

ISLAM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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Introduction

The close of the twentieth century marks the end of a tumultuous period in the recorded history of the human race. This century has seen the worst of human nature through wars of attrition involving ethnic and racial genocide, religious conflict, and political strife. It has also seen the best of human reason and intellect through phenomenal advancements in learning, science, and technology.

Religion seems to have played a major role in both respects. It has generously contributed to festering social and political conflicts, and in collaboration with race and ethnicity, which usually accompany religious identity, it has made the world witness the bloodiest of human acts and the fiercest of atrocities - well matched by its record in previous centuries, and even exceeding it with the aid of modern technology, which has provided the most efficient instruments of human extermination and mass destruction.

Religion has also been credited with providing the drive and motivation for major social and cultural transformations. The celebrated example in recent history is the Protestant Reformation, which, among other things, generated the proper work ethic, led to the rise of capitalism, facilitated industrialization, and accelerated technological advancement.

However, preceding these developments, history records the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, which spanned almost a millennium from the 8th to the 18th centuries. As heirs of the Greco-Hellenistic tradition, Muslim scholars synthesized the ancient sciences of the Mediterranean peoples along with Oriental elements from China and India. The flowering of science and civilization in early Islam provided the impetus for European civilization to extricate itself from the Dark Ages and build upon its enriched heritage -- a heritage that was preserved through the efforts of Muslim scholars, whose contributions to astronomy, cosmology, geography, natural history, physics, metaphysics, alchemy, and medicine provide the essential foundations of contemporary science. No less significant are their contributions to human sciences such as anthropology, social ethics, history, philosophy, and the philosophy of history. Names such as Al-Farabi, Averroes, Avicenna, Al-Biruni, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Khaldun, Rhazes, all remain Newtons in their respective fields.

The Role of Religion

The contemporary phase of phenomenal growth and development in the Western world was ushered in by the combined forces of religious reformation and political, social, and cultural revolution, backed by the values of liberty and equality as the fundamental basis of human rights, individual freedom, and social

justice. That today some remain "more equal than others" is a different story. Nevertheless, what Western civilization has achieved so far in science and technology inspires the awe as well as the envy of the rest of the world. In spiritual and religious matters however, there are lessons to be learned and taught on all sides of the great divides that separate people along religious and denominational lines.

That religion has played a significant role in the development of events that mold the history and character of nations and peoples is without dispute. To what extent its contribution has been positive and to what extent it has added to political strife and social conflict remains a matter of great controversy and begs serious discourse.

The term "religion" in social sciences is often defined in terms of the function it performs. Roberts states, for example, that religion means "to unify," "bind together" and "make whole." So, religion is what it does? Government systems, family structures, and economic organizations differ in form and content but more or less serve the same function, providing political stability, personal security and fulfillment, and basic means of sustenance, respectively. Religions differ not only in form and content, but also in their focus on the functions they perform. Some focus on salvation of the soul as the main function and objective of religion (as in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism); others focus on the realization and actualization of the Divine Order, the fulfillment of the Divine Command which forms the main purpose and function of religion (as in Judaism and Islam). This difference in approach has produced different modes of response and adjustment and yielded different worldviews, which in turn would bring distinctive approaches to the issues of global governance.

Religion and World Order

The Religion and World Order Program of Project Global 2000 has courageously taken on the task of inviting religious faith traditions to engage in an exercise of self-evaluation and self-examination with the objective of addressing the challenges faced by all faith communities. These challenges are intensified due to the need for collaboration with secular organizations to participate in promoting education, research, and community projects for the establishment of "a more just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable world order." In this increasingly a-religious world, the conveners of this Conference have reminded us that religion acts both as a cause and catalyst for social change and transformation. They have pointed out that the role of religion has not always been positive in society, and that "organized religion has sometimes been . . . a powerful force in war and human destructiveness."

However, while defining religion and spirituality as a unitive experience of "the holy," "the ultimate," "the sacred," "the unknowable," they point out that it is also a means of interpreting life, developing morality, and establishing practices which help followers deal with problems of meaning, suffering and injustice. They rightly maintain that if religion is and does all this, then religion is still relevant to the emerging world order and in fact forms its deepest core of interest, experience, and concern. I find this position and statement much in harmony with the concept of faith and religion in Islam, where there has never been a tradition of separation between this world and the other world, between sacred and profane, the "world of Caesar" and the "world of Christ." All matters of this world, from the most complex to the most mundane, are subject to religious concerns. In that sense, everything is sacred, and religion is part of everyday life and not a ritual confined to specific acts on specific days. Nevertheless, the French sociologist Emile

Durkheim maintained that religious phenomena emerge when a separation is made between the sphere of the profane -- the realm of everyday utilitarian activity -- and the sphere of the sacred: the numinous and the transcendental. He declared that religion itself is a system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred. This position, though familiar to Christianity, is very different from the Islamic approach to religion and society.

What is Islam?

Islam is the third and last of the three revealed religions, following Judaism and Christianity. The Qur'an, as revealed to Prophet Mohammed in the 7th century AD, is the bearer of the final message and last revelation from God, according to Muslim belief. The message in the Qur'an is the completion of the earlier messages brought by Moses and Jesus, and neither negates nor contradicts the original messages in their pristine forms.

