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Muslim Theodicy as Reflected in Turkish Media Reactions to the 1999 Earthquake

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> The Reality!
> What is the Reality?
> Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Reality is! (Qur'an 59:1-3)![1]

Introduction

It is not known how many lives were claimed by the earthquake that shook the Aegean coast of Turkey on 17 August 1999. The official count is between fifteen to twenty thousand, but the media and other "unofficial" sources rarely place the number below forty thousand. This lack of uncertainty about the numbers indicates the magnitude of confusion, suspicion, and (mis)information that resulted in the wake of the disaster and engulfed the Turkish state, media, and society alike. One of the most persistent voices raised in this chaos has been that of the Turkish Islamically-motivated media, whose reaction to the catastrophe will be analyzed here.

As Ormsby remarks, "[T]heodicy denotes the attempt to demonstrate that the divine justice remains uncompromised by the manifold evils of existence" and "to render an intelligible account of existence."[2] How does a world religion deal with the evils and

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[1]The Qur'anic citations in this paper are from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: an Explanatory Translation* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992), a reference consisting of the *suret* number followed, after a separating colon, by the *ayet* number.

[2]Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamtc Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3, 10.

calamities—natural or others—that befall its communities? How does it contextualize and justify them, and what remedies does it offer? These are the overarching questions examined in this paper. Since such an analysis of theological stances has to be situated in a context of time and place, the paper will also discuss certain basic facts about the sociopolitical position of Islam in Turkey, which will, in turn, enhance our understanding of the particular Islamic response under examination. The first section of the paper will take a brief look at the history of secularization and secularism[3] in Turkey.

My main source for this study was newspapers articles. I have analyzed articles that appeared in four Turkish daily newspapers over the course of the thirty days following the earthquake. The newspapers are *Yeni Şafak,* a conservative paper with Islamic tendencies, *Milli Gazete* and *Akit,* the two most outspoken Islam-motivated papers in Turkey, and *Cumhuriyet,* a long-established socialist paper from which I have compiled responses to the Islamic media.[4] The theological position of the Islamic media will be corroborated by mapping out the Qur'anic matrix for their claims and contextualized by stating the reaction it has drawn from *Cumhuriyet*. This will help to confirm the uneasy love-hate relationship of Turkey and Islam that is already evident from the Islamic media's approach regarding the earthquake.

Constraints of space prevent us from reproducing the formidable array of *hadis* and secondary literature quoted by the

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[3]As Berkes has maintained, secularism in the form of a specific doctrine is interrelated, but not identical, with secularization as a process involving doctrines, but also 'outside' factors such as technological development. See Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

[4]The notation system used to identify the newspaper articles is as follows: The names of the newspapers are abbreviated to their first letter; thus, *Yeni Şafak* is "y," *Milli Gazete* is "m," *Akit* is "a," and *Cumhuriyet* is "c." This letter is followed by the day of appearance, itself followed by the month—August or September—respectively abbreviated to an "a" or "s." Thus, an article that has appeared in *Akit* on the 22nd of August would be denoted by 'a22a," articles in *Akit* on the 22nd and 23rd of August would be "a22/23a," and articles in *Akit* on the 22nd of August and the 13th of September would be "a22a, a13s." Turkish spelling will be used to transliterate non-Turkish Islamic terminology, with the exception of the word "Qur'an."

Islamic newspapers in support of their case. For the same reasons, we will not engage in extended discussions of complex classical Islamic theodicy, though I will briefly refer, in various footnotes, to basic similarities and differences between contemporary and classical Muslim theological approaches. The paper will, however, make frequent references to the Qur'an since "any consideration of the Islamic understanding of suffering must begin with a study of the Qur'an,"[5] "to which all Islamic discourse must ultimately relate itself, even if also appealing to other sources."[6] The Qur'anic parallels will suffice to establish that the newspapers' interpretation of the catastrophe constitutes, if not the only possible Muslim reaction, then still a canonically justified Islamic response. This is the case in spite of all accusations of ideological abuse of religion and bigoted extremism leveled at these papers by the general consensus of military, government, and mass media in Turkey.

This crass opposition, especially evident in the reaction of *Cumhuriyet,* reveals the depth of the rift between the Qur'an and the general Islamic populace of Turkey. The Qur'an presents statements, propositions, and systems of thought which, judging by voting patterns and the orientation of popular mass media, are seen as alien, outdated, or undesirable by a great majority of the Turkish people.

The question of the extent to which a religious population that consciously distances itself from its revelatory source can still be classified as belonging to that religion—or inversely, the extent to which a religion can change along with its constituency while still remaining the "same religion"—falls outside the scope of the present investigation. Still, it is doubtlessly this supposed "religious decay" that has shaped the—sometimes extreme—harshness of the Islamic newspapers' explanation of the earthquake. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent, in an Islamic society that is less polarized around issues of religion and secularity, the theological response to a natural disaster might be different, if not regarding doctrinal content,

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[5]John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 99.

[6]David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), vii.

then at least in the emphasis laid on the various canonically possible explanations.

Secularization, Secularism, and the Turkish Republic

The growth of the roots of secularism in Turkey runs parallel to the spread of nationalistic ideas during the nineteenth century. The aim of secularism was to abolish the traditional *millet* barriers of segregated religious communities and create a nation or people unified by *Osmanlılık* (Ottomanism), implying "equal citizenship regardless of religious affiliation. Article 8 of the 1876 constitution stipulated that all subjects of the state be called *Osmanlı*s."[7] While the *millets* were never completely abolished, Davison maintains that "the nineteenth century reforms—whether in administration, in education, or in law—established a process of increasing secularisation of ideas and institutions" based on a Western model. "The Ottoman Empire never became a secular state, but throughout the reform period [1826-1878] it was a secularising state."[8]

The Turkish Republic, the first state based upon the principle of popular sovereignty established in any Islamic country,[9] was constituted on 29 October 1923 under the presidentship of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the Republic's 1924 constitution stated that "[T]he people of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards citizenship."[10] The following years saw many radical reforms. For instance, all differences in the status of citizens according to religion were abolished, as were religious education in public schools (re-introduced in 1948) and mystical orders, and Islam ceased to be the religion of the state.

Thus, "among the Muslim countries it was in Turkey that, prior to World War II, a secular concept of state, religion, law, education,

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[7]Roderic Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), 246.
[8]Ibid., 258.
[9]Berkes, 481.
[10]Quoted in Davison, 247.

and economy was first promoted, and a definite doctrine of secularism implemented as political, constitutional, educational, and cultural policy."[11] This Turkish blend of secularism implied political, legal, and educational restrictions upon religion, while simultaneously promoting a degree of state involvement in religious affairs—through a State Department of Religious Affairs, for instance.[12]

To this very day, this secularism is far from having gained universal Muslim approval and is hotly disputed in Turkey itself, mainly because of the belief that "Islam cannot be merely a faith for the conscience of the individual, that it is, on the contrary, the foundation of an entire social system."[13] After all, in the Islamic Ottoman Empire, "religion and state were believed to be fused together; the state was conceived as the embodiment of religion, and religion [for instance, through the rule of the *şeriat,* Islamic canonical law] as the essence of the state."[14]

Secularization as a process implies the "decline, and perhaps ultimate disappearance, of specifically religious beliefs and institutions."[15] However, as theorists agree, the factors influencing and steering this process and its results are extremely difficult to assess. Thus, Fenn argues that secularization is a "process of struggle, dispute, conflict, or negotiation, involving social actors who attempt to press their own claims and views of reality [such as secularism or religious extremism] and not an automatic or evolutionary process,"[16] an opinion we will find is amply borne out by the Turkish experience.

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[11]Berkes, 481.
[12]Ibid., 480.
[13]Ibid., 4.
[14]Ibid., 7.
[15]Malcolm B. Hamilton. *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Routledge, 1995), 167.
[16]Ibid., 179.

Causes of the Earthquake: The Instrument of God

We will now examine the explanations offered by three Islamically-oriented Turkish daily newspapers—*Yeni Şafak, Milli Gazete* and *Akit*—of the occurrence of the earthquake. With a few isolated exceptions (most of them referred to in footnotes), these accounts are surprisingly compatible and consistent. Over the course of a month, the papers developed a complex theological mosaic, within which emphasis is placed upon the earthquake's possible functions as manifesting God's wrath, or his mercy, and as an ultimately inscrutable test for his people.

The word *ayet* refers to the "signs" of God, which take the form both of the *ayetler* of the Qur'an and of the signs of God in nature, of which the earthquake is an example. Since God is omniscient and omnipotent, not even a single leaf in this world moving without his volition, it is beyond question that he also caused the earthquake—it is instrumental to his purposes.[17]

That "material" (e.g., geological) reasons for an earthquake exist is accepted. They, however, are secondary causes, and do not in themselves constitute a sufficient explanation of the occurrence.[18]

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[17]y20/22a. In his excellent study of Islamic theodicy, Ormsby cites the treatise on earthquakes *Kashf al-Salsalah 'an Wasf al-Zalzalah* composed by as-Suyuti around 905 C.E.: "In explaining earthquakes, al-Suyuti places primary emphasis on the divine will. Earthquakes occur solely through divine decree *(qada')*. When God wishes to terrify man, He sends earthquakes. . . . Ultimately, . . . they occur because God has foreordained them, and we cannot know why" (261-262). Similarly, the Ash'arite school of theology, which broke away from Mu'tazilism (see below) in the 10th century C.E. and eventually became one of the major "orthodox" schools of Islamic theology, emphasizes that "the ultimate justification of events, however appalling, [lies] in the inscrutable but unfailing efficacy of divine will" (263).

[18]The question whether the catastrophe would have claimed the same number of lives if conscientious contractors had built more stable buildings is left open, the answer only being known to God. Both clear answers "yes" and "no" are rejected as heretical (a9s). See also Ormsby's contrast between the predestinarian Mujbirite school of theology and the Mu'tazilites, who emphasised free will. The debate emerged around the 8th century C.E., and both positions were ultimately rejected by orthodoxy (Ormsby, 22).

Rather, it is believed that there are spiritual and nonmaterial causes that are inaccessible to science and that underlie such occurrences. And although God's will and intention are ultimately unfathomable, it is the duty of Muslims to ponder what message God might be communicating through the medium of such an earthquake.[19]

The "Majestic" Interpretation

By far the most common interpretation presents the earthquake as a manifestation of God's wrath. The wrath of God is seen as being directed against the "system" since the various misgivings of the writers and columnists interconnect to form an organic, systematic whole. At the core of this system lies a crisis of people's relationship with the religion of Islam. The impression created is that Islam is respectively being fought, misunderstood, exploited, or ignored by various segments of the population, an impression that closely ties in with the issue of secularization and secularism in Turkey. The Turkish political, judiciary, and educational systems are blamed for banning women who wear headscarves, for preventing women from attending universities, from keeping women from becoming members of the parliament, for banning the leading members of the (Islamic, now outlawed) Welfare Party from politics, for banning the teaching of the Qur'an to under-12-year-olds, for declaring illegal the imparting of higher religious education (the outlawing, for instance, of making an under-fifteen-years-old a *hafiz*—one who has memorized the Qur'an), for closing down the so-called "Qur'an courses" for young children, for acting against *imam-hatip* high schools which produce *imams*, for firing thousands of civil servants and army officers as part of a "fight against reactionism (*irtica*)," for obstructing the construction of mosques in certain central public areas, and for discriminating against many Islamic civil organizations and initiatives as "reactionary."

The actions listed above are expressions of the Turkish military and political leadership's commitment to fight "religious extremism" in Turkey, a commitment that has intensified since 28 February 1998, when many of the above-mentioned policies were decided upon by

[19]y18a, y3/5s, m18a.

the Turkish National Security Council, which includes both military and political leaders. The process of 28 February is generally taken as a declaration of war against the entire religion of Islam, against the religious sensibilities of ordinary Muslims, and against God Himself.[20]

Opinion is divided, however, on how far the army itself is to blame. Some writers imply, generally indirectly, that the army is responsible for provoking the wrath of God.[21] Others, vehemently rejecting this view, back the armed forces as one of the remaining pious Muslim bastions of the country, or at least state their accusations more diplomatically, maintaining that the process of 28 February has channeled all the energies of the state into a "hunt for reactionaries," thus leaving the country highly vulnerable, both morally and materially, in the event of such catastrophe.[22]

The next step down the pyramid of responsibility takes us to the Turkish people themselves: the state policies promoting secularism and curtailing Islamic education are seen as both expressing and exacerbating a general moral decay in the country. The Qur'an, it is emphasized, contains many binding moral imperatives, such as commandments not to steal, not to serve anyone but God, to act in the right and proper way, as decreed by God (e.g., to use proper material when constructing a building), and to stop evil and promote good through *gayret* (personal effort) and *cihat* (holy war). But today, it is argued, many Turkish people mistakenly believe that they can be Muslims while being opposed to the *şeriat* or the *sünnet* of the Prophet. In today's society, the devil is everywhere, and people, who are in a state of wickedness and heedlessness, instead of praising God both for his mercy or for his wrath, glorify their own egos (*nefs*), intelligence, imagined power, and wealth to the extent of committing idolatry.

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[20]y18/20/21a, a21/22a.

[21]This takes into account the fact that the epicenter of the earthquake was situated very close to the Navy Headquarters, where the decisions of 28 February decisions are reported to have been made, and where, it is further alleged, the boast was made, amidst heavy drinking and other blasphemous conduct that took place on that night, that "no force can stop us in our fight against *irtica*."

[22]y26a, y5/6s, m22a, a25/26a.

People, moreover, are deeply in love with this life and with worldly goods,[23] and they try to avoid the ultimate reality of death and the afterlife. Good things (*maruf*) are being forbidden and frowned upon, while evil things (*münker*), such as canonically prohibited sexual orientations, adultery and fornication,[24] improper clothing, pornography, prostitution, usury, gambling, drug abuse and trade, environmental destruction, corruption, inflation, consumerism, theft, Darwinism, materialism, hedonism, freemasonry, pork import, and immoral television programs are being openly promoted.

Communal worship, as recommended by the Prophet, is virtually abandoned. Muslims are being oppressed by tyrants and infidels on the one hand and exploited by pseudo-religious charlatans on the other. The latter group is inciting religious discord and division to serve its own materialistic ends and is preventing the Muslim people from achieving unity and solidarity as one *ümmet* and electing an *İmam-ı Kebir* (grand imam).

Economic divides are so extreme that most people are poor while a few live like Pharaoh,[25] and even the majority of "good Muslims" are *de facto* party to the promotion of evil in politics and society because, at the very least, they have not sufficiently followed God's command to order good (*emr-i maruf*) and forbid evil (*nehy-i münker*)[26] and have neglected the divine order of *cihat*.[27] This indirect responsibility for evil is extended to make the accusation that while their Muslim brothers in Iraq, Bosnia, and other regions were suffering at the hands of infidels, Turkish Muslims stood by without acting to alleviate that suffering.

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[23]In this context, it is emphasized that the earthquake hit the most highly industrialized area of Turkey (m22a).

[24]According to one columnist, the religion of Islam (and, apparently, Judaism and Christianity as well) commands that men and women who commit adultery and fornication be partially buried in the ground and killed by stoning (*recm*). Through the earthquake, God is claimed to have taken this job unto himself (a27a).

[25]The earthquake is also regarded as an economic "equalizer" of all classes (m23a).

[26]See also Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din* (Cairo, 1932), 2:269-312 ("Kitab al-Amr bi l-Ma'ruf wa n-Nahy 'an al-Munkar").

[27]Whether *cihat* refers to an armed holy war against infidels and/or to the "greater *cihat*" against one's own ego is left up to the reader's interpretation.

Also, because the rules of Islam are not being taught anymore, their opposites are proliferating, causing increasing chaos and evil in society. Thus, the common people, as part of the system, have become complicit in fostering spiritual causes for the earthquake. This argument also accounts for the suffering and death of innocents:[28] wrongs committed by a majority are seen as causing a "universal" catastrophe.[29]

Some further argue that this earthquake, the (supposedly) biggest material calamity of the century, occurred in Turkey because it had abandoned the ways of the Ottoman Empire, perceived to have been the exemplary standard-bearer of Islam in this world for hundreds of years.[30] The sum total of moral decay in politics and society, causing the earthquake, is thus contextualized as the inevitable legacy of almost a century of secularization and secularism in Turkey.

One last interesting explanation of the wrath of God connects the earthquake to the preceding solar eclipse. Similar eclipses are reported to have accompanied the Prophet's birth and death and the transference of his grave. The Messenger of God himself is reported —apocryphally—to have led special prayers when there was an eclipse in order to prevent calamitous effects. However, in Turkey, the divine sign of an eclipse was "welcomed" in the style of the nations that were destroyed—with an infidel "drunk band of noise-makers" (the Vienna Symphony Orchestra) brought in by a ministry with the money of the people, and the occasion celebrated with champagne, dancing, and strange ululations and bangs that were full of mockery for the might of God. Furthermore, the event was described in some media as 'the dance of the sun with the moon," a comparison offensive to the pious sensitivities of some writers, who

[28]According to some exceptions to the opinion, no innocents suffered in the earthquake—which was a planned cleansing operation—or at least we cannot judge what the sins of the dead might have been (a25a, a9/11s).

[29]y18/20-22/24a, y3/5s, m18-23/25/27/30a, m1/10/13/15/16/18-20s, a22/23/25/27/31a, a10s.

[30]a26a.

performed eclipse prayers in fear of the certain approach of God's wrath.[31]

The "Merciful" Interpretation

A second pool of opinion, while acknowledging the wrathful or majestic (*celali*) dimension of the earthquake, adds that God's merciful (*cemali*) names are equally manifested in it, just as every event, when regarded from different perspectives, will manifest various attributes of God.[32]

According to this interpretation, humans love God because of his merciful names and fear him because of his majestic ones,[33] but even the fear of God is seen as a sweet fear that will, in the end, lead to love of God. Thus, while it is true that, in the afterlife, God's majestic names will manifest themselves as hell and his merciful ones as heaven, the fact that God places "rebels" in hell rather than completely destroying them shows that his mercy is boundless—that even hell is a manifestation of mercy within majesty.[34]

One "merciful" interpretation is that the divine involvement in the earthquake can remind one that all things and events are manifestations of God, thus leading one to recognize God's continuous work all around and inside oneself. Thus, perhaps the most important aspect of the earthquake is its function as a new chance, as a warning or enlightenment for people—as an event, that is, that may enable them to remember or discover God. After all, as the saying goes, one calamity is better than a thousand admonitions.[35]

In the context of divine mercy, it is also emphasized that the "good" Muslims who die in natural disasters are classified as martyrs and will enjoy an elevated status in paradise, while the property of Muslims destroyed in such events is classified as *zekat* (Islamic

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[31]y18a, m16/23/29/30a, m16s, a26a, a13s. It is also claimed that the loss of temperature and lunar gravity caused by an eclipse can set the earth's faultlines in motion.

[32]y5/13s.

[33]For instance, *Cebbar* (the "Almighty"), *Müntakim* (the "Avenger"), *Mümit* (the "Giver of Death"), *Kahhar* (the "Compeller").

[34]a2/10s.

