on earth which is not malleable enough to receive man's discharge of his ethical vocation; or one where the doing or not-doing of that will would make no difference.

To know the divine will, man was given revelation, a direct and immediate disclosure of what God wants him to realize on earth. Wherever the revelation was corrupted, perverted, or forgotten, God has repeated the performance, taking into consideration the relativities of history, the changes in space and time, all to the purpose of keeping within man's reach a ready knowledge of the moral imperatives. Equally, man is endowed with senses, reason and understanding, intuition, all the perfection necessary to enable him to discover the divine will unaided. For that will is imbedded not only in causal nature, but equally in human feelings and relations. Whereas the former half takes another exercise of the discipline called natural science to discover it, the second half takes the exercise of the moral sense and the discipline of ethics. The discoveries and conclusions are not certain. They are always subject to trial and error, to further experimentation, further analysis and to correction by deeper insight. But, all this notwithstanding, the search is possible, and reason cannot despair of reexamining and correcting its own previous findings without falling into skepticism and cynicism. Thus, knowledge of the divine will is possible by reason, certain by revelation. Once perceived, the desirability of its content is a fact of human consciousness. Indeed, the apprehension of value, the suffering of its moving appeal and determinative power, is itself the "knowledge" of it. For to know value is to lose one's ontological poise or equilibrium and to roll in the direction of it, that is to say, to suffer change, to begin the realization of its ought-to-be, to fulfill the ought-to-do which issues therefrom. As the leading American empiricist, C. I. Lewis, used to say: "The apprehension of value is an experience and is itself a 'value-ing.'"¹¹

¹¹ C.I. Lewis elaborated upon this idea in his *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1946), 416-17.

So much for the consequences of religious experience in Islam for the theory of man. We ought now to consider the implications for soteriology and history. We have already mentioned the malleability of the world, its readiness to be informed, kneaded, remolded and cut so as to make it a concretization of the divine pattern. This preparation, together with the availability of revelation and the promise of a critical establishment of the divine will by reason, all render unpardonable the failure of man to fulfill his vicegerency. Indeed, fulfillment of his vocation is the only condition Islam knows for man's salvation.¹² Either it is his own doing or it is worthless.¹³ Nobody can do the job for him, not even God, without rendering him a puppet. This follows from the nature of moral action, namely, it is not itself moral unless it is freely willed and undertaken to completion by a free agent. Without the initiative and effort of man, all moral worth or value falls to the ground.¹⁴

Islamic soteriology therefore is the diametrical opposite of that of traditional Christianity. Indeed, the term "salvation" has no equivalent in the religious vocabulary of Islam. There is no saviour and there is nothing from which to be saved. Man and world are either positively good or neutral, but not evil.¹⁵ Man begins his life ethically sane and sound, not weighed down by any original sin, however mild or Augustinian.¹⁶ In fact, at birth he is already above the zero point in that he has the revelation and his rational equipment ready for use, as well as a world all

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (الذاريات: ٥٦)

¹² And I [Allah] have not created the **jinn** and humans but to serve Me (51:56).

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ... (الملك: ٢)

¹³ It is Allah Who created life and death that you may prove yourselves worthy in your deeds (or, that you may excel one another by deeds of righteousness). (67:2).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ... (البقرة: ٢٥٦) ... فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفِرْ ... (الكهف: ٢٩)

¹⁴ There is no compulsion in religion. Truth and righteousness are henceforth manifestly distinguished from their opposites (2:256). Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will let him disbelieve (18:29).

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ... (السجدة: ٧) أَلَلَّيْ خَلَقَ مُوسَى (الأعر: ٢)

¹⁵ It is Allah Who created everything in the best form (32:7)... It is He Who created and perfected all things (87:2).

¹⁶ Saint Augustine, *The Enchiridion*. chap. 26. For an analysis of the Christian conception of sin, see this author's *Christian Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967), chap. VI.

too ready to receive his ethical deed.¹⁷ His *falāḥ* (felicity; felicity through works; ethical felicity; success; happiness and ease), a term Islam uses which comes from the root meaning "to grow vegetation out of the earth," consists of his fulfillment of the divine imperative.)¹⁸ He can hope for God's mercy and forgiveness, but he may not count on it while refraining from doing the divine will whether out of ignorance, laziness or blatant defiance. His fate and destiny are exactly what he himself makes them to be.¹⁹ God's government is just, neither favorable nor unfavorable. Its scale of justice is absolutely that of the most precise and perfect balance. And its system of worldly and other worldly rewards and punishments disposes for everyone, whether blest or unblest, exactly what he deserves.²⁰