Further, the root of the word Islam is silm, i.e. "peace" -- peace with God and man. Islam means surrender to the will of God, and a Muslim is one who submits to His will. The objective of this submission is not as much the personal salvation of the individual believer, but the successful execution of the Divine Plan and the implementation of a just and harmonious social order. Islam is essentially a social religion. All rites, rituals, and religious duties involve a social content and facilitate a social purpose. The five obligations that establish the criteria of a Muslim are:

- (1) A declaration and acceptance of the oneness of God (tawheed) and the Prophethood of Mohammed (shahada). The great social significance of tawheed is that if God is one, so is all of His creation, and all the messages sent by God through different prophets were true messages -- the message brought by Prophet Mohammed being the final message to mankind.
- (2) Prayer five times a day is a fundamental duty of a Muslim which also has a social role and significance. When the prayer call is made, all Muslims pray at that time wherever they are, and if they go to the mosque to join the congregation for any or all of the five duty prayers they get an additional reward. This is meant to promote unity and solidarity, as well as sociability.
- (3) The third duty of a Muslim is to pay zakah or obligatory charity, generally two and a half percent of one's wealth annually. Zakah in Islam is a method of wealth redistribution and a manifestation of believers' concern for their fellow beings and local communities. In general, Muslims are encouraged to be generous and charitable to their family, friends, and society.
- (4) Fasting from dawn to dusk for 30 days in the month of Ramadhan is a great spiritual as well as social reinforcement exercise. Like the time for prayers, the time to start and end fast are predetermined and shared by all in the local community. This enhances a spirit of sharing, generosity, and social solidarity. Although fasting is meant to be a spiritual exercise, its social benefits are manifest to the most casual observer.
- (5) The fifth duty of a Muslim is to perform pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime, if one can afford to do so. Again, pilgrimage is not a tourist activity engaged in any time of the year; like all other Islamic

religious requirements, the Hajj has its specific time. Fasting, for example, is performed through the month of Ramadhan; prayers are performed at fixed times of the day according to the position of the sun; zakah is given out once a year in Ramadhan. Pilgrimage is performed during the five days spanning the 8th to the 12th of the month of Dhul Hijjah, when pilgrims from around the world gather in the plains of Mina and Arafat, outside Makkah. In recent years the number of pilgrims during the week of Hajj has exceeded two million, and forms an impressive gathering of Muslims, truly reflecting and celebrating the variety of nations and peoples in Islam.

Strictly speaking, the only "rituals" in Islam are the obligatory prayers five times a day, and the annual pilgrimage to Makkah to perform the Hajj. But Islam is more than prayer and pilgrimage. In a sense, all that Muslims do, or ought to do, in their daily lives and dealings with fellow beings remains relevant to religious concerns. In the course of living their daily lives, they constantly face rewards and punishments and encounter prescriptions and proscriptions as laid down through Divine guidance in the revealed text, the Qur'an, in the Traditions of Prophet Mohammed, and in the interpretations of these two sources by learned and informed scholars and individuals.

Islam, therefore, is a religion as well as a way of life that promotes social harmony and solidarity through its sacred texts as well as its traditional and ethical systems and lived experiences. That things have been less than ideal in Islamic societies, as in societies of other faith traditions, is a well-recognized fact of contemporary life. Many theories can be propounded as to what went wrong and how that can be righted. At the end of a momentous era, it is once again appropriate to address this issue.

Islam, Religion, and Society

The Islamic perspective on religion and society differs from others in the sense that religion is not treated as a product of society, as in the social sciences, which explain the origin of religion in man's search for meaning and security and treat it as purely a social phenomenon and the product of a social system. In the Islamic perspective, religion precedes life and society itself. God is the Creator of all life and all forms, and has created things with a design and a plan. Man's effort to live in accordance with the requirements of God's plan constitutes religious obligation and expresses his religiosity.

Thus in Islam religion is not simply what it does, but what it is. Essentially, it is surrender and submission to the will of God. Religion antecedes man and society. Religion is not the creation of man's imagination, nor is it a social creation, nor simply, as in Durkheim's words, "society divinized". In Islam, religion is that blueprint, that grand design which has been formulated by the Creator and Sustainer of all, the Lord of heavens and earth, who alone is responsible for the emergence and existence of all phenomena known and unknown to human beings with their limited powers of observation and comprehension.

Marett claims that ritual and emotion are primary to religion, and belief is only secondary. To this idea Kluckhohn adds that emphasis on belief is a Western bias. In Orthodox Islam, however, ritual is minimal, emotion is certainly not the primary accompaniment of the religious experience, but belief is central to the entire exercise of faith. A Muslim's declaration of his belief in God and His Omniscience is the defining moment that bestows on him his religious identity. Belief, therefore, is central in Islamic faith.

Niebuhr points out that all belief systems, such as nationalism or science, are religions, but they are inferior systems. Islam, on the other hand, starts with faith and spirituality and culminates in belief: I have faith and so I believe. Niebuhr's "belief systems" operate at the cognitive level (of beliefs) and only secondarily generate the emotive state of faith. As I understand Islam, it starts with the premise of faith from which will flow beliefs, rituals, and emotions. Thus in Islam the component of faith and spirituality is central to its character and concerns.