[35]y5s, m18a, m7s.

compulsory alms). Also, it is pointed out that, through their death, good Muslims and innocent babies have been freed from the torture of living under the present system with its idolatrous rebellion against God.[36] All in all, therefore, the death of innocents is regarded as a manifestation of divine justice and mercy. Furthermore, there are many individual manifestations of divine mercy, such as survivors reporting that they were saved by their prayers, and "urban legends" about children saved by mysterious "beings of light."[37]

One important manifestation of mercy is the assumption that, since humanity is now living in the age of Muhammad, the universal Prophet of Mercy, the peoples who have received his message will never be completely destroyed, but rather punished through occurrences such as wars, plagues, and earthquakes.[38]

Another consideration of mercy concerns the unverified assumption that earthquakes befall Muslims more often than infidels. This is so because, just as the punishment for capital offenses is often deferred and carried out later by central institutions, the punishment for most of the unbelievers' crimes is being delayed until Judgment Day, while the—less significant—wrongdoings of believers are partly punished in this world, so that, come Judgment Day, they may already be purified and fit to enter heaven.[39]

Others, contradicting this view, opine that tyrannies and other major injustices will be punished on earth, not just in the afterlife, and that other countries experience fewer catastrophes of a similar magnitude because they are more at peace with God than Turkey, at least to the extent that they use their God-given intelligence to avoid erecting dangerous buildings in earthquake zones.[40]

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[36]One article speaks of an idol or god called 'Laikos' (i.e., laicism) (m24a).

[37]y20/23a, y3/6s, m5s.

[38]a20a. See also Qur'an 21:107.

[39]m18a.

[40]As an example of this, another writer cites the Japanese, who are seen as unbelievers who nonetheless act like Muslims in that they fulfill the good commandments of Islam—"the religion of everyone in this world"—thus avoiding major losses in earthquakes. The late poet Mehmed Akif is quoted as having said, "Go and see Islam in Japan. The only missing factor is the *tevhid,* its form being the Buddha." Here, infidels who perform good deeds anyway are perceived as reaping their rewards in this world (a3s).

What all these considerations about mercy have in common is the assumption that it is never God who is unjust to humanity, but humans who are unjust to themselves. By not using their intelligence and hearts and by not recognizing the imperatives of Islam, they create injustice in the world, which, in turn, results in catastrophes like the earthquake, which can be seen as merciful occurrences serving to expose and rectify the situation.[41] Thus God loves humans more than they love themselves, and He is more merciful to them than they are to themselves.[42]

The Earthquake As Trial

Next to interpretations centering around wrath and mercy is the view that the earthquake has significance as a test in which people's individual and collective beliefs and morals are examined under extreme circumstances. The test is not only applied to the present situation, but also is projected into the future, in terms of whether humans will learn from the warning and strive in the way of God. Again, the—perhaps rationally inexplicable—suffering of some innocents plays a crucial role. The world is seen as a testing ground that would lose its meaning if only rebels against God were affected by misfortune. The fact that the "real" reasons for the earthquake are veiled behind "material" reasons also forms part of this test. God has given free will to humans so that the test of life may expose their true nature. Thus, the earthquake only renews the faith in the hearts of those who already believe but impairs even further the ability to comprehend of those who deny God.[43]

All in all, great emphasis is placed in this interpretation on God's "majesty." It is, nevertheless, recognized that it is not possible to fathom completely God's reasons for bringing about the earthquake since this one event, among other things, denotes punishment and

[41]One columnist compares the earthquake to an electric shock administered to a comatose patient (a30a).
[42]a20/23/28a.
[43]y19/21a, y3s, m18a, m2s.

salvation, warning and test, and also confirmation and disproval—of both true and false beliefs and attitudes—all at once.[44]

Effects of the Earthquake: Theological Aftershocks

In spite of this ultimate inscrutability of God's purpose, individuals, groups in society, and society itself, must still ask themselves what can be done to stop such disasters from occurring in the future and to heal the wounds of a calamity like the earthquake. Emphasis, in this area of reflection and discussion, is laid on turning toward God with one's whole being, recognizing the transitory nature of life and the beauty of death followed by the hereafter and observing the various commandments of the religion. Furthermore, various mistaken ways of acting in the aftermath of the earthquake are exposed and condemned out of the theological fear that such transgressions might lead to a repetition, or even a worsening, of the catastrophe.

Turning to God and Religion

Writers and columnists recommend seeking refuge solely in God and turning to prayer and recitation of the Qur'an as the only source of solace, mercy for the dead, and hope for the survival of those still

[44]y21a, y8s, m18a. Al-Makki (d. 996 C.E.), and, following him, al-Ghazali (d. 1111 C.E.) make the point that it is due to the limitations of the human intellect that we do not perceive the "perfectness" of the world. This perfectness is hidden by God from all except those who "trust in him," i.e., advanced mystics (Ormsby, 58-59). Here, rational explanations for occurrences such as earthquakes are seen as helpful stepping-stones on the way to the "unquestioning acceptance of God's will, 'trust in God,' [as it occurs in the] final stages on the mystical path" (Ormsby, 263). This missing of the mystical "perfect world" dimension of theodicy from the newspapers' accounts reflects the prohibition of mystical orders in Turkey. Some of the other theodicies that find no discussion in the newspapers are the emanationist accounts of evil as a necessary coexistent with good or merely as the privation of good, as advocated by al-Farabi (d. 950 C.E.) or Ibn Sina (d. 1037 C.E.). (See Majid Fakhry, *The Subject-Matter of Metaphysics: Aristotle and Ibn Sina (Avicenna)*, in Michael E. Marmura, ed., *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George F. Hourani* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

buried under collapsed buildings. Also, God is to be thanked and humbly implored *(tazarru)* for the blessings he bestows, for the manifestation of his mercy in the fact that the catastrophe has not been even worse,[45] and for the protection of people from such disasters in the future.[46]

It is emphasized that the earthquake will make life more beautiful for those who recognize God's authorship behind it and, in this way, become privy to the secret of the divine order "Be!" through which God can make anything happen at any time. Conversely, those who do not believe in God are pitied for having no one left to turn to in light of this calamity, and God is beseeched to lead these black sheep back into his flock.[47]

Realization, repentance, and reorientation are the central issues here. It is hoped that the earthquake will make people realize how powerless (to the point of nonexistence) they, the relative and passing world they inhabit, and their egos, technology, science, struggles, and relative sufferings are in contrast to God's supreme sovereignty over all there is. The earthquake and the panic it has provoked in many people are seen as more "real" and closer to God than everyday reality with its "fake" and superficial concerns and entertainments.

Now, past sins must be remembered, and, hopefully, the experienced pain will soften people's hearts so that their egos can be overcome and replaced by mercy, self-denial, and other forgotten virtues. Thus, out of the havoc caused by the earthquake, the monuments of virtue and purification can arise, and a reorientation toward God and Islam can take place.[48]

As Tim Winter points out, "[F]rom the first days of the Muslim experience the remembrance of death and the chastening facts of eschatology provided a characteristic underpinning to the [Islamic]

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[45]In this context, it is claimed that the city of Istanbul was not destroyed because it is under God's special protection (y26a, m2s).

[46]y19-21a, m18a.

[47]y18/22/23/29a, m27a. One columnist, however, taking his cue from the assumption that such catastrophes only expose the true nature of human beings, refuses even to pray for, let alone help, those who still rebel against God and encourages his readership to do likewise (a14s).

[48]y18-20a, a3s.

devotional life."[49] Thus, many writers explore, with reference to earthquake, the theme of death in an Islamic context, both to console those who have lost their loved ones in the catastrophe and to inform those who survived but felt the "touch of death." It is maintained that, if one fails to regard death as beautiful, this most inescapable fact of life will taint one's entire life with horror and anxiety. A beautiful death is found at the end of a life lived well, full of faith and morality. According to a *hadis*,[50] those who have lived thus will find death easy: their souls will be pulled from their bodies as a hair is pulled from butter. However, those who have led a bad life will die in anguish, surrendering their souls as if a gnarled bush were being pulled from a pile of wool. Then, on Judgment Day, everybody will reap what they have sown in life, with some going to heaven and others (be it temporarily or forever) to hell. This might be terrible from the perspective of the sinner, but it is beautiful from the perspective of truth and justice. Also, having suffered injustice or calamity in one's life raises one's rank in heaven. Thus, we should see this life as a way station and not attach too much significance to it, looking forward, instead, to the day of our reunification with our Lord.[51]

The practical importance assigned to keeping the commandments of Islam in the wake of the catastrophe is exemplified by the declarations of the State Department of Religious Affairs regarding funereal details. The high death toll requires extraordinary measures, and so, when water is not available, the ablution of the dead may be performed with dry earth *(teyemmüm)*. If need be, corpses can be wrapped in one instead of three sheets, and one need not distinguish between men and women while placing corpses in mass graves, as long as there is always "a little bit of earth between two bodies." Also, in the case of bodies mutilated beyond recognition, it is acceptable to perform, after taking a photograph, the burial prayer without knowing the name of the deceased. Many

[49]Tim J. Winter, from the Introduction to his translation of al-Ghazali's *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1989), xiii.
[50]Ibn Abi d-Dunya, *Kitab al-Mawt,* cited in ibid., 41.
[51]m26a.

official prayers for the dead are announced, and it is further recommended that those planning to perform the *umre* (minor pilgrimage) this year give their travel money as alms to survivors instead, as this will please God more and will also be officially recognized as *zekat*.[52]

Transferring these individual duties of betterment to society, the writers and columnists emphasize that, thanks to the earthquake, many more or less concealed evils in society—again, mainly contextualized as the "legacy of secularism"—have been completely exposed. They hope for a "metaphysical tremor" that will reconcile the country's elites with the religion of Islam and bring home its importance to them. Furthermore, it is demanded that religious people be shown more respect. While some writers coat this hope in the wish for compassion and religious tolerance for and between all groups,[53] most writers explicitly ground it in Islam. Thus, one columnist mentions his impression that, since the earthquake, people respect him more because of his beard, and some note that mosque attendance seems to be on the rise. Also, it must now be realized, it is urged, that proper morality can only be fostered by infusing children with the religion of Islam and the love and fear of God[54] and that any attempt to arrest this infusion or establish an alternative system of morality will result in catastrophe.[55]

It is assumed that the limitations of a "scientific" worldview have been shown up by the fact that earthquakes, which even cats and dogs can anticipate, cannot be predicted by science. However, since the Qur'an mentions the foreseeing of earthquakes, it is maintained that prophets and saints can, regarding this kind of occurrence, receive inspiration from the supernatural realms, for instance through the sighting of angels or of an eclipse. Thus, the

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[52]y20/27a.

[53]In this vein, one columnist goes as far as to state that he is happy with people doing whatever they want, even worshipping idols, as long as they do not go around openly insulting other people's beliefs (a30a).

[54]One writer describes human beings as the "problem" and Islam as the "solution" (m5s).

[55]y18/19/24a, m25/27/31a, m3/13s.

country must produce people with the right religious education and saintly disposition to make such predictions possible.[56]

The Imperative of Brotherly Help

One consolation for many writers depressed by the country's wicked condition is that the imperative of brotherly help is being taken very seriously by the Turkish people. This solidarity, seen as an effect of the people's Islamic religion, is encouraged and contrasted with a perceived lack of solidarity in Western nations. As a particularly noble example, a group of girls are cited who, because of their veils, are unable to attend university, but have set up a nursing center in the earthquake zone. Regarding financial aid, people are encouraged to channel it through the right—that is to say, Islamic—organizations, and are, thus, indirectly advised against entrusting the Turkish state with the aid. People also should not, in a haughty manner, flaunt the help they offer, but should offer it quietly and humbly.[57]

Apart from the people's charity and solidarity, the supposedly Islamically motivated help effort is, for most writers, best exemplified in the helping hand extended by the individual members of municipalities—such as those of Istanbul and Ankara—that are controlled by the Islamic Falah Party. Another example is the Muslim world in general, seen as rushing to Turkey's help without the ulterior motives that are suspected behind the Western help effort and in spite of the fact that Turkey hosts air bases from which American fighter planes bombard various Muslim countries.[58] From Algeria to Yusuf Islam (also known as Cat Stevens), twenty countries, groups and individuals are mentioned in this context. Finally, there are

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[56]m23/24a, m16s, a1/14/16s.

[57]y18/25/27a, a6s.

[58]y27a, a7s. To suppport this claim, Alan Makovsky from the Washington Institute think tank is quoted as having warned against a possible upsurge of religious extremism in Turkey after the earthquake and as having stated that, because of the country's strategic importance, it would be in the interest of the West to send as much aid as possible to stop the Islamists from gaining ground (y28a). *Yeni Şafak* is the only one of the three newspapers examined to mention that the Pope called for, and himself conducted, prayer for all victims and survivors of the earthquake (y23a).

Islamic NGOs, banks, and business conglomerates that contributed to the help effort,[59] of which thirty are listed.[60]

This spirit of religious solidarity is now expected to extend to the Turkish state so that all those suffering under the state's oppressive regulations regarding religion may be granted amnesty. Furthermore, the importance of spiritual aid for earthquake victims is emphasized, and anyone able or equipped to provide it is called to action.[61]

Rejected Theological Responses

There are two kinds of theological reactions to the earthquake that are almost unanimously opposed by the newspapers. They are the opposite extremes of fatalism and a "secularized" theology, the latter being an offshoot of the purely materialistic interpretations of the earthquake that, as we saw earlier, had been rejected.[62]

The fatalistic attitude, blaming the catastrophe solely on God's predestined will, or fate, is perceived as a defamatory billing of God with matters that fall in the realm of human responsibility. Fate may exist, but it is no excuse for not using our brains as human beings and taking responsibility in those spheres of life where use of our willpower can make a difference. God has created laws of causality both in the material and in the spiritual realms, and it is the responsibility of humans to recognize them and act according to them. Thus, when the time comes, God will surely hold humans responsible for not having built safe houses in spite of having known that they were living in an earthquake zone and for having neglected to support aid organizations, which could have assisted in the wake of the catastrophe. Humans have responsibilities before God, and it is through these responsibilities that they have power, and they do have, by dint of this power, at least a limited amount of freedom.[63]

The opposite complaint is that some "secularized" theologians maintain that God is only indirectly (i.e., as the ultimate creator of all

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[59]In this context, even notorious mafia dons such as Sedat Peker are "absolved" by some because of their pious help effort (a25a).
[60]y/m/a 18a-18s.
[61]y18/23a.
[62]y27a.
[63]y20/22/27a, m2s.

things) involved in this earthquake, which is a normal occurrence of no special significance, and that, as long as Turkey takes the correct material precautions, it will be prepared for the next earthquake. The objection to this scenario is that it portrays God as merely an uninvolved first cause in time, almost superfluous as long as people take precautions against disaster. We are reminded of God's names *fail* (active) and *muhtar* (selecting) and of his omnipotence and omnipresence. It may be important to build stable buildings and acquaint oneself with the scientific causes of the earthquake, but this must be accompanied by an "inner cleansing" of the repentant individual and by an unconditional surrender to the will of God.[64]

The general consensus is that both denying our limited realm of responsibility (through fatalism) and denying God's absolute power (through a "secularized" theology) ultimately lead to the same ills: heedlessness and irresponsibility vis-à-vis God, other humans, property, and oneself.[65]

Having thus mapped out religiously correct actions and attitudes in the wake of the earthquake, we find it easy to identify who has failed to live up to them. The identification is important since these heedless groups of people could easily cause new disasters.[66]

Continued Sins and Shortcomings

The foremost culprits are the government and its agencies, seen as unequipped and unwilling to provide aid in the crisis zone. Supposedly because of their specialization in fighting *irtica,* they have become incapable of reacting to other threats, such as the earthquake. It is lamented that most politicians deny a link between God and the

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[64]y3/6s.

[65]y22a. Again, this contrast can be compared to that which emerged in the second Islamic century between the Mujbirites and the Mu'tazilites (Ormsby, 22). Muslim (d. 718 or 720 C.E. is quoted by Ormsby as stating that free will and predestination are "two deep valleys where people stray without ever reaching bottom. Act therefore like someone who knows that only his acts can save him; and trust in God like someone who knows that only that will strike him which was meant for him" (Ormsby, 71).

[66]y19a.

earthquake,[67] to such an extent that a member of the Falah Party, wishing to remind parliament of the *Zilzal* ("Earthquake") *suret* of the Qur'an, was booed into silence. The government, meanwhile, continues to fight *irtica.* Aid coming in from various Islamic countries such as Kuwait has been obstructed, Turkish Islamic NGOs and businesses are stopped from helping as effectively as they might have,[68] veiled women who want to volunteer as nurses in over-crowded hospitals are turned away, and civil servants and *imams* airing their religious interpretations of the earthquake in public are fired or penalized.[69]

The next targets of criticism are state organizations with a religious mandate, namely, the State Department of Religious Affairs and the Red Crescent. These appear to have become completely secularized and insensitive. The Department of Religious Affairs is accused of being absent from the scene at a time when religious support is most desperately needed by the people and is held responsible for haphazard burials without enough *imams* being in attendance to conduct proper funeral prayers. The department is further criticized for unquestioningly endorsing all government policies and for not fulfilling its mandate of securing an adequate place for religion and its concerns within the democratic system. The Red Crescent, which supposedly benefits from the forced collection of skins of sacrificial animals at the end of the *kurban bayram*

[67]This stance is ironically contrasted with the fact that even American politicians are asking their people to pray for Turkey (y20a) and that Greek authorities have offered to erect a new town for victims of the earthquake, on the precondition that a mosque should stand in its center (m27a).

[68]For instance, the aid bank accounts of the Muslim NGOs İHH, Mazlum-Der, and MGV were confiscated and absorbed into the state-sponsored help effort. While this incident was extensively condemned for weeks, one maverick article mentions that the event was isolated and insignificant and that these organizations were able to continue their help effort once they had acquired the necessary official permissions (m9s).

[69]y19-22/25/28a, y1/16s, m28a, m13s. The analyses of Stephen Kinzer (*New York Times*) and Lee Hockstader (*Washington Post*) received much coverage. According to them, the Turkish government was deliberately trying to keep groups with a religious agenda out of the help effort so that they would not win the trust of the people and, thus, indirectly strengthen the cause of political Islam (y28a, a5s).

(Sacrifice Holiday), is berated for arriving in the disaster zones much later than the Red Cross and for being extremely ill-equipped.[70]

The final big block of admonitions is directed at the "mainstream" (i.e., not overtly Islamic) Turkish media. These, too, refuse to connect God with the earthquake and are further accused of drowning out the voices of those common people who do make this connection. They are charged with ignoring or misrepresenting the Islamic aid effort[71] and the writings and motives of Islamic journalists, creating the (supposedly false) impression that the religious media are using the catastrophe as an "advertisement for the *şeriat*" and that Islamic aid groups only help people who are affiliated with them.[72]

The Turkish people also get their share of the reproach. To some writers, the initial increase of religious sentiment among the people has waned quickly, all the old vices being taken up again.[73] One columnist reports that even the very morning after the earthquake, there were only two rows of people performing the morning prayer in the enormous Blue Mosque.[74] A further shock is that some individuals are vandalizing the destroyed houses and the dead buried underneath, and common Muslims are upbraided for not being even as brave in pursuing *maruf* as the grave-robbers are in committing crimes.[75]

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[70]y23/24/26a, m27a.

