

## Chapter 2

# The Sources of Common Principles of Morality and Ethics in Islam

### Introductory Remarks

All nations have common principles in morality and ethics. The source of these moral and ethical attitudes can be traced back to three main sources:

1. Intuitive Reasoning (al-fitra) or the basic innate constitution of all human beings. In every person there is an innate intuition that can guide him/her to right or wrong in, at least, the basic morals. Killing an innocent person is repudiated and considered as an abominable, detestable crime, by all normal human beings whose innate constitution has not been distorted by wrong beliefs, practices, and attitudes. The Qur'an extolled the unblemished innate nature in many verses, including, for example, the following:

Our Sibghah (religion) is the Sibghah (Religion) of Allah (Islam) and which Sibghah (religion) can be better than Allah's? And we are His worshippers. (Q. 2:138)

So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah (i.e. Allah's Islamic Monotheism) upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know (Q. 30:30)

In a tradition, the Prophet said: "Everyone is born with the basic innate nature which is inclined to submit to God; then his parents bring him up as a Jew or as a Christian or Magian. (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim) [1].

The untainted nature can discern that lying, breaking promises, stealing and so forth are bad and wrong and that veracity, keeping promises, fidelity and honesty are good and right. The basic principles of ethics lie deep in every soul. The intuition and innate constitution guide those with normal unblemished nature to the right conduct and keep them away from malevolent behavior.

2. Faculty of Reason (al-'Aql): The ability to reason and derive a decision by using one's mind. The Qur'an extolled those who are wise, thoughtful and ponder

over matters as a result of their accepting the call of the prophets of God. Thus, the Qur'an says:

You who believe. If you heed Allah, He will give you criteria (by which you will judge right from wrong), and will cleanse you of your sins and forgive you. (Q. 8:29)

However, the Qur'an also speaks about those who refused to use their faculty of reason and willfully transgress the boundaries set by God's commands. Such people will find their abode in Hell:

They will say: If only we had really listened and used our reason (minds), we would not have been companions of the Blaze. (Q. 67:10)

The reason should be used to reflect on creatures of the Lord and his signs spread all over:

And in Your creation and all the creatures He has spread about, there are signs for people who use their reason (Q. 45:4)

There are signs for people who use their reason. (Q. 16:1)

There are those people who are blind to the truth because they refuse to see it despite the fact that they have normal eyesight, and refuse to hear despite the fact they have normal hearing:

And surely, We have created many of the jinns and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not (the truth). They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones. (Q. 7:179)

And Allah guides not the people who disbelieve. They are those upon whose hearts, hearing (ears) and sight (eyes) Allah has set a seal. And they are the heedless! (Q. 16:108).

The blind and the seeing are not the same. Nor are those who believe and do right, the same as evildoers. (Q. 40:58)

It is only people of understanding who heed. (Q.13:19)

Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breast. (Q. 22:46)

Similar themes can be gauged in the biblical literature. Hence, for instance, one reads in the Gospel of Matthew about what Jesus (PBUH) said: "The reason I use parables in talking to them is that they look, but do not see, and they listen, but do not hear or understand. Isaiah said: This people will listen and listen but not understand; they will look and look, but not see because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes." (Matthew 13/13–16).

It is logical to derive that people of wisdom acquire morality. They are honest, just, sincere, benevolent, modest, never inflicting harm (non-maleficence) except with very good reason to thwart greater harm. They are usually tolerant and forgive the misdeeds of others. The one who possess sagacity and discernment has the ability to analyze an event, or behavior in the best possible way. He can draw the best conclusions and make the right decisions.

Human beings are endowed with the faculty of reasoning by which one can discern right from wrong. However this pure faculty could be enmeshed and lured by instincts and carnal desires, egotism, search for pleasure, selfishness and hedonism. All the vices will ensue if the carnal desires, egotism, arrogance, pride, hegemony, unsatiated desire for wealth and power, are not controlled by reason and revelation. Both are needed to control the beast in each one of us hidden deep in the egotistic arrogant selfish desires. Man should strive hard to control his desires and aspire to those exalted who always do good and refrain from harming others: “And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our paths; for verily God is with those who do right” (Q. 29:69).

The first and foremost requirement in the development of moral-spiritual is to work on the control of the lower self from “doing harm” to any creature (humans, animals or ecosystem), except in self-defense and in order to thwart aggression. This striving is followed, or may go hand in hand, by doing good to others (beneficence). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told one of his companions that if you are not capable of doing good to others, at least do no harm to them [2]. According to the famous Muslim theologian, al-Ghazali: “If you cannot reach the level of angels, then do not fall into the level of beasts, scorpions and snakes. If your soul is content to come down from the highest heights, at least, do not let it be content into the lowest depths (to the rank of beasts, snakes and scorpions). Perhaps you will be saved by the middle way where you have neither more nor less than what suffices” [3]. The Qur’an says:

We have indeed created man in the best of stature, then We abase him to the lowest of the low. (Q. 95:4,5).

Certainly belief in Oneness of God guides the believers to noble virtues and righteous deeds, and admonishes them to refrain from vices and heinous deeds. The Prophet said: “I solemnly declare that a person who inflicts harm to his neighbor is not a believer of God” [4]. In another tradition he said, “A woman entered Hellfire, because she incarcerated a cat until it died of hunger and thirst” [5]. Still in another tradition, a prostitute of Bani Israel was thirsty so she came to a well, and got water for herself to drink. When she finished she found a dog very thirsty, so she went back to the well and got him water in her shoe and quenched its thirst. God was pleased with her deed and let her enter Paradise [6].

Muslim Philosophers like Ibn Tufail believe that any normal human being can recognize God, with his divinely endowed nature and his reason. He wrote the Story of Hayy bin Yaqzan whose mother delivered him on a remote island, and died in post partum. A gazelle felt sympathy for this newly born, and reared him like a mother. When he grew up, she died, and he was stunned, and dissected her body to know what happened. He went on pondering and by using his intuitive reason he reached the conclusion that indeed there was a Creator for this world, and he worshipped Him silently until a learned sage came to his island. They became friends and Hayy learned a language from him. Both were amazed when they found that Hayy reached to the conviction of a Supreme Being, the Creator of this world, without any guidance from anybody or revelation except his own intuition and reason.

Ibn Sina, Ibn Tufail, Al Kindi, Al Farabi, Al Razi, among many other Muslim philosophers believed that human being can recognize God and most of His attributes, without revelation if he uses his intuition and reason properly, and if it is not masked by carnal instincts, and false beliefs. They thought that the multitude of common people needed revelation, but the intellectuals and the philosophers can reach to the same conclusion without the guidance of a Prophet or his representative. Ibn Sina believed that revelation is also needed for men of intellect, not to reach the recognition of God, but to describe for them the proper code of life. Ibn Sina came to this conclusion in his later days, when he almost became a mystic Sufi.

Ibn Sina defied the other philosophers (or at least some of them) who saw that the revealed religion suits only the common people, while men of intellect are suited for philosophy. Ibn Sina held that a Prophet like Muhammad (PBUH) is superior to any philosopher, as the Prophet is not dependent on human reason, which can err, but is wholly dependent on revelation from God, which will never err. In his “book al-Isharat” signs (Admonitions) he became a mystic Sufi and became critical of the rational approach to God. Ibn Sina worked out a rational demonstration for the existence of God, based on Aristotle’s proofs, which became standard among later medieval philosophers in both Judaism and Islam [7]. However, neither he nor the Islamic philosophers ever doubted the existence of God, and that unaided normal human reason can arrive at knowledge of the existence of Supreme Being. Reason was man’s most exalted activity and it has an important role in the religious quest. Ibn Sina thought it was a religious duty for those who had the intellectual ability to discover God for themselves by using reason and to free the conception of God from superstitions (added to true religion) and anthropomorphism. Ibn Sina and others like him, wanted to use reason to discover as much as they could about the nature of God.

This attitude seems strange in modern philosophy. Reason is used in Western modern philosophy in a more mundane and pragmatic way as in a utilitarian consequentiality school, or to stress the importance of deontology, the categorical philosophy of Kant and his followers to establish the basis of ethics and morality on secular grounds. It is ironic that post modernist philosophers of the West in the twentieth century attacked “Reason” and all the philosophies built on Reason [8].