Patricia and Gerald Mische in their statement "Religion and World Order Program: Rationale and Context" referred to Toynbee's conclusions about the importance of spirituality and religion in the rise and fall of civilizations. Earlier, Auguste Comte also alerted us to the dangers and difficulties of transition from one stage to another through theological, metaphysical, and positive stages under his "Law of Human Progress." It would be a mistake, Comte asserted, to expect the new social order to emerge smoothly from the throes of the preceding order. Contemporary history has reaffirmed the tribulations encountered by societies in transition. Comte recognizes the increasing diversity and complexity spurred by population growth and division of labor as powerful instruments of social progress. These changes are taking place everywhere, affecting peoples of all faith communities and creating for them singular challenges in the context of their respective traditions.

1. Working Toward a Shared Global Ethic

The creation of a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable future is not just a matter of economy, planning and politics. Without the infusion of the ethical and the spiritual, the entire edifice will crumble and deteriorate. So how do we bring spirituality back into the central arena? The question is difficult to address across the board, purportedly covering the entire spectrum of faith traditions. Perhaps the best results will be obtained when each faith tradition approaches this as a home mission and works at the problem from within.

However, the increasing heterogeneity created by burgeoning populations and greater geographic mobility, and the sharpened sensitivities towards roots and identities in an increasingly pasteurized and homogenized world at the mercy of the multimedia, make the task of addressing the spiritual and the moral even more challenging. Never in history was there greater awareness of the variety in races and nations, and never before was the vast segment of humanity exposed so graphically to man's inhumanity to man, conveyed vividly in tabloids and on television screens in living rooms across North and West, and in community huts and tea-shops across South and East. We see more and yet remain ignorant; we are surrounded and yet remain alone. The alienation in modern urban society, the sense of frustration and deprivation among the majority of the world's peoples and communities, has created an atmosphere of alarm, distress, and distrust. Mankind was never so advanced technologically and affluent materially, yet it was perhaps also never so ravaged emotionally and impoverished spiritually.

This is indeed the time for us to ring the alarm bells. It is appropriate that we use the turn of the century and the beginning of the new millennium as an excuse to take account of ourselves and come up with "new millennium's resolutions" that are not only serious but also sustainable.

The Role of Religion and the Islamic Perspective

We have been asked to address five important issues in the context of our respective sacred texts, ethical systems, teachings, traditions, history and lived experience. A fair and comprehensive discussion of these issues is indeed a tall order; it would take volumes to address each one in the six wide and varied contexts identified above. I will briefly state some introductory points reflecting the Islamic perspective, focusing on the sacred text of Islam, the Qur'an, although my paper will not even approach a definitive statement of the Islamic position.

1a. Peace and Security

The very word "Islam" denotes peace. Islam also means submission to the Divine Will and, by derivation, submission to the Rule of Law. The Holy Qur'an in numerous verses exhorts believers to refrain from war and violence. The Qur'an encourages peace; the only war that is encouraged is the war of defense to protect faith and religion, person and property, and only if threatened with aggression. The Qur'an says:

God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you forth: . . .

(Qur'an: 60:9)

And fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression -- for, verily, God does not love aggressors.

(Qur'an: 2:190)

But if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!

(Qur'an: 8: 61)

The misuse of the word jihad as a holy war of conquest and aggression must be rectified. The Arabic word jihad literally means "struggle," either in physical terms as in war and political conflict, or, more importantly, against sin and oppression, greed and exploitation -- a struggle with one's base spirits. There is much encouragement in the Qur'an as well as in the Traditions of the Prophet to engage in this latter kind of jihad.

Respect for human life and personal property is the fundamental ethical principle of Islam. It teaches respect for sanctity of the home and privacy of the individual. The Qur'an instructs even members of the family to:

. . . ask leave of you [before intruding upon your privacy]...

(Qur'an 24:58)

The Qur'an recognizes the individual's right to ownership of property and specifies clear measures for the transfer of property among family members and between individuals and communities. Islam is particularly careful about ensuring accuracy and justice in all forms of transactions, and ensures this through prescribed means, for example, witnessing and documentation. The Qur'an says:

O' you who have attained to faith! Whenever you give or take credit for a stated term, set it down in writing. And let a scribe write it down equitably between you; and no scribe refuse to write as God has taught him: thus shall he write. And let him who contracts the debt dictate; and let him be conscious of God, his Sustainer, and not weaken anything of his undertaking. And if he who contracts the debt is weak of mind or body, or is not able to dictate himself, then let him who watches over his interests dictate equitably. And call upon two of your men to act as witnesses . . .

(Qur'an 2:282)

The fairness of a deal is further ensured by requiring the witness to agree to witness a transaction only if it is fair, just, and legal.

The two most sensitive areas of human relations are political conflict leading to aggression, and war and economic exchange leading to exploitative transactions. Together they form the most nagging source of inter-group conflict. Application of the Islamic principles to maintain peace, obey the law, and respect the sanctity of individual privacy and personal property will certainly contribute to an atmosphere of tranquillity, peace, and security in society.

1b. Economic and Social Justice

Islam is not just a religion, but a way of life which represents a complete system encompassing the social, the private, and the individual. In Islam all mankind is but one community, and as such it shares common interests and concerns. The individual, however, is guaranteed rights and freedoms "in accordance with the principles of social responsibility and solidarity as stipulated by the Islamic law." However, the Qur'an places on the individual the responsibility to maintain truth and social justice. As the Qur'an says:

O' you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!

