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THE CONCEPT OF STATE IN ISLAM - A REASSESSMENT

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The Holy Prophet started preaching Islam in his ancestral home Mecca. But he had to migrate from Mecca to Medina because the Meccans were not willing to accept his faith and made it difficult for him to preach his religion. The Medinans, on the other hand, accepted him as the Messenger of God invited him to Medina, and with their help and support, he founded a city-state at Medina.

THE PROPHETIC ERA

In the person of the Holy Prophet, as Imām or Head of this new state, were combined a legislator (*mujtahid*), a statesman, an administrator, a judge, and a military commander. He also led the congregational prayers and was the supreme authority in matters connected with religion and Revealed Law. Therefore he had different capacities. Nevertheless, although he had the last word in political and military affairs, and as the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) was not obliged to consult others, he consulted his Companions in all matters other than those concerning revelation in accordance with the command addressed to him in the Qur'ān to the effect that he should consult them in affairs and when he had taken a decision, he should put his trust in God (sūrah 3: verse 159). The command to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in this respect is for no other purpose except to emphasise the significance and importance on the Muslims of "consultation" (*shūrā*) in managing the affairs of the state, otherwise as has been pointed out above, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) did not require anyone's advice. In his personal capacity he usually accepted the advice of others and did not impose his own decision. In sūrah 42: verse 38 it is laid down that the Muslims should conduct their affairs by mutual consultation. The verse is descriptive of the nature of the Muslim community that is expected to conduct all its worldly affairs by mutual consultation. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: "Difference of opinion in my community is (the manifestation of Divine) Mercy"; and: "My community would never agree on an error".[1]

While interpreting the verses pertaining to "consultation" a very important question arises as to whether the body to be created for this purpose is a consultative body or an advisory body. According to the Practice (Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet who always consulted a body of eminent members of the Muslim community, namely his Companions, in the conduct of the affairs of the state, it was an advisory body, and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs subsequently followed this practice. The generally accepted principle is that the person in authority must consult others but he is not bound by the advice and can overrule it. However, as it will be seen later, the Khāwarij did not agree to it. According to them under the relevant Qur'ānic injunction a consultative body and not a single head of the state advised by the advisory body (which advice he could over-rule) was required to conduct the affairs of the Muslim community. They maintained that after the death of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) there was no obligation to render obedience to a Khalīfah or Imām as the Head of the State, because the Muslim community could govern itself by constituting a Consultative Assembly from amongst themselves. However if a need arose the Assembly could appoint a Head of the State for its own convenience. Be that as it may, the principle that those who command authority ought in all matters of importance consult the Muslims is undisputed.

In sūrah 4: verse 59 of the Qur'ān, each and every Muslim is enjoined to obey God, to obey the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and those having authority over Muslims, who are from amongst them. From this verse four principles of Islamic political ethics have been deduced. The first principle is that since all authority in the universe vests in God, who is the Omnipotent and Omnipresent Creator of the universe, He alone must be obeyed to the exclusion of all others. God has laid down law in the Qur'ān in the form of what is good and what is evil. These commands have been sent as revelation from time to time to the prophets for the guidance of mankind, the last being the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). God has already placed in the nature of man the knowledge of good and evil and has further clarified the distinction between good and evil in the Qur'ān. It is, ethically speaking, on this basis that every Muslim is commanded to promote good and to suppress evil.

The second principle is that obedience may be rendered to man, but only under God's command, generally speaking, in the case of the prophets,

where rendering obedience is in fact to God and not to human beings. The Holy Prophet is to be obeyed because he was the last and the final one through whom the faith has been eventually perfected in the Qur'ān, which for a Muslim, is the pure word of God, whereas the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet is the authoritative exposition of the Qur'ān.

In the course of the evolution of Muslim polity, the state through a special department called "*Àisbah*", considered it as its duty to forcibly impose on the people Islamic religio-moral obligations detailed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, besides the strict enforcement of Islamic law pertaining to certain crimes (e.g., theft, adultery, drunkenness etc.) Through the department of Justice (*Qaîâ*). Thus the functions of the *MuÁtasib* (Religious Censor) included compelling the Muslims to do what was ethico-legally reputable or right (*ma'rūf*) and to detect, restrain and punish what was disreputable or wrong (*munkar*). But as is evident from Muslim history this practice was not consistently followed. As for the contemporary Muslim nation-states, the department of "*Àisbah*" has ceased to exist in the traditional form in almost all such states. Similarly the specific provisions of Islamic criminal law are not being enforced in all the Muslim nation-states.

The third principle is that obedience may be rendered after God and the Holy Prophet to those who command authority over the Muslims. Theoretically, this form of obedience is subject to their acting in execution of the commands of God and the Holy Prophet. But if they are not acting as is expected of them, then, according to the interpretation advanced by eminent Sunni jurists, they must still be obeyed as God alone can punish them. The fourth principle is that obedience can only be rendered to those who command authority over the Muslims who are from amongst them, in the sense that they are themselves members of the Muslim community. Obviously these leaders of the Muslim community have to be Muslims themselves as they are expected to act, at least in theory, in execution of the commands of God and the Holy Prophet, although they can further employ or delegate their powers to non-Muslims who should likewise be obeyed. Thus generally speaking, in the Qur'ān no mode of life is prescribed for a subjugated Muslim community. The mode of life which a Muslim is commanded to follow can only be followed if he is member of a politically free community. Consequently the Muslim community must strive for establishing a state of its own wherever it is possible to establish a viable

state. This is one of the constitutional principles, which can be deduced from the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet, who migrated from his ancestral home Mecca to found a separate state at Medina.

A state which is managed and administered in accordance with the laws of Islam is called *Dār al-Islām* (Abode of Peace). Its independence has to be preserved under all circumstances and therefore its first priority must be defence. But effective defence is only possible if equality is maintained among its citizens and they are all united to help one another in defending their common territory. This is also a constitutional principle deduced from the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet as is apparent from *Mīthāq al-Madīnah*, the first written constitution of the world, which was promulgated by the Holy Prophet in the city-state of Medina.

This ancient document contains in all forty-seven articles. The first part, consisting of twenty-three articles, deals with the mutual relations, rights and duties of Muslims. It is under these articles that the Emigrants from Mecca (*Muhājirīn*) were united with the Helpers from Medina (*AnÄār*) in a fraternal bond of a Community of Faith, thus laying down the principle that according to Islam, nation-hood (*Millah* or *Ummah*) is to be founded on a common spiritual aspiration, rather than on common race, language and territory. The second part of the document, consisting of twenty four articles, is concerned with the relations of Muslims with the Jews and other non-Muslim inhabitants of Medina or the valley of Yathrib, and confirming them in their religion as well as possessions, enumerates their duties and rights. The interesting features of this part of the document are that non-Muslims are included "in" or "with" the Muslim Ummah, which implies that if nation-hood of Muslims is founded on a common spiritual aspiration, their unity with non-Muslim minorities in the state, is based on the defense of a common territory. The Muslims and non-Muslims, described as a "single community", are to help one another against whoever wars or fights against the people of Yathrib for, as stated in the document: "among them there exists sincere friendship, honourable dealing and no treachery". They are also expected to contribute or bear expenses equally so long as the war continues, and they are to collectively defend the valley of Yathrib which is described as:

> "sacred for the people of this document". It is also stated therein that whenever among the people of this document there occurs any serious dispute or quarrel: "it is to be referred to God and to Muhammad, the

> Messenger of God (God bless and preserve him). God is the most scrupulous and truest Fulfiller of what is contained in this document". [2]

It may be pointed out here that if a Muslim state (*Dār al-Islām*) is conquered or subjugated by a non-Muslim power, it will be transformed into an Abode of War (*Dār-al-Àarb*), and theoretically the Muslims therein shall be left with two alternatives: either to conduct militant struggle (*jihād*) in order to regain their independent status or to migrate (*hijrah*) to some Muslim country. It was to avoid this possibility that the Holy Prophet laid full emphasis on the defence of Medina. Hence it is evident that the Muslim concepts of patriotism and nationalism are not solely based on an attachment to a particular land or territory but these are founded on an attachment to the ideals and aspirations which have been realised or are being realised or may be realised through institutions established in such land or territory, and that land or territory is "sacred" only in this context.

The Holy Prophet had founded a confederal state as the non-Muslim tribes governed themselves in accordance with their own laws and were fully autonomous in their own regions. It was only in accordance with the terms of *Mīthāq al-Medinah* that they were one with the Muslim community. The Holy Prophet as the Head of the first Muslim state, was indeed concerned with the formation and maintenance of unity among the Muslim community (*Millah*/Ummah) and its governance in accordance with Islamic law (*Sharī'ah*). But, generally speaking, since the broad principles of law had already been laid down by God in the Qur'ān, the Holy Prophet as the chief executive authority, interpreted those laws and implemented them, thus laying down the constitutional principle that in the sphere of legislation, the Head of the State has to be a *Mujtahid* (one who himself exerts to interpret law) and not a *Muqallid* (one who follows interpretations of others). The basis of this principle is the Qur'ānic verse: "And to those who exert We show Our paths". (sūrah 29: verse 69).

The principle is further illustrated in the light of a Tradition of the Holy Prophet. At the appointment of Ma'ādh as the governor of Yemen, the Holy Prophet is reported to have asked him as to how he would decide matters coming up before him. Ma'ādh replied: "I will judge matters according to the Book of God". "But if the Book of God does not contain anything to guide you?" "Then I will act in accordance with the precedents of the Prophet of

God". "But if the precedents also fail?" "Then I will exert to form my own opinion".

From this principle one inference can clearly be drawn: that the worldly affairs (*Mu'āmalāt*), as distinguished from the religious obligations (*'Ibādāt*), being subject to the law of change, such situations are bound to arise where the Qur'ān and the Sunnah may not provide sufficient guidance, and the Muslims would be expected to exert to advance their own solutions in interpreting Islamic law and implementing it in accordance with the needs or requirements of their respective times. In other words through "*Ijtihād*" a mechanism is provided within the polity in order tomake the *Sharī'ah* mobile and to proceed along with the community rather than becoming static or lagging behind. The other inference which can be drawn is that the Judiciary (*Qaîâ*) is to be separated from the Executive. Because according to the Qur'ānic injunction laid down in sūrah 4: verse 59 if any dispute arises between the citizens or as against the state, the matter is to be referred to the Judiciary for adjudication in accordance with the Book of God and precedents of the Holy Prophet, and the judgement of the court is binding on the disputing parties.

Next in importance from the constitutional standpoint is the document called the Treaty of Al-Àudaybiya, which was made between the Holy Prophet as Head of the State of Medina and Suhayl bin 'Amr, the representative of the pagans of Mecca. The treaty was a pact of non-aggression for ten years between the Muslims and the Quraysh. Apart from the stipulations in the agreement, which were favourable to the long-term strategy of the Holy Prophet, it is interesting to note the manner in which the treaty was recorded. According to the version provided by the historians, the Holy Prophet asked 'Alī to write the treaty with the opening: "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful". But the representative of the Meccans objected asserting that the Quraysh would not approve of the words "the Beneficent, the Merciful", and that the treaty should commence with the pagan invocation: "In Thy name, O Lord". Thereupon the Holy Prophet directed 'Alī to write the words as desired by the representative of the Meccans. Then the Holy Prophet told 'Alī to write: "This is the treaty which Muhammad, the Messenger of God made with Suhayl bin 'Amr....". But Suhayl bin 'Amr again interrupted and asking 'Alī to withhold his pen, addressed the Holy Prophet thus: "If we had accepted you as the Messenger

of God, there would have been no war between us. Therefore, let only your name and parentage be written". Accordingly under the direction of the Holy Prophet and despite the protests of Abū Bakr, "Umar and 'Alī, 'Alī reluctantly wrote: "This is the treaty which MuÁammad bin 'Abdullāh made with Suhayl bin 'Amr".[3]

The contents of the treaty as well as the manner in which it was recorded indicate that it is an embodiment of the political sagacity, far-sightedness and pragmatic approach of the Holy Prophet as a statesman. According to Montgomery Watt, it was motivated by supreme importance of the Holy Prophet's belief "in the message of the Qur'ān, his belief in the future of Islam as a religious and political system, and his unflinching devotion to the task to which, as he believed, God had called him".[4] The treaty raises some very important constitutional questions. These are: Was the act of forsaking his designation as the Prophet of God (despite having been so appointed by God), a sovereign act on the part of the Holy Prophet as the Head of the State, performed in the interest of the state or the community, and as such was neither repugnant to nor in conflict with the overall sovereignty of God or supremacy of His Law? The next question is: If the act was sovereign, then would it be correct to say that the overall sovereignty of God does not impose any restrictions on the sovereignty of the state or the Head of the State as legislator (*Mujtahid*) so long as the action taken, functions performed or laws of God interpreted are in the interest of the state or the community?In sūrah 38; verse 27 of the Qur'ān while appointing David as a "*Khalīfah*" (Vicegerent) in the land, God commanded unto him: "Verily We have made thee a *Khalīfah* in the land; then judge between men with truth, and follow not thy desires lest they cause thee to err from the Path of God." It is therefore evident from this verse that God lays emphasis mainly on the adoption of a course of justice, honesty and truthfulness on the part of the Head of the State for this, generally speaking, leads to the Path of God; and not to allow his personal interest to influence his official conduct or decisions.

The traditional Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) acknowledges the powers of the Head of the State as legislator to suspend (*Ta'wīq*) a Qur'ānic rule of law, or to restrict *(TaÁdīd)* or to expand (*Tawsī'*) its application if the conditions so demand or the interests of the state or the community so require. The exercise of these powers constitutes "sovereign act" (as distinguished from

Ijtihād) on the part of the Head of the State. If this is the position then the overall sovereignty of God or the supremacy of His Law does not interfere with or impose any limitations on the sovereignty of the state or the powers of the legislator (*Mujtahid*) to implement that interpretation of the Qur'ānic rule of law which suits the requirements of the state or the community. Therefore it may not be correct to assert that the state in Islam is not fully sovereign or that the legislator (*Mujtahid*) can only exercise his powers in a restricted manner.

Theoretically a Muslim state acknowledges the supremacy of God's Law, but as for its interpretation and implementation, the legislator's supremacy cannot be doubted when his act is sovereign or he exercises his power of discretion by accepting/advancing a specific interpretation with due regard to the interests of the state and the community. Besides that he is entirely free in the sphere of making "man-made" laws and implementing them in accordance with the requirements of the state or in order to benefit the community, so long as these laws are technically not considered repugnant to the injunctions of Islam, or the Qur'ān and Sunnah are indifferent towards them. A wider interpretation of the Qur'ānic doctrine of "necessity" (*IîÇirār*) is also available to the legislator where under what is forbidden (*Áarām*) becomes lawful (*Áalāl*). The advancement of the theory during 661 A.D. that the Caliphate and Prophethood must not be permitted to remain within the same family established that spirituality was not relevant for the administration of the state. On this basis there is some justification in the claim that the state in Islam is not a theocracy. If the elimination of spirituality had led to the emergence of the "power" state (*mulk*) in Islam, it was argued that it did not matter for a "power" state was perfectly competent to enforce the *Sharī'ah*.

Every enlightened Muslim is aware that from 661 A. D. onwards the republic in Islam was transformed into a monarchy due to the apprehension, as it was claimed, of the breaking out of a civil war among the Muslims. A vital change had taken place in the foundational principle of Muslim polity, yet only passive or ineffective voices were raised by Sunni jurists against the new political order on the ground that it amounted to subversion of the political system evolved through the Practice (Sunnah) of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. On the basis of this precedent one can say that if there is a threat to the Muslim community of its destruction from within, and under that threat,

the persons in authority in the state completely alter the ideology of its traditional constitutional structure, they would be justified to do so under the *Sharī'ah*.

Finally the Sermons on the Mount 'Arafāt (*KhuÇbah al-Widā'*) delivered by the Holy Prophet during the Pilgrimage of Farewell in the tenth year of the Hijrah, have also to be considered for deducing an extremely important constitutional principle as these amounted to an illustration of human rights from the Islamic viewpoint. It was for the first time in the history of mankind that in the light of the Qur'ānic injunctions some of the human rights were enumerated and guaranteed by the Holy Prophet. Thus life and property were made inviolable, drawing of "*ribā*" (usury) on money loaned was prohibited, vendetta as practiced in pagan days was to be left unevenged, no Arab was to have any privilege over non-Arab except that based on piety, Muslims were to consider themselves as brethren and it was not lawful for a Muslim to take from the belongings of his brother except that which he parted with willingly, the rights of the spouses were protected etc.

It may be pointed out at this stage that foundations of the Secretariat of the Chief executive authority were laid by the Holy Prophet himself. Scribes were appointed who drew up the state documents, and the only privilege which the Holy Prophet had as Head of the State was that his seal conferred legitimacy to all official documents.

To sum up, some of the important constitutional principles that can be derived from the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet are:

First; that the ultimate sovereignty vests in God. But the vesting of overall sovereignty in God or supremacy of His Law does not in any sense mean that the state has restricted sovereignty or is not fully sovereign in conducting its worldly affairs (*Mu'āmalāt*) particularly when a supra-legal action taken by the Head of the State is in the interest of the community or the state.

Second; that since the Muslims are expected to be governed under their own specific legal system called the *Sharī'ah* in all spiritual and temporal matters, they must aspire to establish a state of their own wherever it is possible to create a viable state.

Third; that the nation-hood of Muslims is to be founded on a common

spiritual aspiration and that commonness of race, language and territory is a secondary consideration.

Fourth; that the non-Muslim citizens of the state (not of conquered territories who were considered as "protected people") are to be confirmed in their religion and possessions. Their national unity with the Muslims is to be based on sincere friendship, honourable dealing, mutual respect and the defence of common territory.

Fifth; that the Muslims and non-Muslims are jointly/collectively expected to defend the territories of the state, and to bear expenses of the same.

Sixth; that to frame and implement a written constitution for the state and to strictly adhere to its terms is a Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet.

Seventh; that the grant of a constitution is not the task of a single individual but a collective act of the representatives of the federating tribes who are voluntary signatories of the socio-political contract. The constitution not being sacrosanct has no spiritual or religious significance but essentially a contract.

Eighth; that through the peaceful co-existence of different religions, races and communities the ideal of human unity (*al-Ummah al-WāÁidah*) is to be realised.

Ninth; that the importance of "consultation" (*shūrā*) in conducting the worldly affairs of the state has to be emphasised, although the Head of the State is not bound by any advice.

Tenth; that respecting interpretation of the *Sharī'ah* and its implementation, the Chief executive authority in the state is expected to act as a "*Mujtahid*" rather than a "*Muqallid*". Thus "*Ijtihād*" by the law-maker is a continuous and unending process.

Eleventh; that the Executive is to implement, execute and enforce the *Sharī'ah* as interpreted by the Chief executive authority, and the Chief executive authority while making laws is expected to have a pragmatic approach, to act with political sagacity, and far-sightedness so far as the interests of the state and citizens are concerned.

Twelfth; that human rights as enumerated in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah

(Practice) of the Holy Prophet have to be guaranteed and enforced in the state.

Thirteenth, that "*Zakāt*" or other similar taxes imposed through Islamic welfare laws be meticulously collected by the state officials and disbursed among the needy citizens under the supervision of the state.

Fourteenth; that the Judiciary (*Qaîā'*) is to be separated from the Executive so that it can decide matters before it independently and without being influenced by the Executive.

Fifteenth; that the Muslims' primary obligation is that they should, after God and the Holy Prophet, render obedience to those who command authority from amongst them so that order is maintained in the state.

The era of the Holy Prophet as Head of the city-state of Medina has always been considered as a model in the sense that a Muslim state had been founded and was being managed and governed by the Prophet- Imām himself. This dispensation was unique in the history of Muslims and was never to be repeated. Philosophically speaking, it was an ideal or a perfect state in the sense that the Ruler was in direct communion with God. The Holy Prophet was Head of the State in the tradition of the earlier Semitic prophet-kings mentioned in the Qur'ān. But although the foundations of the state had been laid and it was being headed by the Prophet- Imām, the state itself was in the process of becoming or developing and was therefore endeavouring to realise the objectives for which it had been created. In other words, on the spiritual or religious side (*'Ibādāt*) Islam had been perfected, but on the mundane or worldly side (*Mu'āmalāt*) the state in Islam was not a finished product, as the community was to keep on developing under a legal order. This development was to be accomplished through a continuous process of "*Ijtihād*".

THE RESULT OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The Holy Prophet died in 632 A.D. and the question of a successor (*Khalīfah*) arose on his death because, pragmatically speaking, a young socio-political organism like the early Muslim state required a directing head. Therefore originally the "*Khilāfah*" as an institution came into being because the conditions had so demanded. The possibility cannot be ruled out that it came into being on the basis of Consensus of the Companions (*Ijmā'*) in

response to the demand of times.

Did the Holy Prophet nominate or appoint any successor? Some of the Sunni jurists argue that since the Holy Prophet, shortly before his death, had directed Abū Bakr to lead the congregational prayers, this indicated that he desired Abū Bakr to be appointed as his successor. On the other hand according to the Shī'ite jurists, he had appointed 'Alī as his successor. In this connection reliance is placed on a Tradition whereunder the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that those who consider him as their "Mawlā" (master/leader), they should also regard 'Alī as their Mawlā". However, Jalāl al-dīn SuyyūÇī on the authority of Àudayfah has pointed out that some of the Companions of the Holy Prophet asked him as to whether or not he would appoint a successor unto them. The Holy Prophet is reported to have replied that if he did appoint such a successor over them and that if they were to rebel against the successor appointed by him, then punishment could come upon them. He also states on the authority of Imām Bukhārī, Imām Muslim, Beyhaqī, and Imām AÁmad that Caliphs 'Umar and 'Alī had confirmed before their deaths that the Holy Prophet did not appoint any successor.[5]

It is evident that had the Holy Prophet in fact nominated a successor or prescribed a specific method for such appointment, then that mode alone would have become the only way of appointing the Head of the State, and a restrictive stipulation of this nature would have caused difficulty in the further evolution of Muslim polity. Therefore the Holy Prophet by not appointing his successor or suggesting any specific mode or laying down any framework for constituting or deposing such a successor, had acted in conformity with the Qur'ān which is silent on this issue. It may further be pointed out that the political system in Islam is one of such matters that falls in the category of "*Mu'āmalāt*" (worldly affairs) which being evolutionary are subject to the law of change. Therefore the political system in itself has no spiritual or religious significance.

In sūrah 4: verse 58 Muslims are commanded by God to hand over their trusts to competent persons. In other words the Qur'ān has ordained that only competent person/persons be appointed for managing the affairs of the Muslim community, though this is even logically the obligation of those who are expected to make such appointments. The Qur'ān is mainly concerned with matters relating to right and wrong or good and evil, and is not

concerned with matters relating to planning (*tadbīr*). That the best person or persons are to be appointed is a matter relating to right and wrong. But the question as to how the appointment is to be made or whether a particular process employed for determination of the best person will succeed or not, involves planning and is a matter relating to efficiency and wisdom in the light of prevailing conditions. Therefore the silence of the Holy Prophet in the matters of nomination or appointment of any successor after him or laying down any rule for constituting or deposing the successor, was deliberate because such structures were to be evolved in the light of the good sense of the community. These were not meant to be permanent but were subject to the changing requirements of the Muslim community from time to time. Thus the real object of Islam is to establish a Community of Faith governed under the *Sharī'ah*. Although for the continuous interpretation and enforcement of the *Sharī'ah* the establishment of a state or a political system is necessary, the Muslim community is at liberty to determine any mode of constitutional structure which suits its requirements.

The word "*Khalīfah*" is derived from "*Khalafa*"*(kh.l.f)* which means to succeed, to be followed or to leave behind. That is the reason why some Muslim jurists argue that *Khalīfah* can only be that of the Holy Prophet who was mortal, as only mortals leave successors behind. However, the term "*Khalīfah*" also occurs in the Qur'ān, although there is no indication which directly connects it with the political implications of the term i.e., the Head of the State in Islam. In sūrah 38: verse 27 God appointed David as a "*Khalīfah*" in his land. In sūrah 6: verse 166 it is stated:"It is He (God) who has made you "*Khulafā'* " (plural of *Khalīfah*) on the Earth, and He raises some of you above others by (various) grades in order that He may test you by His gifts". But in the Qur'ānic sense probably the word is to be interpreted as man being vicegerent of God.

The word "Imām" also occurs in the Qur'ān and implies a leader in a general or comprehensive sense i.e., leader of the believers or of the infidels. God's prophets are sometime addressed as Imām s in the Qur'ān; at other times the term appears to mean an example, a model, or a revealed book.

Respecting the practice of the Holy Prophet in this context, the chroniclers record that whenever he left Medina for some duration of time, he appointed a deputy to look into the affairs of the town in his absence.[6] But although the appointment of a deputy was the practice of the Holy

Prophet, he did not appoint a successor on his death. Nevertheless there is a Tradition attributed to the Holy Prophet in which he is reported to have said:" Leaders shall be from the Quraysh".[7] Dr. Àamīdullah remarks that the context of this direction is not known as the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet himself does not seem to confirm the obligatory character of this qualification. He points out that the Holy Prophet left Medina at least twenty five times for one reason or the other. On all such occasions he nominated a successor in Medina, yet it was not the same person that he chose always for carrying on the interim government. Among these successors (called *Khalīfah*) were Medinans, Qurayshites, Kinanites and others; there was even a blind person.[8]

During the period of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (632 to 661 AD) different modes were adopted for the appointment of the Head of the State and in all the cases the appointment was confirmed by the Muslim community through its consent which was formally obtained by means of "*bay'ah*". Generally speaking, the methods adopted during this period had a common feature i.e., the selection of the best person through initial election, nomination, or election through an Electoral College, in most cases followed by a private *bay'ah*, and subsequently the appointment being confirmed through a public *bay'ah*. The course adopted in all the cases was democratic, and the majority principle, although not specifically disapproved, was not followed, as the need did not arise.

Ibn IsÁāq in his biography of the Holy Prophet, provides an accurate account as to how the first successor of the Holy Prophet, namely Abū Bakr, was elected. He states that on the death of the Holy Prophet, three distinct political groups were formed among the Muslims of Medina, namely, Muhājirīn (Immigrants), AnÄār (Helpers) and Banū Hāshim (the supporters of the family of the Holy Prophet). The Muhājirīn were led by Abū Bakr and 'Umar, the AnÄār supported Sa'd bin 'Ubaydah, whereas Banū Hāshim were solidly behind 'Alī.

While 'Alī and other members of the family of the Holy Prophet were busy in making arrangements for his funeral (according to ñabarī[9], the Holy Prophet was buried on the day after his death), news arrived that the AnÄār were assembling in the Hall of Banū Sā'adah in order to elect Sa'd bin 'Ubaydah as the Head of the State. On hearing this 'Umar and Abū Bakr along with some other Muhājirīn rushed to attend the proceedings.

The claim of the AnÄār for power was advanced on the ground that they constituted the bulk of the armed forces of Islam and they even suggested divisibility of the government in the alternative. Proposals like joint rule with two Caliphs operating simultaneously or alternate succession, one from the Muhājirīn and the other from the AnÄār, were considered.[10] The Muhājirīn opposed such suggestions, stood for the unity of the Muslim community and advanced their claim on the ground that the Arabs as a whole would only accept leadership from the tribe of Quraysh. Although 'Alī did not attend this session, the claim of Banū Hāshim was based on their close connections with the family of the Holy Prophet. A political debate took place between the groups assembled in the Hall of Banū Sā'adah. Eventually, 'Umar proposed the name of Abū Bakr as the Head of the State when he asked him to extend his hand and Abū Bakr, a candidate for succession, accepting such recommendation held out his hand. Thereafter following 'Umar, the Muhājirīn as well as the AnÄār who were present there swore allegiance to him by way of *bay'ah*. Subsequently, this private *bay'ah* was followed by a public *bay'ah*.[11] Thus he was accepted as *Khalīfah* by the Muhājirīn and the AnÄār. (According to ñabarī[12], 'Alī and other members of Banū Hāshim swore allegiance to Caliph Abū Bakr sometime after his public *bay'ah*).

Caliph Abū Bakr's speech, after the multitude had sworn allegiance to him, is significant. He proclaimed: " I am not the best among you; I need all your advice and all your help. If I do well, support me; if I mistake, counsel me. To tell truth to a person commissioned to rule is faithful allegiance; to conceal it is treason. In my sight, the powerful and the weak are alike; and to both I wish to render justice. As I obey God and His Prophet, obey me: if I neglect the laws of God and the Prophet, I have no more right to your obedience"[13]

The second *Khalīfah* namely 'Umar, was nominated by Caliph Abū Bakr. But since nomination had no legal precedent, it was merely a recommendation. However, the Muslim community reposed confidence in Caliph Abū Bakr; therefore his recommendation was accepted through the subsequent referendum when the nomination of 'Umar was put to public at large and it was confirmed by a general *bay'ah*.

Caliph 'Umar was assassinated. But before his death, he constituted an Electoral College of the probable candidates in order to select one from

amongst them for being put up as the sole candidate for succession. A council of six was formed consisting of ‘Alī, Uthmān, ‘Abdur RaÁmān, Sa‘d, Zubayr and ñalÁah. (Qāîī Sulaimān ManÄūrpūrī in his *RaÁmatu ’l-lil-‘ÿlamīn,* vol. 2 p. 105 states that the name of the sister of the father of the Holy Prophet, Umm Àakīm Bayîā’ was also included in the Electoral College). Caliph ‘Umar appointed his own son ‘Abdullah to give a casting vote in case there was an equal division, but ‘Abdullah was specifically excluded from standing as a candidate for succession. The council through a process of elimination deputed ‘Abdur RaÁmān to make a recommendation as to who out of ‘Alī and Uthmān should be the sole candidate. ‘Abdur RaÁmān is said to have consulted as many people as he could in Medina including women as well as students and those who had come from outside or happened to be present in Medina as way-farers and majority of them expressed their view in favour of Uthmān. Then ‘Abdur RaÁmān even questioned ‘Alī and Uthmān about the manner in which they would conduct themselves if any of them was selected as the successor. Eventually ‘Abdur RaÁmān supported Uthmān and finally Uthmān was selected as the sole candidate. Later the rest of the Muslim community swore allegiance to him in the form of a public *bay‘ah.*

Caliph Uthmān’s era developed its own complications when the Muslim settlers in Egypt, Kufa and Basra complained against the administrators appointed by him. They alleged that their grievances were not redressed, they demonstrated and turned into insurgents, demanding resignation of Caliph Uthmān from his office. There was no garrison deputed in Medina for the protection of the Caliph. Army assistance from outside was sought, but it did not arrive in time. The insurgents stormed the house of Caliph Uthmān and brutally murdered the old Caliph.[14]

After the assassination of Caliph Uthmān some eminent members of the Muslim community in Medina gathered in front of the house of ‘Alī and requested him to agree to become the *Khalīfah*. The uncle of the Holy Prophet ‘Abbās supported him as the sole candidate. But ‘Alī refused to accept a private *bay‘ah* and insisted that if the Muslim community wanted to swear allegiance to him as the Head of the State, it should be openly done in the Mosque of the Holy Prophet. This was accordingly done.[15]

The times of Caliph ‘Alī were even more turbulent than those of Caliph Uthmān. First, Mu‘āwiyah refrained from swearing allegiance to him; and second, Zubayr and ñalÁah, two eminent Companions of the Holy Prophet,

left Medina for Mecca in order to persuade 'ÿ'ishah, the Holy Prophet's very respected widow, to join them for demanding "QiÄāÄ" of Caliph Uthmān's murder from Caliph 'Alī. Their reasoning was that the culprits were identified and therefore action should be taken against them. The problem as explained by ñabarī [16] was that there were conflicting opinions regarding this matter and even the then living Companions of the Holy Prophet were divided. It was therefore not easy for Caliph 'Alī to punish the alleged culprits. Caliph 'Alī while summing up the situation could not help lamenting that the conditions which prevailed in his times were identical to those of the days of "Ignorance".[17]

The issue resulted into the Battles of the Camel (*Jamal*) and of *Siffīn* in which many Muslims lost their lives at the hands of one another including the Companions of the Holy Prophet. According to ñabarī ten thousand Muslims were killed on both sides in the Battle of the Camel alone.[18] After the unsuccessful arbitration between Caliph 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah, some of the supporters of Caliph 'Alī who had earlier insisted on him to submit to arbitration, now turned against him maintaining that when he had already been elected as *Khalīfah* by the people of Medina then he should not have conceded to refer this decided matter to arbitration. They formed a separate group of their own called "Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-'Adl" (Khawāraj) and rebelled against Caliph 'Alī. Just as Caliph 'Alī was waging war against Mu'āwiyah, he had also to fight against the Khawāraj. Eventually Caliph 'Alī was assassinated by a Khārijite while he was proceeding to offer prayers in the mosque at Kufa.

From this brief survey it is evident that during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, different modes were adopted for the appointment of the Head of the State. These modes were neither mentioned in the Qur'ān nor recommended by the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet. It may further be added that at no stage the parties involved used the Qur'ān and the Tradition in support of their individual political claims. The modes adopted were founded purely on the Sunnah (Practice) of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The candidate for the Caliphate was selected through an initial election by a restricted number of eminent persons, or by nomination, or through a small electoral college, and thereafter, the approval of the general public was obtained in the form of an acquiescence and by way of *bay'ah*. Women were not debarred from registering their consent. Furthermore, the hereditary rule,

although known to the Arabs, was specifically excluded in the case of succession.