3. Divine Revelation (al-wahy, Tanzil): Muslims believe that God guides humanity by sending a number of prophets and apostles, who are the bearers of the revelation. Muslim believe that since the beginning of history there have been a hundred and 24,000 minor and major prophets who came to guide humanity about their origin and final return to God. These prophets receive the revelations from God. However, the major Prophets are sent with a universal message from God, and a Shari’ah (Code of Life) to organize the community of faithful—the Umma, into a universal body of the believers. These prophets brought monotheistic faith in One God, but as time passed by their followers distorted the pure monotheism and brought back their old deities to be worshipped along with God. The first such prophet of God was Adam and the last is Muhammad (PBUH). A Muslim should believe in all of them, whether he knows their names, origins or not. The Qur’an

mentions a number of them. Thus, it mentions, for instance Noah (Nuh), Abraham (Ibrahim), Ishmael (Ismail), Isaac (Ishaq), Jacob (Ya'qub/Israel), Joseph (Yusuf), Moses (Musa), Zacaria (Zakariyah), Jesus (Isa), John the Baptist (Yahya), Jonah (Yunus), Lot and so on. All these are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (with difference in their stories). Others who were not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, like Hud, Salih, Shu'yib are considered of Arab origin. Nevertheless, all of them stressed belief in one God, the Supreme Lord of all the worlds and creatures. The Qur'an is replete with the admonition of the messengers of God to their nations from the time of Noah, Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb, Lot, and every Prophet and Messenger of God who proclaimed the unity of God by declaring:

Invoke your Lord with humility and in secret. He likes not the aggressors. And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope; Surely, Allah's Mercy is (ever) near unto the good-doers. (Q. 7:56–57)

Muslims believe in all these prophets and the divine messages they brought with them. The Qur'an says:

Say we believe in God, and His revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes; and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them; and we bow to God in submission (*islam*). (Q. 2:136–138)

The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him from His Lord; as do the men of faith. Each one of them believes in God, His Angels, His books and His Apostles. We make no distinction between one and another of His Apostles. And they say we hear, we obey; we seek your forgiveness. (Q. 2:285).

In the tradition reported on the authority of the Prophet, he said: My example and the example of the preceding Prophets is similar to a man who enters a wonderful building, which he admires, but for a cleft in the wall, which needs to be sealed by a slab (or a slate). The building represents the past prophets and I am only the slab which fills the gap" (narrated by Muslim in his authentic collection of traditions) [9]. The Prophet Muhammad is the culmination of a long history of prophethood and messengers of God. This is captured by the Qur'an when it declares:

This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon, and have chosen for you Islam, as your religion. (Q. 5:3).

Islam is the religion that unites the entire humanity from Adam till doomsday and considers all nations to have witnessed One God through the messages and teachings of their respective prophets:

There is no nation that was not given an admonisher. (Q. 35:24).

All peoples are the progeny of Adam who was elevated to be the vicegerent of God on earth:

Behold thy Lord said to the angels: I will create on earth a vicegerent. (Q. 2:30).

And He (Allah) taught Adam the nature (names) of all things. (Q. 2/31).

Adam was endowed with the knowledge which the angels did not know, and for that reason God ordered them to bow to Adam in respect and veneration. (Q. 2:30–34). And not only Adam was honored by Allah, but also his progeny:

We honored the progeny of Adam, provided them with transport on land and sea, given them for sustenance things good and pure, and conferred on them special favors above a great part of our creation. (Q. 17:70).

It is in this sense that Islam teaches respect for the human body. In a tradition the Prophet rebuked a man who broke a bone from the cemetery without any good reason and told him, “The guilt of breaking the bones of the dead is equal to the guilt of breaking the bones of the living” (narrated by Abu Dawud *Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitabal-jana’iz*), [10].

In other words, due respect and reverence should be given to the funeral as exemplified by the Prophet who stood up in veneration for the passing by of a funeral of a Jew, at a time when Jews were waging war against him (and tried to assassinate him and then poison him but failed). One of his companions exclaimed: “It is only the funeral of a Jew”. The Prophet (PBUH) retorted: “Is it not a human being?” [11] (*Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-jana’iz*).

The unity of human beings is established in many verses of the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet. The value of a human being depends on his good deeds, and not on his wealth or position:

Oh mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah (God) is he who is the most righteous of you. (Q. 49:13).

Karen Armstrong in her book “*A History of God*” [12] says: “In practical terms, Islam meant that Muslims had a duty to create a just equitable society where the poor and vulnerable are treated decently. The early moral message of the Qur’an is simple: It is wrong to stockpile wealth and build a private fortune, and good to share the wealth of society fairly by giving a regular proportion of one’s wealth to the poor”. (Holy Qur’an 92/18, 9/103, 63/9, 102/1).

The zakat (alms giving) and salat (prayers) are two of the five Pillars of Islam. These five are (1) *Shahada* (i.e. witnessing that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger), (2) *Salat* (Regular five prayers each day) (3) *Zakat*: Compulsory alms giving which is a definite share of the wealth to be distributed every year to the needy and poor. (4) *Fasting* during the month of Ramadan (the 9th lunar month in the Islamic calendar) from dawn to sunset (5) *Hajj* (pilgrimage) to Makkah, at least, once in a lifetime, if a person has the amenities and means to go there.

Each of these has a great moral value, for example, prayers are done five times a day in congregation. There are no priests or clergy to lead the congregation. Any Muslim who knows the prayer and the rules of this ritual can lead them. The imam stands in the front while the rest stand behind him close to each other (shoulder to shoulder) with no difference between race, color, wealth or even age. Women usually stand in the back rows inconspicuously. However, it is recommended for them to pray in the privacy of their home.

The aim of Salat is multiple: Adoration of Allah, speaking to Him directly by reciting His word, the Qur'an, sense of equality and legality. The Salat should prevent those who pray from shameful and unjust deeds.

Establish regular prayers for prayers restrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (Q. 29/45).

The Zakat (literally purification and growth) frees Muslims from worship of wealth and teaches them to share their wealth with the needy and poor:

Take (O Muhammad) from their wealth a charity by which you purify them (Q. 9:103).

Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy, and for those employed to collect it, and for bringing hearts together (for Islam, usually the new reverts), and for freeing slaves, and for those in debt (for a good cause), and for the cause of Allah, and the wayfarer. (Q. 9:60).

Have you seen the one who denies the Day of Judgment, for that is the one who repulses the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the indigent. So woe to those who pray, (but) who are heedless of their prayers. Those who only make show (of their deeds), and refuse (even) neighborly needs (*Surah Al-Ma'un – Almsgiving* Q. 107: 1–7).

Similarly fasting a whole month from dawn to sunset, abstaining from food, drink and sex with a spouse, teaches each Muslim to develop a disciplined life and to forebear and remember the poor and needy who do not even get their meals. The month of Ramadan is celebrated with communal meals, congregational prayers and giving a lot to the needy and indigent.

Every Muslim has to make hajj, at least once in a lifetime, if he can afford the journey and expense. All those who go to Hajj, put off their clothes, garments and get into the simple traditional pilgrim's white dress that eradicates all distinction of race or class. Furthermore, the person who adorns the required attire get liberated from the egotistic preoccupations of their daily lives. They all cry out in unison, "Here I am at your service O Allah"; and then start to circumambulate around the Ka'aba (the holiest shrine in Islam) seven times, along with multitudes (almost tens of thousands at a time, the total being more than 3 million).

Ali Shariati, the late Iranian sociologist of religion described his experience succinctly. "As you circumambulate and move closer to Ka'aba, you feel like a small stream merging with a big river. Carried by a wave you lose touch with the ground. As you approach the center, the pressure of the crowd squeezes you so hard that you are given a new life. You are now part of the people, you are now a man, alive and eternal... You have become part of this universal system. Circumambulating around Allah's house, you soon forget yourself...you have been transformed into a particle that is gradually melting and disappearing. This is absolute love at its peak." [13].

This is the true significance of the affirmation of *islam*, which literally means "surrender/peace." Every Muslim has to surrender himself/herself in obeisance to Allah, The Creator, The Sovereign, The Merciful, The Exalted who has ninety-nine beautiful names or attributes:

He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity (no other God) Who knows (all things), both the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. He is Allah other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, and the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names (attributes). Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise (Q.59:22–24).

According to Karen Armstrong [14]: “There was no obligatory doctrines about God; indeed the Qur’an is highly suspicious of theological speculation, dismissing it as Zanna/Self-indulgent guesswork about things that nobody can possibly know or prove. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation and the Trinity seemed prime examples of Zanna, and not surprisingly, the Muslims found these notions blasphemous. Instead...God was experienced as a moral imperative. Having practically no contact with either Jews or Christians and their scriptures, Muhammad had cut straight into the essence of historical monotheism.”

Further down she writes: “In the Qur’an, however Allah is more impersonal than Yahweh...” We can only glimpse something of God in the signs of nature, and so transcendent is He that we can only talk about Him in parables. Constantly, therefore the Qur’an urges Muslims to see the world as epiphany:

Verily in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the succession of night and day in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply there on; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth. (In all this) there are signs, indeed for people who use their reason. (Q. 2/158, 159).