(Qur'an 4:135)

Provisions in the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet, from which Islamic jurisprudence is derived, cover all aspects of the economic system, which is founded on the combined principles of free enterprise, individual responsibility, and social justice. For example, Islam explicitly prohibits usury and other methods of obtaining wealth that are exploitative and speculative. It also prohibits gambling and games of chance. The Qur'an says:

O' you who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing. Shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state!

(Qur'an 5:90)

In the Islamic economic system, all gains should accrue from personal effort or hard work, or as a result of risk-taking in investment. Guaranteed return is seen as exploitative and is forbidden in Islam. This is a confirmation of Islam's deep regard for the principle of social justice.

Islam respects individual rights of property ownership and encourages gainful employment to ensure comfortable living for oneself and one's family. However, Islam prohibits hoarding of wealth, and adopts measures through zakah and charity, and through encouraging generosity, to redistribute wealth. The Qur'an says:

Believe in God and His apostle, and spend on others out of that of which He has made you trustees. For those of you who have attained to faith and who spend freely [in God's cause] shall have a great reward.

(Qur'an 57:7)

It is the fundamental duty of the Islamic state to ensure that these basic economic principles are enforced and respected. The state must supervise the market to prevent and eliminate economic crimes and exploitation. Murad Hoffman points out that "Islam may be . . . the only ideology which brings the individual and the state into a balanced relationship".

Islam is also perhaps the only religion that constantly relates the here and the hereafter, and measures piety not only in terms of worship but also in terms of service to humanity. The Qur'an says:

True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west -- but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets, and spends his substance -- however much he himself may cherish it -- upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for freeing of human beings from bondage, and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues, and truly pious are they who keep their promises whenever they promise and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of God.

(Qur'an 2:177)

Social justice remains central to a system that treats the individual as an integral part of the symbiotic community. The Prophet said that the ummah, or community of believers, is like one body: if one part suffers, the whole also suffers the pain and injury. Social justice is the best insurance against social malaise. If individuals are treated justly and fairly, society will derive the direct benefit in terms of social peace and harmony.

The fundamental basis of justice is equality and equity. Equality of individuals is assumed to be the norm in Islam. Although God has created different nations and peoples, they are all on the same level in the degree of their humanity. One individual is superior to another only in their degree of piety and closeness to God. The Qur'an says:

. . . Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware.

(Qur'an 49:13)

There is no superiority of one person over another, of the rich over the poor, one social class over another, or one race over another. All people are equal in the eyes of God; only those who excel in piety and charity and work in the cause of Allah are the successful ones, and theirs will be the best rewards.

1c. Human Rights

Islam accords much emphasis to human rights as the basis of social solidarity as well as stability. No society can prosper or be harmonious without giving adequate attention to the protection and preservation of human rights. Islam teaches that all human beings have the right to life at conception, and, after birth, a right to full opportunities to lead a rewarding and satisfying life. God says in the Qur'an:

Are you not aware that God has made subservient to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and has lavished upon you His blessings, both outward and inward?

(Qur'an 31:20)

And He has made subservient to you, [as a gift] from Himself, all that is in the heavens and on earth: in this, behold, there are signs indeed for people who think!

(Qur'an 45:13)

. . . and do not kill your children for fear of poverty -- [for] it is We who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them . . .

(Qur'an 6:151)

Even in matters such as the selection of a name, parents are instructed to choose the best name with the best meaning with which to address the newborn. The child has the right to proper care and nurturing, to education and schooling. As an adult, each individual has the right to earn a living and own property, which s/he may inherit or acquire through personal effort such as trade or other forms of legitimate acquisition. Yet rights come with responsibilities. The Qur'an warns:

[On the Day of Judgment,] every human being will be held in pledge for whatever [evil] he has wrought.

(Qur'an 74:38)

Each person is responsible for himself, yet each person is like a shepherd to his flock, responsible for its welfare -- encouraging others to do good and discouraging them from doing that which is harmful and prohibited. The Qur'an says:

And [as for] the believers, both men and women -- they are protectors of one another: they [all] enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace: verily, God is almighty, wise!

(Qur'an 9:71)

Islam laid down a charter of human rights fourteen centuries earlier than the contemporary Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, human rights in Islam are not just based on human nature, or established through human reasoning which hammers out a system of "just" and "fair" rights. In Islam, human rights are bestowed by God on man and are inalienable as well as irrevocable. These rights are not obtained after a struggle: they are given as a birthright. However, as in the system of negative marking, some of these rights are taken away by state and society in violation of the principle of justice and respect for the rights of man as guaranteed by God, which forms the fundamental basis of true spirituality in Islam.

Islam tells us that every person is born free in the fitrah or pure state of nature. The individual's right to freedom is sacred, unless he violates the law of God or desecrates the rights of others. There is no concept of original sin in Islam. Every child is born pure and clean. S/he does not inherit inferiority because of ancestry, social class, religion or ethnicity. The Islamic concept of individual freedom is based on the principle that (1) man's conscience is subject to God only, to Whom every man is directly responsible; (2) there is personal accountability for all of one's deeds, and the actor alone is responsible for the consequences, derives the rewards, and receives punishment; (3) God has delegated to man the responsibility to decide for himself and make rational choices, for man is a free agent, endowed with free will, and that is why, unlike the angels, he remains accountable for his deeds.

