

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE UMMAH

I. TERMINOLOGY

The social order of Islam is therefore unique. None of the terms known in the Western languages can be used to refer to it. In English the expression "social order" means the system of values or principles which govern the life of a society. Any system of any values or principles qualifies for the appellation, since even what may be described as chaos is a form or order of social living. Hence, it is proper to speak of a capitalist, communist, democratic, fascist social order, or an English, American, French, Chinese or Indian social order. When it comes to "social," the adjectival derivative from society, the meaning is more restricted. The term "society" means a voluntary grouping of humans designed to achieve certain ends (what the Germans would more precisely call *Gesellschaft*. It is not to be confused with "community" which is defined as the involuntary grouping of humans who are one or alike in race, language, history, culture, geography. The Germans call the latter *Gemeinschaft*. "Society" and "community" may and may not coincide. In the case of the French and of the English, for example, they do; in that of the Germans, the Slavs and Chinese, they do not. Community membership is natural and inevitable, except by emigration, naturalization, and systematic acculturation. Society membership, *per contra*, is instant; for it is the result of decision. That is why it is nearly always restricted in effect to some common denominator or denominators shared by the members of the group. Such denominators may vary from economic interest such as the members of a cooperative housing society enjoy, to a whole range of cultural values implied when we designate a specific class or group within the group.¹ The political entity is hardly ever a society. Though some exceptions may be found (Switzerland,

¹In the West, in modern times, a common need and a decision to meet it have provided the foundation for economic associations such as commercial companies, corporations and cooperative societies of all kinds (credit and thrift, consumers, housing, marketing, etc.). But never for a state.

Yugoslavia [and formerly] the U.S.S.R.), they are all of recent origin and the result of special factors. Most political entities coincide with communities. If not total, their coincidence is nearly so, a fact which justifies the political entity as a "nation" as well. Hence, it is possible in Western political theory to define the state as a territory with definite boundaries within which lives a specific community whose affairs are governed by a sovereign power capable of enforcing its decisions.²

In Islam, two terms corresponding to community are *sha'b* and *qawm*. They may not be used to denote society without violence to their meaning, i.e., to the consciousness of the people denoted by the appellation.³ The Arabs, Turks and Persians are each a *sha'b* or a *qawm*, if we mean thereby to speak of them as communities varying from one another; if our purpose is to focus on their differences in language, customs, geography, genealogy, etc. But they are not "societies," either individually, or severally, insofar as this category is not applicable to them exclusively, but would at once include the Malays, Indians, Hausas, Bantus and Slavs, etc. Insofar as all these communities and more share in Islam, in its culture and civilization, they are integral parts of one and the same *ummah* or "society" of Islam. The *ummah* is a universal society⁴ whose membership includes the widest possible variety of ethnicities or communities, but whose commitment to Islam binds them to a specific social order. The matter is further complicated by the fact that each one of the Muslim communities is the *ummah*, the microcosm. For it is necessarily and legitimately responsible for speaking and acting for the world-*ummah* as long as the latter has no legally-constituted government or institution capable of enforcing Islamic law, of effectively representing the universal *ummah*, or of assuming responsibility therefor. The reason for this is the fact that it is Islam which provides them with all the important categories of culture and civilization, of social differentiation and classification, of evaluation in all personal, and most social

That is supposed to rest exclusively on ethnic characteristics which are innately common, and hence permanent, See: Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press 1962), p. 393.

²This is the traditional, classical definition of the state in Western culture. It is the opposite of the Islamic state which is limited neither by territory, nor by ethnic, cultural, religious, or political boundaries. See, for example, George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1947), pp. 764-65; and James B. Hastings, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, s.v. "The State."

³Al Zubaydī. *Taj al 'Arūs* s.v. q-w-m, vol. 9.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ (الأنبياء: ٩٢)

⁴This is your *ummah*—one, united and integral—and I am your Lord. Serve Me (21:92).

and inter-societal affairs. Hence, there is far more justification for their identification on the basis of Islam which they share with the world Muslim brotherhood than on the basis which makes them a community. The latter, i.e., the differing elements which their respective communities furnish, are not denied; but being relatively unimportant in comparison with those which Islam provides for them, they are recognized and put in the places which properly belong to them.

The term *ummah* is not translatable and must be taken in its original Islamic Arabic form. It is not synonymous with “the people,” or “the nation” or “the state,” expressions which are always determined by either race, geography, language and history, or any combination of them. On the other hand, the *ummah* is translocal, not determined at all by geography considerations. Its territory is not only the whole earth, but all of creation. Neither is the *ummah* restricted to any race. It is trans-racial and regards all humanity as its actual or potential members. Nor is the *ummah* the “state” because it is a transtotal world-state, within which it may include and contain several “states.” Equally, the constituents of the *ummah* constitute the *ummah* even though they may not fall under the political sovereignty of one state, not even that of the Islamic state. The *ummah* is a sort of “United Nations” with one strong and comprehensive ideology, a world-government and a world-army to enforce its decisions. The *ummah* is the social order of Islam; and the movement which pursues it, or seeks to actualize its goals, is ummatism.⁵

II. NATURE OF THE UMMAH

A. AGAINST ETHNOCENTRISM

The social order of Islam is universal, enveloping the whole of mankind without exception. By virtue of being human, of being born, every person is an actual member of the social order, or a potential member whose recruitment is the duty of all other members.⁶ Islam recognizes the nature

⁵See this author's *On Arabism: Urūbah and Religion: An Analysis of the Fundamental Ideas of Arabism and of Islam as Its Highest Moment of Consciousness* (Amsterdam; Djambatan, 1962), chap. VI.

⁶The obligatory nature of the *Shari'ah*, concerning the divine imperatives, falls on all humans without exception or discrimination, because the desiderata of values of Islam are so for all. Hence, every human being ought to be called to Islam by the Muslims, who already acknowledge this normativeness of the contents of the Islamic revelation. For further analysis of this point, see this author's "On the Nature of Islamic *Da'wah*," *International Review of Mission*, vol. 65, no. 260 (October 1976).

grouping of humans into families, tribes and nations, as a God-created and God-ordained arrangement.⁷ But it rejects every ultimization of such groupings as definitive of man, as constituting a final criterion of good and evil. While extending the legal notion of the “family” to include all the relatives who can show any genealogical relation to one another however remote, and governing their mutual relations of inheritance and support by law, Islam established for the larger groupings of tribes and nations the function of complementing and cooperating with one another for the benefit of all.⁸ Above all humans, individuals as well as groups, stands the law. Ethnic diversity is a fact. It is also to a certain measure a desideratum. Beyond that measure, Islam regards it as *matériel*, subject to the dictates of the law. When ethnicity becomes ethnocentrism, Islam condemns it as *kufir* (apostasy), because it implies the setting up of another source for the law, for good and evil; namely, the ethnicity itself. Juristically, ethnic considerations fall within the realm of the *mubāh* (permissible), and is limited to the realms of the *ḥarām* (the prohibited) and the *makrūh* (the recommended-against) on the one side, and of the *wājib* (the obligatory) and *mandūb* (the recommended) on the other.