“The Qur’an constantly stresses the need for intelligence in deciphering the “signs” or “messages” of God. Muslims are not to abdicate their reason, but to look at the world attentively and with curiosity. It was with this attitude that later enabled Muslims to build a fine tradition of natural science, which has never been seen as such a danger to religion as in Christianity. A study of the workings of the natural world showed that it had a transcendent dimension and source, whom we can talk about only in signs and symbols; even the stories of the Prophets, the accounts of the Last Judgment, and the joys of Paradise would not be interpreted literally, but as parables of higher ineffable reality.” The Prophet said that Jannah i.e. Paradise is something that no eye has seen or heard of or evencrosses the imagination of any human being) [15].

The Qur’an emphatically denied any association with God, neither as wife or son:

Say: He is the One God, the Eternal Refuge (the uncaused cause of all beings). He begets not, and neither is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him (Q. 112:1–3).

“But they have attributed to Allah partners- the jinn, while He has created them. And they falsely, having no knowledge attribute to Him sons and daughters. Praise and glory be to Him (for He is) above what they attribute to Him. He is the



originator of the heavens and earth. How can He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things and He has full knowledge of all things”.

That is God (Allah), your Lord, the Creator of all things, so worship Him, and He is the Disposer of all things. Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives all vision, and He is the Subtle (above all comprehension) yet acquainted with all things (Q. 6:100–103).

According to the explanation provided by Karen Armstrong [16], The perception of God’s uniqueness is the basis of the morality of the Qur’an. To give allegiance to material goods, or to put trust in lesser beings was Shirk (idolatry), the greatest sin of Islam...Muslims must realize that Allah is the ultimate and unique reality... There is no deity but Allah the Creator of the heaven and earth, who alone can save man and send him the spiritual and physical sustenance that he needs. Only by acknowledging Him as as-Samad (The uncaused cause of all being) would Muslims address a dimension of reality beyond times and history... She continues: “There is no simplistic notion of God, however, this single deity is not a being like ourselves which we can know and understand. The phrase “Allahu Akbar” (God is Greater) that summons Muslims to Salat (prayers 5 times a day) distinguishes between God and the rest of the reality, as well as between God as He is in Himself (al-Dhat) and anything that we can say about Him; yet this incomprehensible and inaccessible God wanted to make Himself known. An early tradition (hadith of the Prophet) says: “I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known. Hence, I created the world so that I might be known” [17].

By contemplating the signs (ayat) of nature and the verses of the Qur’an, Muslim could glimpse that aspect of divinity...we only see God through His activities, which adapt His Ineffable being to our limited understanding. The Qur’an urges Muslims to cultivate perpetual consciousness (taqwa) of the Face or the Self of God that surrounds them on all sides “Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of Allah” (Q. 2:115)...Qur’an sees God as the Absolute, “Who alone Has True Existence”.

The Qur’an stressed the continuity of the religious experience of humankind, and teaches that God sent Messengers to every people on the face of earth. The Qur’an orders Muslims to argue other faiths with respect and friendly attitude, “Do not argue with the Peoples of the Scriptures except in the most kindly manner-unless it be such of them as are set on evil doing- and say: We believe in that which has been bestowed upon us, as well as that which was bestowed upon you; for our God and your God is one and the same, and unto Him that we surrender ourselves”. (Q. 29:46). Indeed, the religion of God introduced the compassionate ethos which was the hallmark of the more advanced religion: brotherhood and social justice were its crucial virtues. A strong egalitarianism would continue to characterize the Islamic ideal [18].

## Gender Equality, the Hallmark of Islam

During pre-Islamic period, known as the Age of Ignorance (*jahiliya*), the majority of women were on par with slaves; they were disdained and the birth of a female child was considered as a calamity. Some would hide in disgrace, others would kill the newly born female child immediately after birth; still worse he might keep her and then he would take her and bury her alive.

The Qur'an condemned this callous disgraceful behavior:

And when the female (infant) buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) shall be questioned. For what sin she was killed? (Q. 81:8–9)

If one of them receive the tidings of a female, his face darkens, and he is in wrath inwardly. He hides himself from his folk because of the bad news. He contemplates: Shall he keep the child in contempt or bury it (her) in the dust? Verily evil is their judgment. (Q.16:58,59)

They despised women because they could not fight. Moreover, since feuds and fights were almost a daily phenomenon between different tribes, there was deep-seated fear that if they get conquered, the enemy would enslave children and women. The men, when they felt the defeat, they fled the battlefield. Consequently, disgrace would befall the whole tribe for ages.

The Qur'an not only forbade the killing of female children (infanticide), it also gave women legal rights of inheritance (which they were deprived from when there was a male inheritor) and divorce. The Prophet encouraged women to play an active role in the affairs of Ummah. The first person on earth to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) was his beloved wife Khadija, who supported him all through his life. In fact, when the Prophet had the first encounter with revelation in the Cave of Hira in Makkah, he came back trembling from the harsh new experience with the Archangel Gabriel. Khadija supported him and he was afraid of being attacked by bad spirits turning him into insanity. It was Khadija who reassured him saying: "Nay...never will Allah let you down. You are kind and considerate towards kin. You help the poor and forlorn, and bear their burdens. You are striving to restore the high moral qualities that your people have lost. You honor the guest and go to the assistance of those in distress. This cannot be that you are attacked by an evil spirit" [19].

She took him to her cousin Waraqa bin Nawfal, an old learned sage, who had adopted Christianity, and after hearing from Muhammad (PBUH), he reassured him that he had received a revelation from God, similar to that revealed to Moses and the Prophets, and that his tribe (Quraysh) will drive him out of Makkah. He wished to be alive then, to support him.

The first batch of Muslims included slaves, Sumayyah, her husband Yasir and her son Ammar, who were exposed to torture by Quraish. Sumayyah was the first martyr in Islam. She was followed by her husband Yasir, but Ammar was saved.

Khadija herself suffered greatly when Quraysh prevented Muslims to have any dealings with people of Makkah and its traders. This was a total boycott of the

Hashimites, the Prophet's clan. No food was allowed for them, and all of them suffered greatly. After 3 years of full siege it was lifted when the Prophet informed Quraysh that their written oath (to deprive Muslims from their necessities and push them into hunger) which was hanged in Ka'ba was eaten by moth except the name of Allah. Both Khadija and the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, who also supported him, died in that same year.

A number of women of Medina supported the Prophet and even fought battles with him. The Qur'an stressed the equality of men and women in the sight of Allah, and the women continued to play a pivotal role in the community. The Qur'an says:

Indeed the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and the believing women, the obedient men and women, the truthful men and women, the humble men and women, the charitable men and women, the fasting men and women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and women who do so, for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and great reward. (Q. 33:35).

It is remarkable to note that the supervisor of the markets of Medina, at the time of 'Umar (the Second Caliph) was al-Shaffa bint Abdulla of Quraysh, and that of Makkah was another woman by the name of al-Samra bint Nuhaik al-Asadiyah [20]. The Qur'an addressed women explicitly, and sections were named for women (The Women Chap. 4) which discussed a number of the marital problems and the role of women. Another chapter entitled Divorce (Chap. 65) discussed the divorce and completed what has been alluded to earlier in Chap. 2. The chapter entitled: Maryam (Mary, Chap. 19) narrated the story of Mary and the birth of Jesus (PBUH). Chapter 3, entitled The Family of Imran relates the circumstances connected with the mother of Mary (PBUH) who wished to have a boy to serve in the temple, but instead she delivered Mary and she gave her to the sanctuary. The wife of Zakariyah delivered Yahya after being barren, and her story is told in Chaps. 3 and 19. The story of the woman who argued with the Prophet (PBUH) was given in Chap. 58.

It is instructive to note that when God mentions an example of the best believers, He only mentions Mary and the wife of the aggressor tyrant Pharaoh who brought up Moses. According to Arabic tradition, Asia the daughter of Muzahim reared Moses, and believed in him as the Messenger of God. (See the Qur'an, Chap. 66).

Similarly, when God mentions the example of the unbelievers, He only mentioned two women who transgressed and refused the prophethood of their husbands; they were the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot, who perished with her people. (Q. Chap. 66). The sister of Abu Sufyan, the leader of Quraish, (Abu Lahab's wife) who threw stones and placed thorns on the route of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was mentioned in the Chap. III).

The Qur'an is replete with stories of believers and non-believer transgressors from both sexes. According to Karen Armstrong, the Qur'an quite frequently addressed women explicitly; something that rarely happens in either the Jewish or Christian Scriptures [21].

Qur'an abhorred fornication and adultery which was banned. Both the male and female who practiced this heinous act were to be punished by 100 lashes, if they

confess, without any duress, or, if the actual act is witnessed by four adult persons of integrity (which is almost impossible), as required by the Qur'an (Q. 24:2-5).

Likewise, prostitution is banned, and those who had slave girls and forced them into prostitution were required to stop the evil practice. In such cases the oppressed slave girls were to be exonerated from any blame as they were actually forced into the evil act while they had wanted to get out of it. God is all Merciful but harsh punishments await the doers of evil deeds unless they desist and stop forcing the poor slave girls into the dirty trade (Q. 34:33).