These are the natural rights of men, which constitute their moral prerogative. Within this framework of Islam, religious persecution and class and social conflict have little room to operate. The related concept of equality of all human beings ensures freedom and justice for all.

The respect for leadership and the right to free expression, as well as the necessity for consultation, provided the model for participatory government of the people by the shoura (consultation) method. This form of government ensures democratic exercise of human rights and civil liberties. The Qur'an says:

O' you who have attained to faith! Pay heed unto God, and pay heed unto the Apostle and unto those from among you who have been entrusted with authority . . .

(Qur'an 4:59)

Make due allowance for man's nature, and enjoin the doing of what is right; and leave alone all those who choose to remain ignorant.

(Qur'an 7:199)

God tells us in the Qur'an that the more enduring reward of the hereafter will be given to those who:

. . . are constant in prayer; and whose rule [in all matters of common concern] is consultation among themselves . . .

(Qur'an 42:38)

Indeed, women's rights are human rights, which are also Islamic rights. Fourteen centuries ago, Islam bestowed special rights and privileges on women, including economic and conjugal rights. But these rights come with special responsibilities, which have often been applied selectively and oppressively by society's vested interest groups. In Islam itself, in matters of faith and spirituality, of economic justice, of individual rights and freedoms, there is the principle of equity and, wherever applicable, equality between men and women. The Qur'an says:

Men shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, whether it be little or much -- a share ordained [by God].

(Qur'an 4:7)

. . . the rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husband's] rights with regard to them . . .

(Qur'an 2:228)

That Muslim women remain deprived of these rights is part of the universal story of gender discrimination worldwide. Islam gave women the right to property ownership, inheritance, freedom of speech, and participation in the economy, in addition to specific conjugal rights, at a time when these were unthinkable under other faith traditions. However, as with most of their counterparts, Muslim women remain deprived of their rights because of their own general backwardness and lack of education, which renders them incapable of understanding, let alone demanding, their rights -- thus excluding them from active participation in economic, civic, or political spheres.

Islam specifically identifies the rights of the child, and makes not only the parents but the community and the society responsible for securing adequate maintenance, education, and welfare. Islam surely recognizes that "it takes a village to raise a child"; however, Islam also places specific responsibilities on the child, especially in regard to matters of religious practice (from which the child is not exempt) and parental respect and obedience (for which the child is duly responsible).

The rights of non-Muslims living in Islamic societies (al dhimmi) are also identified specifically and elaborately. The Islamic state is to guarantee the freedom and protection of all ahl al dhimma with full respect for their religion and social and cultural heritage, as well as their rights to own property, engage in business, and make a living, and their freedom of movement and liberty.

Contrary to current media misrepresentation, Islam has never lent itself to large-scale religious persecution, nor has any Islamic country through history engaged in religious/ethnic "cleansing" -- though they have frequently been the victims of genocide, such as lately in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Eastern Turkistan, among others. Perhaps the main reason that the image of violence has become associated with Islam and Muslims today is the deliberate and popular use of the term "Islamic fundamentalism." This term is both applied to, and self-applied by, groups that are nothing more than political/ideological factions comprised of extremists and terrorists who use the cloak of Islam to achieve, so they think, an air of legitimacy. These groups have done the most harm to Islam's image in the contemporary world. Similar groups and movements are found in almost all other major religions today but, for reasons too complex to get into here, have not had equally damaging consequences for the reputations of their faith traditions.

1d. Ecological Sustainability

Man's ownership of land, natural resources, and all material property is based on the Islamic principle that ultimate ownership belongs to God alone. The Qur'an says:

Unto God belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. Verily, God alone is self-sufficient, the One to whom all praise is due!

(Qur'an 31:26)

All that is in the heavens and on earth extols God's limitless glory: for He alone is almighty, truly wise! His is the dominion over the heavens and the earth; He grants life and deals death; and He has the power to will anything. He is the First and the Last, and the Outward as well as the Inward: and he has full knowledge of everything. He it is who has created the heavens and the earth in six eons, and is established on the throne of His almightiness. He knows all that enters the earth, and all that comes out of it, as well as all that descends from the skies, and all that ascends to them. And He is with you wherever you may be; and God sees all that you do. His is the dominion over the heavens and the earth; and all things go back unto God [as their source]. He makes the night grow longer by shortening the day, and makes the day grow longer by shortening the night; and He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men].

(Qur'an 57:1-6)

Man's right to ownership is legitimized through proper means of acquisition (inheritance, work, or risk-taking) but restricted to the extent that his use of his own property does not permanently damage or deplete the resources.

Here indeed is the earliest expression of concern for sustainable development and conservation of resources that guides the entire approach of Islam to economy, society, environment, and resources. The Qur'an teaches the importance of respecting the environment and the natural resources which man may

use for his benefit, but only to the extent that they satisfy legitimate needs and are not consumed in excess or acquired through unfair means. While encouraging the "good life" for believers, the Qur'an also emphasizes moderation in consumption. The Qur'an says:

Children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful!

(Qur'an 7:31)

. . . and who, whenever they spend on others, are neither wasteful nor niggardly but [remember that] there is always a just mean between those [two extremes] . . .