The Head of the State was considered successor of the Holy Prophet (*Khalīfah*), the interpreter and promulgator of Islamic law (Imām/Mujtahid), the leader of the congregational prayers, the defender of the religion of Islam, the guardian of the Muslim community, the judge, the moral censor (*MuÁtasib*), the administrator, the statesman, and the military commander (*Amīr al-Mu'minīn*).

It has already been mentioned that in the times of the Holy Prophet there was only one acknowledged privilege of the Head of the State i.e., all the state documents were expected to bear his seal. The seal of the Holy Prophet was used by the succeeding Caliphs until the times of Caliph Uthmān, when it fell into a well and was lost. However an identical seal was got prepared and was used for the same purpose. During the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, particularly in the turbulent days of Caliph 'Alī, the fourth *Khalīfah*, a second privilege was introduced and that was if the Head of the State himself was not leading the congregational prayers, then the leader of the public worship mentioned his name in the Sermon (*KhuÇbah*) and prayed for him.

It may be useful at this stage to briefly consider some of the views about the institution of Caliphate, advanced during this period. The Shī'ites restrict the *Khilāfah* exclusively to the House of 'Alī. They reject the formula of election and hold that the leadership of Muslim community is an issue of such vital importance that the Holy Prophet could have not died without appointing someone as the Imām. They maintain that the Holy Prophet had no male issue to succeed him; therefore, he appointed his son-in-law 'Alī as Imām, and his descendants are to hold the office of Imāmate as of right. The Shī'ites consider the appointment of the Caliphs who preceded 'Alī as illegal and regard Caliph 'Alī as the first Imām. According to this view each Imām (the descendant of Caliph 'Alī and FāÇimah, the Holy Prophet's daughter) possesses super-human powers and is in constant touch with God. Thus the nature of Imām's authority is spiritual in essence.

The Khārijite (the term denotes "one who leaves his home among the unbelievers for God's sake"; it also implies secession (i.e. Khurūj from the Muslim community) theory is the extreme opposite to that of the Shī'ites.

The Khārijites represent the left wing of Muslim political opinion and in modern terminology may be considered as strict social democrats. They require only moral qualifications in a *Khalīfah*, and restrict his authority by retaining the right to depose him if he is found unfit to hold his office. The Khārijites maintain that the *Khalīfah* should be appointed with the agreement of the entire Muslim community. Accordingly they reject the doctrine of the restriction of the *Khilāfah* to the House of ʻAlī, or to the tribe of Quraysh. They insist on a free election, and hold that even a non-Arab or a slave is eligible for the office of the *Khilāfah* provided that he is a Muslim of upright character and takes the responsibility of performing the duties assigned to his office. Some of them maintain that even a woman could be appointed *Khalīfah*, the others among them reject the doctrine of the necessity of *Khalīfah*'s appointment, and argue that since it is nowhere specifically mentioned by God (i.e., it is only recommended but not obligatory), the Muslim community could rule itself by constituting a legitimate Consultative Assembly and at the same time, fulfil their religious obligations. Nevertheless, if the conditions so demanded, a *Khalīfah* could be elected.[19]

During this period the Executive was properly consolidated. Caliph ʻUmar, in particular, encouraged the establishment of different departments of Central Secretariat in the form of *Dīwāns* on the Persian model. In these departments secretaries and clerks were employed in order to assist the Chief executive authority in managing the affairs of the state. The department of moral censorship (*Àisbah*) was also organised to enforce the Rights of God (*Àuqūq Allāh*), the Rights of Human Beings (*Àuqūq al-ʻibād*), and the Rights which were common to both God and Human Beings (*Àuqūq bayn Allāh wa'l-ʻibād*).Broadly speaking, the Rights of God were the holding of congregational prayers, the observance of fasts in the month of Ramaîān, the payment of Zakāh etc. The wrongs that infringed the Rights of Human Beings included unlawful transactions, usury, false and defective scales, weights and measures, non-payment of debt etc. The Rights which were common to both God and Human Beings were violated when, for instance, a divorced woman or a widow remarried without observing *ʻIddah* (a period of time to ascertain pregnancy); or when the leader of public worship lengthened the prayers unnecessarily so that the weak and old failed to stand it or people were hindered or delayed from performing other jobs; or when a judge made the people wait before holding his court etc.

It is interesting to note that besides *Àuqūq al-'ibād* as briefly defined above, "Human Rights" as we understand them today, were clearly laid down in the Qur'ān and the Practice (Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet. The citizens were familiar with them and these were meticulously enforced during this phase of the seventh century republican Muslim State. Following are the basic human rights which can be directly traced from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy Prophet:

1. **Equality of all citizens before law as well as equality of status and opportunity.** "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and spread from these two many men and women". (sūrah 4: verse 1)."Lo! Pharaoh exalted himself in the earth and divided its people into castes. A group among them he oppressed, killing their sons and sparing their women. Lo! He was of those who work corruption". (sūrah 28: verse 4).

2. **Freedom of religion.** "There is no compulsion in the matter of religion". (sūrah 2: verse 256)."And if thy Lord had pleased, all those who are in the earth would have believed all of them. Wilt thou (Muhammad) then force men till they are believers?" (sūrah 10: verse 100). "Had God willed, idolaters had not been idolatrous. We have not set thee (Muhammad) as a keeper over them, nor art thou responsible for them". (sūrah 6: verse 108)."For each of you We have appointed a law and a way. And if God had willed He would have made you one (religious) community. But (He hath willed it otherwise) that He may put you to the test in what He has given you. So compete with one another in good works. Unto God will ye be brought back, and He will inform you about that wherein ye differed." (sūrah 5: verse 48). "If God had not raised a group (Muslims) to ward off the others from aggression, churches, synagogues, oratories and mosques where God is worshipped most, would have been destroyed". (sūrah 22: verse 40). "Unto you your religion and unto me my religion". (sūrah 109: verse 6).

3. **Right to life.** "And slay not the life which God hath forbidden save for justice". (sūrah 17: verse 33).

4. **Right to property.** "And eat not up your property among

yourselves in vanity, nor seek by it to gain the hearing of the judges that ye may knowingly devour a portion of the property of others wrongfully". (sūrah 2: verse 188).

5. **No one is to suffer from the wrongs of another.** "Each soul earneth on its own account, nor doth any laden bear another's load". (sūrah 6: verse 165)."That no laden one shall bear the burden of another". (sūrah 53: verse 38).

6. **Freedom of person.** Inferred from the practice of the Holy Prophet, by Imām KhaÇÇābī and Imām Abū Yūsuf: A Tradition is reported by Abū Dā'ūd to the effect that some persons were arrested on suspicion in Medina in the times of the Holy Prophet. A Companion inquired as to why and on what grounds had these persons been arrested. The Holy Prophet maintained silence while the question was repeated twice, thus giving an opportunity to the prosecutor, who was present there, to explain the position. When the question was put for the third time and it again failed to elicit a reply from the prosecutor, the Holy Prophet ordered that those persons should be released. On the basis of this Tradition Imām KhaÇÇābī argues in his *Ma'ālim al-Sunan* that Islam recognises only two kinds of detention: (a) under the orders of the court, and (b) for the purposes of investigation. There is no other ground on which a person could be deprived of his freedom. Imām Abū Yūsuf maintains in his *Kitāb al-Khirāj*, on the authority of the same Tradition that no one can be imprisoned on false or unproved charges. Caliph 'Umar is quoted in Imām Mālik's *MuwaÇÇa* as having said that in Islam no one can be imprisoned without due course of justice.

7. **Freedom of opinion.** "God loveth not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who hath been wronged". (sūrah 4: verse 148). "Those of the children of Israel who went astray were cursed by the tongue of David, and of Jesus son of Mary. That was because they rebelled and used to transgress". "They restrained not one another from the wickedness they did. Verily evil was that they used to do". (sūrah 5: verses 78-79)."And when they forgot that whereof they had been reminded. We rescued those who forbade wrong, and visited those who did wrong with dreadful punishment because they were

evil-livers". (sūrah 7: verse 165). "You are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right and forbid wrong". (sūrah 3: verse 110).

8. **Freedom of movement.** "It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so travel ye through its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes; but unto Him is the Resurrection". (sūrah 67: verse 15).

9. **Freedom of association.** "And let there be formed of you a community inviting to good, urging what is reputable and restraining from what is disreputable". (sūrah 3: verse 104).

10. **Right of privacy.** "It is not proper that ye enter houses through the backs thereof...So enter houses by the doors thereof". (sūrah 2: verse 189) "O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace (salām) upon the folk thereof. That is better for you, that ye may be heedful". "And if you find no one therein, still enter not until permission hath been given. And if it be said unto you: Go away again, then go away, for it is purer for you. God knoweth what ye do". (sūrah 24: verses 27-28)."And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that so abhor the other!" (sūrah 49: verse 12).

11. **Right to secure basic necessities of life.** "And let not those who hoard up that which God has bestowed upon them of His bounty think that it is better for them. Nay, it is worst for them. That which they hoard will be their halter on the Day of Resurrection". (sūrah 3: verse 180). "And in the wealth of the haves there is due share of the have-nots". (sūrah 51: verse 19).

12. **Right to reputation.** "Neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith". "O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime". (sūrah 49: verses 11-12). "And those who malign believing men and believing women undeservedly, they bear the guilt of slander and manifest sin". (sūrah 33: verse 58).

13. **Right to a hearing.** Inferred from the Sunnah (Practice) of the

Holy Prophet who, sending 'Alī to the Yemen gave him the following direction: "You are not to take decision unless you have heard the second party in the same way as you have heard the first".

14. **Right to decision in accordance with proper judicial procedure.** "O ye who believe! if an evil-liver bring you news, verify it, lest you smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did".(sūrah 49: verse 6). "O man, follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge". (sūrah 17: verse 36). "Lo! God commandeth you that ye restore deposits to their owners, and, if ye judge between mankind, that ye judge justly". (sūrah 4: verse 58).

The extent to which the citizens were aware of human rights laid down in the Qur'ān, can be cited by an example. It is stated that one night Caliph 'Umar, while crossing a street in Medina, heard the sound of debauchery of a drunkard coming from inside a house. Losing his temper, he attempted to enter the house. But no one answered his knock or opened the door. Still annoyed, he climbed on the roof, and from it shouted down to the owner in his courtyard thus: "Why are you breaking the law by permitting such an abusive drunkard in your house"? The owner replied: "No Muslim has the right to speak like that to another Muslim. May be I have committed one violation, but see how many you have committed. For instance: (1) spying, despite God's command - "Thou shalt not spy" (sūrah 49: verse 12); (2) breaking and entering - you came in over the roof, despite God's order: "Enter houses by the door" (sūrah 2: verse 189); (3) entering without the owner's permission - in defiance of God's command, "Enter no house without the owner's permission" (sūrah 24: verse 28); (4) omitting the Salaam - though God orders, "Enter not houses without first announcing your presence and invoking peace (salām) on those within" (sūrah 24: verse 27). Feeling embarrassed, Caliph 'Umar said: "All right, I forgive your violation of Law". The owner of the house retorted: "That is your fifth violation. You claim to be the executor of Islam's commandments, then how can you say that you forgive what God has condemned as a crime"?

Everyone was free to express his own opinion concerning the execution of Islamic injunctions about human rights and even the Caliph was accountable for his conduct and actions. Sometimes the attitude of the citizens towards the Caliph was uncouth and aggressive, and at other times it was improper and insulting; nevertheless it was tolerated. On numerous

occasions Caliph 'Umar had to face such situations and to provide explanations. Caliph Uthmān was eventually assassinated since he could not satisfy his critics. On one occasion Caliph 'Alī was delivering Sermon (KhuÇbah) in the Mosque of Kufa when some Khārijites interrupted him with insulting language. The companions of Caliph 'Alī urged him to punish them or at least to expel them from the Mosque. But Caliph 'Alī declined to take such action on the ground that the Muslims' right of freedom of speech must not be imperilled.[20]

Although the Caliph could over-rule the advice of the Council (*Shūra*), during this period, it played a very vital part in the management of the affairs of the state. According to Shiblī, whenever an important matter came up, the Council was summoned and no decision was taken without consultation. Some decisions were taken on the basis of majority opinion. The members of the Council were mainly from the two major political groups namely, the Muhājirīn and the AnÄār. In the times of Caliph 'Umar, the matter of not treating land in the conquered territories of Iraq and Syria as "*Ghanīmah*" (spoils of war) but considering it as state land (according to the text of the Qur'ān one fifth of the said land should have been trusted for the welfare of the public and the rest was to be distributed among the soldiers), the fixation of salaries of the members of the armed forces and other personnel, the appointment of governors and tax-collectors, the matters involving trade relations with other countries etc., were disposed of according to the advice of the Council. Caliph 'Umar is reported to have said that without "*Shūra*" (consultation) there could be no *Khilāfah*.[21]

As interpreter and promulgator (Mujtahid/ Imām) of Islamic law, Caliph 'Umar is considered as the founder of the Science of the Secrets of Religion ('Ilm al-Asrār al-Dīn). In his view all *Shar'ī* (religio-legal) ordinances were based on rational considerations, although it was generally held that Reason had nothing to do with Islamic injunctions. Caliph 'Alī also belonged to the same school of thought and made significant contribution to the science of interpreting Revelation in the light of Reason during his times. According to Shiblī, Caliph 'Umar was the first to encourage the development of "independent inquiry" (*Qiyās*) for formulating a legal opinion. Before him in the times of Caliph Abū Bakr, legal decisions were taken either in the light of the Qur'ān, or in accordance with the precedents set by the Holy Prophet, or on the basis of Consensus of the Companions (*Ijmā'*).[22]

Caliph 'Umar had even been criticised for introducing innovation (*bid'ah*) in the course of his interpretation of Islamic law. But his explanation always was that innovation was of two kinds namely, " reprehensible innovation" (*bid'ah al-sayyi'ah*) and "commendable innovation" (*bid'ah al-Áasanah*). In other words, in his approach, he, not only adhered to the text of the Qur'ānic injunctions but at the same time attempted to reach the spirit underlying them.[23]

Two examples of the *Ijtihād* of Caliph 'Umar may be cited in order to show as to how he approached and resolved some of the problems of Islamic law. During an year of famine in Medina, he suspended the Qur'ānic penalty (*Áadd*) of cutting of hands of thieves for the reason that if he, as the Head of the State, could not provide basic necessities of life to the citizen, he had no right to impose this Qur'ānic punishment. He exercised this power under the doctrine of necessity (*iîÇirār*) as laid down in sūrah 2: verse 173, sūrah 5: verse 3, sūrah 6: verse 120, and sūrah 16: verse 115 of the Qur'ān which transforms that what is forbidden (*Áarām*) into lawful (*Áalāl*) under certain conditions of compulsion. In sūrah 16: verse 106, a believer under compulsion or if forced by necessity, has been permitted even to the extent of a verbal denial of his belief or making a sacrilegious utterance in order to save his skin. There are also some Traditions of the Holy Prophet which support these Qur'ānic verses. For instance, he is reported to have said that harm or damage to the community must be avoided at all costs. On one occasion in the course of war he prohibited the cutting of hand of an established thief.

Thus the principle deduced is that in a state of necessity (*iîÇirār*)) unlawful can become lawful, or necessity makes permissible acts otherwise prohibited. In such a situation a Qur'ānic fixed penalty can be suspended. The later Muslim jurists, however, highlighted numerous dimensions of the concept of "necessity" and held that under such circumstances a Qur'ānic rule, besides being suspended (*Ta'wīq*), can also be restricted in application (*TaÁdīd*) or extended (*Tawsī'*) as the conditions require. Eventually the Qur'ānic doctrine, apparently of individual necessity, was developed further and applied with full force to the doctrine of collective or state necessity, and in the wider interest of public order or for the prevention of chaos, even usurpation (*istīlā'/taghallub*) was acceptable to Imām Abū Àanīfah, Imām Ghazzālī and other eminent Sunni jurists so long as the usurper (*Imām al-*

mutaghallib) did not interfere in the orderly running of the government, permitted people to perform their religious obligations, and if possible, himself observed the limits of God.[24]

The other example is of a famous problem of Islamic law of inheritance that arose in the case called *al-Àimāriyah*. In *al-Àimāriyah* the position was that a woman had died leaving behind a husband, a mother, two brothers from a former husband of her mother (uterine brothers), and her full brothers and sisters. In an identical case, Caliph Abū Bakr had given one half to the husband, one sixth to the mother, one third to the two brothers from her mother's former husband, and as the inheritance was distributed completely among the Qur'ānic heirs, nothing was left as residue to be given to the full brothers and sisters of the deceased; therefore, they were excluded. When a similar case came before Caliph 'Umar for adjudication, he, in the first instance, decided the matter in accordance with the precedent set by Caliph Abū Bakr. But when the same situation arose in a subsequent case, one of the full brothers pleaded before him saying: "O Commander of the Faithful! Grant that our father was an ass (*Áimār*), still we had emerged from the same womb and shared a common mother. Therefore why should we be deprived?" Upon this Caliph 'Umar ruled that the full brothers and sisters should participate equally in the one third given to the uterine brothers of the deceased. The first decision of Caliph 'Umar may be based on justice (*'adl*) strictly in accordance with the Qur'ānic law of inheritance, but his second decision which altered the shares fixed by the Qur'ān for the uterine brothers, was based on something more than justice, i.e. equity (*Al-QisÇ/iÁsān*), as God loves the equitable (sūrah 49: verse 9).[25]

Shiblī states that in the times of Caliph 'Umar the entry of non- Muslims was not banned in Mecca and Medina, and that they could stay in the holy cities for as long as they liked.[26] Stipends were fixed also for poor non-Muslims from the "*Äadaqāt/zakāt*" fund. One can cite numerous examples of the existence of religious tolerance in those times. For instance, on one occasion it was brought to the notice of Caliph 'Umar that some Muslims in Syria had forcibly occupied a piece of land belonging to a Jew and constructed a mosque thereon. Under his orders the mosque was demolished and the land was restored to the Jew. This piece of land, generally known as the "Jew's House" (*bayt al-Yahūdi*) still exists in Syria.

Caliph 'Umar also kept an eye on the popular and renowned generals of

the Muslim armed forces, which consisted of different nationalities including Jews, Greeks, Byzantinians, Persians and even Jāts of Sind, besides Arabs and other converts to Islam.[27] He reduced the rank of two eminent generals namely Khālid bin Walīd in Syria, and Muthannā Shaybānī in Iraq, to ordinary soldiers on account of their insubordination and in order to establish the supremacy of the central executive authority.[28]

Caliph 'Ali had been a prominent member of the Council (*Shūra*) during the preceding three administrations, and during his own Caliphate, he not only strengthened this institution, but usually acted under its advice and guidance. It was in accordance with the advice of the Council and his army officers that he desisted from destroying Mu'āwiyah's men in the Battle of Siffīn when they played the trick of tying copies of the Qur'ān to their lances and seeking quarter, although he wanted to pursue them and finish the rebellion completely. Again it was on the advice of the Council that he agreed to refer the dispute between him and Mu'āwiyah to arbitration.

Despite the fact that his times were difficult, Caliph 'Alī made significant contribution to the sphere of Islamic law and jurisprudence. He was, like his three predecessors, *Mujtahid* in regard to the interpretation of law. Although the Judiciary had been separated from the Executive, there were instances of the poor citizens' sufferings at the hands of important state officials and the courts failed to provide adequate relief to them due to the influence of such officials. In order to redress their wrongs, Caliph 'Alī founded a powerful new central court called "*Naïar al-Muïālim*" (Reviewer of Wrongs), and himself sat in it as the first "*Naïar*" (Reviewer). In short Caliph 'Alī as well as Caliph 'Umar as *Mujtahids* courageously interpreted and promulgated Islamic law, enforced Human Rights, and took care that the independence of the Judiciary was maintained.

Caliph 'Alī was very democratic, humane and lenient. According to Ameer 'Alī, had he possessed the stern character of Caliph 'Umar 's he would have been more successful in governing an unruly people like the Arabs. "But his forbearance and magnanimity were misunderstood, and his humanity and love of truth was turned by his enemies to their own advantage".[29]

During the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, generally speaking, the constitutional principles deduced from the Sunnah (Practice) of the Holy

Prophet were followed. But the most significant constitutional principle added to Muslim polity through the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was the multiplicity of methods of appointment of the Head of the State (*Khalīfah*). The principle in essence was that the appointment must be made with the approval of the Muslim community, and the concept of hereditary succession was specifically excluded. The adoption of different modes of appointment, indicated that any mode could be adopted to suit the prevailing conditions so long as it was democratic, efficient and based on wisdom. However it was not generally realised that owing to the expansion of Islamic territories it had become necessary to obtain the approval of the entire Muslim community settled in numerous big cities other than Medina (the Capital). If this modification had been made in the basic principle of appointment, the objection of Mu'āwiyah respecting Caliph 'Alī's election might have not been raised.

It is abundantly clear that the real emphasis of Islam is on the establishment of a Community of Faith being governed exclusively by the *Sharī'ah*. But the republican political order introduced as a political system in the state under the Sunnah (Practice) of the Rightly Guided Caliphs had no spiritual or religious significance. It had its importance only because it followed immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet and was evolved by his closest Companions. However, it collapsed owing to numerous reasons. Some of these are:

- First, the republican political system contained in itself the possibility of its transformation into a hereditary/dynastic monarchy.

- Second, the *Khalīfah* was presumably appointed for life, but no legal methodology was evolved for his impeachment or deposition in case such a need arose.

- Third, as the ancient tribal rivalries disseminated suspicion and hatred, the differences of opinion among the various political groups took the form of militant confrontation and the struggle for power led to a civil war.

- Fourth, three out of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs namely 'Umar, Uthmān and 'Alī were assassinated. Caliphs 'Umar and 'Alī were murdered in the mosque - an exposed place for any popularly

elected Muslim Head of the State, making him extremely vulnerable, particularly when no arrangements had been made for his security. There was neither any garrison present in Medina nor guards had been deputed for the protection of the house and person of Caliph Uthmān. Caliph ʻAlī was assassinated in accordance with a well-planned conspiracy of the Khawārij, the political group which adopted terrorist methods for accomplishing their objectives.

It is a generally accepted principle that great men make history. The four Rightly Guided Caliphs, who laid down the foundations of republican Islam, were certainly the greatest men Islam has produced after the Holy Prophet. But great men make history only if they have the support and co-operation of the people united behind them. The efforts of the Rightly Guided Caliphs for the permanent democratisation of Islam failed, not because of any lapse on their part, but owing to the failure of the Muslim peoples of those times to realise that democracy had its own discipline. If they had understood this political message, very ably projected by the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the "*shūra*" could have developed into a representative institution and the process of "*Ijtihād*" might have been initiated in the form of law-making through "*Ijmāʻ*" (Consensus of the Community). But the Muslims divided themselves into numerous intolerant and fanatical religio-political groups and under the general policy of "if you are not with us you are against us" these groups actually fought against and ruthlessly slaughtered one another. Ameer ʻAlī rightly observes that with Caliph ʻAlī ended the republic of Islam, and he closes the chapter of his book with a quotation of Oelsner to the following effect: "Thus vanished the popular regime, which had for its basis a patriarchal simplicity, never again to appear among any Mussulman nation".[30]

THE SUBVERSION OF POLITICAL MESSAGE

In the historical process of transformation from 661 AD to 1258 AD, and then from 1261 AD to 1517 AD, the interaction of numerous forces and events led to changes in the Caliphate in substance as well as form. Muʻāwiyah was proclaimed *Khalīfah* in 661 AD, and four years before his death he nominated his son Yazīd as his Successor (Walī al-ʻAhd). The oath of allegiance was secured for Yazīd despite the protests of some jurists who maintained that it was illegal to swear allegiance to two persons at one and the same time. Muʻāwiyah nominated his own son as the succeeding Caliph, because, as he himself explained, that if he had nominated anyone outside his

own family, or if he had appointed an electoral council as Caliph 'Umar had done, or if he had left the matter to be decided by the Muslim community, it would have led to a civil war among Muslims. His reasoning was that the precedent of nominating the succeeding *Khalīfah* already existed. Accordingly î, his Governor of Medina, said to the people: "Verily the Commander of the Faithful hath seen it fit to appoint his son Yazīd as the successor over ye according to the institutions of Abū Bakr and 'Umar ". 'Abdur RaÁmān bin Abū Bakr interrupted: "Rather according to the institutions of Khusro and Caesar, for Abū Bakr and 'Umar did not do so for their children, nor for anyone of the people of their house". The prompt reply came from Marwān: "There was no legal bar for Abū Bakr and 'Umar to nominate their children or anyone of the people of their house if they had found them competent. But in the present case the Commander of the Faithful is nominating his son Yazīd as successor over ye because he had found him fit and competent".[31]

Thus the republican political system evolved had the seed which could transform it into a hereditary or dynastic monarchy. The example so set was followed throughout the later history of Islam. The reigning Caliph nominated one of his sons or kinsmen as his successor and the oath of allegiance was secured for him. During the 'Abbasid rule double nominations were often made, the two successors to hold the office of *Khalīfah* one after the other. This arrangement frequently led to wars of succession. The *Millha/Ummah* was made to accept monarchy because first, the events of Muslim history brought home that the instability engendered by the republican order may eventually lead to the destruction of the Muslim community; and second, the Qur'ān was not averse or opposed to the institution of monarchy as some of the earlier prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān were also kings. As a result the original political message, reflected in the teachings of the Holy Prophet and the Sunnah (Practice) of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was quietly discarded, the citizens were reduced to subjects and the republican order was replaced by an autocratic monarchy.

The later jurists and historians regard the Umayyads as usurpers or kings by right of power and Caliphs only in name. It was during this period that more emphasis was laid on sceptre and seal. The Umayyads ruled as an Arab aristocracy at Damascus instead of Medina, and the Caliph had come to acquire kingly prerogatives. Besides the two earlier privileges, namely the Seal (*khatm*), and the Sermon (*khuÇbah*), three more were introduced by

Mu'āwiyah himself on apparently valid grounds. For instance, the Throne (*Sarīr*) was introduced for the reason that Mu'āwiyah was too fat and when he sat on the floor like the rest of the Arabs in accordance with the Arab custom, two persons were required to assist him to stand up. But if he were to sit on a higher place like a chair or a throne, then he could get up without anyone's help. A Confined Part (*MaqÄūrah*) in the mosque for the exclusive use of Mu'āwiyah was introduced for security reasons, as an unsuccessful assassination attempt had been made on him by a Khārijite while he was offering prayers in the mosque. Finally, although the Muslim coinage (*Sikkah*) was struck since the times of Caliph 'Umar, the Umayyad caliph's name was carved on the coinage as a prerogative of the reigning monarch. Then Arabic was made the court language, and the earlier simplicity gradually gave way to luxury and splendour.

The executive and judicial institutions of Islam were also effected along with the vital transformation of the political order. In other words the political change led to the development of these institutions in such a manner that it should not come into conflict with the order established by the Umayyads. During this period, particularly after the tragedy of Karbala, disillusioned by the political conditions, the best minds in the world of Islam turned to mysticism (Sufism) or to the other-worldliness. There developed a school of determinist philosophy advocated by the Murji'ites who maintained that only that happens in this world what is willed by God. The Umayyads supported this school and encouraged its development because it helped in the dissemination of the viewpoint that the tragedy of Karbala or whatever happened there had actually been willed by God.

The Battle of Zab (750 AD) brought about the replacement of the Umayyad rule by the 'Abbasid rule, and the passing of the Caliphate from the second to the third phase of its development as an institution. It may be noted that under the Umayyad rule (661-750) the unity of the Muslim world had remained a political reality. But within six years of the accession of Abū 'l-'Abbās al-SaffāÁ, who was acknowledged as *Khalīfah* in 749 AD, the unity of the Caliphate was shattered by the establishment of an independent Umayyad kingdom in Spain. The founder of this kingdom was 'Abdur RaÁmān I, a descendant of Marwān II, the last Umayyad Caliph defeated at the Battle of Zab. However the Umayyads in Spain did not assume the title "*Khalīfah*" but adopted the title "Amir".[32]

Under the ‘Abbasids the capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad, and the Caliphate was further transformed into a monarchy on the Persian model through the introduction of such institutions as the “*Wazārah*” etc. Meanwhile the Amirs (hereditary Governors) of the dominions of Islam, who were kept in check by the Umayyads, came to acquire enormous power under the ‘Abbasids as the centre gradually showed signs of weakness. The Amirs secured deeds of investiture from the Caliph, and were completely independent in their own dominions. Some of them paid tribute to the Caliph while the others did not, but most of them fought against one another.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries the world of Islam was divided into a number of petty principalities and a state of constant warfare prevailed among the Amirs.[33] North Africa was completely cut off first by the establishment of the Adrisid dynasty at Fez (in 785 AD), then the Aghlabite dynasty (in 801 A.D.)[34], and finally the FāÇimid dynasty (in 909 AD). The FāÇimids (tracing their descent from Caliph ‘Alī and FāÇimah) occupied Egypt and gradually built up an empire extending over the territories of North Africa and including Syria, Yemen and even the Hedjaz.

The position of the ‘Abbasid Caliph at Baghdad during the tenth and eleventh centuries was very weak. The Buwayhid troops had entered Baghdad (in 946 AD), and the administration of the seat of the Caliphate had passed into the hands of the Buwayhid Amir. (The Buwayhid dynasty which held sway over Baghdad was a Shī‘ite dynasty). The name of the Amir appeared with that of the Caliph on the coinage, and was mentioned with that of the Caliph in the *KhuÇbah*. The Caliph could not issue the patent of sovereignty to anyone without the consent of the Amir. The function of the Caliph was only to bestow titles or honours. Nevertheless in theory he was considered as the religious as well as the temporal head of the Muslim community, and orders were issued in his name.

The ‘Abbasid Caliphate was not acknowledged in North Africa. This was the empire of the FāÇimids who regarded themselves as Imām s. When the Holy Cities passed into the hands of the FāÇimid, ‘Abdur RaÁmān III, the Umayyad ruler of Spain adopted the title “*Khalīfah*” and was acknowledged as such in his own dominions. So in the tenth century three separate, independent and antagonistic Caliphates were established in the world of Islam (i.e., Cordoba, Cairo and Baghdad). Although the Ummayad

power was declining in Spain by 1037 (the Muslims were finally expelled from Spain in 1610), and the FāÇimid empire was recovered for the ‘Abbasids by Salah ĪalāÁ al-Dīn in 1171, the ‘Abbasid Caliphate survived in Baghdad until 1258.

Between the tenth and eleventh centuries the Baghdad Caliphate was at its lowest ebb. The Buwayhids controlled the administration of the capital, and the rise of numerous dynasties (e.g., the ñāhirid, the Īaffārid, the Sāmānid etc.), or the breaking up of Eastern Islam into a number of independent political units, had reduced the Caliphate to a constitutional fiction. However, as shall be discussed later, it was during this period of weakness and impotence that a systematic exposition of Islamic constitutional theory was advanced by Abū ’l-Àasan ‘Alī bin MuÁammad al-Māwardī (991-1058 AD). Unlike Al-Bīrūnī (973-1048 AD) who recorded that the Caliphate had ceased to command authority over temporal affairs and had been reduced to merely a religious office[35], Al-Māwardī ignored the dependent position of the Caliphate. His account of the state in Islam, like the other Sunni jurists of different Schools of Fiqh (jurisprudence), is far removed from the conditions that actually prevailed.

Since the importance of the Caliphate was reduced by the establishment of independent dynasties in the territories of Islam, Al-Māwardī insisted that those who had usurped the authority of the Caliph must secure the deed of investiture from him so that their rule could be validated as legal and constitutional. But the struggle for political supremacy between the Caliph and the politically independent Amirs continued and ultimately resulted in the development of “Sultanate” in Islam.

The word “*sulÇān*” occurs in the Qur’ān and means authority, spiritual or magical power (i.e., good or evil power) etc. In the literature of Traditions the term appears to imply ‘the power of God’ or ‘the governmental power’. In the early history of Islam “*sulÇān*” meant the temporal power of the *Khalīfah*. However under the ‘Abbasids when Spain and North Africa were lost to the Baghdad Caliphate, the Umayyad rulers of Spain were sometime addressed as “*Ibn SulÇān*” (on the ground that they were the descendants of the Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus). Among the ‘Abbasids Caliph Mā’mūn is reported to have been addressed as the “*SulÇān* of God”.

Under the later ‘Abbasids when the rise of independent dynasties led to

the curtailment or usurpation of the Caliph's temporal power, the term "sultan" came to imply 'the secular ruler/sovereign' in contrast to the Caliph who remained, at least in theory, the supreme religio-political head of the Muslim community. Nevertheless when the Buwayhids dominated Baghdad, they received from the Caliph such titles as the Amir al-'Umar a, *SulÇān al-Dawlah, Shāh, Shāhān i shāh, Malik* etc., and the precedent of "sultan" being given as a title by the Caliph had not been set. The independent sovereigns received the patent of sovereignty from the Caliph, under the advice of the Buwayhid Amir, for religious or political considerations, and they kept up the semblance of the unity of the Caliphate by mentioning the name of the Caliph in the *KhuÇbah* or by putting it on the coinage; but within their own dominions they were completely independent. In other words the Sultanate had been established, though it had not reached the stage of complete emancipation from the Caliphate. It existed as an authority devoid of legal sanction and its use in official documents, correspondence, or on coinage had not yet become common.

The Caliph stripped of his temporal power retained such religious prerogatives as the appointment of the *Qāîîs* (judges), and the Imām s of the mosques. He symbolised the unity of Islam, and was unaffected by the rise and fall of dynasties.