The Prophet restored the humanity of women and emancipated them at every level of social life. Emancipation of both male and female slaves was declared as a commendable act of piety and love of God, which He would reward in the Hereafter. The Qur'an encouraged freeing of the slave as acts of expiation when wrongs were committed unintentionally. Such acts included unintentional manslaughter or having sex with one's wife during the fasting.

#### Succession to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Appearance of Different Schools of Thought Among Muslims:

After the sudden death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 632 C.E., majority of Muslims in Medina chose Abu Bakr, Muhammad's close friend and his father-in-law, to be their leader; but some of the companions believed Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet should be his successor. However, Ali himself recognized Abu Bakr as the caliph. Similarly after the death of Abu Bakr (CE 634), 'Umar was nominated as the successor by Abu Bakr and the muslims approved and gave him allegiance. Ali also gave allegiance to 'Umar. When 'Umar was assassinated by Abu Lu'lua the Magian Persian slave in CE 644, he appointed a committee of six companions, including 'Uthman and Ali (both of whom had married the Prophet's daughters) among whom the next caliph was to be chosen. The majority chose 'Uthman, as he was of more lenient nature than Ali. 'Uthman was old when he became caliph, and after 6 years in power, he delegated many of his responsibilities to Marwan ibn al-Hakam (a young Umayyad), and appointed many of his relatives as rulers in different parts of the empire. Unfortunately, many of them were not as good as he wished. Uthman was slaughtered in a revolt, and Ali was chosen as caliph by the companions of the Prophet in Medina, but Mu'awia, the Umayyad governor of Syria refused to give allegiance on the pretext, that the mutineers who killed 'Uthman should first be brought to justice. He knew that Ali could not put a thorough investigation of the case, as the mutineers were multitudes from Iraq, Egypt and even some from around Medina. He had to establish his rule first. Mu'awia, who governed Syria from the time of 'Umar and under 'Uthman was powerful and used his resources to appease the soldiers and men of influence.

Imam Ali was assassinated by Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, an ultra fundamentalist (Kharijite) who refused any truce between the fighting parties.

Following 'Ali's assassination, his son Al Hasan was selected by the people as the successor of Ali, but his men were divided, and finally he agreed to relinquish the caliphate to Mu'awiya, on condition he should be openly acclaimed as the successor after Mu'awia. Mu'awia was a shrewd political leader who could rule a

vast empire, with good administration. Mu'awia was accused of poisoning Al Hassan through his wife Ja' da bint Al Asha' th Al Kindy [22–24].

Following the death of Al Hasan the way was cleared for Mu'awiya to appoint his son Yazid as the heir to the throne. Yazid was known for his love for good wine, concubines and music. When he came to power, the people of Iraq sent for Husayn ibn Ali, to offer their allegiance as the proper caliph [25].

Many of the companions e.g. Abdullah ibn Omar, Abdullah ibn Abbas warned him not to leave Makkah to Iraq as those who gave their allegiance in Iraq will betray him as they had betrayed his Father (Imam Ali) and his brother (Imam Hasan). Husayn thought his duty was to rise against the corrupt Yazid, especially that more than 100,000 gave him their allegiance.

By the time he went to Iraq, the mutiny was suppressed by U'bayd Allah ibn Ziyad, the new governor of Iraq, in the name of Yazid.

The hundreds of thousands who paid their allegiance to Husayn backed out. Husayn had already left Madina for Iraq. He and his small band of followers, including his family, were besieged and killed in Karbala, Iraq by the huge Umayyad army. Members of the family of the Prophet who survived the tragedy were taken as prisoners back to Damascus where Yazid was on the throne. The head of Husayn was taken to Yazid, where he poked the mouth, lips, eyes and nostrils with a rod in front of Zainab, Husayn's sister. And had it not been for Zainab, Yazid would have slaughtered the only remaining son of Husayn, Ali Zayn al-Abdin, who was ill at the time of the battle of Karbala.

This catastrophic blow to Muslims all over was manifested by the revolution of the people of Medina and Makkah against this brutal rule of Yazid. Yazid sent a strong army which included many mercenaries to crush the revolution. They did with the strongest possible force.

The brutal army finished the carnage and went to Makkah which was saved by the news of the sudden death of Yazid [25].

All the pious Muslims were against the rule of Yazid. Even the son of Yazid, Mu'awiya the second, who was appointed as the new caliph, refused the throne and declared that he could not condone the massacres or behavior of his father. He was poisoned by the Umayyad house soon after this incident [26].

The followers of Ali in Iraq, who betrayed his son Al Hasan and his other son al-Husayn, felt remorse up to this day and considered themselves, in a way the cause of the catastrophe of Karbala. They chain themselves and cut their bodies with knives and swords annually, on 10th of Muharam, the day on which al-Husayn was massacred.

Zaid, the grandson of al-Husayn was instigated by those Shi'ah of Iraq, in an exactly similar way to what happened to his grandfather. He was warned by Imam Jaffer al Sadiq (his nephew) not to be lured by them. He even told him that he himself refused their call for him to revolt against the Umayyad ruler (Hisham ibn AbdelMalik) as they are cowards and hypocrites who will fail him. More than 100,000 paid their allegiance, but before the battle started, they asked him about his opinion on Abu Bakr and U'mar. He praised them, and they took this opportunity to recline from fighting, as he refused to curse Abu Bakr and U'mar. He declared them

rafidah i.e. those who refused the true path. Only some three hundred remained with him and he was massacred with all his family and followers. His body was taken from the grave, crucified on a post in Basra, and then the body was thrown in the trash of al-Basra [26].

His followers are known as Zaydiyyah, and one of his descendants al-Hasan al-Utrush established a government and dynasty in Daylam, in Northern Iran near the Caspian Sea. Later another branch established long lasting Imamates in Yemen which remained for almost a thousand years (sometimes ruling only a small mountainous part of Yemen in Saada), and at times ruling the whole of Yemen up to Dofar, (now in Oman).

The Zaydi School, the first Shi'ah Sect, were moderate and never cursed the Sahaba (the companions of the Prophet [PBUH]) and accepted the traditions (hadiths) of the Prophet narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, etc. i.e. Sunnah people. In Fiqh (jurisprudence) they are similar to Sunni schools.

They were strictly Mu'tazilah who claimed to be Ahl al 'Adl waal-Tawhid i.e. the people of justice and monotheism. They defended the free will of men, so that God will judge them by their deeds. God is also very rational, and they refused predestination to emphasize God's essential Justice. They extolled Reason and were considered free thinkers. At the time of the Abbasid caliph alMa'mun, who encouraged philosophy, medicine, astrology and science by translating books from different languages (Greek, Latin, Syriac, etc.), the Mu'tazila became the doctrine of the caliphal state, and they tried to impose it on other Muslims.

The champion of the Sunnah, Ahmad ibn Hanbal refuted their doctrines about:

- (1) The Creation of the Qur'an: According to this doctrine, the Mu'tazilites claimed that there was no eternal word of God (Logos), and that all the revealed books were created by God in time and place, as the need arose. Hence, they were not eternal.
- (2) Predestination: According to this doctrine, the Mu'tazilites refused any hint to predestination. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, though not a strict believer of predestination (Jabriyah), claimed that Allah preordained things and nothing can happen without His permission or order.
- (3) Anthropomorphic Description of God: According to this doctrine, Ahmad ibn Hanbal accepted all the attributes of God that were mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith, as they are without any explanation. If God in the Qur'an is described as having a face, then God has a face, hands and feet and He sits on the throne. He "sees", "hears", "speaks" and we shall see Him in Paradise. There is no way except to take these descriptions literally, though he acknowledges fully that nothing is similar or comparable to Him. "There is nothing whatever like unto Him and He is the One that hears and sees (all things)" (Qur'an 42:11). The perception of God's uniqueness is beyond doubt, but what the Mu'tazila maintained is tantamount to saying that the concept of the transcendent God could never be seen in this world or the Hereafter.

Ibn Hanbal's followers maintained that reason was not an appropriate tool for exploring the unfathomable nature of God. They accused the Mu'tazilites of

draining God of all mystery, and making Him an abstract formula that has no deep religious value. Ibn Hanbal was stressing the essential ineffable God, which lay beyond reach of all logic and conceptual analysis.

- (4) Rationalistic Conception of God: According to the Mu'tazilite doctrine God became rational being not very different from a rational man, thus emptying God of His transcendence. The Mutazilis replied that such an attitude is almost blasphemous as God is depicted as a dictator, whose actions cannot be explained, and that He can be unjust. Their opponents retorted that if everything is His own and in His domain, whatever He does is wise and just though we may not be able to discern the wisdom behind such an act.