(Qur'an 25:67)

In fact, discouraging both miserliness and excesses of generosity, the Qur'an admonishes:

And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute.

(Qur'an 17:29)

Islam recognizes the importance of environmental safety and protection. Maintaining a clean environment is the basic civic duty of believers which will contribute to pollution control and a healthier environment. The Prophet encouraged the planting of trees, the preservation and conservation of resources, the careful use of water and other environmental resources, and safety in the environment when he described acts such as the removal of a harmful object from the way of the people, as charity worthy of Allah's reward. However, the principle of balance and moderation remains central to Islamic teachings.

Man is neither deified with perfect qualities nor vilified as base and sinful. Furthermore, Islam rejects hedonism as well as asceticism. Islam is not concerned primarily with this world (secular) or with the other world (sacred). It addresses itself to both the human condition here and human destiny in the hereafter. The Qur'an says:

Seek instead, by means of what God has granted thee, [the good of] the life to come, without forgetting, withal, thine own [rightful] share in this world, and do good [unto others] as God has done good unto thee; and seek not to spread corruption on earth: for, verily, God does not love the spreaders of corruption!

(Qur'an 28:77)

It would devalue life on earth only relative to life in the hereafter, which is everlasting and where the rewards are even greater. God says in the Qur'an:

Behold how we bestow [on earth] more bounty on some of them than on others: but [remember that] the life to come will be far higher in degree and far greater in merit and bounty.

(Qur'an: 17:21)

Man holds the vice-regency of God on earth (Qur'an 2:30). He is therefore responsible for the protection and preservation of that which has been entrusted to him by God. All life is to be respected, so there is no hunting or killing of animals or keeping them in captivity for pleasure and profit. Waste is to be avoided and so is excessive use of resources. The Prophet advised Muslims to consume in moderation, yet without self-denial. Man is not to forgo the good things of life that God has provided for him. The Qur'an says:

Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God, for his servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: they are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the day of Judgment.

(Qur'an 7:32)

However, natural resources such as air, water, and minerals from the soil cannot be the private property of the individual, but may be leased from the state, which is to oversee the fair and proper use of these resources, with particular care for conservation and preservation of diminishing resources. These Islamic injunctions to the faithful provide the first principles of "sustainable development" as they facilitate the maintenance of a healthy environment and a prosperous and peaceful society.

1e. Cultural Identity and Integrity

Islam recognizes the variety and differences among nations and peoples and accords no superiority to one over another, for all people are the creation of God and are deserving of equal respect. Islam does not extol uniformity, and in fact celebrates differences among peoples as signs of God's power of creation. The Qur'an says:

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are signs for those who know.

(Qur'an 30:22)

In this context, Muslims are even encouraged to marry outside their immediate community so that it will help extend their circle of social contacts, expand their knowledge of different cultures and peoples, and increase access to wider resources. However, all religions are to be respected and all places of worship protected and treated with dignity and care. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to make the following declaration:

Say: "We believe in God, and in that which has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus and the prophets from their Lord: we make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam)."

(Qur'an 3:84)

All men come from the same source and are the beneficiaries of guidance from their Creator. All people who obey God and do good deeds will be rewarded. , Heaven is not just reserved for good Muslims, but is available to:

Those who believe (the Muslim) and those who are Jews, Christians and Sabians -- all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

(Qur'an: 2:62)

Variations of culture and language are to be respected and celebrated, not despised and eradicated. Islam does not enforce or encourage uniformity in outward expressions of cultural forms. There is no mark, symbol, dress, or form that designates Islam or Muslims. The message is eternal and universal for all mankind and not for a particular people at a particular time. Since no one cultural form is recognized as superior or dominant, all cultures are respected as legitimate and wholesome -- as long as they neither threaten nor violate the universal principles of faith. People of different cultures are not to be challenged or confronted unless they violate the Divine laws. And even then, Muslims are asked to tell them, "To you your religion and to me mine" (Qur'an 109:6). Because as God says in the Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion . . ." (Qur'an 2:256).

The Qur'an also lays down the general principle to guide Muslims in their choice of conduct:

Help one another in righteousness and piety, but help not one another in sin and rancor.

(Qur'an 5:2)

This principle allows Muslims as believers to cooperate in any effort toward the promotion of the good that will enhance peace, tranquillity, harmony, and enrichment of the quality of life in society.

2. Working Toward Global Governance

Trends in contemporary society clearly indicate that there will be far-reaching changes in the way we live and organize ourselves. With the shrinking and crowded globe resulting from technological advancement and population proliferation, not only have our problems intensified, they have also multiplied and spread across regions and continents without respecting state boundaries, national sovereignty, and territoriality. The world is indeed a global village. Within this wider playing field, game plans designed with a localized and limited perspective may have to be revised and adapted. The Islamic tradition, in spirit as well as in practice, has always been global. As a universal religion neither confined to a nation or people nor restricted to a single issue, message, or individual personality, Islam taught universal values and principles that are applicable to all people at all times.

2a. Global Civic Society

The Islamic value of respect for the law and obedience to the highest authority provides the ethos and the environment for a global civic society. The criteria for global citizenship fit the criteria of the believer who accepts the will of God, obeys that will, seeks to understand to his/her best reasoning ability the relevant rules and obligations, and attempts to fulfill these obligations and achieve the accompanying privileges to the best of his/her ability. Faith, then, would be the ultimate criterion for effective global citizenship. Faith facilitates our understanding and acceptance of our duties as members of a community and citizens of a global society.

