

CHAPTER VI

THE PRINCIPLE OF ETHICS

Al tawhīd affirms that the unique God created man in the best of forms to the end of worshipping and serving Him.¹ Obedience to God and fulfillment of His command are therefore man's *raison d'être*. *Al tawhīd* also affirms that this purpose consists of man's vicegerency for God on earth.² For, according to the Quran, God has invested man with His trust, a trust which heaven and earth were incapable of carrying and from which they shied away with terror.³ The divine trust is the fulfillment of the ethical part of the divine will, whose very nature requires that it be realized in freedom, and man is the only creature capable of doing so. Whenever the divine will is realized with the necessity of natural law, the realization is not moral, but elemental or utilitarian. Only man is capable of realizing it under the possibility of doing or not doing so at all, or doing the very opposite or anything in between. It is this exercise of human freedom regarding obedience to God's commandment that makes fulfillment of the command moral.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (الذاريات: ٥٦) لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (التين: ٤) ثُمَّ رَوْنَاهُ وُفْعًا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي وَجَعَلْ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (السجدة: ٩)

¹I have not created the *jinn* and humankind but to serve Me (51:56)... We have created man in the best of forms (95:4)... We have perfected his (man's) creation and breathed into him of Our spirit. Indeed, Allah has created hearing, your sight and discerning heart. Little do you express your gratitude (32:9).

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة: ٣٠)

²And when your Lord announced to the angels that He was about to create man and to establish him on earth as vicegerent for Him, they said: Would You establish on earth a creature that sheds blood and works evil, while we adore and praise You constantly? Allah answered: I have a purpose which you do not know (2:30).

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

³We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains; but they refused to carry it and were frightened by its burden. However, man accepted to carry it (33:72).

I. THE HUMANISM OF ISLAM

Al tawhīd tells us that God, being beneficent and purposive, did not create man in sport, or in vain.⁴ He has endowed him with the senses, with reason and understanding, made him perfect—indeed, breathed into him of His spirit—to the end of preparing him to perform this great duty.⁵

Such a great duty is the cause for creation of man. It is the final end of human existence, man's definition, and the meaning of his life and existence on earth. By virtue of it, man assumes a cosmic function of tremendous importance. The cosmos would not be itself without that higher part of the divine will which is the object of human moral endeavor. And no other creature in the cosmos is known who can substitute for man in this function. If man is said to be "the crown of creation," it is certainly on this account, namely, that by his ethical striving and action, he is the only cosmic bridge through which the moral—and hence higher—part of the divine will enters the realm of space-time and becomes history.

Al taklīf (responsibility or obligation) laid down upon man exclusively knows no bounds, as far as his possible scope and theater of action. It comprehends the whole universe. All mankind is object of man's moral action; all earth and sky are his theater, his *materiel*. He is responsible for all that takes place in the universe, in every one of its remotest corners, for man's *taklīf* is universal, cosmic. It comes to end only on the Day of Judgement.

Al taklīf is the basis of man's humanity, its meaning and content. Man's acceptance of its burden puts him on a higher level than the rest of crea-

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى (القيامة: ٣) أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى (القيامة: ٣٦) أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِكُمْ مَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَيْنًا وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَرْجِعُونَ (الزُّمَرُ: ١١٥) وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَئِيْمِينَ (الأنبياء: ١٦)

⁴Does man think that We are unable to resurrect his bones? (75:3)... Does he think he will be left alone, without reckoning? (75:36)... Do you think, O men, that We have created you in vain? That your return is not to Us? (23:115)... No! We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between them in sport (21:16).

أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (البلد: ١٠-٧) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي (الحجر: ٢٩)

⁵Does man think that nobody will watch over him? Have We not created for him his eyes [to see]? His tongue and lips [to speak]? Have We not given him his orientation between the path of righteousness and that of evil? (90:7-10)... And when I perfected man's creation, I breathed into him of My spirit (15:29).

tion, indeed, than the angels, for only he is capable of it. It constitutes his cosmic significance. A world of difference separates this humanism of Islam from other humanisms. Greek civilization, for instance, developed a strong humanism which the West has taken as model since the Renaissance. Founded upon an exaggerated naturalism, Greek humanism deified man—as well as his vices. That is why the Greek was not offended by representing his gods cheating and plotting against one another, or committing adultery, theft, incest, aggression, jealousy and revenge, and other acts of brutality. Being part of the stuff of which human life is made, such acts and passions were claimed to be as natural as the perfections and virtues. As nature, both were thought to be equally divine, worthy of contemplation in their esthetic form, of adoration—and of emulation by man of whom they were the apotheosis.⁶ Christianity, on the other hand, was in its formative years reacting to this very Greco-Roman humanism. It went to the opposite extreme of debasing man through “original sin” and declared him a *massa peccata*.⁷ The degrading of man to the level of absolute, universal, innate and necessary state of sin from which it is impossible for any human ever to pull himself by his own effort, was the logical prerequisite if God on High was to incarnate Himself, to suffer and die in atonement for man’s sinfulness. In other words, if a redemption has to take place by God there must be a predicament so absolute that only God could pull man out of it. Thus human sinfulness was absolutized in order to make it “worthy” of the crucifixion of God.⁸ Hinduism classified mankind into castes, and assigned the majority of mankind to the nethermost classes—of “untouchables” if they are native to India, or to that of *malitcha*, the religiously unclean or contaminated of the rest of the world. For the lowest as well as for the others, there is no rise to the superior privileged caste of Brahmins in this life; such mobility is possible only after death through the transmigration of souls. In this life, man necessarily belongs to the

⁶Murray, *Five Stages*... pp. 65-6, 73.

⁷See: *Supra*, chap. II, n. 21.

⁸Their words are full of deadly deceit, wicked lies roll off their tongues, and dangerous threats, like snake’s poison, from their lips (Romans 3:13)... But by the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with Him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his sacrificial death he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that He is righteous. In the past He was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time He deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate His righteousness. In this way God shows that He himself is righteous and that He puts right everyone who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:24-26)... Law was introduced in order to increase wrongdoing; but where sin increased, God’s grace increased much more. So then, just as sin ruled by means of death, so also God’s grace rules by means of righteousness, leading us to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21).

caste in which he is born. Ethical striving is of no consequence whatever to its subject as long as he is alive in this world. Finally, Buddhism judged all human and other life in creation as endless suffering and misery. Existence itself, it held, is evil and man's only meaningful duty is to seek release from it through discipline and mental effort.⁹

The humanism of *al tawhīd* alone is genuine. It alone respects man and creaturely, without either deification or vilification. It alone defines the worth of man in terms of his virtues, and begins its assessment of him with a positive mark for the innate endowment God has given all men in preparation for their noble task. It alone defines the virtues and ideals of human life in terms of the very contents of natural life, rather than denying them, thus making its humanism life-affirmative as well as moral.