They cite misfortunes that befalls human beings, natural disasters, the evil and mischief that is abundant and all around. The innocent children could suffer from painful diseases, or put into hardships by becoming orphans, maimed by wars and explosive mines as happens in modern world. The evil and mischief is evident all through human history, and if that has been ordained by God, or at least by his permission, the Mu'tazili will say then that God is a tyrant despot and dictator. To them God cannot ordain or allow any evil. He gave human beings free will and reason to do whatever they want; accordingly, they will be judged by God in the hereafter.

The polemical arguments between the rationalists and traditionalist continue; to include accusation by the traditionalists that the Mu'tazilites were dualist (*Mathanawiya*) who believed in two Gods: one is the God of goodness and the other is the God of evil. Of course, the Mu'tazilis rejected these allegations. Perforce, the good and the bad, the Mu'tazilis say, are inherent in humans, but they have the divinely endowed reason and revelation to choose between the two, and be accordingly judged by God. Unfortunately, the Mu'tazilis in power used the caliph authority to torture the imam of the Sunna (traditionalists), Ahmad ibn Hanbal to accommodate their views, and that horrified the people by this unjust behavior. Since then the Mu'tazilis fell into disrepute. Later Ahmad ibn Hanbal was absolved by al-Mutawakkil, who apologized of what his predecessors had done to him, and took his side openly. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, however, refused the royal patronage and any monetary rewards from the caliph. Nevertheless, he kept his allegiance to the caliph since he believed that rebellion would bring more harm to Islam and to the people.

## **The Ithna 'Ashariyya—Twelvers—of Iraq**

The Shi'ites believed that the post of Imam (Khalifa) was too important to be left to the people to decide. As a matter of fact, they believed that God Himself appointed the Imam by commanding the Prophet to declare Ali to be his appointed heir. The process of designation was continued by Ali, who did the same and appointed al Hasan, his son, by the order of God. Similarly, al-Hasan appointed his brother

al-Husayn and al-Husayn appointed his son, Ali Zayn al-Abdin, who was followed by Muhammed al-Baqir, and then Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. According to them, Imam Ja'far established their *madhhab* and that is the reason they are called Ja'fariah or Imamiyah. Ja'far appointed his son Musa al-Kazim, followed by his son Ali al-Rida till the line reached the 12th Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi, who disappeared in a "tunnel" in Samarra in Iraq for over 1,100 years and will appear at the End of Time (like the Messiah of Jews, Christian's Jesus and Sunni Muslim's Mahdi and Jesus).

The Ja'fari (Imami or Twelver) Shi'ites use reason in their jurisprudence only, which is similar in a way to Sunni Schools (Qiyas: analogy).

The essential doctrine in their creed is the belief that God Himself has designated those purified twelve (Ali and his descendants from Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet). The Sunni Muslims believe that the Muslim Community should choose their leaders.

The Ja'fari (Imami or Twelver) believe that the Qur'an has both exoteric and esoteric dimensions which require allegorical or metaphorical interpretation of the (Qur'an) which is far from using reason. However, they agree and adopt part of the Mu'tazli theology, but they are not Mu'tazili. In fact, a number of their doctrines is far removed from Mu'tazili theology.

**The Kharijites:** This is the fraction that disagreed with Imam Ali during the battle of Siffin in 36 AH and rebelled against him and later assassinated him. The Kharijites constitute of the Arab tribes who rebelled against the caliphal authority. They fought the Umayyad dynasty with unprecedented bravery and caused, at least partly, its demise. As zealots, they did not hesitate to fight those who disagreed with them even for trivial things, and called their adversaries non-believers. They were divided among themselves under different leaders and were wiped out by the rulers who were threatened by their ferocious battles against corrupt rulers. Today, there remains only one moderate faction who are known as Ibadiyya and this faction which is indeed a minority can be found till this day in Oman, Tanzania, Algiers, and some in Tunis and Libya.

The Ibadiya are Mu'tazili in their creed. They maintain that the Imam is to be chosen by the highest group of their learned scholars, and then the public. This leader should be one of the best scholars, of perfect character, bravery and able to lead the congregations in prayers and to fight in the battles. From early times, they refused what the Sunni claimed that he should be of Quraish or even an Arab. Of course, they refuted bluntly the idea of the Imams designated by God as the Shi'ites believed. In their doctrine of leadership—they resemble the Zaydi school, except that the Zaydis believe that the Imam should be chosen from the descendants of al-Hasan or the descendants of al-Husayn. Few among the Zaydi School accept any qualified Muslim as their leader and Imam. They can dispose their ruler (Imam) if the council of Ulema (learned people) decided to topple him at anytime.

**The Isma'ili Shi'ite believe** like the Twelver faction that the Imams are appointed by God and that there are only seven instead of the twelve of the Imamiya faction. They put Isma'il instead of Musa al-Kazim, who they accuse of being corrupt, and that was the reason his father, Ja'far al-Sadiq replaced him with his brother Isma'il.



Isma'ili's are an esoteric group, with secret associations. The assassins of Syria and Iran were one of their blood thirsty, well-organized secretive societies. They differed greatly among themselves and had many factions, the most important of these are the Fatimids which founded a dynasty that started its rule from Maghreb-Tunis and settled in Egypt where it expanded to rule the whole of Syria, Hejaz (including Makkah and Medina) and Yemen. In Yemen, the Sulaiyhal-Yemeni dynasty ruled in the name of Fatimids. One of its rulers was Queen Arwa (Sayyida bint Ahmed) who was beautiful, very clever and wise. She ruled Yemen for 50 years (20 years during the period in which her husband al-Mukarram Ahmad, the ruler, was paralyzed and 30 years after his death). She established the Bohra Ismailis of India, and that is why they pay her allegiance, and come to Yemen annually to visit her tomb, and her palace in Gibla in Yemen.

There are other offshoots of Ismali faith e.g. Druze, Nuseriya (Alawiyyin). They are mainly found in the mountainous areas of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey. They themselves claim they are not Muslims and certainly they are far from Islam.

Another Isma'ili sect which completely vanished were the Qarmatians, because of their extremism, vandalism and obscenity. They were courageous and caused havoc in Iraq and even invaded Makkah, killed the Pilgrims, and took the Black Stone from the most sacred mosque in Makkah to their home in al-Ahsa (the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia of today) for 23 years. They allowed incest and shared among themselves the bounties, money, women, drinking alcohol, and allowed every type of vice that could be imagined. Fortunately, they were wiped out and annihilated by the Fatimids, and in Yemen by many factions.

The assassins were exterminated by Salahuddin two centuries later, and finally the Mongols who invaded Persia and Iraq in the thirteenth century under the leadership of Hulaku, exterminated many in Alamut Castle in North Iran near the Caspian Sea.

The Ismailis of today are the AghaKhani's of India, the Bohra of India (both are found in many other places), the Ismailis of Nejran (Saudi Arabia) and Northern Yemen. The Ismailis believe in the esoteric dimension of religion, and claim to possess a different esoteric explanation of the Qur'an. The Imami Shia also believe in the esoteric dimension of the Qur'an; but the Ismailis have surpassed any imagined limit in the interpretation of Islamic revelation. Isma'ili thinkers use Greek philosophy, ancient Zoroastrian myths of Iran and neo-platonism to formulate their religious myth. Thus for instance, they speculated about the Prophet and the Imams based on Al-Farabi's theory of emanation and regarded them as the "souls" of this celestial scheme. In the highest Prophetic sphere of the first heaven was the Prophet. In the second heaven was Ali, and each of the seven Imams presided over the succeeding spheres in due order. The last sphere is for Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet who was married to Ali, and who was the mother of Hasan and Husayn. She was, according to this scheme of emanation, therefore, the Mother of Islam and corresponds with Sophia, the divine wisdom. There were a number of Ismali thinkers including Abu Ya'qub al Sijistani (from Afghanistan), Hamid al-Din Kirmani (Iran) and Ikhwan al-Safa, the Brethren of Purity. The latter was a group of an esoteric society that rose in Basra, and had authored a number of

epistles which included mathematics, science, philosophy and Isma'ili esoteric faith. However, the sect, unlike the Twelver Shi'ites of Iran has little influence in politics of our world of today,

Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'ah, (the People of Tradition and Community) the Sunni Muslims:

They are the largest sect of Muslims and compose at least 80 % of all world Muslim population. They maintain the Five Pillars of Islam as follows:

- (1) Shahada: This is the foundation of the Muslim faith. It is bearing testimony that "There is no deity except God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
- (2) Salat: Five religiously prescribed daily prayers.
- (3) Zakat: Alms-levy to support the poor and needy.
- (4) Sawm fasting from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan, the 9th lunar month of the (Hijra Calendar).
- (5) (Hajj/pilgrimage to Makkah) at least once in a life-time if one can afford.