2b. Global Structures and Systems

The Islamic concept of ummah (the community of believers) is truly a global concept which provides a global structure to operationalize a civic society. The ummah in Islam is not fractured by national boundaries and territorial sovereignty. It is not exclusive to particular peoples, races, or classes. The only criterion for membership in the ummah is one's adherence to the Islamic faith. With such a tradition of universality, extending beyond Islam to reach out to peoples of all other faith traditions is but an exercise on familiar territory; for if one can transcend all barriers of language, culture, and lifestyle and discover the essence of unity and brotherhood in Islam, one can move further and stretch to include all mankind, which the Qur'an tells us was initially one, and only later developed differences in views and approaches. Furthermore, the ummah is not supposed to be inward-looking; it is recognized to be a part of a global community, and relations with this larger community are valued and recognized through clear instructions on dealing with it in political, economic, and social matters.

2c. Local Initiatives

Local initiatives are essential to the success of any form of global governance. The establishment of local mosques in every neighborhood, where people congregate on a daily basis, is the basic structural design for providing opportunities for "bottom-up" initiatives to launch programs of community welfare. The mosques have traditionally been the centers of learning and social services, as well as civic and social activities.

On a transnational level and among countries of differing faith traditions, the local communities of citizens' welfare groups based in mosques, churches, temples, and synagogues can cooperate and develop a program of activities to be implemented within the limits of their immediate resources and shared with other communities interlinked by economic, political, or environmental interdependencies. Some of the most active and effective grassroots organizations have been operational at this level. They can link up together to form a global chain and thus serve the larger humanity.

2d. Balancing Tensions

Balancing tensions should come easily under Islam, for it is a religion of "the middle way" which teaches moderation. It provides safeguards for the protection of individual good, without sacrificing the common good. What is good for all will be good for the individual, but what is good for the individual may not be good for all. Yet the individual's right to his own good is not denied as long as the exercise of his rights does not deprive others of their rights nor affect the common good. Rights in Islam are always in direct relation to one's obligations and responsibilities, for Islam recognizes the basic logical principle that one person's rights are derived through the fulfillment of obligations on the part of another. Thus, in order to obtain one's rights, we have to fulfill our responsibilities, which are essentially the rights of others in worldly matters, and the rights of God in matters of faith and spirituality.

The private sector is that aspect of the economy operating on resources invested by individuals, in which capital belongs to the individual, and risks and benefits also accrue to the owner/s of the capital. The public sector has at stake public funds raised through taxes or other income generated by the civic authority. Islam encourages individuals (i.e. the private sector) to operate in such a way that the public sector also benefits. Circulation of funds and resources is encouraged to keep money moving from private to public domains through donations, gifts, investments, and the payment of obligatory charity, the zakah. The capital thus generated will come back to the individual through trade and earned wages, thus reentering the private sector. Thus, a healthy circulation is maintained in the movement of resources between the two sector domains.

Long-term gain is always the preferred target in all faith traditions that teach believers to wait for their reward till after the day of judgment. Short-term objectives may appear as a result of pre-existing need, and may be facilitated by the availability of resources and the immediacy of choices. Yet again a balance is needed in drawing up priorities in the face of limited resources. Economic and environmental needs

may at times clash, and immediate economic returns take precedence over environmental concerns. However, Islam prohibits the exploitation or irretrievable depletion of the environment for the purpose of deriving any immediate economic benefit. Economic needs may be rationally assessed and met through the exercise of moderation in consumption, effective planning, and proper distribution. Any activity that ignores environmental interests and concerns will bring long-term difficulties, even in economic terms.

The concept of sovereignty in Islam is subject to the basic principle that all sovereignty belongs to God. All positions of authority derive their mandate from the legitimacy of their position and should be allowed the legitimate exercise of power as long as they carry out the covenant. The hierarchy of authority in the social context operates on the principle of justice and reciprocity as well as accountability. As in the domains of public versus private interest and individual versus common good, which are not mutually exclusive and are often interrelated, each higher level of sovereignty should not deny the legitimacy and authority of lower levels, even though it may supersede them on the principle of the common good being larger than the individual good; it should still restrain itself from denying or exploiting the lower level for fear of the highest authority, which in all matters belongs to Allah alone, to Whom all are accountable.

2e. Religious Resources for Global Governance

The suggestion to use schools, research institutions, media, publications, community-based networks, and professional associations as "religious resources for global governance" is based on the premise of the separation of religion from these social structures. In the Islamic system, these social institutions will have built-in religious content. Therefore, instead of being consciously used as a religious resource, they will be recognized in their own right as the bearers and conveyers of the religious message. This message is based on the concepts of the sovereignty of God the Creator, the equality of his creation, and the principle of balance and justice to govern all human affairs.