Islam is not inimical to ethnicity going as far as constituting its own political state, its own *khilāfah*, a position recognized as legitimate since the days of al Māwardī, as long as the *sharī'ah* is observed in full.⁹ Since observance lays down upon a sovereign ethnic entity the duty of making peace and war only in step with the *ummah* as a whole, and so to conduct its affairs as to prevent evil from befalling the others and to bring good to them. Beyond these measures, Islam tolerates no particularism, and lays upon all Muslims the religious obligation to fight it with all their strength wherever and whenever it shows its face.¹⁰ The law of Islam

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ...
(الحجرات: ١٣)

⁷O Mankind, We have created you male and female. We have constituted you into peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Noblest among you in the eye of Allah is the most righteous (49:13).

⁸Ibid.

⁹The legitimacy of more than one caliphate was defended by al Ash'arī, and condemned by al Māwardī. However, Islamic juristic opinion at the time achieved a near consensus in favor of tolerance, as the issue concerned the Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba and the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt.

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَت إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ فَاءَهُنَّ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (الحجرات: ٩)

¹⁰And if two factions of believers fight each other, seek to reconcile them, If, thereafter, any of the two factions returns to aggression, then fight them until they comes back to their senses, and

is one for all on account of its divine source. Just as God is One, the God of all creatures, certainly of all humans, His law is one and the same. He has no favorites. He makes no exceptions. Islam regards ethnocentrism as gravely as it does, because favoritism is an attack upon the very transcendence of God. For God to be the Ultimate Reality, the Ultimate Judge (i.e., the Ultimate Principle, Criterion and Source), His stance *vis-à-vis* all creatures must be one and the same. For Him to regard any ethnic group as His favorite, i.e., as different in relation to Him, to His law, to His cosmic order, to His system of reward and punishment, is to necessarily impair His ultimacy or transcendence. The claim that ultimate reality is plural is a contradiction unworthy even of the small mind. And so is every variety of ethical relativism, whether human, such as eudaemonism; cultural, such as utilitarianism, the Anglo-Saxon tradition of political liberalism, and all nationalism; or Protagorean, such as hedonism, the new-old religion of the West.¹¹

B. UNIVERSALISM

The social order of Islam is universalist in tendency.¹² Though it may currently exist in one nation or another, a group of nations, or merely a group of individuals, it is one in that it seeks to comprehend mankind. Islamically speaking, therefore, there can be neither an Arab nor a Turkish, nor a Persian nor a Pakistani, nor a Malay social order, but one: the social order of Islam. However, the social order of Islam may begin in any country or group; but it sours and turns non-Islamic if it does not move continuously toward including all of mankind. The ideal of the universal community is that of Islam, expressed in the world-*ummah*. It is not *dépassé*, out of tune with the times, an absolute ideal of the Middle Ages. In the West, the ideal of the universal community ruled for a millennium and a half, from the *Imperium Mundi* of the Romans to the Reformation. It was attempted again under the Enlighten-

reconcile the two again in justice. Be just and equitable, for Allah loves the just (49:9).

¹¹See this author's essay, "The Metaphysical Status of Values in the Western and Islamic Traditions, *Studia Islamica*, Fascicle xxviii, 1968, pp. 29-62.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ... (الحجرات: ١٠) إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ
(الأنبياء: ٩٢)

¹²The believers are indeed brethren to one another, constituting one brotherhood (49:10)... This is your *ummah*—one, united and integral—and I am your Lord. Serve Me (21:92).

visions of both democracy and communism. At every one of these occasions, the ideal was corrupted, violated, assassinated and laid to rest by the particularistic, nationalistic, and ethnic subversion of its enemies. Nor is any one of those movements inimical to the universalist ideal, or describable as genuinely opposed to the ideal as such. The ethnic forces which rallied the people around their princes in the Reformation were opposed to the corruption of the ideal as practiced by the Roman Church; and those nationalist forces which countered the Enlightenment ideal of the French Revolution were opposed to its corruption by Imperial France. Likewise, the breakdown of the ideal after World War I and II was due to the machinations and manipulations of Zionism and neo-colonist imperialism. In other words, the ideal failed because of a lack of genuine subscription to it; because of a failure of nerve on the part of its adherents. The faith of the Western masses in the ideal continued. But it has met its final disaster at the hand of contemporary skepticism where not only is nothing holy, but nothing has any precise or definite meaning at all.

C. TOTALISM

The Islamic social order is totalist, in the sense that it holds Islam relevant to every era of human activity. The base of the social order is the will of God which must be relevant to every creature insofar as God had endowed it with constitution, a structure, and a function.¹³ Human beings, in their physical, personal, social and spiritual natures, do have a God-given constitution which they ought to fulfill. No activity of theirs escapes God's determination; and they can project for themselves no goal in any field of endeavor that does not fall under the *sharī'ah* categories of *wājib* through *ḥarām*. Moreover, it is a sign of a developed mentality and a refined vision that the realm of the *mubāḥ* (permissible) is as much

¹³Qur'an 25:2. While the universalism of Islam is evident in the fact that the injunctions of Islam are addressed to all humans by virtue of their humanity, its totalism is so in the fact that where it left any area of human behavior not specifically legislated for, it placed that burden upon the Muslim. The Muslim is obliged to seek the application of the revelation to the everyday affairs and problems he encounters. *Ijtihād* is a universal duty incumbent on all Muslims, as Allah affirmed in the Qur'an (6:38).

occupied by the desiderata of Islam as possible. The juristic principle¹⁴ of no prohibition without a text (the rule is permissibility) is a preventive against the unjust and invalid extension of prohibitions, not against their valid extrapolations. To analyze, to deduce, induce, to extend and extrapolate the laws of Islam and make them relevant to all that there is, is both worthy and necessary, Otherwise the comprehensiveness of the will of God on which the *sharī'ah* ultimately rests would become questionable. The best social order is, in consequence of this truth, that which orders as much of human activity as possible, not as little as possible; and the best government is that which governs most, not least. Let us remember that the Islamic social order is not merely a club, a learned society, a chamber of commerce, a trade union, a consumers' cooperative or a political party in the Western sense of the term. It is all these and much more, as Ḥasan al Bannā used to say, precisely because of the relevance of the will of God to all things.¹⁵

The totalism of the Islamic social order does not only pertain to present human activities in all times and places, as well as all the humans who are the subjects of these activities and whom it regards as its necessary members. While it holds all Muslims as conscripts in its programs and projects, it holds non-Muslims as potential members who ought to be persuaded to join. There is hence no end to the social order of Islam because of the endlessness of life and activity in this world. The task is to interfere in everything that is or moves to the end of making it, him, her, or them, the more and better fulfillers of the divine will.¹⁶ *Falāḥ* is the genuine transformation of the earth into the garden of God (the real meaning of the Quranic concept of *isti'mār al arḍ* [reconstruction of the earth]), and of mankind into heroes, geniuses and saints fulfilling the patterns of God. We must of course remember that to do so immorally would not constitute *falāḥ*. *Falāḥ* requires that the acts of transformation themselves fulfill the divine law as they seek to bring about its fulfillment in their objects.

