

FREE ONLINE NON-PROFIT
QUARTERLY P.D.F. MAGAZINE

Peter Gould
Explores Humanity
Through Islaamic Art

The Pacifism
of Islaam

Globalisation & Islaam

Humanisation
Through Humourisa-
tion!





I-MAG

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FREE ONLINE
NON-PROFIT
QUARTERLY
P.D.F. MAGAZINE

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ABOUT
I-MAG

I-MAG is a free online non-profit quarterly magazine. The first issue of the magazine was published in February 2005; three more issue came on a monthly basis. A pause of three months followed for evaluating and renovating the magazine. I-MAG became a quarterly in the Fall (September) of 2005.

I-MAG is an acronym of Islaamic Magazine. I-MAG is pronounced in two syllables; “I” as in “eye” and “mag” as in the first three sounds of magazine.

I-MAG aims at presenting a fair and objective image of Islaam. Our magazine is not a dogmatic one, we believe in critique and critical thinking in hopes of presenting intellectual enlightenment in the areas that we cover while adhering to the code of ethics of journalism.

I-MAG sees itself not merely as an electronic publication but rather as an intellectual enlightenment project that plays a part in the social economy; an economy in which responsible and free (free of charge and free of partiality) information is the main merchandise.

I-MAG's slogan “Enlighten Your I” tells a lot about the magazine. “I” stands for Islaam, but it also refers to the first speaker pronoun since we hope that we all would enlighten our “I”s or ourselves. “I” also refers to the “eye” which the design of I-MAG for sure pleases.

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Sarah WONDERS

SARAH IS A NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL WITH AN INQUISITIVE MIND. SHE HAS A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAAM. SHE ATTEMPTS TO SORT OUT THE MYTH FROM THE STEREOTYPE FROM THE TRUTH. WHEN IN DOUBT, SHE ASKS.

IN EACH ISSUE, WE WILL PUBLISH ONE OF SARAH'S QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAAM AND THE ANSWER TO IT.

If you have any question about Islaam, do not hesitate to e-mail it to Sarah. She will make sure that you receive the answer to it. :)

Sarah's e-mail address is: sarah@i-mag.org

Q. I knew that Muslims have their own calendar which is different than the one I'm used to. How is that? Is it based on the Birthday of Mu'hammad?

A. Dear Sarah,

That is true Sarah. Arabs before Islaam, and also Muslims until today follow the lunar calendar for months. It depends on the phases of the moon.

There are also 12 months in the lunar calendar, and each month is either 29 or 30 days long.

Important occasions take place in these months such as Fasting in the month of Rama'daan, and pilgrimage in the month of >thoo Al'hijjah.

Years in the Islaamic calendar



are calculated from the year Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) immigrated from Makkah to Almadeenah which took place 1429 years ago.

Actually the idea to start a different annual calendar did not come until the time of the second 'Kaleefah (Caliph) 'Umar Bin Al'kattaab who though that it would be prude to date according to the year of immigration since it is a milestone in the history of Islaam.

Muslims love and respect Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.), but his birthday does not have a religious or a ritual significance. Mu'hammad was man with the message, but he was not the message.

Yours in humanity,
I-MAG Team

Behind the Scenes:

Gould

Explores Humanity Through

ISLAAMIC ART



Interview by Rym Aoudia [Reem Awdee']
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Peter Gould is a Sydney-born graphic designer and artist. Since embracing Islaam in 2002 his travels and studies throughout the Middle East have inspired a unique cultural fusion that is reactive to a world of misunderstanding.

His photography and artwork has featured in several exhibitions locally and abroad including a solo exhibit at The Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick, entitled "The Road Less Travelled" and a collaboration with international master calligrapher Haji Noor Deen, "Eastern Fusion"

Some artists would say that art chose them while others would say that they chose art, did you choose art or did art choose you? Tell us about yourself, your background, and how you became interested in the arts.

I was born in Sydney, Australia and have spent most of my 25 years living here. I've always had a creative streak and a passion for the visual arts.

I was particularly drawn to the possibilities of digital expression which led me to studies in graphic design and to my current position running a small design studio and as working as a part-time artist.

I explored a spiritual path in my late teens and embraced Islaam at the age

of 20. In the years since I have been fortunate to travel through many Muslim countries and am now undergoing a process recording and expressing those collective experiences through art and photography.

I recall being profoundly moved during my time in Andalusian Spain in 2003; the Alhambra in particular had a presence that awakened something in me and encouraged an investigation into the Islaamic arts.

