

CHAPTER 8

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT AND CULTURE

In the sixth chapter we have shown that the first part of the first pillar of Islam is the dedication of one's life to God alone; this is the meaning of *'La ilaha illa Allah'*. The second part means that the way of this dedication comes from the Prophet Muhammad: *"Muhammadar Rasul Allah"* points to this fact. Complete submission to God comes by submitting to Him through belief, practice and in law. No Muslim can believe that another being can be a 'deity', nor can he believe that one can 'worship' a creature of God or that he can be given a position of 'sovereignty'. We explained in that chapter the meaning of worship, belief and sovereignty. In what follows we will show the true meaning of sovereignty and its relationship to culture.

In the Islamic concept, the sovereignty of God means not merely that one should derive all legal injunctions from God and judge according to these injunctions; in Islam the meaning of the *'Shar'ah'* is not limited to mere legal injunctions, but includes the principles of administration, its system and its modes. This narrow meaning (i.e., that the *Shar'ah* is limited to legal injunctions) does not apply to the *Shar'ah* nor does it correspond to the Islamic concept. By *'the Shar'ah of God is meant everything legislated by God for ordering man's life; it includes the principles of belief, principles of administration and justice, principles of morality and human relationships, and principles of knowledge.*

The *Shar'ah* includes the Islamic beliefs and concepts and their implications concerning the attributes of God, the nature of life, what is apparent and what is hidden in it, the nature of man, and the interrelationships among these. Similarly, it includes political, social and economic affairs and their principles, with the intent that they reflect complete submission to God alone. It also includes legal matters (this is what today is referred to as the *'Shar'ah'*, while the true meaning of the *'Shar'ah* in Islam is entirely different). It deals with the morals, manners, values and standards of the society, according to which persons, actions and events are measured. It also deals with all aspects of knowledge and principles of art and science. In all these guidance from God is needed, just as it is needed

in legal matters.

We have discussed the sovereignty of God in relation to government and the legal system, and also in relation to matters of morals, human relationships, and values and standards which prevail in a society. The point to note was that the values and standards, morals and manners, are all based on the beliefs and concepts prevalent in the society and are derived from the same Divine source from which beliefs are derived.

The thing which will appear strange, not only to the common man but also to writers about Islam, is our turning to Islam and to the Divine source for guidance in spheres of science and art.

A book has already been published on the subject of art in which it has been pointed out that all artistic efforts are but a reflection of a man's concepts, beliefs and intuitions; they reflect whatever pictures of life and the world are found in a man's intuition. All these affairs are not only governed by the Islamic concepts, but, in fact, this concept is a motivating power for a Muslim's creativity. The Islamic concept of the universe defines man's relationship to the rest of the universe and to his Creator. Its basic subject is the nature of man and his position in the universe, the purpose of his life, his function, and the true value of his life. These are all included in the Islamic concept, which is not merely an abstract idea but is a living, active motivating force which influences man's emotions and actions.¹⁸

In short, the question of art and literary thought and its relationship to Divine guidance requires a detailed discussion, and, as we have stated before, this discussion will appear strange not only to educated people but even to those Muslims who believe in the sovereignty of God in matters of law.
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A Muslim cannot go to any source other than God for guidance in matters of faith, in the concept of life, acts of worship, morals and human affairs, values and standards, principles of economics and political affairs and interpretation of historical processes. It is, therefore, his duty that he should learn all these from a Muslim whose piety and character, be-

¹⁸ The book, The Principles of Islamic Art, by Muhammad Qutb.

lief and action, are beyond reproach.

However, a Muslim can go to a Muslim or to a non-Muslim to learn abstract sciences such as chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, medicine, industry, agriculture, administration (limited to its technical aspects), technology, military arts and similar sciences and arts; although the fundamental principle is that when the Muslim community comes into existence it should provide experts in all these fields in abundance, as all these sciences and arts are a sufficient obligation (**Fard al-Kifayah**) on Muslims (that is to say, there ought to be a sufficient number of people who specialize in these various sciences and arts to satisfy the needs of the community). If a proper atmosphere is not provided under which these sciences and arts develop in a Muslim society, the whole society will be considered sinful; but as long as these conditions are not attained, it is permitted for a Muslim to learn them from a Muslim or a non-Muslim and to gain experience under his direction, without any distinction of religion. These are those affairs which are included in the **Hadith**, "You know best the affairs of your business". These sciences are not related to the basic concepts of a Muslim about life, the universe, man, the purpose of his creation, his responsibilities, his relationship with the physical world and with the Creator; these are also not related to the principles of law, the rules and regulations which order the lives of individuals and groups, nor are they related to morals, manners, traditions, habits, values and standards which prevail in the society and which give the society its shape and form. Thus there is no danger that a Muslim, by learning these sciences from a non-Muslim, will distort his belief or will return to **Jahiliyyah**.

But as far as the interpretation of human endeavor is concerned, whether this endeavor be individual or collective, this relates to theories of the nature of man and of the historical processes. Similarly, the explanation of the origin of the universe, the origin of the life of man, are part of metaphysics (not related to the abstract sciences such as chemistry, physics, astronomy or medicine, etc.); and thus their position is similar to legal matters, rules and regulations which order human life. These indirectly affect man's beliefs; it is therefore not permissible for a Muslim to learn them from anyone other

than a God-fearing and pious Muslim, who knows that guidance in these matters comes from God. The main purpose is, a Muslim should realize, that all these affairs are related to his faith, and that to seek guidance from God in these matters is a necessary consequence of the faith in the Oneness of God and the Messengership of Muhammad.

However, a Muslim can study all the opinions and thoughts of **jahili** writers, not from the point of view of constructing his own beliefs and concepts, but for the purpose of knowing the deviations adopted by **Jahiliyyah**, so that he may know how to correct these man-made deviations in the light of the true Islamic belief and rebut them according to the sound principles of the Islamic teachings.

Philosophy, the interpretation of history, psychology (except for those observations and experimental results which are not part of anyone's opinion) ethics, theology and comparative religion, sociology (excluding statistics and observations) — all these sciences have a direction which in the past or the present has been influenced by **jahili** beliefs and traditions. That is why all these sciences come into conflict, explicitly or implicitly, with the fundamentals of any religion, and especially with Islam.

The situation concerning these areas of human thought and knowledge is not the same as with physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, medicine, etc. — as long as these last-mentioned sciences limit themselves to practical experiments and their results, and do not go beyond their scope into speculative philosophy. For example, Darwinist biology goes beyond the scope of its observations, without any rhyme or reason and only for the sake of expressing an opinion, in making the assumption that to explain the beginning of life and its evolution there is no need to assume a power outside the physical world.

Concerning these matters, the true guidance from his Sustainer is sufficient for a Muslim. This guidance toward belief and complete submission to God alone is so superior to all man's speculative attempts in these affairs that they appear utterly ridiculous and absurd.

The statement that "Culture is the human heritage" and that it has no country, nationality or religion is correct only in relation to science and technology — as long as we do not

jump the boundary of these sciences and delve into metaphysical interpretations, and start explaining the purpose of man and his historical role in philosophical terms, even explaining away art and literature and human intuition philosophically. Beyond this limited meaning, this statement about culture is one of the tricks played by world Jewry, whose purpose is to eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that the Jews may penetrate into body politic of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs. At the top of the list of these activities is usury, the aim of which is that all the wealth of mankind end up in the hands of Jewish financial institutions which run on interest.

However, Islam considers that — excepting the abstract sciences and their practical applications — there are two kinds of culture; the Islamic culture, which is based on the Islamic concept, and the **jahili** culture, which manifests itself in various modes of living which are nevertheless all based on one thing, and that is giving human thought the status of a god so that its truth or falsity is not to be judged according to God's guidance. The Islamic culture is concerned with all theoretical and practical affairs, and it contains principles, methods and characteristics which guarantee the development and perpetuation of all cultural activities.

One ought to remember the fact that the experimental method, which is the dynamic spirit of modern Europe's industrial culture, did not originate in Europe but originated in the Islamic universities of Andalusia and of the East. The principle of the experimental method was an offshoot of the Islamic concept and its explanations of the physical world, its phenomena, its forces and its secrets. Later, by adopting the experimental method, Europe entered into the period of scientific revival, which led it step by step to great scientific heights. Meanwhile, the Muslim world gradually drifted away from Islam, as a consequence of which the scientific movement first became inert and later ended completely. Some of the causes which led to this state of inertia were internal to the Muslim society and some were external, such as the invasions of the Muslim world by the Christians and Zionists. Europe removed the foundation of Islamic belief from the methodology

of the empirical sciences, and finally, when Europe rebelled against the Church, which in the name of God oppressed the common people, it deprived the empirical sciences of their Islamic method of relating them to God's guidance.

Thus the entire basis of European thought became **jahili** and completely estranged from the Islamic concept, and even became contradictory and conflicting with it. It is necessary for a Muslim, therefore, to return to the guidance of God in order to learn the Islamic concept of life — on his own, if possible, or otherwise to seek knowledge from a God-fearing Muslim whose piety and faith are reliable.

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In Islam the saying, "Seek knowledge from the one who knows", is not acceptable with respect to those sciences which relate to faith, religion, morals and values, customs and habits, and all those matters which concern human relationships.

No doubt Islam permits a Muslim to learn chemistry, physics, astronomy, medicine, technology and agriculture, administration and similar technical sciences from a non-Muslim or from a Muslim who is not pious — and this under the condition that no God-fearing Muslim scientists are available to teach these sciences. This is the situation which exists now, because Muslims have drifted away from their religion and their way of life, and have forgotten that Islam appointed them as representatives of God and made them responsible for learning all the sciences and developing various capabilities to fulfill this high position which God has granted them. But Islam does not permit Muslims to learn the principles of their faith, the implications of their concept, the interpretation of the Qur'an, **Hadith**, the Prophet — peace be on him — the philosophy of history, the traditions of their society, the constitution of their government, the form of their politics, and similar branches of knowledge, from non-Islamic sources or from any one other than a pious Muslim whose faith and religious knowledge is known to be reliable.

The person who is writing these lines has spent forty years of his life in reading books and in research in almost all aspects of human knowledge. He specialized in some branches of knowledge and he studied others due to personal interest. Then he turned to the fountainhead of his faith. He came

to feel that whatever he had read so far was as nothing in comparison to what he found here. He does not regret spending forty years of his life in the pursuit of these sciences, because he came to know the nature of **Jahiliyyah**, its deviations, its errors and its ignorance, as well as its pomp and noise, its arrogant and boastful claims. Finally, he was convinced that a Muslim cannot combine these two sources — the source of Divine guidance and the source of **Jahiliyyah** — for his education.