3. Collaborating with the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies

Perhaps one major difficulty in working with the present setup at the UN is that it is not very hospitable to the global perspective. The UN is an organization of states, not of nations, and to the extent that it operates within the clearly defined principles of state sovereignty, it remains restricted in its ability to support and sustain issues that are not neatly confined to state boundaries. Environmental issues, for example, and those relating to health matters such as outbreaks of disease, are not always contained by the border guards within national boundaries. Similarly, cultural, faith, and religious traditions are not neatly confined, though some states may even claim religion as their *raison d'être*. Often, peoples of one faith sharing a common ethnic origin, language, and cultural tradition are separated by artificial state boundaries.

Furthermore, the state has acquired an authority and superiority to which all matters are subordinated. Moral principles, human lives, bilateral and multilateral relations are sacrificed to satisfy the interests of the state as perceived by its current leadership. The principle of state sovereignty has done much to contribute to the present-day global crises, where problems and solutions are complicated by rigid and

often artificial divisions and become insurmountable due to national pride or considerations of "national security."

To operate on a global scale, we need to come up with parallel networks where nongovernmental organizations will come together and operate more or less free of the United Nations, which is bound by its own charter that recognizes the principle of state sovereignty and accepts the legitimacy of national self-interest. To ensure the kind of moral and spiritual transformation that is needed to bring long-lasting peace and security to the world community, we need newer instruments that will operate on a global scale and address issues raised above the mundane affairs of national governments. What is perhaps needed now is a massive interfaith effort to bring the people of the world together to devise plans and strategies that will enable us to enter the next millennium with the attitudes and motivations necessary to ensure the establishment of a just, moral, and peaceful world order.

We have seen, recently and repeatedly, the difficulties faced by the United Nations in resolving international conflict, and its inability to take effective moral positions on numerous current international issues. We have also seen the failure of nation-states to provide peace to their regions and prosperity to their citizens. Economic hardships have intensified; war and conflict are rampant on the world scene; health is a major concern in all parts of the globe. Even the education system has failed to reach all segments in most societies, and has proved sorely incapable of providing even minimum skills, let alone the kind of preparation that will enable the individual and the community to face the rising challenges of the coming age.

Thus, it is now the turn of religion to shake off the inertia that set in after its engagement in centuries of interreligious conflict, which dictated economics and politics on the world scene. Today we need the moral authority, the spiritual strength that religion can impart, to launch an effort to "save the world" with vigor and confidence. Transcending state boundaries, religion and spirituality could penetrate to the very grassroots from where all wider movements draw strength. Thus, to supplement the United Nations' herculean efforts to bring the states together and pool their resources, I would suggest the establishment of a parallel global organization to bring together representatives of different religious traditions, who would deliberate on matters of policy and planning and make recommendations for implementation by national governments on the basis of the moral and ethical standards upheld by the various faith traditions.

Conclusion

What is needed today is the moral authority of religion. The nation-states have shown their moral bankruptcy, though there are stirrings of concern among some "secular" national leaders. Unless religion and state come together and work hand in hand, the world will continue to see the accelerating deterioration of the world order, and while in our generation we still may anticipate the coming of the millennium with enthusiasm, our children may not be in such a positive frame of mind in welcoming the next century, unless we undertake some serious correctional measures here and now.

I suggest the establishment of a permanent world body comprising the leadership of the various faith traditions, which may be called (for lack of a more original name) the Parliament of World Religions. This Parliament will have a formal organizational structure through which it will perform an advisory

function for national governments; but it will also have an active executive board engaged in deliberating issues of policy, formulating and evaluating platforms for action, and coordinating the activities of organizations such as those engaged in welfare, relief, and charity work, which are traditionally related to religious institutions.

The mandate of this Parliament should be truly global. The Vatican and other Christian churches, for example, have an excellent track record in the promotion of welfare and charity work around the world. Though generally a part of their evangelical mission, this kind of network of activity can be focused mainly on the betterment of the human condition, irrespective of conversion rates. If all religions come to accept one another as legitimate systems of belief, recognizing that each person is entitled to hold his/her own beliefs according to individual convictions and understanding, these efforts will be less aggressive and the world will be more peaceful. If religions downsized their focus on winning converts and upgraded their programs for welfare and the betterment of humanity, the world would not only be more peaceful, but also more just and moral.

The world today needs a system of checks and balances. Democratic governments have recognized this principle from their inception, but they uphold it within the confines of their states and apply it to their national constitutions, where these exist. In interstate matters there is a degree of arrogance and self-centeredness, usually justified on the principle of national sovereignty, which would otherwise be unacceptable on the individual level and condemned as improper, immoral, unjust, or even criminal. Nation-states are literally getting away with murder, and the larger the numbers involved, the greater their impunity.

It is becoming increasingly clear that nation-states cannot monitor themselves, and certainly, in this post-bipolar world, cannot police each other. On the global level there is a power vacuum that can only be filled by a different type of authority, a higher order, represented by religion, which can introduce an element of moral and spiritual concerns into matters that secular organizational structures such as sovereign states and their instruments have increasingly failed to address.

The issues in the 21st century will be qualitative in nature and not quantitative. It is no longer a matter of how much change but what kind of change -- for major change there will be. Policy decisions in the future will increasingly be moral decisions, in terms of their prioritization as well as their applications and consequences. Global governance will then be not just an ideal, but a necessity that will ensure our survival even in the foreseeable future. Indeed, religion and spirituality have an increasingly important role to play in stabilizing the world in the 21st century, and the sooner this is realized, the sooner the world can be on its way to achieving prosperity, justice, and peace.