The Buwayhids were superseded by the Ghaznavids, and yet the title "*SulÇān*", although in use, remained without legal sanction. However when the Seljuqid forces entered Baghdad and the influence of the Ghaznavids came to an end, the title "*SulÇān*" received official confirmation. ñughral Beg received this title from the Caliph in 1055 AD[36], and it appeared on his coinage. Thus it can be assumed that it was not before the eleventh century that the Sultanate came to acquire a completely independent place for itself and stood side by side with the Caliphate. The Sultan became the sole possessor of the temporal power of the Caliph. His power depended on the sword and could not be set aside by any means other than the sword. Consequently the confirmation of the SulÇān by the Caliph meant no more than the acknowledgement of an already established authority. Yet the Sultanate could not displace the Caliphate owing to the religious implications of the institution, the influence of the tradition, and the respect that the 'Abbasids commanded in the eyes of the Sunni Muslims.

The moralists (writers on political morality) of the eleventh, twelfth and

thirteenth centuries either found a place for the Sultanate within the Caliphate, or justified the existence of the Sultanate in its own right. For instance, according to Niïāmī i ‘Arūîī it was difficult for the Caliph to manage the affairs of the vast dominions of Islam singly, therefore it was necessary that he should have deputies who ruled over different territories of Islam[37]. Niïām al-Mulk (1017-1091 AD) does not appear to support the idea that the Caliphate was the source of the temporal authority of the Sultan. In his opinion the Sultanate was a divinely ordained institution and that therefore the Sultan should rule according to the *Sharī‘ah*. Niïām al-Mulk accepted the Caliphate only as a religious institution and regarded the *Qāîīs* (judges) as the deputies/representatives of the Caliph.[38]

The Caliph's acknowledgement of the Sultan led to the establishment of a dual government at Baghdad which was bound to result in a conflict between the authority of the Sultan and that of the Caliph. The Caliph had occupied a dependent position, but when the wars of succession broke out among the rival Seljuqid claimants, the Caliph re-asserted his independence and Caliph Muktafī managed to re-establish his temporal power at least in Baghdad and the surrounding territories to the exclusion of the Seljuqids. But since the Caliph had delegated his temporal power to the Sultan of his own free will, the Sultan re-asserted his claim to temporal power. In the later half of the twelfth century the renewal of the deed of investiture to individual rulers from the Caliph fell into disuse, and the supporters of the Sultanate contended that it was beneath the dignity of the Caliph to control temporal affairs. In this connection Barthold quotes an Atabeg of the last of the Seljuqid Sultans as having said that the Caliph in the capacity of the Imām should occupy himself with the performance of prayers (*Namāz*) and religious leadership as it was the foundation of the Faith and the best of deeds. As regards temporal affairs, these should be delegated to the Sultan.[39]

On the decline of the Seljuqids when the Khwarazm Shahs claimed the privileges formerly enjoyed by the Seljuqid Sultans, a new series of struggle started between them and the Caliph. The Khwarazm Shahs were Shī‘ite and they never approached the Caliph for the confirmation of their Sultanate, the power of which depended originally on their military strength. The Ghorids too, although a Sunni dynasty and on good terms with the Caliph, assumed the title "Sultan" before they were acknowledged as such by the Caliph.

The Khwarazm Shahs claimed Baghdad as their territory; they insisted

on being acknowledged as Sultans, and their name being mentioned with that of the Caliph in the *KhuÇbah* in Baghdad. MuÁammad bin Takash aspired to the restoration of the Universal Sultanate in his favour and accordingly carved on his seal the words: "The shadow of God on Earth". He secured a Decision (*Fatwā*) from the Shī'ite jurists of his dominion to depose the Caliph and marched towards Baghdad, but failed to capture it. Thus the stage had arrived that the Sultan could retaliate by omitting the name of the Caliph from the *KhuÇbah* in his dominion if the Caliph was not willing to permit the Sultan's name to be mentioned in the *KhuÇbah* in Baghdad. Moreover while the Caliph could not depose the Sultan, the Sultan could depose the Caliph by securing a Decision (*Fatwā*) from the jurists.[40]

The conflict for political supremacy between the Sultanate and the Caliphate (which at that stage of the history of Islam was also a Shī'ah-Sunni conflict) eventually resulted in the collective ruin of Muslims. In the middle of the thirteenth century the Mongols not only inflicted a severe defeat on the Khwarazm Shah but also sacked Baghdad (1258 AD). Caliph Musta'Äam was mercilessly put to death, and for the three years that followed (1258 to 1261 AD) the Muslim world remained without a *Khalīfah*.

On its revival in Cairo in 1261 AD, the 'Abbasid Caliphate came under the protection of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt, and was completely transformed into a religious office. According to Barthold, Sultan Baybars worked for its revival so that it could give a show of legitimacy to the Mamlūk rule in Egypt; and that the aim of the Sunni jurists like Zuhri and Jalāl al-Dīn SuyyūÇī, who supported the Cairo Caliphate, was to extol the Egyptian Sultanate as the only legally valid Sultanate.[41] Thus the Caliph became part of the Sultan's train, and bestowed deeds of investiture on those rulers whom the Sultan approved. He had nothing to do with temporal affairs. Although such practices as mentioning the Caliph's name in the *KhuÇbah* and striking it on the coinage had ceased, the Caliph was still regarded as the sole authority for validating the rule of the Sultans, and the fiction that sovereignty without the confirmation of the Caliph remained illegal according to the *Sharī'ah* was kept up by the Sunni jurists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was maintained by them that the 'Abbasid Caliph at Cairo was the successor of the Holy Prophet, and that a Sultan who possessed no deed of investiture from the Caliph was not authorised to appoint *Qāīīs* (judges) according to Islamic law; if he did so, all

the marriage contracts in his dominion became invalid.[42] The jurists of Mecca (like QuÇb al-Dīn), however, were of the opinion that the Caliphate had ceased to exist in 1258 AD, and that it had since been substituted by the Sultanate.

The Mongol rulers having embraced Islam during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries adopted the title "Sultan" (or "¥l-Khān"). They did not acknowledge the Cairo Caliphate, because their ancestors had fought against the 'Abbasids, and also, they were not on good terms with the Mamlūk Sultans.[43] In this background a new religious motivation was devised for the Sultanate in Eastern Islam. The Sultanate came to be regarded as founded on "Power" (*Dhu Shawkah*) and derived its strength 'through the Grace of God'. According to this theory, only the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs were the real successors of the Holy Prophet and under the *Sharī'ah*, were the proper Caliphs; but the Umayyads as well as the 'Abbasids were Caliphs 'by Right of Power' (*Dhu Shawkah*). Furthermore since God was the source of all power, any Sultan could claim himself as *Khalīfah* (i.e. the Successor of God). Shāh Rukh, the son of Tīmur, proclaimed himself as *Khalīfah* in the fifteenth century probably on these grounds.

In this way the Caliphate merged into the Sultanate, and the practice of mentioning the names of the Rightly Guided Caliphs with that of the ruling Sultan in the *KhuÇbah* as well as the striking of the names of the Rightly Guided Caliphs with that of the ruling Sultan on the coinage became common from the fifteenth century onwards in Eastern Islam.[44]

In 1517 AD the Ottoman Sultan Salim I conquered Egypt and annexed it into the Ottoman Empire. It is reported that Caliph Mutawakkil III was taken to Istanbul (Constantinople) where he transferred the office of the Caliphate to SulÇān Salīm I.

During the course of roughly nine hundred years (632-1517 AD) the Caliphate, initially a republican institution (632-661 AD), was transformed into a hereditary/dynastic monarchy and which once included the Sultanate as its part (632-1055 AD), first emancipated the Sultanate which came to occupy a rival position against the Caliphate (1055-1258 AD), then it came under the protection of the Sultanate (1261-1517 AD), and eventually was absorbed into the Sultanate (1517 AD).

The claim of the Ottoman Sultans to the Caliphate rested on the

following grounds: (a) By Right of Power (*Dhu Shawkah*); (b) Nomination (on the basis of the same argument which was advanced at the appointment of Yazīd as the successor of Mu'āwiyah), and election (by a limited number of high officials forming an electoral college in accordance with the precedent set at the time of the election of Caliph Uthmān); and finally (c) The Guardianship of the Holy Cities. In respect of the last ground, Barthold is of the view that although the Umayyad rulers of Spain did not adopt the title of "*Khalīfah*" because the Holy Cities were under the control of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, no eminent jurist has regarded the possession of the Holy Cities as a necessary condition for holding the office of the Caliphate.[45]

The Ottomans did not belong to the tribe of Quraysh. They were not Arabs but Turks. Accordingly the jurists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (following Ibn Khaldūn and Abū Bakr Bāqillānī) did not attach any importance to the Qurayshite lineage as a qualification for holding the office of the Caliphate. It was under the rule of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph that the office of the Sheikh-al-Islam gradually developed and the department of religion was separated from the other departments of the state. The Ottoman Caliphate was acknowledged throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Shī'ite Iran and Mughal India however, did not recognise the Ottoman Caliphate owing to religious and dynastic rivalries.

The Ottoman Caliphate declined during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to its autocratic nature and inflexibility to adopt itself to the requirements of the changing times. Owing to the consistent emphasis of the Ulema and jurists over the past numerous centuries on remaining loyal to the rulers after God and the Holy Prophet, the Muslim masses (Sunnis in particular) had been conditioned to accept tyranny in order to avoid anarchy, and as a result, had submitted to absolute autocracy, or suffered under the despotic regime of one Sultan after the other. Throughout this period, with a few rare exceptions, the ruling elite appears to have remained above the law and if the *Sharī'ah* was strictly enforced, it was to control or subdue the poor masses who had been reduced from citizens to subjects. Eventually the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph were attracted to the puritanic Wahhābī movement which asserted by violence the supremacy of Islamic law. On the other hand, the impact of the West let loose such forces as individual freedom, nationalism, patriotism, secularism, constitutionalism and radicalism in the world of Islam. The Ottoman Sultanate, Caliphate as well as

the office of Sheikh-al-Islam were finally abolished by the Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal in 1923/1924 and Turkey as a "nation-state" was declared a secular republic.

THE OPINIONS OF JURISTS, MORALISTS AND PHILOSOPHERS

On the subject of Islamic constitutional theory, political ethics and philosophy, literature started appearing in the world of Islam, generally speaking, from the ninth century onwards. The writings can be broadly divided into three categories: (a) of jurists, (b) moralists, and (c) philosophers.

JURISTS

The first and the most eminent among the jurists who wrote on this subject is Al-Māwardī (991-1031 AD). His famous treatise titled "*AÁkām al-SulÇāniyyah*" (The Ordinances of Government) was written in order to impress upon the Buwayhid Amirs the significance and importance of the 'Abbasid Caliph as the supreme spiritual as well as temporal authority. It is interesting to note that from this period onwards, in the history of Islam, the role of the Sunni jurists had been to bridge the gulf between the ideal and the real, or theory and practice, by attempting to provide an Islamic rationale to every change in order to maintain the continuity of the Islamic character of the community.

Al-Māwardī maintains that the establishment of the Caliphate/ Imām ate is a religious obligation for the Muslims, because its main object is the defence of the Faith and the preservation of order in the world through the implementation of Revealed Law. In support of his argument he quotes that verse of the Qur'ān in which David was appointed *Khalīfah* on Earth by God (sūrah 38: verse 27). He is of the view that a secular state is based on the principles derived through human reasoning, and therefore it promotes only the material advancement of its citizens. But since the Caliphate is based on Revealed Law, it promotes the material as well as the spiritual advancement of the people.[46]

Al-Māwardī divides the community that appoints the Caliph into three groups. In the first group come the candidates for the Caliphate. A candidate for the Caliphate apart from being an adult Muslim of upright character, must be of Qurayshite lineage, physically and mentally sound, possesses

courage and determination, is well-versed in the arts of war, is just, knowledgeable, and able to make independent decisions or pass judgements as a Mujtahid.

In the second group are placed the eminent members of the community who have acquired the authority "to bind and loose" and possess the right of electing the Caliph. Then follows the third group that consists of the masses of Islam who should swear allegiance when the Caliph had been elected by the eminent few.[47]

Al-Māwardī regards both the election of the Caliph by the eminent members of the community or the nomination of the Caliph by the preceding Caliph as perfectly valid methods of appointment. According to him the reigning Caliph could appoint his son or kinsman as successor during his lifetime or even make more than one nomination at one and the same time.[48]

Al-Māwardī was obviously rationalising the actual historical situation. In other words he was trying to justify the changes in the earlier republican methods of constituting the Caliph to suit the conditions of later times. The reigning Caliph usually nominated his son or kinsman as his successor during his life-time, and the leading Amirs, the eminent state officials etc., who were in most cases created by the Caliph himself, gave their approval. This approval after nomination constituted the election of the succeeding Caliph. Thus although the Caliphate had been transformed into a hereditary/dynastic monarchy, the fiction that the Caliph held his office on the basis of the established practice of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (i.e., nomination as well as election) was maintained.

It is strange that Al-Māwardī attempts to find support for his argument by citing examples from the early history of Islam. Caliph Abū Bakr was elected by the people who were not the creation or instruments of the preceding Caliph and his nomination of Caliph 'Umar was merely a recommendation which was accepted by the Muslim community. As for Caliph Uthmān's appointment it was election by the Electoral College and not a designation. Similarly Caliph 'Alī was popularly elected. In any case, these examples have been used by Al-Māwardī as precedents to legalise the hereditary/dynastic transfer of the office of the Caliphate within the 'Abbasid family, whose employee he was. He even justifies three successive

designations on the basis of the precedent that when Hārūn al-Rashīd made a threefold designation of his sons as his possible successors, the jurists considered it as valid on the ground that on one occasion the Holy Prophet had made a successive designation of generals in the battle-field. According to Al-Māwardī, such a method of designation can be adopted in the public interest (*Al-MaÄāliÁ al-'ÿmmah*). But he does not seem to realise that the example of successive designation in the battle-field may not be applicable because on the death of a Caliph when one of his heirs has succeeded him, the new Caliph, being the supreme authority, is entitled to designate his own successor and is not bound by the designation made by his predecessor.

According to Al-Māwardī, the duties of the Caliph are, that he should guard the religion of Islam and suppress the growth of heresy; that he should interpret Islamic law as *Mujtahid* and promulgate it; that he should keep armies on the frontiers in order to defend Islamic territories from aggression by an enemy; that he should champion the cause of Islam either by offering Islam to the non-Muslims of the adjoining countries or by waging war against them until they accepted the status of protected people; that he should execute and preserve justice; that he should implement a sound financial system; that he should appoint only competent ministers, governors, tax-collectors, judges and other state officials and fix their salaries from the state treasury; and lastly, that he should supervise all the departments of the state.

As it is apparent the duties of the Caliph were spiritual as well as temporal in nature, clearly indicating the unity of religion and politics, or church and state. Thus the model of state advanced by Al-Māwardī was based on an amalgam of religious and secular aspects of life of the Muslim community. But whether such a situation existed in reality, was a different matter.

Finally, Al-Māwardī speculates on the conditions under which the office of the Caliph can be forfeited. These are, when he fails to interpret the Faith correctly, becomes physically or mentally unfit, is arrested or overpowered or restrictions are imposed on his movements. But he, at the same time argues that if the Caliph was under the influence of a powerful Amir, so long as the Amir ruled according to the *Sharī'ah*, the need of either releasing or deposing the Caliph should not arise.[49] Obviously the existing political conditions were responsible for this thesis of Al-Māwardī.

At this stage, in the light of the exposition provided by Al-Māwardī, the legislative, executive and judicial aspects of his version of the state of his times can be briefly examined:

Theoretically speaking no one is empowered to legislate in a Muslim state, for God as the only true Law-giver has laid down His laws in the Qur'ān. These laws however, are in the form of broad principles which require interpretation in the light of the Tradition (Àadīth), the Consensus of the community (*Ijmā'*), and the use of Analogical Reasoning (*Qiyās*). There was also a very large field of legislation of such laws which were not repugnant to the injunctions of Islam (i.e., the Qur'ān and Sunnah), and in respect of those laws legislation had always been made by the Muslim rulers in the form of royal ordinances (Farmān).

The jurists interpreted those Qur'ānic rules of law which were seemingly obscure, or on the interpretation of which the preceding authorities disagreed. They did not object to the implementation of those man-made laws towards which the Qur'ān and Sunnah were indifferent. The Caliph as monarch was technically only an agent through whom the *Sharī'ah* could be implemented. But sometimes he legislated even in this field on the basis of his sovereign act. He also had the power to appoint jurists and to authorise them to give decisions or legal rulings (*Fatāwā*) in matters concerning legislation, either by choosing the interpretation of a particular school which suited his needs, or by suppressing the decisions (*Fatāwā*) of the jurists on the ground that they were inexpedient or against public interest, or by authorising only a few individual jurists to give decisions who agreed with him. This arrangement suited the interests of the autocratic and absolute monarchy that had emerged from the early republic. Thus the authority to interpret the *Sharī'ah* was usually granted to individual jurists who were the creation of the Caliph himself, and the formation of an assembly composed of various sections of the jurists (*Ijmā'*) was discouraged lest it became strong enough to restrict or curtail the arbitrary power of the sovereign.

In the light of Al-Māwardī's exposition, theoretically the state in Islam was a unitary form of government, highly centralised under a single supreme head, who was the Chief executive authority. The Caliph in that capacity appointed the ministers (*Wazīrs*), governors (Amirs), judges (*Qāîîs*), tax collectors (*ÿmils*) etc., and supervised all the departments (*Dīwāns*) of the state.

The office of the" *Wazīr*" (Minister) was introduced during the reign of the 'Abbasids, when the Caliphate came under the influence of the Persian ideas of sovereignty. There existed no precedent for the establishment of this office. But justifying the appointment, Al-Māwardī advances the argument that the word "*Wazīr*" is derived from "*w.z.r.*" which means "load" i.e., the *Wazīr* shares the load of the sovereign's responsibilities. According to him, the jurists had already sanctioned the appointment of one or more *Wazīrs* by the sovereign. He further argues that in the Qur'ān Prophet Moses is stated to have asked God about the appointment of a *Wazīr* (sharer of burden) from his family (i.e., Aaron, his brother). He also maintains that the Holy Prophet consulted his Companions who shared the burden of his temporal responsibilities. *Ibn Khaldūn* likewise justifies the existence of this office on the ground that Abū Bakr was the *Wazīr* of the Holy Prophet, 'Umar was the *Wazīr* of Caliph Abū Bakr, and Uthmān as well as 'Alī were the *Wazīrs* of Caliph 'Umar.[50]

It is interesting to note how the Qur'ān and Sunnah were used by the subsequent jurists in support of any change that took place in the Muslim polity. It has already been noted that in order to emphasise the importance of the office of Caliph on the headstrong Amirs and Sultans, Al-Māwardī advanced the argument that the establishment of the Caliphate was a religious obligation and God had set a precedent in the by appointing David as the Caliph on Earth. But the institution of the Caliphate was not regarded as divinely ordained in the times of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Similarly no precedent existed for the appointment of a *Wazīr* or *Wazīrs*. Nevertheless Al-Māwardī took pains in providing justification for this office through the Qur'ān and Sunnah. This clearly establishes that jurists of every age could adjust the interpretation of the *Sharī'ah* in accordance with the needs and requirements of their times.

Al-Māwardī discusses three kinds of Governorship (*Amārat*) appointed or acknowledged by the Caliph. These are Governorship with General Powers (*Al-amārah al-'āmmah*), Governorship with Specific Powers (*Al-amārah al-khāÄÄah*), and Governorship by Usurpation (*Al-amārah al-istīlā'*). The Governorship with general powers was like sovereignty, and with specific powers amounted to command over a specific department.

The Governorship by usurpation came into being when a Muslim usurper occupied Muslim territory by force of arms (either by defeating the

armies of the Caliph or by dethroning the reigning Amir). In such circumstances the Caliph had no choice but to confirm the usurping Amir in his dominion. Therefore, Al-Māwardī, under the doctrine of necessity, introduces the concept that the confirmation should not be declined if the usurping Amir gives the undertaking that he would rule in accordance with the *Sharī'ah* and maintain the unity of the Muslim community (*Ummah/Millah*) by owing allegiance to the Caliph. The usurping Amirs on the other hand, solicited the confirmation of the Caliph because it gave an air of legitimacy to their rule. Some of them paid tribute to the Caliph, others did not.

The practice of appointing Amirs (governors) for outlying provinces is very old in Islam. The Holy Prophet appointed such Amirs, similarly the Rightly Guided Caliphs as well as the Umayyads appointed Amirs and kept a strict watch over their activities. However under the Umayyads the practice of hereditary governorship had been introduced and was maintained by the 'Abbasids. Consequently on the death of an Amir, the Caliph formally confirmed his son or kinsman who succeeded him. But the Governorship by usurpation that transformed the unity of the Muslim world into a loose confederation and virtually made the Caliph impotent, was a much later development. It had no precedent in the early history of Islam. Al-Māwardī included it in his interpretation of the State in Islam[51] because his aim was, as it has already been pointed out, to impress upon the usurping Amirs the importance of the 'Abbasid Caliphate which had lost its prestige.

Dealing with the executive responsibilities of the Caliph, Al-Māwardī also talks about the Judiciary (*Qaîâ'*) which had always been regarded as one of the most important organs (*waïïfah*) of the state. As the Muslim Empire expanded four major courts with varying jurisdiction came into existence. These were the Court of the Reviewer of Wrongs (*Naïar al-Maïālim*), the Court of the *Qāîī* with criminal/civil jurisdiction, the Court of the Moral Censor (*MuÁtasib*), and the Court of the Police Magistrate (*ĪāÁib al-ShurÇah*). According to Al-Māwardī it was the exclusive responsibility of the Caliph to appoint the *Qāîī* at all levels, although he himself should preside over the *Maïālim* Court.

In the light of Al-Māwardī's exposition the state in Islam was a monarchy, restricted to the members particularly of the house of 'Abbas and generally of the tribe of Quraysh. The Caliph as the supreme head of the

state was (at least theoretically) empowered to appoint or dismiss his agents at will, and if sovereignty existed within the world of Islam it could only exist with the sanction of the Caliph, otherwise it was illegal.

The executive and judicial institutions that had been evolved during the course of centuries were maintained with some modifications and the administrative system of numerous independent dynasties that held sway over different territories of Islam was modelled on them.

Briefly the peculiarities of the state in Islam as set out in Al-Māwardī's exposition are: That the object of the state was to achieve the well-being of the Muslims not only in this world but also in the Hereafter; that the state stood for the unity of the Muslim community and the oneness of the Muslim world, therefore there should be appointed a single Caliph and if the Muslim world were to be fragmented into a number of independent political units, these units should exist only with the sanction of the Caliph; that the state drew a line between Muslims and non-Muslims; that only those taxes which had been recommended in the Qur'ān could be levied in the state; that usury was forbidden; that the Muslim subjects were to be governed under the civil law of Islam but Muslim and non-Muslim subjects came under the criminal law of Islam; and finally, that the state in Islam had a special department called Hisba (religious censorship) to enforce the religious discipline of Islam on its Muslim subjects.

Generally speaking, Al-Māwardī's model was followed by the later jurists, and as the condition of the Caliph at Baghdad deteriorated further, more adjustments or rather compromises were made in order to cope with the political reality. For instance, in the times of Al-Ghazzālī (1058 AD - 1111 AD) the Caliph was completely dominated by the Seljuq Sultan. Therefore Al-Ghazzālī, like Al-Māwardī, advanced the argument that the establishment of the institution of Caliphate was a religious obligation for the Muslims under the *Sharī'ah*, and not merely a rational necessity. He argued that after the death of the Holy Prophet the Caliphate was acknowledged as an indispensable institution according to the Consensus of the Community (*Ijmā'*).[52] Therefore the appointment of a Caliph was imperative for the maintenance of a proper religio-political order, which could only be established by an Imām to whom obedience must be rendered. This line of reasoning was adopted to emphasise the legitimacy of the 'Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustīhar on the Seljuq Sultan who wielded effective power, and also on

the adherents of the BāÇiniyyah sect who acknowledged his FāÇimid rival at Cairo as the legitimate Imām.

It is interesting to note that while repeating the qualifications of a Caliph as enumerated by Al-Māwardī, Al-Ghazzālī modified some of them to suit the case of Caliph Al-Mustïhar. For instance, the ability to wage war (*Jihād*) was no more considered an important qualification when force and prowess (*Shawkah*) for waging war was possessed by the "loyal" Sultan, who could use it in place of the Caliph. Similarly the duty of the administration of the state could be delegated to the competent and conscientious Sultan as sharer of the Caliph's burden. Even the deficiency of Knowledge (*'Ilm*) or the lack of ability of *Ijtihād* on the part of the Caliph was to be ignored, as the Caliph could rely on the Ulema (Islamic scholars) who might be consulted and their advice followed. In other words Al-Ghazzālī held the view that the Caliph should be a *Muqallid* and depend on *Taqlīd* (following the legal opinions of the Ulema) rather than trying to be a Mujtahid himself if he was incapable of *Ijtihād*.[53]

Being conscious of the political situation that the Caliph was merely a ruler in name whereas the real authority vested in the Seljuq Sultan, Al-Ghazzālī had no hesitation in maintaining that the Caliph should delegate authority to the one who was wielder of effective power (*Shawkah*) and who swore allegiance to him. Al-Ghazzālī wanted the Caliph to lead a religious life and always to seek guidance from the Ulema. The Caliph was entitled to the obedience and loyalty of all the eminent personalities of the empire by virtue of his religious conviction (i.e., Sunni Islam).

During the times of Al-Ghazzālī the 'Abbasid Caliphate had become so weak and impotent that at times the Sultan appointed or designated the new Caliph. Consequently on the grounds of existing practice as well as the designation having been made by the one who was backed by military force, Al-Ghazzālī acknowledged this new method of the Caliph's appointment as valid under the *Sharī'ah*. According to Al-Ghazzālī so long as the wielder of effective power i.e., the Sultan, acknowledged or swore allegiance to the Caliph, his government was lawful according to the *Sharī'ah*. The principle on which Al-Ghazzālī seems to have based his thesis is that tyranny of a cruel Sultan should be accepted, but chaos and lawlessness must be avoided at all costs. The main argument of Al-Ghazzālī is that since an attempt to get rid of a tyrannous Sultan, who had the support of the army, was likely to lead to

confusion and disorder, such an attempt must not be made in order to safeguard the welfare of the state and the Muslim community. Without citing the Qur'ān (sūrah 4; verse 59), but placing reliance on some Traditions, he insists that besides the Caliph obedience must also be rendered to such Amirs and Sultans who were usurpers of political power.[54]

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there are the views of two very eminent jurists namely, Ibn Jamā'ah (1241 AD -1333 AD) and Ibn Taymiyya (1263 AD -1328 AD) on this subject which may also be examined. In the writings of Ibn Jamā'ah one notices the same principle in operation as in the writings of Al-Ghazzālī i.e. that tyranny to be considered preferable to anarchy. In other words, bad rule should be accepted in order to avoid disorder. Since the times of the Rightly Guided Caliphs the established interpretation of sūrah 4; verse 59 was that the obedience to the Caliph as Head of the State was qualified and depended on his following the laws laid down by God and the Holy Prophet, and that if his actions were in conflict with the *Sharī'ah*, he was liable to be deposed. But in the light of political reality, this interpretation was forsaken by jurists like Ibn Jamā'ah. He held that every constituted authority must be obeyed and the constituted authority included a usurper who was in effective control of the administration of the state and who, for his own convenience, had sworn allegiance to the figurehead Caliph.

What Ibn Jamā'ah added to the methods regarding the appointment of a Caliph was: the legitimisation of self-appointed Imām through forceful seizure. It has already been noted that Al-Ghazzālī went a step further than Al-Māwardī in including the designation/appointment of a Caliph by the Sultan as one of the methods for appointing a new Caliph. But Ibn Jamā'ah went even further by permitting a usurper of the supreme authority to appoint himself as the Imām. According to Ibn Jamā'ah, obedience to authority was an absolute religious obligation on the Muslim community under sūrah 4; verse 59 of the Qur'ān, as it was identical with obedience to God and to the Holy Prophet. Therefore self-appointment by a military commander to the office of Imām was lawful under the *Sharī'ah* and obedience should be rendered to such a ruler in order to maintain the unity of the Muslim community. Not only that, Ibn Jamā'ah expects the Muslim community to render obedience even to the subsequent usurper who defeated the earlier one and after deposing him, became the effective Imām

himself.[55]

Al-Māwardī, Al-Ghazzālī, and Ibn Jamā'ah, all of them belonged to the Shāfi'ī school, and as it has been demonstrated, they, during their respective eras, went on compromising the *Sharī'ah* interpretation with the deteriorating political reality, until the wheel had turned full circle and the delegation of all the powers and functions of the Caliph to the Sultan or to any usurper was completely legalised under the *Sharī'ah*. In other words these eminent jurists of Sunni Islam clearly laid down that the *Sharī'ah* is capable of numerous interpretations and it is perfectly legal to make the *Sharī'ah* adjust to any set of prevalent circumstances.

The voice of Ibn Taymiyya (1263 AD -1328 AD), an eminent Àanbalī jurist, strikes a somewhat different note. Disillusioned with the attitude of the conventional jurists towards the state in Islam, he claimed the freedom of *Ijtihād* and went back to the basic sources i.e., the Qur'ān and Sunnah in order to make a fresh start. He did not concern himself with the Caliphate. He even denied the necessity of this institution. He was mainly concerned with the supremacy of the *Sharī'ah* and as to how the Muslim community (the rulers as well as the ruled) could regulate their lives by it. He did indeed lay emphasis on the close connection between the Imām and the Muslim community, but "Imām" according to him was any wielder of effective authority, irrespective of the fact as to whether he had acquired it legally or illegally.

While interpreting sūrah 4; verse 59, he advanced the argument that only those orders of the wielder of authority should be obeyed which were in conformity with the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But it is interesting to note that although he absolved the Muslim community from obeying those orders which were in conflict with the Qur'ān and Sunnah, he refrained from preaching rebellion owing to his fear of anarchy or disorder in the state.

He expected the wielder of power and his agents to act in accordance with the *Sharī'ah*, and if the Head of the State was unfamiliar with it, then like Al-Ghazzālī, Ibn Taymiyya advocated that he should seek the guidance of the Ulema. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya too was of the view that the quality of being a *Mujtahid* was not essential in the Head of the State and that he should practice *Taqlid*. Thus Ibn Taymiyya and Al-Ghazali desired that the influence of the Ulema in the governance of the state should increase as they both

believed that the Ulema were the real successors of the Holy Prophet after the end of the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Ibn Taymiyya did not attach any importance to the struggle for power between the Caliph and the Sultan. He accepted the political situation as it existed in his times. His main concern was restoration of the Rule of the *Sharī'ah* in the state so that the Muslims, for their collective survival as a community, could lead their lives in accordance with an authoritative and strictly enforced law.[56] Thus he stood for a puritanical or rather an idealistic *Sharī'ah* -government, and spent his entire life struggling for the implementation of his ideals. But since his interpretation of the *Sharī'ah* was narrow, rigid, inflexible and unsuited to the prevailing political conditions, it was, generally speaking, ignored.

MORALISTS

The Moralists were a group of writers of books on political ethics. These books were in the form of counsel for kings (also called *Adab, Akhlāq*, or Mirror literature). These moralists were neither concerned with Islamic constitutional theories as propounded by the jurists nor were they interested in the political thought of the philosophers. They isolated the Caliph and preached that he should devote himself completely to religious matters e.g., offering prayers, observing fast, defending Faith, punishing heretics etc. As for the Sultan, he was to be considered as the real sovereign over his realm and the citizens, although theoretically constituting the Muslim Ummah, were his subjects. The teachings of these writers were based mainly on political considerations. They did not bother to raise or answer the question as to whether a king held his office legitimately or illegitimately. They accepted the political reality as it existed and at the same time they tried to present the model of an Excellent King (*Malik al-Fāîil*) or a Just Sultan (*Malik al-'ÿdil*). In order to realise their objective they imitated the style and methodology of the Persian writers of pre-Islamic times. This literature is obviously the product of an age when the Caliphate had gradually given way to the Sultanate.

Although the moralists projected the universal concept of ethics, they remained, generally speaking, attached to the *Sharī'ah*. They were mainly concerned with the visualisation, in an already established absolute monarchy, of an ideal political order based on universal ethical values like

justice and equity, the importance of which is also acknowledged by the *Sharī'ah*. Therefore they freely used the examples and anecdotes of the former infidel (*kāfir*) kings in order to establish how virtuous they were as models. Their works were usually in the form of guides to be read by the Sultans or Maliks - some of whom, although able to read and write, were in many respects tyrants or savages with little respect for ethical or human values. Advice could only be tendered to them through the adoption of the art of flattery, about the qualities and duties required in a ruler, his servants and functionaries, or his relations with his subjects and as to how best to manage the affairs of state.

Some of the famous authors of such works are Ibn al-Muqaffā (*Kitāb al-Adab al-Īaghīr*), Jāhiz (*Kitāb al-Tāj* and *Kitāb Istihqāq al-Imāmah*), Kaykā'ūs (*Qābūs Nāmā*), Niïām al-Mulk (*Siyāsat Nāmā*), and Al-Ghazzālī (*NaÄïÁat al-Mulūk*).