[71]Many articles portray the outrage of Islamic countries whose promptness in supplying large amount of aid has supposedly been misrepresented by the Turkish "mainstream" media (m30a). It is also lamented that the help effort of Greece and Israel is especially highlighted by the government and media, which one columnist explains with the aid of the hypothesis that, now that these groups' laicistic religion has collapsed, they are turning to Christianity and Semitism (!) for aid in their fight against Islam (m31a). Some see the Israeli help effort as a hidden ploy to facilitate eventual military invasion of Turkey as part of the Jewish conspiracy to take over the world (a27/30a). Another columnist suspects that the downplaying of the aid effort of the Islamic world is a concerted attempt, involving the Israreli intelligence agency Mossad, to prevent the rise of a universal Islamic *ümmet*-consciousness across all nations (a1s).

[72]y20/21/24/25a, y11s.

[73]This quite unverifiable opinion is contradicted by others (a17s).

[74]m19/28a.

[75]m25a, m10s, a4s.

Overall, a disproportionate part of the theological exploration of the earthquake has sought to expose the shortcomings of various segments of Turkish society both before and after the earthquake, to connect the earthquake scenario to the wrath of God, or, conversely, to point out the merits of religion and religiously motivated groupings. In contrast, relatively little emphasis is placed on exploring the merciful or tribulatory aspects of the catastrophe. This is due to the assumptions made regarding the negative way in which the religion of Islam is lived, perceived, and treated in "secularist" Turkey. We will assess the validity of these assumptions in our review of articles from *Cumhuriyet*. At this point, it has become clear that curtailments by military and state, ignorance or willful rejection and transgression on the part of the Turkish people, and mis- or nonrepresentation by "mainstream" media of Islam are the factors that incline the Islamic media toward their extreme punitive stance regarding the earthquake.

The Qur'anic Matrix

We will now examine a selection of the Qur'anic material quoted by the newspapers in support of their positions and will try to determine to what extent their interpretation of the earthquake presents a genuine Islamic response to the catastrophe. For the sake of clarity, this material has been subdivided into four sections. The first deals with "before" the earthquake, examining announcements concerning the trial of humankind, Qur'anic warnings, punishment and destruction of ancient nations, and parallels between the earthquake and Judgment Day. As we will see, "The Qur'an opts firmly for the theory of instrumentality—for the belief that suffering is an instrument of the purposes of God."[76] The last three sections concern themselves with "after" the catastrophe, analyzing possible lessons to be learned from it. Emphasis is placed on God's absolute sovereignty, mercy, and justice, on the responsibility of humans for the evils that befall them, and on specific commandments,

[76]Bowker, 112.

prohibitions, and admonitions that are voiced in the Qur'an and are relevant to the situation at hand.

Trials and Punishments

The first cluster of Qur'anic passages quoted by the newspapers refers to the nature of this world as a test. God points out that he will test and try us "once or twice every year" (9:126) "with evil and with good" (21:35). These trials are inflicted so that we "might grow humble" (6:42) and "turn . . . in repentance" (9:126), realizing that "we are Allah's and Lo! unto Him we are returning" (2:156).[77]

In the next, and by far the largest, group of quotations, attention is drawn to God's warnings and punishments and to the destruction of ancient nations. It becomes obvious that God will chastise those who offend him already on earth, as exemplified in the following passages: "There is not a township (or community) but we shall destroy it ere the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with dire punishment. That is set forth in the Book (of Our decrees)" (17:58) "And verily We make them taste the lower punishment [i.e., punishment in this world] before the greater, that haply they may return" (32:21). It is crucial to note that the Qur'an insists that innocents may also suffer: "And guard yourselves against a chastisement which cannot fall exclusively on those of you who are wrong-doers" (8:25).[78]

Still, why and how does this punishment of God come about? The pattern underlying most of the Qur'anic punishment-narratives quoted by the papers is one of mercy-wickedness-wrath, in which God either delivers a group from affliction or sends them a messenger proclaiming His commandments, but the group becomes heedless and blasphemous. The last step is divine wrath, where God punishes the group through disasters, often annihilating it entirely. The following passage is representative of the many that illustrate this process:

[77]m11s, a24a, a1/3s. See also Qur'an 2:155.
[78]m22a, a2/17s.

> And We sent no prophet unto any township but We did afflict its folk with tribulation and adversity that haply they might grow humble. / Then changed We the evil plight for good till they grew affluent and said: Tribulation and distress did touch our fathers. Then We seized them unawares, when they perceived not. / And if the people of the townships had believed and kept from evil, surely We should have opened for them blessings from the sky and from the earth. But (unto every messenger) they gave the lie, and so We seized them on account of what they used to earn. (7:94-96)[79]

It is also emphasized that, just because the punishment of some might have been delayed, it is by no means forgotten:

> If Allah were to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing, He would not leave hereon a living creature, but He reprieveth them to an appointed term, and when their term cometh they cannot put (it) off an hour nor (yet) advance (it). (16:61)[80]

As examples, many ancient nations are cited who met with this fate:

> Have they not travelled in the land to see the nature of the consequence for those who disbelieved before them? They were mightier than these in power and (in the) traces (which they left behind them) in the earth. Yet Allah seized them for their sins, and they had no protector from Allah. (40:21)

The particular nations listed in the Qur'an in this context run to an impressive and intimidating list, including the children of Israel, the tribe of 'Ad, the dwellers in the wood of Midian, the people of Noah and of Lot, and many more—all of whom were punished for various transgressions. The upshot is self-evident: in all their dealings, humans must be wary of God's wrath.[81]

Finally, carrying the parallels to the earthquake to an even more intimidating level than that of the destroyed nations, attention is drawn to the final earthquake of the Day of Judgment:

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[79]a28a, a1s. See also Qur'an 6:63-65; 7:97-99.

[80]a10s.

[81]m22/29a, m11/13s, a31a, a1/2/16s. See Qur'an 5:13; 7:78, 90-92; 11:43, 64-65, 67, 81-83; 15:74-77; 17:102-103; 21:76-77; 26:189; 27:50-53; 29:36-37; 34:15-17; 37:97-100; 41:15-16; 51:43-45; 53:53-54; 59:2; 68:17-32.

> When Earth is shaken with her (final) earthquake
> And Earth yieldeth up her burdens,
> And man saith: What aileth her?
> That day she will relate her chronicles,
> Because thy Lord inspireth her.
> That day mankind will issue forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds.
> And whoso doeth good an atom' s weight will see it then;
> And whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then. (99:1-8)[82]

The Sovereignty, Mercy, and Justice of God

In light of all these tests, warnings, reminders, and punishments, what lessons must be drawn from the earthquake? The most important thing to remember is the absolute sovereignty of God and the necessity of turning toward Him with all one's being. "Say (O Muhammad): The cause belongeth fully to Allah. . . . (All this hath been) in order that Allah might try what is in your breasts and prove what is in your hearts" (3:154). A passage that illustrates, in a particularly poignant manner, the sovereignty and judgment of God, the required acquiescence into His will and the possible pleading for His mercy is 7:155:

> And Moses chose of his people seventy men for Our appointed tryst and, when the trembling came on them, he said: My Lord! If Thou hadst willed Thou hadst destroyed them long before, and me with them. Wilt Thou destroy us for that which the ignorant among us did? It is but Thy trial (of us). Thou sendest whom Thou wilt astray and guidest whom Thou wilt. Thou art our Protecting Friend, therefore forgive us and have mercy on us, Thou, the Best of all who show forgiveness.[83]

Refuge must be sought in God's limitless justice and mercy: "Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope. For it (is only) that which it hath earned, and against it (only) that which it hath deserved" (2:286). "And I have said: Seek pardon of your Lord. Lo! He was ever forgiving" (71:10).

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[82]Various newspaper articles.

[83]y18a, m11s, a19/28a, a15s. See also Qur'an 5:118; 9:116; 35:16-17.

Specifically, God's mercy and justice manifests themselves in the—normally—positive role of nature and in His treatment of those who die in His way:

> He hath created the heavens without supports that ye can see, and hath cast into the earth firm hills, so that it quake not with you; and He hath dispersed therein all kinds of beasts. And We send down water from the sky and We cause (plants) of every goodly kind to grow therein. (31:10)

And:

> Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. Who fulfilleth His covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph. (9:111)[84]

The Realm of Human Responsibility

However, in order properly to invoke God's mercy and justice, human beings must first acknowledge that they alone are responsible for all misfortunes that befall them and that, ultimately, if God does not will it, their wicked ways will not be mended: "Whatever of good befalleth thee (O man) it is from Allah, and whatever of ill befalleth thee it is from thyself" (4:79). "Lo! Allah changeth not the conditions of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts; and if Allah willeth misfortune for a folk there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender beside Him" (13:11). "And . . . your Lord proclaimed: If ye give thanks, I will give you more; but if ye are thankless, lo! my punishment is dire" (14:7).[85]

An example of those who wrongly abdicate their responsibilities as humans unto God are the idolaters of Mecca:

> And the idolaters say: Had Allah willed, we had not worshipped aught beside Him, we and our fathers, nor had we forbidden aught without

[84]m3/11s, a20/31a. See also Qur'an 2:243.
[85]m2/13s, a24/27a. See also Qur'an 11:116.

> (command from) Him. Even so did those before them. Are the messengers charged with aught save plain conveyance (of the message)? And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. Then some of them (there were) whom Allah guided, and some of them (there were) upon whom error had just hold. Do but travel in the land and see the nature of the consequence for the deniers! (16:35-36)[86]

Before this background of human responsibility, it must still be humbly remembered that, ultimately, one's redemption lies solely in the hands of a merciful God: "As for the disbelievers, whether thou warn them or thou warn them not it is all one for them; they believe not. Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom" (2:6-7).[87]

Commandments, Prohibitions, and Admonitions

Having realized that God both puts us to the test and passes judgment on our faith and on the way we put it into practice, having acknowledged our own responsibility for our shortcomings and the disasters that occur on account of them, and, having, in the end, put our trust in the way God handles all of His affairs in the universe, it now remains for us to make sure that we do all that we humanly can to please and appease Him. This we can accomplish through paying heed to his commandments, prohibitions, and admonitions as outlined in the Qur'an and as reproduced by the newspapers we have examined.

First and foremost, we must "Keep the covenant" (17:34), i.e., believe "in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets" (2:177). God advises us to

> hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour onto you: how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. Thus Allah maketh clear His revelations unto you, that haply ye may be guided, /And there may spring from you a nation

[86]y27a.

[87]y21a, m2/11s. See also Qur'an 23:38; 76:29-30.

> who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful. (3:103-104)

We must keep the commandments of God, by, for instance, observing proper worship and not setting up any other deities with Him.

We are to "vie with one another in good works" (2:148), giving our wealth, "for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask" (2:177). God looks favorably upon "those who keep their treaty when they make one." (2:177) God has "set the measure, / That ye exceed not the measure, / But observe the measure strictly, nor fall short thereof" (55:7-9). In contrast, "Those who when they take the measure from mankind demand it full, / But if they measure unto them or weigh for them, they cause them loss" (83:2-3) are promised an awful doom.

God is wroth against those who "devour heritages with devouring greed / And love wealth with abounding love" (89:19-20). Misers are equally admonished: "And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded" (17:29). God forbids the taking of interest, asserting that "Allah hath blighted usury and made almsgiving fruitful" (2:276). Furthermore, "come not near unto adultery. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way" (17:32). As regards the taking of life, we are warned to "slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right" (17:33).

The Qur'an also gives clues as to how to deal with disbelievers: "There is a goodly pattern for you in Abraham and those with him, when they told their folk: Lo! we are guiltless of you and all that ye worship beside Allah. We have done with you. And there has arisen between us and you hostility and hate for ever until ye believe in Allah only" (60:4). Further, as Shu'eyb was advised to inform the tribe of Midian, "if there is a party of you which believeth in that wherewith I have been sent, and there is a party which believeth not, then have patience until Allah judge between us. He is the best of all who deal in judgement" (7:87).

As for oneself, one should "go in awe for fear of [the] Lord" (23:57), be "patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress"

(2:177), "and call on Him in fear and hope" (7:56). In contrast, God especially fiercely admonishes the one who "forbiddeth the approach to the sanctuaries of Allah lest His name should be mentioned therein, and striveth for their ruin" (2:114). Finally, we are warned against knowing "only some appearance of the life of the world, and [being] heedless of the hereafter" (30:7). "This life of the world is but a pastime and a game. Lo! the home of the Hereafter—that is Life, if they but knew" (29:64).[88]

The Punishment-Narrative: An Analysis

The punishment-narrative, generously applied to the current earthquake by the Islamic newspapers, is one of the dominant themes of the Meccan period of the Qur'anic revelation (c. 610-622 C.E.). David Marshall describes how the most important original function of these narratives lay in warning "the unbelieving Meccans of [a direct and unmediated] act of divine punishment which would fall on them in this world if they did not repent."[89] However, after the *Hijrah* (622 C.E.), with Muslims taking up arms against the Meccan disbelievers and winning the battle of Badr, it was perceived that "the divine action of punishing unbelievers in this world and the human action of fighting these same unbelievers [had] come together,"[90] which meant that "the punishment which had been foretold as a decisive moment of divine intervention [began to be] transformed into an extended military campaign."[91]

Running parallel to military success, the Muslim stance toward the Meccans changed from punitive to reconciliatory, while, simultaneously, in the Medinan period of Qur'anic revelation (622-632 C.E.), the old punishment-narrative all but vanished from new passages of scripture. Marshall concludes that "since the abundance of narrative in the Meccan parts of the Qur'an seems to be directly related to that context of weakness and lack of manifest authority, the paucity of narrative in Medinan passages, and its virtual

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[88]y20a, m21a, m2/9/16s, a20/27-29a, a1/2s. See also Qur'an 2:279; 7:56; 11:52; 17:22-23, 26-28, 31, 33-37; 60:5; 96:6-7.
[89]Marshall, 30.
[90]Ibid., 133; Qur'an 8.
[91]Marshall, 144.

disappearance after the success of Badr, might then plausibly be accounted for by the change in fortunes of the believers, their growing power and Muhammad's increasing authority."[92]

This analysis confirms that, while the punitive stance is a valid resort of the Muslim community in times of weakness and oppression, alternatives to it, such as a reconciliatory stance, are available to the Muslim facing disbelief and antagonism. Neither the Meccan people nor the population of Turkey were completely destroyed by their respective "divine punishments," not having, as one might argue, completely rejected the witness of their Prophet, as the destroyed nations had. This, in turn, poses questions as to whether the punishment-narrative is really a good model to explain the Turkish earthquake and whether the harsh punitive approach of the newspapers is really warranted by the extent of "disbelief" observable in Turkey.

The listing in the Qur'an of compatible—but not necessarily coexistent—instrumental reasons for the occurrence of disasters delineates the area within which valid Islamic interpretations can be made, without, however, dictating how these interpretations are to be weighted amongst each other. Thus, theologians can choose from a range of narratives and stances according to the historical and sociopolitical situation in which they find themselves. In order to understand better the choices made by the three Islamically oriented papers, we will now once again turn to the position of Islam in Turkey, by examining the attitude of the socialist newspaper *Cumhuriyet*.

The Sociopolitical Matrix

Having looked at the theological reaction of three Islamic daily newspapers to a natural catastrophe and having mapped out the Qur'anic warrant for this reaction, our analysis has given us a conclusive range of theological strategies open to the Muslim confronted with such a disaster. However, we have also seen that this range is flexible enough to allow theology to be influenced by society,

[92]Ibid., 163.

politics, and other circumstances that are tied to specific times and places.

Without repeating the contents of our historical section or the positions and actions condemned by the Islamic media above, here we will lay out the argumentative background for the position that the state, army, and wide sections of the Turkish population have adopted vis-à-vis the media mouthpieces of Islam in connection with the earthquake. As an ardent supporter of the Turkish military (the ultimate opinion maker in Turkey), and fueled by a strong suspicion of religion, *Cumhuriyet* offered a comprehensive account of this position throughout the month following the disaster.

In *Cumhuriyet,* religious media and aid groups are eyed with extreme suspicion and cynicism and are seen as exploiting the earthquake and the aid effort as an ideological tool to convert people to their cause. In this context, the government's freezing of some Islamic aid accounts is seen as a positive step.

Islamic media and organizations are criticized on various specific grounds: they, supposedly, only belatedly joined the help effort and then, allegedly, tried to drive other groups of helpers away by force. It is claimed that religious groups hijack foreign aid arriving at airports in order to distribute it in their own name, that the money they collect for aid ends up in Saudi Arabian bank accounts, that, while distributing aid, they discriminate between men and women, and that their aid only targets groups they perceive as a possible source of support. Further, through their identification of specific groups, like the military, as being culpable for the earthquake, the Islamic media are seen as trying to provoke religious riots.

In *Cumhuriyet's* reactions to theology concerning the earthquake, a lack of deep understanding coupled with open rejection is evident, confirming many of the grievances of Islamic writers regarding Turkish society. To take a few examples, it is simplistically assumed that the suffering of innocents cannot be squared with the notion of a loving God, and many of the—canonically sound—connections made by the Islamic media between the state of the country and the earthquake meet with rejection, ridicule, and outrage. On the other hand, writers at *Cumhuriyet* correctly opine that religious interpreters

of the earthquake see it as an opportunity to promote political Islam and, ultimately, the rule of *şeriat.*

One group describes the religious faction as haters of women and enemies of science who exploit religion for their personal and political aims, using it, as Marx put it, as the "opium of the people"—as a tool for silencing, exploiting, and tyrannizing over the masses. It is claimed that religious rule in a country equals oppression, and many Islamic countries are cited as examples. A religious, as opposed to secular, education is seen as discouraging critical and rational thought, thus enslaving and debilitating the minds of individuals, especially of women, who are perceived as being turned by religious education into slaves and satellites of their male keepers.

Other writers are aware that a full recognition of Islam, even when not exploited by power-hungry opportunists, entails adoption of a religious code normatively regulating the society in question. These writers see democracy and *şeriat* as incompatible (without going to the trouble of explaining which specific version of Islamic law they have in mind), opining that democracy and Turkey's modern legal system are a progress from and improvement upon Islamic law. Therefore, they openly reject many basic Islamic tenets, claiming that the religion must go through an internal "reform" that will make it content to exist side by side with a secular state before it can be allowed to exercise its potentially antidemocratic influence on politics and society through parties and other organizations.[93]

What we are dealing with here, then, is not just ignorance or heedless transgression of an established religious code in society. Rather, it is a case of conscious questioning and rejection of such a code, the idea of which had already become relativized at the founding of the Turkish Republic. Furthermore, this attitude is not the isolated opinion of a radical newspaper, but rather reflects, to a fair degree, the stance of the military and the government, as exemplified in their policies against *irtica,* and of "mainstream" mass media. In light of these facts, combined with the supposed moral decay in society emphasized by the Islamic papers, it seems understandable that vocal supporters of Islam should, in their

[93]c25/27/28/30a, c3/4/6-8/10-12/18s.

evaluation of the earthquake, lay their emphasis on sins, punishment, fire, and brimstone. This position is best understood, in consonance with our historical assessment of the punishment-narrative, as an extreme resort of a group perceiving and fighting against its supposedly waning influence in society.

Conclusions

In this paper, after taking a brief look at the history of secularization and secularism in Turkey, we have outlined what theological causes and hoped-for effects three Turkish Islamic daily newspapers have posited for the earthquake that occurred in Turkey on 17 August 1999. We have then sought to establish, first, the Qur'anic and, second, the sociopolitical matrix within which these newspapers have operated. The first analysis has enabled us to assess the canonical validity of the papers' theological claims while the second has shown us the "outside" factors that determine how these claims have been weighted and presented. Here, following, is the picture that emerges:

The Islamic papers posit three principal instrumentalist causes for the earthquake. The first concerns the wrath of God, the second his mercy, and the third his function as a tester of his people through positive and negative events. Of these three, the first is regarded as the primary reason for the earthquake while the other two are intended mainly to console those who have lost lives and property to the earthquake and receive much less exposure than the aspect of wrath. Correspondingly, in regard to the "ideal" effects of such a catastrophe, the lion's share of hopes concerns a "bettering" of society: the importance of the religion of Islam is repeatedly emphasized and connected with hopes for the recognition of its commandments in private and public life.