In Islam, ethics are inseparable from religion and are built entirely upon it. The Islamic mind knows no pair of contraries such as "religious-secular," "sacred-profane," "church-state," and Arabic, the religious language of Islam, has no words for them in its vocabulary. This first principle of Islamic knowledge is therefore the unity of truth, just as the first principle of human life is the unity of the person, and the first principle of reality is the unity of God. All three unities are aspects of, and inseparable from, one another. Such unity is the ultimate principle. The existence of God was not a question for Islam. It has correctly assumed that man was indeed a *homo religious*, a being whose consciousness has always worked around a pivotal presence of the godhead. But its call for the unity of God was fresh as most men repeatedly mixed up the godhead with other beings, powers or human wishes, thus spoiling its unity. However, anxious to save mankind and the whole of human history from any assumed loss before its advent, it affirmed this divine unity to have been known to Adam, the first human, and his descendants, and called its absence wherever divine unity was not in evidence a human aberration.

The presence of this unity in the mind is what Islam calls religious experience, *īmān* or certain conviction. It is not an "act of faith," a "decision" which man takes where the evidence is not conclusive. Nor is it dependent, as it were, on him and his assessment on a case from which apodeictic certainly is ruled out—not a wager *à la Pascal*! It is so crushingly compelling by its own evidence and reality that man must acquiesce to it as to the conclusion of a geometrical theorem. Percep-

⁹Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, p. 443.

tion of the divine unity, Islam holds, happens to a man just as the presence of a "hard datum" enters consciousness. Its "truth" is as rational, as critical, and as inevitable. The meaning of divine unity is that God alone is God; that nothing absolutely nothing in creation, is like unto Him in any respect whatever, and hence absolutely nothing is associable with Him. He is Creator of all that is, Lord and Master, Sustainer and Provider, Judge and Executor. His will is the law in nature, and the norm in human conduct. It is the *summum bonum*.

Such awareness on the part of man is at once enchanting to him and the world around him. It is possessive, its object being both *tremendum* and *fascinosum*. To be siezed by it is to live one's whole life, not excluding the most personal secret of it, under the all-seeing eye of God, under the all-relevant norms of His divine will, under the shadow of impending judgement according to a scale of absolute justice. There can be no more perfect self-discipline, no more effective self-motivation. In the perspective of this awareness of divine unity, everything in the universe is created for a purpose and sustained at every moment of space-time by the Author of that purpose. No law of nature operates automatically; for its necessity derives not from blind fate or a clockwork cosmos, but from the benevolent God Whose will is to provide man with theater and materials wherein his action is ontologically efficacious. Hence, the doors of natural and humane science and technology are wide open to the most thorough-going empiricism possible without the least alienation or separation from the realm of moral and esthetic value. Fact and value are here synthesized as one datum proceeding from God and fulfilling His will. The world is, under this view, animated; for every atom of it moves by the divine agency, in a divine dependency, for a value that is divine desire.

This, in brief, is the essence of the *shari'ah*, of culture and civilization. The Muslims have called it *al tawhid*, meaning the three unities of God, truth and life. It is at the base of their representation of reality, of their collective mind, action and hope. The question—what ought man to do?—is answerable only in its light.

II. PURPOSE OF MAN'S CREATION

Islamic ethics, therefore, begins with the identification of the divine purpose in man. What is his *raison d'être*? the purpose of his creation, of his continued sustenance in life and history?

Using the religious as well as the ancient Semitic terminology, Islam holds that man was created to serve God. God said in the Quran, the scripture of Islam, "I have not created men and *jinn* except to serve Me."¹⁰ In philosophical terms, this is tantamount to saying that the purpose of man's existence is the realization of the *summum bonum*. Obviously, what is being asserted here is the purposefulness of human life. Its denial is the cynical assertion of meaninglessness. It is another matter whether the meaning of human life is heroism, saintliness or covering the world with yellow paint. Indeed, this question itself cannot be raised without assuming a positive answer to the first, namely, that there is meaning or good in human life. Such meaning or good, which is the purpose of all creation is, according to Islam, the fulfillment of the divine will. Whereas this fulfillment takes place involuntarily as in the physiological and psychic function; and freely, as in the ethical. The ethical functions realize the moral values and these are the higher occupants of that realm, the higher imperatives of divine will. The divine will includes imperatives of a lesser order such as food, growth, shelter, comfort, sex, etc.; for everything in creation partakes of the divine purposiveness; and in fulfilling them, in the hierarchial order proper to them, man realizes the divine will. But his vocation lies in the moral realm where fulfillment of the divine will can take place only in freedom; that is, under the real possibility of man's capacity to do otherwise than he ought. It is in this sense that he is God's vicegerent on earth; for only he can realize the ethical — and hence higher values, and only he can have for an objective the realization of the whole realm in its totality. Hence, he is a sort of cosmic bridge through which the divine will, in its totality and especially the higher ethical part of it, can enter space-time and become actual.

In a dramatically eloquent passage of the Quran, God tells us that He offered His trust to heaven and earth, but these shied away from it; that man alone accepted it.¹¹ The Quran also tells us in another passage that the angels objected to God's plan for creating man, knowing that man was equally capable of evil, which they are not. God, however,

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْإِنْسَ وَالْجِنَّ إِلَّا لِعِبَادِي (الدَّارَات: ٥٦)

¹⁰I have not created the *jinn* and humankind but to serve Me (51:56).

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

¹¹We offered Our trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains; but they refused to carry it and were frightened by its burden. However, man accepted to carry it (33:72).

rejected their claim and assigned to man a higher destiny.¹² In cosmic economy, man's capacity for evil is indeed a risk. But this risk is incomparable with the great promise which he may fulfill if endowed with freedom. What the Quran meant to say is that only man may realize ethical value because only he has the freedom necessary therefor; that only he may pursue the totality of values because only he has the mind and vision requisite for such pursuit. Upon his creation, God gave him of His wisdom, proved him superior to the angels and ordered the latter to prostrate themselves in honor of him.¹³ No wonder then that in Islam man is regarded as the crown of creation, higher than the angels precisely on account of his unique ethical vocation and destiny.