Do you have a certain artistic style and what medium do you prefer to work with?

In addition to black & white photography I like to explore possibilities in the digital realm, often referencing traditional natural

media styles and techniques.

I love trying to interpret script into vibrant and contemporary styles also incorporating traditional Islaamic motifs and elements in unexpected ways. Recently I've been exploring oils and acrylics again which I did often when I was younger which is at once both liberating and challenging.

Who is in your mind when you're in the process of creating an artwork? (the layman, the artist, etc)

I've often tried to photograph timeless scenes, so the viewer is sharing the same enchanted moment as someone else from centuries ago.

There exists a deep beauty and visual

unity in traditional Islaamic cities such as Damascus, Fes, Granada, Beirut, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Mecca and so on.

Exploring these cities was something truly inspirational and something I've wanted to share with both Muslims and non-Muslims back home, so really there are many people I'm thinking about when creating.

What plans and dreams do you have for your art?

Eventually I hope to pursue my artwork at a more commercial level and collaborate with artists from all over the globe, from all different denominations and backgrounds.

For now the sheer joy of creating and experimenting is enough to satisfy my creative urge. Ultimately however I'd like to encourage people to reflect and consider the message and stories behind the images - this would truly make it a deeply rewarding and worthwhile experience.

What are the joys and challenges of being a Muslim artist and what is your view on working as an artist?

My graphic design business earns my keep day to day and artistically I'm just finding my feet in the commercial realm.

To date my artistic pursuits have been very well received and it's encouraging to see people genuinely excited and intrigued (or confused!) by who I am and what my artwork explores.

How is your art different from the western genre in terms of its message, themes, style, tones, light and other features?

Perhaps my visual styles will be familiar to western audiences, but the presentation of Islaamic spiritual themes in this way is quite unexpected. For example I've attempted to interpret the 99 beautiful names and attributes in new and intriguing ways.

What is the relationship between your faith as a Muslim, your Australian identity, and your creative pursuits?

To be honest I 'just do my thing'! I might carry several labels but I don't actively set out to represent them. I feel like God has infused my heart and soul with certain qualities and one outcome of that is an expression of faith through art and colour, light and space.

How has your art been received in your community?

The Muslim community in Sydney is extremely diverse and vibrant, representing many nationalities.

Al'humdu Lillaah (Thanks to Allaah) those that discover my work are warm and encouraging, and appear genuinely pleased to see an Australian born Muslim working in this field and even attempting to have a conversation in fus'ha Arabic.

Sometimes it's an educational experience too -to my surprise I've often been asked "Spain... are there Muslims there?" and the follow- on conversation about Alandalus has their shifted understanding of the faith and its historic importance.

What could the Muslim community do to promote and encourage Muslim artists? What advice would you give Muslims who are interested in pursuing the arts? With the internet, networking

and interaction is easily facilitated, how do you think Muslim artists can take advantage of this and what possibilities would it bring?

I think there is general appreciation for the arts in our community but it has not been fostered. There are some talented personalities here and I believe there will be increasingly more events and exhibitions to expose them over time.

For now I have had to largely rely on international artists to discuss and nurture ideas. The U.K. for example has some brilliant pioneers in contemporary Islaamic art. There are a series of online networks which make collaboration and regular discussion possible - these should be a first stop for any creative Muslim!



What would you like your art to offer the Australian community and the Muslim community in general? What is your perspective on the revival of Islaamic art in the West to make a positive difference in society and to carry a global role in bridging the East and the West?

We in the West live in societies largely driven by marketing, advertising, branding and status - a visual culture where perception is reality for people without the time or inclination to read between the lines.

I believe we could harness this opportunity through creative dialogue since art and music operate on a neutral platform unhindered by the bias or assumption that may come with traditional media.

In shaa- Allaah the beauty of Islaamic art will continue to inspire, excite and touch the heart of man as it has done for many centuries, and be a catalyst for true understanding.

Peter's work can be seen online along with information about his Sydney-based graphic and web design studio, Creative Cubed.

Contact Info:

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Light Painting

Ahmed Al-Abdullatif
Ahmad Konash

■ Idea

Light painting, also known as light drawing is a photographic technique in which exposures are made usually at night or in a darkened room by moving a light source or by moving the camera.

In this photo-tip we will move the light source(s) in order to paint with light. The light can either be used to selectively illuminate parts of the subject or to "paint" a picture by shining it directly into the camera lens. Light painting requires a sufficiently slow shutter speed, usually a second or more.