In confirming this stance through an analysis of relevant Qur'anic passages, it became evident that, first, the theological handling of the earthquake by the Islamic newspapers is canonically justified and, second, that the canonically possible range of interpretations is, nevertheless, wide and flexible enough to allow the individual theologian to lay greater stress on one or the other of the valid assessments.

The selection and weighting performed by the theologian must be a reflection of the theologian's historical and sociopolitical circumstances. To assess these more closely, we turned to a fourth newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*. By correlating *Cumhuriyet*'s stance with that of the military, the great majority of the duly elected members of parliament—including the government—and the societal behavior patterns criticized by the Islamic newspapers, we came across the picture of a society significantly alienated from, ignorant of, and/or in conflict with some of the most basic tenets of its almost unanimously professed religion.

"Every Turk today . . . feels himself in a state of ambiguity with regard to religion. This is related undoubtedly to the present-day conditions of our society and might be a product of the rapid changes that we are undergoing, but one can claim that this condition is going to persist."[94] These words, written as early as 1927, are uncannily valid for today's Turkey as much as they—perhaps inevitably—were for a nation that had come into existence only five years ago. There is, however, nothing inevitable about the situation in Turkey today, for polarization there between "secular" and "religious" forces is as rife as the "religious schizophrenia" of the common people regarding how to act and whom to believe. It is in this context that the religious media's neglect of milder interpretations in favor of the punishment-narrative must be regarded: in a society torn by various "truths," the media are aggressively—albeit without overstepping the canonical boundaries of their tradition—trying to get their voice heard.

While the punishment-narrative is a legitimate Qur'anic motif to invoke, our analysis of its historical area of application has revealed that it was used in a context—that of nonacceptance and persecution of Islam and of its Prophet and followers by the idolaters of Mecca—which, in its harshness, is hardly comparable to present-day Turkey, where there might be limitations on the religion of Islam, but where, nonetheless, almost the entire population is Muslim and showing no sign of abandoning the religion.

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[94]Mehmet Izzet in *Hayat* 2 (14 July 1927), 33:122, quoted in Berkes.

On the other hand, the treatment that Islam and its supporters have received at the hands of the military, state, and sections of the media in Turkey has struck this author as being misrepresentation and also as being unduly prohibitive and harsh. The assessment of the Muslim groups as power-hungry fanatics who are out to spread oppression and ignorance in the country has not been borne out by our analysis, which makes it difficult to see how the extent of antireligious legislation, action, and sentiment displayed by the latter groups can be justified.

Unfortunately, it is this uncompromising stance—both on the part of the Islamic media and on the part of their detractors—that today maintains a deadlock that originates in the times of the Ottoman Empire and continues into Turkey's history today. Both the resources of a secular, democratic state and the immense richness of the Islamic religion (as amply demonstrated in this document) offer better solutions for Turkey's future than relentless rigidity or aggression. It remains to be seen whether people will be able to step outside their *nefs* enough to rediscover and emphasize the doctrines of love and tolerance expressed in their various traditions—religious and secular alike.

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Is Vegetarianism Un-Islamic?

Richard C. Foltz[*]

> All your life you have been drinking the blood and eating the flesh of animals without realizing what you have been doing. You love flesh and enjoy murder. If you had any conscience or any sense of justice, if you were born as a true human being, you would think about this. God is looking at me and you. Tomorrow his truth and his justice will inquire into this. You must realize this.
>
> M. R. Bawa Muhaiyadeen, *Come to the Secret Garden: Sufi Tales of Wisdom* (Philadelphia: Fellowship Press, 1985), 26.

An estimated 20 percent of the world's population—over one billion people—claims Muslim identity. Though Muslims now inhabit every corner of the globe and live in societies as diverse as those of West Africa, Central Asia, the Philippines, and the United States, one social factor that they all seem to share is the eating of meat. Ethical questions surrounding the use of animals for food are not raised in the legal literature of classical Islam, and, even today, any serious discourse on the viability of an "Islamic" vegetarianism is difficult to find.

The Islamic scholar Mawil Izzi Dien, in his recent book *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*, goes so far as to assert the following:

> According to Islamic Law there are no grounds upon which one can argue that animals should not be killed for food. The Islamic legal opinion on this issue is based on clear Qur'anic verses. Muslims are not only prohibited from eating certain food, but also may not choose to prohibit themselves food that is allowed by Islam. Accordingly

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> vegetarianism is not permitted unless on grounds such as unavailability or medical necessity. Vegetarianism is not allowed under the pretext of giving priority to the interest of animals because such decisions are God's prerogative.[1]

In other words, according to Izzi Dien, not only is there no such thing as Islamic vegetarianism, to be a vegetarian is un-Islamic! Such a blanket dismissal of the very possibility of an Islamic vegetarianism, however, is not warranted. Throughout history, numerous Muslims have practiced vegetarianism, in many cases for reasons of piety. Since early times, many South Asian Sufis, for example, have been vegetarian, including many members of the Chishti order, the Suhrawardi saint Hamid al-din Nagori, and others.[2] Though some have attributed this to Hindu or Buddhist influence, among the Sufis of North Africa and the Ottoman world, saints were often believed to take animal form, and vegetarian anecdotes were widely told.[3] An early female Sufi, Zaynab, is said to have been persecuted for her refusal to eat meat.[4]

Today, a growing number of Muslims throughout the world are practicing vegetarian lifestyles, not only in the West but in traditional Islamic environments as well. The animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has launched, at the suggestion of its Muslim members, a website on Islam and vegetarianism.[5] In Turkey, which has several national vegetarian organizations, an old Istanbul neighborhood known as "Non-meat-eater" (*Etyemecz*) derives its name from the vegetarian practices of a

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[1]Mawil Izzi Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (Cambridge, England: Lutterworth, 2000), 146.

[2] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 348, 358.

[3]Emile Dermenghem, *La culte des saints dans l'Islam Maghrebin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 97-101.

[4]Margaret Smith, *The Way of the Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 154-162.

[5]www.islamveg.com.

Sufi sect.[6] Iran has at least one registered vegetarian society, the Sana and Shafa Vegetarians' Association, based in Tehran.[7]

An Anthropocentric Tradition

Throughout the Qur'an's fourteen-hundred-year history, Muslim commentators on the Islamic Scripture have been both forthright and unapologetic in asserting an anthropocentric worldview. "Verily," the Qur'an states, "we create man in the best conformation" (95:4).[8] Humanity is described in the Qur'an as the "vicegerent" (*khalifah*) of God on earth (2:30; 6:165; 35:39), entrusted with the stewardship of maintaining the balance and order of Creation.

The Qur'an has usually been read as allowing the eating of meat, as in verse 5:1 which reads:

> O you who have attained to faith! Be true to your covenants! Lawful to you is [the flesh of] every beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter]: but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in a state of pilgrimage. Behold, God ordains in accordance with his will.

A similar permission has been perceived in 6:145:

> Say: "In all that has been revealed unto me, I do not find anything forbidden to eat, if one wants to eat thereof, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine—for that, behold, is loathsome—or a sinful offering over which any name other than God's has been invoked. But if one is driven by necessity—neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need—then [know that], behold, thy Sustainer is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace."

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[6]Ibrahim Tütüncüoğlu, "The Past and Current Situation of Vegetarianism in Turkey," *European Vegetarian Union News*, (1998), 4 and (1999), 1: online version: www. ivu.org/evu/English/news/index.html.

[7]Baquer Namazi, "Environmental NGOs," *Situational Analysis of NGOs in Iran* (Tehran: United Nations Development Programme, 2000), appendix.

[8]Qur'anic citations are given from Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).

According to the Qur'an, then, meat eating might seem to be, except under specified conditions, pleasing to God. Since it is incumbent upon Muslims to live in a way that is pleasing to God in every detail, not to eat meat if God wishes us to would constitute an act of infidelity.

Islam's historical tensions with Buddhism (and, in India, with Hinduism), seen as an idol-worshipping religion, provide a further "guilt by association" argument against vegetarianism. The seventh/thirteenth century legal scholar 'Izz ad-Din b. 'Abd as-Salam, in his *Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam*, observes:

> The unbeliever who prohibits the slaughtering of an animal [for no reason but] to achieve the interest of the animal is incorrect because in so doing he gives preference to a lower, *khasis*, animal over a higher, *nafis*, animal.[9]

An earlier traditional jurist, Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1062), provides an argument against moral consideration being extended to animals that is later echoed by those heard in nineteenth-century England when he writes that "the laws of Allah are only applicable to those who possess the ability to speak and can understand them."[10] The faculty of speech has long been proposed as a major criterion of human uniqueness, and some would make this argument even today. But such reasoning can, in light of our improved understanding of animal communication, be turned on its head; it could actually be used in *support* of making animals morally considerable. Even in the Qur'an, one finds a verse that seems to run counter to Ibn Hazm's claim: "And [in this insight] Solomon was [truly] David's heir; and he would say: 'O you people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and have been given [in abundance] of all [good] things: this, behold, is indeed a manifest favour [from God]!'" (27:16). Of course, it remains unclear to most humans what laws Allah may have established for

[9]Izz ad-Din b. 'Abd as-Salam, *Qawa'id al-Ahkam fi Masalih al-Anam*, cited in Izzi Dien, 146.

[10]Ibn Hazm, *Al-Fisal fi l-Milal wa l-Ahwa' wa n-Nihal*, 5 vols. (Cairo: [Available from] Muhammad 'Ali Subayh, 1964), 1:69.

other species and how they may or may not differ from those laid down for humans.

Compassion for Animals

Within the admitted hierarchy of Creation in which human beings occupy the highest rank, the Qur'an and the Sunnah nevertheless strongly enjoin Muslims to treat animals with compassion and not to abuse them. The Qur'an states that all creation praises God, even if this praise is not expressed in human language (17:44). The Qur'an further states: "There is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature on two wings, but they are communities like unto you" (6:38). Thus, when in the nature of things (*fitrah*), the Muslim must kill in order to survive, Muhammad called for compassion: "If you kill, kill well, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters."[11] He is reported to have said on another occasion, "For [charity shown to] each creature which has a wet heart [i.e., is alive], there is a reward." He opposed recreational hunting, saying that "whoever shoots at a living creature for sport is cursed." In another *hadith*, the Prophet is said to have reprimanded some men who were sitting idly on their camels in the marketplace, saying, "Either ride them or leave them alone." He is also reported to have said, "There is no man who kills [even] a sparrow or anything smaller, without its deserving it, but Allah will question him about it [on the Day of Judgement]," and, "Whoever is kind to the creatures of God, is kind to himself."[12]

Classical Islamic law prescribes that domestic animals should not be overburdened or otherwise mistreated or put at risk, that their young should not be killed in their sight, that they should be given adequate shelter and rest, and that males and females should be allowed to be together during mating season. The legal category of water rights extends to animals through the law of "the right of

[11] *Sahih Muslim*, 2/11, "Slaying," 10:739.
[12] Cited in B. A. Masri, *Islamic Concern for Animals* (Petersfield, United Kingdom: The Athene Trust), 1987, 4.

thirst" (*haqq ash-shurb*).[13] The *Sahih Bukhari* mentions two contrasting stories with particular relevance to the treatment of animals. In one, a woman is condemned to hell because she has mistreated a cat; in another, a sinner is saved by the grace of Allah after he gives water to a dog dying of thirst. In the observation of G. H. Bousquet, Islam thus "condemns to hell those who mistreat animals, and . . . more importantly, accords extraordinary grace to those who do them good."[14]

Possibly the richest material that Muslim civilization has produced in regard to animal rights is a tenth-century treatise entitled *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn* by an anonymous group of philosophers who called themselves the *Ikhwan as-Safa*, or "Pure Brethren." In this unusual work, representatives from the animal kingdom bring a court case against the human race whom they accuse of abusing their position. The animals point out that before the creation of man, they roamed the earth in peace and harmony, what might be called in contemporary language "natural balance":

> We were fully occupied in caring for our broods and rearing our young with all the good food and water God had allotted us, secure and unmolested in our own lands. Night and day we praised and sanctified God, and God alone.
>
> Ages passed and God created Adam, father of mankind, and made him his viceregent on earth. His offspring reproduced, and his seed multiplied. They spread over the earth—land and sea, mountain and plain. Men encroached on our ancestral lands. They captured sheep, cows, horses, mules, and asses from among us and enslaved them, subjecting them to the exhausting toil and drudgery of hauling, being ridden, plowing, drawing water, and turning mills. They forced us to these things under duress, with beatings, bludgeonings, and every kind of torture and chastisement our whole lives long. Some of us fled to

[13]James L., Wescoat, Jr., "The 'Right of Thirst' for Animals in Islamic Law: A Comparative Approach," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13 (1995), 6:637-654.

[14]G. H. Bousquet, "Des animaux et de leur traitment selon le Judaïsme, le Christianisme et l'Islam," *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958), 1:41. These *hadiths* are retold in a recent book for Muslim children, *Love All Creatures* by M. S. Kayani (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1997 [1981]).

> deserts, wastelands, or mountaintops, but the Adamites pressed after us, hunting us with every kind of wile and device. Whoever fell into their hands was yoked, haltered, and fettered. They slaughtered and flayed him, ripped open his belly, cut off his limbs and broke his bones, tore out his eyes; plucked his feathers or sheared off his hair or fleece, and put him onto the fire to be cooked, or on the spit to be roasted, or subjected him to even more dire tortures, whose full extent is beyond description. Despite these cruelties, these sons of Adam are not through with us but must claim that this is their inviolable right, that they are our masters and we are their slaves, deeming any of us who escapes a fugitive, rebel, shirker of duty—all with no proof or explanation beyond main force.[15]

The Brethren's view of the natural world is all the more striking for its exceptionality in the context of fourth/tenth-century Muslim society. They were a radical group, as indicated by their choice to remain anonymous, and, in subsequent centuries, only the heterodox Sevener-Shi'i or Isma'ili sect, identified today with the Aga Khan, adopted their writings as authoritative. Yet it may be that, in regard to animal rights, the Pure Brethren were (like St. Francis in Catholicism) simply ahead of their time and, as such, may have more to teach us in the twenty-first century than they did to Muslims of their own era.

At least one contemporary Islamic legal scholar has taken issue with the dominant anthropocentric view of animal rights. In the Preface to his book *Islamic Concern for Animals*, the late B. A. Masri (formerly imam of the Shah Jehan mosque in Woking, England) states his opinion that "life on this earth is so intertwined as an homogeneous unit that it cannot be disentangled for the melioration of one species at the expense of the other."[16] Masri understands the superiority of the human species to consist only in its spiritual volition (*taqwa*), that is, its capacity to make moral choices. Without this distinction, Masri believes, the differences between humans and other animal species are superficial.[17]

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[15]Lenn Evan Goodman, trans., *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 5-6.
[16]Masri, *Islamic Concern for Animals*, vii.
[17]Ibid., 4.

In fact, animals, Masri notes, can even be humanity's teachers. 'Ali, the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law, is reported to have said, "Be like a bee; anything he eats is clean, anything he drops is sweet and any branch he sits upon does not break." Despite all this, however, Masri stops short of discussing the option of vegetarianism. His concern is with eliminating the kinds of unnecessary cruelty and exploitation of animals that he sees as prevalent in modern society, such as laboratory testing.[18] He writes:

> To kill animals to satisfy the human thirst for inessentials is a contradiction in terms within the Islamic tradition. Think of the millions of animals killed, in the name of commercial enterprises, in order to supply a complacent public with trinkets and products they do not really need. And why? Because we are too lazy or too self-indulgent to find substitutes.[19]

The received dogma that entire species of animals exist primarily for us to eat, meanwhile, escapes Masri's critique more or less intact. It is curious that, in condemning the killing of animals for "inessentials," Masri fails to include meat-eating as the one inessential use for which more animals are killed than any other. He mentions all manner of alternatives to the abuse of animals for so-called scientific purposes, without ever acknowledging, much less exploring, the many healthful alternatives to a meat-based diet. Only in the last sentence of a lengthy discussion on the cruelties of factory-farming does Masri (himself a vegetarian) suggest, "Some may decide that the products of intensive factory farms are not suitable, both from the religious and the health point of view, and seek more naturally produced eggs and meat; or give up eating meat altogether."[20]

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[18]B. A. Masri, "Animal Experimentation: The Muslim Viewpoint," in Tom Regan, ed., *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 171-197.

[19]Masri, *Islamic Concern for Animals*, 17.

[20]Ibid., 28. Near the end of his treatise, Masri finally raises the question of "why Islam, with all its concern for animals, has allowed its followers to consume their meat and did not ask them to become vegetarian, like some other religions" (31). He does not follow up with an answer, however, putting it off to a proposed but

The late Sri Lankan Sufi teacher, M. R. Bawa Muhaiyadeen, puts the matter somewhat more strongly. "My children," he writes, "we must be aware of everything we do. All young animals have love and compassion. And if we remember that every creation was young once, we will never kill another life. We will not harm or attack any living creature."[21]

Of course, ethical concern for the rights of animals does not necessarily lead to vegetarianism, nor is it the only possible justification for it. Another major motivation is human health. Especially among Sufis, austerities aimed at purifying the body have sometimes entailed abstention from animal flesh. The Indian saint Shaykh Nasir ad-Din Mahmud (d. 757/1356), known as "The Lamp of Delhi," ate plain rice, or rice with lentils (a mixture we now know to be protein-complementary!), or else bread and sometimes melons and sweets.[22] Such practices were not limited to the Indian environment. Even Hellenistically influenced Sufis have sometimes shunned meat-eating as nourishing the "animal soul" or *nafs* (also called "the lower self"). Muhyi ad-Din ibn 'Arabi, in his *Risalat al-Anwar*, admonishes the reader to "[b]e careful of your diet. It is better if your food be nourishing but devoid of animal fat."[23] In his commentary on this passage, 'Abd al-Karim ibn Ibrahim al-Jili notes that this is "because animal fat strengthens animality, and its principles will dominate spiritual principles."[24]

Of course, mainstream Islam has never encouraged asceticism in the way many Sufi traditions have. But in light of present-day scientific perspectives on nutritional health, it is clear that Muslims can enjoy physical as well as spiritual benefits from a vegetarian diet.

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apparently never completed second volume of his work. (Masri passed away in 1993.)

[21]M. R. Bawa Muhaiyadeen, 28.

[22]Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nasir-u'd-din Chiragh-i-Delhi* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyyat, 1991), 57, citing Sayyid Muhammad Gisu Daraz, *Jawami' al-Kalim*, 162. I am grateful to Emil Ansarov for alerting me to this and the following two references.

[23]Muhyi ad-Din ibn 'Arabi, *Risalat al-Anwar*, trans. Rabia Terri Harris, *Journey to the Lord of Power* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions International, 1989 [1981]), 31.

[24]'Abd al-Karim ibn Ibrahim al-Jili, *Isfar 'an Risalat al-Anwar*, in Harris, 81.