Even then, this is not my personal opinion; this is a grave matter to be decided merely by some person's opinion, and the question of depending on a Muslim's opinion does not arise when the Divine standard provides us a way to judge the matter. This is the decision of God and His Messenger — peace be on him — and we refer it to them. We refer it to them in the same manner as is befitting for a Believer, as all controversial decisions ought to be referred to the judgment of God and His Prophet — peace be on him.

God Most High says in general terms concerning the ultimate aims of the Jews and Christians against Muslims:

"Many among the People of the Book wish to turn you back from your faith toward unbelief, due to their envy, even after the truth has been known to them; but forgive and excuse them until God brings about His decision. Indeed, God has power over everything." (2:109)

"The Jews and Christians will not be pleased with you unless you follow their way. Say: "Indeed, God's guidance is the true guidance". And if, after this knowledge has come to you, you follow their desires, then you will find no helper or friend against God." (2:120)

"O you who believe! If you follow a party of the People of the Book, they will return you to the state of unbelief after you have believed." (3:100)

As reported by Hafiz Abu Y'ala, the Messenger of God — peace be on him — said: "Do not ask the People of the Book about anything. They will not guide you, in fact, they are themselves misguided. If you listen to them, you might end up accepting some falsehood or denying some truth. By God, if Moses had been alive among you, he would not be permitted (by God) anything except to follow me."

After this warning to the Muslims from God concerning the ultimate designs of the Jews and Christians, it would be extremely short-sighted of us to fall into the illusion that when the Jews and Christians discuss Islamic beliefs or Islamic history, or when they make proposals concerning Muslim society or Muslim politics or economics, they will be doing it with good intentions, or with the welfare of the Muslims at heart, or in order to seek guidance and light. People who, after this clear statement from God, still think this way are indeed deluded.

Similarly, the saying of God Most High: "Say: 'Indeed, God's guidance is the true guidance', determines the unique source to which every Muslim should turn for guidance in all these affairs, as whatever is beyond God's guidance is error and none other than He can guide, as is clear from the emphasis in the verse, "Say: 'Indeed, God's guidance is the true guidance'. There is no ambiguity in the meaning of this verse and no other interpretation is possible.

There is also a decisive injunction to avoid a person who turns away from the remembrance of God and whose only object is this world. It is explained that such a person follows mere speculation — and a Muslim is forbidden to follow speculation — and he knows only what is apparent in the life of this world and does not possess the true knowledge.

"Avoid a person who has turned away from Our remembrance and does not desire anything beyond the life of this world, and this is the extent of his knowledge. Your Sustainer knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He knows best who is guided." (53: 29-30)

"They only know what is apparent in the life of this world, and are negligent of the Hereafter." (30:7)

A person who is negligent in remembering God and is completely occupied with the affairs of this life — and that is the case with all the 'scientists' of today — knows only what is apparent, and this is not the type of knowledge, for which a Muslim can rely completely on its possessor, except for what is permitted to be learned from them to the extent of technical knowledge. He should ignore their interpretations concerning psychological and conceptual matters. This is not that knowledge which is praised repeatedly in the Qur'an for example

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in the verse, "Are they equal — those who know and those who do not know"? Those who take such verses out of context and argue are in error. The complete verse in which this rhetorical question is posed is as follows:

"... Or is he who is worshipful in the watches of the night, prostrating and standing, he being afraid of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of His Sustainer? Say: Are they equal — those who know and those who do not know? Indeed, the thinking persons take heed." (39:9)

Only such a person who, in the darkness of the night, remains worshipping, standing or prostrating, who fears the Hereafter, and hopes for the mercy of his Sustainer, is truly knowing, and it is his knowledge to which the above verse refers; that is to say, the knowledge which guides toward God and the remembrance of Him, and not that knowledge which distorts human nature toward denial of God.

The sphere of knowledge is not limited to articles of faith, religious obligations, or laws about what is permissible and what is forbidden; its sphere is very wide. It includes all these and also the knowledge of natural laws and all matters concerning man's delegated role before God. However, any knowledge, the foundation of which is not based on faith, is outside the definition of that knowledge which is referred to in the Qur'an and the possessors of which are considered praiseworthy. There is a strong relationship between faith and all those sciences which deal with the universe and natural laws, such as astronomy, biology, physics, chemistry and geology. All these sciences lead man toward God, unless they are perverted by personal opinions and speculations, and presented devoid of the concept of God. Such a regrettable situation actually occurred in Europe. In fact, there came a time in European history when very painful and hateful differences arose between scientists and the oppressive Church; consequently the entire scientific movement in Europe started with Godlessness. This movement affected all aspects of life very deeply; in fact, it changed the entire character of European thought. The effect of this hostility of the scientific community toward the Church did not remain limited to the Church or to its beliefs, but was directed against all religion, so much so that all sciences turned against religion, whether they were speculative philoso-

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phy or technical or abstract sciences having nothing to do with religion.¹⁹

The Western ways of thought and all the sciences started on the foundation of these poisonous influences with an enmity toward all religion, and in particular with greater hostility toward Islam. This enmity toward Islam is especially pronounced and many times is the result of a well-thought-out scheme, the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society.

If, in spite of knowing this, we rely on Western ways of thought, even in teaching the Islamic sciences, it will be an unforgivable blindness on our part. Indeed, it becomes incumbent on us, while learning purely scientific or technological subjects for which we have no other sources except Western sources, to remain on guard and keep these sciences away from philosophical speculations, as these philosophical speculations are generally against religion and in particular against Islam. A slight influence from them can pollute the clear spring of Islam.

CHAPTER 9 A MUSLIM'S NATIONALITY AND HIS BELIEF

The day Islam gave a new concept of values and standards to mankind and showed the way to learn these values and standards, it also provided it with a new concept of human relationships. Islam came to return man to his Sustainer and to make His guidance the only source from which values and standards are to be obtained, as He is the Provider and Originator. All relationships ought to be based through Him, as we came into being through His will and shall return to Him.

Islam came to establish only one relationship which binds men together in the sight of God, and if this relationship is firmly established, then all other relationships based on blood or other considerations become eliminated.

"You will not find the people who believe in God and the Hereafter taking as allies the enemies of God and His Prophet, whether they be their fathers or sons or brothers or fellow tribesmen." (58:22)

In the world there is only one party of God; all others are parties of Satan and rebellion.

"Those who believe fight in the cause of God, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of rebellion.

Then fight the allies of Satan; indeed, Satan's strategy is weak." (3:78)

There is only one way to reach God; all other ways do not lead to Him.

"This is My straight path. Then follow it, and do not follow other ways which will scatter you from His path." (6:153)

For human life, there is only one true system, and that is Islam; all other systems are *Jahiliyyah*.

"Do they want a judgement of the Days of Ignorance? Yet who is better in judgement than God, for a people having sure faith? (5: 50)

There is only one law which ought to be followed, and that is the *Shar'iah* from God; anything else is mere emotionalism and impulsiveness.

"We have set you on a way ordained (by God); then fol-

¹⁹ Refer to the chapter, "Al-Fisam al-Nakad", in the book **The Future Belongs to This Religion**.

low it, and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge." (45:18)

The truth is one and indivisible; anything different from it is error.

"Is anything left besides error, beyond the truth? Then to which do you go?" (10:32)

There is only one place on earth which can be called the home of Islam (**Dar-ul-Islam**), and it is that place where the Islamic state is established and the **Shar'ah** is the authority and God's limits are observed, and where all the Muslims administer the affairs of the state with mutual consultation. The rest of the world is the home of hostility (**Dar-ul-Harb**). A Muslim can have only two possible relations with **Dar-ul-Harb**: peace with a contractual agreement, or war. A country with which there is a treaty will not be considered the home of Islam.

"Those who believed, and migrated, and strove with their wealth and their persons in the cause of God, and those who gave them refuge and helped them, are the protectors of each other. As to those who believed but did not emigrate, you have no responsibility for their protection until they emigrate; but if they ask your help in religion, it is your duty to help them, except against a people between whom and you there is a treaty; and God sees whatever you do. Those who disbelieve are the allies of each other. If you do not do this, there will be oppression in the earth and a great disturbance. Those who believe, and migrate, and fight in the cause of God, and those who give them refuge and help them, are in truth Believers. For them is forgiveness and generous provision. And those who accept Faith afterwards and migrate and strive along with you, they are of you." (8:72-75)

Islam came with this total guidance and decisive teaching. It came to elevate man above, and release him from, the bonds of the earth and soil, the bonds of flesh and blood — which are also the bonds of the earth and soil. A Muslim has no country except that part of the earth where the **Shar'ah** of God is established and human relationships are based on the foundation of relationship with God; a Muslim has no nationality except his belief, which makes him a member of the

Muslim community in **Dar-ul-Islam**; a Muslim has no relatives except those who share the belief in God, and thus a bond is established between him and other Believers through their relationship with God.

A Muslim has no relationship with his mother, father, brother, wife and other family members except through their relationship with the Creator, and then they are also joined through blood.

"O mankind, remain conscious of your Sustainer, Who created you from one soul and created from its mate, and from the two of them scattered a great many men and women. Remain conscious of God, from Whose authority you make demands, and reverence the wombs (from which you were born). (4:1)

However, Divine relationship does not prohibit a Muslim from treating his parents with kindness and consideration, in spite of differences of belief, as long as they do not join the front lines of the enemies of Islam. However, if they openly declare their alliance with the enemies of Islam, then all the filial relationships of a Muslim are cut off and he is not bound to be kind and considerate to them. Abdullah, son of Abdullah bin Ubayy, has presented us with a bright example in this respect.

Ibn Jarir, on the authority of Ibn Ziad, has reported that the Prophet called Abdullah, son of Abdullah bin Ubayy, and said, "Do you know what your father said?" Abdullah asked, "May my parents be a ransom for you; what did my father say?" The prophet replied, "He said, 'If we return to Medina (from the battle), the one with honor will throw out the one who is despised.'" Abdullah then said, "O Messenger of God, by God, he told the truth. You are the one with honor and he is the one who is despised. O Messenger of God, the people of Medina know that before you came to Medina, no one was more obedient to his father than I was. But now, if it is the pleasure of God and His Prophet that I cut off his head, then I shall do so." The Prophet replied, "No". When the Muslims returned to Medina, Abdullah stood in front of the gate with his sword drawn over his father's head, telling him, "Did you say that if we return to Medina then the one with honor will throw out the one who is despised?"