■ Tools

A camera with shutter speed control capabilities, tripod, mirror, light source(s)



■ Steps

- 1 Place the camera on the tripod. If you don't have a tripod, you can use any flat stable plain.
- 2 Position the tripod facing the mirror so that the lens field is not blocked by the painter's movements. Also set the timer to release the shutter after 2 seconds or more in order to give yourself enough time to be in the right place when it clicks.
- 3 Set the camera on manual control "M", make sure that the flash isn't on and set the shutter speed to "5 seconds or more depending on the desired result.
- 4 Use a low ISO or film sensitivity from 100 up to 600 depending on the desired final exposure.
- 5 Make sure the room is dark and then turn the light source(s) on.
- 6 When you are ready, press the button, and start moving the light(s) until you hear the shutter locks. In our case, we used our mobile flash lights and covered it with coloured paper to obtain different light colours.
- 7 Try more types of light that have different colours and try taking more pictures with different settings.

Good luck painting!

Share your experiments with us.
Send your works to: konash@i-mag.org

■ Examples



© Photographs by Ahmed Al-Abdullatif and Ahmad Konash for i-mag.org



Globalisation & ISLAAM

By Teresa Lesher, Ph.D.*

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Globalisation is generally seen as an economic movement -a worldwide process of homogenising prices, products, wages, rates of interest and profits- which depends on the movement of commodities, money, information and labor around the globe.

More generally, globalisation is a comprehensive term for the emergence of a global society, a result of advances in communication, transportation, and information technologies.

It describes the growing economic, political, technological, and cultural links between individuals, communities, businesses, and governments around the world.

Major Forces in Globalisation

Three major organisations, established at the end of World War II, have spurred the growth of globalisation by enabling poorer countries to participate in world trade and by protecting producing countries from devaluation of both their tangible and intangible products.

The *World Bank* (WB) was established to provide loans to developing countries to encourage accelerated growth and provide a higher living standard for their people; the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF) was established to give loans to developing countries so that they can maintain the value of their currencies and repay foreign debts; and the *World Trade Organisation* (W.T.O.) was created to lower tariffs and to encourage the trade of products, services, investments, and the protection of intellectual property rights.

It is worth noting that the IMF and WB have certain conditions, or “structural adjustment programs” required by fund recipients: detailed instructions on required economic changes, with the aim to develop free markets through privatization, or the selling off of government enterprises; deregulation, or removing rules that restrict companies; and trade liberalisation, which opens local markets to foreign goods by removing import/export barriers.

Pros and Cons of Globalisation

There are several general benefits of globalisation, including the familiarity and connectedness that geographically distanced peoples and cultures can experience.

Products, services, and technologies are becoming standardized, which makes travel, trade and communication easier.

The legal and monetary systems around the world have similarities, allowing greater communication with shared languages. Infrastructures, such as transportation and communication, are coordinated and standardised to facilitate the delivery of products and ideas worldwide.

Finally, people have better access to products not available locally, which also encourages production, development and greater profits.

However, there are also several recognised adverse effects of globalisation: it promotes materialism

as people develop artificial wants, increases credit-based economies, contributes to an unequal distribution of wealth, widens economic gaps and inhibits national industry and jobs.

Local cultures are gradually lost or destroyed (sometimes referred to as cultural imperialism), and the environment and natural resources are irresponsibility exploited for monetary gains.

Tabb (2007) shares some statistics and incidents in criticism of globalisation:

- More than 80 countries had lower per capita income at the end of the 1990s than they had at the end of the 1980s;

- In countries worldwide in 1960, the top 20 percent had 30 times the income of the poorest 20 percent. By 1999, the top 20 percent had 75 times the income of the poorest 20 percent;

- Rich countries negotiate trade agreements at the expense of the poor countries. For example, the 48 least-developed countries in the world face

tariffs on their agricultural exports that are on average 20 percent higher than those faced by the rest of the world on their agricultural exports to industrialized countries;

- Wealthy countries grant agricultural subsidies to their farmers to protect national industries from foreign competition.

For example, the U.S.A. can sell corn and soybeans at half of what it costs to produce them, resulting in artificially low world prices that hurt producers in poor countries where there are no government subsidies;

- In 2002 the US president authorized \$4 billion in subsidies to 25,000 cotton farmers. This action lowered world cotton prices by one-fourth.