Both aspects would seem to be fully compatible with established Islamic principles of animal rights.

Social Justice in Islam

The Prophet Muhammad was one of history's great social reformers. He lived at a time of social change and upheaval in western Arabia, a time when some families were enjoying untold wealth while others suffered in deprivation. Consequently, social justice is one of the major themes of the Qur'an.[25] Muhammad's insistent preaching against the hypocrisy and selfishness of Mecca's wealthy elite is certainly a major factor accounting for the persecution suffered by the early Muslim community.

In most societies today, meat-eating remains by and large a privilege of the wealthy. This is a privilege that comes at a cost not only to the animals who are slaughtered for the tables of the rich, but also in the form of chronic hunger for 20 percent of the world's human population, a disproportionate number of whom are Muslims. Even while so many human beings go permanently malnourished, more than half of all land under cultivation is given over to crops destined for livestock consumption. As contemporary philosopher Peter Singer, guru of the Animal Liberation movement, puts it, "The raising of animals for food by the methods used in the industrial nations does not contribute to the solution of the hunger problem. On the contrary, it aggravates it enormously."[26] It is worth noting that Middle Eastern countries now import much of their meat from places such as New Zealand and that factory-farming (in which animal remains are typically fed to other animals) presents considerable difficulties in verifying whether meat is *halal*.

A growing body of contemporary literature asserts that Islam contains strong directives about environmental stewardship, centering on the notion that Allah has appointed humans as

[25]See, for example, Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
[26]Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York: Random House, 1975), 180.

vicegerents (*khulafa'*) over Creation.[27] This discussion has so far failed, however, to emphasize connections between issues of environmental degradation and meat-eating. Among the many other harmful effects of industrial-scale meat production are the clearing of tropical forests for grazing land, the pollution of water supplies by factory farms, and the feeding of hormones and antibiotics to livestock, which then adversely affect human consumers.

While the fact remains that a few small human societies (mainly pastoral groups in arid climates) are still ecologically constrained to diets based on animal products,[28] for the vast majority of Muslims, the eating of meat is not only unnecessary but is also directly responsible for causing grave ecological and social harm, as well as being less healthful than a balanced vegetarian regime. Given these considerations, the absence of a serious contemporary Islamic discourse on the benefits of vegetarianism is nothing less than astonishing.

To Kill or Not to Kill?

One issue that many Muslims connect with meat-eating is the customary sacrifice performed once a year on the occasion of 'Eid al-Adha, commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. On this day, Muslims traditionally slaughter an animal they can afford, from a sheep to a camel, and distribute the meat to the poor as an act of charity. However, twice during the 1990s, King Hassan

[27]See, besides Izzi Dien, Akhtaruddin Ahmad, *Islam and the Environmental Crisis* (London: Ta-ha Publishers, 1997); Abou Bakr Ahmed Ba Kader et al., eds., *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment* (Gland, Switzerland: International Union for the Conservation of the Natural Environment, 1983); S. Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi, 2000 [1967]); Iqtidar H. Zaidi, "On the Ethics of Man's Interaction with the Environment: An Islamic Approach" *Environmental Ethics* 3 (1981), 1:35-47; the essays in Harfiya Abdel Haleem, ed., *Islam and the Environment* (London: Ta-ha Publishers, 1998); Fazlun Khalid and Joanne O'Brien, eds., *Islam and Ecology* (New York: Cassell, 1992); and my "Is There an Islamic Environmentalism?" *Environmental Ethics* 22 (2000), 1:63-72.

[28]S. Hossein Nasr, plenary address, Islam and Ecology conference, Harvard University, 8 May 1998.

of Morocco banned this slaughter for economic reasons, citing the well-being of his Muslim subjects.

In any event, ritual slaughter in Islam is merely customary, and not prescribed by law.[29] In a recent essay, Muslim publisher Shahid 'Ali Muttaqi argues against the necessity of performing the traditional sacrifice on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. Contrasting Islam with Judaism and Christianity, he points out that "the notion of 'vicarious atonement for sin' is nowhere to be found in the Qur'an. Neither is the idea of gaining favor by offering the life of another to God. All that is demanded as a sacrifice is one's personal willingness to submit one's ego and individual will to Allah."[30] Muttaqi concludes that the existence of animal sacrifice in Islamic custom derives from the norms and conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society, and not from Islam itself:

> Animals are mentioned in the Qur'an in relation to sacrifice only because in that time, place, and circumstance, animals were the means of survival. In those desert lands, humans were intricately tied up in the natural cycle, and as a part of that, they killed and were killed like every other species of that area. Islam offered conditions to regulate life in that time and place, ensuring the best possible treatment for all under those circumstances, while at the same time broadening people's understanding of life to include a spiritual dimension and a respect for all life as a part of a unified whole. But let us not assume for a minute that we are forever stuck in those circumstances, or that the act of eating meat, or killing an animal is what makes one a Muslim.[31]

Even if one is to accord a cultural (as opposed to strictly religious) value to practices such as the Eid al-Adha sacrifice, it may be noted that a number of religious traditions, including Judaism, Vedism, and others, historically evolved metaphorical substitutions for blood sacrifice; it is therefore not inconceivable that such a development could occur in the future within Islam.

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[29]Philip J. Stewart, "Islamic Law as a Factor in Grazing Management: the Pilgrimage Sacrifice," in *Proceedings of the First International Rangeland Congress* (Denver, Colorado: Society for Range Management, 1978), 119-20.

[30]Shahid 'Ali Muttaqi, "The Sacrifice of 'Eid al-Adha': An Islamic Perspective Against Animal Sacrifice" (www.islamveg.com/sacri.html), 2.

[31]Muttaqi, 5.

The Qur'an and Sunnah have been shown to enjoin Muslims to treat animals with compassion. This is clearly reflected in the established procedure for *halal* slaughter. It should be obvious, however, that not slaughtering the animal at all would be even more compassionate. As strong as the theme of compassion in Islam is demonstrated to be, the line allowing for "humane" killing seems arbitrarily drawn. As Oliver Goldsmith remarked in regard to certain members of eighteenth-century English society, "They pity, and they eat the objects of their compassion."[32] Peter Singer suggests that "practically and psychologically it is impossible to be consistent in one's concern for nonhuman animals while continuing to dine on them."[33] Since, unlike in early times, most Muslims today are not constrained to eat meat for their survival, 'Ali Muttaqi enjoins Muslims to "cease to do so merely for the satisfaction of ravenous cravings which are produced by nothing more than our *nafs* ("lower self")."[34]

It is often remarked, especially by hunters, that since the natural predators of so many animals have been suffering dramatically declining numbers, prey species are in many places proliferating beyond control and should, therefore, be hunted by humans. One recent case in India concerned the *nilgai*, or "blue cow." With the disappearance of tigers, the *nilgai* population has exploded, but Hindus will not allow the species to be hunted because of its name. In desperation, some Indian Muslims have resorted to the cry, "For God's sake, let's not call it a blue cow. Let's call it a blue bull, and kill it!"[35]

What this sort of argument overlooks, of course, is that population imbalances such as that of the *nilgai* have been brought on by gross human alterations of habitats, such as those of predators like the tiger. The reasoning, then, is one of punishing the victim. Is this, we may ask, the approach of a conscientious *khalifah*?

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[32]Oliver Goldsmith, "The Citizen of the World," in *Collected Works*, 5 vols., ed. A. Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 2:60.
[33]Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 172.
[34]Muttaqi, 6.
[35]Related by Muhammad Aslam Parvaiz at the Islam and Ecology conference, Harvard University, 8 May 1998.

A more sympathetic example can be found in a story about the eighth-century female Muslim mystic Rabi'ah of Basrah. According to the medieval hagiography of Farid ad-Din 'Attar:

> It is related that one day Rabi'a had gone up on a mountain. Wild goats and gazelles gathered around, gazing upon her. Suddenly, Hasan Basri [another well-known early Muslim mystic] appeared. All the animals shied away. When Hasan saw that, he was perplexed and said, "Rabi'a, why do they shy away from me when they were so intimate with you?"
> Rabi'a said, "What did you eat today?"
> "Soup."
> "You ate their lard. How would they not shy away from you?"[36]

'Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri (d. 465/1074) tells a similar story about Ibrahim ibn Adham, who, it is said, liked to go hunting. One day, as he was pursuing an antelope, he heard a voice asking him, "O Ibrahim, is it for this that We have created you?" Immediately, he got down from his horse, gave his fine clothes to a shepherd in exchange for a wool tunic, and assumed the life of a wandering dervish.[37]

Food for Thought

Islam has a long tradition of interpreting (*ijtihad*) divine revelation to meet the needs and conditions of the present age. Factory farms did not exist in seventh-century Arabia, nor were large percentages of arable land being used for fodder crops in preference to food for humans while 20 percent of the world's population went chronically malnourished. Traditional Arab pastoralists needed animal products in order to survive, yet their practices did not result in the destruction of entire ecosystems. For the most part, the early community lacked the vast dietary alternatives available to most Muslims today, and, unlike us, they were unaware of the connections between meat-eating and heart disease, colon cancer, obesity, and other maladies.

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[36]Farid ad-Din 'Attar, *Tazkirat al-Awliya*, trans. Paul Losensky and Michael Sells, in Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996), 160.
[37]Qushayri, cited in Dermenghem, 100.

Times have changed. But, for a contemporary Islamic legal scholar to make a case for vegetarianism, the Qur'an-based objections raised by Izzi Dien at the beginning of this article would have to be addressed. I am not a qualified legal scholar, so the following brief attempt to suggest how this task might be approached is offered only for purposes of initiating discussion. The verse cited above—"The beast of cattle is made lawful unto you [for food]" (5:1)—might be compared with other verses (16:5, 66; 40:79), where the wording is equally general. The theme common to these verses is that of deriving sustenance; in 16:66, milk is explicitly mentioned, whereas 40:79 begins, "It is Allah who provided for you all manner of livestock, that you may ride on some of them and from some of them you may derive your food."

The gloss "flesh of"" in verse 5:1 is merely inserted into English translations, being absent in the original Arabic. Moreover, the prohibition of hunting while on pilgrimage would seem to indicate that it is an impure act, which might best be refrained from altogether. Likewise, in interpreting the permission in 6:145, which extends even to forbidden meat "if one is driven by necessity," one might choose to generalize the condition of dire need to meat-eating in general.

A vegetarian interpretation of these and other Qur'anic verses will not be without problems. In several verses, the eating of meat is mentioned as one of the pleasures of paradise (52:22; 56:21).[38] Nevertheless, it would appear that, in arguments such as Izzi Dien's, we have the perspective of meat-eating Muslims seeking the kind of interpretation that will support a carnivorous status quo. Muslims committed to ethical vegetarianism, therefore, might interpret the Qur'an to the opposite end with equal success.

Given all these considerations, it is not inconceivable that at some point in the future, Muslim legal scholars will find a basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah for encouraging vegetarianism. Indeed, in cases where abstention from meat does not endanger the welfare of

[38]I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out these verses to me. Of course, likening meat to other heavenly pleasures forbidden on earth could be compatible with some, though not all, arguments for vegetarianism.

Muslims, perhaps some will even issue *fatwa*s ("legal opinions") classifying meat-eating as *makruh* (the category of discouraged acts whose commission brings no punishment but abstention from which brings reward). This is an admittedly extreme speculation, yet, in light of the extreme injustices connected with meat-eating in the contemporary world, both toward animals and toward human beings, it is perhaps not an entirely outlandish one. That is for the jurists to discuss. In any event, at the very least, one can hope to hear more in the way of Islamic critique of factory-farming as being incompatible with the clearly established Islamic principles of compassion toward animals.[39]

It cannot be denied that, since the inception of Islamic civilization fourteen centuries ago, a dietary norm of meat-eating has gone largely unquestioned by Muslims, who have interpreted the traditional sources in ways that have affirmed a carnivorous diet. But from the standpoints of human health, social justice, ecological stewardship, and compassion toward nonhuman creation, it can be seen that a vegetarian lifestyle may in fact be preferable for Muslims. Such a lifestyle is not incompatible with the teachings of the Islamic tradition, which can actually be read in ways that fully support vegetarianism.

[39]My anonymous reviewer, citing the Malikite jurist Shatibi's concept of *maslahah* (that is, a ruling for the common good that is compatible with the *Shari'ah*, even though it is not found in it explicitly), suggests the possibility of an approach whereby "compassion, as one of the overarching principles of Islamic religion, takes precedence over specific legal prescriptions."

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Wilfred Cantwell Smith in Lahore 1940-1951

Sheila McDonough[*]

> When I was a questioning undergraduate in the Depression, God spoke to me more effectively through the words of Amos than He did through Christ. This was not so ten years earlier.[1]
>
> One may remember the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order. Some of us tried to do our little bit to make life Christian in that significant sense.[2]
>
> Relatively few have thought the thesis [that non-Christian faith is partial, whereas Christian faith is final, perfect] through carefully, and self-consciously defended it. [One who has is H. H. Farmer.][3]

These three quotations indicate something of what Smith wanted his readers to understand about his own background. He had been a questioning undergraduate, a person whose conscience was stirred up by the Biblical prophet Amos; an admirer of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, and a graduate student in England reflecting on whether the Christian faith should be considered partial or final and perfect.

While an undergraduate, Smith became committed to the left-wing perspectives of the Christian social gospel movement. This is the implication of his comment about the importance of the prophet Amos for him as a young man. As an active member of the Student

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[1]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Questions of Religious Truth* (New York: Scribners, 1967), 92.

[2]Smith, *Questions of Religious Truth*, 110.

[3]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), 328, 329, n. 1.

Christian Movement (SCM) during his undergraduate days at the University of Toronto, he had moved away from the conservative theological and political attitudes characteristic of the members of the Knox Presbyterian Church that his family had attended. His father seems to have represented to him somewhat stern Presbyterian values. The father had opposed joining other Presbyterians in the new United Church of Canada that was established in 1925. Smith's mother, Sarah Cory Cantwell Smith, came from an American Methodist background and seems to have communicated to her son feeling for religious poetry and interest in foreign missions. He had visited Egypt with his mother when he was seventeen. His mother was descended from the Cory family, one of the families that had suffered persecution during the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts, at the end of the seventeenth century.[4]

The young Smith developed during his SCM days a readiness to ask questions. One of his professors, Stewart McCullough, had trained him in careful study of ancient Near Eastern history and religion. During his undergraduate days, he had wrestled with the conflicts between science and religion; Arthur Eddington's writings on science and religion had led the young Smith into new ways of thinking about the size and mystery of the cosmos.[5] The fruits of biblical scholarship also impinged on his mind, notably through participation in comparative study of the gospel records by the Sharman method. This was a method widely used throughout Canadian Christian Student movements in the 1930s and 1940s. Further, Smith's father had lost much of his money as a result of the Depression, and the young Smith was receptive to the criticisms of the capitalist system characteristic of the Christian social thought of the time. The Scottish moral and political philosopher John MacMurray, played a significant role in shaping the thinking of the young Christian socialists of Smith's undergraduate days.[6]

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[4]Marion Starkey, *The Devil in Massachusetts* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 64-75, 106, 207.

[5]Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (London: Everyman, 1935).

[6]Roger Hutchinson, "The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order: A Social Ethical Analysis of a Christian Socialist Movement." Ph.D. Dissertation, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto, 1975. See also Roberta Cameron, "The Making of

The book by Smith's friend, and later colleague, R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets,* tells us something of how the Canadian Christian socialists of the 1930s viewed human history and society.[7] The imperative was to think about contemporary society in the manner of the Hebrew writing prophets, such as Amos and Jeremiah, to express judgment on corruption, and to call for a transformed future. Smith went to Cambridge in 1938 with all these ideas in his mind and found there an even more radical critique of the forces at work in the world. He did not join the Communist Party, but he accepted much of the socialist analysis as to how class shapes ideas. His mental state was probably much like that of many of his contemporaries who went off to fight against fascism in the Spanish civil war. It was a time when the threat of evil and the promise of a transformed future were perceived intensely as an "either-or" choice. He later told me that the tense state of mind that he had encountered among students at Cambridge had affected him greatly.

Many of the students at Oxford and Cambridge in the late 1930s were very disturbed about the rise of fascism, the Spanish civil war, and the threat of impending war. The poet Stephen Spender has characterized the era as the "Pink Decade," a time many young people felt that the conflicts between fascism and socialism were reaching epic proportions.[8] Wilfred Smith had gone to England in 1938. He was studying Christian theology at Cambridge; H. H. Farmer was his tutor. He was also taking classes in Islamic history with H. A. R. Gibb at Oxford. His family reports that he used to bicycle between the two universities.

Smith was a pacifist, as was his Canadian contemporary George Grant, who was also in England at the time. Smith and Grant had

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Wilfred Cantwell Smith's 'World Theology.'" Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Religion, Concordia University, Montreal, 1997. The most influential of John MacMurray's books was *Freedom in the Modern World* (London: Faber and Faber; first published 1932). This book was delivered in a series of lectures over the BBC and received widespread public response. It helped shaped the antifascist attitudes in the English-speaking world of the 1930s.

[7]R. B. Y. Scott, *The Relevance of the Prophets* (New York: MacMillan, 1944).

[8]Stephen Spender, *World within World: The Autobiography of Stephen Spender* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952).

been contemporaries in their secondary-school studies at Upper Canada College in Toronto. In their secondary-school days, a group of students advocated pacifism as the best response to problems of modern war. Grant remained in England to do volunteer ambulance work in London during the bombing raids. He later established, at McMaster University, one of Canada's main centers for the comparative study of religion.[9] Smith, however, in 1939, opted to go as a missionary to Lahore, where he hoped to aid the Indians in getting rid of British imperialism. He believed that World War I had been a conflict between greedy imperialist powers; he hoped that the outbreak of another European war might prove an opportunity for India to obtain freedom from exploitation. He saw himself at that time as devoted to Nehru's cause of working to create a new, free, and socialist India. He thought that if the imperialist powers destroyed themselves in the coming war, a better future might become possible for the former colonies.

In Lahore, the young Canadian taught Islamic history at the Forman Christian College; he also took part regularly in discussions with a group of young Indian intellectuals—Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Christian—who shared his hopes for the future. Some of them taught at Government College, Lahore, or were civil servants. Many of these people remained his lifelong friends. Several of them had studied in British universities before returning to Lahore. It was a milieu that Smith loved. The stimulation of the struggle to articulate the grounds for a better future remained with him always, in spite of much later discouragement and disillusion. Furthermore, for the rest of his life, he continued to see the struggle as one in which people from different traditions could, and should, talk to each other about directions for the future.

This background of the Canadian Christian social gospel, the Cambridge "Pink Decade," and the socialist intellectuals of India is readily discernible in the pages of Smith's first book, *Modern Islam in India,* which was published in Lahore in 1943. The book is a vigorous statement by a young man in his mid-twenties of his passion

[9]William Christian, *George Grant: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

for the immediate implementation of progressive ideals in India. The young man's mentor was Nehru; he was also fascinated by the Muslim poet, Iqbal; and he was committed to a scientific socialist revolution. Quotations from Nehru, Iqbal, and Smith himself may help illuminate the perspectives of the time.

First, Nehru

> The *avatars* of today are great ideas which come to reform the world. And the idea of the day is social equality. Let us listen to it and becomes its instruments to transform the world and make it a better place to live in.[10]

Smith's friends, the progressives of Lahore, were, like Smith himself, pro-Nehru. In 1907, Nehru was a student at Cambridge, where he had become interested in the Fabian Society.[11] Back in India, Nehru, in the heady excitement of the anti-British struggles of 1919-1922, joined the movement for national independence and was several times imprisoned by the British. During his visit to Russia in 1926-1927, the Congress leader had been impressed by much of what he saw.