¹⁴This is one of the "general principles of law making" (al qawā'id al kulliyah) Subḥī al Mahmasānī, *Falsafat al Tashrī' fi al Islām* (Beirut: Dār al 'Ilm li al Malayīn, 1380/1961), pp. 261 ff. 'Abd al Wahhāb Khallāf calls these general principles "al qawā'id al uṣūliyah al tashrī'iyah." See his *Ilm Uṣūl al Fiqh* (Cairo: Dar al Qalam, 1392/1372), pp. 197 ff.

¹⁵Iṣḥāq Mūsā al Husaynī, *Al Ikhwān al Muslimūn* (Beirut: Dar Beirut li al Ṭibā'ah wa al Nashr, 1955), p. 79.

... مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَنُوعًا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ (الأنعام: ٣٨)

¹⁶In the Book, We have left nothing out. Everything is recorded and, on the Day of Judgment, all will be brought up before Allah for judgment (6:38).

The social order of Islam is free. If it is built by force, or if it executes its programs through coercion of the people, the social order would lose its Islamicity. Regimentation may well be necessary; but it can be legitimate only if it is restricted to the area of implementation. Prior to that, Islam requires *shūrā* (mutual consultation) on the very instituting of regimentation which can, at any rate, only be temporary and pertinent to specific projects. Where regimentation is the rule and coercion is resorted to on principle, the outcome may well be a successful actualization of the divine pattern, but it is an actualization whose value is utilitarian, not moral. For it to be moral, it would have to be entered into by its subject voluntarily, as a free decision taken out of personal commitment to the value, or divine pattern in question.¹⁷ There is no doubt that Islam seeks the actualization of both, the utilitarian and the moral values, but it does not tolerate, and it pays no respect to the former without the latter. The actualization that counts in its eye is that which realizes both at once. God has taught us this lesson eloquently in the Quran. To the suggestion that humans were about to be created, the angels who can do no wrong but fulfill God's commandment, demonstrated: "Would you then [O God] create a creature that is capable of corruption and homicide, when we do [nothing but] praise and glorify You?" God answered: 'I have a purpose which you do not know.'¹⁸ Were humans like angels, incapable of evil, their deeds would fulfill every divine desire or imperative, but they would not be moral. The moral is the highest part of the divine will. Certainly, therefore, it must be the highest of what is required of a man, for a will that does not enjoin the moral can-

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنْ أَسْرَفَ فَلْيَسْرِمْهُ وَمَنْ حَسَلَ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهِمَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (الزمر: ٤١)

¹⁷We have revealed to you the Book in truth. Whoever decides to be guided by it does so to his own credit. Whoever goes astray, does so to his own discredit. O Muhammad, you cannot do more than to convey and warn (39:41).

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة: ٣٠)

¹⁸And when your Lord announced to the angels that He was about to create man and establish him as His vicegerent on earth, the angels said: Why would You establish on earth a creature that sheds blood and works evil, while we adore You and praise You incessantly? Allah answered: I have another purpose which you do not know (2:30).

not be divine because it would then be in contradiction with itself. The same truth is stressed in the Quran in yet another passage, still more dramatic than the first and as eloquent: "We offered the trust to heaven and earth and mountains," God said, "but they rejected it out of fear. Man carried it."¹⁹ Throughout heaven and earth, the will of God is actualized with the necessity of natural law; the creatures of heaven and earth are not free to do or not to do so. Hence, their actualization is not moral. Only man's is moral, because only he is free before the divine imperative. That is why only he carries the divine "trust".²⁰

To cause humans to actualize value, if it cannot mean to coerce them into such actualization, must mean to persuade them to do so of their own accord. This means that for value-actualization to be moral, it has to mean no more than teaching and convincing humans that values are values, that divine commandments are the desirable patterns. This makes of the social order of Islam a seminar or school on a large scale where the business of government and leadership is to teach, to educate, to convince, to persuade, to enlighten and to guide.

E. MISSION

Evidently the *ummah* is not an accidental growth of nature. It does not exist for its own sake, and much less for the sake of any of its constituents. It exists solely as an instrument of the divine will which seeks, through the *ummah*, to find concretization in space and time. It constitutes the matrix of God's definitive revelation, the instrument of His will, and the point at which the divine meets the cosmos, and here the cosmos is launched on its infinite march toward fulfillment of the divine purpose. As the Quran has put it eloquently, the *ummah* exists so that "the word of God may be supreme."²¹

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ...
(الأحزاب: ٧٢)

¹⁹We have offered Our trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains. But they were frightened by and refused to carry it. Man however accepted and carried it (33:72).

²⁰Ibid.

إِنَّا نَصْرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ... وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (التوبة: ٤٠)

²¹If you do not render assistance to Muhammad, it will not matter; for Allah has committed such help to him... He brought the unbelievers low and made the word of Allah supreme. He is Almighty, Wise (9:40).

A. NO ISLAM WITHOUT THE UMMAH

God commanded: "Let there be of you an *ummah* to call to the good, to enjoin virtue and forbid vice. Those who do so are the felicitous (Holy Quran 3:104). Clearly, the Muslims are commanded to form themselves into an *ummah*, i.e., a social body organized in a special way. The Quran text has given us the *'illah* (sufficient reason) of the commandments, namely, "to call to the good, to enjoin virtue and forbid vice." This *'illah*, however, is only the "final cause" or ultimate purpose which the *ummah* is supposed to serve. A less final "final cause" (hence, an instrumental cause) is the fact that it is the *ummah* which makes possible the calling to the good, the enjoining of virtue, the forbidding of vice. The *ummah* is the source of the Muslim's rights, as well as of his duties; and it is the body in which those rights and duties can be exercised.

The Prophet (SAAS) rules: "It is not permissible for three Muslims to find themselves in a land without their assigning one of them to their leadership." Since their purpose is to uphold the rights, enforce the divine injunctions, realize justice, execute the *hudūd*, and fulfill happiness in this and other world, there is no escape from forming themselves into an *ummah*, an organic society with *'imārah* (government).²²

Someone may object that the realization of personalist values does not need the *ummah*. He may assert that, on the contrary, society spoils such a realization, since virtue is highest when it is secret. Our answer as Muslims is that that is a Christian view. Certainly, Islam enjoins the personalist values, collectively known as *ikhhlāṣ* (*nīyah*, *ṣidq*, *ibtighā' wajh Allāh*, *ṭuhr*, *amānah*, etc.), but it equally forbids monasticism

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (الحديد: ٢٥)
 إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَادَكَ اللَّهُ... (النساء: ١٠٥) وَإِنْ أَحْكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تَتَّبِعِ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ... (المائدة: ٤٩)

²²We have sent Our messengers with the necessary evidence. We revealed to them the Book and the balance [criterion of justice] so that the people may establish justice on earth. We have given them steel, an instrument of great power, that benefit to mankind may be actualized; and that those who wish to help the cause of Allah and His messengers may do so. Allah is Almighty and Exalted (57:25)... We have sent down to you [Muhammad] the Book in truth that you may mete out justice to the people according to His revealed criteria (4:105)... And judge between them [O Muhammad] by what Allah has revealed to you, and do not follow their prejudices (5:49).