As a result, West African countries lost hundreds of millions of dollars, and the region's 11 million cotton-producing households suffered increased poverty;

- Although there are several health crises in the developing world, (eg malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS), the WTO's stand on intellectual property rights, in particular the patent laws that protect medicines made by pharmaceutical companies, require that people pay high prices for life-saving drugs. The result is that the poor die of easily treatable diseases.

These examples show that globalisation, particularly in the economic sense, is detrimental to weaker peoples and nations who are often at the mercy of the rich powerful who make the laws, set the standards and control the prices.

Islaam: For or Against Globalisation?

Islaam, in many ways, supports globalisation since it connects people, facilitates communication and business, and provides employment opportunities.

For example:

- The 'Qura~n requires the democratization of information, meaning that God's message is for all mankind and that those with knowledge have the responsibility of conveyance. *"And we have not sent you (with this message) except as a mercy to [all nations]"* (21:107);

- Mutual acquaintance and travel is encouraged with the well-known Quranic verse: *"O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."* (49:13);

- The annual pilgrimage ('haj) is an international religious service spanning several days, when people from around the world meet, discuss, trade commodities and information, and establish brotherly ties. Early trade routes and information exchange in the Muslim world had their origins in the 'haj;

- Trade and employment in one another's service is a natural aspect of life. God said, *"It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service..."* (43:32).

Moreover, Muslims are advised and urged to undertake and participate in whatever may be beneficial for mankind

with no limits to ethnic, religious, geographical or political boundaries. This principle supports the idea of globalisation, and globalisation facilitates the application of this principle in communities worldwide.

Islaamic Business Ethics

Injunctions and advice detailed in the 'Qura~n and prophetic traditions encourage mutual cooperation but also define proper behavior so that the poor, weak and vulnerable are protected against the avarice and subjugation of others.

Trade laws are applicable whether business partners are Muslim or not; Islaam does not accept discriminatory treatment of non-believers. There is a place for a free market system in Islaam, but with the following conditions:

- Reckless exploitation, consumption and bribery is forbidden in Islaam: *"And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly, nor give it [in bribe] to authorities in order that [they might aid] you to consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin while you know [it is unlawful]"* (2:188);
- Fair dealings and economic transparency are required: *"Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly, but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent."* (4:29);
- Brokerage or agency (contracting middlemen in the sale of goods) is permissible unless it interferes with free trade. The prophet Mu'hammad taught that it is unethical (and therefore illegal) for a broker to store goods in order to inflate prices; even though it benefits businessmen, it harms the general

public;

- Hoarding money and goods is forbidden unless it is done in order to meet the needs of society, such as the storing or rationing of grain during a drought.

The 'Qura~n warns, *"Give tidings of a painful punishment to those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them for God's sake."* (9:34) One's superfluous wealth should be used to give loans to the needy, for unconditional aid to the needy, or as venture capital for development and investment projects;

- Fraud is prohibited according to the Quranic verses *"Woe to those who deal in fraud, those who when they have to receive by measure from men exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account?"* (83:1-4) and *"Give just measure, and do not be of those who cause loss. And weigh with an accurate scale, and do not deprive people of their due. And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption."* ('Qura~n 26:181-183).

The Prophet Mu'hammad also cursed the one who bribes and the one who takes bribes.

Wealth management in Islaam

Spending and consumption are both allowed and encouraged in Islaam as long as one does so without extravagance, wastefulness or inconsideration of the poor.

The 'Qura~n says, *"O children of Adam, wear fine clothes...eat and drink..."* but also reminds us to *"be not excessive"*

(7:31) and that “*whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul – it is those who will be the successful.*” (59:9).

Likewise, unlimited savings are allowed, but an annual poor due is to be levied as a tax (zakat) which is used for social security and public services.

Specifically, zakat is for “*the poor, the destitute, those who collect it, reconciling people’s hearts, freeing slaves, those in debt, ...*” (9:60).

The wealthy are reminded in the ‘Qura~n that charity is not an optional benevolent deed, but rather that “*from their properties [is] the right of the beggar and the deprived*” (51:19).

Debt management in Islaam

Interest on loans, which channels wealth from the poor to the rich, encourages exploitation of the poor and widens economic gaps, is strictly prohibited in Islaam. The ‘Qura~n states that “*God has permitted trade and has forbidden interest*” (2:275).