III. MAN'S INNOCENCE

Islam holds that man is created innocent, and plays out the drama, as it were, after his birth, not before. No matter who his parents were, who his uncles and ancestors, his brothers and sisters, his neighbors or his society were, man is born innocent. This repudiates every notion of original sin, of hereditary guilt, of vicarious responsibility, of tribal, national or international involvement of the person in past events before his birth.¹⁴ Every man is born with a clean slate, it asserts, basing its

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ
وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة: ٣٠)

¹²When Allah announced to the angels that He was about to create man and to establish him on earth as vicegerent for Him, the angels said: Would you establish on earth a creature that sheds blood and works evil, while we adore you and praise you constantly? Allah answered: I have a purpose which you do not know (2:30).

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ... وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ
الْكَاذِبِينَ (البقرة: ٣١-٣٤)

¹³Allah taught Adam the names [essence] of all things (2:31). We commanded the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam. They all did except Iblis, who felt too proud to do so. But Iblis is ungodly (2:34).

أَلَّا تَرَىٰ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ يَذَّكَّرُ وَأَن لِّقَسِّ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَاسَعَى (النجم: ٣٨-٣٩) لَا يَكْلِفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا
مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ... (البقرة: ٢٨٦)

¹⁴No person is responsible for the guilt of another...To every person belongs the merit or demerit of what he has wrought (53:38-39)...Allah does not charge a person with more than he can bear. Therefore, to everyone belongs the credit or discredit which he has personally earned (2:286).

stand on the absolute autonomy and individuality of the human person.¹⁵ No soul, the Quran declares, will bear any but its own burden.¹⁶ To it belongs all that is has itself personally earned, whether merit or dismerit.¹⁷ None will receive judgement for the deed of another, and none may intercede on behalf of another.¹⁸ Islam defines man's responsibility exclusively in terms of his own deeds and defines a deed as the act in which man, the sane adult person, enters into bodily, consciously, and voluntarily, and in which he produces some disturbance of the flow of space-time. That guilt and responsibility are ethical categories and are incurred only where a free and conscious deed is committed is a "hard datum" of ethical consciousness.

A number of modern Christian thinkers sought to reestablish the old doctrine of original sin by giving it a new, descriptive base. Such a base, they claimed, was furnished by the discoveries of biologists and psychologists and their analyses of human nature. The will to

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَنْ أَهْتَكَفَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ صَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَفْعَلُ لِنَفْسِهِ...
(الزمر: ٤١) وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ... (الکهف: ٢٩)

¹⁵We have sent down to you [Muhammad] the Book in truth. Whoever is guided by it is so to his own credit; whoever goes astray does so to his own discredit (39:41)... Say [O Muhammad], the truth has come from our Lord and become manifest. Whoever wishes to believe, let him do so; whoever wishes to disbelieve, let him do so (18:29).

... وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا نُزِرْ وَازِرَةً وَزَرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَيْكَ رُجُوعٌ... (الأنعام: ١٦١)

الْأَنْزِرُ وَازِرَةً وَزَرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ (النجم: ٣٨-٣٩)

¹⁶No soul will be charged but what it has wrought upon itself. No person is responsible for the guilt of another. To Allah is your return (6:164)... No person may be asked to reckon but for his own deeds. His record will be manifest; and he will be given exactly what he deserves (53:38-9).

مَنْ أَهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا نُزِرْ وَازِرَةً وَزَرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا (الإسراء: ١٥) مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ (فصل: ٤٦)

¹⁷Whoever guides himself by Our revelation does so to his own credit. Whoever goes astray does so to his own peril. Nobody will be responsible for another's deed, and we will not judge but after a messenger is sent [to proclaim and warn] (17:15)... Whoever does good will have that good reckoned for him. Whoever does evil will have that evil marked against him. Your Lord commits no injustice to His servants (41:46).

قُلْ لَا تَسْأَلُونَنَا عَمَّا آجُرُكُمْ وَلَا تَسْأَلْ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (سأ: ٢٥) فَإِلْيَوْمَ لَا يَمُوتُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَقُولِ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ بِهَا تَكْذِبُونَ (سأ: ٤٢)

¹⁸Say: You are not accountable for our crimes; nor are we for the evil you do (34:25). On the Day of Judgment, no person will be of any avail to another, neither for good nor for ill.. Those who committed injustice will be assigned to the Fire which they denied (34:42).

live, to survive, to satisfy the instincts, the desire for pleasure and comfort, man's will to power, his egotism and even the undeniable fact of his imperfection and otherness than God — all these have been claimed to constitute in their opinion so many loci of original sin, which they then define as the self-centered direction of all these natural or psychic inclinations.¹⁹

Surely, man is made of all that the biochemist, physiologist, pathologist, psychologist and all the sciences study in him, and the object of their studies is certainly "given," another "hard datum," predetermined before birth. But all this, whether physical or psychic is natural and necessary. Man does not have it by choice. The baby and the adult are determined by their bodily frames, the one not to climb a mountain and the other not to carry an elephant. But it would be repugnant to reason to call either of them "guilty" of their failures to climb the mountain or carry the elephant. The Quran has declared that no man may be responsible for any more than he can bear.²⁰ Determination by nature is consonant with innocence and constitutes no valid ground for incrimination, for ethical responsibility is commensurate with capacity for the controlled use of one's natural equipment with a view to produce the objective contemplated by one's consciousness. Where there is no capacity, there can be no freedom and hence neither responsibility nor guilt. Modern advocates of original sin have often fallen back upon the endowment of nature for justification of their theory. Their most common plea is: Consider the self-centeredness of the newborn infant, not to speak of the adult person. Topping all modern Christian apologetics in bombast is the grandiose claim of Paul Tillich who defined original sin as the personal guilt incurred by passage from essence to existence within the mind of God of the idea of man.²¹ The sweeping assertion of some Indian thinkers, not forgetting Guatama, the Buddha, that man—indeed the whole realm of nature—is both evil and unreal, is of the same kind.²²

¹⁹Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, part I, chap. IV, chap. XIV, pp. 35 ff; Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 pp. 44 ff; Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (New York: Scribner, 1941), pp. 245, 263-269.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا... وَلَا تَحْمِلْنَ مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَاقِبِهِ... (البقرة: ٢٨٦)

²⁰No soul will be charged with more than it can bear... Our Lord, grant that we may not have to carry that which is beyond our power (2:286).

²¹Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 29-44.