(Quran 56:27). Its uniqueness is that of holding that no *ikhhlās* is credible unless it translates itself into visible acts in space and time, as well as of enjoining *ikhhlās* upon the community as such. In Christianity, society and the state are the realm of Caesar. This has been the traditional understanding of Christianity, based upon the scriptural texts of Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25. Efforts at widening the scope of Christian ethics so as to make them relevant and applicable to society began in earnest after the Reformation—Calvinism being the ideal example; but they were all rejected by the majority and never became part of the orthodox dogma except in the view of their own sectarian followers. It was not until after the Industrial Revolution in England had brought man's exploitation of man to superlative levels of cruelty and degradation that the Christian conscience was moved to extend the relevance of Christ to social relations and public legislation. Only in the last two or three decades, and largely in reaction to racism, communism and World War II did the concern become general. Even so, the Christian mind has not opted for an outright affirmation of an *ummah*-like Christian ethic. Where it is convinced of the need for Christ on the political and social levels, it asserts the relevance of Christ ambiguously as being in opposition to what the Caesars of the earth do. It never sees Christ as telling those Caesars what they should do.²³

In Islam, everything is God's concern and falls within the scope of the religious imperative. Indeed, the *ummah* is the *sine qua non* condition of all piety and morality. That is why God described the faithful as "men and women who are protectors of one another, enjoining virtue and forbidding vice to one another" (Holy Quran 9:71). Still more directly, He commanded us to "cooperate with one another for the good, to the purpose of achieving piety" (Holy Quran 5:3). On the side, God commanded us to "disagree with and oppose one another so as to prevent evil, to avoid crime and stop aggression" (Holy Quran 5:3). Didactically, He described the condemned as people who "did not forbid one another the evil which was practiced among them" (Holy Quran 5:79). That is why the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Where people see vice committed and do not seek to change it, Allah would inflict upon them His punishment"; and explained his judgement with the reasoning that "when evil is secret, it hurts only its doer; when it is public and not prohibited, it hurts everybody."²⁴

²³Barth, *Against the Stream*, pp. 29-31.

²⁴Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al Qur'ān al 'Azīm* (Beirut: Dār al Ma'rifaḥ, 1388/1969), s.v. Qur'an 5:79, vol. 2, pp. 83-84.

Further justification for the *ummah* may be derived from the analysis of ethical consciousness and of personalist ethics. The former reveals that a moral imperative is one which derives from, is applied in, and has meaning only in the context of, the web of relations with nature and other persons in which the moral subject stands and lives his life. The service of God being the realization of His will, and the divine will being, *in percipi*, the values, or the *prius* which makes everything valuable, it follows that if man is to serve God, he must stand in the interhuman relations which can actualize the moral values. Just as it is meaningless to require a disembodied soul, unrelated to the world of space-time, to actualize the utilitarian values, it is meaningless to expect that a hermit-monk unrelated to other men in relations of trade, friendship, marriage, neighborhood, production and consumption of material goods, war and peace, trial and judgement, mission and teaching, recreation and esthetic enjoyment, fraternization, to actualize the moral. Moral values are ideal essences in a transcendent supernal plenum unless they are actualized in the very body of such interhuman relations. Morality presupposes such relations and is impossible without them. Every relation forsaken or withdrawn from means that the value relevant to it, i.e., the value to which that relation is the substrate or carrier, is condemned to non-actualization. The life of solitude which the individualist, hermit, anchorite or monk leads is based, in the final analysis, on a truncation of the realm of values, for it is guided by the principle that the values of which the carrier is the consciousness or soul of the subject in itself, i.e., in its uniqueness and solitude, are alone constitutive of the realm of value, or are the highest values for the sake of which all other values may be violated. The former is evident blindness to the existence of other values, a forced axiological monism or exclusivism; the latter, an insensitivity to the real moving power of other values, a false judgement of their order of rank—indeed a denial of their axiological finality. No wonder that all solitary men, the famous hermits and anchorites of history, have led a life of hardness, intemperance and often, of cruelty.²⁵

Whenever the moral dimension is defined in personalist terms, it necessarily issues into an individualism which finds its logical conclusion in egotism. For it must, in the final analysis, depend upon the inner determinants of the moral subject of which only his own conscience can be the judge. The moral agent may will the loftiest and most altruistic

²⁵William James, *The Variety of Religious Experience* (New York: Mentor Books, New American Library, 1953), pp. 269 ff, pp. 276 ff.

ideals. What makes his willing moral, is, *ex hypothesi*, not the loftiness or altruism of the content willed, but the manner in which his own faculty has disposed itself in the act. It is this priority—nay exclusiveness—of his personal internal determination in the constitution of ethicality that makes him an egotist, forever obsessed with himself. If it is claimed that the obsession with self is itself altruistically motivated, as in the case of the self-willed example, it must be acknowledged that since the more involved with nature and other men the conduct of the moral agent is, the less confidently is exemplarity predicted of that conduct whether by him or mankind. The tendency would hence be to seek exemplarity at the cost of involvement. Historically, the exemplars of ethical inner determination have been the monks and hermits of all ages and nations, men who are guided by an ethic of isolation from the world, of anti-world, of resignation and asceticism. It is common knowledge that Islam is a religion of private as well as public life, of the individual as well as the state, of everyday living as well as lofty contemplation. Hence it is not possible without men standing in the web and woof of relations with nature and other men, mutually influencing and being influenced, determining and being determined by other men. Indeed, the famous statement of the Prophet (SAAS) “Religion is rather the matter of dealing with others,” is an expression of this bent of Islam towards involvement in the affairs of other men in this world.²⁶ The fact is also expressed in Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān’s yearning for a community of humans after his discovery of the truth, and after his attainment of all the happiness the personalist pursuit could possibly furnish, as we have seen earlier.²⁷

B. ONE AND ONLY ONE *UMMAH*

God said: “This *ummaḥ* of yours is one *ummaḥ*” (Holy Quran 21:29; 23:53). In saying this God meant that the believers shall have one fulcrum around which to rally, one overall purpose, a keystone value, which brings all their endeavors under one all encompassing meaning, namely, the service of God. The *ummaḥ* is and must always remain one because God is One, and His service is one. His will for all mankind, all places and all times, embodied in the Quran and the *sunnah* of the Prophet

²⁶Or rather, “Religion consists in counselling others to do the good.”