The Sunni Muslims also believe in the six fundamental beliefs of the creed:

- (1) Belief in One God, as the only God and Creator of all creatures, and believing in the ninety-nine attributes of God.
- (2) Belief in all the prophets (124,000), as mentioned in Hadith of the Prophet, and apostles of God (more than 300), though we may not know their names and locations.
- (3) Belief in all the Scriptures—(the scriptures revealed to the prophets of God). Muslims believe that the scrolls were given to Ibrahim (Abraham), the Torah to Moses, the Gospel to Jesus, the Psalms to David and the Qur'an revealed to Muhammad. Muslim believe these scriptures to be the word of God (before distortions).
- (4) Belief in the Angels of God who were created from light (nur). They always obey God by their nature and hence always do good. Muslims know about the high ranking angels who have been mentioned in the Islamic tradition. Hence, Gabriel is the angel who brought revelation to Muhammad, Mikhael is the Angel of Mercy (Rain), Israfil blows the horn the Angel of Death (Izrail) and Munkar and Nakir, the two angels who are responsible for questioning people when they are lowered in their graves at the burial.
- (5) Belief in the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter. Muslims believe that God will resurrect every dead body with new properties suitable for eternal life, who will be judged for their deeds while living on earth. The good people among them will be rewarded with life in Paradise; and those who did evil on earth shall be punished in the Hellfire. However, Muslim wrong doers will not be forever in Hell. Once they are purified they are taken to paradise.
- (6) Belief in Destiny ordained by God. Everything that befalls us or any creature of God, is predestined and ordained by God, long before He created all creatures. The question of preordained destiny will be taken up again in this study as it is one of the divine mysteries that has divided opinions among Muslim sects. The Sunni also believe in the Pillar of Ihsan (Doing the best).

This pillar teaches that you worship God as if you see Him all the time. If you cannot see Him, then you are certain that He watches you all the time. This stage is only reached by few who constantly seek God, and feel God's presence in their life. They almost do no sin or evil, and if they do so they immediately repent and reach out to God.

This high stage is alluded to in a sacred tradition which is inspired by God but it is not verbatim from God as is the Qur'an): "*My servant draws near to me by means of nothing dearer to me than that which I have established as a duty to him. And my servant continues drawing nearer to me through supererogatory acts until I love him: and when I love him, I become his ear through which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps and his foot whereon he walks*" (narrated by al-Bukhari and others).

The transcendent God also has an immanent presence in a way. The aforementioned tradition indicates that a purified person becomes a saint whose actions and desires are in conformity with what God has prescribed in the Qur'an and the tradition. Hence, it is accurate to say that there is no belief in immanentism in Islam which maintains that God exists in and extends into all parts of the created universe, including the individual. Those who believed thus were considered heretics.

The Qur'an, the word of God, represents the presence of God in the midst of all Muslims, and each one of them has access to the Qur'an and can recite, this eternal word of God. By doing so, each Muslim can connect with God directly, especially during prayers (salat).

Majority of the Muslims, which includes Kharijites, Za'hirites and Zaydis believe what the Sunnis believe, with differences in interpretation. The Imami Shi'ites believe in some pillars of Islam, Iman and Ihsan, with differences in their interpretation, naming, and additional conditions such as witnessing Ali ibn Abi Talib as Wali (true adherent to Allah) and the true heir of the Prophet Muhammad.

All the Muslims agree that caliphate (Imamate) is not a political affair; rather, it is part of religion. The Shi'ite, as we mentioned earlier, believe that the Imams are appointed by God through the Prophet, who declared Ali, as the Imam. In contrast, the Sunnis believe that the matter of caliphate was left to the community leaders to choose the proper caliph through the process of "shura" consultation. They also maintain that he should be from Quraysh, the tribe to which the Prophet belonged, and that he should be a man of integrity and rectitude. Once he is recognized as a caliph he cannot be overthrown unless he is accused of blasphemy, apostasy, of being completely incapacitated by illness, blindness or mental disease. In other words, the Sunnis are against revolutions, since it leads to more bloodshed and worse tyranny. They yielded to the tyrant rulers, and avoided more harm, and bloodshed. However, if a revolutionary movement could succeed in overthrowing the ruling power, then they supported it by giving their allegiance.

#### The Origins of the Belief in Predestination (*al-qadar*) Among Muslims

To be sure, the Qur'an and the the Sunna provide a complex doctrine of God's omnipotence and omniscience, which led to support the notion of predestination.

There are a number of the verses in the Qur'an which appear to support such a belief:

The command of God is a destiny decreed. (Q. 33:38).

Indeed all things We created with predestination. (Q. 54:49).

In a tradition quoted on the authority of the Prophet he said, "You should believe in predestination, its good or bad, as ordained by God" (Sahihal-Bukhari, Kitab al-Iman; Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Iman).

But there are other verses that emphasize the human responsibility:

Consider the human self, and how it is formed, and how it is imbued with its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who buries it in corruption and darkness (Q. 91:7-10).

Verily God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves (Q. 13:11).

Every soul will be held responsible for what it had done (Q. 74:38).

The first people who used predestination as an excuse for their sins of blasphemy and worshipping idols with God were the unbelievers in Makkah who made excuses for their disbelief by saying:

If God had willed, we would not have associated with him any deity, we or our fathers. So did those before them until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Do you have any knowledge that you can produce (that supports your allegation)? You follow but conjectures and you only guess and lie. (Q. 6:148).

God condemned their attitude of arguing and making excuses for themselves to worship deities other than God. The hypocrites of Medina also argued with the Prophet about predestination, and found excuses for their behavior by saying that they should not try to do the good, since God had already willed for them to be wretched. On one occasion during the caliphate of Ali, he was asked about predestination by an old man. To this he responded: "God gave His orders to do the good and shun evil, but never enforced us to do it. We have a choice. However, God certainly knows what we are going to choose". This is the doctrine of divine omniscience.

Historically, the Umayyad dynasty encouraged the doctrine of predestination, and justified their rule by claiming that God had already given them the power to rule, even if they were transgressors. Moreover, they taught that resisting the authority of the ruler was like resisting the authority of God. This sect was known as al-Jabriyah, who claimed that man has no choice, and God has already forced him to do whatever he is doing. Even if they commit crimes, it is not their fault, since they are simply performing what God has preordained. This group almost disappeared after the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty.

Another group known as al-Murji'ah, claimed that once you declare the belief in God and the prophethood of Muhammad then whatever bad deeds you do will not affect you. They were also supported by the majority of Umayyads rulers who

indulged in sins and tyranny, but continued to testify their faith by tongue. This group also didn't persist for long after the collapse of Umayyad rule. The critics of the Umayyad establishment stressed free will and moral responsibility.

**Truth of the Matter Regarding the Doctrine of Predestination:** It is clear from reading the Qur'an that there are a number of verses that could be interpreted as supporting predestination and others that could be cited in support of free choice. Thus, for instance, the following passage:

If good comes to them, they say: "This is from God"; and if evil befalls them they say: "This is from you." Say: "All (things) are from God." So what is (the matter) with these people that they can hardly understand any statement? What comes to you of good is from God, but what comes to you of evil is from yourself. (Q. 5:7879)

This verse has been explained in the commentary by Ibn Kathir [27]: "The hypocrites of Medina say when they get good things it is from God, but when bad things or mishaps befall them, they say: it is because of you, O Muhammad, as we have left our old religion and followed you. This is similar to what Pharaoh and his people said to Moses. God denied their false allegations and said "Everything that befalls you from mishaps and natural disasters is from God, as it is ordained to be a test for you in this life. Hardships, misfortunes and natural disasters befall all humans, good and bad, believers and non believers; and it is only a test for their patience and faith. Then God explained that what befalls you of good fortune is by the Grace of God, but whatever befalls you of hardships is because of your misdeeds and corruption on earth. But God forgives a lot".

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib explained the doctrine to the old man that predestination signifies the full knowledge of God of whatever we are going to do. But it does not mean that God forced us to do good or bad.

According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, [28] and a number of other Muslim thinkers destiny of God could be divided into two main parts: (1) Cosmic part which is related to the laws of nature in the whole cosmos including of course the earth and human beings. This constitutes the laws of nature, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, storms, dry seasons, etc. For human beings, it constitutes all those matters related to our parents, nation, language, the era we are born or our genetic make-up, our ailments or the society we were brought up in.

It is the old recurrent question of nature and nurture and philosophy of determinism appears in different guises e.g. the determinism of Marx which is dependent on the tools of production, economic issues, or the determinism of the genetics, that we are fashioned according to our genes, and our choices and character depend wholly on hidden influences of the genetic make up. Some even claim "we are what we eat" and find excuses that determine our behavior or inclinations on this genetic make-up, or "the effect of that type of food". Ibn al-Qayyim agrees that we cannot control natural causes which, he says are ordained by God in His omnipotence and omniscience and His sublime wisdom. (2) The injunctions of Shari'ah, which God has ordained through the prophets and the scriptures. For that He gave human beings the choice of obeying or disobeying, believing or refusing to believe; doing good or spreading evil and mischief on earth. God says in the Qur'an:

And say: The truth (has now come) from your Lord. Let then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills reject it. (Q.18:29).