Ibn al-Muqaffā (724 AD -757 AD), following the tradition of the earlier Sunni jurists, expects the Caliph/ruler to be a *Mujtahid* and to practice *Ijtihād* while implementing the *Sharī'ah*. Jāhiz on the other hand, refers to numerous manners, customs and anecdotes of ancient Persian kings, and in his *Kitāb Istihqāq al-Imāmah* maintains that the *Sharī'ah* changes with the changing times whereas the ruler and the government are permanent requirements. Kaykā'ūs as a ruling prince, wrote his book (compiled in 1082 AD) based on his own experiences, for the guidance of his son. In his view the ruler must be a practicing Muslim, wise, just, truthful and in effective control of his kingdom. Niïām al-Mulk (1018 AD-1092 AD) had served as Chief Minister of two Seljuq Sultans namely, Alp Arslān and Malik Shāh. He, like Kaykā'ūs, also enumerates the essential requirements in a Muslim king and expects him to conduct himself as an absolute monarch but within the boundaries of the *Sharī'ah*. Since he lays emphasis on justice, Niïām al-Mulk wants the ruler to pay special attention to the establishment of a pious and unapproachable judiciary. He advises against women having any influence in the court, is against employing non-Muslims on key posts particularly when educated Muslims were unemployed, and finally desires that the ruler must maintain an intelligence service in order to know as to what was happening in the kingdom although spying has been specifically disapproved by the Qur'ān.

Al-Ghazzālī, who is essentially a religious thinker, discusses in his book (compiled in 1111 AD) as to what spiritual beliefs a Muslim ruler must hold

and on what ethical principles he should act. He was making an effort to reconcile his ideals with the existing political reality, but his attempt made him land into numerous inconsistencies. For instance, according to his conviction the Caliphate is an indispensable institution on the basis of a generally accepted Consensus of the Community (*Ijmā'*), and its establishment is imperative for the maintenance of a proper religio-political order. But in *NaÄīÁat al-Mulūk* he preaches that kings are appointed by God who sends them to protect men from one another just as He sent prophets to guide men aright. Therefore he has no hesitation in maintaining that the Sultan is God's shadow on earth. He argues: "To dispute with kings is improper, and to hate them is wrong; for God on high has commanded: Obey God and obey the Prophet and those among you who hold authority - which means obey God and the prophets and your princes. Everybody to whom God has given religion must therefore love and obey kings".[57]

It is interesting to note that when Caliph 'Umar was called the "Caliph of God", he refused to accept this title for the reason that in the Qur'ān God had specifically called David as His Successor (*Khalīfah*) on Earth. However with the passage of time a stage had arrived when a theologian of the stature of Al-Ghazzālī would regard every king having been appointed by God to protect mankind and therefore he had to be considered as "God's Shadow on Earth".

Again Al-Ghazzālī who attaches so much importance to the established 'Abbasid Caliphate, does not care to refer even to the theoretically accepted terms of contractual relationship (*bay'ah*) between the Caliph and the Muslims. He avoids discussing the main problem whether the Sultan should or should not obey the Caliph. On the contrary he wants the Sultan to fulfil the functions of the ancient Persian or Sasanid kings besides following the practice of the old caliphs. But for the subjects, Al-Ghazzālī considers that abject obedience to the ruler is a form of worship of God.

To sum up, although the moralists attempted to keep the absolute monarchy within the confines of the *Sharī'ah*, in reality their counsel, as men of affairs, was based on political expediency, and this is the only criterion with which the entire mirror literature can be judged.

PHILOSOPHERS.

Generally speaking the Muslim thinkers endeavoured to interpret Islam

in the light of Greek philosophy. Therefore their political thought was greatly influenced by the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. They agreed with Plato that Law was the only real foundation of a state. Accordingly they maintained that if a state was based exclusively on the *Sharī'ah* and upheld its supremacy, it was truly "Islamic". On the other hand, if in a state the *Sharī'ah* was not enforced or it was made to compete with man-made laws, then it would not be an Islamic state but a state founded on "Power" (*Mulk*). They also believed that the deeper meanings of the *Sharī'ah* could only be understood through philosophy.

It may be useful to discuss here the views of at least three Muslim philosophers, namely Al-Fārābī (868 AD -950 AD), Ibn Sīnā (980 AD -1037 AD), and Ibn Rushd (1126 AD -1198 AD), before making an assessment of the ideas of Ibn Khaldūn (1332 AD -1406 AD), who can neither be considered as a jurist, nor a moralist, nor a philosopher, but who as a political scientist with his empirical approach, forms a category of his own.[58]

Al-Fārābī has been generally accepted as the first Muslim political thinker. Although his thought was influenced by the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, he made his own interesting additions to them. Al-Fārābī, like his Greek masters, was concerned with the question as to what was the ultimate aim of man and his conclusion like them was "to achieve happiness". But according to him, complete "happiness" could only be achieved by man if he led his life in accordance with the dictates of the *Sharī'ah*. Next, man in isolation could not attain "Happiness" or "Perfection". He had to form a political association with other men for realising these ideals. Therefore the establishment of a state was necessary for man could only achieve "happiness" in a community through helping one another. So in his view the ideal state was that which provided facilities to its citizens for realising the two-fold concept of "happiness" as envisaged by Islam i.e., well being in this world and preparation for achieving happiness in the hereafter.

According to Al-Fārābī, the ideal state was ideal only if it was governed initially by the Prophet-Lawgiver-Philosopher-Imām. In other words the perfect state was the one which was ruled by the Holy Prophet himself as Imām, as he was in direct communion with God, Whose Law was revealed upon him, and he had the capability of understanding its deeper meanings as a philosopher. This theory of Al-Fārābī can only be understood if we accept his views respecting "Prophesy". He further believed that those who lived in

the state of Medina ruled by the Holy Prophet attained happiness and excellence or realised their true destiny. Since the Holy Prophet was the "Ultimate Interpreter of Law" (*Imām al-MuÇlaq*), he was the ideal ruler of the "Ideal State" (*Al-Madīnah al-Fāîîlah*).

Since it was virtually impossible to realise the ideal or perfect state in the absence of the Prophetic-Lawgiver- Imām, Al-Fārābī enumerates different types of imperfect states which were contrary to his concept of a perfect state. Some of these imperfect states have been picked up from the writings of Plato, but the other varieties are the product of his own speculation. These states include: One concentrating only on providing basic necessities (*al-îarūriyāt*); Vile/Despicable state (*al-Shawah*); Tyrannical state (*al-Taghallub*); Democratic state (*al-Jamā'iyyah*); Rouge/Hypocritical state (*al-Fāsiqah*); Failed state (*al-Mubaddalah*); Erroneous state (*al-¿āllah*) etc. However, he regards all imperfect states as "*Jāhiliyyah*" (absence of wisdom/knowledge to follow the right path), and therefore the inhabitants of such states could never achieve authentic "happiness".

According to Al-Fārābī, all imperfect states emerge out of a false perception of religion or due to corrupt convictions. But it is interesting to note that he regards "democratic" state (*Madīnah al-Jamā'iyyah*) closest to his perception of the ideal or perfect state. Perhaps he had in his mind the republican era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs which immediately followed the ideal leadership of the Prophet-Imām. But again when he maintains that it is from a democratic state that most of the "*Jāhiliyyah*" states emerge, one cannot help deducing that at the back of his mind was the transformation of the republican order into an absolute monarchy of different forms. Obviously Al-Fārābī had a very deep perception of Islamic history, and in the course of the evolution of his political thought, whatever be the nature of the influence of Greek philosophy, he kept an eye on the historical experience of the Muslim community.

In Ibn Sīnā's political philosophy one notices the amalgamation of three elements i.e., the Greek ideas, the improvements made thereon by Al-Fārābī, and the orthodox theories of the Caliphate as advanced by the jurists. Ibn Sīnā, like Al-Fārābī and the Greek thinkers, believes that the ultimate object of man is to realise "happiness". He is also convinced that a state founded on the *Sharī'ah* revealed to the Prophetic-Lawgiver was superior to the one founded on "Power" (*Mulk*).

As for the institution of Caliphate, Ibn Sīnā holds the opinion that the Caliph, who is expected to be well-versed in the *Sharī'ah*, must be obeyed because he is the successor of the Prophetic-Lawgiver. He describes the same qualifications and duties of the Caliph as enumerated by the jurists. However he adds that the Caliph should be elected by the Muslim community, and if the electors made a wrong choice, then they would cease to be Muslims and become *Kāfirs* (unbelievers).

There takes place a major departure on the part of Ibn Sīnā from the jurists when he advances the view that the usurper (*mutaghallib*) must be fought against and if possible put to death. He maintains that those citizens who, despite having means, decline to act in this manner, must be punished. According to Ibn Sīnā the act of slaying a usurper is most pleasing to God. In this respect Ibn Sīnā's position is rather unique. But unfortunately there is an inconsistency in his thought. He argues that if a weak and incompetent Caliph is replaced by a strong and intelligent rebel, then the citizens should acknowledge the claim of the rebel if he was otherwise fit to hold the office. Evidently Ibn Sīnā is prepared to alter his earlier rigid stand in favour of an authority based on power plus intelligence. What he is trying to drive at is that a powerful and intelligent but less virtuous usurper should be preferred to a weak and incompetent but pious Caliph.

Ibn Sīnā also draws a line between religious obligations (*'Ibādāt*) and worldly affairs (*Mu'āmalāt*). He contends that it is necessary to perform religious obligations (*'Ibādāt*) because these are of general benefit to each member of the Muslim community. But he emphasises that the Imām must be primarily concerned with the worldly affairs (*Mu'āmalāt*) of the citizens. He should regulate the inter-human relations through such legislation that protects life, property and transactions of the citizens. In this connection Ibn Sīnā recommends that the *Sharī'ah* should be enforced and its opponents should be eliminated from the state. According to Ibn Sīnā the two-fold concept of "happiness" i.e., the well being of man in this world and to prepare him for realising bliss in the hereafter, is guaranteed by adherence to the *Sharī'ah*.

In Ibn Rushd one comes across the same idea again that man cannot attain "happiness" or perfection in isolation. He must establish a political relationship with others, as he cannot survive without a state. Furthermore since a just state has to be based on Law, the ideal state is the one that is

founded on the Divinely Revealed Law, and that it is only in such a state that man can realise authentic "happiness" or highest perfection. The constitution of the ideal state is the *Sharī'ah*, and since the philosopher alone has the capability of understanding its hidden meanings and interpreting it, he has to play a very important role in the politics of the ideal state. It is interesting to note that although Ibn Rushd himself was a theologian as well as a jurist of the Mālikī school who held office as *Qāîī* of Cordoba, he considered the philosophers as more competent than the theologians (Ulema) as well as the jurists to understand and interpret the *Sharī'ah*.

Ibn Rushd maintains that with the end of the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the state in Islam ceased to be the ideal state and was transformed into a "*Mulk*" (Power State). Thereafter from "*Mulk*" different forms of imperfect states had been emerging in the history of Islam. In his view the *Sharī'ah* is perfectly capable of providing an opportunity for the establishment of the ideal state. But the weaknesses in human character always lead to the creation of imperfections in the states. Hence it has become virtually impossible to realise the ideal of a state based purely on the *Sharī'ah*.

Ibn Rushd considers the Caliph as identical to Plato's philosopher-king. But he does not agree with Al-Fārābī that the ideal ruler could only be the Prophet- Imām, and that real "happiness" was only achieved by those citizens who lived in the ideal state governed by the Prophetic-Lawgiver-Imām. Since he believed in the extinction of prophecy after the death of the Holy Prophet, he argued that the ideal state which existed during the times of the Holy Prophet could not be recreated. However the imperfect states could endeavour to come as close to that ideal as possible.

Ibn Khaldūn[59] draws a line between the state founded exclusively on the *Sharī'ah* (*siyāsah dīniyyah*) and the state founded on rational laws (*siyāsah 'aqliyyah*). His view of history is mainly based on his concept of " *'AÄabiyyah*" which means: a group's (or dynasty's) claim to rule based on eminence acquired through collective achievement, strength of will, and striking power. According to this theory, so long as the "*'AÄabiyyah*" of a group (e.g., the tribe of Quraysh) or a dynasty (e.g., the Seljuq) does not show signs of decline, it retains its power over the state. But with its fall, the group or dynasty is eliminated and some other group or dynasty with a fresh "*'AÄabiyyah*" takes over.

In Ibn Khaldūn's times most of the existing Muslim states were power-states which in his terminology were "states based on man-made laws". He argues that the Holy Prophet was the Lawgiver- Imām who knitted the Muslim community together under the *Sharī'ah*, the supremacy of which was acknowledged throughout the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. But thereafter owing to the decline of religious motivation, the Caliphate was transformed into *Mulk* (power-state) which was governed mainly through the laws formulated by human reason (*siyāsah 'aqliyyah*) although it was claimed that their original source was the *Sharī'ah*.

Ibn Khaldūn also discussed the significance and importance of the Caliphate as a religio-political institution, and in this respect he agreed with Al-Māwardī that the Caliph should protect the religion of Islam and administer the state. But in his times the Caliphate had only survived as a purely religious institution at Cairo and the Caliph had long ceased to have any say in the administrative or political matters.

However, as a pragmatist, Ibn Khaldūn was convinced that even *Mulk* (power-state) through its man-made laws could work for the welfare of its citizens, although he recommended that *Mulk* should not break its links with the *Sharī'ah* as *Mulk* had originally emerged from the Caliphate. Thus while acknowledging the *Sharī'ah*'s theoretical importance, Ibn Khaldūn accepted the state as it was and held that a "mixed" state which was administered partly in accordance with the *Sharī'ah* and partly with the "*'aqliyyah*" (man-made) laws could serve its citizens. In other words even a Muslim state administered exclusively through laws formulated by human reason could work for the well being of its citizens. This position is different from that of the jurists and philosophers who laid emphasis on maintaining the purity of the *Sharī'ah* in the state.

CONCLUSION

In the light of what has been discussed above, it is evident that what makes a Muslim state "Islamic" is not its constitution or the political system it adopts, but the implementation of those laws which are derived exclusively from the *Sharī'ah*. Islam is indifferent to or unconcerned with the political order so long as the wielder of power (legitimate or illegitimate) maintains the supremacy of the *Sharī'ah* in the state. Mīthāq al-Madīnah and the republican political systems introduced by the Rightly Guided Caliphs, had no spiritual

or religious significance but were social contracts of different varieties. However, some jurists like Shāh Walī Ullāh include political system also as part of the *Sharī'ah* and maintain that under the *Sharī'ah* only three modes have been approved whereby the Caliphate (Head of the State) can be constituted and these are: election, nomination, and usurpation.[60] The conventional Fiqh grants legitimacy even to usurpation as one of the modes but with the condition that the usurper undertakes to enforce the *Sharī'ah*. Therefore according to a majority of the jurists, moralists and philosophers the real Islamic state is only that which is administered under the pure *Sharī'ah* laws, and if in a Muslim state the *Sharī'ah* laws are made to compete or stand side by side with the man-made laws (or it is administered exclusively under the man-made laws), then it is not an Islamic state, but would be categorised as power-state (*Mulk*). According to this criterion, only the state governed by the Prophetic-Lawgiver-Imām and subsequently by the Rightly Guided Caliphs (who were themselves *Mujtahids*) was truly Islamic. Thereafter the state in Islam was transformed into different forms of "*Mulk*" (Power-state as opposed to Islamic state), brought into being through hereditary/dynastic succession, coercion or conquest or through any other lawful or unlawful means, and the claim was advanced that a power-state was perfectly competent to enforce the *Sharī'ah*. Most of the power states in the Muslims world had been governed by "Mixed" laws (i.e., some *Sharī'ah* laws and other man-made laws). Man-made laws were usually enforced through a royal decree or ordinance (*Farmān*), and possibly as sovereign acts on the part of the wielder of power.

Another important feature which should be noted is that the jurists while maintaining the supremacy of the *Sharī'ah*, interpreted it, particularly in respect of the worldly matters (*Mu'āmalāt*), through the mechanism of "*Ijtihād* ", in accordance with the needs and requirements of the changing times. They kept the *Sharī'ah* mobile by providing various innovative interpretations and did not permit it to become static. The *Sharī'ah* continued to remain one but its numerous interpretations led to the formation of different schools of Fiqh in the Muslim world.

During the republican phase of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, "*bay'ah*" had meant a contract between every individual citizen and a candidate for e office of the Caliphate the candidate when appointed Caliph shall govern in accordance with the laws of the *Sharī'ah*.

The Muslim succeeded in building a great empire and a magnificent civilisation. But the cultural, philosophic and scientific progress achieved through centuries of labour was arrested due to the growth of irrational orthodoxy and fanaticism. While Arabic literature on philosophy and empirical sciences was being translated into Latin and Europe was moving out of the dark ages to an age of enlightenment, Muslims were burning their books of knowledge in the cross-roads of Cordoba and Baghdad. Their civilisation collapsed also owing to the sectarian differences between the Shī'ite and the Sunni when both Khawarzm and Baghdad were destroyed at the hands of the Mongols. Muhammad Iqbal has correctly observed:

> "I consider it a great loss that the progress of Islam as a conquering Faith stultified the growth of those germs of an economic and democratic organisation of society which I find scattered up and down the pages of the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the Prophet."[61]

The modern Muslim, effected and stimulated by the new Western ideas like individual freedom, nationalism, patriotism, secularism, constitutionalism, humanism, social justice etc. disseminated in the Muslim world, is determined to reinterpret and rediscover the dynamic, progressive and forward-looking spirit of Islam. However the question that arises in his mind is as to whether the writings of the jurists and philosophers of the past can provide any guidance to the Muslims of today in the community to realise the humanistic, socialistic or egalitarian ideals of Islam.

According to Al-Fārābī the adoption of democracy (*al-madīnah al-Jamā'iyyah*) as a political system in a state can equip it with such qualities that would bring it closest to his concept of the ideal or perfect state, provided it does not degenerate into autocracy or despotism. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldūn in his "*Muqaddamah*", while acknowledging the theoretical supremacy of the *Sharī'ah*, preaches that a Muslim power-state, administered under "mixed" laws (or even exclusively under man-made laws), can work for the betterment of its citizens because all man-made laws), can work for the betterment of its citizens because all man-made laws which are enforced for the well being of the citizens are of have to be derived from the fountain-head of the *Sharī'ah*.

This implies that there is no distinction between the spiritual and the secular in Islam, because all man-made laws implemented in the state with

the intention to benefit the community should be deemed to emerge from the *Sharī'ah* or, to put it in another way, the *Sharī'ah* would not or could not be opposed to them. It is interesting to mote that almost five centuries after Ibn Khaldūn, Muhammad Iqbal arrived at the same conclusion when he proclaimed:

> "The Ultimate Reality, according to the Qur'ān, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, and the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being".[62]

Notes and References

1. These Traditions are well known and quoted by many scholars. For instance see *The Caliphate* by T.W. Arnold p. 184 etc.
2. For English translation of Mīthāq al-Madīnah (The Constitution of Medina) see, Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina,* 1962 Ed. pp. 221-225.
3. Ibn IsÁāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* trans. as *The Life of Muhammad* by A. Guillaume 9th Pak. Ed. 1990 pp. 504-507; *ñārīkh i ñabarī* vol. 1 (*Sīrat al-Nabī*) Urdu trans. Nafīs Academy Karachi 1967 Ed. Pp. 335-339.
4. *Muhammad at Medina,* op.cit. Pp. 51-52.
5. SuyyūÇī's *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* Urdu trans. by Shabbīr AÁmad AnÄārī Pp. 9,10.
6. *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa 'l-Ashrāf* by Al -Mas'ūudī Pp. 235-36 etc.
7. *The Caliphate* by T.W. Arnold Pp. 45-50.
8. *Introduction to Islam,* Pp. 110,111.
9. *ñabarī's* source of information is Waqadi. See *ñārīkh i ñabarī* vol. 1 (*Sīrat al-Nabī*) vol. 1 Urdu trans. p.527.
10. *Introduction to Islam,* p. 111.
11. Ibn IsÁāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* trans. as *The Life of Muhammad* by A. Guillaume 9th Pak. Ed. 1990 pp. 504-507; *ñārīkh i ñabarī* vol. 1 (*Sīrat al-Nabī*) Urdu trans. Nafīs Academy Karachi 1967 Ed. Pp. 529-535

12 *ñārīkh i ñabarī,* vol. 1 p.535.

13. Ameer 'Ali's *A Short History of the Saracens* 1951 Ed. pp. 21,22; Also see *ñārīkh i ñabarī,* vol. 1 p. 579; Ibn IsÁāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* p. 687.

14. *ñārīkh i ñabarī,* collected vols. 2&3 Urdu trans. 1977 Ed. pp. 439, 441-479, 505.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 3 p. 27; *The Orient under the Caliphs* p. 19.

16. *ñārīkh i ñabarī,* vol. 3 pp. 39,40.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

18. *Ibid.*, p.199.

19. *Kitāb al-Kāmil* of al-Mubarrad ed. by W. Wright (Chapter on Khawāraj) pp. 527-600; Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqqaddamah* pp. 196-202; *Sociology of Islam* by R. Levy vol. 1 pp. 301-304; *The Caliphate* by T.W. Arnold pp. 148-189; *A Literary History of the Arabs* by R. A. Nicholson, pp. 207-220; *The Development of Muslim Theology* etc. by D. B. Macdonald pp. 7-63.

20. *A Muslim Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by SulÇān Àussain Tābindeh (*Naïar Madhhabī be I'lāniya Àuqūq al-Bashar*) English trans. F.J. Goulding 1970 Ed. pp. 31,32.

21. Shiblī's *Fārūq i A'ïam,* pp. 254-256.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 448-450, 478,479.

23. *Quami Digest Fārūq i A'ïam* Number, March, 1983 Article Dr. M. Àamīdullah p. 28.

24. For an interesting discussion on this aspect of the Qur'ānic concept of "Necessity" see Begum Nusrat Bhutto vs. Chief of Army Staff etc. 1977 P.L.D. Supreme Court pp. 724-727.

25. *A Digest of Muhammadan Law* by Neil B.E. Baillie 1957 Ed. pp. 733,734.

26. *Fārūq i A'ïam,* op. cit. pp. 395,396, 518.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 345,346.

28. *Ibid.*, pp.179,181.

29. *A Short History of the Saracens,* p.52.
30. *Ibid.*, p.54.
31. SuyyūÇī's *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* Urdu trans. by Shabbīr AÁmad AnÄārī p.224; English trans. by S.H. Jarrett pp. 197,199-209.
32. *Muhammadan Dynasties* by S. Lane-Pool p.20.
33. *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades* trans. by H. A. R. Gibb pp. 22,23,34.
34. *Muhammadan Dynasties,* p. 36.
35. Al-Bīrūnī's *Chronology of Ancient Nations* trans. by E. Sachau, pp. 129,131.
36. R. Levy, *A Baghdad Chronicle,* p. 188.
37. *Chahār Maqālah,* trans. by E.G. Browne p. 11.
38. *Siyāsat Nāmā,* pp. 5,42,43.
39. Barthold's *Turkistan Down to the Mongol Invasion* trans. by H. A. R. Gibb, pp. 346,347.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-375.
41. Barthold's "Studien uber Kalif und Sultan", trans. by C. H. Becker. *Der Islam,* 1916. pp. 352, 364-374.
42. Barthold's *Musalaman Culture,* trans. by S. Suharwardy p. 69.
43. *A Literary History of Persia* by E.G. Browne, vol. 3, pp.40-61.
44. Barthold's "Studien uber Kalif und Sultan", pp. 353,374-386.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 352,354-355.
46. *AÁkām al-SulÇāniyyah,* pp. 3; also see Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqqaddamah,* p. 190,191.
47. *AÁkām al-SulÇāniyyah,* p. 4,5.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 12,13,18; also see *Muqqaddamah,* pp. 210-218.
49. *AÁkām al-SulÇāniyyah,* p. 23-32.
50. *Muqqaddamah,* p. 237.

51. *AÁkām al-SulÇāniyyah,* pp. 47-57; also see Von Kremer's *History of Islamic Civilisation*, English trans. pp. 242-261.

52. *Kitāb al-IqtiÄād fi 'l-I'tiqād*, pp. 95,96.

53. *Kitāb al-Mustaïharī,* pp. 83,92.

54. *IÁyā al-'Ulūm al-Dīn* vol. 2 p. 124; *The Sunni Theory of the Caliphate* by H. A. R. Gibb (Archive Oriental vol. 3 9948) pp. 401-410; "Al-Ghazzālī's Theory of Islamic Government" *The Muslim World*, July 1955, pp. 229-241.

55. *TaÁrīr al-AÁkām fī-Tadbīr ahl al-Islām* ed. and trans. by Kofler in *Islamica* vol. VI pp. 349-414 and Vol. VII pp. 1-64.

56. Kitāb al-Siyāsah al-*Shar'iyyah*, pp. 40,56,63,169,170.

57. *NaÄīÁat al-Mulūk* (Counsel for Kings) English trans. by F. R. C. Bagley ed. 1964, pp. 45,46. English trans. of Kābūs Nāmā and Siyāsat Nāmā can also be examined.

58. For a detailed study three works of Al-Fārābī can be consulted namely, *al-Madīna al-Fāîilah*, *Kitāb Siyāsah Madaniyyah,* and *Kitāb TaÁÄīl al-Sa'ādah*. For a further study of Ibn Sīnā's political thought the last two chapters of his *Kitāb al-Shifā* are recommended. As for Ibn Rushd, his relevant works are *TaÁāfah al- TaÁāfah*, *FaÄl al-Miqāl*, *¿amīmah*, and *Manāhij*. For this portion of my study I have also relied upon Rosenthal's *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* pp. 122-157, 175-209; *Studies of Muslim Political Thought and Administration* by H. K. Sherwani pub. Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, pp. 58-86, 135-167, 168-184, 185-203; and M. Àamīdullah's *Introduction to Islam,* pp. 105-119.

59. Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqqaddamah* is now available in Urdu translation as well as English translation by Erwin I. J. Rosenthal.

60. *Àujjat Ullāh al-Bāligah* Urdu trans. by Maulana Abdur Rahim, 1962 Ed., vol. 2, p. 607.

61. *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal,* ed. by S. A. Wahid p. 100.

62. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* IAP, 1989, p. 123.

SOME BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION- WITH REFERENCE TO THE MESSAGE OF JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Yakü biä o yakü gà o yakü dää

Badīä khatm āmad aÄl o far' i īmää

(See but the One, say but the One, know but the One,

For in this is sealed the root and branches of faith.)

(*Shabistarī*)

Islam is the religion of unity (*al-tawÁīd*) which is both the principle and goal of all things essentially Islamic. This truth is most evident in the case of education that in its widest sense is the goal of the religion itself. Islam sees the human being as being comprised of many faculties and possessing levels of existences from the physical to the spiritual. Nevertheless, he possesses a unity and wholeness that all authentic manifestations of the principle of Islamic education have sought to address. In other words the subject of Islamic education must be the whole of man.

It must then be asked who is man in the Islamic perspective. At once God's servant (*'abd-Allah*) and vicegerent (*khalīfat-Allāh*) on earth, man was created upon the Äūrah of God according to the famous Áadīth, "*Khalqa Allāhu 'l-ÿdama 'alā Äūratihī* (God created man upon His image) which means that man reflects all of God's Names and Qualities, God not possessing *Äūrah* or form in the technical sense of the term. By virtue of this reality man can reach the highest perfection of becoming the mirror in which God reflects Himself and "knows" Himself. That is the station of *al-insān al-kāmil* or Universal Man and it might be said that the ultimate goal of Islamic education, especially as envisages by Sufi masters such as *Rūmī*, is to enable man to become what he is in reality, that is, the Universal Man.

Man is also the sum of the levels of existence synthesised in a “small” cosmos which for that reason is called microcosm. As such, he contains all the levels of existence within himself including body, soul and intellect or spirit (*al-jism, al-nafs*, and *al-‘aql/al-rūÁ* or to use the Persian terminology of Rūmī (*tan, jān and khirad/jān-i jānān*). A complete educational program must therefore cater to the needs to all these realities within man as in fact one sees in traditional Islamic education when it possessed wholeness and was not bereft of any of its major aspects, this being particularly true of Sufi education when it included the formal as well as the purely spiritual aspects of the training and education of the disciple.

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We need not concern ourselves here with physical education except to recall the fact that traditional living itself caused the body to exercise and that in addition there were such traditional sports as horseback riding, archery, wrestling, etc. Formal education dealt most of all with what today is called the “mind”, although this term is understood differently in an Islamic context and the mind was always considered in conjunction with its relation to the Spirit. And so Rūmī states:

Ay birādar tū hama andīsha ī

mā baqā tū ustukhān o rīsha ī

O brother thou art all thought,

The rest of thee is but sinew and bones*

One must remember that from the point of view of Islamic metaphysics man is essentially what he knows and we become existentially transformed by our knowledge and become identified ultimately with what we know principially. This knowledge is often identified with vision in Sufi literature and the Sufis speak of that organ with which we are able to know the Invisible World as the eye of the heart (*‘ayn al-qalb/chishm i dil*) rather than ear or some other organ. Vision symbolises knowledge and is in fact knowledge as we call a wise man a seer or visionary in English. Rūmī refers to this relationship and ultimate significance of knowledge when he says.

Tu nayī ää jism, tū ää dīda ī

wā rahī az jism, gar jān dīda ī

ādamī dīd ast, bāqī gàsht o pàst

har che chasmash dīda ast, āä chīz àst

(Thou art not this body, thou art that vision,

Thou shalt escape from the body, if thou seest the soul.

Man is vision, the rest is flesh and skin,

Whatever his eye sees, that is what he is.)

No clearer statement can be made of the identity of man's essence with principial knowledge. But such knowledge can only be attained if mental education is accompanied and complemented by spiritual education. Our mental activity and meditation (*fikr*) must be illuminated and elevated by the remembrance of God (*dhikr*)

Fikr kun tā wā rahi az fikr i khud

Dhikr kun tā fikr gardī dar jasad

Dhikr gà tā fikr i tū bālā kunad

Dhikr guftan fikr rā wālā kunad

(Meditate until thou becomest free of thought of thyself,

Invoke (remember God) until thy body becomes meditation

Invoke until thy thought is elevated,

For invocation elevates one's thought/meditation.)

***

Any education implies, however, before anything preparation and readiness in the being of the person who is to undergo the process of education. There must be before anything else an acceptance of one's ignorance and the yearning to know. The person who is ignorant and is no aware of his ignorance is in the state of what is traditionally called

"compound ignorance" (*jahl-i murakkab*) which is a mortal disease of the mind. One who is infected by it is not in a state that is conducive to being educated. Since Islam places the goal of education not on its worldly results, which are nevertheless legitimate on their own level, but on the soteriological character of knowledge, it places the greatest value in that yearning (*Çalab*) which qualifies a person for becoming educated. That is why a student in a traditional Islamic school (*madrasah*) is still called a *Çālib* (pl. *Çullāb*). The Sufis extend this yearning to the realm of spiritual perfection and consider it as one of the most important qualities of a seeker after inner perfection. In a famous poem Rūmī goes so far as to say.

ÿb kam jū, tishnagī āwar ba dast

Ta bi jūshad ābat az bālā o past

(Seek less water, rather become thirsty,

For then water will gush forth from above and below.)

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Precisely because the goal of Islamic education is ultimately perfection of the human soul and salvation (*falāÁ*), this type of education is never separated from ethical and moral considerations along with the formal and logical, totally in contrast to modern Western education. This truth can be seen in the curricula of traditional *madrasahs*, where students study after the Qur'ān and related subjects *'ilm al-akhlāq* or ethics before embarking upon other subjects. As for Sufism, ethical training is at the heart of all Sufi education as demonstrated by the writings of such masters as Imām Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and Imām Abū Àāmid MuÁammad al-Ghazzālī. For the Sufis this ethical education means also spiritual discipline and the cleansing of one's heart and mind in addition to correct external action. For once the heart is cleansed the eye of the heart opens and is then able to gain knowledge of that which is externally invisible. Or to use the Qur'ānic symbol of the expansion of the breast,

Har ke rā bāshad zi sīna fatÁ i bāb

ú ze har dharrah bi bīnad āftāb

(Whoever has had the door of his breast opened,

He will be able to see the sun in every atom.)

Education cannot therefore be limited to the training of the rational faculty separated from the Intellect which is its principle and revelation which alone can make accessible the light of the Intellect for it in an operative way and also provide the ethical framework within which the training of reason must take place. Without accepting revelation and its injunctions one ends up with hedonism or a rampant rationalism whose dire consequences for humanity are evident today wherever modernism, which is inseparable from rationalism even if seems to negate it in certain of its manifestations as irrationalism, has spread. Islamic education cannot seek to educate the mind outside of the world of faith.

*Falsafī kū munkar i Áannānah*** ast*

Az Áawās i anbiyā bīgāna ast

(The rationalist philosopher being in denial of prophecy

Is devoid of the inner sense of the prophets.)

The training of the mind or reason (*'aql-i juz'ī*) must always be in relation to revelation (*waÁy*) on the one hand and the Universal Intellect (*'aql-i kullī*), which is ultimately none other than the instrument of revelation, on the other. The Mathnawī is replete with references to *'aql* and the distinction between *'aql-i juz'ī* and *'aql-i kullī*. The latter is in fact the source of all the knowledge attainable by reason, and when Rūmī criticises *'aql* in favour of love *'ishq*, he has always in mind *'aql-i juz'ī* which according to him should be sacrificed before the Blessed Prophet.

'Aql rā kun tū fidā i muÄÇafā
(Sacrifice thy reason before Mustafa)

As for *'aql-i kullī*, it is the source of both knowledge of the cosmos and attachment to it, the goal of all veritable education of *'aql-i juz'ī*.

¥ä jahāä yak fikrat ast az 'aql-i kull

'Aql-i kull shāh ast o Äūrat hā subul

(This world is but a thought of the Universal Intellect,

The Universal Intellect is king and forms its messengers.)

This awareness of the subordinate role of reason *vis-a-vis* the Intellect and placing them in a hierarchy is part and parcel of the reality of the hierarchy of all the elements of the human being according to which each lower level must be educated to submit to the higher level in accordance with the natural order of things. The senses must be subordinated to reason and reason to intellect/Spirit.