²²T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), 330-331; also Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, 362 ff.

IV. IMAGO DEI

Man, the Quran claims, in agreement with the Jewish and Christian views, is created in God's image.²³ Like Judaism, and unlike Christianity, however, it regards this image as innate in all men and permanent; that is to say, being part of nature, it cannot be lost. Islam does not follow Christianity in distinguishing between a natural *imago dei* (as *actus*) and an ethical one (as *reatus*). Neither does it allow either or both of them any ontological status, as the theological term *inquinamentum* indicates. The Christian distinction is needed to make the fall something ontological, something true of all human beings, and this would constitute the necessary predicament from which no man can save himself by his own effort—which is the assumption of the Incarnation.²⁴ Islam did not share these assumptions and could hence regard every man at all times as embodying the divine image.

Islamic thought built upon this notion of God's image in man is philosophic anthropology. The Quran asserted that man was endowed with a soul, and defined the latter as "of the breath of God."²⁵ Man's soul was then analyzed into an animal component which gave man his sentience and desires, and a rational component which gave him his mind. The Quran told of man's endowment with the senses, with a capacity for knowledge of nature, of God and of His will, strong enough to be

فَلَمَّا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (الحجر: ٢٩) اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَكَّرُوا
وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَاءً وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ذَلِكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَتَسَاءَلُوا
اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ (غافر: ٦٤) خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ
(التغابن: ٣)

²³And when Allah perfected the creation of man and breathed into him of His spirit, the angels prostrated themselves to him (15:29)... It is Allah who granted to you the earth in which to settle, Who raised the sky for your protection, Who formed you in the best of forms, and Who gave you the good things to enjoy. Such are the deeds of your Lord. Blessed be Allah, Lord of the universes (40:64)... He created heaven and earth in truth; and He created you in the best of form. To Him is the ultimate return. (64:3).

²⁴St. Augustine, "Against Two Letters of the Pelagians," *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978) First series, Vol. 5. p. 378. But I see a different law at work in my body—a law that fights against the law which my mind approves of. It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is at work in my body. What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ! This, then is my condition: on my own I can serve God's law only with my mind, while my human nature serves the law of sin (Romans 7:23-25).

فَلَمَّا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي ... (الحجر: ٢٩)

²⁵And when I have perfected man's creation, I breathed into him of My spirit (15:29).

trustworthy—indeed to substitute for revelation or to be its equal.²⁶ Muslim philosophers have universally equated the two. Reason was the part of man which made him godlike; and being the breath of God, it is man's most godlike organ and hence the faculty by which like can know like, by which man can know God.

This divine image is ubiquitous in all men. It cannot ever be destroyed or lost and it constitutes man's essential humanity. It is his noblest and most precious possession. It is divine. Where it is missing, there is no human being; and where it is deficient, the condition of the patient is called insanity. Here Islamic humanism is one with the philosophic humanism of the Greeks (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), with the difference that whereas the highest object of Greek rationality was *paideia* (culture), for the Muslim it is *taqwā* (piety, righteousness). On second look, however, Islam's piety turns out to include Greek *paideia*, for in Islam, the recognition of God as God, i.e., as Creator, Lord and Judge, is the highest rationality ever.

Islam is radically different from Greek humanism, as the latter recognized the free citizen and assigned the slave to another inferior category. It is equally different from Jewish humanism which, while asserting the *imago dei* to be present in all men by nature, differentiates between men on the level of birth and nature by assigning an elect status to its own adherents. It is different from Christian humanism when the latter distinguishes between *imago dei* as a natural *zelem*, possessed by all men and an acquired *demuth* which only its adherents possess as a result of their faith and baptism. Finally, it is different from secular European humanism which defines itself in terms of European culture exclusively, and thus relegates the Asians, Africans and other non-Europeans to a subhuman level. Even the great Kant, the noblest prince of the Enlightenment, the advocate of the categorical imperative, was unable to push his own rationalism to its logical conclusion and assigned

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِيهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (الحجدة: ٩)
وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لِكَيْدٍ بِهِ عَلَّمَ إِنْ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْفُورًا (الاسراء: ٣٦) سَرِيحُهُ
مَا يَتَّبِعُنِي الْأَفَاقُ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ... (فصل: ٥٣)

²⁶Allah then perfected the creation of man and breathed into him of His spirit. It is Allah Who created your hearing, your sight and your discerning heart. Little do you feel grateful (32:4). O man! Follow not that whereof you have no knowledge. As faculties of knowledge, your sights your hearing and your hearts are indeed responsible (17:36)... We shall show them Our evident signs in all horizons as well as within their own selves, that they may be convinced Our revelation is the truth. (41:53).

inferior status to the Asians and Africans. Islam regards all men alike; and God is repeatedly reminding man in the Quran: "We have created you all from one pair—all from dust—Higher among you is he who is higher in righteousness ... and knowledge."²⁷ Those who know and those who don't, are they equals?" the Quran asks rhetorically.²⁸ On the day of his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (SAAS) received a revelation signalling the completion of the revelation and of Islam. On that solemn occasion he found fit to remind the Muslims who were almost all Arab in race and were Arab in language and culture without exception: "No difference whatever between an Arab and a non-Arab can exist except on the level of righteousness."²⁹

The second faculty constitutive of the soul as mind or reason is man's capacity for responsibility. The Muslim philosophers insisted on defining this capacity as *qadar* (capacity for action), and the theologians, as *kasb* (capacity for acquisition of the consequences of action, action being exclusively a divine prerogative). This difference between *qadar* and *kasb* is a theological nicety. On the ethical level they are equal for both have the same effect of attributing responsibility to man for his deeds.

Man's capacity to know the good or the will of God, his capacity to fulfill or not to fulfill the imperative and his responsibility for his deeds constitute his humanistic "equipment." All men are endowed with this equipment without exception.

Islam has no soteriology. "Salvation," in its purview, is an improper religious concept with has no equivalent term in the Islamic vocabulary. Man stands in no predicament from which he is to be "saved." Adam, the first man, committed a misdeed (eating from the prohibited tree); but he repented and was forgiven.³⁰ His misdeed was an ordinary human

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَاۡئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْۤا اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ ...
(الحجرات: ١٣)

²⁷O humankind, We have created you out of a single pair, a male and a female. We have made you differing peoples and tribes that you may come to know one another. Noblest among you in the eye of Allah is the most righteous (49:13).

... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ اِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اُولُوْا الْاَلْبَابِ (الزمر: ٩)

²⁸Say: Those who know and those who don't, are they equal? Certainly not. Indeed only those with mind will reckon (39:9).

²⁹Amin Duwaydar, *Ṣuwar min ḥayāt al Rasūl* (Cairo: Dār al Ma'ārif bi Miṣr, 1372/1953), p. 593.

فَلَقَّىۡنَا اٰدَمَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِۦٓ مَكِّيۡمًا فَنَابَ عَلَيْهِۤ اِنَّهُۥ هُوَ النَّوَۡبُ الرَّجِيۡمُ (البقرة: ٣٧)

³⁰Adam received a revelation from his Lord and repented. Allah accepted his repentance, for He is the Merciful Forgiver (2:37).

mistake; it was the first error in ethical judgement, the first misconduct, the first crime. But, for all its firstness, it was the deed of one man, and hence his own, personal responsibility. It had no effect on anyone else beside him. Not only was it devoid of cosmic effect, but even of any effect upon his own children. It constituted no "fall," either for Adam himself, or for anyone else. It did send Adam from Paradise to earth but it changed nothing in his nature, his capacities, his promise, his vocation or his destiny. Man is not "fallen" and hence there is no need to "save" or ransom him. Rather, man stands under an imperative, an ought-to-do, and his worth is a function of his fulfillment or otherwise of the imperative. Rather than "fall," Islam asserts innocence; rather than "salvation," felicity. Being an exact function of his own deeds, man's felicity or infelicity is his own work, totally. Such felicity does not depend on anyone's blessing or agency; it is not the effect of a sacrament, or of an ontic participation in a mystical body such as the Church. Islam is free of both.

The moral imperative to which man is subject neither looks towards, nor refers to, any past event, whether a "fall" or a "ransom" effected by someone else. It does not arise out of such past events, but is totally constituted by something present or future. Hence, Islam knows no "justification by faith," no history of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation). The only relevant past it recognizes is the revelation of divine commandments and past men's felicity or infelicity as obedience or violation of these commandments.

Instead of flowing from faith in a salvific drama that happened in the past, man's mortality issues from the Muslim's faith that God is. In this perspective, the existence of God is the existence of truth and value both of which lay a claim to his loyalty and energy. Such a claim consists in the positive disturbance of space-time to the end of actualizing therein the divine pattern. Faith and all the attendant faculties by which values and their relations are cognized and their materials are selected and assigned are only preparations for concretization. Spirituality itself, the whole realm of it, Islam asserts, is nothing unless it is concretized in real men and women. Assuming that at birth man stands on the threshold of ethicality, at the zero point of the ethical dimension, Islam conceives of his duty as positive deeds, as the doing of something new, not as the undoing of something past. Its ethics is wholly forward-looking, even when it is archconservative and stagnant. It is this ethical affirmativeness which gave the Muslim his *élan*. Not weighed down by shackles from

the past, he became an exemplar of worldliness and activism, an inveterate enemy of world-denial and history-depreciation.

V. ACTIONALISM

Carrying the internalizing ethical insights of Jeremiah and later Semitic men of religion to their logical conclusion, Jesus (AS) was sent as prophet to the Jews in order to promote the personalist ethic of intention against the growing externalism and literalism of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It was natural that such extremism was contrasted with an opposite extremism in order to expose the aberrating exaggeration. Jesus taught the principle that the moral character of an act is a function, not of its effects or consequences which are measured by the values of utility, but of its accompanying and motivating intent, exclusively. In numerous parables, he illustrated beautifully the point that what seems to be evil in its effect is really not so because of its motivation, that where the intent is pure, where the heart is determined by the noble purpose of love of God and obedience to Him, the act is wholesome and the person saved.³¹ It was thus that Augustine could say, "Love God and do what you will," and Immanuel Kant, "The intrinsically good thing is a good will." Jesus' sublime effort was therefore oriented toward the internal, radical self-transformation of the person. It was not part of that ethic to deprecate the effects of moral action and hence of the world, of space-time and history. Its strength lies in its single-minded determination to cleanse and purify the spring of all action—the will. If it defined the moral good as a state of the will when it is determined by the love of God, it did rightly; for the slightest violation of this principle is *ipso facto* vitiation of any deed whatever. This was Jesus' divine answer to rampant externalism, to a law enthusiasm that had lost the spirit of the law.³²

Islam acknowledged the revelation of Jesus, and confirmed its ethical insights with enthusiasm. Indeed, in the interest of furthering this insight, it ordered its adherents to pronounce verbally, before entering into every morally or religiously significant deed, the formula, "I intend the projected act for the sake of God," whether a ritual of worship, or removal of a nuisance from the public road. Islam declared no act ethically

³¹See this author's *Christian Ethics*, chap. VI.

³²Ibid.

meritorious unless it was so prefaced, so dedicated to "the Face of Allah (SWT)." Islam has thus institutionalized the good intention, and almost externalized it in the process—a practice adopted thereafter by Judaism in the Middle Ages under Islamic influence in order to guarantee its presence in the moral agent.

This notwithstanding, Islam went beyond intentionalism to an ethic of action. Having assured the good intention as a *conditio sine qua non* of morality, it prescribed passage from the will to action, from the realm of personal consciousness of space-time, to the rough and tumble of the market place, the murky business of history-in-the-making. Values, or the divine will, must not only be the object of human intention. They must become actual, and man is the creature meant to actualize them in freedom and for the sake of God. He must therefore disturb the ontological poise of creation. He must knead and cut nature so as to actualize therein the moral dimension of the divine pattern revealed to him. He must bring the world's latent tendencies to full fruition or self-realization. The extent to which he is successful in achieving this is the criterion of his *falāḥ*. While the good will is an entrance ticket to the arena of ethical striving and endeavor, actionalism or the efficacious actualization of the absolute in history is the entrance ticket to Paradise bearing upon the closeness to God of one's residence therein. This is not a return to the utilitarian or casuistic ethics of consequences, for the good intention is presupposed. It is a plus that Islam is seeking not a substitute, nor a minus. The ethic of Jesus correctly saw that personal conscience is the ultimate judge of one's moral status on earth, for only the conscience knows the determinants of the will and its judgement is alone capable of setting the will right. Action, on the other hand, is by nature public, altruistic and goes beyond the self. It is visible to the world and measurable by external means, whether its object is self, other selves, or nature. Hence, it is necessary that it be regulated by public law—the *sharī'ah*; administered by a public office or state—the caliphate; and its disputes adjudicated by a public judiciary—*qaḍā'*.