There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. (Q. 2:256).

Are you going to compel people to be believers. (Q.10:99)

It is evident that the people have free will to accept Islamic faith and revelation or refuse it. There is no compulsion in acceptance of religion. In other words, all the commands of God regarding faith and Shari'ah are not to be enforced on human being, as they have free will. But God will judge them for what they do whether bad or good on the Day of Judgment. Accordingly, there is no compulsion or predestination as regards choosing the right or wrong, the true religion or the false deities, doing good or doing evil. Human being is entrusted with reason that can guide him to the true path.

Though there is a wide range of things that has been predetermined for man e.g. his color, his faculties, his misfortunes, ailments, natural disasters, his genes, the era or the nation that he is born, or the society in which he lives, or the language he has grown up with (mother tongue); nevertheless there is still free choice of man to hold him responsible for his deeds. If that free will is abolished or curtailed for any reason, then that responsibility is lifted, even by law and definitely in the Day of Judgment, for God is oft forgiving and just.

Imam Nawawi, a famous Muslim traditionist, in his commentary on the tradition reported in Sahih Muslim [21, 29] explains: "The predestination (*al-'qada' wa al-qadar*) does not mean that God forces man to do good or bad, and takes away his ability to choose. It simply means that God with His omniscience and previous knowledge knows exactly what he (a man) will do; and whether he will believe or not, or, will do good or evil, and what will be their choices and preferences. He exactly knows what is going to happen. But that does not mean that He compels him to take such a path. Moreover, and He never ordained that he will go astray and pay no heed to the revelation, and do all the evil deeds. Certainly Allah ordered them through His Apostle to believe, do good and spread peace, and give charity and help the needy and so forth, but He gave him the choice to accept or reject the true path, to do the good or enmesh himself in carnal egotistic desires and actions and spread evil and mischief on earth. The Day of Judgment will come when he will pay for all his arrogance and mischief".

## Predestination and Science

We suggest a new approach to the question of predestination, using the findings of physiology of the nervous system (NS), which illustrates the integration of the autonomic NS with the central NS. The autonomous nervous system [30] is a system that controls the involuntary part of our bodies. It is a part of the peripheral NS and

runs along with these nerves, but relays signals in different ganglia (stations). It is divided into Sympathetic System thoracolumbar division which originates from thoracic and lumbar spinal cord, travels along with different nerves and relays the signals in separate ganglia. The medulla of the suprarenal gland is an important part of the Sympathetic NS. It affects the circulatory system (heart and blood vessels) whereby it can raise the blood pressure or increase the heart beats according to any situation that requires more pumping of the heart as in fight-flight situations. If there is a need for fight-flight, then all the blood in the reservoirs (liver, spleen, muscles) is pumped to the circulation, the blood pressure increases and the heart rate quickens, and becomes very fast. The muscles get more nourishment; the stored sugar (glycogen) is immediately released from the muscles and the liver. The suprarenal gland increases its output of epinephrine (adrenaline) and nor epinephrine (nor adrenaline), which also increase the blood pressure, and cause tachycardia (fast heart beats) and the pupils widen, the muscles stiffen (contracts) thereby ready for the fight-flight. These muscles are voluntary striated muscles nourished by different nerves to do their job, but they are affected by the sympathetic NS.

The non-voluntary muscles of the gastrointestinal tract and urinary tract get less blood and nourishment in such a situation. The profuse secretion of epinephrine-nor epinephrine also affects the emotional state of the person and affect a separate system in the brain called the limbic system and certain nuclei in the brain which play a role in the psychological and emotional state of the person.

All the internal organs and viscera are not controlled by the volition. The heart and circulatory system are controlled by multitudes of hormones, nerves (sympathetic and Para sympathetic), a lot of reflexes, and by an innate system in the heart muscle itself with a special conductive system with pacemaker tissue starting from a node in the atrium (SA node) down to the node at the junction of the atria and ventricles (A-V node), and then a system of fibers through both ventricles. The heart will continue to beat even if all the nerves to it are sectioned. Even if the heart is cut into pieces, the pieces will continue to beat (idioventricular rhythm) [31].

The work of the heart is outside the domain of volition. Similarly the respiratory system is not affected by volition except for moments when a person holds his breath intentionally, but is forced by the rise of CO<sub>2</sub> in his blood sensed by centers in the brain (medulla), to go on breathing.

The gastrointestinal system is out of control except at the beginning when a person starts to drink or eat, but once the bolus of food or drink pass in the gullet (esophagus), then everything goes under the control of the involuntary autonomic nervous system. At the end when the person wants to excrete the refuse i.e. defecate, the voluntary system is called upon and the sphincters will not allow defecation unless the place is appropriate for this act. Similarly the urinary tract is completely involuntary except at the time of voiding urine, when the sphincters in the neck of the bladder control this act. However, if the pressure is increased in the urinary bladder, the person will urinate anywhere. In short, almost all the systems of the body are controlled by involuntary mechanisms. Volition only comes in a small percentage of the body activities.

The nervous and the skeletal muscular systems are partly under control of volition. The decision to raise my hand or write a paragraph or run, comes from the higher centers of the brain in the frontal lobe. The order is relayed to a motor area of the brain (precentral gyrus) down to the specified nerve centers in the spinal cord, through specific tracts, and from thence to the appropriate muscles to contract, and the antagonistic muscles to relax. At the same time, the basal ganglia (in the brain) and the cerebellum make these movements smooth and not overshooting. There is a synergy between many systems just to raise one finger or pronounce one word, in which the voluntary and involuntary systems of the body cooperate.

This knowledge offered, by the Science of Physiology, gives an idea of how things are complicated even in simple tasks of volition. The involuntary or predestined part of our bodies and life is huge, and we will not be held responsible for things which are outside the domain of our volition and control. God will judge us only on the part over which we have control and volition. The responsibilities among persons also differ, according to their abilities, intelligence, wealth, power, health and so forth. Those endowed with higher abilities, power, wealth and so on, will definitely be held more responsible, than the poor, ignorant powerless person. All, however, will have their just share of responsibility on the Day of Judgment.

## The Attributes of God

Muslim theology takes up the question about God's attributes (sifat and names). These are God's beautiful names that describe God's essence and His actions. Hence, the doctrine that states God's uniqueness simply asserts that there is nothing that could be compared to Him is His essential uniqueness (tawhid). God is the ultimate unique reality:

Say: He is the One God; God, the Eternal Refuge; He beget not, and neither is begotten; And there is nothing that can be compared to him (Q.112:1-3)

There is no deity but God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who alone can save man and send him spiritual and physical sustenance that he needs. Allahu Akbar (God is Supreme) is the call of the minaret, which is repeated five times daily, distinguishes between God and anything else. He is the Real Existence, while all the other creatures are ephemeral even if they last for thousands and thousands of years, as they will vanish one day. Their existence depends on His will, and they are always in need of Him, the *Samad* (the Eternal Refuge).

The name Allah is the essence of all the names and attributes:

All that lives on earth or heaven is bound to pass away; but forever will abide your Sustainer's self, full of majesty and glory (Q. 55:26-27)

The world only exists because He is al-Ghani (rich and infinite); He is the giver of life (al-Muhyi), the Knower of all things (al-'Alim), the Producer of Speech (al-Mutakallim). Without these attributes there would not be life, knowledge or speech.



It is an affirmation that only God has true existence and positive value...The God worshipped by Muslims cannot be contained by human categories and refuses simplistic definition. Allah is the only true reality, beauty or perfection [32].

The assertion of the unity of God was not simply a denial that other deities were not worthy of worship. To say that God is One, is not just a mere numerical definition: it is a call to make that unity the driving factor of one's life and society [33].

One of names of God in the Qur'an is al-Nur (The Light). In the famous Light verse of the Qur'an (Q. 24:35), God is described as the source of all knowledge as well as the means whereby humans catch a simple glimpse of transcendence:

God is the light of the heavens and earth. The parable of His light, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is enclosed in glass, the glass shining like a radiant star; a lamp lit from a blessed tree-an olive tree that is neither of the East nor of the West-the oil whereof (is so bright that it) would well-nigh give light (of itself), even though fire had not touched it; light upon light. (Q. 24:35).

The participle "as it were (*ka* in Arabic)" is a reminder of the essentially symbolic nature of the Qur'anic discourse about God. Therefore, the Light is not God himself, but refers to the enlightenment which He bestows on a particular revelation (the Lamp) which shines in the heart of an individual (the Niche). The light itself cannot be identified wholly with any one of its bearers, but is common to them all. As Muslim commentators (especially al-Ghazali) pointed out, light is a particularly good symbol for the divine Reality, which transcends time and space. The image of the olive tree in this verse was interpreted as allusion to the continuity of revelation, which springs from the "root" and branches into multifarious variety of religious experience that cannot be identified with or confused by any one particular tradition or locality; it is neither of the East nor the West [34].