Àiss asīr i 'Aql bāshad ay fulān

'Aql asīr i rūÁ bāshad ham badān

Sense is the prisoner of reason, o man!

And reason prisoner of the Spirit, know this truth.

It is the reality of this hierarchy that an authentic Islamic education must respect and has always respected. It is only the presence of *'aql i juz'ī* wed to *'aql-i kullī* through the gift of faith (*īmān*) that can prevent our rebellious passions from bringing ruin upon us and creating an obstacle to the realisation of that perfection for whose attainment we were created.

'Aql dar tan Áākim i īmān buwad

Ke za bīmash nafs dar zindān buwad

'aql is the ruler of faith in the body,

From whose fear the passionate ego remains imprisoned.

Ultimately all real education and instruction comes from the *'aql-i kullī* and *waÁy* for in Islam revelation is based primarily upon knowledge and its transmission. Lest one forgets, the most famous names by which the Sacred Book of Islam is known, such as *al-Qur'ān, al-Furqān, Umm al-kitāb and al-Hidāyah* are all related to the category of knowledge. It is in the light of this truth that Rūmī goes so far as to say.

¥n nujūm o Çib waÁy i anbiyāst

'Aql o Áiss rā sū i bīsū rāh kujāst

'Aql i juzvī 'aql i istikhrāj nīst

Juz padhīra i fan o muÁtāj nīst

Qābili ta'līm o fahm ast īn khirad

Lūk ÄāÁib waÁy ta'līmash dahad

Jumlah Áirfat ha yaqīn az waÁy būd

Awwal ū lūk 'aql ān rā barfazūd

Hīch Áirfat rā bi bīn kīn 'aql i mā

Tā na dād āmūkht bī hīch ūstā

This astronomy and medicine is (knowledge given by) Divine inspiration to the prophets: where is the way for intellect and sense (to advance) towards that which is without (spatial) direction.

The particular (individual) intellect is not the intellect (capable) of production: it is only the receiver of science and is in need (of teaching).

This intellect is capable of being taught and of apprehending, but (only) the man possessed of Divine inspiration gives it the teaching (which it requires). Assuredly, in their beginning, all trades (crafts and professions) were (derived) from Divine inspiration, but the intellect adds (something) to them.

Consider whether this intellect of ours can learn any trade without a master.

Although it (the intellect) was hair-splitting (subtle and ingenious) in contrivance, no trade was subdued (brought under command) without a master.

If knowledge of trade were (derived) from this intellect, any trade would be acquired without a master.

(Nicholson Translation, Book IV, v. 1294-1300)

Without reliance upon *'aql i kullī* and *waÁy*, reason usurps the position of centrality in the soul while being unable to attain to authentic knowledge and certitude. It is this version of *'aql* limited to its ratiocinative powers call

instidlāl to which Rūmī refers as the wooden leg which cannot attain firm knowledge.

Pā i istadlāliyān chūbīn buwad

The leg of the rationalists is a wooden one.

Islamic education must train this rational faculty but always in light of the tenets of faith and the inalienable link which exists between *'aql i juz'ī* and *'aql i kullī.*

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Furthermore, Islamic education must include not only a formal aspect represented in formal learning which a master such as Rūmī possessed to the highest degree, but also intuition, creativity, and the possibility of response to that divinely given intellectual power to which Rūmī subordinates formal learning. Such an intuitive power cannot be cultivated in all people, but in any case it should not be stifled through formal education by excessive outward regimentation and blind imitation (*taqlīd*) which as far as the experience of the truth is concerned, and certainly not imitation of models established by the Noble Qur'ān, Hadith and the great traditional figures, was strongly opposed by Rūmī.

'Aql dà 'aql ast awwal muksibī

Keh darāmūzī chu dar maktab Äabī

Az kitāb o ūstād o fikr o dhikr

Az ma'ānī waz 'ulūm i khūb o bikr

'Aql i tū afzūn shawad bar dīgarān

Lük tū bāshī za Áifi ān garān

LawÁ Áāfiï bāshī andar dawr o gasht

LawÁ maÁfūï ast kū zīn dar guzasht

'Aql i dīgar bakhsishi yazdān buwad

Chasmā i ān darmiyān i jān buwad

Chūn za sīna āb i dānish jūsh kard
Ne shawad ganda na dīrīna na zard

Intelligence consists of two intelligences; the former is the acquired one which you learn, like a boy at school, From book and teacher and reflection and (committing to) memory, and from concepts, and from excellent and virgin (hitherto unstudied) sciences.

(By this means) your intelligence becomes superior to (that of) others; but through preserving (retaining in your mind) that (knowledge) you are heavily burdened.

You, (occupied) in wandering and going about (in search of knowledge), are a preserving (recording) tablet; the preserved tablet is he that has passed beyond this.

The other intelligence is the gift of God: its fountain is in the midst of the soul.

Went the water of (God-given) knowledge gushes from the breast, it does not become fetid or old or yellow (impure); And if its way issue (to outside) be stopped, what harm? for it gushes continually from the house (of the heart). The acquired intelligence is like the conduits that run into a house from the streets:

(If) its (the house's) waterway is blocked, it is without any supply (of water). Seek the fountain from within yourself!

(Nicholson Translation, Book IV, v. 1960-1968)

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Since Islamic education embraces the whole of man's being from the physical to the mental to the spiritual, it must include of necessity not only an ethical dimension but also an aesthetic one. The role and significance of aesthetic education is vast and its discussion would necessitate a separate treatment. Nevertheless, it is important to mention it here and also to add that of all the Muslim authorities, none has dealt with the philosophy of beauty and the importance of art and aesthetics with the same depth and thoroughness as Rūmī. Suffice it to say that this incomparable sage/poet

whose life was enundated with manifestations of beauty considered God Himself as man's teacher in the arts. As he states in this *rubā'ī*,

Man āshiqī az kalām i tū āmūzam

Bayt o ghazal az jamāl i tū āmūzam

Dar parda i dil khayal i tū raqÄ kunad

Man raqÄ ham az khayāl i tū āmūzam

I learn love from Thy Word,

I learn poems and ghazals from Thy Beauty.

The imagining of Thee dances through the veil of the heart,

I learn the sacred dance from imagining Thee.

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The highest goal of an Islamic education must correspond of necessity to the highest aim and purpose of the human state and in fact of creation which is to know God according to the famous hadith, "I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known; therefore I created the world so that I would be known," a hadith known generally as the hadith of *kanz makhfi* or "hidden treasure". Now, this supreme knowledge is not possible without that attraction and love which Rūmī calls *'ishq*. In fact the verb "wanted" in the above hadith is the rendition of the Arabic verb *aÁbabtū* which means in reality "loved to". Love is therefore inseparable from this supreme knowledge, this love not being simple human emotion but a divine reality about which Rūmī said:

Shād bash ay 'ishq i khush sawdā i mā

Ay Çabīb i ijumlah 'illat hā i mā

Ay dawā i nakhwat o nāmūs i mā

Ay tū AflāÇūn o Jālīnūs i mā

Hail O Love that bringest us good gain-thou that art the physician of all our ills.

The remedy of our pride and vain glory, our Plato and our Galen!

(Nicholson Translation, Book I, v.23-24)

No wonder that for Rūmī the person who does not possess this fire of love is unworthy to exist as a human being.

ÿtash ast īn bāng i nay o nīst bād

Har keh īn ātash na dāradnīst bād

This sound of the reed is fire, not wind,

Whose does not possess this fire, may be he naught!

True education must turn the spark of that fire which lies somewhere under the cinder of our hardened heart and forgetful mind into a burning flame without which we live beneath the veritable human state.

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Islamic education is thus based upon a gradation ranging from the physical to the mental and rational to the spiritual in accordance with the structure of the human state. It is also an educational system permeated on all these levels by the light of faith and combined with ethical and aesthetic components at every stage. The crowning achievement of this education is to make possible the knowledge of God through the illumination of our being by the Universal Intellect with the help of that fire of love or *'ishq* which was kneaded into the very clay of our existence when God created us. This love must therefore permeate all aspects of education from the love of knowledge to the love between teacher and student that on the higher level becomes the love between spiritual master and disciple. As the Persian poet Naïīrī has said,

Dars i faqīh ar buwad zamzama i maÁabbatū
Jum'ah ba maktab āwarad Çifl i gurayz pā i rā

Were the lessons of the teacher be a chant of love, It would bring the fleeting child to school on Friday.

Note and References

*All translations of Persian poetry unless otherwise stated are by us. The

poems of Rūmī are from his *Mathnawī*, except where stated.

*******Àannānah* is the tree against which the Blessed Prophet of Islam leaned while preaching and announcing the verses of the Qur'ānic revelation. Hence Rūmī uses it poetically as the equivalent of prophecy itself.

THE SUFI TROBAR CLUS AND SPANISH MYSTICISM: A SHARED SYMBOLISM

(Part II)

Luce López-Baralt

Translated by Andrew Hurley

First part of this study appeared in *Iqbal Review*, October 1997. Dr Baralt argued that the degree to which the mystical literature of Spain came under the influence of Islam is much greater than had been studied. Focusing on such great figures of Christian mysticism as St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila she presented her thesis with reference to the key concepts, symbols and recurrent motifs that are found in these works. Part I was devoted to preliminary observations and studied the imagery of "*Wine and Mystical Drunkenness*" and "Dark Night of the Soul" in the Works of St John of the Cross. In part II she continues to investigate further and draws our attention toward the close parallels between the two traditions.

The process of assimilating the æsthetics, the mysticism, and the narrative and metaphoric symbolic devices that were present in the literature of their Moorish neighbours went on among the Christians of Castille for hundreds of years; some day [the co-presence of that literature in Spanish letters] will be talked about with the same naturalness as we say today that Virgil and Ovid were present in the literature of the sixteenth century.

Américo Castro

(Part II)

(c) Inward illumination. The living flame of love and the "lamps of fire."

Let us now turn our attention to another of St John of the Cross's most important symbols: inward illumination. It is mainly in his poem "*Llama de amor viva*," or "The Living Flame of Love," which has not received a great deal of attention from scholars, that St John celebrates light, the flames in which his ecstatic soul burns, and the mysterious "lamps of fire" that illuminate his soul at the instant of its transformation into God. As a symbol light is, of course, universal; we see it in the Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchies,* and Mircea Eliade calls our attention to the many cultures that have adopted it as their own: Judaism, Hellenism, gnosticism, syncretism, Christianity in general.1 But in St John of the Cross many of the details of the symbol seem, once again, to be Sufi.

From its earliest beginnings Islamic mysticism was obsessed with the trope of illumination—perhaps, as Edward Jabra Jurji (12) and Annemarie Schimmel suggest, because Islam frequently merged the ideas of Plotinus and Plato with those of Zoroaster and other ancient Persian sages. Suhrawardī, called *al-maqtūl* (the murdered or "executed," d. 1191), is also called "*Sheikh al-Ishrāq*," master or teacher of the philosophy of illumination, due to his many writings on the subject: some fifty treatises in Arabic and Persian (showing influences from Avicenna, Hellenism, and important ancient Irani and Eastern elements), among which one might mention his *Àikmat al-ishrāq* ("The Philosophy of Illumination") and *Hayākil an-nūr* ("The Altars of Light"). His followers insisted so emphatically upon this interior light that they earned for themselves the epithet *ishrāqiyyūn,* literally "illuminated" or "enlightened" (in the radical sense of the word: inwardly lighted: *alumbrados*), precisely like that persecuted sect in sixteenth-century Spain.2 For St John of the Cross, the accusation that he was an *alumbrado* was very dangerous, and indeed weighed heavily against him with the Inquisition, but among his

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[1] *Cf.* also the study of the symbolism of illumination in Western religious figures (Dante, Jacopone di Todi, St Augustine, St Catherine of Genoa, etc.) in the chapter titled "The Illumination of the Self" in Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism.*

2 Curiously, this parallel escaped Asín and Antonio Márquez (*Los alumbrados. Orígenes y filosofía: 1525-1559.*) The word "*alumbrado*" ("Illuminatus," "enlightened one") needs further study. In Spanish the term is now applied to a drunk (perhaps as a vague reminder of this often delirious sect of spiritual "drunkards"?); it is odd that Spanish often employs "Orientalizing" terms for drunkenness: a "curda" or Kurd, a "turca" or Turk.

Islamic counterparts the epithet was neither dangerous nor pejorative nor at all uncommon. Ibn 'Arabī uses it, in fact, to refer to one of his authorities: "One of the *illuminati* told me" (TAA 84). We find the same respect accorded the epithet in Al-Ghazzālī, who, referring to a Sufi teacher, says in the *IÁyā* (IV, 176-197): "A man, one of those whom the uncreated light illumines with its splendors. . . " (*cf.* Asin, *Espiritualidad* II:363). The motif of illumination is common throughout Islamic mysticism, which gave it several technical names, among them *zawā'id* (excess of light or spiritual illumination in the heart [Al-Hujwīrī, 384]). Critics have always acknowledged the importance of illumination in Sufi literature: Domingo de Santa Teresa saw among the Shādhilites "an exaggerated dependence on interior illumination, on the divine brightness" (17) while Annemarie Schimmel, more positively, alludes to the "highly developed light metaphysics" of Al-Ghazzālī's *Niche of Lights* (*Mystical Dimensions* 96).

Highly developed and highly detailed: in his *IÁyā,* Al-Ghazzālī assigns illumination to the third degree of *tawÁīd* or oneness with God: "au troisième [degré] on. . . contemple [l'Unité de Dieu] par illumination intrieure" (381) while for the later Abū 'l-Àasan al Shādhalī it is the fourth degree of spiritual ascension, in which "God illuminates the soul with the light of original intellect in the midst of the lights of mystical certainty."3 But the eleventh-century mystic Hujwīrī, ever concerned with exactitude, makes a subtle distinction between the light of illumination and the fire that may cast that light: "There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His beauty in the light of contemplation" (*Kashf al-MaÁjūb,* in Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 6). And although in many passages St John of the Cross spoke of the interior light with which the "Father of Brightness" (Iac. 1:17; *VO* 836) illuminates his spirit, he insisted a great deal more on the "living fire of love" which is the soul at the moment of its transformation into God. This is the same metaphor the impassioned Sufis employed throughout the Middle Ages, hundreds of years before the emblem of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary burning with flames of love became popular—a phenomenon which

3 *Mafajir,* 97, 199, in Asín, *Šādhilâes* 259-260; *cf.* also the case of Aémad al-Kharrāz, in Smith, *Sufi Path* 121-122.

occurred, according to the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (vol. 2, Paris, 1953) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This distinction, and St John's poem on the "flame" and his highly detailed commentaries on that poem, perceived within the context of the European Renaissance as so original, look less and less strange or "foreign" to us within the contexts of literary Islam. Avicenna, for example, was able to recognize the fifth *Áāl* of the ecstatic state because of the brilliant *flames* (not *light*) of direct knowledge of Allah (*cf.* Pareja 378)—a fire that inflames "his soul at its very deepest center" and which the philosopher calls, technically, "*qalb*."4 Invariably precise in his treatment of symbols, Kubrā establishes the difference between the fire of the devil or demon and the spiritual fire of *dhikr* (repeated prayer, memory of God, withdrawal inward), which the mystic will surely recognize "comme un flamboient ardent et pur, animé d'un mouvement ascendant et rapide" (Corbin, *L'homme* 113-114; Kubrā p. 8). 'AÇÇār celebrates that same flame poetically: "What is *wajd*? (ecstasy) / to become fire without the presence of the sun" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 48-49).

While Fr Crisógono finds that St John's "Living Fire of Love" and the glosses on that poem remind him of Boscn's line "O fire of living love!", and while Demaso Alonso would hear echoes of the "Boscán *à la divine*" of Sebastin of Córdoba, my own view is that we can find parallels in Sufi mysticism that are perhaps even more significant. Nor are they hard to document. The most noteworthy of the tropes found in Sufism is undoubtedly that of the lamps of fire—an image that Baruzi, perhaps seeing as excessively enigmatic, calls "assez pauvre" (360). But this is the lamp which, with few exceptions, mystically illuminates the center of the soul of that Sufi who has begun to follow the mystical path. Bāyazīd celebrates

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4 In Sufism, the precise conception of the *qalb* or deepest centre of the heart is quite complex. Some Sufis conceive it to be an organ which is at once physical and spiritual and which is able to know God. This view also frequently subdivides the organ of spiritual communion into distinct degrees or profound centres in which distinct moments of the mystical process are experienced. Nūrâ of Baghdad, for instance, subdivides the "heart" (or this ecstatic process) into four degrees, which culminate in the *lubb* or "deepest heart." Annemarie Schimmel comments that, however, "Sufis often add the element of *sirr,* the innermost heart in which the divine revelation is experienced" (*Mystical Dimensions* 192; *cf.* also Nicholson 97).

"having within oneself the lamp of eternity" (Nicholson 79); Rūzbehān of Shīrāz (1209) notes the "nombreuses lampes qui répandent une vive lumière" within his soul (Corbin, *L'homme* 79); Al-Ghazzālī insists upon the splendor and brightness of "the light of the lamp that burns in his heart" (Asín, *Espiritualidad* 371); while Ibn 'Arabī teaches that the heart is the dwelling-place of God and that the gnostic should "illumine it with the lamps of the celestial and divine virtues until its light hath penetrated into every corner" (Asín, *El Islam* 423). The mystical lamps become (one must use the word) a commonplace of Sufism, reappearing over and over again among religious writers, thinkers, and teachers of Islam in many lands and many periods. This tradition would appear to have had its origin in the many commentaries on the famous Qur'ānic sūrah of the lamp (24:35):

> God is the LIGHT of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche in which [there] is a lamp—the lamp encased in glass—the glass, as it were, a glistening star. From a blessed tree is it lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light. God guideth whom He will to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men, for God knoweth all things (Rodwell's translation).

In his work entitled *FaÄl fi-_l-maÁabbah* ("Treatise Upon Love"), Al-MuÁāsibī, born in Basra in 781, interpreted this sūrah in a "mystical" way: God lights an inextinguishable lamp that illuminates the most secret "caverns" or orifices of the gnostic's heart: "When God kindles that lamp in the heart of His servant, it burns fiercely in the crevices of his heart [and] he is lighted by it" (Arberry, *Sufism* 50). Another who applied this sura to his private spiritual experiences was Al-Ghazzālī, who in *The Niche of Lights* underscored, as St John of the Cross did also, the autonomous nature of this interior lamp: "self-luminous and with no external source" (Bakhtiar 20).

These symbolic lamps, tended for such a long time by the Muslims,5 would seem somehow to be mirrored in the image St John lifts from the

5 There is a poem by Rūmâ (translated by W. Hastie) in which the symbols of the lamp and night that we have been dealing with here are glimpsed; these were doubtlessly recurrent images in the mystical literature of Islam: "All Unbelief is midnight, but Faith the Night-Lamp's glow; / Then see that no thief cometh to steal Thy Lamp when low, / Our hope is

Song of Songs—"quia fortis est un mors dilectio, dura sicut infernus æmulatio, lampades ejus, lampades ignis atque flammarum,"6 though St John drains away the literal Biblical meaning and reinterprets those "lampades" or flames of blazing fire in terms very similar to those we have just looked at. And there is yet another surprise: St John of the Cross coincides detail for detail with several of the Muslim mystics in his interpretation of these spiritual lamps: for Al-Ghazzālī they signify the "archetypes or Divine Names and Qualities" (*Niche for Lights, cf.* Bakhtiar 20), and for the Shādhilites, through Ibn 'Ubbād of Ronda's *SharÁ al-Àikam* (I, 69), "the lights of the [divine] attributes" (Asin, *Šādhilīes* 266). That is precisely the way St John understands his own lamps of fire. And further still: as chronologically and geographically distant from St John of the Cross as he is, Nūrī of Baghdad in the ninth century, in his *Maqāmāt al Qulūb* ("Dwellings of the Heart"), makes clear what the divine attributes are that can be understood as "residing" in the lamps of fire:

> [God] has suspended from the main door [of the house of the heart] one lamp from among the lamps of His grace. . . and has lighted it with the oil of His justice and makes it to shine with the light of His mercy.7

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for the Sunlight, from which the Lamp did shine; / The Light from it kindles, still feeds its flame below; / But when the sun hath risen, both Night and Lamp go out; / And Unbelief and Faith then, the higher Vision know, / O Night! Why art thou dreaming? O Lamp! Why flickerest so? / The swift Sunhorses panting, from East their fire-foam throw, / 'Tis Night still in the shadow; the village Lamp burns dim; / But in Dawn's Splendour towering, the Peaks Heaven's Glory show" (Smith 93-94).

6 In the Spanish Bible this verse (Song of Songs 8:6) reads as follows: "Porque fuerte es como la muerte el amor; / Duros como el Seol los celos; / Sus brasas, brasas de fuego, fuerte llama"; the King James version reads "for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame"; and the New Catholic Bible reads as follows: "for stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire."

7 Our translation into Spanish (translated here into English) is to be published soon in its entirety; it is based on Paul Nwyia's edition of the text (*Textes inédits* etc., p. 18). *Cf.* also *Exégèse* 327.

These attributes of the lamp (or the light it produces) are virtually the same as in St John's glosses to his poem:

> [The] splendor that this lamp of God gives [to the soul] insofar as it is goodness. . ., [and,] neither more nor less, it is the lamp of justice, and of strength, and of mercy, and of all the other attributes which together are represented to the soul in God (*L,* 3:3; *VO,* 872).

The words of Laleh Bakhtiar in her analysis of the Sufi symbol of the lamp of fire would appear to apply equally to St John of the Cross. For Bakhtiar, the lamp of fire is "related to the intelligence for it is this faculty which recognizes the Archetypes or Divine Names or Qualities" (20). St John, however, and as usual, supports his explanation of the symbol with that Biblical passage referred to above: "Knows well the soul the truth of that said by the Spouse in the Song of Songs, when he said that *the lamps* [coals] *of love were lamps of fire and flame* (8:6)" (*L* 3:3; *VO* 873). Here, St John's reading of the literal words of the Bible is somewhat forced; the result is to give them, as on so many other occasions, an interpretation concordant with the Symbolism of Islamic mysticism. Might this sincere yet culturally hybrid Christian be, at least partially and perhaps unwittingly, "islamicizing" the Scriptures?

He does islamicize at least his own literature, for the many detailed parallels continue. One of these parallels is the lamp as certain knowledge of God. For the Sufis, the spiritual lamps or lights are the dwelling-place of consciousness: mystical certainty, the fourth stage in Abū-l-Àasan al Shādhalī's *ñabaqāt, Sha'rānī*, 11, 10-11) and for Abū ÀafÄ al-Suhrawardī the degree of *Anwār al-yaqīn* or "lights of certainty." For St John of the Cross, too, the knowledge of God's attributes leads to the total knowledge of God: "Oh what delights! in which it is to such a degree *known*" (*L* 3:17; *VO* 880). The process ends, in St John's words, with "the transformation of the soul into God[, which] is totally unspeakable [ineffable]" (*L,* 3:8; *VO,* 876). For Suhrawardī too, this is the final transformation of the soul into God, the *Áaqq al-yaqīn* or "point at which the lover is immersed into the light of contemplation. . . and is transformed, and this is the Supreme degree of oneness (Pareja 396). In order for this wonder to occur, the fire and the lamps have purified the soul of all that is not God: St John, if one is to judge by his own commentaries, would fully agree with the vivid interpretation that Kubrā gives the purifying action of the fire of *dhikr* (remembrance of

God/withdrawal inward): it flames up in the soul, proclaiming "*anā, wa lā ghayrī* " ("I, and nothing else") and joins its flame to those of the mystic's kindled heart, and all is then "*nūrun 'alā nūr*" (Kubrā, II:4): light upon light, as the Qur'ān says. That is, "Bride into the Bridegroom transformed."

In both St John of the Cross and the Sufis, the soul has been prepared for this transformative union because it has been purified or cleansed beforehand of all its impurities. St John alludes metaphorically to these impurities again and again, though schematically: "if we were to speak on purpose of the ugly, dirty figure which the appetites present to the soul, we would find no thing, however covered with cobwebs and vermin it may be, . . . nor any other filthy, dirty thing that might exist or that one might imagine in this life, to which we might compare it" (*N* I: 9:3; *VO* 383). But in spite of the avowed impossibility of comparison, more than once St John, like St Theresa, compares this spiritual sensuality with "animals" (*L,* 3:73; *VO,* 911). And once again it is the imaginative Kubrā who offers a vivid portrayal of the allegorical motif, giving the impression that he is amplifying upon the more sober St John yet without deviating from his line of thought. The light from the lamp of fire illuminates his soul and Kubrā points out the vermin or animals that the soul is full of[8] and needs to expel in order to reach "quietude."

> *Dhikr* (withdrawal inward) is like a lamp that is lighted within a dark house. . . . By its light, [the soul] understands that the house is filled with impurities[:][9] such as the impurity of the dog, of a panther, of a leopard, of an ass, of a bull, of an elephant, and of every objectionable creature in existence (chapter 54, p. 25).

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8 We should recall the special impact for a Muslim, accustomed to rites of purification such as ablutions, that the idea of "impurity" would have. If certain animals such as the dog "contaminate" or "pollute" a place, one must not pray there. St John, as we have seen, seems close to this acute sensitivity to corruption or pollution as manifested in Kubrā. St John's "vermin," which produce a repugnance that is difficult to describe, would seem to fall within the emotional tradition of those impure animals described by the Muslim mystic.

9 The Arabic contains the conjunction *wā* "and," which renders the passage not altogether clear; we have substituted a colon for greater understanding.

Union with God is manifested for both St John and the Muslim illuminists or Ishrāqīs by one further element: the veils that cover and separate the Divinity from the mystic's soul are stripped away. As both Asín Palacios and W. H. T. Gairdner (44) point out, this symbol of the veil of the phenomenological and human which separates us from God is given only sketchy portrayal by the neoplatonists (the Pseudo-Dionysius, for example, in *The Celestial Hierarchies*) and such writers as Garcilaso and Fray Luis de León. But the Muslims' insistence on the symbol, and the symbol's widespread and elaborate employment in poems and treatises, allow us to associate it here with Islam, especially because of the specific context in which it appears: as part of the most widespread symbol of spiritual illumination. At least one Islamicist seems to consider it a uniquely Sufi metaphor: "In Sufi parlance, phenomenal existence is conceived by a veil, which conceals the truth from man's view," comments T. H. Weir (xxxii), though we could not say with how much awareness of the distant antecedents in Alexandria. For Alexandrian antecedents there are: the symbol of the veil, which is admittedly ancient in Islam, appears in the "traditions" or "hadīths" as the famous formulation that follows:

> Allah hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: were He to withdraw the curtain, then would the splendours of His Face surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight (Gairdner 44).

Mystics as diverse as Semnānī_, who sets the unveiling of God at dwelling number 81 of the ninth stage of the mystical path (Bakhtiar 96), Kubrā (pp. 20, 62), Ibn Iraqī (Smith, *Sufi Path*), Al- Hujwīrī (291), Ibn 'AÇā' Allāh (*Àikam,* 90), Jāmī (Smith 52), Ibn 'Arabī (*TAA* 95, 51), and Aémad Al-Ghazzālī (*TAA* 108)—all employ the symbol, each adding his own complexity to it. We are reminded by Maria Teresa Narvaez (85) that AÁmad Al-Ghazzālī's brother, the more famous MuÁammad Al-Ghazzālī, is very close to St John of the Cross: God cleanses the soul "of worldly filth and [pulls back] the veils which hide Him, so that He may be seen in the heart as though one were gazing upon Him with the eyes (qtd. in Asin, *Espiritualidad* II:515-516). "Break through the cloth of this sweet encounter!" says St John in the "Living Flame." And in his commentary, he describes in detail, in a most Sufi-like manner, what this "cloth" is:

> Take away from before [the soul] some of the many veils and curtains that the soul has before it, so that it may see what He looks like, and then there shines through and is glimpsed, somewhat darkly (because not all the veils are taken away) that face of His that is filled with grace (*L* 4:8; *VO* 920).

Not only veils but *curtains* that prevent the soul's perfect union with God: St John parallels the Muslims very closely: in Arabic *éijāb* is "veil" or "curtain" (Pareja 321; *Arabic-English Dictionary* 156) and poets such as Ibn al-Fāriî allude to this latter meaning: "Thou shalt find all that appears to thee / . . . but in the veils of occultation wrapt: When he removes / the curtain, thou beholdest none but Him" (Smith *Sufi Path* 132). In a more popular version, curtains and veils also separate Muhammad from God in the legend of the *mir'āj* (XIX, 21).

The parallels continue: in the process of purification that culminates in illumination, both St John and the Sufis polish the mirror of their soul to the point where it is so burnished that it can reflect the light of God: "the mirror [of the] heart has been so polished with divers classes of mortification. . . whose effect is the polishing that must be accomplished so that the forms of mystical realities can manifest themselves with all their brightness in the heart." These words are from Abū al-Mawāhib al- Shādhalī of Cairo's (*ñabaqāt,* Sha'rānī, II, 70), but the image is repeated over and over by Rūmī, Ibn 'Aèā' Allāh, Ibn 'Arabī, Al-Ghazzālī, and even the ancient Bīsèāmī (d. 874), Àakīm Tirmidhī (d. 898), and Hasan BaÅrī (d. 728). St John sounds like them all, and his soul, "through the brightness that comes supernaturally," becomes a "bright mirror" (*N* II: 24:4; *VO* 459).

In another view of the symbol, Al-Sha'rānī explores the mysterious depths of the soul which is enkindled with love: it is subdivided into seven concentric states, each deeper than the one before (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 174). St John of the Cross echoes this figure by declaring in his "Living Flame" that his soul is concentric (I, 13). The Pseudo-Dionysius had used such a figure even earlier, but St John and the Sufis coincide in the smaller details of the figure. In the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle," St John remarks that there are precisely seven of these degrees or stages of the soul's concentricity:

> This wine-cellar that here the soul speaks of is the last and narrowest degree of love in which the soul can reside in this life; and it is for that reason that it is called the inward *wine-cellar,* that is, the most inward. From which it follows that there are others which are not so inward, which are the degrees of love from which one ascends unto this last, and we may say that these degrees or wine-cellars of love are seven [in number] (*CB* 26:4; *VO* 700).

While for St Theresa, as we all know, it is the interior castles of the soul that are seven in number, for St John of the Cross it is cellars, with the most inward quite specifically a wine-cellar. Would his imagination have been under the influence of some recollection of the symbol of the ecstatic wine—which is also, apparently, Sufi? In Kubrā's fertile imagination, the concentricities of the soul take the form of seven wells which the interior soul, inflamed with love, must climb out of until it reaches the ultimate light of truth. Here is the passage in which he describes this ascent:

> Thou shouldst know that existence is not limited to a single act. There is no act of being [or of existence] that is not underlain by another act of being [or of existence] which is more important and more sublime than the preceding one, until we come to the divine Being. For each of these acts or levels of existence, which we see throughout the mystical path, there is a well. These acts of being or levels of existence are seven [in number]. . . . [Once] thou hast ascended through the seven wells of the divers categories of existence, behold, thou arrivest at the Heaven of the Deity and the Power of God. . . and His light is so bright that human spirits may only barely stand it, while yet they become enamoured of it with mystical love (8: 7)

The soul as an interior well is not an image that is Kubrā's alone, however curious it may seem to us. It has a long Muslim genealogy—we should recall, for example, Najm Rāzī, a thirteenth-century Sufi who also used it (*cf.* Corbin, *L'homme* 156-157). But few get as much mileage out of the simile as the late-Persian treatise-writer Kubrā does. In one passage from his *Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa-Fawātié al-Jalāl* (chapter 17, p. 8), we come upon a very interesting and highly significant play on words with the Arabic root *q-l-b* □□□□ whose multiple meanings Kubrā fully and explicitly exploits: *qalaba* ("to turn around, to transmute, to reflect something, to be transformed, to

change"); *qalb* ("transmutation"); *qalb* in its more usual sense of "essence, heart, center, middle"; and, last, the variant *qalīb* ("well") (all, *Arabic-English Dictionary*). Kubrā points out, then, for the illuminated heart of the mystic, the shifting possibilities: it can reflect God, it can become transmuted or transformed in Him, it can be the most profound essence and centre of the soul, and it can be (at least metaphorically) a well. The wit or ingenuity of this master of style is doubly important because it coincides in a surprisingly precise way with St John of the Cross. For as though he were aware of the possibilities of the Arabic root, in the "Living Flame" St John also equates the deepest centre of his soul, which is able to reflect God and transform itself into Him, with a well: "O happy soul!. . . which also art *the well of living waters*." Like Kubrā, St John is insistent in his use of the image, repeating it more than once and supporting it with the Biblical passage on Jeremiah's "fountain of living waters" (*L* 3:7-8; *VO* 875; Jer 2:13). Kubrā had supported his own conceit with the Qur'ānic passage on Joseph (12:10-19). There is another very interesting, and rather strange, parallel: in employing the image of the soul as a well or cistern in the midst of a process of illumination, both mystics—like so many previous Sufis—link and intermingle the "living waters of that spiritual well with the flames of transformation in God." Kubrā's soul-as-a-well "se métamorphose en puits de lumière" (Corbin, *L'homme* 121). In St John of the Cross, water and fire are equated to a miracle, one which is mirrored in the miraculous transformation of Bridegroom into Bride:

> Thus these lamps of fire are living waters of the spirit. . . . [For although] they were lamps of fire, they were also pure and limpid waters. . . . And thus, although it is fire, it is also water; for this fire is figured forth by the fire of the sacrifice which Jeremiah hid at the cistern, which when hidden was water, and when pulled from the well for the sacrifice was fire (2 March 1, 20-22; 2:1-22)10. . . called

10 Here, reference is to the Apocryphal book of Machabees (book 2), whose verse reads as follows (New Catholic Bible): "But when many years had passed, and it pleased God that Nehemias should be sent by the king of Persia, he sent some of the posterity of those priests that had hid it, to seek for the fire; and as thy told us, they found no fire, but thick water, Then he bade them draw it up, and bring it to him. And the priest Nehemias commanded the sacrifices that were laid on, to be sprinkled with the same water, both the wood and the things that were laid upon it. And when this was done, and the time came that the sun shone out, which before was in a cloud, there was a great fire kindled, so that all

> *flames* rather than *water,* saying *O lamps of fire!* All that which can in that song be said, is less than that which is, because the transformation of the soul into God is ineffable (*L,* 3:8; *VO,* p. 875-876).