This Indian reformer was very impatient with all forms of traditional religious thinking because he considered religious leaders to be generally passive about social change, or else as supporters of feudalism. He perceived the religious revivalism of Hindus and Muslims in the 1920s and 1930s as primarily reactionary. Nehru wanted to move India into a better future by, first, getting the British out and, then, by using the power of the state to encourage and guide a form of industrialization that would promote economic and social justice. He did not want to copy the forms of government of the USSR, but rather wanted to use democracy to promote socialism. He thought of religion as largely irrelevant, or hostile to, the kinds of changes he envisioned for India.

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[10]Jawaharlal Nehru, as quoted by P. C. Joshi in "Nehru and Socialism in India," in B. R. Nanda, ed., *Socialism in India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972), 122.
[11]Ibid., 122–139.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and the other socialist Indians in Lahore in the early 1940s, understood Nehru to be their leader in the struggles against imperialist control, against feudalism, and against the exploitation of the Indian poor. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the Congress leaders made their support of Britain in the conflict contingent on the departure of the British from India. The leaders of the Congress, including Nehru, were imprisoned. In 1941, Smith and his wife visited Nehru in Lucknow, where he had been imprisoned.[12]

Second, Iqbal

Iqbal wrote in the poem "God's Command to His Angels":

> Rise, and from their slumber wake the poor ones of My world!
> Shake the walls and windows of the mansions of the great!
> Kindle with the fire of faith the slow blood of the slaves!

Lahore was the city in which the Muslim poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) had spent most of his life. Iqbal had just died two years before Smith arrived in the city. As indicated in above-quoted lines from Iqbal, this Muslim poet also believed that the Indians must throw the British out and start work on creating a better society. Iqbal was older than Nehru and Smith; he had been a mature adult at the time of World War I.

Smith's friends in Lahore were representative of many Indians of that time who were enthused by, stimulated by, angry about, and in diverse ways reacting to, the impact of Iqbal's life and work. It is not surprising that the intellectually alert young Canadian Christian socialist encountered Iqbal's ideas as omnipresent in the Lahore of the time. Smith also became enthused by, stimulated by, angry about, and, in diverse ways, reacted to the impact of Iqbal on him. Smith's first book is largely about Iqbal and indicates the complex mix of admiration and exasperation that many of the Lahore socialists felt about the poet.

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[12]Reported by Muriel Smith to John Coleman.

Iqbal had admired Lenin and the Russian Revolution. However, he wrote a poem entitled "Lenin before God," indicating that abolishing religion would not help to make the world better.[13] The point of Iqbal's poem on Lenin is that, if religious leaders support reactionary and feudal political leaders, as the Russian Church had supported the tsar, the fighters for social justice may abandon religion. Iqbal is warning the Indian Muslims that, if they equate their religion with reactionary social forces, the religion itself may be destroyed. His message is a warning against using religious symbols to oppose social change.

On the other hand, Iqbal also thought that getting rid of religious life entirely would not do much to improve the world. The thesis of the poem is that the equation of the Russian Church hierarchy with the tsarist regime does not in itself prove the nonexistence of God. Iqbal was much more critical of the extremism of the Russian Revolution than either the young Smith or the young Nehru. In the poem, Lenin, after his death, is surprised to find that God has all along existed.

In one of Iqbal's open letters to Nehru, he argued his point as follows:

> He [Nehru] thinks, wrongly in my opinion, that the only way to Indian nationalism lies in a total suppression of the cultural entities of the country through the interaction of which alone India can evolve a rich and enduring culture.
>
> A nationalism achieved by such methods can mean nothing but mutual bitterness and even oppression.[14]

Iqbal thought that any effort by the state to suppress religion entirely would just make religious people more violent and irrational. The Muslim poet wrote several times to Nehru trying to explain this point of view.

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[13]V. G. Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal: Renderings in English Verse with Comparative Urdu Text* (Karachi: Oxford University Press; Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan), 1999), 114.

[14]S. A. Vahid, ed., *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1964), 258.

Third, Wilfred Smith

Smith said in the Preface to his *Modern Islam in India*: "I am a socialist with pronounced ethical convictions; and I believe in the scientific method."[15] This firm statement is an example of a manifesto from Smith, who thought of himself as a scientific historian who could discern the class struggle at work in any human situation. In this book, Smith says that otherworldly idealism is bad in religious thought because it diverts attention from the real problems of life. It makes no difference whether people are Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, or Christians. From Smith's perspective at this period, the good people shared a common view of the problems and possibilities of their immediate situation and worked together with the immanent forces of progress in history. In other words, the good ones in Lahore in 1940 followed Nehru, and the bad ones did not.

In *Modern Islam in India,* Smith argues that a good scientific understanding of religion should demonstrate that the ideas of all religions are shaped by the class struggle. The historian of religion can recognize through what stage each religious group is currently passing. He can see what objective changes are taking place in society and how the religious persons in question are relating to those changes. These religious persons either oppose, ignore, or work constructively with the changes in question.

Smith said that, while the objective changes occur in the conditions of material existence as a culture moves from one phase of development to another, the minds often do not change quickly or accurately. Only the people who properly understand the objective realities at work in the historical process can adequately understand what is happening in their milieu. In this book, the word *liberal* is consistently used to indicate an objectively wrong way of understanding how human beings should relate to the will of God. Conservatives, reactionaries, and liberals all misunderstand the historical process. Only the socialists understand how the will of God is working. That will is best understood to be the unfolding of the

[15]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India, A Social Analysis* (New Delhi: Usha Publications, reprinted 1979; first published 1943), viii.

immanent processes at work in human history. In discussing the Indian Muslims of his time, Smith wrote:

> Naturally, it must be borne in mind that the social background has been constantly developing. Accordingly, the religion has changed slightly in harmony with that development. But in so far as it [the religion] has not changed sufficiently, its objective role in society has been transformed. Whereas it was once a progressive movement, it has passed through a passive, liberal phase, and has finally become conservative; it was ready recently even to become reactionary.[16]

This is the perspective that Smith, in Lahore in the early 1940s, thought was characteristic of the changes that were taking place in the thinking of representatives of all the major world religions. It was the perspective that he used to measure the lives and thoughts of the Indian Muslims in the modern period. Doubtless, in his student days at Cambridge, he had held that these were the phases through which the Christian world, as he understood it, had been passing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From this perspective, religious persons in any tradition can be understood in their own contexts as reactionary, conservative, passive liberal, or progressive. Smith thought that each of these particular stances has a distinct relationship to the immanent processes at work as the objective conditions of life in the world go through their inevitable phases of development. The reactionaries in all religious traditions fight change actively and want to force society back into an earlier phase. The conservatives try to resist change by clinging to a status quo. The passive liberals allow change to move them but take no decisive actions. The progressives accurately understand the immanent forces at work as history progresses through inevitable stages, and they actively strive to work with these immanent forces to bring about the good society on earth.

It was by these criteria that Smith measured the major religious thinkers and religious movements within Indian Islam from 1800 onward. A measuring rod like this is characteristic of any intellectual system that assumes that one worldview is correct—or orthodox—

[16]Ibid., 61.

and that all unorthodox, or heretical, positions have recognizable characteristics. One knows in advance what the heretics are like before one even meets them. The orthodoxy in this case was a religious Marxist view of history, namely, that the unfolding of human history toward a classless society is the plan and work of God. The intellectual challenge, for one who holds such a perspective, is simply to recognize which heresies are present and who the typical reactionaries, conservatives, liberals, and progressives are. The adherent of the orthodoxy already possesses the labels; the question is just which label to stick on which phenomenon.

However, Smith had trouble finding an appropriate label for Iqbal. The Canadian scholar wrote:

> Theologically . . . he [Iqbal] wrought the most important and the most necessary revolution of modern times. For he made God immanent, not transcendent. For Islam, this is rank heresy; but for to-day it is the only salvation. The revolution of immanence lies in this, that it puts God back into the world. Iqbal's God is in the world, now, with us, facing our problems from within, creating a new and better world with us and through us. Religion is life. And life, this mundane material life, is religious. The present world, of matter, time and space, is good. God himself, and all the values, rewards, ideals, and objectives of religion become transferred to the empirical universe. Correspondingly, the will of God is not something imposed from without to be accepted resignedly, but surges within, is to be absorbed and acted upon.
>
> All the religions have gone through world- and life-denying phases, in times of social decadence or unprosperous stagnation. Iqbal scornfully rejected these aspects from Islam as alien and evil, and insisted that his religion said 'yes' to the material world.
>
> Iqbal, as we have seen, in deploring the old static other-worldliness of religion, now certainly a sin, denounced it as un-Islamic and inherently evil. . . .
>
> Religion performing this service for mankind has been called an opiate. It could equally be called a stimulant; for without it man could never have carried on. Man has had in his religions, in their vision of eternity, the only thing that has kept him going through thousands of years of non-achievement.
>
> But when good can be really attained, then that religion which still tries to preserve good in idea, in some other world, *instead of* realising it in this world—that religion becomes reactionary and evil. It has become so attached to the metaphysical values that it actively resists the attempt to put those values back into actual life. . . . Iqbal, John

> MacMurray, the Communist Party, and all social progressives, attack traditional religion for the same reason: namely, that by diverting attention by its idealism from the real situation and real opportunities, it to-day impedes right action.[17]

This passage is a significant key to Smith's thinking in the 1940s with respect to criteria for measurement of any religious thinker or movement. His heroes and mentors, as he clearly says, were Iqbal, John MacMurray, the Communist Party, and all social progressives. The Canadian was vigorously opposed to any kind of "pie in the sky" talk. As noted earlier, his passion was not unlike that of those who went off to fight in Spain—a feeling that immediate action was essential. In this case, the action was to make India free and strong and to ignore or oppose those adherents of traditional religions who did not share these values. Smith was somewhat baffled by Iqbal since he understood that the poet wanted the liberation of India and the abolition of feudalism but was against getting rid of religion. Smith found this to be an unintelligible paradox.

Inefficient Ideology

One of Smith's characteristically sharp statements in this volume is: "The trouble with a wrong ideology is that it is inefficient."[18] This was written with reference to the Khilafat movement in India, a movement that took place among Indian Muslims right after the end of World War I. These Indian Muslims wanted to restore the Turkish caliph to power as a way of ensuring the safety of all Muslims throughout the world. Smith did not note that neither Iqbal nor Jinnah was much interested in the Khilafat movement, whereas Gandhi was an active supporter of that cause. In any case, the relevant point is that Smith believed, at this time, that all religious ideas should be looked at in terms of their probable efficiency as instruments for making the world a better place. Restoring the Turkish caliph to power did not strike him as a useful, practicable, or efficient goal.

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[17]Ibid., 122-126.
[18]Ibid., 248.

Iqbal and Smith were probably not far apart in their attitudes to the Khilafat movement. However, the clash between Iqbal's and the young Smith's views of history lay precisely in how each envisaged the threats and possibilities of post-World War I India. We have already indicated where Iqbal differed from Nehru. At this stage of his development, Smith did not comprehend Iqbal's point.

On the other hand, Iqbal, also, in many ways, admired his fellow Kashmiri, Nehru; he put images of Nehru and his father into the epic poem *The Jawid-Namah,* which was dedicated to Iqbal's young son as a symbol of the Muslims of the future.[19] This means that the ideal of Nehru's life, a rich man's son who put all his energy into working for social justice, was an ideal Iqbal wanted all the future Muslims to understand and to internalize. Iqbal agreed with Nehru on many matters, but not on the ignoring of religion. Smith's position in the early 1940s was pro-Nehru, but he also responded to Iqbal's call to the Muslims to wake up. The young Canadian wrote:

> Muhammad Iqbal summoned the sleeping Muslims to awake. . . . Throughout his life he devoted himself to inciting activity, to insisting eloquently that life is movement, that action is good, and the universe is composed of processes, and not of static things. He bitterly attacked the attitudes of resignation and quiet contentment, the religious valuation of mere contemplative, passivity, and withdrawal from strife. . . . Above all, his Islam repudiated the conception of a fixed universe dominated by a dictator God and to be accepted by servile men. In its place he would put a view of an unfinished growing universe, ever being advanced by man and by God through man. Iqbal's prime function was to lash men into furious activity, and to 'imbue the idle looker with restless impatience'. Life is not to be contemplated but to be passionately lived.[20]

Thus, Smith responded with considerable personal intensity to the passionate dynamism of the Muslim poet. Smith had found friends in Lahore among the Indians from different religious backgrounds who shared his view of the necessity of social revolution. One of the Muslims he particularly admired was K. G.

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[19] *The Javid Nama*, trans. A. J. Arberry (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 121.
[20]Smith, *Modern Islam in India,* 119.

Saiyidain, author of a seminal book, *Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*. Iqbal had personally approved of this book as an excellent exposition of his ideas and had written a foreword to it.[21] Smith said of Saiyidain:

> He has been acutely aware of the stupidity . . . of capitalism; and he has pointed them out with scorn. Not only does competitive society produce major evils from time to time, such as war, but it is bad throughout; and it must go. . . . The perversion of personality, the frustration, the meaninglessness of life, the individual hopelessness, the fear, worry, and insecurity, the mutual competition and antagonism—all these products of capitalism are evil. Anyone who supports such a system is wicked. Similarly the 'over-production,' the destruction of commodities, the poverty in the midst of plenty, the wars—all these things are also stupid. Anyone who supports such a system is dull and unintelligent.
>
> On the other hand, Sayyidayn, inspired by Iqbal, and understanding the potentialities of science, has looked forward to a new social order, in which man shall develop gloriously and flourish. The new personality which Iqbal proffered for attainment shall be attained: the strong and life-affirming individual; courageous, tolerant, disciplined; free, active and powerful; and dedicated to the service of God, with whom and with its fellow-men it shares the task of creating a better world. This ideal is not impossible of achievement, provided society is reconstructed—with co-operation instead of competition, production for use instead of production for profit, more equal distribution, and the full exploitation of technology—and provided education is reconstructed.[22]

One can readily see that this dislike of capitalist competition was Smith's own worldview, learned partly from John MacMurray and from the exponents of the Christian social gospel. The young Canadian was happy to have found friends in Lahore who shared this perspective on the threats and possibilities of the modern world. The fact that he and his friends achieved so much of a common mind helped to determine Smith's lifelong commitment to the possibility of mutual comprehension among persons from different religious

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[21].K. G. Saiyidain, *Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*, revised and enlarged edition (Lahore: Ashraf, 1965; first published 1938).

[22]Smith, *Modern Islam in India,* 144, 145.

backgrounds. He remained close to friends like Saiyidain throughout his life.

Nevertheless, many of Iqbal's provocative images irritated and puzzled the young Smith. Smith thought that many of Iqbal's ideas were likely to be used by reactionary forces. Chapter 4 of Smith's book is entitled "The Movement in Favour of a New Culture of the Future: Reactionary." Since Smith had come out of the antifascist milieu of a British university in the 1930s, he was very alert to anything that looked protofascist. He arrived in India well aware of the struggles taking place in the Spanish civil war and of the fierce conflicts between socialists and fascists in Germany at that time. He distrusted, as many people of his time did, any talk of supermen as profascist. Smith wrote:

> Of Iqbal, we can say that he himself was unable to see the full implications of his thought partly because he was not an economist and partly because of his natural prejudice in favour of the traditional Platonic idea of a primarily spiritual universe. This inability to carry this thought to its correct conclusions led him into innumerable reactionary potentialities and several reactionary actualities; and recently a full-fledged fascist tendency took advantage of these same errors to represent itself successfully as his following.[23]

The label "reactionary" was thus pinned by Smith on aspects of Iqbal's thought that were seen as detrimental to the cause of bringing about the required social revolution in India. Smith commented:

> In order to achieve anything valuable, it is important to know how to achieve it. Iqbal stirred the Muslims and pointed out to them the goal; but not being aware of the path to it, he left himself and his followers open to being misled by anyone interested in misleading them provided he could talk the same jargon. To-day events have been moving rapidly through a crisis, and the whole force of the old order has been directed to confusing the people and to promising them Utopia in idea while working in fact for reaction. At such a time it is not good enough merely to have the right ideals.[24]

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[23]Ibid., 155.
[24]Ibid.

This is a very clear statement of Smith's own beliefs in the early 1940s. He knew that India and the world were in crisis. He thought that he and fellow Indian socialists clearly understood the reasons for the crisis, the nature of the forces at work in the world, and the path to take, and that all they needed to do was to ally themselves with the immanent will of God, the inevitable movement of history toward a classless society, and follow that power into the future. At this time, Smith thought that all Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jews, and Christians could, and should, jump on the same bandwagon and get moving in their efforts to bring about the objectively correct future. There is always passion in Smith's writings; this time it was antifascist passion. Smith wanted to engage himself in the war of ideas and help to speed on the social revolution he hoped to see arise in India. Many sensitive people at that time felt the imminence of crisis, the threat of collapse of the European social order. This awareness made many people conscious of a need to act fast.

Since Iqbal had not been ready to jump on Nehru's bandwagon, Smith saw the poet's ideas as dangerously vulnerable to misuse by Indian protofascists. Nehru had visited Iqbal in 1937, on the latter's invitation, and reported that they liked each other and enjoyed talking together.[25] Nehru seems to have warned Iqbal that his ideas might be misused by the feudal powers in India, and Iqbal presumably tried to explain yet again why he feared the notion of a strong central state with an antireligious bias. Smith followed Nehru, and the other Indian socialists, in just dismissing Iqbal's anxieties as reactionary. Smith knew, and said, that Iqbal himself was not reactionary, but maintained that Iqbal's view of the "spiritual nature of the universe" made the poet's images vulnerable to misuse by reactionary forces. At this point in time, Smith did not fully comprehend why Iqbal had said that Lenin would be surprised when he met God. The Canadian thought that such imagery just meant a reversion to feudalism. For "spiritual nature of the universe" Smith read "pie in the sky"—pie that distracts from clear thinking about social goals. Smith's view, as stated in this first book, was that it did not matter to what religion a

[25]Iqbal Singh, *The Ardent Pilgrim*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, reprinted 1997), 152.

person belonged; what mattered was whether that person understood the objective forces at work in history. He wrote:

> It is the world crisis facing all religions to-day. It lies in the fact that the objective conditions of the modern world are so radically new that to act religiously, to realise objectively and actually the values at which the religions have constantly aimed, means to act in a way that is no longer recognisably—that is, nominally, religious. To choose real righteousness is to spurn imagined morality. This fact Iqbal recognised; but he did not see the crisis that it involves. The world is so basically new that is no longer possible to have both the substance and the appearance of any religion.
>
> Once the crisis has been reached, the religious men split into two groups. The progressives, religious and righteous in fact, go on their way regardless of whether their acts and attitudes are superficially Muslim—or Christian or whatever. . . . The others, who choose to maintain religion in idea, to be nominally and recognisably Muslim, etc. become the reactionaries.[26]

One can perhaps best think about the encounter of Smith with Iqbal as an instance of two disciples of historical theology crashing into each other. Both Smith and Iqbal thought that religious imperatives should be articulated in the context of actual situations; the imperatives should make sense in terms of what was going on in the world. Both of them acknowledged the futility of attempting to shape reality in terms of unworkable ideals, such as the folly of the Khilafat movement. Both acknowledged that, in order to make the world better, one would have to have an accurate appraisal of what forces were at work in a particular context and would have to give up the illusion of retreat into the past. Smith and Iqbal were agreed on this point. Smith affirmed that one should take a positive attitude to the possibilities of making life better in the world; he knew that Iqbal shared this perspective. Smith, however, explicitly talked in this 1943 book about the objective forces functioning in particular situations. Like many socialists of the time, he was convinced that right-thinking people could clearly see, if their thought was objectively correct, the forces at work in the world; they could accurately predict the future.