²⁷Ibn Tufayl, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, tr. George N. Atiyah, in *A Sourcebook in Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muḥsin Mahdi (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1936).

(SAAS) and crystallized in the *sharī'ah* is one. His will is for all people, all men being absolutely equal in His vision. He does not expect of any people or race more or less than He expects of all others. The oneness of the *ummah* is therefore religious and moral, not biological, geographic, political, linguistic or cultural. Because of this the Prophet (SAAS) has called the Jews an *ummah* even though they were within the same locality as the Muslims and belonged to the same political, linguistic and cultural group. Because their ideology—religious and moral—is different, he deemed them to constitute a separate *ummah* of their own. Islam does not recognize any *ummah* based on biology, geography, politics, language or culture; but on religion. Hence, the nation, the race, the state, the continent—all these categories, are known in modern Western culture, but not recognized in Islam.

To say this does not mean that the religious unity of the *ummah* is not reinforceable and complementable by these other kinds of unity. The unities of space or geography, of language and culture, of biological descent and race can, and in fact do, help support the religious unity. “The nearer relations are more entitled to man’s good deed” is a principle of Islamic law.²⁸ What Islam is saying here is that no kind of physical nearness should ever be allowed to determine the conduct of either the Muslim individual or the Muslim group, over and above the religious and moral factor. “We have created you all of one male and female,” God said, “and made you tribes and nations that you may fraternize with one another. Noblest among you shall be the most virtuous” (Holy Quran 40:13). Evidently, physical nearness is subservient to virtue and piety; it is secondary to ethical worth and personal merit, not the reverse.

The *ummah* therefore is not a matter of birth and geography and language. These are independent of one’s will and hence necessary. The *ummah*, as a religious and moral brotherhood, is a free association of individuals to the end of actualizing in and for themselves and humanity the whole realm of values; in traditional Islamic terms, “happiness in the two abodes, this life and the hereafter.” One is not born into it by blind chance, but elects and decides to join it as a rational being. The *ummah* is not a *gemeinschaft*, but a *gesellschaft*, not a community-by-nature, but a community-by-decision, a “society.”

At the launching of the Islamic movement right after the *hijrah* in 1 A.H., the tribe, the simple form of *gemeinschaft*, and the empire, a

²⁸*Al aqrabūn awlā bi al ma'rūf*, one of the general principles of law-making.

political *gesellschaft* founded upon a *gemeinschaft* of race, language, culture, and history, were known; and they were prospering. Islam knocked both about. It established a pure *gesellschaft*, a universal brotherhood under the religious and moral law and invited all mankind to join. This was and still is the greatest innovation in the social history of man. True, Christianity has succeeded in establishing a *gesellschaft*, or society, based purely on religion and morals. But, unfortunately, the religious and moral content essential for Christianness was reduced to the minimum; namely, the ineffable experimental act of faith and the purest ethic of intent. Both are personal, secret or internal, and depend totally upon the conscience of the individual for execution, criticism and evaluation. As soon as it was given any significant public or societal content, Christendom split and partly lapsed into the older forms of *gesellschaft* based on *gemeinschaft*. The early Church divisions which appeared at Nicaea and Chalcedon involved to a preeminently high degree the Semitic versus the Greek factionalism of the people. Likewise, the great schism of 1058 A.C. was a division of East *versus* West. Finally, in the Reformation movement of the sixteenth century, the national tendencies of the Germans, the English, the French, the Italians, the Dutch overwhelmingly determined the outcome of the ninety-five theses the personally disturbed Catholic monk Luther proposed to his superiors.²⁹

In Islam, therefore, no religious diversity and no moral independence or division within the *ummah* is legitimate. Divergence from the *ummah's* religion is heresy; for in the religious and moral senses, the *ummah* is indubitably a monolithic system. To entertain the opposite is to allow Muslims to practice religions and follow moral principles other than Islam—which is absurd. Furthermore, to allow religio-moral diversity within Islam is to renounce *al tawhīd*, the principle of the unity of all truth and knowledge. This is tantamount to allowing two diverse claims to the truth to coexist. Such is not a critical attitude; for the problem here is not one of denying the possibility of claims and counter-claims but the possibility of an overarching, critically knowable truth in terms of which the opposition of claim and counterclaim might be solved and differences might be composed. Islam is definitely against pluralism of ultimate truth, not of opinions about the truth. It demands that opinions be responsible. It has assigned the maritimation of *ijmā'* (consensus) for this responsibility to channel itself. Islamic jurisprudence allows every consensus of the *ummah* to be broken by the creative, in-

²⁹The details of the ideational history of the Church may be read in Henry Bettenson's *Documents...*

novative interpreter; but it prescribed upon him the duty to seek the consensus of the *ummah* for it, or suffer it to be rejected as *bid'ah* (condemned innovation).

However, to say that the *ummah* is one religiously and morally does not mean that the *ummah* admits no administrative division. Indeed, there can be as many administrative divisions within the *ummah* as efficiency requires. In the determination of the first of *Ramaḍān* for fasting purpose, the first of *Shawwāl* for *Īd al Fitr* and the disposal of the *zakāh* funds, the Shafi'i school has countenanced divisions within the *ummah* as small as twenty-four *farsakhs* in extent (192 kms.).³⁰ Today, it may well be argued that the extraordinary developments in communications technology have made the whole world a single province. At any rate, public administration is not merely a matter of communication, and the *ummah* may be said to be as divisible as efficiency and service demands.

It should be noticed that administrative autonomy within a division of the *ummah* does not give the province legislative autonomy. Law-making in Islam is governed by a complete system of jurisprudence. In this system, general principles are distinguished from their application. The former admit of no change, for they are both divinely ordained and rational. Where man's creativity is called for is in the matter of translating a principle or value into specific, concrete directive for conduct—prescriptivization of the law—and that of carrying out or realizing those directives—its implementation. Only the prescriptivization of the Prophet (SAAS) is normative; and it is so by divine sanction: "In the Prophet's *sunnah*, there lies a good example for whosoever looks up to God ..." (Holy Quran 33:21). Everybody else's prescriptivization is a human effort subject to the test of coherence with the Quran and the *sunnah* as a whole, and to the test of the consensus of the *ummah*. The creative effort of any division of the *ummah*, whether it be in prescriptivization or implementation, is a contention on its part in Islamic law which that division ought to universalize by convincing the Muslims of the world of its validity, or to avoid or change when in the ensuing debate Muslim world opinion stands out solidly against it.³¹

Excluding our own time, the *ummah* has been, throughout its history, a monolithic unity in as much as it was all governed by one and the

³⁰Abd al Raḥmān al Jazīrī, *Al Fiqh 'alā al Madhāhib al Arba'ah* (Cairo: Al Maṭba'ah al Tijāriyah al Kubrā, n.c.), s.v. "Beginning of Ramaḍān" and "Beginning of Shawwāl," vol. 1, pp. 548-55.