Another trope for the process of illumination that both St John and the Sufis insist on is the metaphor of the sudden stroke of lightning or lightning-bolt which indicates the abrupt and fleeting manifestation of God. Although in this case the parallel seems quite widespread (Mircea Eliade remarks that "the rapidity of mystical illumination has been compared in many religions to lightning" [*The Two . . .,* p. 22]), among Muslims, including the alchemists (*cf.* Jung 317), it becomes an obligatory technical equation. Ibn 'Arabī assures us of the stability of his image, in Arabic *lā'ié,* literally "lightning": "The author of these poems always uses the term 'lightning' to denote a centre of manifestation of the Divine Essence" (*T.A.A.* 92). Again, Semnānī gives it a precise numerical location along the mystical path: strokes of lightning occupy number 69 of the ninth stage along the road (Bakhtiar 96). Many other Muslims employ the term, but we shall only look closely at the case of Al-Ghazzālī who, in his *IÁyā* remarks:

> [The] lights of truth shall shine brightly in his heart. . . . In the beginning they shall be as fleeting bolts of lightning, which flash and flash again and remain a short while or a longer . . . and there shall be divers illuminations, or always the same one (in Pareja 294).

In words remarkably resembling those of Al-Ghazzālī, St John of the Cross also presents the sudden flash of mystical experience under the metaphor of a flash of lightning:

> And it is, sometimes, as though an extraordinarily bright door had opened, and through it [the soul] should see [a light] like a flash of lightning, when upon a dark night things suddenly become bright and clear and one can see them clearly and distinctly and then they are once again in darkness (*N* II: 24:5; *VO* 459).

And that is the figure of the mystical stroke of lightning. We will not insist overmuch on a similar image that St John shares with the Muslims—

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wondered." The second verse (2:1-22) is too long to quote in its entirety here.

the "stroke of darkness" (*Dark Night* II:5:3; *VO* p. 572)—because here the antecedent common to both (possibly the Pseudo-Dionysius) is quite clear. It is, however, useful to note that this "lightning-bolt of darkness" is part of a metaphysics of light and darkness which, while already quite complex in the early Fathers of the Church, took on unexpected dimensions of complication and wit among the Sufis (and especially Persian Sufis), as Toshihiko Izutzu has demonstrated in his essay "The Paradox of Light and Darkness in The Garden of Mystery of Shabastari." Even the architects of Islamic mosques played with the alternations of light and shadow, and we will discover in St John of the Cross—at a much later date than the Pseudo-Dionysius—that same play of chiaroscuro, for which St John even invents a term: "*obumbraciones*" or "*hacimiento de sombra*" (*L* 3:12; *VO* p. 878). St John's curious elaboration of this kaleidoscopic spiritual phenomenon would appear to locate him quite close to Muslim mysticism and Arabic aesthetics, which, in patent defiance of Aristotelian logic, delights in the impossible union of contraries:

> But although these virtues and attributes of God may be lighted lamps that are burning brightly, being so near the soul. . . they yet cannot fail to touch [the soul] with their shadows, which are also brightly lighted and burning bright, in the figure of the lamps which create them, and there these shadows shall be splendours. (*L* 3:14; *VO* 878).

The "Living Flame of Love" (which we might consider to include the glosses on that poem), in which St John describes the process of his final illumination, has always been one of the poet's most enigmatic works, and one of those least addressed by literary criticism. Reference to Muslim illuminationist literature, however, helps us decipher its mystery and recognise some of its possible sources—*Sufi* sources to which St John of the Cross would appear, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, to have had some access. While we do not question the Christian orthodoxy or intentions of St John, we must recognise that even though he was an undeniable child of the West, in paralleling the Sufis so closely, and even in so frequently realigning his Biblical citations and "supports" with the axis of the technical Symbolism of Islam, he also was, in more than one sense, a cultural child of the East. Or better, a child of genius of that Spain of three bloodlines that Américo Castro explored—the poet sings his Christian sentiments with

Muslim metaphors. And his "Living Flame of Love," an unquestionably orthodox yet culturally hybrid poem, would appear to celebrate the *morada* or "dwelling" of illuminative union from the point of view of an *ishrāqī* or Muslim Illuminationists. Or further yet: from the point of view of a very erudite *ishrāqī,* well versed in the matter and Symbolism of Illumination.

d. *Water, or the inner spring or fountain of mystical life.*

Yet this "initiate" of Islamic symbolism that St John of the Cross would appear to have been holds yet further surprises for us. Another of his favourite symbols is water as the inner spring or fountain of the soul, a symbol he incorporates into his poetry in stanza 12 of the "Spiritual Canticle" ("¡Oh cristalina *fuente,* / si en esos tus semblantes plateados, / formases de repente / los ojos deseados, / que tengo en mis entrañas dibujados!") and in the poem titled "Cantar de la alma que se huelga de conocer a Dios por fe," which begins "Que bien sé yo la *fonte que mana y corre* / aunque es de noche." The universality of water as a spiritual metaphor is clear, from the Bible (John 4:14) to alchemical terminology (Jung 104), as is the spring or fountain, the "immemorial symbol of eternal life" as Maria Rosa Lida calls it. In exploring the particular modalities that the symbol assumes in St John of the Cross, once again we find traits that would appear to be clearly Muslim. Some of them have already been pointed out by Asín Palacios: both St John and St Teresa, for instance, employ the Islamic (and especially Shādhilite)11 image of diligent and laborious prayer or meditation seen in terms of the arduous transport of spiritual water through channels and aqueducts, an effort that contrasts with the spontaneity of the autonomous bubbling-forth of the spring of a higher degree of contemplation: "[When it] gives itself to prayer, the soul is now like one to whom water has been brought, so that he drinks peacefully, without labour, and is no longer forced to draw [the water] through the aqueducts (also: 'the buckets of a water wheel') of past meditations and forms and figures," as St John said in *The Ascent* (II: 14:2; *VO* 421). (This is very similar to St Teresa's water-figure in the *Autobiography* (XI) and the *Interior Castle* (IV: 2:3).

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11 *Cf.* also Al-Ghazzālâ, *IÁyā',* 211-212, and Rūmâ, who also speaks of the water of the soul transported by canals (Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 80, 85).

The symbol of the spring or fountain in St John of the Cross has been the object of numerous critical studies, though critics have had difficulty tracing its sources. David Rubio does not think the sources are Biblical:

> None of the 56 metaphors of the "spring" or "fountain" of the Vulgate, and none of the numerous metaphors of the same object in Western mysticism can in any way be tied to the concept of the "spring" or "fountain" in St John of the Cross (18).

Ludwig Pfandl associates St John's use of the spring or fountain with the spring "della prouva dei leali amanti" of the chivalric romance *Plati.* (108). Dámaso Alonso, on the other hand, rejects, for reasons mainly bibliographical in nature, any possible influence by the *Caballero Platir* and favors instead Garcilaso's Eclogue II as transmitted through the "divinification" of Sebastián de Córdoba. María Rosa Lida's review of Alonso's book minimizes the importance of Sebastián de Córdoba and emphasizes instead St John's close similarity to the spring of the *Platir* (despite the problematic nature of its possible influence) and the spring of Primaleón. Lida takes an essential element of the symbol to be the fact that St John's spring or fountain reflects another's face, precisely as it does in these chivalric romances, Garcilaso's Eclogue I, Sannazaro's *Arcadia,* and even an epigram by Paulo el Silenciario.

But without rejecting these possible Greco-Latin and European antecedents (which might to some degree have left their mark on St John), we must insist that they do not entirely clear up the problem of St John's particular spring. Sebastián de Córdoba does take Garcilaso's poem and recast it *à la divine,* so that the spring takes on a "religious" or allegorical cast, but he does not give it the details that would bring it into congruence with the symbol as found in St John. Although other authors (Garcilaso himself, for instance) are closer in some essential aspects of the spring (the fact that it reflects another's face), their images lack the mystical dimension that is so obvious in St John of the Cross. And besides—St John's spring reflects the *eyes* of the Bridegroom, not his face.

The mystical literature of Islam will not solve all the thorny problems of St John's spring or fountain, but it will provide some answers that I believe to be fundamental. First of all, the spring in Islamic literature is conceived of from the beginning *à la divine.* Ramon Lull, so clearly grounded in things

Arabic, speaks of a crystalline mirror that reflects the degree of contemplation which the soul has of God (*cf.* Hatzfeld) and in Ibn ʻArabī's *Futūéāt* (II, 447) the spring is a mirage (*sarāb*) that the thirsty mystic thinks he sees but, realizing his error, discovers instead to be God and himself (*cf.* Asín, *Islam cristianizado* 497). We should recall that the "semblantes plateados" or "silvery semblances [or mien]" of the spring reflect the eyes which St John/ the female narrator/ the Bride has "engraved [or drawn] within [his/her] entrails." That is: the eyes reflect him/herself and God/ the Bridegroom.

Let us pause for a moment to look at the poem "Qué bien sé yo la fonte. . .," which was composed in prison in Toledo ca. 1577-1578 and is one of the most shatteringly beautiful poems of St John's *oeuvre.* In this poem, the poet explains his "fonte" or fountain to the reader, and when we compare these details with Bakhtiar's commentary on the *Book of Certainty* we see that St John of the Cross and the anonymous Sufi author coincide virtually phrase for phrase. Below, we offer a side-by-side reading of the two figures:

Bakhtiar:	St John of the Cross:
The mystic enters the Garden of the Spirit and finds a fountain, water which gushes forth. . . ["flowing" in the *Book of Certainty*]. . . .	"Fonte que mana y corre": "fount which issues forth and flows." . . .
[The] fountain is the Fountain of Knowledge. . .	"Qué bien sé yo," "how well I know," is the poet's constant refrain.
Which is illuminated by the Spirit. It is the contemplative Truth of Certainty, the knowledge of Illumination, . . .	St John said of his fountain or spring, which is also curiously "lighted," that "its brightness is never dimmed, and I know that all light from it is come."
Knowledge of the Oneness of all Divine	St John insists on Oneness, although he

Qualities. . . .	refers to the unity that underlies the mystery of the Trinity: "Well I know that three in one single living water / live, and one from the other is derived."
The Fountain of Knowledge appears like veils of light, not darkness, behind each of which shines the Light of Essence Itself (Bakhtiar 27).	In the "silvery semblances" of the spring in the "Spiritual Canticle," which St John understands as "faith," one may glimpse God "even through veils"; "beneath this faith lies the substance of faith, stripped of the veil of this silver. . . . So that faith is given us and joins us to God Himself, but covered with a silvering of faith" (*VO* 657).

"Although it is night," St John insists upon the mystical certainty that he feels in the presence of this spring or fountain. He repeats the verb *to know* no fewer than eleven times in the poem, and almost invariably emphatically: "qué bien sé yo," "how well I myself do know." "Certainty," indeed, is the principal semantic referent of the Sufi symbol of the spring or fountain. Al-Ghazzālī, to take just one example, says (Gairdner, *Niche for Lights* 77) in a commentary on Sūra 13:19 of the Qur'ān, "the water here is knowledge." Nūrī of Baghdad had the same insight as early as the ninth century: in Treatise VII of his *Maqāmāt al Qulūb* (135), in which he gives long descriptions of the mystical water of the soul, he declares that the water that flows in the gnostic's heart implies knowledge (*'ulūm*) of the secrets of an eternal God (and here we should recall St John: "that eternal fount is hidden" [*VO* 930]). For Nūrī the divine water symbolises not only knowledge of God, but the *certainty* of that knowledge.

But St John adds yet another element to that certainty: "qué bien *sé* yo por *fe* la fonte frida" (*VO* 931). The "crystalline spring" of the "Spiritual Canticle" thus signifies faith as well, as the poet explains in the glosses to the poem (*CB* 12:3; *VO* 657). That most delicate conjunction of faith and certainty occurs also among the Sufis. The author of the *Book of Certainty* describes the "Fountain of the Lore of Certainty" in precisely those terms: "This degree of certainty being none other than faith (*īmān*)" (145). Another passage states that in Sufism the second degree of faith is the "Eye of Certainty" (*'aynu'l-'yaqīn*) (13). This terminology might seem very abstruse and strange, and yet we see that it takes us closer to that complex spring or fountain of St John of the Cross than do the European sources quoted by critics to date..

Within the fountain of the "Spiritual Canticle" (and this no doubt reinforces in some critics' mind the association with Garcilaso's Eclogue II: "¿Sabes que me quitaste, fuente clara / los ojos de la cara?": "Do you know that you have taken from me, bright spring/ the eyes of my face?"), St John sees mirrored "the desired eyes" of the Bridegroom—curiously, mysteriously, the *eyes,* not the face. In the "Spiritual Canticle" this lovely *lira* on the spring immediately precedes the moment at which the lovers are joined. The same thing occurs in Kubrā: "le double cercle des deux yeux" appears "au stade final de pèlerinage mystique" (Corbin, *L'homme* 127). As Shabastarī reminds us, these eyes can wound the mystic who is about to enter absolute union: "the eye has no power to stand the dazzling light of the sun. It can only see the sun as reflected in the water" (in Izutsu, 298). It is perhaps for that reason that St John asks first to contemplate those allegorical eyes in his "crystalline spring"—only thus, and echoing his Sufi colleagues in the mystical experience, can he bear the experience. In the light of these close parallels, then, the stanza's mystery would appear to be gradually coming clear. When in the next stanza the poet's soul "flies off" toward God, it "can hardly receive Him without losing its life" (*CB* 13:12; *VO* 660) and the poet/ Bride exclaims: "Turn them [the eyes] away, Lover!" How close St John of the Cross is to Ibn 'Arabī, who in his comment on the enigmatic line from the *Tarjumān*, "She kills with her glances," explains that the line refers "to the station of passing away in contemplation" (*fanā fi'l-mushāhadah*).

The unbearable pain of ecstasy prefigured in a pair of divine eyes whose glance can hardly be borne brings St John yet once again into parallel with his

religious counterparts in the East. Both cases ask for the eyes of God in order to be able to see God: "When you looked at me/ Your grace in me your eyes impressed / . . . / and at that, my own eyes / became worthy of adoring what they saw in you" (*VO* 628), exclaims St John, echoing so many Muslims such as Ibn 'Arabī: "When my Lover appears, what eye shall I look upon him with? With his, not my own, because no one sees him save Himself alone" (in Nicholson 198).

But there is a powerful reason for the recurrence of the figure of the other person's eyes reflected in a spring, that trope which marks for Sufis the beginning of the alchemy of Union through Love. The unquestionable reason for the fact that we find in the mystical literature of Islam (and not of Europe) so many examples in which at the precise moment of mystical transformation the fount of ultimate spiritual knowledge reflects a pair of mysterious eyes, is that in Arabic the word *'ayn* has the simultaneous meanings "fountain" or "spring," "eye," "identity" (or "substance" or "individuality") and "the same."12 (There are other meanings as well.) All the Sufis seem to have done is translate the various *simultaneous* semantic meanings of the three-letter word-root into *linear* poetry, in a way that is extraordinarily profound in its mystical implications and at the same time constant throughout Arabic contemplative literature. What is astonishing is that St John of the Cross should parallel the Sufi masters so closely—indeed, perfectly. Although practitioners of the *dolce stil nuovo* such as Petrarch and Achilini had suggested that the intermingling of souls that occurred at the moment of love (and lovemaking) was achieved through the eyes, which are the windows of the soul, they had never set these eyes within a fountain,

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12 *Cf.* J. M. Cowan, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (663), which offers some of the main meanings of the root *'ayn,* as noted in the text above. Michael Sells notes the extraordinary richness of the word in the Sufi master Ibn 'Arabâ: " *'Ayn* is one of the most difficult terms in all of Ibn 'Arabâ's writings" (Polished Mirror 137). Sometimes *'ayn* is translated by "determination, delimitation, or unification of the undetermined, unlimited, non-entified real." (Here the term, which is equivalent, as we know, to "spring" and "eye," would appear to approach the concept of indeterminacy that we see in the spring in St John's poem "La fonte": "bien sé que suelo en ella no se halla, / y que ninguno puede vadealla, / aunque es de noche." Sells also translates the multivalent concept of *'ayn* by "the same," as in the lines from the *FuÄūÄ,* 119: "But in reality Lordship is *the same* [*'ayn*] as the Self" (Garden Among the Flames 295, emphasis added). Sells has incorporated the two essays we have just quoted in his book *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*; these are the first journal publications.

spring, or pool, and especially not one with mystical overtones. The Arabic root *'ayn* establishes an equation (*i.e.,* between the fount or spring, the eyes, and "identity") which is inescapable to anyone who knows Arabic yet which seems eccentric, "odd," to a Westerner unfamiliar with the linguistic terms that the root brings into association.13

As though he were an initiate into the secrets of the Arabic languge and had direct knowledge of this semantic field (or as though he had "miraculously" stumbled upon it for himself), St John of the Cross asks the reader to understand that the fount which reveals to the Bride the eyes of the Bridegroom symbolizes the total transformation of one into the other. Thus, St John says in his commentary to this stanza, "it is true to say that the Bridegroom lives in the Bride, and the Bride in the Bridegroom, and such likeness does love bring about in the transformation of the Lovers that one can say that each is the other and that both are one. . . . Each ceases to be each and changes into the other; and thus, each one lives in the other, and the one lives in the other, and the one is the other, and both are one, by the transformation of love" (*CB* 12:7; *VO* 658). To signal the absolute unity of the transformed essence of these lovers, St John could apparently think of nothing so apt as that the Bride see the *eyes* of the Bridegroom reflected in

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13 We should recall, in addition, that in speaking in this section of the poem about the beginnings of transformative ecstasy, St John of the Cross might also being pointing toward the ancient image of the "eye of the soul." This trope, which Plato apparently introduced into the West, has been employed as a symbol by countless Western religious writers: St Augustine (in his *Confessions*), Origen, Meister Eckhardt, St Bonaventure, Ramon Lull. Ludwig Schrader has written an admirable essay on this subject (*q.v.*). J. García Palacios (220) adds yet other Spanish authors who use the symbol: Laredo, Estella, Gómez García. But the figure of the eye is also—in the singular—an organ of spiritual knowledge for the Muslims. In his *IÁyā' 'ulum al-dân,* Al-Ghazzālâ calls the eye the '*ayn al-qalb* (the eye of the heart or of the soul), and the anonymous author of the *Book of Certainty,* as we have noted earlier, calls it the '*ayn l-yaqân,* or eye of certainty. Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda used the symbol in similar terms in his *Àikam* (243). Popular Hindu literature refers to the mystic as the possessor of a "third eye." Later we will have occasion to see that St John of the Cross appears to parallel the detailed elaboration of the trope among the Sufis more than he does his counterparts in religious writing and poetry in the West.

Finally, we should recall, as a curious coincidence perhaps, that Spanish still "remembers" the ancient Arabic-language association of "eye" and "spring" or "fount": a still spring issuing from the ground is still called an *ojo de agua,* an "eye of water."

the pool, and not his *face.* If St John, like his Sufi counterparts, understands that the *eyes* are semantically equated with the *pool* into which the Bride gazes, and that this *fount* and these *eyes* are in turn equated with *identity,* then we should find it strange that he *not* elaborate the literary trope within these lines of close, mysterious transformative equivalence. All are made perfectly equal in this verbal alchemy: the *eyes,* the *fount* or *spring,* the *unity* or *oneness* or *identity* of the lovers who are transformed into one another in the silvery surface of the water of the pool that serves as mirror. What is astonishing, as we say, is that this stanza written by St John of the Cross, the most enigmatic of Spanish poets, ceases to be eccentric or unnecessarily mysterious when we read it with the knowledge of that three-letter Arabic root. I myself am astounded to admit that a Sufi would understand this odd mystical narcissism of the "Spiritual Canticle" 's spring better than a Western Christian reader, however religious he or she might be.

e) *The heart as the mirror of God: the* **qalb,** *translucid and ever-changing vessel.*

Immediately after seeing the eyes of the Bridegroom reflected in the spring of silvery mien, the female protagonist of the "Spiritual Canticle" sings joyfully, in lines that are possibly the finest love poetry in the Spanish language, of having found the ineffable Love—and the delicious union that is intrinsic to it—that she had been seeking:

Mi Amado, las montañas,	My Beloved, the mountains,
los valles solitarios nemorosos,	the bosky solitary valleys,
las ínsulas extrañas,	the strange isles,
los ríos sonorosos,	the sounding rivers,
el silbo de los aires amorosos,	the whisper of the loving breezes,
la noche sosegada	the night as serene
en par de los levantes del aurora,	as the rising light of dawn,
la música callada,	the hushed music,
la soledad sonora,	the sounding solitude,

la cena que recrea y enamora.	the feast that recreates and invites to love.

Once again the poetry, in lines of immense profundity, seems to want to reveal secrets—suggestions of St John of the Cross's experience of the infinite, an experience terribly difficult to put into words because it is outside language and human reason. But once again we find in Islamic mysticism the symbolic coordinates that will help us understand the poet's most intimate mystical thoughts and feelings. At the point of mystical union, when the poem's symbolic pool is revealed to be the locus of oneness between Bride and Bridegroom, and thus the locus of divine manifestation, the Bride who at the beginning of the poem had sought her Bridegroom through a hazy landscape that her swift foot really barely trod (so little "realized" was the scene), now suddenly discovers that the Bridegroom is not *in* that landscape, but rather *is* it: the mountains, valleys, rivers, breezes. And unexpectedly the anguished question "Where?" with which the poem had begun ("Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me with my moan?") begins to be answered with a myriad of spaces in glorious, kaleidoscopic succession. The Bridegroom, curiously, does not have a face, as those traditional lovers of European love poetry would have had (we should recall Petrarch and Ronsard), but is conceived rather in the metaphoric terms of a vertiginous cascade of spaces and even unexpected times and situations (night, music, solitude, a feast or dinner) which suggest the collapsing of the contraries height and depth, sound and silence, the solid and the ethereal.

In the poem's ecstatic union of Bride and Bridegroom, everything seems to merge: "Mi Amado las montañas / los valles solitarios nemorosos / las ínsulas extrañas. . . ." The metaphorization by means of which the Bridegroom has been linked—in fact verblessly equated—with those spaces is completely unknown in the European poetry of the Renaissance; indeed, so strange is this mode of imaging that the Spanish critic Carlos Bousoño, in a most fortunate essay for our topic here, calls it "visionary" and "contemporary." In the metaphor, what is associatively brought together is the sensations or impressions that are produced by the two linked elements: in the Bride's perception, St John tells us in his glosses, the Bridegroom is "like" the mountains because the impression produced by the mountains (height, majesty, pleasant fragrance) is similar to the impression produced by the Bridegroom: "The mountains are lofty, abundant, broad, and lovely, filled

with flowers and scents. These mountains are my Beloved for me" (*CB* 14-15:7; *VO* 665). Likewise, the valleys are associated with the sensations of delight, coolness, and rest; the "strange isles," with the notion of mystery; the sounding rivers, with the sensation of being washed over by them and hearing that profound roar that blots out all external sound; and so on, through the celebratory stanzas.

These equations are achieved not by means of parallel elements that are recognizable by logic, but rather through non-rational, non-logical associations, just as in such Semitic poems as the Song of Songs and such drunk-with-love Sufi texts as Ibn 'Arabī's *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq* (*The Interpreter of Desires*) or Ibn al-Fāriî's *Khamriyyah* (Wine Song).

And St John the "visionary" reveals even further mystical equations. The Bride asked at the beginning of the poem about where—in what *space*—the Bridegroom had hidden himself from her. Now she has discovered that He *is* those spaces that she wandered through in search of Him, and discovers also that this unexpected identity of her Beloved's is completed—by a true prodigy of love and wondrous literary insight—in her *realisation* of this fact: in a word, in her herself. "These mountains *are* my Beloved *for me,*" the poet-commentator insists in the glosses that are meant to clarify the poem's obscurities: "All these things (mountains, rivers, valleys) is her Beloved in him/itself and is so *for her*" (*CB* 14-15:5; *VO* 664, emphasis ours).14 The act of intuition is indeed wondrous: in the high intermingling of love, God has transformed her into Himself, yet it is she who in employing the metaphorical mirror gives the Bridegroom a new identity: He is that whole myriad of marvellous spaces and music and nights and times because He is so in her realisation or perception of Him; she contains, so to speak, within herself all that delicious, extraordinarily free and changing identity. Times and spaces are not simply cancelled or collapsed, as they are in all ecstatic moments, but converge in the unified identity of the two Lovers. The once-perplexed Bride at last knows where her Bridegroom had hidden Himself. The answer is repeated yet again, overwhelming in its pure simplicity: "In

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14 The Spanish syntax corresponds to the English given here: the apparently plural subject with a singular verb and singular predicate pronoun. Even the syntax, then, speaks of identity.

me."15 And the seeking, agonising Bride of the "Spiritual Canticle" realises that she, like 'AÇÇār's thirty birds that so assiduously sought the Sīmurg throughout the world, was herself the Sīmurg that she had sought through the sheepfolds, through the hillside, and through the woods and undergrowth that are journeyed through in the first stanzas of the poem. She could not find her Beloved there because she was seeking Him where she would never find him: outside herself.

Of course God is, or contains within Himself, all of these elements with which the Bride identifies Him—mountains, valleys, rivers. In this transformative state the soul understands the secret concatenation of causes that articulate the harmony of the Universe—an understanding that far transcends simple pantheism, into which St John of the Cross never falls. God transforms the soul into His virtues and attributes. He is—or manifests—His attributes in the soul, which acts as a mirror of Him. Although the poem's protagonist saw her Beloved reflected in the pool or mirror of herself, now the Beloved is reflected in the pool or mirror of the soul, which is also Him: both are the mirror of the other, and reflect back and forth its/their ipsiety in an unending succession of unendingly self-reflecting mirrors, as though one were set before the other. Or to say this in another way: God observes Himself in His Bride, while she contemplates Him in herself because she *is,* or perfectly reflects, all these simultaneous transformations of ineffable attributes that come together in her own substance. It is no coincidence, given what we have been discussing thus far, that the consummation of the union which the "Spiritual Canticle" celebrates began in a metaphorical mirror—the water of the spring. God shall be reflected in the mirror of the soul as though in pure translucid water which at this moment of supreme identification is able to reflect Him in His glory.

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15 St John of the Cross apparently was very given to the use of this figure, a symbolic space, to communicate the transformative ecstatic moment. In the "Coplas del mismo hechas sobre un éxtasis de harta contemplación," he insists upon this image, repeating the "where" and the "there" of the "Spiritual Canticle": "Entréme *donde* no supe, / y quedéme no sabiendo / toda ciencia trascendiendo. // Ya no supe *donde* estaba, / pero, cuando *allí* me ví, / sin saber *donde* me estaba, / grandes cosas entendí. // . . . . El que *allí* llega de vero / de sí mismo desfallece. . . ." (emphasis added).

This mirror is a well polished one: St John of the Cross (and St Teresa, who used the trope in her own work) adopted an ancient *leit-motif* which the Sufis of the Middle Ages had been using and refining for centuries. The soul, loosed of its bonds and given up wholly to God, is, metaphorically, a spotless mirror which can reflect the Godhead. Henri Corbin saw this in the case of Ibn ʻArabī, who felt that he knew God in the exact proportion to which the Names and Attributes of God had their epiphany in him: "Dieu se décrit á nous-mêmes par nous-mêmes;" "par cette *sympatheia* s'actualise l'aspiration reciproque fondée en la communauté de leur essence" (Corbin, *Imagination créatrice* 95, 88). The soul, whose powers are filled only with the infinite, becomes, as we have seen, a polished mirror, transparent water, in order to be able to reflect, as though in a glowing kaleidoscope, all these divine attributes. The swift succession of attributes in this wonderfully pure mirror of the soul is only apparent, however, since in God, free of time and space, the manifestation occurs simultaneously and instantaneously.

St John of the Cross makes clear that this spring or fount in which the union begins to be celebrated is "the heart, [which] here signifies the soul" (*CA,* 12:7; *VO,* p. 658). In Western mysticism this trope of a heart as the symbolic vessel or receptacle of crystalline waters that reflect the changing and visionary images of the divine manifestations within the soul, is a strange one. But once again, the Sufis come to the aid of our understanding of the apparently enigmatic symbols of St John of the Cross. Ibn ʻArabī would have very profoundly understood, and would have seconded, what St John wants to say at this point in the poem, for he knew a great deal about this inner heart that was also the mirror of changing images: in Arabic, the word *qalb,* as we have noted, simultaneously means "heart" and "perpetual, constant change," among other things. As one might expect, Muslim mystics took full advantage of this coincidence in the multivalent roots of Arabic, and put them to work in their poetry. Thus, in the most famous and most complex lines of his *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq,* Ibn ʻArabī says the following:

> My heart is capable of any form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,
>
> And the idols' temple and the pilgrim's Kaʻabah and the tablets of the Torah and the book of the Qur'ān.

> I follow the religion of love: where so ever the camels of love go,
> that is my religion and my faith.

It is Michael Sells who has seen, with extraordinarily keen sight, that Ibn 'Arabī's "drunken" lines speak not simply (as many Arabists have it) of tolerance for all revealed religions—for God may be found in all of them—but also, and much more profoundly, of the high dwelling-place of the ecstatic heart that is receptive of any form ("Garden Among the Flames" 311, n. 37). Or, to say it another way, receptive of any divine manifestation that may occur in it. These are Sells' words:

> The heart that is receptive of every form is in a state of perpetual transformation (*taqallub,* a play on the two meanings of the root *q–l–b,* heart and change). The heart moulds itself to, receives, and becomes each form of the perpetually changing forms in which the Truth reveals itself to itself. . . . [To] achieve a heart that is receptive of every form requires a continual process of effacement of the individual self in the universal (293).

Ibn 'Arabī is quite conscious of these truths, since in the original Arabic of his poem, the line "my heart is capable [or has become the vessel] of any form," the poet is playing with the possibilities of the word *qalb* __________: his heart (*i.e.,* the mirror of his soul) is in a state of perpetual transformation as it "successively" reflects the manifestations of God: "For Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Áaqq* (the Truth) manifests itself to itself through every form or image but is confined to none. The forms of manifestation are constantly changing" (290-291). St John of the Cross tells us exactly the same thing when he makes explicit that the kaleidoscopic stanzas of the "Spiritual Canticle" ("My Beloved, the mountains. . .") represent the continual manifestation of God in the mirror of the soul. This heart-mirror should obviously be capable of reflecting any divine form, without fixing any one within itself, since (and we quote St John himself here) "not even the angels can see enough of it, nor ever will." It always "brings newness to them, and always they marvel more" (*CB,* 14-15:8). Thus the soul of the true contemplative, as Sells once more notes, "is not so much an entity or object as an event, the process of perspective shift, of *fanā',* the polishing of the divine mirror" (299). There is, then, no reason to seize upon any one of these states or manifestations, even the highest of them, because, as St John tells us, only God can finally know them truly and infinitely.

I believe that this is the reason the poet lavished such indeterminate joy on his poetic kaleidoscope: God is spaces, times, music, sounding solitude, and not simply one of these things, but all, and infinite numbers more, because surely from St John's feverish cataloguing celebration we can infer that the joy of the reception of these attributes never ends. Once again Michael Sells: "From the divine perspective the eternal manifestation always has occurred and always is occurring. From the human perspective it is eternal but also a moment in time, an eternal moment that cannot be held on to but must be continually re-enacted" (132). It would appear that with these words Sells is explaining not only the *Tarjumān*'s stanzas of transformative union, but those of the "Spiritual Canticle" as well, and for good reason it would appear so: both mystics have a heart—a *qalb*—which is colourless and of utter purity, like water,16 and endowed, for that very reason, with a protean ability to reflect in its "silvery mien," as in an unending mirror, the continuous manifestations which the Deity makes of its own Essence to Itself in the fortunate soul that is able to assume any form.

f) The ascent of the mount.

One of St John's most famous—if not most fully elaborated—symbols is the ascent of the mount (Mount Carmel in his case), which signifies the soul's ascent to the mystical peak. Few symbols are as "Jungian" as the cosmic mountain whose echoes reverberate in St John: from the ziggurats of Mesopotamia to the temple of Borobudur in Java (Eliade, *Patterns* 376), what we have is a symbolic architecture that makes possible a ritual and yet concrete ascent of profound spiritual significance. As one might expect, mystical literature has adopted this symbolic motif, which can be documented over and over in European literature: in the *Neunfelsenbuch* (*Book of the Nine Rocks*) of the fourteenth-century German mystic Rulman Merwin; in Jean Gerson; in Diego de Estella's *Meditaciones del amor de Dios*; in the Blessed Nicholas Factor; in Francisco de Osuna's *Tercer abecedario espiritual* ("Third Spiritual Primer"); and, above all, in the case of Bernardino de

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16 We will see in a moment that St John of the Cross attributes a similar and, once again, recognisably Sufi nature to the symbolic "solitary bird" of his soul in transformative ecstasy. The bird "has no determined colour" but possesses at the same time all colours, and for the mystic the strange quality of the colourless bird symbolically signifies the loosing of the soul from the bonds of all that is created.