[26]Smith, *Modern Islam in India,* 147.

Iqbal also had affirmed the reality of process and constant change, but he never spoke of the "objective" realities of social change. The Muslim poet thought one could make a human judgment in a particular context as to what should be done to make things better for everyone, but he did not speak of God's will as an immanent process inevitably working in a particular direction. Iqbal's Lenin could be seen as a symbol of all persons who fail to acknowledge that they themselves live under judgment; humans are not infallible. Iqbal's perspective was closer to what is sometimes called "prophetic" faith. One can discern the judgment of God at work in a particular context. But one cannot see God working as part of an inevitable immanent process. One can discern what the good might be in a specific situation and make decisions based on that discernment. But a long-range view as to what exactly will happen next is not possible. "Prophetic" faith attempts to judge the potentialities for good [27]and evil in a specific situation, but it does not assume an immanent purpose in history that human beings can fully comprehend. Smith later acknowledged that he had learned to appreciate the Qur'an from the perspective of Iqbal. The poet taught him to recognize that the Qur'an conveys a dramatic imperative to choose rightly in all historical contexts.[28] Iqbal was an historical theologian in the sense that he understood the Qur'an to mean that wrong choices in history would lead ultimately to failure. The Muslim poet-philosopher understood himself to be following the perspective of Ibn Khaldun in this respect. Iqbal wrote:

> The point of interest in this view of history is the way in which Ibn-i-Khaldun conceives the process of change. His conception is of infinite importance because of the implication that history, as a continuous movement in time, is a genuinely creative movement and not a movement whose path is already determined. [29]

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[27]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981), 111, 112.

[28]Ibid., 112-122.

[29]Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1977 reprint; first published [six lectures] 1930, then [seven lectures] 1934), 141.

Humans are free to choose, but, if they choose wrong values, they will face destruction. Iqbal often emphasized that time is real. He meant by this that good conditions of life for all persons could be created within time, if the believers understood the possibilities of the time in which they lived and chose to work rightly in the present to make the future better. But Iqbal also said that Marxism was a delusion of twisted minds who naively believed that they comprehended and could control the future and the universe. In his poem, "Satan's Parliament," Iqbal has Satan observe that he thinks that communists are his tools. Satan says:

> When Nature's hand
> Has rent the seam, no needleworking logic
> Of communism will put the stitches back.
> I [Satan] be afraid of socialists?—street-bawlers,
> Ragged things, tortured brains, tormented souls! [30]

Iqbal had made several long speeches in English addressed to the Indian Muslims in the crisis period of the early 1930s.[31] He advised them to hold to a vision of what a good world should be. He quoted the biblical phrase—"Where there is no vision, the people perish."[32] He knew that negotiations were taking place between the Muslim League, the Congress, and the British with respect to the future of the subcontinent. In the context of ongoing negotiations, no one can reasonably hold a precise idea of what the end results will be. Iqbal had just warned the Muslims to hold fast to their basic values. Smith, in 1943, interpreted this latter perspective of Iqbal as reactionary because it was not a blanket approval of Nehru's socialist vision.

1947: The Impact of Partition

World War II ended; independence was gained by the two new nations of India and Pakistan. Widespread violence broke out in South Asia as millions of persons got involved in chaotic transfers of

[30]Kiernan, 240.
[31]Vahid, 161-220.
[32]Ibid, 195. For the biblical verse, see Proverbs*:* 29:18 (KJV).

populations. Smith and Iqbal's friend K. G. Saiyidain remained with India, but after the troubles of the partition, the Indian Muslim wrote an open letter to Nehru warning him against the dangers of permitting communal forces to work unchecked. In 1947, Saiyidain wrote:

> It was the memorable night preceding the l5th of August when India was to attain her political freedom. . . . Then the midnight hour struck and the Radio was switched on and they all listened in to the historic ceremony. . . . and thrilled to your deeply moved and moving voice as you took the oath of office: "I, Jawaharlal Nehru. . . ."
>
> They went to bed that night full of joy and exaltation and the hope of a new earth, a new heaven and a new dawn. . . .
>
> It was almost exactly three months later. . . . during this short period, tragedy had stepped close on the heels of tragedy. The Punjab had gone up in flames: Delhi had its gruesome bath of blood; Calcutta had flared up twice. . . . in many other parts of India and Pakistan, life and peace and decency were trembling on the verge of a breakdown. The rosy glow of Freedom's dawn had turned blood-red. . . .
>
> You [Nehru] know more fully than I can possibly describe the extent and the intensity of the suffering which partition and the exchange of populations have brought in their train. But that is not the worst. What is even more ominous than murder and arson and loot and the disruption of families is the reaction to these happenings among those who have survived and on millions of others in different parts of the country. These bitter experiences and their reports—which some papers took delight in playing up—have induced in their hearts *not* feelings of pity and charity and commiseration . . . but bitterness and fanaticism and the mad craving for revenge. . . . this alarms me even more than the cold-blooded acts of inhumanity committed by goondas and hooligans.
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> How can this fire be put out? . . . The declarations of faith published at the time on behalf of writers, artists, poets and other workers in the field of culture—in India as well as in Pakistan—are a small but welcome sign of hope.[33]

Smith regarded Saiyidain as one of the most lucid interpreters of Iqbal whom he had known in his early years in India.[34] Smith shared

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[33]K. G. Saiyidain, *Education, Culture and the Social Order* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963 reprint), 266-273.

[34]Smith, *Modern Islam in India,* 142.

much of the horror and concern that his friend Saiyidain was expressing in this postpartition letter to Nehru. Saiyidain went on to spend most of the rest of his life working to help develop good training in the humanities and social sciences in the educational system of India.[35]

Smith returned to Canada. Like Saiyidain, he understood that the problem of South Asia after partition was not just one of recovering from the outbursts of violence. The more serious need was to recover some kind of basis of mutual respect between those who had inherited the results of the violence. This was to be one of the driving motives behind Smith's future efforts. He has told us that the violence at partition had affected him profoundly. He wrote:

> One of the things that has burned itself most deeply into my consciousness is the Hindu-Muslim cataclysm of 1947, the time of the partition of India: the terrifying upheaval of hate and violence, when ten million persons were uprooted and perhaps one million were massacred, many brutally.[36]

It was this experience, *burned deeply* into Smith's consciousness, that directed his future concern to think through more carefully how to help people comprehend the strengths and weaknesses of religious thought and practice. He wanted to work toward a future in which such a cataclysm would not occur again. He eventually came to believe that transforming the ways in which we think about religion may be one of the best ways to help us discover more positive directions for thought and practice.

Smith left Lahore from 1947-1948 in order to pursue doctoral studies at Princeton. His first book had been intended as a doctoral dissertation for Oxford, where his tutor had been H. A. R. Gibb, but Smith thought it had not been accepted.[37] The difficulties of

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[35]K. G. Saiyidain, *The Humanist Tradition in Indian Educational Thought* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966); *Islam, the Religion of Peace* (New Delhi: Islam and the Modern Age Society, 1976); *The Faith of an Educationist* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965); *Universities and the Life of the Mind* (New York: Asian Publishing House, 1968).

[36]Smith, *Questions of Religious Truth,* 108.

[37]Oral communication from W. C. Smith.

communication during wartime had interfered with the mutual understanding of Gibb and Smith. The latter thought his work had been refused because it was so anti-British. At Princeton, Smith wrote a thesis on the differences between the perspectives of two Muslim editors of the Arabic *Azhar Journal*, the publication of Egypt's leading Muslim theologians. He received his doctorate and accepted the position of Birks Chair of Comparative Religion in the Divinity Faculty of McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

As a result of the impact on his mind of the horrors of the violence that had accompanied the independence of India and Pakistan, Smith went through a radical change of perspective with respect to many of his key ideas. He had returned briefly to South Asia after partition and had personally interviewed persons who had been working with the refugees. He wanted to find out for himself the causes and fruits of the violence. His conclusion was that Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs had all taken part in destructive outbursts against persons from other communities.

Just four years after partition, he published in Lahore a small book entitled *Pakistan as an Islamic State,* in which he acknowledges his earlier errors. In these few years, he had undergone a revolution in self-awareness. He had to grapple with the realization that he had been seriously wrong in his judgment as to what might happen in South Asia. This small book can be read as a communication intended for Smith's Indian and Pakistani friends in order to help them think through what had happened and to find new directions for building the future. Smith's brother had been the Canadian ambassador to the USSR during World War II and had helped to convince Wilfred of the realities of the Gulag camps and other forms of Soviet tyranny. In this new book, Smith tells his readers that his earlier trust in an immanent force in history working inevitably in the Marxist way to a future good society had been just wrong—*that God had failed.*

A number of other Western intellectuals, who, like Smith, had become very left-wing during the era of the Cambridge "Pink Decade," later published a book entitled *The God that Failed.* The English poet Stephen Spender was one of the authors who explained the hopes and fears of many of his generation who found that their

trust in the Communist Party, or their confidence that immanent forces for good were automatically driving history, was shattered by events. These disturbing events included the brief alliance between Hitler and Stalin, the revelations about the brutal tyranny of the Stalinist state against its own citizens, and the discovery of the hypocritical role of the Communists in the Spanish civil war.

George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* became the classic statement in English literature of disillusionment with what Stalin's forces had done in Spain.[38] The different authors of *The God that Failed* had shared the hopes of a bright new world, even though they came from many diverse backgrounds with different problems, such as racism in America, poverty in rural Italy, and the miseries in the industrial centers during the depression. These authors had shared the dream of revolution. When their dream disintegrated in the light of actual historical events, they also took different paths. They had in common the conviction that their trust had been betrayed. Smith was not explicitly part of this group, but he was of the same generation and had many of the same experiences. In his case, the discovery of the evils of the Stalinist system and the horrors of partition had both worked to shatter his confidence that he had infallible knowledge about the future direction of history.

In Smith's first book, published in 1943, the word "immanent" meant "good," and the word "transcendent" meant "bad"; in the second book, published after 1947, and subsequently, the reverse is the case. The idea of a knowable immanent force in history working to a comprehensible end becomes equated in Smith's later thought with an arrogant intellectualism, namely, the delusion that any human mind can comprehend exactly what is going on at a particular point in history and can be sure of the results of human action. One could say that the disasters of the partition violence and the horrors of Stalinism were shocks experienced by Smith as attacks against his intellectual conceit. We can better understand his later fulminations against simplemindedness in methodology if we recognize that his model of "what not to do," when studying religious phenomena, is

[38]George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, in *The Orwell Reader* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, first published 1956).

what he himself had done in his first book. His later message is: Never be as arrogant in your assumptions as I was.

He talks more explicitly in this book of 1951 about the mistakes he now sees in Marxist thinking. Presumably, he was consciously trying to explain his new perspective to his Indian and Pakistani socialist friends. He wrote:

> We should note especially the profound and crucial distinction that while Communism treats ideals as instruments for attaining political power [Note 1], Islam treats political power as an instrument for attaining ideals.
>
> [Note 1] This is a serious indictment, and should therefore be documented. Cf. 'Lenin defined Marxism as the revolutionary theory and tactics of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat'. V. Adoratsky: *Dialectical Materialism, opening sentence. Indian edition.* . . .
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> Cf. also: "Communist ethics. But is there such a thing as Communist ethics? Of course, there is. . . . We deny all morality taken from superhuman or no-class conceptions. . . . We say that our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class struggle of the proletariat. . . . For us morality is subordinated to the interests of the proletarian class struggle."—Lenin . . . as reprinted in V. I. Lenin, *Religion*, Burmon Publishing House, Calcutta, n.d.[39]

This is the core insight of Smith's subsequent reaction against belief in an immanent process in history, namely, that such a conviction knows no standard of judgment outside the success of the particular cause. Anything was justified in the cause of the victory of the proletariat. He wrote:

> In a Marxist state, such as the Soviet Union, whose rulers recognize, they claim, no ideals, opposition groups have precisely no rights. It is official Marxist doctrine that a person as such, 'man in general', does not exist; persons exist only as member of a social class. Consequently, an individual condemned as being 'an enemy of the working class' is regarded in the USSR, as having literally no rights whatever, and is treated accordingly. It is difficult or even impossible for a Christian or democratic idealist to *conceive* such an attitude; and difficult therefore for

[39]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Pakistan as an Islamic State* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1951), 26.

> him to believe the stories coming out of the Soviet Union about treatment of those out of favour. . . .
>
> Slowly, however, the outside world is beginning to discern the importance of transcendent ideals, and to realise that it is better to have ideals, even when not lived up to, than to repudiate them outright. It is important that practice be good. It is equally important that, when practice lapses, good ideals be acknowledged; so that there be something to which one can appeal.[40]

This passage neatly sums up the position Smith accepted after he had digested the shocks of partition and of Stalinist tyranny. There can be little doubt that one of the Christians who had trouble accepting the dark view of Stalinism was Smith himself. From now on, he regards his first book as full of dangerous error, not least because he had failed to comprehend the necessity of transcendent ideals as a way of keeping society sane.

In all of Smith's subsequent books and articles, the holding up of transcendent ideals is stressed as essential for sane functioning in the actual contexts of existence. It is sane to hold transcendent ideals because one needs to recognize that the actual implementation of justice, for instance, will always be imperfect. But one needs also to recognize that more justice is always possible. This perspective is required in order to keep people moving toward implementing more justice even though they never fully succeed. Smith became convinced that, without the acceptance of transcendent ideals, such as justice, people would sink into nihilistic destructiveness. Unless we think we could be better than we are and work toward that goal, we are likely to decay and revert to worse behavior. In the case of Pakistan, the transcendent ideals of Islamic justice and peace would be, Smith believed, useful guides for the creation of a better future. He writes:

> That Pakistan is Islamic is given; its interpretation of Islam is free. And it will be on its interpretation that it will, by the world, be judged. The decisive question, in the village and in the country, is, as in all villages and

[40]Ibid., 87, 88.

> all countries, what does that people in fact consider good, and how effectively do they pursue it.[41]

In studying any religious tradition, therefore, Smith now says that we need to ask of persons in any context, what do they consider good, and what are they doing to make that good tangible and fruitful? He no longer thinks it is adequate just to characterize religious persons as reactionary or progressive.

To impose a preexisting theory on a particular context causes intellectual confusion. Smith now recommends that scholars should be more open to the people involved in the context and just ask them what it is that they think they are doing and why they have such ideas. He now knows that his problem of finding a label for Iqbal had been that the label itself was too simplistic.

Smith was invited back to Lahore in 1974 to give a lecture on Iqbal. He told his Muslim audience that they could scarcely imagine how much the Muslim poet had meant to him. Reading *Bang-i Dara* in Urdu when he was first in Lahore had enthralled him.[42] He said that he was not going to write more about Iqbal but would rather try to do what he believed Iqbal said should be done. In part, this meant establishing the Institute of Islamic Studies so that Western scholars could learn a better appreciation of Islam by having Muslim teachers and fellow students. It also meant carrying on the tradition initiated by Sayyid Ahmed Khan and Shibli, and furthered by Iqbal, of helping Muslims understand how to reconstruct more effectively their traditional modes of religious thought and practice in the light of the demands and challenges of the modern world.[43]

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[41]Ibid., In Smith's later book, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Mentor Books, 1959), a similar approach is used to discuss many other modern Muslim societies, including India. The chapter on Pakistan in this later book is similar to the small 1951 volume.

[42]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Faith and Belief: Some Considerations of the Islamic Instance," in *Iqbal Memorial Lectures* (Lahore:University of the Punjab publication, 1975).

[43]For Iqbal's tributes to Shibli, and Sayyid Ahmed Khan, see M. A. K. Khalil, trans., *Call of the Marching Bell* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1997), 108, 308. For Iqbal's ideas about religious education, see Vahid, 103-109, 234-237.

Many readers of Smith's books and articles seem to have trouble with his use of the word "transcendent." We can probably understand him better if we recognize that his personal rejection of the intellectual perspectives of his own former self is a significant key to understanding what the term came to mean to him. He came to see that no one could have final knowledge as to the forces at work in a particular situation. Thus, to move from stressing immanence to stressing transcendence became a way of indicating the fallible nature of human thinking.

All the major religious traditions try to uphold transcendent ideals. Smith's later view is that the various cumulative religious traditions of the world usually function to transmit practicable visions of the potentialities for good in specific situations. As he said about the challenges of the new Pakistan, the Islamic goals of peace and justice already existed in the tradition. The challenge was how to implement those goals effectively.

In studying religious life and thought in the modern world, Smith's new focus was on letting people speak for themselves. One should ask people, like the Pakistanis, what they see as good and what they see themselves as doing to implement that good. In 1951, Smith wrote this little book called *Pakistan as an Islamic State* for the citizens of the new Pakistan who were struggling to articulate what they should do with their new challenges. He used the poetic image of a kite pulling them. The image came from a Muslim friend who said that Pakistanis should move forward, always trying to act in the light of transcendent standards of goodness and justice. The kite was the symbol of the transcendent, pulling, but not entirely controlled by, or fully comprehensible to, humans.[44] In Smith' words:

> Living in the mundane present is itself no mean task; as we have insisted, Pakistanis may not for a moment neglect the matter of making their nation viable. Yet for them, as for all men, living wholly within the mundane present is unworthy of human dignity, as well as disruptive of human history. They, as are the rest of us, are faced in the embattled world of the latter twentieth century with the massive problems of

[44]Smith, *Pakistan as an Islamic State,* 66.

living at all. In addition, as have been all communities since the dawn of history, they are faced with the concurrent question of living well.[45]

[45]Ibid., 109.

Book Reviews

William C. Chittick. *Sufism: A Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000. x, 180 pages. PB $15.95. ISBN 1-85168-211-2.

Contemporary life, with its ever-increasing pace and its infatuation with the idea of inclusiveness, has created a smorgasbord of popular books that attracts a particular kind of cosmopolitan reader—the one who would like to know something about everything. The demand having created supply, there has come into existence a whole industry of books on the fly with an enormous range of topics. There are, for example, travel books, which promise the experience of a lifetime by means of a round-the-world-in-fifty-days tour; international cookbooks; and, more recently, books about various religions, faiths, and historical personalities. Oneworld, a leading publisher specializing in this last-named field, has produced a whole series of titles, including *Buddhism: A Short History*; *Jesus Christ: A Short Biography*; *A Short Introduction to the Old Testament Prophet*; the latest in the series is William Chittick's *Sufism: A Short Introduction.*

In line with the other titles of the series, *Sufism* does exactly what the series is supposed to do: it provides a short introduction to one of the trendiest subjects of our times, in the form of a book that is manufactured rather than written, in language that is agreeable to those who read such books between subway stations or in the comfort of an airplane seat thirty-five-thousand feet above sea level.