By God, now you will know whether you have honor, or God's Messenger! By God, until God and His Messenger give permission, you cannot enter Medina, nor will you have refuge from me!" Ibn Ubayy cried aloud and said twice, "People of Khazraj, see how my son is preventing me from entering my home!" But his son Abdullah kept repeating that unless the Prophet gave permission he would not let him enter Medina. Hearing this noise, some people gathered around and started pleading with Abdullah, but he stood his ground. Some people went to the Prophet and reported this incident. He told them, "Tell Abdullah to let his father enter". When Abdullah got this message, he then told his father, "Since the Prophet had given permission, you can enter now."

When the relationship of the belief is established, whether there by any relationship of blood or not, the Believers become like brothers. God Most High says, "Indeed, the Believers are brothers," which is a limitation as well as a prescription. He also says:

"Those who believed, and migrated, and strove with their wealth and their persons in the cause of God, and those who gave them refuge and helped them, are the protectors of each other." (8:72)

The protection which is referred to in this verse is not limited to a single generation but encompasses future generations as well, thus linking the future generations with the past generation in a sacred and eternal bond of love, loyalty and kindness.

"Those who lived (in Medina) before the Emigrants and believed, love the Emigrants and do not find in their hearts any grudge when thou givest them something, but give them preference over themselves, even though they may be poor. Indeed, the ones who restrain themselves from greed achieve prosperity. Those who came after them (the Emigrants) say; 'Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers who entered the Faith before us, and leave not in our hearts any grievance against those who believe. Our Lord! You are indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful.'" (59:9-10)

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God Most High has related the stories of earlier Prophets in the Qur'an as an example for the Believers. In various

periods the Prophets of God lighted the flame of faith, and guided the Believers.

"And Noah called upon his Lord and said, 'O my Lord, surely my son is of my family, and Your promise is true, and You are the Justest of Judges'. He said, 'O Noah, he is not of your family, as his conduct is unrighteous; so do not ask of me that of which you have no knowledge. I give you the counsel not to act like the ignorant.' Noah said, 'O my Lord, I seek refuge with You lest I ask You for that of which I have no knowledge, and unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be lost'. (11:45-47)

"And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled, he said, 'I will make you a leader of people'. He said, 'And also those from among my offspring?' He answered, 'My promise does not extend to the evildoers'. (1:124)

"And when Abraham said, 'My Lord! Make this a city of peace and feed its people with fruits, such of them as believe in God and the Last Day'. He said, 'And those who reject faith, I will grant them their pleasure for a while, but will eventually drive them to the chastisement of the Fire. What an evil destination!' (2:126)

When the Prophet Abraham saw his father and his people persistent in their error, he turned away from them and said, "I leave you and those upon whom you call besides God. I will only call upon my Sustainer, and hope that my Lord will not disappoint me." (19:48)

In relating the story of Abraham and his people, God has highlighted those aspects which are to be an example for the Believers.

"Indeed, Abraham and his companions are an example for you, when they told their people, 'We have nothing to do with you and with whatever you worship besides God. We reject them; and now there is perpetual enmity and anger between you and us unless you believe in One God.'" (60:4)

When those young and courageous friends who are known as the Companions of the Cave saw this same rejection among their family and tribe, they left them all, migrated from their

country, and ran toward their Sustainer so that they could live as His servants.

"They were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance. We gave strength to hearts, so that they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We shall not call upon any god apart from Him. If we did, we should indeed have said an awful thing. These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a clear proof for what they do? Who can be more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against God? So, when you turn away from them and the things they worship other than God, take refuge in the cave. Your Lord will shower mercies on you and will provide ease and comfort for your affairs'" (18:13-16)

The wife of Noah and the wife of Lot were separated from their husbands only because their beliefs were different.

"God gives as an example for the unbelievers the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were married to two of Our righteous servants; but they were false to their husbands, and they profited nothing before God on their account, but were told, 'Enter you both into the fire along with those who enter it.'" (66:10)

Then there is another kind of example in the wife of Pharaoh. "And God gives as an example to those who believe the wife of Pharaoh. Behold, she said, 'My Lord, build for me in nearness to You a mansion in heaven, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those who do wrong.'" (66:11)

The Qur'an also describes examples of different kinds of relationships. In the story of Noah we have an example of the paternal relationship; in the story of Abraham, an example of the son and of the country; in the story of the Companions of the Cave a comprehensive example of relatives, tribe and home country. In the stories of Noah, Lot and Pharaoh there is an example of marital relationships.

After a description of the lives of the great Prophets and their relationships, we now turn to the Middle Community, that is, that of the early Muslims. We find similar examples and experiences in this community in great numbers. This community followed the Divine path which God has chosen for the Believers. When the relationship of common belief

was broken — in other words, when the very first relationship joining one man with another was broken, — then persons of the same family or tribe were divided into different groups. God Most High says in praise of the Believers:

"You will not find any people who believe in God and the Last Day loving those who fight God and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred. These are the people on whose hearts God has imprinted faith and strengthened them with a spirit from Himself. And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein. God will be well-pleased with them and they with Him. They are the party of God; truly the party of God will prosper." (58:22)

We see that the blood relationships between Muhammad — peace be on him — and his uncle Abu Lahab and his cousin Abu Jahl were broken, and that the Emigrants from Mecca were fighting against their families and relatives and were in the front lines of Badr, while on the other hand their relations with the Helpers of Medina became strengthened on the basis of a common faith. They became like brothers, even more than blood relatives. This relationship established a new brotherhood of Muslims in which were included Arabs and non-Arabs. Suhail from Rome and Bilal from Abyssinia and Selman from Persia were all brothers. There was no tribal partisanship among them. The pride of lineage was ended, the voice of nationalism was silenced, and the Messenger of God addressed them: "Get rid of these partisanship; these are foul things", and "He is not one of us who calls toward partisanship, who fights for partisanship, and who dies for partisanship."

Thus this partisanship — the partisanship of lineage — ended; and this slogan — the slogan of race — died; and this pride — the pride of nationality — vanished; and man's spirit soared to higher horizons, freed from the bondage of flesh and blood and the pride of soil and country. From that day, the Muslim's country has not been a piece of land, but the homeland of Islam (**Dar-ul-Islam**) — the homeland where faith rules; and the **Shar'ah** of God holds sway, the homeland in which he took refuge and which he defended, and in trying to extend it, he become martyred. This Islamic homeland is a refuge

for any who accepts the Islamic **Shar'ah** to be the law of the state, as is the case with the **Dhimmi**s. But any place where the Islamic **Shar'ah** is not enforced and where Islam is not dominant becomes the home of Hostility (**Dar-ul-Harb**) for both the Muslim and the **Dhimmi**. A Muslim will remain prepared to fight against it, whether it be his birthplace or a place where his relatives reside or where his property or any other material interests are located.

And thus Muhammad — peace be on him — fought against the city of Mecca, although it was his birthplace, and his relatives lived there, and he and his Companions had houses and property there which they had left when they migrated; yet the soil of Mecca did not become **Dar-ul-Islam** for him and his followers until it surrendered to Islam and the **Shar'ah** became operative in it.

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This, and only this, is Islam. Islam is not a few words pronounced by the tongue, or birth in a country called Islamic, or an inheritance from a Muslim father.

"No, by your Sustainer, they have not believed until they make you the arbiter of their disputes, and then do not find any grievance against your decision but submit with full submission." (4:65)

Only this is Islam, and only this is **Dar-ul-Islam** — not the soil, not the race, not the lineage, not the tribe, and not the family.

Islam freed all humanity from the ties of the earth so that they might soar toward the skies, and freed them from the chains of blood relationships — the biological chains — so that they might rise above the angels.

The homeland of the Muslim, in which he lives and which he defends, is not a piece of land; the nationality of the Muslim, by which he is identified, is not the nationality determined by a government; the family of the Muslim, in which he finds solace and which he defends, is not blood relationships; the flag of the Muslim, which he honors and under which he is martyred, is not the flag of a country; and the victory of the Muslim, which he celebrates and for which he is thankful to God, is not a military victory. It is what God has described:

"When God's help and victory comes, and thou seest peo-

ple entering into God's religion in multitudes, then celebrate the praises of thy Lord and ask His forgiveness. Indeed, He is the Acceptor of Repentance." (110:1-3)

The victory is achieved under the banner of faith, and under no other banners; the striving is purely for the sake of God, for the success of His religion and His law, for the protection of **Dar-ul-Islam**, the particulars of which we have described above, and for no other purpose. It is not for the spoils or for fame, nor for the honor of a country or nation, nor for the mere protection of one's family except when supporting them against religious persecution.

The honor of martyrdom is achieved only when one is fighting in the cause of God, and if one is killed for any other purpose this honor will not be attained.

Any country which fights the Muslim because of his belief and prevents him from practicing his religion, and in which the **Shar'ah** is suspended, is **Dar-ul-Harb**, even though his family or his relatives or his people live in it, or his capital is invested and his trade or commerce is in that country; and any country where the Islamic faith is dominant and its **Shar'ah** is operative is **Dar-ul-Islam**, even though the Muslim's family or relatives or his people do not live there, and he does not have any commercial relations with it.

The fatherland is that place where the Islamic faith, the Islamic way of life, and the **Shar'ah** of God is dominant; only this meaning of 'fatherland' is worthy of the human being. Similarly, 'nationality' means belief and a way of life, and only this relationship is worthy of man's dignity.

Grouping according to family and tribe and nation, and race and color and country, are residues of the primitive state of man; these **jahili** groupings are from a period when man's spiritual values were at a low stage. The Prophet — peace be on him — has called them "dead things" against which man's spirit should revolt.

When the Jews claimed to be the chosen people of God on the basis of their race and nationality, God Most High rejected their claim and declared that in every period, in every race and in every nation, there is only one criterion: that of faith.

"And they say: 'become Jews, or Christians; then you will be guided'. Say: 'Not so: The way of Abraham, the pure in

faith; and he was not among those who associate other gods with God'. Say: 'We believe in God, and what has come down to us, and what has come down to Abraham, Ismail and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes (of Israelites), and what was given to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets by their Sustainer. We do not make any distinction among them, and we have submitted to Him. If then they believe as you have believed, they are guided; but if they turn away, then indeed they are stubborn. Then God suffices for you, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. The baptism of God: and who can baptise better than God? And we worship Him alone.'" (2:135-138)

The people who are really chosen by God are the Muslim community which has gathered under God's banner without regard to differences of races, nations, colors and countries.