Islamic religious experience has great consequence for world history. The fire of the Muslim's vision caused him to hurl himself onto the stage of history, therein to effect the realization of the divine pattern his Prophet (SAAS) had communicated to him. Nothing was for him worthier than this cause. In its interest, he was prepared to pay the maximum price, that of laying down his life. True to its content, he regarded his stage as consisting of the whole world; of his *ummah* as consisting of mankind minus a few recalcitrant people whom he sought to bring within

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عَيْنَيْنِ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (البلد: ١٠-٨) وَسَعَّرْ لَكُمْ مَآبِ السَّنَوتِ وَمَآبِ الْأَرْضِ
جَمِيعًا ... (العنابة: ١٣) أَلَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ
(الزعرور: ١٠)

¹⁷ Have We not created for men their eyes, their tongues and lips? Have we not granted them their senses of orientation? (90:8-10). Allah has indeed made all that is in heaven and earth subservient to humankind (45:13)... It is He indeed Who made the earth men's dwelling place; Who made for you roads thereby you may find guidance (to destinations) (43:10).

¹⁸ M.M. al Zubaydi, *Tāj al Arūs* (Dār Maktabat al Hayah, 1965), s.v. "f-l-ḥ," vol. 2, 199.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصُدُّهُمُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ
مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (الزلزلة: ٨-٦)

¹⁹ On that day [the Day of Judgment], all people will be resurrected and shown their own deeds. Whoever does an atom's weight of good will behold it then, and whoever does an atom's weight in evil, it will be reckoned unto him with equal precision (99:6-8).

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (آل عمران: ١٨٢) فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أَضِيعُ عَمَلًا عَمِلَ
مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى ... (آل عمران: ١٩٥)

²⁰ Allah never treats His servants unjustly (3:182). Allah accepts the prayers of those who pray to Him, that He will never lose account of any good deed by anyone, whether male or female (3:195).

the fold by force of arms. His *pax Islamica*, which stood on his arms, was never conceived as a monolithic society in which Islam alone predominates. It included Jews, Christians, Sabians by Quranic authority, Zoroastrians by Muhammadan authority, and Hindus and Buddhists by the jurists' extrapolation of that authority. The ideal remained the same, namely, a world in which, as the Quran puts it, "the divine word is supreme," and everybody recognizes that supremacy.²¹ But for such recognition to be worth anything at all it must be free, the deliberate decision of every person. That is why to enter into the *pax Islamica* never meant conversion to Islam, but entry into a peaceful relationship wherein ideas are free to move and men are free to convince and to be convinced. Indeed, the Islamic state put all its resources at the disposal of Jewish society, Christian society, Hindu and Buddhist society, whenever these sought its authority to bring back into line with Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism any member who defied or transcended that line. The Islamic state was the only non-Jewish state where the Jew was not free to de-Judaize himself, or to rebel as a Jew against the authority of Judaism. The same applied to the Christian, Hindu or Buddhist. Whereas, up to his emancipation in the nineteenth century, the European Jew who defied the directive of this *Bayt ha Din* could only be excommunicated—such excommunication making of him a lawless man, awaited just outside the walls of the ghetto by the Christian state or any non-Jew to be dispossessed and killed—the oriental Jew who defied *Bayt ha Din* was corrected by the Islamic state in the name of his rabbis. This constitutes an ultimate proof of the Muslim understanding of the divine trust as ethical.

II. AL TAWHĪD AS WORLDVIEW

Traditionally and simply expressed, *al tawhīd* is the conviction and witnessing that "there is no god but God." This seemingly negative statement, brief to the utmost limits of brevity, carries the greatest and richest meanings in the whole of Islam. Sometimes a whole culture, a whole

... وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا (التوبة: ٤٠)
 ... وَيَكُونُ الَّذِينَ يُلُوا... (البقرة: ١٩٣)

²¹ It is He Who humbled to the depths, the word of the unbelievers; He Who made His word supreme (9:40)... That religion be all His alone (2:193).

civilization, or a whole history lies compressed in one sentence. This certainly is the case of the *al kalimah* (pronouncement) or *al shahādah* of Islam. All the diversity, wealth and history, culture and learning, wisdom and civilization of Islam is compressed in this shortest of sentences - *lā ilāha illā Allah* (There is no god but God.)