Laredo, whose *Subida del Monte Sión* (*Ascent of Mount Zion*) would seem to serve as a prelude to the *Ascent* of St John of the Cross (*cf.* Santiago Barroso).

It should come as no surprise that for several reasons, the symbol also receives considerable attention in Muslim mysticism. The mountain at whose summit the mystic struggles to arrive is part of a visionary geography of impossible but highly articulated maps that Henri Corbin has discussed in profound detail: in Suhrawardī's *Récit de l'éxil,* for example, the "orientation est celle d'une géographie visionaire s'orientant sur le 'climat de l'Īme'" (Corbin, *L'homme* 70). From the *Libro de la escala de Mahoma* (*Book of Muhammad's Stairway*) (*cf.* Muñoz Sendino, 225-226) to Ibn 'Arabī's *Tarjumān,* we find the theoretical elaboration of the spiritual mountain. Kūbra insisted a great deal on it, and gave it an often-employed technical name: it was the mountain *Kāf.*

We turn our attention to this universal symbol in order to note that in some details of his own particular use of it, St John of the Cross reminds us once again of his Sufi predecessors. Bernardino de Laredo's spiritual *Ascent* is to Mount Zion, which is one of the mounts that St John also names (*S,* III: 42:5, *VO* 533), and so it might at first appear to be a Christian elaboration of the allegory, but we are surprised to find that hundreds of years earlier, Muslim mysticism had employed the image of an ascent to that same Mount Zion or Sinai (we should recall that the Qur'ān inherits a great deal of the Scriptures and that Mount Zion/Sinai is also sacred to Islam).

In a work titled *Ba'ze az ta'wīlāt-e Golshan-e-Rāz* (in Corbin's translation *Quelques-unes des exégeses spirituelles de la Roseraie du Mystère*: *Trilogía* 96), which is a commentary on Shabastarī's *Rose Garden of the Mysteries,* an obscure Ismā'īlī treatise-writer speaks particularly of his ascent to Mount Zion or Sinai. More important yet is the case of Suhrawardī:

> Le symbol du Sinaï, nous le recontrons deja. . . dans Sohrawardi [*Récit de l'exil occidental*]. La même, la figure que le pèlerin découvre au sommet du Sinaï mystique, typifie a la fois sa propre Nature parfaite (al-Tibī' al-Tāmm. . .). . . . Avec cette ascension au "Sinaï de son être", le mystique achève l'expérience de son escathologie personelle du présent. En révivant l'état de Moïse au sommet de la montagne, c'est le "Moïse de son être" qui est volatilisé (Corbin, *L'homme* 111-112).

For us, the most interesting parallel between St John of the Cross and the Muslim mystics who elaborated this cosmic ascent in their works over the course of centuries is that both cases have recourse to drawings, etchings, or paintings that help provide the reader with doctrinal illustration and explanation of how this arduous ascent may be achieved. Julián Rivera associates the graphic representations of the mystical path, quite common in Ramon Lull, more with Lull's Sufi predecessors than with the European emblematic tradition:

> That didactic method which is taken to be an innovation introduced [by Lull] and by which everything is vulgarised . . . with graphic representations, schemata, concentric circles. . ., squares, so that it might enter through the eyes into the intelligence of the masses, was a method peculiar to and characteristic of the Muslim Sufis contemporaneous with Lull (170-171).

If we compare the two traditions, we find that it is true that Lull, who did not read Latin and who wrote in Arabic, seems to derive more from the "Sufi hermits" he directly quotes in his *Libre d'amic e amat* than from the European emblemists that Frances Yates has studied. Bakhtiar reproduces a concrete example of that long Muslim tradition, a Persian rendering of the cosmic mountain *Kāf* that forms part of a manuscript containing an anthology of fourteenth-century Persian poems. (See Fig. 1.) Although it is polychrome, and much more highly decorated than the famous illustration of the Ascent of Mount Carmel that was drawn first by St John (*VO* p. 362) and then re-elaborated more "artistically" by his followers (see Figs. 2 & 3), the fundamental idea shared by the two illustrations is not hard to see. In the Persian case, the rendering, covered with explanations (especially in the top part of the drawing), serves as illustration for mystical poems dealing with the ascent of the spiritual mountain. Is this linking of a graphic representation, a poem, and a prose gloss a distant antecedent of St John's procedure as he speaks of his own mystical ascent? Both St John of the Cross and the Sufis employ this tripartite technique. And some details of the Muslims' symbolic mountain are quite similar to St John's. Frithof Schuon describes the Sufi's ascent to his own soul in these terms:

> What separates man from divine Reality is the slightest of barriers. God is infinitely close to man, but man is infinitely far from God. The barrier, for man, is a mountain. . . which he must remove with

> his own hand. He digs away the earth, but in vain, the mountain remains; man goes on digging in the Name of God. And the mountain vanishes. It was never there (*Stations of Wisdom,* in Bakhtiar 57).

St John of the Cross says of the summit of his mountain that "in this place there is no longer any path," and he discovers that there never was. In the depths of his soul is God: St John has performed a circular and non-existent journey: "from God to God."

But the path is no less arduous for all that. Bakhtiar insists: "One needs a guide to climb: one can climb a mountain by many paths, but one needs to follow one made by experienced people" (28). We should recall St John's obsession with the spiritual teacher, who should be that person that is right for each soul—an obsession that Asín traced to the Muslims. We should also note that they are *plural* paths, some twisting and therefore leading nowhere: these also appear in St John's schema, as we see in the drawing. Bakhtiar continues: "The higher one moves spiritually, the more vision one gains. . . . [One] passes from form to formlessness" (28). Al-Ghazzālī insists upon the same process: "The fourth stage is to gaze at the union of an all-comprehensive, all-absorbing One, losing sight ever of the duality of one's own self. This is the highest stage" (Nawab Ali 104). Because of his insistence on this *nothing* which is the pathway to arrive at the *all* at the summit of the mountain, St John once again shows himself to be a brother of the mystics of the East: "to come to be all / wish not to be something in nothing," says the poem that accompanies the drawing. St John also sees annihilation (that oft-mentioned *fanā* of the Sufis) as necessary in the process of ascent: "one single thing is needed; which is to know how to truly negate oneself . . . and annihilate oneself in all" (*N* III: 16:1; *VO* 495).

The ascent to the mountain of one's own soul, which is achieved by self-annihilation, is, we must acknowledge, a universal motif of mysticism, and yet St John of the Cross and the Sufis (and even Bernardino de Laredo) precisely parallel one another in their metaphorical ascent of the Sinai of the soul, taking their direction in this singular adventure from mystical "maps."

g) The solitary bird.

St John of the Cross conceives the soul as a "solitary bird" (much like the "passer solitarius" of David's Psalm 102:7; in Vulgate 101:8), but he

endows it with enigmatic properties that transform it into a symbol which has baffled critics such as Fr. Eulogio Pacho because of its total lack of Western antecedents. And indeed such antecedents are virtually impossible to discover in Europe. Authors who in one way or another use the symbol of the soul as a bird (which is, of course, a trope so long-used that it has been documented even in ancient Egypt)—St Bonaventure, St Bernard, Hugh of St-Victor, Ramon Lull, the blessed Orozco, Laredo, and even such anonymous medieval texts as the Portuguese *Book of the Birds* and the *Ancren Riwle* (*The Nun's Rule*), by an unknown English anchorite of the thirteenth century—are not really very helpful when we attempt to penetrate the trope as presented by St John of the Cross. Nor are we particularly enlightened in this regard by such studies on the subject of literary birds as that by María Rosa Lida: the nightingale and the swallow of the Renaissance, with their clear Greco-Latin lineage, make St John's solitary bird all the more mysterious and singular.

All St John tells us of this mysterious bird is contained in two brief and almost identical portraits, one in the *Dichos de luz y Amor* (120, *VO* 967) and the other in the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle" (*CB* 15:23; *VO* 670). The *Treatise on the Properties of the Solitary Bird,* which would have been so illuminating, is so far lost. We will, nonetheless, make an attempt to throw some light on St John's schematic bird of the soul. Once again, the most fertile fields in which to search seem to be Eastern and not Western. Muslims, like Christians, have for centuries employed the symbol, which we clearly see to have mystical connotations in the Qur'ān, where Solomon exclaims: "O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and are endued with everything. This is indeed a clear boon *from God.*" (27:16) Later Sufis such as Kubrā, adapting the verse, exclaimed:

> ("praise to God, Who has given us the language of the birds"). This is "the language of self [which] contains knowledge of the higher state of being" (Bakhtiar 3, 7).

Throughout the Middle Ages, Muslim authors—Sanā'i, 'Aèèār, Bāyazīd, al-Bīsèāmī—all produced treatises on the mystical bird. Particularly important are those that Suhrawardī, Avicenna, and Al-Ghazzālī each composed under the title *Risalāt al-ñair,* or the *Treatise upon the Bird,* although, as Seyyed Hossein Nasr notes (51), Suhrawardī virtually translated into Persian the Arabic treatise written by Avicenna.

To decipher or put into perspective the mysteries of the "properties" of St John of the Cross's particular bird, let us look for a moment at some of St John's parallels with these Sufis.17 St John closely echoes the Persian Al-Bīsèāmī (d. 877), who described himself as "a bird whose body was of Oneness," and who flies "in singularity" [(Attar, *Muslim. . .,* n.p.)]]; St John's bird is "solitary" and will not suffer "the company of another creature" (*Dichos* 120; *VO* 967). The wings of al-Bīsèāmī's bird are "of eternity" (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 49); Rūmī's symbolic bird flies far away from all things material and perishable (Nicholson 86); St John's "shall rise above all things transitory" (*Dichos* 120). Al-Bīsèāmī's bird raises its head toward the Lord [[(Attar, *ibid.*)]]; St John's "puts its beak into the air of the Holy Spirit" (*Dichos* 120). Àallāj exclaims, "I fly with my wings to my Beloved" (*ñawāsin* 34); in St John's flight, "the spirit. . . sets itself in highest contemplation" (*VO* 670). And both finally acquire a knowledge that transcends all reason; Àallāj's soul, like that metaphorical bird, "fell into the sea of understanding and was drowned" (34), while St John's, because it is a bird on the rooftop, as in Psalm 102:7, rises so high that it "remains as though ignorant of all things, for it knows God only, without knowing how" (*Ascent* II: 15:11; *VO* 424).

Perhaps the most interesting parallel is between St John of the Cross and the contemplative bird of Suhrawardī. There is no doubt that it is the fifth quality or property of St John's solitary bird (the fourth property in the *Dichos*) that is most problematic: the bird "has no one color" (*Dichos* 120; *VO* 967). St John explains this by saying that "thus is the spirit perfect (*VO* 670). . . which has no specific quality in any thing" (*VO* 967). This is a curious image, a bird of no colour. To our surprise, though, Suhrawardī had attributed this same property—in identical words—to his own bird, four

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17 There are other parallels between St John's symbol of the mystical bird and that of the Sufis. St John speaks of the falcon or hunting bird which is his soul in the poem whose refrain is "Tras un amoroso lance / y no de esperanza falto / volé tan alto / que le di a la caza alcance" ("After a loving pass / and lacking not in hope / so high I flew / that I overtook the hunt"). This same equation of the soul and the hunting falcon was made by Rūmâ in his *Manèiq al-ñair* (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 307). It would appear that St John interprets the hunting motif of poems such as Diego Ramírez' "Indirecta a una dama" (in *Floresta de varía poesía*), which Dámaso Alonso has quite rightly associated with St John, not only *à la divine* but also *à la Soufi*.

hundred years before St John of the Cross: "All colours are in him but he is colourless" (*Three Treatises* 29). The congruence here is so perfect and so curious that it will be worth our while to quote the text in its Persian original:

*********(Persian verse)

In both cases, the absence of colour implies exactly the same thing: the letting-go of all things material, the absence of material things in the soul. This is a most remarkable parallel. We should recall, however, that this image of the spirit as a colourless entity or process is far from foreign to Islamic mystics. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the world's foremost scholars of Islamic mysticism in Persian, tells us that 'Aèèār's famous *Manèiq al-ñair* also makes indirect allusion to this colourlessness in the bird known as the Simurg. When the thirty birds—each of a different colour—discover that they themselves are the Sīmurg, the beautiful rainbow of their diverse colours must of necessity be erased, so that they, too, in a moment of transformative ecstasy, become "of no determined colour." This is a commonplace of Persian mysticism: in one of his most beautiful verses, Àāfiï also compares the spirit's letting-go to the freedom from colour:

***************(Persian verse)

(Nasr translates this into English as "I am the slave of the will of that person who under the azur's sphere has become free of the attachment to whatever possesses color.") Najm ad-dīn al- Kubrā repeats this image, with some variation, in his *Fawā'ié al-Jamāl wa-Fawātié al-Jalāl,* imagining that the most profound centre of his soul (his *qalb*) is as colourless and fluctuating as water, and able precisely for that reason to reflect the infinite, always changing attributes of God.

h) Ascetic war.

The mystic's progress along the spiritual path under the representation of a struggle or combat against the forces of evil—the devil, sensual appetites, vices—has a long history as a moral or mystical allegory. In his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies,* the Pseudo-Dionysius gives an early (but fundamentally different) outline of the detailed and even picturesque "warfare of the spirit," in the description of which the mystics of the Spanish Peninsula seem to have excelled (Lourenzo Justiniano [*cf.* Martins 175], Fray Luis de Granada, Fray Alonso de Madrid, Osuna), although there are also cases in other areas of Europe, such as Suso. St John of the Cross and St Teresa employed the trope of spiritual battle as few others ever did; it seems to have culminated (though by now with other nuances) in the work of St Ignatius Loyola.

Islam employed the trope of ascetic warfare or battle during the Middle Ages, and in virtually the same terms as the Peninsular mystics. "The Sufis," says Fr Félix Pareja, "often cite the Qur'ānic verse 'and those who fought ardently for us, we shall guide them along our path; for surely Allah is with those who do good'" (229). And the strict mystical application of the Qur'ānic verses and *hadiths* or traditions of the Prophet are easy enough to find. Al-Hujwīrī's summary is perfect:

> The Apostle said: "We have returned from the lesser holy war (*al-jihād al-aÄghar*) to the greatest war (*al-jihād al-akbar*). . . . What is the greatest war? He replied, "It is the struggle against one's self (*mujāhadat al-nafs*)" (*Kashf al-Maéjūb* 200).

This, then, is the trope of a "*javānmardī,* c'est-a-dire de 'chevalerie spirituelle,'" according to Corbin (*L'homme* 195), whose brilliant insights into the trope include his suggestion that the initial Lam-Alif of the famous Muslim dictum "lā illāha illa Allāh" (there is no god but Allah) has the shape of a sword— —and therefore both heralds and participates in that ascetic war. Through time, the image grew so familiar that Ibn QaÄī organized his followers into a sort of religious militia, in a fortified convent (or *rapita*) in Silves (Pareja 381), hundreds of years before the birth of St Ignatius Loyola. Almost all the most important Sufis appear to be aware of the theory: Al-Ghazzālī in his *IÁyā 'ulūm al-dīn* (*cf.* Pareja 293-4 and Nwyia, *Ibn 'Aèā' Allāh* 225), Kubrā in his *Fawāih al Jamāl wa Fawātih al-Jalāl* (*cf.* Corbin, *L'homme* 99), Ibn 'Arabī in his *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*.

The metaphor of spiritual combat is developed into what one might almost call a "conceit" in Islam: the "spiritual knight" wages battle against a siege on the castle of his soul, which is turreted and equipped with battlements and walled about by allegorical walls. It would appear sometimes almost to be a chivalric romance (such as those that St Teresa so delighted in reading) though *à la divine,* except that the knightly romances had not yet been written, in the ninth century if not before, when the Sufis were allegorising the interior castle of their soul. In the *Ascent,* St John of the Cross speaks of the "walls and battlements [or in Peers' translation, the fence and wall] of the heart" (*S* III: 20:1; *VO* 502), but the enigmatic final *lira* of the "Spiritual Canticle" is actually constructed upon the allegory of this battle against the devil in the impregnable fortress of the mystic's spirit: "Que nadie lo miraba / Aminadab tampoco parecía / y el cerco sosegaba / y la caballería / a vista de las aguas descendía" ("Nor did Amminadib appear / whom no one looked upon / and the siege abated / and the cavalry / in sight of the waters descended.").

In his glosses, St John clears up, at least somewhat, the mystery of the words of the poem's ending, which gives the impression of being anticlimactic: "[Aminnadib] signifies the devil (speaking spiritually), the soul's adversary" (*CB* 40:3; *VO* 738). This is an odd equation; St John quotes a verse from the Song of Songs entirely out of context ("Or ever I was aware, my soul made like the chariots of Amminadib," Song 6:12), though Fr Sullivan thinks the "quotation" may come from an exegesis by St Gregory. The gloss gives the details of this spiritual battle: Amminadib "fought and always disturbed the soul with the innumerable armament of his artillery, so that the soul might not enter into this fortress, and hiding-place of the inward withdrawal with the Spouse" (*CB* 40:3; *VO* 738).

But the soul is now in contemplation and "the devil not only dares not arrive, but with great terror flees far away and dares not appear" (*ibid.*). That is why the siege—clearly an addition to the castle—"abates": "By which wall [or "fence"] is understood here. . . the passions and appetites of the soul, / which[,] when they are not vanquished and muzzled closely[,] surround [the soul] and battle with it in one place and yet another" (*CB* 40:4; *VO* 738). Here, clearly, the passions and appetites (and the devil) have been vanquished. And the "cavalry"—another warlike image—which in descending "in view of the waters" adds so much mystery to the stanza,

signifies simply the "corporeal senses of the sensitive part" (*CB* 40:5; *VO* 738) which descend and grow tranquil in view of the waters that are the good things or delights of the soul in the state of absolute union.

However detailed St John's explanation of his verses may be, if we are not familiar with the allegory of the ascetic war, it may still remain quite mysterious and seem somewhat forced or strained. But the Islamic context begins to bring the battle-imagery into a more familiar perspective. Let us look for a moment at a passage from the *Kitāb-al-Tanwīr fī isqāè al Tadbīr,* by Ibn 'Aèā' Allāh of Alexandria (d. 1309):

> [The] dwellings of mystical certainty and the light that floods them all resemble the walls or battlements that encircle the city and its castles. The walls are the lights and the castles are the dwelling-places of mystical certainty, which surround the city of the heart. For him whose heart is surrounded by the wall of certainty and whose dwelling-places, which are the walls of lights in the manner of castles, are whole and firm, Satan has no path by which to arrive at him nor in his house does Satan find habitation in which to rest (Asín *Šhadhiles* 179).

Although the parallels do not always coincide precisely with St John's, the fundamental elements recur: the heart as a fortress or walled city, the walls. And above all, at this precise spiritual moment, Satan has no way of getting at the soul.

We insist on that point—the safety of the soul—because the flight of Satan at the end of the "Spiritual Canticle" might seem illogical, since in earlier stanzas of the poem the ecstatic union had already been consummated and the devil could not possibly have been present at that time. However, and, as we noted earlier, almost anticlimactically, St John announces just at the end of his poem that Satan has been vanquished. If we look at Sufi referents, that "anticlimax" of the poem's may turn into a grand finale: The absolute absence from the soul of its fierce enemy the Devil marks for Muslim mystics the last and highest degree of ecstasy; it is the absolute guarantee of the spiritual heights to which the soul has climbed. The final *lira* of the poem would imply, then, a true poetic *and mystical* culmination. Let us look at how close St John of the Cross is to Ibn 'Abbād of Ronda's *Sharé al-Àikam* (II:78):

> [The] subject has lost the consciousness of his own being and preserves only the consciousness of his presence with his Lord; and he who finds himself in that state is now one of those who are free of all evil and danger, because over them the accursed enemy no longer has any power whatsoever, and he who during his prayer is free of the power of the enemy need not work to combat him and reject him, and so his prayer is accompanied by the presence of God. . . . So that, the devout man having lost consciousness of himself and being now free of the temptation of his enemy, must feel the height of well-being and the apex of delight, bringing to realisation within himself with all truth that which is signified by the word consolation. . . . That is why the contemplative master Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Azīz of Mahdijja would often say: "Spiritual consolation does not exist for him who struggles with his passions, nor for him who battles Satan, but exists only for him who is free and serene from both dangers" (Asín, "El símil" 242-3).

We should note the emphasis on final tranquillity, serenity, consolation, and well-being, which St John repeats in the three last lines of the "Spiritual Canticle" and their corresponding glosses. Al-Ghazzālī also insists on that state of serenity: "Satan shall flee in disappointment and without any further hope of perturbing. . . thy unitary intuition" (Asín, *espiritualidad* 3: 361). In the ninth century, and once more employing the metaphor of ascetic warfare or combat that the soul wages from the battlements of its interior castles or fortresses, Nūrī of Baghdad also sets Satan outside, where he barks in vain and cannot find a way in: "Satan. . . barks from without this castle as the dog barks" (*Maqāmāt* VIII, p. 136):

St John of the Cross, a valiant knight of the spirit, struggles more fiercely yet. He reminds us of some spiritual St George battling against an infernal beast, a seven-headed dragon:

> Happy the soul that is able to do battle against that beast of the Apocalypse (12:3) with its seven heads, the opposite of these seven grades of love, against each one of which [heads] he wages war, and against each one of which he fights with his soul [as ally or weapon or protagonist] in each one of these mansions in which the soul is struggling and gaining each grade of love of God. Which, without doubt, if the soul faithfully do battle in each one and triumph, it

> shall merit going onward from grade to grade and from mansion to mansion until the last, leaving the beast's seven heads, with which it did fierce battle, cut off. . . . And thus the pain is great in many men who enter into spiritual battle against the beast yet are not yet ripe to cut off even its first head by denying the sensual things of the world; and once some men master themselves and do cut it off, still they cannot cut off the second, which is the visions of the sense that we have been speaking of. But what hurts even more is that some, having cut off not only the second and the first, but even the third—which is that which concerns the sensitive inward senses, passing from the state of meditation, and even farther on—, just as they enter into the purity of spirit they are vanquished by this spiritual beast, and it once again rises up against them and even the first head takes on life again, and thus makes the last years of them worse than the first in their falling-back, taking another seven spirits with it worse than he (*N* II: 11:10; *VO* 416).18

But once again, the Sufis' "chivalric romance *à la divine*" includes the figure of a mystical valiant knight who does battle precisely against a dragon—sometimes, precisely a seven-headed one—whose graphic representation (with commentaries in Persian) we see in a miniature contained in a Persian manuscript by Shāh Nāmeh (Fig. 4). In that same manuscript we see another illustration (Fig. 5), in which the spiritual knight, with a handsome steed and luxurious clothing, is presented in the midst of battle against malign spirits that block his mystical path. These *aljines* or genii (of Qur'ānic lineage) resemble monstrous animals or vermin that elude easy description: against such creatures, we might recall, St John and St Teresa also heroically battled.

i) ***The soul as a garden.***

Another image that is quite extensively employed in European mysticism but that St John of the Cross and the Sufis employ in amazingly exact parallel and detail, is a park like place or flower-garden in representation of the soul

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18 Here, St John (s 2:11:10, VO 416) is quoting Like 11:26, "Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and sell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first," which is why this quotation contains italics.

in a state of oneness. This garden, the "unitive station" (*al-maqām al-jāmi'*)in Ibn 'Arabī (*TAA* 65), is explored and codified more fully by Nūrī of Baghdad than any other author. Nūrī dedicated several chapters of his *Maqāmāt al-qulūb* to a description of the wonders of the garden: its flowers, rain showers, fragrances, breezes.19 St John of the Cross also finds these delicate allegorical elements in his garden or "*huerto*" (*CB* 24:6; *VO* 677), which is at the same time his soul. The breeze that refreshes the poet's ecstatic spirit, inherited as it is no doubt from the Spanish versions of the Song of Songs, in the glosses takes on a mystical cast that is often recognisably Islamic. The south wind or Zephyr, which helps to open the flowers and spread their fragrance, "is the Holy Spirit. . . which, when this divine air strikes the soul, inflames it all . . . and enlivens and awakes the will and raises the appetites which erstwhile were drooping and asleep to the love of God" (*CB* 17:2; *VO* 676). This is very much like the wind that blows through the soul of Sa'dī: "It's natural for plants to be revived by the morning breeze, whereas minerals and dead bodies are not susceptible to the Zephyr's influence. (The meaning is that only those hearts which are alive to the meaning of spiritual love, can be quickened by the breath of Divine Inspiration" (Smith, *Sufi Path* 113; *cf.* also Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 203). For St John of the Cross, the fragrances that these divine winds raise from the flowers are God and soul in union: "the same soul. . . that. . . gives fragrance of softness to the Bridegroom that in that soul lives" . . . "the divine fragrances of God" (*CB* 18:9; *VO* 678). After defining this same equation between the perfume of the garden and spiritual Oneness, Nūrī exclaims over the indescribable fragrance of the garden: "God—blessed be He—has a garden upon the face of the earth. He who breathes the perfume of this garden no longer desires Paradise. And these gardens are the hearts of the gnostics" (*Maqāmāt* V: 134). In the garden we also find flowing water; the thirst of the Arab poet would have it no other way: "The Garden of the Soul. . . contains a fountain, flowing water," says Bakhtiar (30) of this water that Nūrī gives such attention to in his poem. Interestingly, St John, for whom water was of course in much more plentiful supply than for the Arab poet, also includes flowing water in his garden, and explains it in divine terms: he

19 In Rūmâ, the breeze is also "a fitting symbol of the life-giving breath of the Beloved" (Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 86). *Cf.* also Macdougal and Ettinghausen, *The Islamic Garden.*

discovers that his soul has "become a paradise divinely irrigated" (*L* 3:7; *VO* 873-4).

Nor of course can flowers themselves be lacking in this garden. St John, recalling fragrant passages from the Song of Songs, says that the Bridegroom comes to the soul (in the biblical sense of the phrase) "among the fragrance of these flowers" (*CB* 18:10; *VO* 678). In a more detailed passage in the glosses to the "Spiritual Canticle," these flowers are named and their qualities enumerated: the lily, the jasmine, roses—each flower lends a different dimension of knowledge of God, and under the tutelage of each in turn, the soul is gradually transformed. For Ibn 'Arabī the mystical dwelling-place we are speaking of is easy to define: "the flower. . . i.e., the station of Divine Revelation" (*TAA* 101). Likewise, for St John of the Cross, roses are specifically "the strange news of God" (*CB* 24:6; *VO* 694).

Here, then, all that is missing is the nightingale, which sips at the rose which is one of the most famous Sufi symbols, the manifestation of the glory of God which the mystical bird unceasingly sips at (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 306). But in fact we continue to follow close upon the mystical Symbolism of Islam, since for St John, too, the nightingale—"the sweet Philomela"—sings the glorious melody of transformative union in the "Spiritual Canticle."

j) Fanā': The lily of letting-go.

There is a flower that St John praises in another poem, and which merits a few additional words. The "Dark Night" culminates in a final letting-go: "leaving my care / forgotten among the lilies." If we look for possible referents among Islamic poetry, we find that the grand finale of the poem is explained (imagistically, at least) in that tradition, and the selection of that specific (perhaps apparently clichéd) flower comes to seem to us to have been more "artistic" and intentional. For lilies are precisely the flower of letting-go for Sufis who have attained the last stage of the mystical voyage, at which all language fails. In those men, the lily, "breathless with adoration" in the words of Annemarie Schimmel (*Mystical Dimensions* 308), glorifies God in silence with the ten necessarily mute tongues of its petals.

k) The foxes of sensuality; the hair as "spiritual snare."

Lastly, some other symbols in common. St John of the Cross, as we have noted several times, obtains a good deal of his poetic vocabulary from the Scriptures (and especially from the Song of Songs), but when he raises that vocabulary to a symbolic and mystical level he does so quite often from a standpoint that is recognisable as within the *trobar clus* of Sufism. For instance, St John equates the foxes of the "Spiritual Canticle" with the sensual appetites of the soul (*CB* 16:5; *VO* 673), Islamicizing the biblical animal that the Bride of the Song of Songs asks be hunted—because for Sufis such as Mohamed ibn Ulyan, the little foxes or vixens are their *nafs* or carnal appetites, which they must repress throughout their spiritual journey:

> In my novitiate, when I had become aware of the corruption of the lower soul and acquainted with its places of ambush, I always felt a violent hatred of it in my heart. One day something like a young fox came forth from my throat, and God caused me to understand that it was my lower soul (Al- Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maéjūb* 206).20

Perhaps more curious yet is the symbol of the hair, which "flies at the neck" of the Bride in the "Spiritual Canticle" and serves as a "snare" to trap her Beloved. Here St John, as Francisco García Lorca has noted, seems to be following the Vulgate version of the Song of Songs ("Vulnerasti cor meum in uno crine tui," 4:9; "thou hast wounded my heart in a lock of thy hair") rather than the Spanish translation by Fray Luis ("robaste mi corazón con uno de los tus ojos, y con sartal de tu cuello": "you stole my heart with one of your eyes, and with a string [as of beads, etc.] of your neck"; *cf.* the King James version: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck"). However, Fray Luis, commenting on another passage of the epithalamion (7:5: "Tu cabeza como el Carmelo: y los cabellos de tu cabeza como purpura de Rey atada en canales": "Your head [is] like Carmel: and the hairs of your head like King's crimson bound in channels"; but *cf.* the King James version: "Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple:

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20 For *nafs* compared with an animal, *cf.* also Nicholson 67, and Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 112, *Triumphal Sun* 197 & 70. St John of the Cross also interprets his sensuality as "livestock" or sheep: "I no longer keep livestock." Here he parallels Al-Sarrāj, who in the *Kitāb al-Luma'* compares the *nafs* with livestock or sheep that the soul "shepherds."

the king is held in the galleries"), notes that the "king" is held within the Bride's hair as though in a bond:

> . . . says that [the hair] is a *snare,* and like a *chain* in which by her inestimable beauty, the king, which is Solomon her Spouse, *is prisoner* (García Lorca 183).

The image of the Bridegroom "held captive" by the Bride's locks is not unknown to other traditions that St John might have been familiar with. Damaso Alonso documents the figure in popular poetry and Emilio Orozco (203) finds it in Theocritus' Fifth Idyll (l. 90) ("A shining lock of hair curling along the neck"). Fr Crisógono y María Rosa Lida tell us that other, secular, lovers also employ the motif: we find the trope in Garcilaso's Canción IV, though somewhat generalized: "De los cabellos de oro fue tejida / la red que fabricó mi sentimiento. . . . Pues soy por los cabellos arrastrado" ("Of her golden hair was woven / the net which my emotions made. . . . For I am by the hair dragged along"). And Petrarch had already used it, more than once: "dico le chiome bionde, e'l crespo laccio, / che si soavemente lega e stringe / l'alma" ("???") (Sonnet 198); "e folgorare [of the eyes] i nodi [of the hair] ond' io son preso" ("???") (Sonnet 198). But it was the Sufis who hundreds of years earlier had turned to religio-mystical purposes the poetic motif of the curls or locks of hair that seduce and entrap and imprison, and which Europeans like Petrarch and Garcilaso only employed at the profane level. Would St John of the Cross, once again, be treading Islamic ground, receiving the image ready-worked to his purposes from Muslim poets and writers, who would appear to be much closer to his uses than were the writers and poets of the Renaissance and the Classics? St John gives some evidence of knowledge of the secret equivalence of the *zulf* or "lock of hair" (*cf.* Arberry, *Sufism* 113) that is the "hook" or "snare" by which so many Sufis, such as Ibn 'Arabī and Shabistarī, snare the Deity or are ensnared:

> If you ask me the long story / Of the Beloved's curl, / I cannot answer, for it contains a mystery / Which only true lovers understand, / And they, maddened by its beauty, / Are held captive as by a golden chain (Lederer 20).

The Sufis, with their characteristic verbal imagination, metaphorically transfigure this curl into the *lām* (the letter *L*), which has the same shape: _.

Thus far we have been exploring the parallels between the mystical Symbolism of St John of the Cross and the Sufis: the abundance of these parallels and their exact correspondence allow us to see how seminal (and to a degree prescient) those early essays were in which Asín Palacios linked St John of the Cross to literary and mystical contexts within Islam. Asín was laying the groundwork for research that is still in a sense only beginning, and which has thrown and is still throwing new light on the works of St John of the Cross—a body of work which has traditionally been seen as so filled with mysteries. Let us now look at the case of St Teresa de Jesus.

(To be Continued)

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON

"IQBAL AND MODERN ERA"

Gent, Belgium 18-19 November, 1997

Monday, 17-11-1997

Arrival of Guests. Stay at Hotel IBIS Centre, Gent.

Tuesday, 18-11-1997

09-00 hrs	Arrival of Participants at Faculty Club, Pand, Onderbergen Near St. Michel Church, Gent University, Gent.
09-30 hrs	Coffee.
10-00 hrs	Welcoming address by Professor Urbain Vermeulen.
10-30 hrs	Opening remarks by Mr. Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan
11-00 hrs	Progress on Bibliography Project by Dr. Daniel De Smet, Catholic University, Leuven.
11-30 hrs	Presentation by Madam Annemarie Schimmel, President, Iqbal Foundation, Bonn, Germany. Theme: "*Iqbal and Classical Islamic Traditions*".
12-00 hrs	Presentation by Dr. G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. Theme: "*Relevance to the Present Day World. Persian Writings of Iqbal*".
12-30 hrs	Question-Answer Session.
13-00 hrs	Lunch.