"You are the best community raised for the good of mankind. You enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and you believe in God.'" (3:110)

This is that community in the first generation of which there were Abu Bakr from Arabia, Bilal from Abyssinia, Suhailb from Syria, Selman from Persia, and their brothers in faith. The generations which followed them were similar. Nationalism here is belief, homeland here is **Dar-ul-Islam**, the ruler here is God, and the constitution here is the Qur'an.

This noble conception of homeland, of nationality, and of relationship should become imprinted on the hearts of those who invite others toward God. They should remove all influences of **Jahiliyyah** which make this concept impure and which may have the slightest element of hidden **Shirk**, such as **Shirk** in relation to homeland, or in relation to race or nation, or in relation to lineage or material interests. All these have been mentioned by God Most High in one verse, in which He has placed them in one side of the balance and the belief and its responsibilities in the other side, and invites people to choose.

"Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your relatives, and the wealth which you have acquired, and the commerce in which you fear decline, and the homes in which you take delight, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and striving in His

cause, then wait until God brings His judgment; and God does not guide the rebellious people." (9:24)

The callers to Islam should not have any superficial doubts in their hearts concerning the nature of **Jahiliyyah** and the nature of Islam, and the characteristics of **Dar-ul-Harb** and of **Dar-ul-Islam**, for through these doubts many are led to confusion. Indeed, there is no Islam in a land where Islam is not dominant and where its **Shari'ah** is not established; and that place is not **Dar-ul-Islam** where Islam's way of life and its laws are not practiced. There is nothing beyond faith except unbelief, nothing beyond Islam except **Jahiliyyah**, nothing beyond the truth except falsehood.

CHAPTER 10
FAR-REACHING CHANGES

When we invite people to Islam, whether they are Believers or non-believers, we should keep in mind one fact, a fact which is a characteristic of Islam itself and which can be seen in its history. Islam is a comprehensive concept of life and the universe with its own unique characteristics. The concept of human life in all its aspects and relationships which are derived from it is also a complete system which has its particular characteristics. This concept is basically against all the new or old **jahili** concepts. Although there might be some details in which there are similarities between Islam and the **jahili** concepts, in relation to the principles from which these particulars are derived, the Islamic concept is different from all other theories with which man has been familiar.

The first function of Islam is that it molds human life according to this concept and gives it a practical form, and establishes a system in the world which has been prescribed by God; and for this very purpose God has raised this Muslim nation to be a practical example for mankind. God Most High says:

"You are the best community raised for the good of mankind. You enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and you believe in God". (3:110)

and He characterizes this community as follows:

"Those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish regular prayers, pay **Zakat**, enjoin good, and forbid evil." (22:41)

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It is not the function of Islam to compromise with the concepts of **Jahiliyyah** which are current in the world or to co-exist in the same land together with a **jahili** system. This was not the case when it first appeared in the world, nor will it be today or in the future. **Jahiliyyah**, to whatever period it belongs, is **Jahiliyyah**; that is, deviation from the worship of One God and the way of life prescribed by God. It derives its system and laws and regulations and habits and standards and values from a source other than God. On the other hand, Islam is submission to God, and its function is to invite people away from **Jahiliyyah** toward Islam.

Jahiliyyah is the worship of some people by others; that is to say, some people become dominant and make laws for others, regardless of whether these laws are against God's injunctions and without caring for the use or misuse of their authority.

Islam, on the other hand, is people's worshipping God alone, and deriving concepts and beliefs, laws and regulations and values from the authority of God, and freeing themselves from servitude to God's servants. This is the very nature of Islam and the nature of its role on the earth. This point should be emphasized to anyone whomsoever we invite to Islam, whether they be Muslims or non-Muslims.

Islam cannot accept any mixing with **Jahiliyyah**, either in its concept or in the modes of living which are derived from this concept. Either Islam will remain, or **Jahiliyyah**: Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half-Islam and half-**Jahiliyyah**. In this respect Islam's stand is very clear. It says that the truth is one and cannot be divided; if it is not the truth, then it must be falsehood. The mixing and co-existence of the truth and falsehood is impossible. Command belongs to God, or otherwise to **Jahiliyyah**; God's **Shar'ah** will prevail, or else people's desires.

"And judge between them according to what God has revealed, and do not follow their opinions, and beware of them lest they confuse you in matters which God has revealed to you." (5:49)

"Then invite them to this, and remain firmly committed to what you have been commanded, and do not follow their desires." (42:15)

"And if they do not respond to you, then know that they are following their own opinions; and who can be more misguided than one who follows his own opinion against the guidance from God? Indeed, God does not guide the wicked people". (28:50)

"We have set you on a way ordained (by God); then follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge. They will not avail thee anything before God. Surely the evil-doers are friends of one another, and God is the Friend of the Godfearing." (45:18)

"Do they want a judgment from the Days of Ignorance?

Yet who is better in judgment than God, for a people having sure faith? (5:50)

These verses make it clear that there are only two ways, and no third possibility exists: either to submit to God and His Messenger — peace be on him — or else to follow **Jahiliyyah**. If the law given by God is not made the arbiter, then naturally one will deviate from it. After this clear and decisive injunction from God Most High there is no room for any controversy or excuse-making.

The foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose **Jahiliyyah** from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership into its own hands and enforce the particular way of life which is its permanent feature. The purpose of this rightly guided leadership is the good and success of mankind, the good which proceeds from returning to the Creator and the success which comes from being in harmony with the rest of the universe. The intention is to raise human beings to that high position which God has chosen for them and to free them from the slavery of desires. This purpose is explained by Raba'i bin 'Amer, when he replied to the commander-in-chief of the Persian army, Rustum. Rustum asked, "For what purpose have you come?" Raba'i answered, "God has sent us to bring anyone who wishes from servitude to men into the service of God alone, from the narrowness of this world into the vastness of this world and the Hereafter, from the tyranny of religions into the justice of Islam."

Islam did not come to support people's desires, which are expressed in their concepts, institutions, modes of living, and habits and traditions, whether they were prevalent at the advent of Islam or are prevalent now, both in the East and in the West. Islam does not sanction the rule of selfish desires. It has come to abolish all such concepts, laws, customs and traditions, and to replace them with a new concept of human life, to create a new world on the foundation of submission to the Creator. Sometimes it appears that some parts of Islam resemble some aspects of the life of people in **Jahiliyyah**; but these aspects are not **jahili** nor are they from **Jahiliyyah**. This apparent resemblance in some minor aspects is a mere coincidence; the roots of the two trees are entirely different. The tree of Islam has been sown and nurtured by the wisdom

of God, while the tree of **Jahiliyyah** is the product of the soil of human desires.

"The fertile piece of land grows good vegetation with the permission of its Lord, while the bad land brings forth but little." (7:58)

Jahiliyyah is evil and corrupt, whether it be of the ancient or modern variety. Its outward manifestations may be different during different epochs, yet its roots are the same. Its roots are human desires, which do not let people come out of their ignorance and self-importance, desires which are used in the interests of some persons or some classes or some nations or some races, which interests prevail over the demand for justice, truth and goodness. But the pure law of God cuts through these roots and provides a system of laws which has no human interference, and it is not influenced by human ignorance or human desire or for the interests of a particular group of people.

This is the basic difference between the concept of life taught by God and man made theories, and hence it is impossible to gather them together under one system. It is fruitless to try to construct a system of life which is half-Islam and half-**Jahiliyyah**. God does not forgive any association with His person, and He does not accept any association with His revealed way of life. Both are equally **Shirk** in the sight of God, as both are the product of the same mentality.

This truth ought to be firmly and clearly impressed on our minds, and when we present Islam to people our tongues should not hesitate to pronounce it, nor should we be ashamed, nor should we leave any doubt in people's minds, nor leave them until they are assured that if they follow Islam their lives will be completely changed. Islam will change their concepts of life as well as their modes of behavior completely. As it changes them, it bestows on them blessings beyond imagination by uplifting their concepts, improving their modes of behavior, and bringing them closer to the position of dignity worthy of human life. Nothing will remain of the modes of **Jahiliyyah** in which they were steeped, except some minor aspects which by accident appear similar to some aspects of Islam. Even these will not remain exactly the same as they become joined to the great root of Islam, which is clearly different from the root to which they had been joined so far, the fruitless and

evil root of **Jahiliyyah**. During this process it will not deprive them of any of the knowledge based on scientific observation; indeed, it gives a great impetus in this direction.

When we call people to Islam, it is our duty to make them understand that it is not one of the man-made religions or ideologies, nor is it a man-made system — with various names, banners and paraphernalia — but it is Islam, and nothing else. Islam has its own permanent personality and permanent concept and permanent modes. Islam guarantees for mankind a blessing greater than all these man-made systems. Islam is noble, pure, just, beautiful, springing from the source of the Most High, the Most Great God.

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When we understand the essence of Islam in this manner, this understanding in itself creates in us confidence and power, compassion and sympathy, while presenting Islam to the people: the confidence of a man who knows that he is with the truth, while what the people have is falsehood; and the compassion of a person who sees the suffering of mankind and knows how to bring them to ease; and the sympathy of a person who sees the error of the people and knows what supreme guidance is.

We need not rationalize Islam to them, need not appease their desires and distorted concepts. We will be extremely outspoken with them: "The ignorance in which you are living makes you impure, and God wants to purify you; the customs which you follow are defiling, and God wants to cleanse you; the life you are living is low, and God wants to uplift you; the condition which you are in is troublesome, depressing and base, and God wants to give you ease, mercy and goodness. Islam will change your concepts, your modes of living and your values; will raise you to another life so that you will look upon the life you are now living with disgust; will show you modes of living such that you will look upon all other modes, whether Eastern or Western, with contempt; and will introduce you to values such that you will look upon all current values in the world with disdain. And if, because of the sorry state you are in, you cannot see the true picture of the Islamic life, since your enemies — the enemies of this religion — are all united against the establishment of this way of life,

against its taking a practical form, then let us show it to you; and, thank God, its picture is in our hearts, seen through the windows of our Qur'an, of our **Shar'ah**, of our history, of our concept of the future, whose coming we do not doubt!"