The receiver of interest, as well as the giver, witness and scribe are all cursed, according to prophetic tradition. The treatment of those in debt is also addressed with ‘Qura~nic injunctions: “*You who believe, heed God and give up what remains [due to you] of interest, if you should be believers....and if the debtor is in difficulty, then [let there be] postponement until [a time of] ease. But if you remit it by way of charity, that is better for you, if you only knew.*” (2:278-280).

Conclusion

Globalisation is a fact of life. While its prevalence is undeniable, its methods and applications remain a choice for us as global citizens, and therefore so do its results. Islaam offers a framework that allows us all to benefit from the advantages of globalisation while protecting us from its harm.

The result is a global community of producers and consumers who promote just and equitable business in an atmosphere of mutual service and compassion.

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MUSLIMS:

Citizens of the World

By Aisha Stacey*

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"Read in the name of your Lord Who has created, He has created man from a clot of blood. Read and your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught by the pen, He has taught man that which he knew not." (The Holy 'Qura~n, Chapter of Al'ala'q, verses 1-5)

These are the first words of 'Qura~n revealed to Prophet Mu'hammad (May Allaah's peace and blessings be upon him). They began a tradition that became embedded in Islaam. Read, seek knowledge, and know your Creator.

Islaam urges people to open their minds and broaden their horizons. Throughout Islaamic history Muslims made advances in medicine and science,

constructed and provided hospitals, built libraries and schools, planted trees and gardens and generally advanced the name of Islaam with humility, grace and generosity.

Education was universal. Muslims, Christians and Jews studied side by side at some of the most famous universities in the known world. Unfortunately some Muslims are now far removed from the true nature of Islaam, as it was practiced by the early Islaamic generations.

Those early generations established truth and justice on earth. Islaam has in the 21st century erroneously become synonymous with terror and this is not the case.

Islaam comes from the Arabic verb *salama* and means peace, security, and safety. The word also means submission to the One God and thus achieving peace, security and safety.

Islaam encourages diversity and tolerance and has created no barriers to knowledge because of ethnicity, race or religion. Today we, collectively as a planet are in dire need of unity in the face of adversity and mutual respect.

Muslims were, and by the grace of Allaah still are global citizens, because we believe ourselves to be part of a universe created specifically for the worship of our Creator. We are all different but our purpose is the same.

"And I (Allaah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone)." (The Holy 'Qura~n, Chapter of Azaariat, verse 56)

One way of fulfilling our obligation to worship Allaah is to take seriously the guidelines He has given us – His words, the 'Qura~n and the Sunnah of His Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) Allaah Almighty says in the 'Qura~n: *"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another."* (Chapter of Al'hujuraat, verse 13)

Here, in the simplicity that characterises Islaam, we have the essence of Muslims

as global citizens. Worship Allaah Alone and know one another.

In 2005, during a speech delivered in Abu Dhabi, Yusuf Islaam (previously Cat Stevens), prominent Muslim lecturer and songwriter referred to the Muslim Ummah (nation) as the world community that was most prepared to live in a global village.

Trials and tribulations are inflicting societies all over the world today. Pain and suffering is all around us. We, as Muslims, must use our unique knowledge and understanding to devise strategies and formulate plans that will benefit all of humanity.

The Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) said, *"Every one of you is a shepherd of those things under your care"*.

In the past we have proven that we are a people capable of building a society based on a humane and moderate belief system.

Islaam is eminently capable of fulfilling the needs of mankind. Islaam is capable of integrating all the distinguishing features of the various nations and tribes.

Since the time of Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) and his 'Sa'haabah (companions) Muslims have been searching for knowledge and spreading out beyond known horizons in an effort to perfect their worship of Allaah.

Now in 2007 it has become imperative that Muslims once again assert themselves as truly global citizens. No longer is it ok to live quiet lives in non descript suburban homes.

Muslims are now being watched and

scrutinised more than ever before in our history.

Our every move is being observed, by governments and their agencies, and by our neighbours and fellow citizens in the communities in which we reside.

Far from being a reason to be afraid and hide our Islaam it is a cause for celebration. Each and every one of us now has the opportunity to show the world the reality and beauty of Islaam.

Identifying ourselves as worshippers of the One God is essential. Doing good deeds, giving charity and spreading Islaam's message of peace is of crucial importance in our everyday lives.

It has become a collective responsibility for Muslims to correct the false ideas and misconceptions about Islaam that abound today.

According to Hammudah Abd Al-Ati ['Hamoodah Abd Al'aa'ti] noted Islaamic author, the role of the Islaamic community is to be the embodiment of all that is virtuous, noble and wholesome.