Some of the attributes describe the essence of God (*al-dhat*). For instance, Power, Knowledge, Will, Hearing, Sight and Speech were attributed to God in the Qur'an. However, they were distinct from God's unknowable essence, which always would elude simplistic understanding [35]. The Qur'an is the eternal word of God. The Mu'tazilite theologians alleged that Qur'an is not eternal but was created by God, like any of His creatures. This is one of the items where Mu'tazili differed greatly from other Sunni theologians. For example, al Karabasi [36] a later Mu'tazili declared that the written and spoken Arabic of the Qur'an was uncreated in so far as it partook of God's eternal speech, but once it is written or recited by humans, their action and doing so is definitely created, as humans are but the creatures of God. This notion is agreed upon by a number of Sunni theologians like Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari (260–330) and Abu Mansur Al Maturidi (d 337), and even Ahmed ibn Hanbal said it at one stage, but later refused to say anything except that the Qur'an is the actual word of God [37]. Some of his followers, later on, claimed that even the recitation or the written Qur'an is the eternal word of God. It seems more of a bickering, for all the Sunni, and most of other sects apart from Mu'tazilis, agree that the Qur'an is the pristine eternal word of God. The actual writing or reciting by humans is an act done by mortals and creatures of God and hence, their act is perforce created. God said in the Qur'an:

But there comes not to them a newly revealed message from (God) Most Gracious, but they turn away therefrom (Q. 26:5).

The word “anew” (muhdath in Arabic) denotes to some that it is not the everlasting old eternal word of God. In fact, the Mu’tazilis were responding to polemics of Christians (Yuhanna Al Dimshqi/Jonathan of Damascus) who argued that the Qur’an said that Jesus is the Word of God, and the Muslims say that the Qur’an is the eternal word of God and is an attribute of His essence. Similarly, Jesus is the word of God and is an attribute of His essence. That type of argument led the Mu’tazilis to claim that the Qur’an is a creation of God, and not an attribute of His essence.

The Mu’tazila also refused the separation of the 99 attributes (names) of God into attributes of essence, and attributes of property or character (al-Sifat). They claim this paves the way to claiming many forms for God, that will end to what the Christians or other idol worshippers say. According to Abdulaiz Sachedina’s extrapolation [38], the Mu’tazili doctrine of the “created Qur’an” signified the historical Qur’an which only reflects the historical circumstances of the original divine command, and should be, therefore, interpreted in lieu of the cultural and historical environment at the time of revelation. “Quantitative and Qualitative changes in the modern Muslim world have raised questions about the relevance of traditional readings of the revelation to contemporary ethical and social exigencies”.

He is not alone in this assertion. Some of the liberal modern secular Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Abid Al Jabri of Morocco, who wrote a book expounding this theory, also maintains a similar interpretation. “Fahm Al-Qur’an Al-Hakim”. Another scholar who is a Syrian architect by profession, Muhammad Shahrur in his book, “The Book and the Qur’an...A Contemporary Reading” written in Arabic: “Al Kitab wal Qur’an...Kira’a Mu’asera”.\* Both of them tried to put the Qur’an in historical perspective and hence tried to remove the sanctity of the Qur’an, despite their effort not to expose these new allegations about the Qur’an and cover them with some praise, here and there. There are others like Mohammed Arkoon, Nasr Abu Zaid, Garoudi, Hassan Hanafi, and others who maintain similar doctrine, have played minimal role in influencing a small minority of Arab intellectuals [39].

Most Sunni, Zaidi, and the Imami Twelver Shia scholars bluntly refuse such allegations, and consider such ideas, as being instilled by Western secularism, who want to put the Qur’an in par with their altered adulterated scripture, which, according to their historians and even some theologians, were written by a multitude of writers in difficult times [40–43].

## Objective Good and Evil

The Mu’tazilis and other Sunni scholars, with the exception of al-Ash’ari, believe that there is rational good and rational evil, discerned by divinely endowed intuition and reason. Ibn Taymiya and his disciple Ibn al-Qayyim also upheld

rational good and evil. Lying, breaking promises, stealing, arrogance, injustice are all evils or bad things that every normal person can discern. Similarly doing well, saving an innocent life, charity, justice, veracity, keeping promises and truthfulness are all good things commended by intuition and reason. Al-Asha'ri, however, claims that what some people consider good, others will consider bad or evil, under the influence of one's culture, education, tribe, or nation and the time. Human beings change their attitudes towards things from time to time and from one place to another. Sexual relations outside wedlock, were considered bad and evil. Nowadays they are the norm. Homosexuality, lesbianism, same sex marriage are nowadays normal behavior in many cultures, whereas they are still taboo in other cultures. Usury was considered a dreadful thing in all revealed religions but in modern times, it became the bedrock of modern economics and banking and so forth. Al-Asha'ri claims that it is only through revelation that we can discern the bad from the good, the wrong from the right; otherwise humans will differ.

Al-Maturidi (another Sunni leader) said that things are divided into three categories: (1) Things that the human intellect (reason) can discern that they are good; (2) things that human reason can know they are wrong; and, (3) things which are not clear or things about which people will change their opinion, sometimes accepting them as good and at times refusing them as bad. In other words, divine revelation guides humanity about such matters. However, we surely need clarification for the doubtful things, or things about which humans differ among themselves. In the final analysis, it is only the revelation that can guide humanity with correct answer.

## **The Position of a Sinner**

Muslims are advised to repent for the sins they commit, as soon as possible. Indeed, in Islam humans should avoid committing sins because intention to do so is considered another sin. It is God alone who forgives, and expiates sins and misdeeds. If repentance is sincere God may show how some sins lead to positive impact of maturing spiritually. But what if a Muslim continues to sin without repentance until he dies? Muslim scholars differ among themselves, depending on the school of thought they represent. For example, the Kharjites maintain that a sinner will go to Hell and will never get into Paradise, even if the sin is not a major sin The Sunni-Mu'tazilis maintain that if a person has committed a major sin, then his abode will be Hellfire for ever. On the other hand, other Sunni thinkers maintain that if the sinner is a believer of Islam and God, then his condition will be judged by God. He may pardon him or punish him, but he will not be in Hellfire forever. He will after sometime of chastisement, be brought out of Hell, and will be sent to paradise. The Prophet Muhammad or other good people of the sinner's family or friends may intercede and God will accept this intercession.

## The Position of Philosophy in Islam

Although Mu'tazilite thinkers emphasized rationality and intellectualism in knowing religious teachings and developing strong belief through rational argument, overall, Muslim scholars looked upon the field of philosophy as outside the orbit of Islamic teachings. They were critical of philosophical speculation about God's existence and other metaphysical issues. Nevertheless, Muslim jurists endorsed natural and mathematical sciences, more particularly, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, which were all branches of philosophical studies. Muslim traditionalists were suspicious of the philosophical claims of superiority in reaching the metaphysical and moral truth. They did not accept those philosophers who declared that matter was eternal, and will not be destroyed, and that God does not know the details of things that happen on earth as He is transcendental and above all creatures. Some philosophers did not believe in body resurrection, and maintained that all the rewards and punishments are spiritual only. However, a number of Muslim philosophers rejected such ideas and theories, and, hence, were accepted by the traditionalist scholars. Al-Ghazali was well known for his criticism of philosophers and he wrote a critical work demolishing philosophers' metaphysical claims in his book entitled: "The Incoherence of Philosophers".

Ibn Rushd of Cordova who came almost a century after Ghazali responded to Ghazali's "incoherence" by composing a refutation entitled: "The Incoherence of the Incoherence" Ibn Rushd was a grand jurist, a physician and a philosopher. He supported the philosophy of Aristotle and wrote a book to explain it and make it more acceptable to religious people. The book was translated into Hebrew and Latin and was adopted by the Church. Thomas Aquinas supported the explanation of Ibn Rushd (Averros) and Aristotle's ideas became part of the Christian dogma about the world. However the Muslim religious scholars didn't accept Aristotle's philosophy even after being Islamicized by Ibn Rushd.

### Mysticism (Tasawwuf)

When luxury invaded the Muslim communities, many devout Muslims became ascetics, refused to indulge in these indulgences and love for Dunya (this life). They preferred the Hereafter and strived hard to curb the lust for fortune, property and profanity. They were respected most of the time, and tried hard to purify themselves first, and then spread their teachings to others, using the Qur'an, the Hadith of the Prophet, and his exemplary character and Sahaba (companions of the Prophet [PBUH]). They had a great success in the masses, and sometimes a wonderful success with the elite and even some of the despotic rulers, cried in repentance. There were stories of some who gave all their wealth to the poor and needy and became themselves ascetics. The Philosophical part of the Mysticism appeared later and was limited to few, but they were definitely antagonized by the religious scholars. However, many of the Sufis were religious scholars themselves and that explains their acceptance all over the Islamic world.

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