Al Tawhīd is a general view of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time, of human history and destiny. At its core, stand the following principles:

A. DUALITY

Reality is of two generic kinds, God and non-God; Creator and creature. The first order has but one member, Allah (SWT). He alone is God, the Eternal, the Creator, the Transcendent. "Nothing is like unto Him."²² He remains forever absolutely unique and devoid of partners and associates.²³ The second is the order of space-time, of experience, of creation. It includes all creatures, the world of things, plants and animals, humans, *jinn* and angels, heaven and earth, paradise and hell, and all their becoming since they came into being. The two orders of Creator and creation are utterly and absolutely disparate as far as their being, or ontology, as well as their experience and careers, are concerned. It is forever impossible that the one be united with, infused, confused with or diffused into the other. Neither can the Creator be ontologically transformed so as to become the creature, nor can the creature trans-

فَإِطْرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ... لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (التورى: ١١) ... وَتَعَلَّى عَمَّا يُصِفُوهُ (الأنعام: ١٠٠) لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْبَاصِرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَاصِرَ... (الأنعام: ١٠٣)

²² Allah is the Creator of the heavens and the earth... Nothing is like unto Him. He is All Hearing, All Seeing (42:11)... Transcendent is He beyond all their descriptions of Him (6:100). Sight can never reach Him; His sight reaches all things.. (6:103).

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (الإعلاص: ٤-١)
وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ لِّلِّينَ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُمِ الْبَيْنَ وَبَنَتِ بَغْيَ عُلَ... (الأنعام: ١٠٠)

²³ Proclaim: Allah is One, Eternal. He neither begets nor is begotten. Nothing is ever comparable to Him (112:1-4)... They ascribed the *jinn* as associates to Allah, (though Allah did create the *jinn*). They even ascribed to Him sons and daughters. All this they did with no knowledge (6:100).

cent and transfigure itself so as to become, in any way or sense, the Creator.²⁴

B. IDEATIONALITY

The relation between the two orders of reality is ideational in nature. Its point of reference in man is the faculty of understanding. As organ and repository of knowledge, the understanding includes all the gnoseological functions, such as memory, imagination, reasoning, observation, intuition, apprehension, etc. All humans are endowed with understanding. The endowment is strong enough to understand the will of God in either or both of the following ways: When that will is expressed in words, directly by God to man, or "the laws of nature," the divine will is deductible through observation of creation.²⁵

C. TELEOLOGY

The nature of the cosmos is teleological; that is, purposive, serving a purpose of its Creator, and doing so out of design. The world has not been created in vain or in sport.²⁶ It is not the work of chance, a hap-
penstance. It is created in perfect condition. Everything that exists does

أَرَأَيْتُمْ أَتَّخَذُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ مُبَشِّرُونَ لَوْ كَانَ فِي سَاءِ آلِهَةٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسَبِّحْ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ
لَا يَسْتَلْ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُمْتَلُونَ أَرَأَيْتُمْ أَتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ... (الأنبياء: ٢١، ٢٢، ٢٣، ٢٤)

²⁴ Or, have they chosen a deity from the earth who raise the dead? If there were therein gods beside Allah, then verily both (the heaven and the earth) would have been disordered. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the throne from all that they ascribed (to Him). He will not be questioned as to that which He does but they will be questioned. Or have they chosen other deities beside Him? Say: Bring your proof (of their deity)... (21:21-4).

... فَلَنْ يَجْدَلَ اللَّهُ بِدِينٍ وَلَا وَلَنْ يَجْدَلَ اللَّهُ بِدِينٍ وَلَا (فاطر: ٤٣)

²⁵ As to the patterns of Allah in creation, you will never find exception. The patterns of Allah are immutable (35:43).

... وَيَقَعُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا تُسَبِّحُكَ... (آل عمران: ١٩١)
وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَمَعِينَ (الأنبياء: ١٦)

²⁶ [Righteous are] those who ponder the creation of heaven and earth and affirm, "O Allah! You have not created this creation in vain" (3:191)... Certainly, We have not created heaven and earth and what is in between in sport (21:16).