³¹This seems to be the only way in which dynamic and creative *ijtihād* can be reconciled to the equally desirable purpose of unanimity and consensus. Both values are integral to the Islamic worldview and its normative system.

same Islamic law. Politically, the *ummah* was united under one suzerainty only during the *Rāshidūn* and Umayyad periods (10-131 A.H./632-749 A.C.). The rest of its history, over twelve centuries, it has been split into many political divisions. The unity of law was the stronger. It gave the Muslim world its institutions, its ethic, its style of life and its culture. It educated the Muslims of all races and cultures in one and the same ideology and welded them into one brotherhood dedicated to the same ideals. The unity of Islamic laws successfully withstood all the threats of fragmentation, including conquest by foreign powers, during the fourteen centuries of Islamic history. It may rightly be said that the *sharī'ah*, is both the spearhead and spine of Muslim unity across the world. And it is the fact which makes the *ummah* a truly universalist brotherhood in which all men are members, potentially by virtue of birth, and actually by virtue of a free personal, ethical decision to enter into the world-fellowship of the law.³²

C. THE NATURE OF UMMATIC UNITY

1. Comprehensiveness

No one, it is hoped, requires proof that Islam is a comprehensive system of life. Islam does not divide the world into sacred and profane; nor does it divide life into religious and secular; nor does it divide men into priesthood and laity. All such divisions are deemed by Islam to be artificial, unnatural, unreasonable. Historically, they all belong to non-Muslim traditions; to Christianity *par excellence* slave of the *Imperium Romanum* in which Christianity was born and formed.

Islam is indeed relevant for the philosophy of religion, i.e., for the highest principles of metaphysics, as well as for the small details of personal everyday living. It is in the Holy Quran that we read the affirmation of the duality of being, the actual creature and the transcendent Creator, of the nature and destiny of man, of his freedom and responsibility, of the instrumentality and malleability of all creation, of the orderliness of the universe, of the unity of truth and value. And it is in the same Book that we read the commandments to return a greeting

³²A parallel might be drawn here between the integrative role of the *Shari'ah* and that of the laws of Solon which were responsible for welding the dispersed groups of Greeks around the Aegean Sea into one cultural unity.

with a better one (Quran 4:85), to seek permission to enter a house before entering (Quran 24:26-28); to address others with a soft voice without yelling (Quran 31:19). Between themselves the Quran and the *sunnah* have given us a complete ritualistic, political, economic, ethical and social system. True, the Quran did not give us all the details but all the principles and some details as examples. In some fields it gave us more detail than in another in order to drive its point home. And so did the *sunnah*. But there can be no doubt of the relevance of Islam's holy writ to everything. The detail which Allah (SWT) or His Prophet (SAAS) has not spelled out was left to the Muslims to elaborate and to specify. Certainly, the Muslims have risen to the task and elaborated the most comprehensive legal system ever devised.³³

The theoretical basis of this comprehensiveness is the axiom that every human activity is a would-be carrier of some value. Since the purpose of the *ummah* is the actualization of value, it follows that the *ummah* would seek to promote such actualization wherever a possibility of it is in evidence. This implies that the *ummah* would have something to say on every human activity; that since the law is relevant thereto, no activity may lie beyond the reach of the *ummah's* executive and judicial arm.

2. Materiality or Contentuality

The comprehensive nature of any unity can be formalistic and abstract. Indeed, the greater the comprehensiveness, the more formalistic and abstract the unity; and a whole religion, or worldview, or ethic can be pressed into a few abstract words which by meaning everything, mean nothing. Islam's comprehensiveness was not achieved at the cost of materiality or content. On the contrary, it was matched by the concrete content, namely, specific legal prescriptions for every moral desideratum and, where the matter lay beyond the reach of law, specific dicta as guides for every area and corner of human activity.

Examples of comprehensiveness without content abound. The Hindu speculative thinker means everything under the sun and beyond it by merely saying *OM* and our Sufi speculator has matched the Hindu by

³³The Quran and the *Sunnah* are the two ultimate sources of all Islamic laws. The huge, expansive corpus of *Shari'ah* prescriptions has covered all areas of personal and social ethics. Evidently, none of Islam's prescriptions would be valid without some ideational relationship to one provision or another contained in the two primary sources.

saying *HŪ*. For philosophers, it is an interesting game to push ever upward towards the one formula which includes all. The sad truth is however that, under such monosyllabic key term, men went all the way from the life of saintliness to that of vice and idolatry. Both the Hindu and the Sufi know that nothing in the term could stop such aberration. Likewise, whereas the primary concern of Jesus (AS) was to break up the petrified legalism, the literalism or reification of the Jews, his disciples chose to blow his essentially ethical and divine insight into an absolute system in which all morality is internalized. Instead of *OM*, the metaphysical boodlebag of the Hindu, they installed "Love," the moral category which includes everything. Augustine's "Love God and do what you will" became a precept which anybody could use to justify any cause.

God, we must assume, is a good historian of religion who knows the pitfalls of man and observes the shortcomings of the religions as so many verses of the Quran testify. It is therefore only natural that in Islam, which came as a reformation of the historical religions, God did not merely give us one or more general principles, but the content, the specific materials of morality, the particular commandments and prohibitions. Where specific content is missing, Islam laid it down on man to seek it and to establish it.

Evidently, by being both comprehensive and contentual, Islam is monolithic. It seeks to build one system, complete in its every detail, wherein human life is regulated from birth to death. The non-Muslims have criticized the *sharī'ah* for being perfect (i.e., comprehensive).³⁴ They are right: Islam's comprehensiveness and contentuality are indubitable facts. But they constitute the religion's distinction and uniqueness as well as merit.

3. Dynamism

By definition, a monolithic system is exclusivist and closed as far as foreign or new materials are concerned. That is the substance of the orientalist's criticism of the *sharī'ah's* comprehensiveness and content. As a complete and full system, the *sharī'ah* is alleged by them to have had one and only one truly great moment in its history, namely, the moment it reached perfection. Once this apex was reached, it could only

³⁴William MacNeil, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), s.v. "The Shari'ah."

decline; for its eternal self-renewal would have to pass it by. A monolithic system cannot change in order to adapt itself to new situations and would necessarily find itself opposed to innovation. And every change is a *bid'ah*. This too is a valid criticism, not of the *sharī'ah*, but of the Muslim jurists and their followers who deliberately arrested the growth and development of the *sharī'ah*. It was indeed our ancestors in the Middle Ages who took Islam on this road. They closed the gates of *al ijtihād*, declared *al ijmā'* to be first the *ijmā'* of the *salaf* (preceding generations) and then the *ṣahābah*, (the Prophet's companions) so that no innovation could be introduced. We can today sympathize with their vision of the need of their time and excuse them. But it is ridiculous for the Muslim of today to follow their example.