With this in mind, Islam declared action the necessary concomitant of faith.³³ God's commandments to act are innumerable in the Quran,

³³The necessity of action as a concomitant of faith is amply demonstrated in the Quran's repeated joining of *īmān* with good works, as so many verses indicate.

... مَن آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ... (الكهف: ٨٨) ... الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ... (السا: ١٧٣)

He who has faith and does works of righteousness (18:88)... Those who have faith and do good works (4:173).

and leave no room for doubt. God's condemnation of *qu'ūd* (rest, inaction) is no less emphatic. Even where solitude, selfsolation or inaction is sought for cultivation of the personalist virtues of the inner self, as in the case of Christian monasticism, Islam condemned it blatantly. "Monkery," the Quran said, "is the invention of priests, not a divine prescription ... [Moreover] they [the Christians] have abused it."³⁴

VI. UMMATISM

Actionalism, we have seen, demands man's transcendence of himself to what is other than himself. When this other-than-self is nature, Islamic actionalism means to transform the world into Paradise. Everything that natural science and technology prescribe for such a transformation becomes a religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim. When, on the other hand, the other-than-self is another human being or beings, Islamic actionalism means to transform humankind into heroes, saints and geniuses, in whom, i.e., in whose life and activity, the divine will is fulfilled. This involvement with other humans is not what is meant by ummatism. Moral altruism, or such involvement with the welfare of others, can well be, and is in many cases, the concern of nonummatists; indeed, of monastics. The Christian need for such altruism was the chief concern of Pachomius, over the personalist isolationism of Antonius, in early Christian Egypt.³⁵

It is in what concerns the doer or agent as the subject of action that Islam brought the new notion of ummatism, requiring that the doer involve others in the action as co-doers or co-operators. Its purpose was to make actionalism collective, to bring the other self or selves into sharing the action as subjects, and hence incurring its moral merit or demerit. If an altruism seeking to improve or perfect man as object will not do, a regimented society whose members act together as subjects out of habit or custom, or of fear of a political tyrant, will not do either. Since the

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِّ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً ... (النساء: ٩٥)

³⁴Surely, they are not equal: those believers who witness no battle while fully capable, and those who fight in the cause of Allah, sacrificing themselves and their wealth. Allah raised the latter a degree over the former (4:95).

³⁵*The New Scaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977). s.v. Monasticism, vol. 8, pp. 462-3.

desired end is moral, its achievement must be the work of the subject in a condition of moral freedom. It should be willed and done for the sake of God, if it is to be moral at all. The achievement of the automation of duty is morally worthless: and so is that of external coercion. Only that action which can be otherwise than it is, depending on the unencumbered vision and will of the subject, has moral worth.

Islam therefore prescribes that the other selves be invited, educated, warned, and adequately moved to join in every deed, willing the objective in question. While coercing them might well realize the utilitarian values in nature, and regimenting them might well realize the moral altruistic objective in men, the realization itself would never be moral. And yet, this is precisely what Islam requires. It can be achieved if and only if the other selves are approached with a view to convincing them of the desirability of the action; and once convinced, they would engage in it and bring about the *matériaux* (real existents) of values voluntarily and consciously. Since realization of the divine will is infinite, relevant to all activities, to all persons, at all times and places, it follows that the society Islam projects is one perpetually stirring to convince and be convinced, to pursue and actualize value in freedom. Such a society is a society properly speaking in the *Gesellschaft* sense of the term, not the *Gemeinschaft* sense. Such society is the *ummah* Islam seeks.³⁶ Its members constitute a threefold consensus: in the mind or vision, in the intention or will, and in the realization or action. It is the brotherhood of the believers under the *shari'ah*, set into perpetual motion. It is a school, *Grosser Stills*, where the business of "convincing" the mind is eternal, a gymnasium of the heart where the will is eternally subject to disciplining and cultivating; and an arena where destiny is seized by the horns and history is made. Unlike the political theories of liberalism, the ummatist theory is one where government governs most, not least, and where sovereignty belongs to God and His law, not to the arbitrary will of the majority; and where the ultimate good is the divine pattern, not the *eudaemonia* of the members. As a member of the *ummah* the individual Muslim is not a conscript, but a volunteer for life, perpetually

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ...

آل عمران: (١١٠)

³⁶You are the best *ummah* brought forth unto mankind, enjoining good works, prohibiting evil, and putting your faith in Allah. (3:110).

mobilized to bring about actualization of the absolute on earth.³⁷ The *ummah* is a society where actionalism is totalist, not totalitarian, authoritative but not authoritarian.

All this flows from the fact, proclaimed in the Quran, that human life is not a sport, that existence is not a game, but a serious matter.³⁸ The *engage* Muslim is a serious being who lives for a cause. God said in His Book: "We have not created you, mankind, except that you may prove yourselves the worthier in the deed."³⁹ Hence the Muslim's career is replete with danger. But his precarious existence is his pride; and his vision of the divine will, his nourishment. His constant awareness of God is not a hollow obsession. Under it, he sees himself as the cosmic median between God and creation. Because of it, he is the vortex of cosmic history.

VII. UNIVERSALISM

The totalism of the divine will leaves no human being outside of its relevance, just as it leaves no point outside of its relevance, just as it leaves no point outside of space-time. The whole world is the object, and the whole of humankind is the object and subject of moral striving. The earth is therefore the object of the Muslim's endeavor, and all humankind is to be involved in its and their own transformation. The universalism of Islam is absolute and without exception just as God is Lord and Master of all without exception. The world can hence be either within or without the world-order of Islam. That is why classical Islamic theory regarded the world as divided between a *Dār al Islām* (The House of Islam) and *Dār al Ḥarb* (House of War), for there is no third alter-

³⁷For a further discussion of the ethical role of the world *ummah*, see this author's "On the *Raison d'être* of the *Ummah*," *Islamic Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1963).

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا تُسَبِّحُكَ فَقَتَلْنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (آل عمران: ١٩١) وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَئِيْمِينَ (الانباء: ١٦)

³⁸Those are the righteous who are mindful of Allah in their standing, sleeping and reclining; who ponder His creation of heaven and earth and pray: Our Lord, Praise be to You, Who created all this not in vain. Protect us from the Fire (3:191)... We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in sport (21:16).