* * *

This is the way in which we ought to address people while presenting Islam. This is the truth, and this was the form in which Islam addressed people for the first time; this was the form, whether it was in the Arabian peninsula, in Persia or in the Roman provinces, or in whatever other places it went. Islam looked at them from a height, as this is its true position, and addressed them with extreme love and kindness, as this is its true temperament, and explained everything to them with complete clarity, without any ambiguity, as this is its method. It never said to them that it would not touch their way of living, their modes, their concepts and their values except perhaps slightly; it did not propose similarities with their system or manners to please them, as some do today when they present Islam to the people under the names of 'Islamic Democracy' or 'Islamic Socialism', or sometimes by saying that the current economic or political or legal systems in the world need not be changed except a little to be acceptable Islamically. The purpose of all this rationalization is to appease people's desires!

Indeed, the matter is entirely different! The change from this **Jahiliyyah**, which has encompassed the earth, to Islam is vast and far-reaching; and the Islamic life is the opposite of all modes of **jahili** life, whether ancient or modern. The miserable state of mankind is not alleviated by a few minor changes in current systems and modes. Mankind will never come out of it without this vast and far-reaching change — the change from the ways of the created to the way of the Creator, from the systems of men to the system of the Lord of men, and from the commands of servants to the command of the Lord of servants.

This is a fact — a fact which we proclaim, and proclaim loudly, without leaving any doubt or ambiguity in the minds of people.

In the beginning, people may dislike this method of giving the message, may run away from it, and may be afraid of

it. But the people disliked it, ran away from it, and were afraid of it when Islam was presented to them for the first time. They hated it and were hurt when Muhammad — peace be on him — criticized their concepts, derided their deities, rejected their ways of behavior, turned away from their habits and customs, and adopted for himself and for the few believers who were with him modes of behavior, values and customs other than the modes, values and customs of **Jahiliyyah**.

Then what happened? They loved the same truth which at first seemed so strange to them, from which they ran away "as if they were startled donkeys fleeing before a lion ..." (74:50-51), against which they fought with all their power and strategy, grievously torturing its adherents when they were weak in Mecca and fighting with them incessantly when they were strong in Medina.

The conditions which the Islamic Call had to face in its first period were not more favorable or better than the conditions of today. It was an unknown thing, rejected by **Jahiliyyah**; it was confined to the valley of Mecca, hounded by the people in power and authority; and, at that time, it was a complete stranger to the whole world. It was surrounded by mighty and proud empires which were against its basic teachings and purposes. In spite of all this it was a powerful Call, as it is powerful today and will remain powerful tomorrow. The source of its real power is hidden in the very nature of this belief; that is why it can operate under the worst conditions and in the face of the most severe opposition. It derives its power from the simple and clear truth on which it stands. Its balanced teachings are according to human nature — that nature which cannot tolerate any resistance for very long — and it is in its power to lead mankind over toward progress, no matter in what stage of economic, social, scientific or intellectual backwardness or development it may be. Another secret of its power is that it challenges **Jahiliyyah** and its physical power, without agreeing to change even a single letter of its principles. It does not compromise with **jahili** inclinations nor does it use rationalizations. It proclaims the truth boldly so that people may understand that it is good, that it is a mercy and a blessing.

It is God Who created men and Who knows their nature

and the passages to their hearts. He knows how they accept the truth when it is proclaimed boldly, clearly, forcefully, and without hesitation and doubt!

Indeed, the capacity exists in human nature to change completely from one way of life to another; and this is much easier for it than many partial changes. And if the complete change were to be from one system of life to another which is higher, more perfect and purer than the former, this complete change is agreeable to human psychology. But who would be agreeable to changing from a system of **Jahiliyyah** to the system of Islam if the Islamic system were no more than a little change here and a little variation there? To continue with the former system is more logical. At least it is an established order, amenable to reform and change; then what is the need to abandon it for an order not yet established or applied, while it continues to resemble the old order in all its major characteristics?

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We also find some people who, when talking about Islam, present it to the people as if it were something which is being accused and they want to defend it against the accusation. Among their defenses, one goes like this: "It is said that modern systems have done such and such, while Islam did not do anything comparable. But listen! It did all this some fourteen hundred years before modern civilization!"

Woe to such a defense! Shame on such a defense! Indeed, Islam does not take its justifications from the **jahili** system and its evil derivatives. And these 'civilizations', which have dazzled many and have defeated their spirits, are nothing but a **jahili** system at heart, and this system is erroneous, hollow and worthless in comparison with Islam. The argument that the people living under it are in a better condition than the people of a so-called Islamic country or 'the Islamic world' has no weight. The people in these countries have reached this wretched state by abandoning Islam, and not because they are Muslims. The argument which Islam presents to people is this: Most certainly Islam is better beyond imagination. It has come to change **Jahiliyyah**, not to continue it; to elevate mankind from its depravity, and not to bless its manifestations which have taken the garb of 'civilization'. We ought not to be defeated to such an extent that we

start looking for similarities with Islam in the current systems or in some current religions or in some current ideas; we reject these systems in the East as well as in the West. We reject them all, as indeed they are retrogressive and in opposition to the direction toward which Islam intends to take mankind.

When we address people in this fashion and present to them the basic message of the comprehensive concept of Islam, the justification for changing from one concept to another, from one mode of living to another, will come from the very depths of their being. But we will not address them with this ineffective argument, saying: "Come from a system which is currently established to a system not yet applied; it will make only a little change in the established order. You should have no objection; you can continue to do what you have been doing. It will not bother you except to ask for a few changes in your habits, manners and inclinations, and will preserve for you whatever pleases you and will not touch it except very slightly."

On the surface this method seems easy, but there is no attraction in it; moreover, it is not based on the truth. The truth is that Islam not only changes concepts and attitudes, but also the system and modes, laws and customs, since this change is so fundamental that no relationship can remain with the **jahili** way of life, the life which mankind is living. It is sufficient to say that it brings them both in general and in particular from servitude to men into the service of God, Who is One:

"Believe if one wishes or reject if one wishes."

"And if one rejects, then God is independent of His creation,"

The question in essence is that of unbelief and belief, of associating others with God and the Oneness of God, and of **Jahiliyyah** and Islam. This ought to be made clear. Indeed, people are not Muslims, as they proclaim to be, as long as they live the life of **Jahiliyyah**. If someone wishes to deceive himself or to deceive others by believing that Islam can be brought in line with this **Jahiliyyah**, it is up to him. But whether this deception is for others, it cannot change anything of the actual reality. This is not Islam, and they are not Muslims. Today the task of the Call is to return these ignorant people to Islam and make them into Muslims all over again.

We are not inviting people to Islam to obtain some reward from them; we do not desire anything at all for ourselves, nor is our accounting and reward with the people. Indeed, we invite people to Islam because we love them and we wish them well, although they may torture us; and this is the characteristic of the caller to Islam and this is his motivation. The people are entitled to learn from us the nature of Islam and the nature of the obligations it imposes on them, as well as the great blessing which it bestows on them. They are also entitled to know that the nature of what they are doing is nothing but **Jahiliyyah**; it is indeed **Jahiliyyah**, with nothing in it from Islam. It is mere desire as long as it is not the **Shar'ah**; and it is falsehood as long as it is not the truth — and what is beyond the truth but falsehood!

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There is nothing in our Islam of which we are ashamed or anxious about defending; there is nothing in it to be smuggled to the people with deception, nor do we muffle the loud truth which it proclaims. This is the defeated mentality, defeated before the West and before the East and before this and that mode of **Jahiliyyah**, which is found in some people — 'Muslims' — who search for resemblances to Islam in man-made systems, or who find justification for the actions of Islam and its decision concerning certain matters by means of the actions of **Jahili** civilization.

A person who feels the need of defense, justification and apology is not capable of presenting Islam to people. Indeed, he is a person who lives the life of **Jahiliyyah**, hollow and full of contradictions, defects and evils, and intends to provide justification for the **Jahiliyyah** he is in. These are the offenders against Islam and they distract some sincere persons. They confuse Islam's true nature by their defense, as if Islam were something accused standing at trial, anxious for its own defense.

During my stay in the United States, there were some people of this kind who used to argue with us — with us few who were considered to be on the side of Islam. Some of them took the position of defense and justification. I, on the other hand, took the position of attacking the Western **Jahiliyyah**, its shaky religious beliefs, its social and economic modes, and its immoralities: "Look at these concepts of the Trinity,

Original Sin, Sacrifice and Redemption, which are agreeable neither to reason nor to conscience. Look at this capitalism with its monopolies, its usury and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law; at this materialistic attitude which deadens the spirit; at this behavior, like animals, which you call 'Free mixing of the sexes; at this vulgarity which you call 'emancipation of women,' at these unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce, which are contrary to the demands of practical life; and at Islam, with its logic, beauty, humanity and happiness, which reaches the horizons to which man strives but does not reach. It is a practical way of life and its solutions are based on the foundation of the wholesome nature of man."

These were the realities of Western life which we encountered. These facts, when seen in the light of Islam, made the American people blush. Yet there are people — exponents of Islam — who are defeated before this filth in which **Jahiliyyah** is steeped, even to the extent that they search for resemblances to Islam among this rubbish heap of the West, and also among the evil and dirty materialism of the East.

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After this, there is no need for me to say: Certainly we who present Islam to the people are not the ones to go along with any of the concepts, modes and traditions of **Jahiliyyah** however great its pressure on us may be.

Our first task is to replace this **Jahiliyyah** with Islamic ideas and traditions. This cannot be brought about by agreeing with **Jahiliyyah** and going along a few steps with it from the very beginning, as some of us think we ought to do, for this will simply mean that from the very beginning we have accepted defeat.

Of course the current ideas of the society and its prevalent traditions apply great pressure — back-breaking pressure, especially in the case of women; the Muslim woman is really under extreme and oppressive pressure — but this is the situation and we have to face it. First we must be steadfast; next we must prevail upon it; then we must show **Jahiliyyah** the low state it is really in compared to the lofty and bright horizons of Islamic life which we wish to attain.

This cannot come about by going along a few steps with **Jahiliyyah**, nor by now severing relations with it and removing ourselves to a separate corner; never. The correct procedure is to mix with discretion, give and take with dignity, speak the truth with love, and show the superiority of the Faith with humility. After all this, we must realize the fact that we live in the midst of **Jahiliyyah**, that our way of life is straighter than that of **Jahiliyyah**, and that the change from **Jahiliyyah** to Islam is vast and far-reaching. The chasm between Islam and **Jahiliyyah** is great, and a bridge is not to be built across it so that the people on the two sides may mix with each other, but only so that the people of **Jahiliyyah** may come over to Islam, whether they reside in a so-called Islamic country and consider themselves Muslims or they are outside the 'Islamic' country, in order that they may come out of darkness into light and may get rid of their miserable condition, and enjoy those blessings which we have tasted — we who have understood Islam and live in its atmosphere. If not, then we shall say to them what God commanded His Messenger — peace be on him — to say:

"For you your way, for me mine." (109:6)

CHAPTER 11

THE FAITH TRIUMPHANT

"Do not be dejected nor grieve. You shall be the uppermost if you are Believers." (3: 139)

The first thought which comes to mind on reading this verse is that it relates to the form of **Jihaad** which is actual fighting; but the spirit of this message and its application, with its manifold implications, is greater and wider than this particular aspect. Indeed, it describes that eternal state of mind which ought to inspire the Believer's consciousness, his thoughts, his estimates of things, events, values and persons.