The *Uṣūliyyūn* who crystallized the *sharī'ah* in the Middle Ages and brought it to the highest level of perfection were careful to include therein the finest machinery for self-renewal of the law.³⁵ They have provided the Muslim with both the perfect law as well as the institutions and means to renew it, and either make it still more perfect than it was or maintain its perfection relevantly workable for all times and places. Except for a few attempts in modern times, the Muslims made no use of the self-renewal machinery of the *sharī'ah*, (namely, *al ijtihād*, *al qiyās*, *al ijmā'*, *al istiḥsān*, *al maṣāliḥ al mursalah*, etc.). This is not the place to analyze that machinery; but we must consider the theoretical base on which it rests.

Islam is the religion of the golden mean: "And thus, We made you (the Muslims) an *ummah* of the golden mean, that you be an exemplary median unto mankind, and that the Prophet (SAAS) may be an exemplary median unto you" (Quran 2:143). It is both general and particular, universal and specific, formal and contentual, monolithic and pluralistic, individualistic and specialistic; and that is its strength. It gave us the general principle, as well as permitted us to violate it where necessary, i.e., where a higher value may be violated in the very pursuit of the value embodied in the general principle. The Quranic injunctions against theft, murder, consuming pork and those for prayer, fasting, respect of parents, even

³⁵The details of the machinery for self-renewal may be read in any textbook of *uṣūl al fiqh* (sources of jurisprudence) under the titles *al ijtihād*, *al qiyās*, *al istiḥsān*, *al maṣāliḥ al mursalah*.

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا (الإسراء: ٢٩)

Be neither miserly, tightly holding your hand, nor a spendthrift, dissipating all your possessions away and becoming a rebuked destitute in need (17:29).

pilgrimage—all these and more may be violated where their realization violates a higher Islamic value, or threatens the realization of such value. The only principle which admits of no exception in Islam is *al tawhīd*. “God does not forgive associationism; but He will forgive anything else less grave to whomsoever he pleases” (Quran 4:47, 155). This openness of Islam to interference in its very commandments constitutes its dynamism. Islam has indeed given man many rooms with closed doors. If in the last centuries the Muslims have not used those keys and kept themselves locked in, no one is to blame but themselves. Other than this, no principle is absolute and inviolable. Islam is the religion of balance. As in the case of its art—all its arts inclusive of the literary—which is built upon this very principle of *al tawāzun* (balance), its very axiology is always a delicate balancing between two evils or a subtle combination of disparate values. In his *Al Siyāsah al Shar‘īyah*, Ibn Taymīyah put it so beautifully: “Islam is the religion of God, standing between the doer of too much and the doer of too little.” And it is this quality that entitles Islam to call itself *dīn al fiṭrah* (the religion of God, of nature and reason, of balance and the golden mean) of life itself. Matchlessly expressive of the *tawāzun* balance of Islam, of Islamic balance, golden-mean-ness and dynamism, is the response the Prophet (SAAS) gave to those who, carried by their enthusiasm for Islam itself, came to him saying: “Henceforth, we shall fast every day of our lives, we shall pray all night long, and we shall never touch a woman.” He said: “As for me, I shall fast some days of the year and shall eat on others; I shall pray and I shall sleep; and I shall take women in marriage. Whoever wishes not to follow my example should not be said to belong in my fellowship.” In passages too numerous to list, the Quran has given the essence of Islam’s ethos as cool common sense in presence of valuational materials which contain equal potentialities for good and evil.³⁶ These are all the goods of the earth. The Book mentions but a few: “women, children, gold and silver, horses, cattle and plantations,” thus gathering all that was then and still is commonly associated with “the world” in the human mind. In verse 3:14, these are declared evil and the Muslims are enjoined to beware, while in 7:31 they are declared good and the Muslims’ pursuit of them is defended. The governing principle is given in 9:25 where the sourness is ascribed to a false order of rank, to man’s preference of them over God, His Prophet and self-exertion

³⁶An eloquent example of Islamic emphasis on the “golden mean” between two exaggerated values of the spendthrift and the hospitable is found in Quran 17:29.

in His cause. The “golden mean” is obviously a mean between two disvalues; but it is also a balance between two pursuits of one and the same value, which happily combines it with all other values and gives each its due.³⁷

4. Organicness

Ummatic unity is organic, that is to say, the *ummah* is like an organic body whose parts are mutually and severally interdependent with one another and with the whole. For the part to work for itself is for itself to work for each of the other parts as well as for the whole to work for itself, is for itself to work for each of the parts. God described the felicitous as “those in whose wealth they recognize a right of the needy and the deprived” (51:19), and the followers of the Prophet (SAAS) as “hard on the unbelievers but soft and merciful to one another”; as “brethren ... whose hearts have been wound up around Him in mutual love of one another” (48:29). The Prophet (SAAS) hit the nail on the head when he described the *ummah* as “the well-settled and consolidated building, each part of which buttresses the others, and compared it to a body which reacts *in toto* with discomfort and fever whenever a part of it is hurt.”

This last *hadith* of the Prophet (SAAS), comparing the *ummah* to an organic body, is perhaps the most apt description of Islamic society. The organic body is alive, and its very life is its organicness, i.e., the interdependence of its various parts to the end sustaining the whole, and their continuous sustenance by that whole. Organicness is not only a quality of life; it is life. For the *ummah* to be otherwise is for it to lapse into the pre-Islamic tribalism of the desert. Even that order, however, is built upon the assumed organicness of the tribe without which it could not exist. The *ummah* merely widened the tribe to include humanity. To deny organicness, therefore, or the need of the *ummah*, is to assume as good the detached existence of individuals isolated from one another in a way which not only makes Islam impossible but equally makes civilization—indeed human life itself—impossible and unthinkable.

Interdependence can be exaggerated; for it can be intensified to the point of rendering the human person a mere cog in a larger body or machine, impervious to the cog’s own advancement, self-fulfillment and

³⁷See the phenomenal analysis of contradictory values in Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, tr. Stanton Coit (New York: Macmillan, 1932), vol. 2, section 2.

happiness. The evils of regimentation and collectivism have always weighed heavily in man's consciousness, whether in the age of the tribe, the city, the nation, or the universal community. Here again, Islam has prescribed *tawāzun*, the golden mean, and declared its purpose to be the achievement of felicity of the person as well as that of the group. Between the absolute individualism of Christianity and the absolute tribalism of Judaism and pre-Islam, Islam has indeed struck the middle ground, asserting both values in the middle, and denying both disvalues at the end, of the spectrum of interhuman relations.

D. POSSIBILITY

Such an *ummah* as has been described is not only possible; it is the only condition of success, indeed of history. No society and no religion, no tribe and no state, no empire and no history has ever been made, or made successful, without realizing in some measure or another, this ummatism. The greater the ummatism, the greater and more lasting the realization; the lesser the ummatism, the more ephemeral the success or the greater the failure. Indeed such ummatism is a guarantee, though temporary, of success for the devil himself. If the devil and his legions of evil fulfilled the requirements of ummatism, he and they will necessarily meet with success, though their success could not be final or decisive for human history. The Zionists are successful, the Spaniards under Ferdinand and Isabella who expelled us from Spain, and the British, French, Italians, Dutch, etc., who colonized our land—even the savage Tartars who massacred the millions and put our greatest cities to the flames—all these were or are successful because they were or are more ummatist than the Muslims were or are today. Hence our sure weakness. Repeatedly in modern literature, the unanswerable question has been raised: "Why is it that when a Muslim shouts *wā Islāmah!*, nobody responds?" Obviously, the answer is our lack of ummatism, our shortcomings in the fulfillment of the provisions and principles of ummatism.