But, since the book has been manufactured by a scholar like Chittick, whose major works include such insightful studies as *The Vision of Islam* and *The Sufi Path to Knowledge*, it could not have been a bland recycling of popular myths, though the publisher chose to design the cover with the reigning stereotypical image of whirling dervishes. In spite of all this, the book does have that particular "Chittick flavor"—that terse and clear prose that attempts to open all

possible channels of communication with the reader, that soft radiance of the primary sources that takes over the voice of the writer almost imperceptibly and pulls us into the wonderful world of Muslim mystics.

The book opens with a proper introduction to the subject, "The Sufi Path"—the first chapter of the book—and, in the very first line, we meet a Sufi "teacher called Ali the son of Ahmad, who hailed from the town of Bushanj in eastern Persia" (1). The Sufi master complains that few people had any idea of what "Sufism" was. "Today," he says, speaking Arabic, "Sufism is a name without a reality, but it used to be a reality without a name" (1). The chapter then goes on to define the subject matter of the book in simple but clear terms.

Nine more chapters follow. The second chapter, "The Sufi Tradition," provides basic clarifications and a very short historical background and ends with the main teachings of the contemporary Sufi masters. This leads to the third chapter, "Name and Reality," another fast trip through some of the problems associated with the common understanding of Sufism, but with a focused emphasis on the main concern of Sufism: remembrance of God. "Self-Help," the fourth chapter, despite its trendy title, does take the reader to the heart of Islamic mysticism. Drawing heavily on the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions (*Hadith*) as well as on his own previous works, Chittick succeeds in offering a very coherent formulation of the basic aspects of Sufism, a formulation that is not devoid of solid substance.

This leads to the next chapter, "The Remembrance of God," which is a pedantic recycling of the notions frequently used in connection with the Qur'anic term *dhikr*—and which comes complete with a lexicographic definition and with mention of the frequency of the term's occurrence in the Qur'an ("about 270 times," if one includes the closely related derivatives).

"The Way of Love" is clearly a chapter for that cosmopolitan reader in the subway who has read *The Short Introduction to Hinduism*, another title in the Oneworld series. In this chapter, Chittick attempts to relate terms drawn from Hinduism to his subject:

> It might be argued that Islam is built on karma yoga, since everyone without exception must observe the Sharia, which sets down the path conforming to God's will through activity. One can also argue that Muslims and Sufis stress jnana yoga, because, generally speaking, they place a higher value on knowledge than do Jews or Christians. (61)

But what redeems the chapter is its use of this analogy merely as a stepping-stone for a major comparative study of Rumi and Ibn 'Arabi, two great masters of the Islamic Sufi tradition. Once again, through his admirable translations, Chittick lets the two sages speak for themselves.

"During my first year teaching at Stony Brook, a colleague introduced me to a student as the instructor of the new course on Sufism. 'Oh, Sufism,' she said, 'that's dancing, isn't it?'" This is how Chittick opens the seventh chapter, "The Never-Ending Dance." An irresistible first paragraph binds the writer and the prospective reader together for another short ride into the various aspects of Sufism—a descriptive narrative that uses the stereotypical images as stepping-stones only to discard them for something substantial. This chapter is the heart of the book. Once again, drawing on the primary sources, Chittick brings home the essential teachings of Sufism:

> Already in this world the perfect Sufis live with God. They journey into the Infinite, listening to the music of God's creative command. At each moment God says "Be" and a new self-disclosure, more glorious and perfect than the preceding, delights the eye. In the words of Iraqi, The Song will never cease, nor the dance come to an end, for all eternity, because the Beloved is infinite. Here the lover hums, The moment I open my eyes,/I see Your face,/The instant I lend my ear,/I hear Your voice. (96)

The last three chapters of the book, "Images of Beatitude," "The Fall of Adam," and "The Paradox of the Veil," lead the reader through key Sufi terms and concepts with the help of specific works of such representatives of the tradition as Baha Walad (d. 1230), Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209), Ahmad Sam'ani (d. 1140), Abu Nasr Sarraj (d. 988) and Niffari (d. c. 970). Through extensive direct quotations, almost all of them previously published translations, Chittick unveils the inner universe of Sufism for the novice.

What rescues the book from being a mere blend of heterogeneous components is its well-conceived plan, no doubt conceived for a very particular readership. It is this overall plan that makes all quotations relevant and helps to integrate the selected material. The plan is evident from the section headings as well as from the general thrust of the book. Had it not been for this general plan, the material used would have made the book a mere recycling of previous material.

As it is, *Sufism* does exactly what it promises: It provides a short introduction to the subject and, in spite of its commercial appeal for the jet-set crowd, it does raise itself above the general run-of-the-mill titles. The fact that Chittick found time and energy to manufacture (and I insist on this term) this book remains a personal decision, though one surmises that he may have been lured to the task by considerations other than those which appear at the surface.

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Faegheh Shirazi. *The Veil Unveiled, The Hijab in Modern Culture*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. 221 pages. HB $55. ISBN 0-8130-2084-0.

Attempting to unwrap the veil, Faegheh Shirazi explores powerful and complex aspects that surround the *hijab*. In six graphic chapters, she analyzes many different visual, political, and literary representations of the veil and demonstrates that "its symbolic significance is being constantly defined and redefined, often to the point of ambiguity" (7). The work is well documented, with lengthy notes, a glossary, and an extensive bibliography. Thirty-five figures depict images of the veil taken from her personal collection of photographs, posters, cartoons, and postage stamps.

The Veil Unveiled begins with "Veiled Images in Advertising." Shirazi compares how the veil sells American-made products to American consumers and how it sells Western products in Saudi

Arabia. Selling vehicles, computers, perfume, cigarettes, and soup, the advertisements to Western markets rely on three major stereotypes of a Muslim woman: the exotic, mysterious woman who hides behind the veil; the backward, submissive woman who is forced to live behind the veil; and the generically veiled woman who represents all cultures of the Middle East. Saudi advertisements cannot rely on such stereotypes, however, and use the image of the veil to sell toothpaste, sanitary napkins, and watches by appealing to mental attitudes about the role of women.

"Veiled Images in American Erotica" is a chapter of how *Hustler*, *Playboy*, and *Penthouse* magazines present stereotypes about the veil to sell sex and politics. Shirazi found a direct correlation between the frequency and content of cartoons in these magazines that depicted the veil and the nature of U.S.-Middle East relations. The cartoons ridicule or mock their subjects, frequently in offensive racist or blasphemous ways. During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, for instance, cartoons were published that portrayed Muslim men as terrorists and barbarians, with veiled women shown as their victims as well as their supporters. According to Shirazi, these veiled images belong to a society that is cast as a hostile, amorphous "other" with which Americans have little in common and to which the best response is war. We may assume that *Hustler*, which is widely read among American troops, did its share to widen the chasm between non-Muslim Americans and Muslim Middle Easterners (59).

"The Cinematics of the Veil" shows how filmmakers have used the veil to make their movies commercially successful. Iranian films have been creative, under strict rules and regulations of what can appear on the screen, and the veil has been used in that country to deny the gaze of the spectator. Indian cinema, on the other hand, uses the veil to draw the spectator's gaze in romantic hide-and-seek melodrama. The veil is also used as a disguise and, at times, to divert attention from less palpable aspects of harsh reality depicted in movies. It serves, furthermore, to distract the spectator's gaze.

The chapter entitled "Iranian Politics and the Hijab" describes how the changing symbol of the veil has been intricately embedded in Iranian politics. Under Reza Shah, the veil symbolized backwardness, and, in the 1920s, women were ordered to unveil in

order to promote modernization by appearing more Western. Several decades later, in the eyes of the Islamic Revolution, the "modern" unveiled women were associated with Western values and were, therefore, reviled. By contrast, the properly veiled woman symbolized Islamic revival; she could prove her independence and "actualize" herself by repudiating the values of Western consumerism. Although the wearing of the *hijab* was only a recommendation made by Khomeini in 1980, constitutional amendments in 1983 and 1986 enforced veiling, and, thereafter, women were not allowed to flout the rules of public chastity by appearing in public unveiled. Shirazi points out that, during the war with Iraq, the *hijab* was symbolically mobilized for war and that the veil was used to distinguish the Shi'i from the Sunni Muslim in a focused campaign. Throughout the country, there appeared, on banners, posters, postage stamps, and graffiti, the image of the "ideal" pious woman as the soldier's strong mother, sister, wife, and daughter, who represented Fatimah Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. To extend the war effort even further, the image of the ideal woman was transformed from the soldier's veiled mother, sister, wife, and daughter to the martyr's veiled mother, sister, wife, and daughter. Women could, thus, support the war by contributing to martyrdom. Since the end of the war, images of veiled women have symbolized the "new" cosmopolitan Muslim woman, whereas the improperly veiled woman is presented as the nation's enemy. Throughout the last century, Iran's rulers have, by changing the symbol's meaning, used the veil to further their own political agendas.

The chapter on "Militarizing the Veil" begins by asking whether Islam allows women to participate in battle. Beginning with various interpretations of 'A'isha's role in the Battle of the Camel, the author goes on to explore how *ahadith* and their interpretations have provided directives for women's participation in battle. She offers an overview of women's changing roles in the United Arab Emirates' armed forces, Iraq's First Women's Brigade, and Iran's Zaynab's Sisters and demonstrates how changes in the design and color of women's headscarves have symbolized the ambitions of various governments.

In "Literary Dynamics of the Veil," Shirazi analyzes selected literature that uses the veil as a metaphor or a synecdoche. She shows how writers have endorsed the veil in their literature, underscoring the veil's moral value, or how they have rejected it, calling it a cage, a prison, or some other form of restraint. The author looks at the works of the Iraqi poet Al-Azri and the Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib; at the Hindi short stories by Yashpal and the lyrics of an Uzbeki song; and at numerous Iranian poets including Iraj Mirza, Parvin E'tesami, and Ayatollah Khomeini. The selections, she says, are not representative but are intended to show the diversity of the use of the veil in literary works.

The collection of veiled images as seen in the book could only have come out of a conglomerate global culture. Multifaceted and with paradoxical meanings, heedless of cultural boundaries, historical timeframes, and religious constructs, the veil is depicted as an ambiguous and powerful symbol. The collage of images presented is certainly diverse, though not representative, and, in this aspect, the book falls short of meeting the expectations raised by its subtitle. The silhouette of the Iranian woman draped in her full-length black *chador* dominates the book, and the same image marks the beginning of each chapter. Where are, one wonders, the veiled women of Malaysia? of South Africa? of the United States? of Germany? The absence of these women in a study of the *hijab* in modern culture is both noticeable and painful, for their valiant struggles, too, demand recognition. No mention is made of the role of the *hijab* in the social fabric of today's Turkey or in the communities of immigrant women throughout North America and Europe. No doubt, the topic is vast, and the wide-angled lens with which Shirazi scans the world's veiled women has still not encompassed the horizon. Her six-year-long research on the topic is limited to her own context and contacts and can only be the beginning of a fascinating study.

Most veiled images that are presented in *The Veil Unveiled* have a "Muslim" connotation, and when, suddenly, we find ourselves exploring the symbolism of the veil in Hindi movies and *Penthouse* photographs, without delving into a study of cultural tradition or examining the reasons for including magazines that sell sex and

politics, a confusion of boundaries arises and begs reorientation. The veil is one topic; the Muslim *hijab* is another.

The *hijab* in modern culture plays a powerful role in shaping the identity of Muslim women throughout the West and around the world. It not only influences the way others see them, but also carries profound significance for many women in their own spiritual journeys. Seen in this light, the *hijab* is far more than a piece of fabric that veils; along with its symbolic meanings, it carries metaphysical layers that convey a Weltanschauung rooted in the religious and traditional contexts of the person who wears it.

Admittedly, the author knows that publishers' marketing agents use the term "veil" in their titles to sell books, and so she took them seriously. *The Veil Unveiled*—does such a title sell twice as many copies? But the book's focus on how the veil appears in popular culture in visual, political, and literary forms fails to probe what lies behind symbols. Certainly, the veil conveys powerful messages in religious, sexual, social, and political ways. The author explores the veil as just that—as a layer of fabric with power to symbolize many different things. Thoroughly secular in approach, the book caters to a consumerist readership that cares to see no farther than the first layer. Overall, the book deals with the veil as it is seen on a surface level, and the reader is left more with graphic images and symbolic examples than with a deep understanding of what lies behind them.

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Yuvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch, eds., *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Religion in America Series. 241 pages, including selected bibliography and index. HB $49.95. ISBN: 0-19-511258-X.

The book under review examines the development of religious diversity in American society, with special reference to Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam. In particular, the study discusses the interaction between the African Americans and the Jews in the United States and describes the response of the former to the latter's religious beliefs, traditions, and institutions. In developing their theories, the authors draw on various disciplines, such as cultural studies, theology, anthropology, sociology, and the history of religions. These disciplines, with religion as their central focus, try to promote a comprehensive interplay between the African Americans and the Jews in America, Israel, and Africa.

In the Introduction, the book discusses, among other issues, the role played by Jews (both religious and secular groups) in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, even though radical Muslim leaders like Malcolm X were suspicious and critical of the ties between the two communities. Chapter 1 deals with "allegorical association," with the term "Diaspora" denoting the presence of Jews and blacks all over the world. The authors go on to state that, unlike the Jews, the Africans who were transplanted involuntarily to North America lacked "a unified spiritual heritage" (16). This assertion, of course, is only partially valid. For one thing, the human cargo from Africa to America included a large number of Muslims. Several recent works have documented the presence of Muslims among the early slaves, one such work being the notable African scholar Professor Sulayman S. Nyang's *Islam in the United States of America* (1999). Other books that address the presence of Muslim slaves in the United States are: Sylviane A. Diouf's *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (1998), Amber Haque's *Muslims and Islam in North America* (1999), and Edward Ball's *Slaves in the Family* (1999). Just as they were forced to relinquish their African names, the African slaves were compelled to abandon Islam for Christianity, the religion of their "masters."

The African Americans perceived "Jewish history as their sacred history" (18), in that the same Creator who gave the Jews the Promised Land would do the same for the African Americans. The Hebrew leader was Moses, who received his covenant from God. Marcus Garvey, of Jamaican origin, was a self-anointed prophet called the "Black Moses." He took upon himself the mission of liberator and repatriator—hence the movement "Back to the

Promised Land of Africa" led by him. An African American rabbi named Arnold Josiah Ford became an active member in the Garvey movement in New York. Rabbi Ford taught his followers that "the 'real' Jews were black people" (24), tracing their roots from King Solomon (Sulayman) and the Queen of Sheba (Saba) of Ethiopia. Ford himself was an immigrant from Barbados who drew his religious inspiration from Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. He was the first African American to "emigrate" to Ethiopia as a Black Jewish Zion. He witnessed the coronation of the last so-called Solomonic ruler in Addis Ababa, Emperor Haile Selassie.

Chapter 2 highlights the African American Jewish community. This community, rejecting the theory that Jewishness is based on ethnicity, regarded Judaism as a universal faith that is open to all human beings. To this reviewer, Judaism seems to refer to an exclusive group of people who embrace the religion, just as Christianity makes reference to its founder Jesus Christ. The offshoot of these two monotheistic faiths is Islam—though, etymologically, "Islam" does not refer to its founder, the Prophet Muhammad. In other words, there is no Mohammedanism in Islam—a fact epitomizing Islam's universal dimension. In the same chapter, a Black rabbi, Capers Funnye, is cited to have been embroiled in a controversy with Louis Farrakhan over the latter's description of Judaism as a "gutter religion." At this juncture, the reader is reminded that Islam, just like Christianity, is the daughter of Judaism. One interesting point the authors raise in this chapter is the general notion that one's authentic Jewishness is based on the ground that pain is not a monopoly of any particular group of people.

In Chapter 3, the authors talk about a Judaic identity for those African American Jews who now regard themselves as Black Hebrew Israelites. According to the authors, "[Black Hebrew] symbols offer a sense of personal salvation, a coherent explanation for painfully oppressive realities . . . and hope of future redemption" (70). In Chapter 4, however, the reader is told that, in 1973, the Black Hebrew Israelites were denied Israeli citizenship, and some were even deported. At the same time, those who decided to stay in Israel were given legal status to work and to receive social benefits such as housing. In Israel, Black Hebrew Israelite men used long African

print shirts, their traditional clothing, while the women dressed in large, modest attire, duly reflecting a religious code of dressing. Black Israelite men were permitted to engage in polygamous matrimonial relationships. Black Israelites in Israel were instructed to refrain from using drugs and engaging in criminal activities or drive-by shooting. They were taught to accept their new home as God's decree or as divine providence. The closing part of Chapter 4 discusses a triangular relationship between Muslims, African Americans, and Arabs. The alliance among the three groups was to be fostered both on spiritual and on secular fronts.

The authors discuss the Nation of Islam and Judaism in Chapter 5, in which the former is described as a "hate group" because of its critical comments against Whites and Jews. The controversy associated with Louis Farrakhan's remarks resulted in subsequent recrimination on the part of both the Nation of Islam and the Jewish community. Another point raised in the chapter is the notion of "the incarnation of God in human form" within the Christian religious circles (93). In Islam, this concept is regarded as *shirk* ("association" or the setting up of partners with God). Jesus Christ was a member of the Prophetic House of the Abrahamic religions. Adam was created without a father, but there has been no extraordinary symbolism to characterize his unique creation. The founder of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, associated Christianity with slavery. He urged his followers to embrace Islam as their true religion to follow the commands of Allah (God), and not to be afraid of any human being except their Creator.

Chapter 6 deals with the Jewish teachings of an African American Muslim group known as the Nubian Islamic Hebrews. Representing an African American Muslim movement in North America, this group has not been a visible or well-publicized Muslim community in the country. Their self-descriptive epithet, *Ansarullah*, "Helpers of God," is a completely misplaced metaphor, for it is God who is the ultimate source of salvation in this world and in the hereafter. In other words, human beings are, like newborn babies, completely helpless.

According to the authors, in 1992, the Ansarullah abandoned the use of the Islamic code of dress requiring women to use the veil. The

women of the Ansarullah went back to the American secular style of dressing to ensure their personal safety. This change of dress code was due largely to the belligerent behavior toward Muslims in America as a result of the media's sensational reports on terrorism associated with radical Muslim groups. Regardless of this circumstance, true Islam, to this reviewer, finds its imprint not on the garment or veil one puts on, but in one's heart.

In Chapter 7, the authors enlighten us about the ties between African American Christianity and Judaism. Here, the African Americans are advised to work harder and redirect history in their favor—for God will not change a people's condition until and unless they themselves first wish to change their condition.

In Chapter 8 and 9, the authors talk about the Black-Jewish relationship and the building of their respective religious institutions. In Chapter 8, particularly, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., is criticized for his opposition to America's involvement in Vietnam, in which, he thought, "innocent people" were killed. King received a barrage of newspaper editorial attacks. Even some civil rights activists, like Ralph Bunche and Jackie Robinson, launched their own verbal protests against King for his remarks about the Vietnam War. Rev King had also told his followers to render their maximum and unwavering loyalty to their Creator and "not to the mores, folkways, the state or the nation or any man-made institution" (181).

Chapter 10, the final part of the study, discusses a variety of issues, such as the Afro-Haitian religious cult called *voodoo*, which is said to have originated from the scheme of the cosmos of traditional African religions. These cultic practices, or festishes, as they are called in English, are termed *jahiliyyah* ("ignorance") in Islam.

An interesting piece of work, the book is weakened by its numerous repetitions. Nevertheless, it is lucidly written and is documented with a large number of sources, both primary and secondary. One would recommend it to students interested in religious studies, Black politics, and also, perhaps, sociology.

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