It describes a triumphant state which should remain fixed in the Believer's heart in the face of every thing, every condition, every standard and every person; the superiority of the Faith and its value above all values which are derived from a source other than the source of the Faith.

It means to be above all the powers of the earth which have deviated from the way of the Faith, above all the values of the earth not derived from the source of the Faith, above all the customs of the earth not colored with the coloring of the Faith, above all the laws of the laws of the earth not sanctioned by the Faith, and above all traditions not originating in the Faith.

It means to feel superior to others when weak, few and poor, as well as when strong, many and rich.

It means the sense of supremacy which does not give in before any rebellious force, before any social custom and erroneous tradition, before any behavior which may be popular among people but which has no authority in the Faith. Steadfastness and strength on the battlefield are but one expression among many of the triumphant spirit which is included in this statement of Almighty God.

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The superiority through faith is not a mere single act of will nor a passing euphoria nor a momentary passion, but is a sense of superiority based on the permanent truth centered in the very nature of existence. This eternal truth is above the logic of force, the concept of environment, the terminology of society, and the customs of people, as indeed it is joined with the Living God Who does not die.

A society has a governing logic and a common mode, its pressure is strong and its weight heavy on anyone who is not protected by some powerful member of the society or who challenges it without a strong force. Accepted concepts and current ideas have a climate of their own, and it is difficult to get rid of them without a deep sense of truth, in the light of which all these concepts and ideas shrink to nothingness, and without the help of a source which is superior, greater and stronger than the source of these concepts and ideas.

The person who takes a stand against the direction of the society — its governing logic, its common mode, its values and standards, its ideas and concepts, its error and deviations — will find himself a stranger, as well as helpless, unless his authority comes from a source which is more powerful than the people, more permanent than the earth, and nobler than life. Indeed, God does not leave the Believer alone in the face of oppression to whimper under its weight, to suffer dejection and grief, but relieves him of all this with the message:

"Do not be dejected nor grieve; you shall be the uppermost if you are Believers." (13:139)

This message relieves him from both dejection and grief, these two feelings being natural for a human being in this situation. It relieves him of both, not merely through patience and steadfastness, but also through a sense of superiority from whose heights the power of oppression, the dominant values, the current concepts, the standards, the rules, the customs and habits, and the people steeped in error, all seem low.

Indeed, the Believer is uppermost — uppermost on the basis of the authority which is behind him and his source of guidance. Then, what is to be said of this earth, what of the people, what of the dominant values of the world, the standards current among people, while he is inspired by God, returns to God for guidance, and travels on His path?

The Believer is most superior in his understanding and his concept of the nature of the world, for the belief in One God, in the form which has come to him from Islam, is the most perfect form of understanding, the greatest truth. The picture of the world which this Faith presents is far above the heaps

of concepts, beliefs and religions, and is not reached by any great philosophers, ancient or modern, nor attained by idolaters or the followers of distorted scriptures, nor approached by the base materialists. This picture is so bright, clear, beautiful and balanced that the glory of the Islamic belief shines forth as never before. And without doubt those who have grasped this knowledge are superior to all others.²⁰

The Believer is most superior in his values and standards, by means of which he measures life, events, things and persons. The source of his belief is the knowledge of God and His attributes as described by Islam, and the knowledge of the realities prevalent in the universe at large, not merely on the small earth. This belief with its grandeur provides the Believer with values which are superior to and firmer than the defective standards made by men, who do not know anything except what is under their feet. They do not agree on the same standard within the same generation; even the same person changes his standard from moment to moment.

He is most superior in his conscience and understanding, in his morals and manners, as he believes in God Who has excellent names and attributes. This by itself creates in him a sense of dignity, purity and cleanliness, modesty and piety, and a desire for good deeds, and of being a rightly-guided representative of God on earth. Furthermore, this belief gives him the assurance that the reward is in the Hereafter, the reward before which the troubles of the world and all its sorrows become insignificant. The heart of the Believer is content with it, although he may pass through this life without apparent success.

And he is most superior in his law and system of life. When the Believer scans whatever man, ancient or modern, has known, and compares it with his own law and system, he realizes that all this is like the playthings of children or the searchings of blind men in comparison with the perfect system and the complete law of Islam. And when he looks from his height at erring mankind with compassion and sympathy at its helplessness and error, he finds nothing in his heart except a sense of triumph over error and nonsense.

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²⁰ See the chapter "Teeth wa rukam," in the book, "Khasais al-Tasawwar al-Islami wa Muqawwimatuhu", by the author.

This was the attitude of the early Muslims toward the hollow expressions of pomp and power and the traditions which had enslaved the people of the Days of Ignorance. Ignorance is not limited to any particular age, but is a condition which reappears whenever people deviate from the way of Islam, whether in the past, present or future.

This was the response of al-Mughira ibn Sh'uba when he encountered the forms, manners, standards, and expressions of **Jahiliyyah** in the camp of Rustum, the famous Persian general.

"Abi Uthman al-Nahdi reports: When al-Mughira crossed the bridge and reached the Persian army, they seated him and asked Rustum's permission for an audience. In spite of their defeat, they had not changed any of their show of pomp. Al-Mughira proceeded. The people were all in their military uniforms, many wearing crowns, and clothed in gold-threaded garments. The floor was thickly carpeted (the carpet extending to three hundred or four hundred steps) and was to be traversed to reach the general. Al-Mughira proceeded, his hair braided in four braids, and climbed on the throne and sat beside Rustum. The attendants jumped on him and pulled him down. He then said, 'We had heard that you were a sensible people, but I see that you are the most foolish nation. Among Arabs all are equal and no one is slave to another, except when one is captured on the battlefield. I imagined that you treated each other equally as we do. It would have been better if you had informed me that some of you are lords over others rather than treating me like this. This is not good manners, and we do not do it. I have come at your request and not on my own. I know now that your situation is weak and that you will be defeated. No kingdom can survive with this character and mentality.'"

A similar attitude was shown by Raba'i bin 'Amer in front of Rustum and his courtiers before the battle of al-Qadisyah:

"Before the battle of al-Qadisyah, 'Sad bin Waqqas sent Raba'i bin 'Amer as a messenger to Rustum, the commander of the Persian army and their ruler. He entered the tent, which was all carpeted and curtained with silk and velvet. Rustum sat on a golden throne, crowned and wearing precious stones and pearls. Raba'i, in tattered clothes, with a shield,

sitting on a small horse, entered. He did not alight from his horse for some distance; then he alighted and tied the horse to a large pillow. He proceeded armed and helmeted. They said to him: 'Take off your arms'. He replied: 'I have not come on my own but on your request. If you do not like it, then I will go back'. Rustum said: 'Let him come'. He came forward leaning on his spear, making holes in the carpet. Rustum asked him: 'For what purpose you have come?' He replied: 'God has sent us to bring whoever wishes from servitude to men into the service of God alone, from the narrowness of this world into the vastness of this world and the Hereafter, from the tyranny of religions into the justice of Islam'. (Ibn Kathir: **Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah**)

* * *

Conditions change, the Muslim loses his physical power and is conquered; yet the consciousness does not depart from him that he is the most superior. If he remains a Believer, he looks upon his conqueror from a superior position. He remains certain that this is a temporary condition which will pass away and that faith will turn the tide from which there is no escape. Even if death is his portion, he will never bow his head. Death comes to all, but for him there is martyrdom. He will proceed to the Garden, while his conquerors go to the Fire. What a difference! And he hears the voice of his Generous Lord:

"Let it not deceive you that the unbelievers walk about in the land. A little respite and their abode is Hell, and what an evil place! But for those who fear their Lord are Gardens through which rivers flow, to abide therein — a hospitality from God; and that which is with God is best for the righteous." (3:196-198)

The society may be drowned in lusts, steeped in low passions, rolling in filth and dirt, thinking that it has enjoyment and freedom from chains and restrictions. Such a society may become devoid of any clean enjoyment and even of lawful food, and nothing may remain except a rubbish heap, or dirt and mud. The Believer from his height looks at the people drowning in dirt and mud. He may be the only one; yet he is not dejected nor grieved, nor does his heart desire that he take off his neat and immaculate garments and join the

crowd. He remains the uppermost with the enjoyment of faith and the taste of belief.

The believer holds on to his religion like the holder of a precious stone in the society devoid of religion, of character, of high values, of noble manners and of whatever is clean, pure and beautiful. The others mock his tenacity, ridicule his ideas, laugh at his values, but this does not make the Believer weak of heart: and he looks from his height at those who mock, ridicule and laugh, and he says, as one of the great souls — those who preceded him on the long and bright path of faith, Noah (peace be on him), said:

“You ridicule us! Yet indeed we shall ridicule you as you ridicule.” (11:38)

And he sees the end of this bright path, and also the end of the dark path in the words of God:

“The criminals used to laugh at the Believers, wink at them in passing, and joke about them when they returned to their families. When they saw them, they used to say: ‘Certainly these people are astray’. Yet they were not sent as watchers over them. Today the Believers laugh at the unbelievers, and watch them while sitting on couches. Did the unbelievers get their reward according to what they used to do”? (83:29-36)

Before this, the Holy Qur’an told us what the unbelievers said to the Believers:

“When Our clear verses are recited to them, the unbelievers say to the Believers: ‘Which of the two parties is superior in station, better in assembly?’” (19:73)

Which of the two parties? The great men who do not believe in Muhammad, or the poor who assemble around him? Which of the two parties? Al-Nadr bin al-Harith and ‘Amr bin Hisham and al-Walid bin al-Mughira and Abu Sufyan bin Harb? Or Bilal and ‘Ammar and Khabbab? If the call of Muhammad had been better, would only such people have followed him who did not have any power or position among the Quraish, who assembled in such a lowly place as the house of al-Arqam, while their opponents were the lords of al-Nadwah, the great and glorious assembly hall, and they possessed power, authority and grandeur?