The inevitable question must therefore be: How do we generate ummatism in the Muslims? Assuming our knowledge of what ummatism is, and our knowledge of what the message of the *ummah*—namely, the ideology of Islam—is, let us address ourselves to the practical question. Step by step, how can we bring about and promote ummatism? The question, practical as it may be, is the question on which the Sufis spent

all their genius while losing sight of the final objective. It was Ibn Bājah who saw through their shortcoming and wrote the treatise, *Risālat Tadbīr al Mutawahhīd*, for which we, as historians of ideas, may invent the term “Societal Sufism.” The Sanusiyah movement in modern times has been a close approximation of such ummatist Sufism.

To ask, How can I generate ummatism between two Muslims? is to ask the question, How can I produce a chemical relation between them which results in *al taḥābub* (mutual loving), *al tawāṣī wa al tanāhī* (counselling), *al taʾakhī* (brothering), *al taʾawun* (cooperation), *al taʾalum* (teaching), *al tazāwuj* (mixing), *al tawāṣī* (consoling) and *al taṣāduq wa al taʾanus* (befriending)? What kind of action and inaction, reality or unreality, activity or passivity can produce the ummatic cement which, once present, will issue in all these values and thus bring about the *um-mah*? In short, this is the question of how can two or more people be caused to love one another? To bring about such transformation in men is not the work of man, but of God, as a hundred or more verses of the Holy Quran proclaimed,³⁸ for it is He Who is the Author of any transformation-for-better, of any transfiguration (*al hidāyah, taʾlīf al qulūb, sharḥ al ṣadr*) of any predisposition toward ummatism. What man can do here is no more than propose, i.e., provide the material context in which the divine initiative might act. It is certainly possible that such human preparation for divine action may never produce any result. But that is the case where human initiative is defiant, vainly cocksure of itself. Where it is combined with a humble recognition of divine power, it cannot but succeed. Otherwise the divine command for any human action falls down and becomes equally presumptuous.

We may then rephrase our question: What specific action or situation may serve as material context to the divine initiative? The only answer possible here is that the humans in question meet one another, recognize and worship God together, seek knowledge and wisdom jointly, work out and achieve the concrete results together, and finally, eat, celebrate, enjoy themselves and intermarry together. If these activities are entered into candidly, and for no other motive than seeking God’s face, they can well be trusted to generate the ummatic cement. No other road will lead to that cement. Presumably, Islamic society meetings on the local, regional and national levels are steps in that direction. So are the Jumu’ah meetings in the Islamic associations and centers around the world. All

³⁸Consult Muḥammad Barakat, *Al Murshid ilā Ayāt al Qurʾān al Karīm* (Cairo: Al Maktabah al Hāshimīyah, 1957), under the aforementioned words for a listing of the verses which contain them.

these, however, are still truncated, irregular, infrequent, haphazard, undisciplined and incomplete. Far more than we have so far done is needed, namely, an institutionalization of the ummatic meeting.

For this purpose it is suggested that each Muslim who reckons in himself a potential for leadership, a commitment to Islam which transcends his own and his family's interest, to become a *ʿāmil* (a founder, organizer and leader of a *ʿurwah wuthqā* [an association of ten adult Muslims inclusive of their families]). A *ʿurwah wuthqā* has one purpose and one *raison d'être*: Islam. The *ʿāmil* identifies and calls the ten members. He assumes the responsibility of maintaining contact with them, of communication between one another, and between themselves and the *ummah's* larger institutions. The *ʿāmil* institutes in his *ʿurwah* the Friday evening Jumu'ah, by inviting its members and their families to his home every Friday evening for three to four hours of Islamic fellowship. Invariably, the evening-Jumu'ah includes a group performance of *ṣalāt al 'ishā'*, of reading a part of the Quran, of some relation to Islam, and finally, of some food and socializing. All four items are absolutely necessary; but they should constitute no hardship and no monotony. The Quranic reading, the exercise in Islamic knowledge, the food and socializing — these three, unlike of course the ritual prayer, can be infinitely variable. As soon as convenient and possible, the evening-Jumu'ah should be held at another member's home. Eventually, every member ought to have the occasion to have the evening-Jumu'ah held at his home. Ideally, the evening-Jumu'ah would be held on a rotating basis at the home of each member of a given *ʿurwah*.

In choosing constituent members of the *ʿurwah*, the *ʿāmil* must consider the distance between their homes and his. Linguistic and cultural affinities, national and racial backgrounds and levels of culture constitute in Islam no base for discrimination. It has always been and will always be the strength of Islamic society that it is open, multiracial, culturally diverse, color-blind and free of generation gaps. Muslim children and grandparents should be as much part of the evening-Jumu'ah as member-adults. Where apathy, lethargy, recalcitrance, difference or opposition develops, whether in regard to the evening-Jumu'ah or Muslim activities on the city, state or country level, the *ʿāmil's* own sense of fairness, his encouragement, consolation, initiative, leadership and personal responsibility are the only recourse.

As the *ʿurwah wuthqā* brotherhoods multiply, there will arise the need to organize them, to plan for their needs and to satisfy those needs. The

experience of one should be shared by the others; and a common Muslim pool of talent, information, influence, finance and leadership ought sooner or later to constitute a headquarters for the Islamic movement as a whole. This is where the movement can assume the great burden of leadership. Periodical seminars should be held for the *ʿāmil*s to enable them to share experiences with one another, and to be trained for a more felicitous and efficacious discharge of functions. The Islamic leadership in the geographic unit could furnish the *ʿurwah*s with a printed “Lessons of the Week,” which also assigns the Quranic portion for reading, so that the selections might issue in a systematized presentation of Islam as well as be responsive to events affecting Muslims everywhere.

As the *ʿurwah*s multiply and the movement grows, further organizational structures would be incepted. Ten *ʿurwah*s would make an *usrah*, ten *usrah*s a *zāwiyah*, and ten *zāwiyah*s a *jamāʿah*. At each of these levels an administrative organ would be set up to attend to the regional needs of the *ʿurwah*s involved. Organization and structure should come after that which is to be organized has come to be. Let us not idly build up structures on the blackboard, but enable them to rise out of the growing realities. The question which we should ask everywhere is how to bring about these realities. The answer, to repeat, is for each Muslim to do the innocent things with his fellow Muslims, to participate together in the activities of worship, of continuing Islamic education and of *al amr bi al maʿrūf wa al nahy ʿan al munkar* (of the promotion of the good and prevention of evil).