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ (الملك: ٢)

³⁹It is Allah Who created life and death that you may prove yourselves worthy in your deeds. He is the Merciful, the Exalted (67:2).

native between the order of ethical freedom, responsibility and peace, and that where these are denied—there is no middle ground between lawfulness and lawlessness. Just as the individual stands under the obligation of transcending himself to the others, so does society. Isolationism is moral lethargy and uncharity for both individuals as well as societies; and when it is practiced in face of injustice, aggression, crime, hunger, ignorance and nonactualization of values, it is downright criminal, a thumbing of one's nose at God in defiance. Cynicism is a diametrical contradiction of God's affirmation of His purposiveness, of the meaningfulness of all that is. However, the real opposite of universalism is particularism which has taken the form of henotheism and tribalism in the past, and of racism and nationalism in our day. The Hebrew-Jewish tradition has never been entirely free of a strand of particularism under which its people regarded themselves as the elect of God for no rational or moral reason, but simply because God had chosen them. And their modern descendants have upheld the biological definition of Jew in face of their claim to an equal status which they had hitherto been denied by the nations.⁴⁰ The Christians of history have on the whole heeded the advice of St. Paul: "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek."⁴¹ It must be admitted though that from Augustine to the Crusades, Luther, Calvin and American Puritanism, the doctrine of predestination has served as cover for crass racism against other Christians and non-Christians. The Christians' conduct toward one another throughout their history, and toward the Africans, Asians and Americans during the last centuries, has brought dishonor to Paul as well as to Jesus who answered, when he was requested to give special attention to his kin because they were sons of Abraham: "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham!"⁴²

Islam has always been universalist; and the Muslims have, as far as this problem is concerned, the cleanest record in history. The religion, as represented by its supreme authority, the divine word or the Quran speaks with utmost emphasis and clarity, "O mankind, We have created you of one pair, male and female, and constituted you in tribes and peoples that you may complement one another. Nobler among you is only the

⁴⁰See, for example, Obert Gordis, *A Faith for Moderns* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 322 ff; or, for a more subtle presentation, the last two chapters of Martin Buber, *On Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972).

⁴¹So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

⁴²And don't think that you can escape punishment by saying that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham (Matthew 3:9).

more righteous"⁴³ and "O men, fear your Lord Who created you from one and the same soul."⁴⁴ The qualities and equipment constitutive of humanness are recognized by Islam to be possessed by all mankind by nature. It does not discriminate against anybody, on the grounds that the said qualities or equipment were never present, or were once present but subsequently lost because of a guilt incurred by the individual, or by his ancestors or fellows. Nor does it bind this egalitarianism to a specific culture or civilization. The ethical principles constitutive of Islamic humanism are not denied of any human being even though he may belong to another faith; to another culture, civilization or age; or if, by some accident of his people's involvement in history, he was or still is, a slave.⁴⁵ The universalism of Islam transcends all human distinctions. It reaches to the *fiṭrah*. There, it recognizes what nature has given or what, by virtue of being born, the man is entitled to.⁴⁶

Certainly Islam assigns privileges to knowledge and wisdom, to piety, virtue, righteousness, good works and self-eversion for God's sake: "Unequal are those who have spent their wealth and exposed their lives in the cause of Allah, and those who remained behind ..."⁴⁷ And it states

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْلَمُ بِحَيْثُ الْمَوْتِ (الحجرات: ١٣)

⁴³O mankind, We have generated you all from one pair, a male and a female. We have constituted you into peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Noblest among you is the most righteous. Allah is Omniscient, All-Knowing. (49:13).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَجِدٍ ۖ ... (الباء: ١)

⁴⁴O mankind, fear your Lord Who created you all of a single soul (4:1).

⁴⁵Abū Ḥamid al Ghazālī, *Al Munqidh*...p. 58, quoted the *ḥadīth* as given in *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī* as follows: "Every child is born with natural religion. It is the parents who later make of the child a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian."

فَأَقْرَهُ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا يَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينَ الْقَاسِمُ ۚ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (الروم: ٣٠)

⁴⁶Turn your face to the primordial religion as a *ḥanīf*. That is the natural religion which Allah made innate to all humans. This pattern of Allah is immutable. It is the worthy religion; but most people do not know (30:30).

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاتِلُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرَ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاتِلِينَ دَرَجَةً ۚ وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاتِلِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (الباء: ٩٥)

⁴⁷Surely they are not equal: Those believers who witness no battle despite their capacity to do so, and those who fight in the cause of Allah, sacrificing themselves and their wealth. Allah raised the latter a degree over the the former. To each, Allah promised a reward; but those who fight for His sake He will grant a greater reward (4:95).

unequivocally that such differentiation remains true only as long and insofar as the adherent is wiser, more pious, more righteous and self-exerting: "If they turn away from this cause, then God will bring forth another people [to take their place] who will not be like them."⁴⁸ All Semitic religions have represented the God-man relationship in terms of a covenant wherein man is to serve God and God is to bless man with crops, children, well-being and happiness; and all of them were keenly aware of the opposite, namely, that where man does not serve God, he would be invested with suffering and punishment. Only Judaism and Christianity have altered the "covenant," a concept which implies the two directional activities of God and man, into the "promise." For Judaism, this is the one directional commitment on the part of God to favor the Jews regardless of their piety or righteousness—nay, even in their a-whoring after other gods, to use the image of Hosea. And for the Christians, this is the unilateral commitment of God to love and ransom His "partner," namely man, even through he sins—nay, because, he sins—against God. Islam has maintained the Mesopotamian "covenant," which gives rise to obligation on both parties, the one to serve and the other to reward; and to privileges to both parties, the one to defy and not serve, and the other to punish.⁴⁹

... وَلَئِنْ تَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبَدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَلَكُمْ (محمد: ٣٨).

⁴⁸And if you turn yourselves away [from spending your wealth in the cause of Allah], Allah will exchange you for others who will not be like you (47:38).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ وَالْمَسِيحِيَّةَ وَالنَّصَارَى وَاللَّهُ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَالْآخِرُ وَاعِلٌ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (الفرقة: ١٢-١٣) إِنَّ أَحْسَنَ أَحْسَنِ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا (الإسراء: ٧) ... وَلَئِنْ عُدْتُمْ عَدْنَا (الإسراء: ٨)

⁴⁹Those who have believed [in this revelation], those who are Jews, Christians and Sabaeans, all those who have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment, and who do good works, will have their reward with their Lord. No fear shall befall them and they will have no reason to grieve. A covenant We established with them raising over them the Mount of Sinai [the revelation that came to Moses in Sinai] that they shall hold firmly to its revealed commandments and abide always by them, in fear of Allah (2:62-63)... Whether you do good works or works of evil, the same will be reckoned unto you (17:7). And if you return to your evil deeds, We shall return to Our punishment of you (17:8).