Second Session

14-00 hrs	Presentation by Prof. J.C. Burgel, University of Bern, Switzerland. Theme: *Mohammad Iqbal's Ideas about Poet's Role in Society".*
14-30 hrs	Presentation by Mr. Jan Marek, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. Theme: "*Iqbal and Islamic Fundamentalism, Nationalism and Patriotism*".
15-00 hrs	Coffee Break.
15-30 hrs	Presentation by Prof. Dr. S.A. Durrani, Vice President, Iqbal Foundation, Europe, University of Birmingham, UK. Theme: "*Iqbal as a bridge between the East and the West*".
16-00 hrs	Presentation by Mr. M. Suheyl Umar, Director, Iqbal Academy, Pakistan, Lahore. Theme: "*That I May See and Tell" Significance of Iqbal's Wisdom Poetry*.
16.30 hrs	Question-Answer Session.
17-00 hrs to 19-00 hrs	Reception in honour of participants and guests of Iqbal Symposium.

Wednesday, 19-11-1997

09-00 hrs	Coffee
09-30 hrs	Presentation by Dr. Natalia Prigarina Oriental Institute, Moscow, Theme: "*The Problems of Interpretation of Iqbal's Poetry at the end of 20th Century*".
10-00 hrs	Presentation by Khaled Ahmed, Editor, Friday Times, Lahore. Theme: "*Allama Iqbal's View of Fiqh*".
10-30 hrs	Presentation by Professor Vito Salierno, Scientific High College "E. Vittorini", Milano, Rome. Theme: "*Iqbal and Italy*".
11-00 hrs	Presentation by M. Ikram Chaghatai, Urdu Science Board, Lahore, Theme: " *Iqbal and Germany*".
11-30 hrs	Presentation by Professor Van Tongerloo, Kuleuven. Theme: "*Iqbal's Concept of Self-identity*".
12-00 hrs	Question-Answer Session.
13-00 hrs	Lunch.

Second Session

14-30 hrs	Presentation by Dr. Rafi-ud-Din Hashmi, Professor, Oriental College, Lahore. Theme: "*The Relevance of Iqbal's Thought in the Modern World*".
15-30 hrs	Coffee Break
16-30 hrs	Presentation by Professor Tehseen Firaqi, Punjab University, Lahore. Theme: "*Man Versus Universe. Iqbal's Perception*".
17.00 hrs	Question-Answer Session.
17.30 hrs	Concluding Session.

ISLAM AND DEVELOPMENT[21]

Maryam Jameelah

Technological backwardness is considered as the foremost problem in *Dār ul Islām* to which the remedy of "development" must be applied. The slogan is industrialisation and more industrialisation – the more the better – regardless of consequent environmental and aesthetic degradation. The question is no longer " if " or "which but only "how?" All this has been reduced to slogans and clichés. The aim of "development" is to force the East into the mould of the West – a goal nearly attained by Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong-Kong and Singapore with Malaysia and Indonesia, despite recent economic collapse, avidly aspiring to membership into the exclusive club of the so-called "advanced" countries.

The question posed by so many modernists and secularist Muslim intellectuals is why *Dār ul Islām* after two centuries of such intensive westernization, still remains so backward? They find that answer in the Muslim mentality of the last five centuries of decline and decadence. For them the prime culprit is *taqlīd* or the reverence and authority of the past which they assume must be relegated to history and not allowed and decisive role in the present or future. The remedy they propose is to discard twelve centuries of the so-called "medieval" period of "decadence" and concentrate on the pristine Islam of the Holy Prophet upon who be peace and the *ÄaÁābah* or Companions. If we could only be good Muslims in that sense, following closely in the footsteps of Sir Sayyid AÁmad Khān (1819-1898) and Muftī Shaikh MuÁammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and their modernist and revivalist successors, they suppose all our problems of backwardness would automatically vanish.

Unfortunately, our situation is much more complicated than that. The whole concept of unlimited development, meaning unrestricted economic growth and industrialisation, based on progressive evolutionism, is goring to Islam and never attempted in pre-colonial days, not withstanding notable public works and charitable institutions constructed by benevolent monarchs.

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21 This essay is an unpublished rejoinder to Dr. Wilfred Murad Hoffman's article, "Backwardness and Rationality in the Muslim Worl", *Encounters. Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, Leicester, U.K. March 1996.

Charles Darwin, later applied by Herbert Spencer, are the founders of progressive evolutionism without which the entire edifice would collapse to the ground. The question is never raised "why" we need "development", much less if we need it at all? The unquestioned acceptance of these criteria for passing judgement upon Muslim lands and peoples is tantamount to submitting Islam to alien values and ideals.

Of course, it is common knowledge that the technological weakness and vulnerability of Muslim lands and peoples caused Muslim submission to colonialism and imperialism. It must not be forgotten, however, that we were far from unique but shared the identical plight with ALL the indigenous peoples of Asia, Africa, America and Australia as the entire world was systemically plundered for the exclusive profit of the white-man. Of course, it is correct that only with the industrial revolution and consequent technological and military might, was this global subjection possible. The big question is when faced with the dire calamity, what should the Muslims have done? Sir Sayyid AÁmad Khān (1819-1898) and Muftī Shaikh MuÁammad 'Abduh and their followers preached that only drastic modernisation of Islam and Muslims would make them equals to Europeans. Jamāl ud-Dīn Afghānī (1839-1897) was the first to propose the adoption of modern science and technology as the panacea. But today, all the industrialised areas of the East without exception are merely cultural extensions of the West. The price they had to pay was the virtual annihilation of their traditional civilisation and culture. Mentally they are complete occidentals located only geographically in the East. Are we Muslims prepared to pay such and excessive price for this costly venture? Even supposing development is entirely successful and every single Muslim achieves wealth and luxurious up-to-date living standards, this is no guarantee that the white-man will ever accept us as his equals. The events of recent history are eloquent testimony to the contrary.22

Nor does any proof exist that development necessarily makes for national strength and independence. During the Gulf War in the winter of 1991, the financial giants of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, despite all their sophisticated weaponry, proved so utterly incapable of defending themselves

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22 Despite all their westernization, secularization, and persecution of Islam by those in power, and their pretensions to being a "western" country the Western countries for membership into the European Union unanimously rejected Muslim Turkey!

that they had to call in thousands of American troops, making them virtually occupied countries by the American military, while a poor and backward country like Afghanistan (lacking even a single factory no airforce, navy or even a railroad) successfully resisted the full technological might of the Russian invaders for more than thirteen years (1979-1992) resulting in the break-up of the Soviet Union and the downfall of Communism. Chechniya could be cited as still another outstanding example.

Decadence, stagnation and decline as inevitable stages in a natural ageing process, are not the very worst that can happen to us. Decadence is merely weariness, lassitude and weakness while deviation is outright self-betrayal and collective suicide. For this reason, decadence is far to be preferred to deviation. Pre-colonial Muslims never fell victim to self-betrayal of Islam from within by any industrial or technological revolution while the much-praised "Renaissance" meant the death of traditional Christian civilisation as it had flourished in Europe for more than a thousand years. Spiritually, morally, artistically and socially, the West has been declining ever since, the only major difference being that the decline of the West has expressed itself in frantic over-activity and aimless change while the decline of the East has been passive. The former process is infinitely more harmful and destructive than the latter. The disintegration of modern western culture and society since the mid-60's has become so obvious to everyone that it really comes as a shock when western-style development is upheld as the only viable model for Muslims.

Modernists in the Arab world habitually castigate the Ottoman Empire for prolonging the era of "medievalism" and "backwardness" on the contrary, Muslim historians should feel grateful that the Ottoman Empire at the height of its power and influence carefully preserved traditional Islamic civilisation for more than an additional four hundred years. Had there been no Ottoman Empire, the Muslim/Arab heartland would certainly have been overrun by western influences during the 16th instead of the 20th century and hardly anything would remain of Islam today.

The sole effective remedy this writer can advise is to follow the wise counsel given in the writings of Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933-) as the only way out of our dilemma – that is, a thorough mastery of all western disciplines, afterwards subjecting them to rigorous scrutiny and criticism according to traditional orthodox Islam and the experience of its historic

civilisation. Only by upholding absolute, transcendental spiritual and moral values can objective standards be maintained as to what should be accepted or rejected from the West. This can only be achieved if we shed all traces of inferiority complexes and recover self-confidence and intellectual independence. Idolatry does not only mean worship of wooden or stone images. Ideas and even words can also become objects of idolatrous worship. Certainly we modern Muslims have made the concept of "development" into an idol, thus being guilty of no less than *Shirk*! We can repent to Almighty Allah, not by more and more "development" -- an overdose of the same poison--but by judging societies cultures and ourselves by entirely different criteria. We get ourselves unduly upset and disturbed whenever the western media portrays us as "backward." At least, the "medieval" world--outlook was religious. What is wrong with "backwardness" when so many others in the so-called "advanced" countries are hastening forward to their self-destruction?

HARMONIES OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Jocelyn Godwin

Reviewed by:

Daud Rahbar

Harmonies of Heaven and Earth by Jocelyn Godwin. Rochester, Vermont, Inner Traditions International, 1995, 200 pages. $ 12.95.

The Subtitle of this book is: *Mysticism in Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde*. On the 181 pages of its text nearly 200 works are cited, and ideas of nearly 150 artists and thinkers collected, idea relating to music and mysticism.

The author is a Professor of Music at Colgate University, in Hamilton, a little town near New York City. This University is known for its Ecumenical Chapel House and its interest in exotic cultures.

There is no clue in the book as to whether the author himself is a mystic or not. It is quite possible to be a historian of mysticism without being a mystic. The author has cerebrated a lot about mysticism in this book.

He seems to have knowledge in depth only of Western classical music. And from all evidence in the book he really feels at home only when listening to operas, sonatas, concertos and symphonies. His acquaintance with non-western music is casual. His interest in it seems only academic.

Let us be realistic: a book on music should be a manual accompanied by a series of recordings to bring alive the observations offered by it. In such a book a discography would have been more of an aid than a bibliography.

Somewhere in India, on one occasion, a musicologist pundit sat in the audience, listening to the singing of *Ustād* (Maestro) Fayyāî Khān. He interrupted the singing, telling the Maestro, "You are singing wrong. Your rendition of the *rāg* is not according to the specifications written in the *Granth*." The maestro said. "Let me have a look at it", said the Maestro. Grabbing the *Granth* he pressed it first against his right ear and then his left ear, and said, "I hear no sound coming from this *Granth*."

A critique of this book, if it is to be of any benefit, should be attempted in a classroom situation, equipped with a sound system and illustrative

recordings. Reading it in solitude, without the help of recordings, will be as eventless and tasteless as the reading of a cook-book far away from a kitchen and a pantry.

In this book there is much alternation between discourses on mysticism (Yoga, Sufism, Kabbala), and discourses on music. It gives the reader a jolty experience of ongoing digressions between mysticism and music.

The message of the book is that listening to, and performing, any kind of vocal or instrumental music, is a mystical happening. Who will take exception to this message? What is left unexplored by the author is the variety of mystical experience offered by this or that system of music.

Even though any musical event is unique, the performers necessarily belong to a particular tradition of folk music or classical music. When we talk about Sufi music, we must first talk about Sufism in some depth. When we talk about the *rāg* music of India, we must first talk about the culture of its Hindu performers and its Muslim performers. When we talk about the songs sung by the Hasidim, we should keep in mind the Kabbalistic psyche, conditioned by the collective of the Jewish history.

It is observed in this book (p. 95) that writing down of music became necessary toward the beginning of the Seventeenth century when Opera was born, bringing together poetry, music, song and instrumental accompaniment. Within a century after this, Professor Godwin tells us, instrumental music " gained complete independence from vocal models, dance and background usage". (p. 96). With due elation he declares that the invention of polyphony in "its classical expression deserves to be placed among the very greatest achievements of European civilisation". (p. 94). Elsewhere the Professor says that symphonies represent the musical counterpart of Gothic architecture. But he stops short of asking the question: How comes it that polyphonic music and Gothic architecture materialised only in Christian Europe. The question is very much worth asking. Isn't there something Trinitarian about these forms of art?

More often than not operatic singing ends on high C, the note registering distance from home. Biblical nomadism seems in evidence here. From the story-based operas symphonies acquired the trait of journey. These are conjectures by the writer of this review who is able to look at Western music from without, being devoted to the classical music of India and

Pakistan.

The music of symphony, bound by the principle of perfect pitch, is sheet-music, performed by way of rigid adherence. Its utter meticulousness and precision match the efficiency and precision of sophisticated machinery of superior quality, reminding one of Rolls Royce. Europeans to whom this music is native, are slow to admit the militancy of its format: all its performers dressed in tuxedo uniform, kept from transgression by the sheet in front of them, and by the commanding superintendence of the conductor. Piano being the father of symphony orchestra, slides between notes are alien to symphonies. The upright piano is the most Christian of musical instruments; like Christian belief it is inflexible and unbending. The spirit of the *New Testament* seems at work in the symphonies also in that they have plenty of rhythm but minimal percussion.

The boom of symphonies owes itself to the Industrial Revolution, along with expansionism of the nations of Europe.

It is fascinating to realise that the experience of Sufi music offers the Muslim listener a very different kind of transport. Flute solo performed by the flutists at the shrine of Rumi in Qonya takes us on a exotic trip to a spiritual space far removed from what is familiar to lovers of symphonies.

In India flute music has graduated to the status of chamber-music. It is now performed to the accompaniment of the drone-instrument (*tambūrā*) and the *Çablah*-drums. In that setting it is no more the haunting outdoor instrument of the solitary shepherd.

The Sufi music of the *qawwāls* of Turkey is performed unaccompanied by drums. The *qawwalī* of India and Pakistan is accompanied by *Çablah*-drums, the harmonium, and clapping. Turkish *qawwalī* is solemn. Indo-Pakistani *qawwalī* is saucy. Both are Sufi music but the spiritual trips offered by them are different.

Professor Godwin does not display awareness of the following elemental features of the Classical music of India and Pakistan:

1. It is not bound by the principle of perfect pitch.
2. Countless classical songs sung in the *rāgās* contain girl-talk (-milk-maid talk-), derived from sacred Hindu folk-lore, sing alike by Hindu and Muslim singers, both male and female.

3. All classical vocal and instrumental music of India and Pakistan is performed accompanied, from beginning to end, by the inevitable drone instrument called *tambūrā*. It is tuned as follows:

   1st string (made of copper) – tuned to the 4th or the 5th.

   2nd string (made of steel) – tuned to high tonic.

   3rd string (made of steel) – tuned to high tonic.

   4th string (made of copper) --- tuned to low tonic.

4. All forms of Indo-Pakistani classical music are set to strong and sophisticated rhythms, delicately played on the *Çablah*-drums or the two-sided *mridang*-drum. This music is music of strong percussion. The drums in it are to be tuned to the tonic. Melody in it gets bejewelled by delicate drumming, using hands, not sticks.

5. The performance of *rāgās* in any form is a stroll around one's home and not a take-off to some distant place. It is music of the stay-put inhabitants of India who perform seated bare-footed on the floor.

6. Last, but not least, is the liquid character of melodic activity in it, sustained by incessant slides between notes.

Professor Godwin has this comment on the Muslim and Jewish experience of music:

> "In the public worship of Islam, music has no place beyond the simple chanting of the Qur'an. As if in compensation, the Muslim esoteric orders – the Sufis – have made music one of the strongest features of their own religious practices. The general term for it (*samā'*), 'audition', stresses the passive nature of this musical way: whereas the Hasidim are transported by their own song, the Sufis' is the more inward path of the concentrated listener. Perhaps in this one can see a reflection of the earth--embracing mysticism of the Jew *vis-à-vis* the earth—forsaking flight of the oriental mystic". (p. 75)

Professor Godwin has jumped to a conclusion from the literal meaning of the word *samā'*, getting the impression that only the listeners at a session of *samā'* are transported by music, and not the performers. He has conveyed

this impression to us without getting it verified by Muslim musicians.

He finds evidence of "the earth-forsaking flight" of Sufi mystics in the dance of the Whirling Dervishes of the Mevlevi Order. This conclusion is hasty too. The dance of these Dervishes is not the only genre of Sufi music. Who can fail to feel the very down-to-earth quality of *qawwalī* singing?

Thorough enquiry into Muslim music would have made Professor Godwin acquainted with the Arabic word of singing: *ghinā'*, the literal meaning of which is 'producing nasal voice'. Nasal voice is hypnotic voice. It is in service of Oriental tranquilism. Operatic voice is not nasal. It comes straight from the thorax. It serves the Christian value of vigilance, like coffee.

The forte of Professor Godwin is his grasp of the character and history of Western Classical music. He points out (pp. 92-102) four stages of its evolution:

1. The polyphonic era (9th century to 6th century). Polyphony, he tells us, was born and bred in service of the church and its Brahmins, reflecting their values.

   (The Professor does not spell out those values. We have to attempt our own guesses in this matter).

2. The operatic era (9th and 18th centuries). Opera, which combined drama and music, came with reformation and the rise of Secularism. It was not only for nobility but still it was the royal and titled patrons who first owned the theatres and dictated the style. Socially speaking, Operatic singing asserted and promoted the voice of the individual in society.

3. The boom of symphonies. It happened after the French Revolution (1789). The great symphonies were composed in a world of collective evolution, rising above caste. In them is experienced the holiness of the priest, the bravery and mercy of the warrior, the honesty and generosity of the merchant, and diligence of the peasant.

4. The present Age of Rock & Roll. Rock & Roll, the author tells us, is music of the fourth caste, the labourers.

This book is packed with such a host of ideas and quotations that

we can go on forever with comments on them, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, and page by page. For critique in this review only a few of the ideas were picked up.

THE ONLY TRADITION

William W. Quinn
Reviewed by
Alvin Moore Jr.

THE ONLY TRADITION, by William W Quinn, Jr; xviii, 384pp 1966, State University of New York Press, Albany, New York.

In 1991 an extraordinary and long awaited book, *The Unanimous Tradition*, was published in Sri Lanka under the auspices of that country's Institute for Traditional Studies. Edited by Ranjit Fernando, the volume includes contributions from almost all the major contemporary traditionalist writers of the Anglophone world. The excellence of the book and the similarity of its title to that of the book under review aroused hopeful interest and anticipation on the part of this writer. Unfortunately the similarity in titles is misleading, for the content of the Quinn book cannot be compared with that of the first named. *The Only Tradition* is also meretricious in that it purports to offer something it does not deliver, namely an adequate account of the first principles of the *philosophia perennis* and how an effective return to these principles could offer a " 'solution' to the vicissitudes of modernity" (the title of the last chapter). On the other hand, the book delivers something that is not announced: namely, an ongoing apologia for the Theosophical Society. The author endeavors not only to co opt Coomaraswamy and Guénon for this and other purposes, but also to identify this heterodox movement with "the only tradition". From the standpoint of traditional orthodoxy the book is not only a nullity, it is sinister.

Quinn states in his "Acknowledgement" that the "...book is essentially a revised and updated dissertation submitted in candidacy for the Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1981", the title of the dissertation being ***The Only Tradition: "Philosophia Perennis" and Culture in the Writings of Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rene Guénon***. Given the dissertation title, a focus on Coomaraswamy and Guénon naturally follows; but there is actually very little attention given to the properly metaphysical element in the writings of these two, and it is this element that sets them apart from other writers who have had the same or similar concerns. Quinn's interest is at the social level and he is largely an innocent, metaphysically speaking. Moreover, very little attention is given to the work of Frithjof Schuon, a sage outstanding not

only for his functioning at the level of the transpersonal Intellect but notable also for his practical wisdom: namely, the application of principles to the realm of contingencies.

Quinn also mentions his indebtedness to several distinguished scholars who served on his dissertation committee, chief among whom was Mircea Eliade; and it was Eliade who introduced Quinn to the works of Coomaraswamy and Guénon. Not surprisingly, Quinn's dissertation-become-book is dedicated to Mircea Eliade, the doyen of ***religionswissenschaft*** during much of his long career. Throughout *The Only Tradition* there is only one relatively minor point on which Quinn states his disagreement with the learned Roumanian. So it is appropriate to not that Eliade was a scholar for whom all the world's Traditions, sacred texts, myths, beliefs and symbols became so much grist for the mills of academe -- which is to say that all mankind's traditional inheritance was reduced to matter for academic and secular ratiocination, to sterile programs demanding no personal commitment and yielding little if any spiritual gain. As Schuon has observed: it is possible to exhaust the potential of traditional ideas on the level of mental exercises. And Guénon remarked somewhere, with more perspicacity than we then gave him credit for, that one of the purposes of the history of religions, considered as a secular discipline, is to empty traditional forms of their qualitative content; a statement that takes on new meaning precisely in the light of Eliade's (and other scholars') indifference to this qualitative content.

Permit us an aside, but it is one that is necessary to clarify remarks that follow: in Quinn's book the Primordial Tradition (which alone can be considered "the only tradition") is frequently mentioned; but there is no recognition on the part of our author that the Primordial Tradition has been outspread, like the fingers extending from the palm of one's hand, into Heaven's major initiatives towards this or that sector of mankind. These Heavenly initiatives form the great orthodox traditions, and it is only within the parameters they establish that man can return to his Fatherland. For the Christian, ***nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me***, "no one cometh to the Father but by Me" -- the **Me** who is simultaneously Way, Truth, and Life. Strict parallels exist in all orthodox traditions. As Schuon has glossed this idea for other traditions: no one returns to God except through the human manifestation of the Logos and by all that this manifestation represents --

whether it be Christ, the Buddha, Muhammad, etc. This obviously assumes, in the words of the *Holy Qur'ān*: that "surely we are from God, and to Him we shall return". But it is by no means sure that our author recognizes this absolutely indispensable principle, for he writes from the Theosophist perspective; and to say the least, it is not certain that Theosophists are creationists or, speaking more broadly, that they recognize the entire dependence of contingent existence on a creating or manifesting Principle. In any case, the dispensations mentioned above: namely, the orthodox Traditions ordained by Heaven, will hold until the consummation f this world, that is, until the end of the present cycle. The present humanity generally will not see the restoration of effective traditional unity this side the grave, or the hither side of extraordinary spiritual realization. To hold otherwise is to ally oneself with parodies and caricatures, with the counter-tradition, with the ephemerality of evil, with the Anti-Christ or what Muslims call ***al-MasīÁ ad-Dajjāl***, the false or lying Messiah. Some foretaste of primordial tradition unity, however, is intrinsic to esoterism; but this is not something that can be approached or achieved on the human and sociological level. We know, sadly, that esoterism, too, can be and is caricatured, especially in these last times,.

To return briefly to Mircea Eliade: in spite of promising beginnings and career-long proximity to the world's great Traditions, in his maturity Eliade was a secular humanist and a rationalistic "philosopher" (in the contemporary sense) who had not found a home in any of the Traditions. Instead, *à la* Teilhard de Chardin, he advocated a "globalization" or a "planetization" of consciousness and culture which, in spite of lip service to spirituality, could only be horizontal, this-worldly, and ultimately downward leading. It may be objected that this is supposed to be a review of Quinn's *The Only Tradition*, not of Eliade. But we must show Quinn's antecedents, where he is coming from; for no man ploughs an entirely virgin field, intellectually speaking. It is the perspective personified in Eliade and his work that has shaped the thinking that has gone into *The Only Tradition* as well as the manner in which Quinn utilizes his major sources, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Rene Guénon. Though Quinn speaks here and there of metaphysics, of the ***philosophia perennis***, even of the ***sophia perennis*** and of **theosophia**, the ***rasa***, the overriding taste of his writing is cerebral and sociological in character. There is nothing of that innascible quality

which one-rightly expects in the utterances of the better traditionalist writers. He cites Coomaraswamy and Guénon primarily where they speak of social applications of metaphysical principles, not where metaphysical or even cosmological realization is in question -- which is the fundamental ***raison d'etre*** certainly of Guénon's ***oeuvre***, and which is fully implicit in Coomaraswamy's normative writing.

Quinn seems beholden to certain well known persons who on any serious reckoning would have to be considered of the most doubtful traditional pedigree: to wit Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, co-founder f the Theosophical Society; and Carl Gustav Jung, founder of the analytic psychology movement. One illustrative episode each from both lives must suffice to range them among the gurus of darkness, for these episodes are not untypical. When Blavatsky was residing at Adyar (a suburb of Madras, in South India), certain persons associated with the Adyar office (then international headquarters of the Theosophical Society) charged that alleged psychic phenomena produced by Blavatsky were fraudulent. The Society for Psychical Research (London) was invited to investigate. On completing its inquiry, the SPR stated that Blavatsky was not a mere vulgar adventuress, she was a highly skilled impostor. It is noteworthy that she made no serious effort to defend herself, and soon afterwards left India never to return. As for Jung, spiritism and occultism were elements in his family inheritance. He characterized his own mother as normal by day but uncanny by night; and Jung himself spent a career exhuming the subconscious prolongation of the human psyche, thus greatly abetting the growing topsy-turvy conviction of the modern world that, as Arnold Toynbee said (in *A Study of History*),

> ... the Subconscious, not the Intellect, is the organ through which man lives his spiritual life....the fount of poetry, music and the visual arts and the channel through which the Soul is in communion with God.

It is unconscionable that an intelligent writer -- which Quinn clearly is -- should implicitly place the doctrine of these two, Blavatsky and Jung, on an equal footing with the doctrine expounded by Coomaraswamy and Guénon. One can only conclude that, intelligence notwithstanding, the author has not informed himself of the real thrust of Coomaraswamy's and Guénon's work; or that he is seriously lacking in discernment and discrimination; or, *quod absit*, that there is an intention to deceive.

Quinn is patently sympathetic to Theosophy though he does not identify himself personally with the Society (which was born with fissiparous tendencies, and there are several). In fact he asserts that the several societies must be distinguished from the movement; but the several societies are the most direct expression of the movement. Nevertheless, because of Quinn's obvious sympathy one must wonder if he is not trying to advance and agenda. Unfortunately, the modern Theosophical movement has been heavily colored by very questionable characters, claims, and initiatives. There is, for example, the effort by the Society under Annie Besant to put forward a new "*World Teacher*", in effect a new *avatar*, which in the nature of things could only have had been a "false or lying" messiah -- had the effort succeeded. There were numerous charges of fraud against Blavatsky (not only those at Adyar) and much of this she only half denied, saying in effect that it was all necessary to win followers. But what is one to think of a leader who has to resort to such tactics and what is one to think of those thus engaged as disciples? And there is the eclectic hodgepodge of disparate elements offered as doctrine, the fictions passed off as "communications" from the Masters, and numerous other fantasies that do nothing to command respect for those who lend them credence. But that was earlier. What about the contemporary Theosophical Society? According to Joscelyn Godwin in his *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, "Together with the Western occult tradition, the Theosophists have provided almost all the underpinnings of the 'New Age' movement, their exoteric reflection...." (In passing, we must ask, "what kind of 'enlightenment' is it that includes the likes of Aleister Crowley?", whose 'illumination' can only have been *d 'en bas*).

The path of deception extends back much further than Quinn and his book, and includes the hijacking of the word *theosophy*. *Theosophy* or *theosophia*, in itself thoroughly honorable and venerable, is a combined form of the Greek words ***theos***, and *sophia*, and according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* means wisdom concerning God or things divine". This same source traces the word to St Dionysius the Aeropagite through John Scotus Erigena. Other sources carry it back even to Ammonius Saccus (175-242 AD), the reputed founder of Neo-Platonism and teacher of Plotinus, and still others say it originated during the Renaissance. Whatever the case regarding the origin and early use of the word, the reality thus denominated is obviously a permanent possibility; but it appears that it is to be distinguished from

spiritual realization itself as expounded in the Vedanta, the Buddhists schools, Sufism, and in Hesychasm. What is to be remarked here, however, is that Quinn seeks to identify modern Theosophy, blemished as it is, with this permanent "wisdom concerning God or things divine"; and though he distinguishes between the Society (or societies) and the movement, he nevertheless seeks in this way to authenticate something that is intrinsically heterodox. He suggests that there is continuity between *theosophia antiqua* and *theosophia recens* or *moderna* (though these adjectives are not used). In an effort to associate modern heterodox Theosophy with ancient and medieval figures of unquestioned honor and integrity, Quinn lists as theosophers Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Plato, Clement of Alexandria, St Augustine, St Dionysius, and Boethius; then continuing with the the medieval and modern periods, Quinn mentions Avicenna, Ibn 'Arabī, Eckhart, Ficino, Cusanus, Boehme, Nostradamus, Law, Swedenborg, Balvatsky, Mead, Steiner, Waite, Coomaraswamy and Guénon. This is plainly duplicitous; Nostradamus, Blavatsky, Mead, Steiner, and Waite have no intrinsic right to be considered of the same quality as the others named in the list, and grouping them with Plato, St Augustine, Ibn 'Arabī, and Eckhart can only establish false associations and lead astray the unwary.

Quinn seems ashamed of some of the things that have characterized the Theosophical Society. Nevertheless, as we stated above, the Society or societies are the direct expression of the movement; and *a fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos* -- "by their fruits shall ye know them". To speak, then, of "the only tradition" and to try and include heterodox Theosophy in this context is to obfuscate if not to deceive.

Chapters 13 and 14 of *The Only Tradition*, "Losses and Gains of the Western Worldview" and "Cultural Effects of Modernity", are not without interest and some diagnostic merit. In the final chapter, however, "The 'Solution' to the vicissitudes of Modernity", the author endeavors to give a secular treatment to the end times, the examination of which traditionally lies within the scope of eschatology, whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish (and even Zoroastrian). This field of great doctrinal importance and richness is passed over in silence as if it did not exist. Quinn writes of an historical continuity between our present cycle, accelerating to its *dénouement* and he conceives this even as a physical continuity with a coming new Golden Age even though he allows this transition may be accompanied by great

catastrophes. But according to traditional doctrine a *pralaya* if not a *mahapralaya* must intervene between the *kali-yuga* and the next *kåta-yuga* or Golden Age. This means that whatever continuity may exist will not be of the corporeal order, but of the subtle, formless or principial realms, according to the nature of the cycle or sub-cycle in question. The further implication is that *this* world will be dissolved and reintegrated into its immediately superior principle and thence into still superior levels. *Dies irae, dies illa, Solvet saeclum in favilla, Teste David cum Sibylla.*

The diversity of the great Traditions is willed by Heaven, and it is Luciferian pride to think man can upset this order, achieve anything against it, or enter in by a gateway other than that of Him who said of Himself, *Ego sum ostium. Per me si quis introierit salvabitur; et ingredietur et egredietur et pascua inveniet.* "I am the Door. By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved; and he shall go in and out and find pasture" -- and *mutatis mutandis* for other orthodox Traditions.

On the face of it, in *The Only Tradition* we are presented with an attempt to clear the way for the counter-tradition, for a tradition in reverse. We have seen that at least one abortive attempt has already been made, under the auspices of the Theosophical Society, to foist on the world a false *avatara* in the Krishnamurti affair. Quinn speaks of the possibility of a new *avatara*, though in words which leave no doubt that he is not thinking in terms of the eschatology of Semitic monotheism. In this period of narrowing possibilities a new divine descent is not to be expected. But we may expect attempts to mimic an *avatara*; we may expect caricatures and parodies. And no doubt the counter-initiation will learn from its earlier ineptitudes and make more and more subtle efforts, "*deceiving if possible even the elect*". As for the Theosophical Society itself, it is now somewhat numerically reduced from its heyday and has become but one among many occult groups. But it has not grown less sinister for all that and, indeed, in becoming less popular it may have become more influential as the intelligence of its adherents has grown. We see the name and/or influence cropping up in all sorts of unexpected places: in the arts, especially painting, literature and music, in extremist sectors of the environmentalist movement, and as noted above in the guise of the "esoteric" inspiration of the New Age movement.

It is relatively easy to see through Quinn's book; even so, it will doubtless achieve its purpose of confusing and then deceiving many,

especially in this period of diminishing discernment and discrimination. Meanwhile as Yeasts (who was himself influenced by Blavatsky and Theosophism) wrote:

> Turning and turning in widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...
> The best lack all conviction while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second coming is at hand...
> And what rough beast its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethelem to be born?

In the interim we must do all we can to affirm and to defend the Good, the True, and the Beautiful -- first of all within ourselves, and then in the world about us -- in the certainty that they can never be really but only apparently defeated.

There are other points in *The Only Tradition* which can be challenged: for example the claim that Ananda Coomareswamy was influenced by Theosophy; which is tantamount to saying that all contact implies endorsement or identification. Then there is the claim of great similarity between the *philosophia perennis and* Theosophy; but in the presence of such pretensions, one must ask: "How well have you read in the *philosophia perennis*?" And there is the claim that Theosophy, heteroclite by nature, is really one among many other expressions of the *philosophia perennis*. Theosophy is, in fact, a caricature, a hodgepodge of ill assembled elements from diverse quarters, an unworthy travesty of the Truth concerning man's origin, nature, and destiny. (And we must not forget that man shares the nature of the what he worships.) But having identified and treated at some length more immediately pivotal errors in this book, it would be overkill to dwell further on each fallacy. We will close with an invitation to the author to reconsider his personal orientation and employ his very considerable talents in ways more positive and more profitable both for himself and for his fellows. *Hodie si vocem audieritis, nolite obdurare corda vestra secundam diam tentationis....*

Note: This controversial book has aroused considerable interest among the traditionally minded. Though all the errors and shortcomings in this review are strictly our own, we wish nevertheless to acknowledge helpful comment, useful suggestions, and material provided, and to thank Rama Coomaraswamy, James Cutsinger, Whitall Perry, Charles Upton, Brice Warnick and James Wetmore.

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