This is the logic of this world, the logic of those of any age or any place who cannot see the higher horizons. It is the wisdom of God that belief remains independent of the glitter and glamour of worldly allurements, such as closeness to the ruler, favor from the government, popularity among the people or the satisfaction of desire. It is only striving, hard work, fighting and martyrdom. Let him accept it who may accept, who has the certainty in his heart that this is purely for the sake of God and not for the sake of people, or for the allurements and attractions so dear to people. Let him stay away from it who desires pleasures and benefits, and who is greedy for pomp and show, and who is after wealth and possessions, and who gives weight to the considerations of men although these may be light in the balance of God.

Indeed, the Believer does not borrow his values, concepts and standards from people so that he is dependent on the estimation of people; he takes them from the Sustainer of the people, and that is sufficient for him. He does not follow the desires of men so that he has to fluctuate with their changing desires; he depends on the firm balance of the truth which does not fluctuate or lean to one side. Indeed, his inspiration does not come from this passing and finite world; the inspiration of his soul comes from the fountainheads of the universe. Then how can he find dejection in his soul or grief in his heart, while he is linked to the Sustainer of the people, the balance of truth, and the fountainheads of the universe?

Indeed, he is with the truth — and what is beyond the truth but falsehood? Let falsehood have power, let it have its drums and banners, and let it have its throngs and mobs; all this cannot change anything of the truth. Indeed, he is with the truth, and nothing is beyond the truth except error, and the Believer cannot prefer error to the truth. He is a Believer, and whatever be the conditions and the situation, he cannot exchange error for the truth.

“Our Master! Do not let our hearts waver after You have guided us, and bestow on us mercy from Yourself; indeed You are the Bestower. Our Master! You will gather mankind on the Day about which there is no doubt; indeed God does not fail in His promise.” (3:8-9)

CHAPTER 12 THIS IS THE ROAD

"By the heavens with constellations; by the Promised Day; by the witness and the witnessed; doomed were the makers of the pit, abundantly supplied with fuel, as they sat by it and watched what they did with the Believers. They were outraged with them only because they believed in God, the All-Powerful, the All-Praiseworthy, He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heaven and the earth. And God is Witness over everything.

"Indeed, for those who persecute the believing men and women, and later do not repent, is the penalty of Hell; for them is the penalty of burning. As for those who believe and do good deeds, there are Gardens through which rivers flow, and that is the great triumph.

"Most certainly, strong is the grip of your Lord. It is He Who originates and repeats. And He is the Forgiving, the Loving, the Lord of the Throne, Performer of what He desires." (85:1-16)

The story of the Makers of the Pit as told in the chapter "Al-Buruj" ("The Constellations") requires deep thought by those among the Believers, to whatever time and place they belong, who invite people to God. The story, with its introduction, description, comments and moral, as related in the Qur'an, points out some profound truths concerning the nature of the Call toward God, the reaction of people to this Call, and the consequences which are possible in the vast scope of this Call — the scope whose vastness encompasses the whole world, this life and the life beyond it. The Qur'an through this story, points out to the Believers the road which lies before them and prepares them to accept with fortitude whatever comes their way, as yet unknown to them, with the permission of the All-Wise God.

This is the story of a group of people who believed in God and openly proclaimed their belief. They encountered tyrannical and oppressive enemies who were bent upon denying the right of a human being to believe in the All-Mighty, the All-Praiseworthy God. They intended to deprive man of that dignity which has been bestowed upon him by God and without which he is reduced to a mere plaything in the hands

of tyrants, to be tortured, burned alive, and provide entertainment to his tormentors by his cries of agony.

But the faith in the hearts of the Believers raised them above all persecution. Belief triumphed over life. The threat of torture did not shake them, they never recanted, and they burned in the fire until death.

Indeed, their hearts were liberated from the worship of this life. Neither the love of life nor the fear of an agonizing death could make them yield to accept dishonor. They freed themselves from this earth and all its attractions, triumphing over life through a sublime faith.

Against these believing, righteous, sublime and honorable souls were pitted arrogant, mischievous, criminal and degraded people. And these criminals sat by the pit of fire, watching how the Believers suffered and writhed in pain. They sat there to enjoy the sight of how fire consumes living beings and how the bodies of these noble souls were reduced to cinders and ashes. And when some young man or woman, some child or old man from among these righteous Believers was thrown into the fire, their diabolical pleasure would reach a new height, and shouts of mad joy would escape their lips at the sight of blood and pieces of flesh.

This hair-raising incident shows that these rebellious people had sunk to those levels of depravity, seeking pleasure through torturing others, which are not even reached by any wild beast. A wild beast kills its prey for food, never to derive pleasure through tormenting it.

The same incident also shows the height to which the spirit of a Believer can soar, liberated and free — that height, the attainment of which has been the highest honor in all generations and in all periods.

By earthly reckoning, tyranny triumphed over faith, and this faith, although it reached its zenith in the hearts of this righteous, noble, steadfast and sublime group, had no weight in the struggle between tyranny and faith.

The traditions relating to this incident, like the text of the Qur'an, say nothing concerning whether God punished these tyrants in this life for their crimes as He punished the people of Noah, the people of Hud, the people of Salih, the people of Sh'uaib, and the people of Lot, or as He caught Pharaoh with his army in all his splendor and power.

Thus from the earthly point of view, the end was pitiful and tragic.

But did this matter finish here? Did the group of Believers, with all the sublimity of their faith, vanish — vanish in the pit of fire with their torments? And did the group of criminals, with all the depravity of their crime, go unpunished?

From the earthly point of view, this tragic end troubles the heart!

But the Qur'an teaches the Believers something else, reveals to them another reality, shows them another scale with which to weigh all matters, and enlightens them concerning the scope of the struggle.

Life's pleasures and pains, achievements and frustrations, do not have any great weight in the scale, and do not determine the profit or loss. Triumph is not limited to immediate victory, which is but one of the many forms of triumph.

In the scale of God, the true weight is the weight of faith; in God's market the only commodity in demand is the commodity of faith. The highest form of triumph is the victory of soul over matter, the victory of belief over pain, and the victory of faith over persecution. In the incident described above, the souls of the Believers were victorious over fear and pain, over the allurements of the earth and of life, and they gained such victory over torture which is an honor for all mankind for all times — and this is the true victory.

All men die, and of various causes; but not all gain such victory, nor reach such heights, nor taste such freedom, nor soar to such limits of the horizon. It is God's choosing and honoring a group of people who share death with the rest of mankind but who are singled out from other people for honor — honor among the noblest angels, nay, even among all mankind, if we measure them by the standards of the total history of generations of men.

It was possible for these Believers to save their lives by giving up their faith; but with how much loss to themselves, and with what a great loss to all mankind? They would have lost and would have killed this great truth, that life without belief is worthless, without freedom is degrading, and if tyrants are allowed to dominate men's souls as well as their bodies, then it is entirely depraved.

This was that noble truth, the great truth, which the Believers realized while they were alive on the earth; they realized and found it while the fire was licking them and burning their mortal frames. This noble truth triumphed over the torment of the fire.

The scope of this struggle is not limited to this earth or to this life. The observers of this struggle are not merely a generation of men. The angels are also participants in the happenings on earth; they observe them and are a witness to them, and they weigh them in a scale which is other than the scale of a generation or even of all generations of men. The angels are noble souls who number many times more than the people on the earth. Without question the praise and respect of the angels is far greater in this scale than the opinion and judgment of the people on the earth.

And then there is the Hereafter. That will be the real sphere which is adjacent to the earthly sphere and is not separated from it, in actuality as well as in the believers' perception of this reality.

Thus the struggle does not end here, and the real decision cannot be reached here. Any judgment based on that part of it which took place on earth is therefore incorrect, as this judgment will concern only a small and rather insignificant part of this struggle.

* * *

The former viewpoint, that is, that of the earthly scale, is limited and narrow, entertained by a hasty man. The latter viewpoint is comprehensive and far-sighted, and such a viewpoint is nurtured in a believer by the teachings of the Qur'an, as it is the mirror of reality and the basis of correct belief.

Among the rewards which God has promised to the Believers for their faith, obedience, steadfastness in the face of calamity, and victory over persecution is contentment of heart:

"Those who believe, and their hearts find satisfaction in remembrance of God. Indeed, remembrance of God brings contentment to the hearts". (13:28)

And it is the pleasure and love of the All-Merciful:

"Surely upon those who believe and do good deeds the All-Merciful shall assign love." (19:96)

And it is remembrance on High:

The Messenger of God — peace be on him — said: "When a certain person's child dies, God asks the angels: Did you take away the soul of My servant's child? They say: Yes. Then He says: Did you take away the apple of his eye? They say: Yes. Then He says: What did My servant say? They say: He praised You and said, 'Indeed, we belong to God and to Him shall we return'. Then He says: Build a house for My servant in the Garden and call it 'The House of Praise.' (Tirmidhi)

He also said: "God Most High says: I am to My servant according to his thought concerning Me; when he remembers Me, I am with him; when he remembers Me to himself, I remember him to Myself; when he mentions Me among a group, I mention him in a better group. If he comes toward Me one span, I come toward him an arm's length; if he comes toward Me one arm's length, I come toward him one step; if he walks toward Me, I run toward him." (Bukhari and Muslim)

And it is the keen interest of the angels in the affairs of the Believers on earth:

"The bearers of the Throne and those around it engage in their Lord's praise, and they believe in Him, and ask forgiveness for the Believers: 'Our Lord! Your mercy and knowledge encompass everything. Then forgive those who repent and follow Your path, and save them from the torment of Hell.'" (40:7)

And it is life from God for the martyrs:

"Do not consider those as dead who were killed in the way of God; they are living and find sustenance from their Sustainer. They enjoy what God has given them from His bounty, and are glad for those who are left behind (on earth) and have not reached there yet, that they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. They are jubilant at the favor from God and His bounty; indeed, God does not destroy the reward of the Believers". (3:169-171)

And as to rejectors of faith, the tyrants and the criminals, God has repeatedly promised that He will catch them in the Hereafter, while giving them a limited period of living on earth: although He has caught some of them in this world too, yet for the final punishment emphasis is on the Hereafter:

"Do not let yourself be deceived that the unbelievers walk about in the land; a limited enjoyment, and then their abode is Hell, and what an evil place!" (3:196-197)

"Do not think that God is unaware of the doings of the wicked people. He has deferred (judgement for) them to the Day when the eyes shall stare, and they shall run with necks outstretched and heads erect, their sight never returned to themselves, their hearts void". (14:42-43)

"Leave them to fun and play until the Day comes which they have been promised. On that Day they will come out of the graves and run as if hastening toward a fixed goal — eyes downcast, faces degraded. It will be the Day which they were promised". (70:42-44)

Thus the life of mankind is adjoined with that of the angels; this life proceeds into the life Hereafter, and the field of struggle between good and evil, between the truth and falsehood, and between faith and tyranny, is not limited to this earth. This matter does not finish here, nor is the decision made in this world. This life and all its pleasures and pains, achievements and frustrations, do not weigh much in the scale.