so in a measure proper to it and fulfills a certain universal purpose.²⁷ The world is indeed a "cosmos," an orderly creation, not a "chaos." In it, the will of the Creator is always realized. His patterns are fulfilled with the necessity of natural law, for they are innate in the way other than what the Creator has ordained for it.²⁸ This is true of all creatures — except man. Human action is the only instance where the will of God is actualized not necessarily, but deliberately, freely, voluntarily. The physical and psychic functions of man are integral to nature, and as such they obey the laws pertinent to them with the same necessity as all other creatures. But the spiritual function, viz., the understanding and moral action, fall outside the realm of determined nature. They depend upon their subject and follow his determination. Actualization of the divine will by them is of a qualitatively different value than necessary actualization by other creatures. Necessary fulfillment applies only to elemental or utilitarian values; free fulfillment to the moral. However, the moral purposes of God, His commandments to man, do have a base in the physical world, and hence there is a utilitarian aspect to them. But this is not what gives them their distinctive quality, namely, that of being moral. It is precisely their aspect of being fulfillable in freedom, that is, the possibility of being fulfilled or violated remaining always open, that gives them the special dignity we ascribe to things "moral."²⁹

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ... (السجدة: ٧) الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَوَيْلٌ (الأعر: ٢) اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ
فَكَرَارًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ... (طه: ٦٤) ... وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي
إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ (يس: ١٢)

²⁷ [Allah] Who created everything and did so perfectly (32:7)... [Allah] Who created and perfected His creature (87:2)... [Allah] Who made for you the earth a place of settlement, the firmament a protective canopy and Who formed you in the best of forms (40:64)... To everything Allah has prescribed its nature and fixed its place in the eternal order (36:12).

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ... وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدْ رُفِعَ عَنِ الْأَلْفَاظِ (الفرقان: ٢) قُلْ لَنْ يُغَيِّبَ اللَّهُ نَبَأًا
كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا... (التوبة: ٥١)

²⁸ Allah, to Whom belongs the dominion of heaven and earth. He created all things. To each and everything He prescribed its measure [its character, course or destiny] (25:2) Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us. (9:51).

²⁹ Qur'an 33:72 (quoted earlier). This is the lesson of the dramatic account given in the Qur'an of the *amānah* Allah offered to nature, but which nature could not bear, and which man voluntarily accepted and carried. In essence, it is the moral principle that *taklīf* (obligation) necessarily implies *qudrah* (capability to act) and *ikhtiyār* (freedom to choose).

D. CAPACITY OF MAN AND MALLEABILITY OF NATURE

Since everything was created for a purpose—the totality of being no less so—the realization of that purpose must be possible in space and time.³⁰ Otherwise, there is no escape from cynicism. Creation itself, the processes of space and time, would lose their meaning and significance. Without this possibility, *taklif* (charge, moral obligation, responsibility), falls to the ground; and with its fall, either God's purposiveness or His might is destroyed. Realization of the absolute, namely, the divine *raison d'être* of creation, must be possible in history, that is, within the process of time between creation and the Day of Judgement. As subject of moral action, man must therefore be capable of changing himself, his fellows or society, nature or his environment, so as to actualize the divine pattern, or commandment, in himself as well as in them.³¹ As a subject of moral action, man as well as his fellows and environment must all be capable of receiving the efficacious action of man, the subject. This capacity is the converse of man's moral capacity for action as subject. Without it man's capacity for moral action would be impossible and the purposive nature of the universe would collapse. Again, there would be no recourse from cynicism. For creation to have a purpose—and this is a necessary assumption if God is God and His work is not a meaningless *travail de singe*—creation must be malleable, transformable, capable of changing its substance, structure, conditions and relations so as to embody or concretize the human pattern or purpose. This is at once true of all creation, including man's physical, psychic, and spiritual natures. All creation is capable of realization of the ought-to-be, or the will or pattern of God, or the absolute³² in this space and in this time.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِي (الذاريات: ٥٦) الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَسْأَلَكُمْ بِكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ...
(المالك: ٢)

³⁰ I [Allah] have not created jinn and humans but to serve Me (51:56)... [Allah] Who created life and death that you may prove yourselves worthy in your deeds (67:2).

³¹ Ibid.

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا بِسْمِكَ يُجْزَى ... (الإسراء: ٤٤)

³² The seven heavens and the earth, and all that is in them, praise [obey] Allah. Nothing exists but it praises (obeys) Allah (17:44).