VIII. LIFE AND WORLD-AFFIRMATION

It follows from the essence of religious experience in Islam that God has placed man in a world which is to be the theater for his service to Him. If God is not to be a malevolent trickster, man's service must be possible. This possibility requires that the world be malleable, capable of receiving man's action, transformable into the pattern which God has revealed. A complete ontological fitness of man and world to each other is a necessary consequence of the divine arrangement.

Unlike speculative Hindu thought and unlike Buddhism and Jainism, Islam does not regard the world as alien to righteousness or religious felicity. In itself, the world is not to be denied and combated. On the contrary, it is innocent and good, created precisely to the end of being used and enjoyed by man. The evil is not in it, but in its abuse by man. That is the villain which deserves to be denied and combated: the immoral use of the world. That is why the ethic of Islam is not that of asceticism. The Prophet (SAAS) has directed his followers against overextended rituals of worship, against celibacy, against exaggerated fasting, against pessimism and the morose mood. He ordered them to break the fast before performing the sunset prayer, to keep their bodies clean and their teeth brushed, to groom and perfume themselves and wear their best clothes when they congregate for prayer, to marry, to take their time to rest and to sleep and recreate themselves with sports and the arts. Naturally, Islam ordered its adherents to cultivate their faculties; to understand themselves, nature, and the world in which they live; to satisfy their innate craving for food, shelter, comfort, sex and reproduction; to realize balance and harmony in their relations with men and nature; to transform the earth into a producing orchard, a fertile farm and a beautiful garden, to express their understanding, craving, doing and realizing in works of aesthetic beauty. All this is history as well as culture. To make history and create culture and to do so well is the content of the divine will. It is righteousness. Indeed, Islam regarded every act capable of adding, however little, to the total value of the cosmos, as an act of worship, of service to God, provided of course it is entered into for His sake. Hence the Muslim has no obsession about his body, or the satisfaction of his instincts. As a conscious believer, such satisfaction is for him a "taste" of the joys of Paradise to come if he continues to fulfill his duty to God. "Who dared prohibit the niceties of this world and the delicacies of His providing?" the Quran asks rhetorically, and

answers emphatically: "They are indeed rightful for the enjoyment of the faithful in this world, and will all be purely theirs on the Day of Judgement."⁵⁰ Repeatedly, the Quran commands, "Eat, drink and enjoy yourselves, but do not abuse."⁵¹

This clearly presupposes honoring work, success and achievement in the transformation of nature. If the world is to yield its fruits, it must be cultivated. Thus the ancient Mesopotamian principle of agricultural service to God is recrystallized as the general transformation of the earth into the orchard wherein man is to find his nourishment and pleasure. The Quran affirms that God has created the world for man; and hence, that everything in creation is for man to use and to enjoy. The oceans, the rivers and mountains, indeed the skies and stars, sun and moon—all have been created for man's usufruct and aesthetic *zīnah* (pleasure).⁵²

The ummatism of Islam blesses man's will to power. "He who has not participated in at least one *bay'ah* (conventional election of a caliph, or a chief of state) dies a non-Muslim," says a famous tradition of the Prophet (SAAS).⁵³ It is God Who instituted the state and the political

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ... (الأعراف: ٣٢)

⁵⁰Say, O Muhammad, who made prohibited the beautiful ornaments which Allah made available for His servants' enjoyment? Say, they belong to the believers in this life as well as in the life to come, in purity (7:32).

يَبْنِي مَا دُمُ حُدُودُكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (الأعراف: ٣١)

⁵¹O Sons of Ādam, look to your adornment at every place of worship. And eat and drink, without excess. Allah loves not those who exceed the limits (7:31).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لَنَا كُلًّا لَوْ أَنَّهُ لَحَمَّاطٌ رِيًّا وَنَسَخَرْنَا مِنْهُ خِلَافَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَنَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ قِيَمِهِ وَلَتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (النحل: ١٤)

يُؤْتِيكُمْ سَكَنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَصْنَانِهَا وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا أَنتَا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ (النحل: ٨٠)

⁵²It is Allah who made the sea subservient to you, to extract from it soft meat to eat, beautiful jewelry to wear, and you see the ships ploughing it and bring to you of His bounty. Perchance, you will feel grateful (16:14). Allah has ordained for you your homes as places of rest and quiescence; the furs, wool and skins of animals as materials of which to make your clothing and tents and from which to derive other advantages during your life on earth (16:80).

⁵³*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, summary by al Mundhirī, vol. 2, p. 94, *ḥadīth* no. 1233. The text of the *ḥadīth* reads as follows: "Whoever pulls a person out of obedience [to the ruler of an Islamic order or state] will face Allah on the Day of Judgment devoid of cause. Whoever dies without having entered into any *bay'ah* will have died a *jāhili* [a non-Muslim]." It was told by 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar and narrated by Nafi'.

order, and participation in the political process is therefore a religious duty. The ruler is to execute the law of God; and the ruled is to obey the law, and to advise the ruler and help him in upholding the law. Both are to mobilize their efforts perpetually to extend this application depthwise in fulfillment of the requirement of totalism, and breadthwise in fulfillment of those of universalism. This is the ultimate realization of the absolute Islam seeks and declares possible in this world and in time. It has no use for a "Kingdom of God" conceived as an alternative to this kingdom, as a messianic age where what is denied here will be realized, in an "other world" in which the *summum bonum* is realizable at the cost of "this world." Such other worldly categories Islam has rejected altogether. With this rejection went equally all mortification of the flesh, world denial, monasticism and asceticism. So strong was this rejection by Islam and so strong was its world-affirmation that it was too often accused of "pure worldliness." The truth is that Islamic worldliness is not "pure," but tempered; and that is precisely the role played by the consciousness of God and the spirituality of Islamic life. Pursuit of the world, Islam commands, must be carried out as the fulfillment of God's commandment to pursue the world and hence, in obedience to the ethical limits set by God's other commandments. This is really what Islamic spirituality means: not a disembodied life of constant prayer and meditation, of self- and world-denial, and of pining after a kingdom hopelessly unrealizable in spacetime, but a full and innocent enjoyment of this world, combined with persistent activism for its betterment and regulated by ethical precepts opposed to exaggeration, injury, injustice, hatred and discrimination.