The field of struggle is very broad in space and in time, in measures and in scales. This realization enlarges the Believer's horizons and heightens his aspirations, so that this earth and whatever is in it, this life and its attachments, shrink in his sight. The Believer's greatness increases in proportion to what he sees and understands of the scopes and horizons. To create such a broad, comprehensive, noble and pure concept of faith, the story of the Makers of the Pit is a great example.

* * *

Light is also thrown on another aspect of the Call toward God and its situation with respect to all possibilities in the story of the Makers of the Pit and the chapter "Constellations" ("al-Buruj").

The history of the Call toward God has witnessed various endings in this world in its struggle with other movements.

It has witnessed the annihilation of the people of Noah, the people of Hud, the people of Sh'uaib, and the people of Lot, and the escape — the bare escape — of a small group of believers. But the Qur'an does not state what these escapees

did in the world and life after their escape. These examples tell us that sometimes God Most High gives the rebels and tyrants a taste of punishment in this world, while the full punishment still awaits them in the Hereafter.

This history of the Call witnessed the annihilation of Pharaoh and his army, and the escape of Moses and his people and the establishment of their authority in the land. Those people of that time were the most righteous in all their (the Israelites') history, although they did not attain complete steadfastness nor establish the religion of God on earth in its entirety; and this example is different from the previous ones.

This history of the Call witnessed the annihilation of the polytheists who turned away from the guidance and belief in Muhammad — peace be on him — and it witnessed the complete victory of the Believers, with the amazing victory of belief in their hearts. And for the first time in the history of mankind the way of God was established in such completeness as was not seen by man, either before or after.

And it witnessed, as we have seen, the example of the Makers of the Pit.

And it witnessed many other examples in earlier or later times with little mention in the history of faith. And even today it is witnessing such examples, which reach one or another of the possible endings recorded throughout history for centuries.

Among the various earlier or later examples, the example of the Makers of the Pit must not be forgotten.

The example must not be forgotten in which the Believers have no escape and the unbelievers are not punished! This is so that the Believers — the callers toward God — should remain fully aware that they can also meet this extreme end in the way of God, and they have no say in it. Their matter and the matter of belief rests with God.

Their task is to fulfill their obligation, and go. Their obligation is to choose God, prefer belief over life, raise themselves above persecution through faith, and to testify to God with deed as well as intention. Then it is up to God to deal with them and with their enemies, with His Religion and His Call, as He deems proper. He may choose for them any one of the endings known in history, or some other ending which only He knows and sees.

They are workers for God. Whenever, whatever, however He wants them to do their work, they should do it and take the known reward. To decide what will be the ending of their endeavor is neither in their power nor is it their responsibility. This is the responsibility of the One in authority, not of those who are mere workers.

They receive the first part of their reward in the form of contentment of heart, height of understanding, beauty of ideas, liberation from desires and attractions, and freedom from fear and sorrow, in whatever condition they may be.

They receive the second part of their reward in praise, remembrance and honor among the angels, in addition to these among the people of this earth.

Then they receive the greater and the last part of their reward in the Hereafter: easy accounting and great favors.

With every kind of reward, they also receive the greatest of rewards: the pleasure of God. It is His bounty on them that He chose them for His purpose, an instrument for His power, so that He makes use of them on this earth as He deems proper.

* * *

The Qur'anic training of the first noble generation of Muslims was of this character to the highest degree. They lost their personalities and identities in this matter, acting as workers for the One in authority, and were pleased with God in every decision and in every condition.

The training by the Prophet — peace be on him — went side by side with the Qur'anic teachings, turning their hearts and eyes toward the Garden, and toward patiently persevering in their assigned task until God ordains what He intends in this world as well as what is pleasing to Him in the Hereafter.

The Prophet — peace be on him — saw the intensity of tortures heaped upon 'Ammar, his father and his mother — may God be pleased with them — but he said nothing more than this: "Patience, family of Yasir! The Garden is promised for you."

And Khabbab bin al-Aratt — may God be pleased with him — reported: "We complained to the Messenger of God — peace be upon him — while he was resting in the shadow of Ka'aba, saying, 'Why do you not ask God to help us?'"

Why do you not pray for us? Then he said: 'Before you, there were people who would catch a man, bury him halfway in a hole dug in the ground, then saw his head until it split in two; or would comb with iron combs between his flesh and bones; yet this would not turn him away from his religion. By God! God will bring this matter to completion, and a time will come when a rider will ride alone from San'a to Hadramut and he will have no fear except of God, or of a wolf against his sheep; but you people are in a hurry'." (Bukhari)

* * *

God's wisdom underlies every decision and every condition. He administers the entire universe, and, He is informed of its beginning and its end, controlling its events and its interrelationships. He knows the wisdom, hidden from us behind the curtains of the Unseen — the wisdom which, in conjunction with His will, unfolds the long process of history.

Sometimes, after generations and centuries, God unveils to us the wisdom of an event which was not understood by the contemporary people. They might have wondered: Why this? O Lord! Why did this happen? The question itself is due to ignorance from which the Believer saves himself. He already knows that behind every decision there is wisdom. His breath of concept and his far-seeing vision in space and time, and in values and scales, raises him above this unbelief whose beginning is in such a question. He journeys on God's ordained course with submission and contentment.

The Qur'an was creating hearts worthy of bearing the trust of being God's representatives on earth. It was necessary that these hearts be so solid, so strong and so pure, leaving behind everything and bearing everything patiently, as not to fix their sights on something of this earth, but looking beyond to the Hereafter, not seeking anything except the pleasure of God and being willing to traverse the path of life until death in poverty, difficulty, frustration, torment and sacrifice. They were not to seek any hasty reward on this earth, whether it was the reward of the victory of the Call, the dominance of Islam, and the glory of the Muslims, or even that this reward be the annihilation of the tyrants, as the All Mighty, the All Powerful had dealt with former generations of unbelievers. When such

hearts were found which knew that during the course of this life they would have no expectations, and that the decision between the truth and falsehood would be made in the Hereafter — when such hearts were found, and God knew the sincerity of their intentions concerning which they had pledged, he gave them victory in the earth and bestowed upon them the trust. This trust was not for their benefit, but so that they might establish the Divine system.

They became the bearers of this trust when no promise was made to them of worldly benefits which they could have demanded, nor were their sights fixed on acquiring such benefits. They were dedicated servants of God from the day they knew of no reward except His pleasure.

All the verses of the Qur'an in which victory is promised, or in which spoils are mentioned or where it is told that the polytheists will be punished in this world by the hands of the Believers, were revealed in Medina. These were revealed only after all these matters were excluded from the Believer's scope of action, his expectation and his desire. God's help came on its own, when God intended that this way of life become actual in the life of mankind, so that generations of men could see it in a practical and concrete form, and not as a reward for the endeavors, the hard work, the sacrifice and the sufferings. This was indeed a decision of God, the wisdom of which we are trying to fathom today.

This intricate point requires deep thought by all callers toward God, to whatever country or period of time they belong; for this guarantees that they will be able to see the milestones of the road clearly and without ambiguity, and establishes the path for those who wish to traverse it to the end, whatever this end may be; then what God intends to do with His Call and with them is up to Him. Then they will not be anxious, while traversing this road ever paved with skulls and limbs and blood and sweat, to find help and victory, or desirous that the decision between the truth and falsehood be made on this earth. However, if God Himself intends to fulfill the completion of His call and His religion through their efforts, He will bring about His will — but not as a reward for their sufferings and sacrifices. Indeed, this

world is not a place of reward.

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Another fact to ponder here is a comment of the Qur'an on the story of the Makers of the Pit where God Most High says:

"And they were angered with the Believers, only because they believed in God, the All-Powerful, the All-Praiseworthy."

The callers to God, of any period or generation, ought to think over this deep truth.

The struggle between the Believers and their enemies is in essence a struggle of belief, and not in any way of anything else. The enemies are angered only because of their faith, enraged only because of their belief.

This was not a political or an economic or a racial struggle; had it been any of these, its settlement would have been easy, the solution of its difficulties would have been simple. But essentially it was a struggle between beliefs — either unbelief or faith, either *Jahiliyyah* or Islam.

This is why the leaders of the polytheists of Mecca offered the Messenger of God — peace be on him — wealth, kingship and worldly things against only one thing: that he give up the struggle of belief and settle with them in this affair. Had he accepted — may God forgive us for saying this — what they asked of him, no difference whatsoever would have remained between them and him.

Indeed, this was a question of belief and a battle of belief. The Believers ought to be certain of this, whatever be the declaration of their enemies. They are their enemies only because of their belief — "only because they believe in God, the All-Powerful, the All-Praiseworthy" — and because they purify for Him alone their obedience and submission.

The enemies of the Believers may wish to change this struggle into an economic or political or racial struggle, so that the Believers become confused concerning the true nature of the struggle and the flame of belief in their hearts becomes extinguished. The Believers must not be deceived, and must understand that this is a trick. The enemy, by changing the nature of the struggle, intends to deprive them of their weapon of true victory, the victory which can take any form, be it the victory of the freedom of spirit as was case of the Believers

in the story of the Maker of the Pit, or dominance in the world — as a consequence of the freedom of spirit — as happened in the case of the first generation of Muslims.

We see an example of this today in the attempts of Christendom to try to deceive us by distorting history and saying that the Crusades were a form of imperialism. The truth of the matter is that the latter-day imperialism is but a mask for the crusading spirit, since it is not possible for it to appear in its true form, as it was possible in the Middle Ages. The unveiled crusading spirit was smashed against the rock of the faith of Muslim leadership which came from various elements, including Salahuddin the Kurd and Turan Shah the Mamluk, who forgot the differences of nationalities and remembered their belief, and were victorious under the banner of Islam.

"They were angered with the Believers only because they believed in God, the All-Powerful, the All-Praiseworthy."

Almighty God spoke the truth, and these treacherous deceivers are liars!