E. RESPONSIBILITY AND JUDGEMENT

We have seen that man stands under the obligation to change himself, society and environment so as to conform to the divine pattern. We have also seen that he is capable of doing so, since creation is malleable and capable of receiving his action and embodying its purpose. It follows from these facts that man is responsible.³³ Moral obligation is impossible without responsibility or reckoning. Unless man is responsible, and somehow and somewhere he will be reckoned with as far as his deeds are concerned, cynicism becomes once more inevitable. Judgement, or the consummation of responsibility, is the necessary condition of moral obligation, or moral imperativeness. It flows from the very nature of "normativeness."³⁴ It is immaterial whether reckoning takes place in space-time or at end of it or both; but it must take place. To obey God, i.e., to realize His commandments and actualize His pattern, is to incur *falāḥ*. Not to do so, i.e., to disobey Him, is to incur punishment, suffering, unhappiness, and the agonies of failure.³⁵

The foregoing five principles are self-evident truths. They constitute the core of *al tawḥīd* and the quintessence of Islam. They are equally the core of *Hanifism*, of all the revelations that came from heaven. All the prophets have taught these principles and built their movements upon them. Equally, these principles are built by God in the very fabric of

...وَهُمْ يُحْشَرُونَ (الأنبياء: ٢٣)

³³ And they [all humans] shall be reckoned with (21:23).

(There are numerous other passages in the Qur'an whose main support is the affirmation of man's responsibility.)

³⁴ This is what Islam understands by the idea of *ḥisāb*. *Yawm al Ḥisāb* is the Day of Judgment. The idea that Allah (SWT) is going to "reckon" (to do *ḥisāb*) with humans is ubiquitous in the Qur'an and it may be said to be the very foundation of the whole moral/religious system.

³⁵ Any casual reading of the Qur'anic *surah(s)* revealed in Makkah will confirm this understanding of Allah's relation to man as covenantal. It is equally the understanding of all previous prophets and their followers. The same covenantal spirit provides the religious and moral foundation of the ancients. It is evident in Mesopotamia's *Enuma Elish* and the codes of law of Lippit Ishtar and Hammurabi. See James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَرِيمُ
وَلَنْ يَكُنْ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (الرُّوم: ٣٠)

³⁶ And turn yourself to primordial religion as a *ḥanīf*, true to the innate religion with which Allah endowed all humans. Immutuable is Allah's creation. It is the true and valuable religion; but most people do not know (30:30).

human nature, constituting the unerring natural religion or natural conscience upon which human acquired knowledge, rests. Naturally, all Islamic culture is built upon them, and together they form the core of *al tawhīd*, knowledge, personal and social ethics, esthetics and Muslim life and action throughout history.

F. CONCLUSION

The essence of religious experience in Islam, we may say in conclusion, is the realization that life is not in vain, that it must serve a purpose the nature of which cannot be identical with the natural flow of appetite to satisfaction to new appetite and new satisfaction. For the Muslim, finality consists of two utterly separate orders, the natural and the transcendent, and it is to the latter that he looks for the values by which to govern the flow of the former. Having identified the transcendent realm as God, he rules out any guidance of action that does not proceed therefrom. His rigorous *al tawhīd* is, in final analysis, a refusal to subject human life to any guidance other than the ethical. Hedonism, eudaemonism and all other theories which find moral value in the very process of natural life are his *bete noire*. In his view, to accept any of them is to set other gods besides God as the guide and norm of human action. *Shirk* (the association of other gods with God, violation of *al tawhīd*), is really the mixing up of the moral values with the elemental and utilitarian which are all instrumental and never final.

To be a Muslim is precisely to perceive God alone (that is, the Creator, and not nature or the creature) as normative, His will alone as commandment, His pattern alone as constituting the ethical desiderata of creation. The content of the Muslim's vision is truth, beauty and goodness; but these for him are not beyond the pale of his noetic faculties. He is therefore an axiologist in his religious disciplines of exegesis, but only to the end of reaching a sound deontology, as a jurist. Justification by faith is for him meaningless, unless it is the simple introduction into the arena of action. It is there that he claims his best, as well as his worst. He knows that as man, he stands alone between heaven and earth with none but his axiological vision to show the road, his will to commit his energies to the task and his conscience to guard against pitfalls. His prerogative is to lead the life of cosmic danger for no god is there to do the job for him. Not only is the job done if and when he has done

it for himself, but he cannot withdraw. His predicament, if he has any by nature, is that he must carry the divine trust to complete realization or perish, as a Muslim, in the process.³⁷ Surely, tragedy lurks behind every corner in his path. But that is also his pride. As Plato had put it, he is "doomed to love the good."

³⁷ Consider in this regard the answer of the Prophet (SAAS) when his uncle Abū Ṭalīb asked him to desist and put an end to the sufferings of the Hāshim clan at the hands of its enemies in Makkah because of Islam. "O my uncle," he said, "if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would never forsake this call [to preach the new religion] even if I should perish." Muhammad Husain Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, tr. Ismā'īl R. al Farūqī (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1976) 89.