Islaam is a religion of tolerance, Muslims from all corners of the globe must show this tolerance and love for all humanity through their deeds and actions.

In this modern era of mass communication and technological advances it is possible to communicate the true beauty and grace of Islaam and our Creator Allaah Almighty, to millions of people at one time.

Muslims today must assure that the airwaves and television screens are filled with examples of our exemplary behaviour.

Most of what the average non Muslim citizen knows about Islaam is based on the inaccurate representations of Islaam and Muslims.

As Muslims, each and every one of us are ambassadors for our faith. It is our responsibility to provide accurate information and to assure that we practice the true teaching of Islaam in our daily lives.

Muslims behaving in an anti Islaamic fashion could be the reason a person sees Islaam but turns away. This responsibility before Allaah is one that no person should bare. Allaah Almighty says in the 'Qura-n: *"Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good and forbidding all that is evil. And it is they who are successful."* (Chapter of A-I 'Imraan, verse 104)

The Islaamic principles of family values and social cohesion could easily be demonstrated through our charitable works and good deeds within our respective communities. A Muslim must be seen to be ready and eager to come to the assistance of those in need. Small deeds and true humbleness demonstrate the simplicity and peacefulness of Islaam. Every time we smile at the person packing our groceries or help our elderly neighbour to bring in the garbage bins we are demonstrating the reality of Islaam.

Each time we say a cheery good morning to the people around us or

deliver a meal to the lonely widow living across the road we are demonstrating the Sunnah of the Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.).

Muslims today shoulder a huge responsibility. We are global citizens, Islaam is a religion that considers all men and women equal.

In the words our Prophet (P.B.U.H.) uttered in his farewell sermon an Arab is not better than a non Arab, a black person is not better than a white person. What makes one person better than another is ta'qwa (piety).

Aboo Hurayrah tells us in a hadeeth found in Bu'kaary that Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) said, *"Anybody who believes in Allaah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour, and anybody who believes in Allaah and the Last Day should entertain his guest generously and anybody who believes in Allaah and the Last Day should talk what is good or keep quiet."*

And in another 'hadeeth, *"the two feet of a slave will not move on the Day of Judgement until he is asked about his life - how he spent it; about his knowledge and what he did with it, about his wealth - how he acquired it and how he spent it, and his body and what he did with it."*

Muslims are global citizens who believe in Allaah and the Last Day.

* Aisha Stacey is an Australian revert to Islam currently residing in Doha Qatar. She works for the Fanar Islamic Cultural Centre as a writer/researcher and is studying for a double degree in psychology and security studies.



MUSLIMS AND Globalisation

By Edwin Anthony

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Generally, when we speak of “Muslims” in the context of “Globalisation”, many Muslims and non-Muslims tend to consider this phenomenon from the point of how Muslims might fit into the general scheme of things.

Those I have spoken to, when asked for their thoughts on “Muslims and globalization” tend to speak on how Muslims might embrace “moderation”, how they might ‘fit in’, how they might be “more open to Western perspectives” or “culture”, or how they might “integrate”, amongst others.

Whilst they do, later, speak on the need to maintain their culture, the “fitting-in complex” seems to be

predominant. They are, in other words, “assimilationist” in their approach.

This is to be expected considering the post-colonial dominance of the West in the global socio-economic-cultural milieu West (one could say that we are living not in the ‘post-colonial world’, but the “modern phase of colonialism” that seeks to ossify in institutional and perspectival form the generic perspectives that inspired colonialism). In other words, the world is fast becoming little more than a puddle reflecting the moon that is the West. Pop-stars, celebrities, writers, artists, teenagers, amongst a host of others, are increasingly taking their perspectival and attitudinal cue from the West.

And where it is not, a siege mentality emerges along with cultural enclaves that basically reject everything Western. When global issues are spoken about amongst Muslims, it is generally in relation to Muslims or the Islamic world. Thus, like much of the rest of the world, the Islaamic world is generally focused on its own issues, or defensive or discursive when it comes to Western views of them.

And like much of the rest of the world, Muslims are failing to see the relevance and potency of their own culturally-inherited perspectives in actually aiding in the address and resolution of global and Western problems.

In my perusal of blogs, editorials, magazines, and so on, I rarely come across articles written by Muslims from an Islamic perspective that address, for instance, Western issues from an advisory approach. When they do speak on non-Islamic related matters, they simply reiterate viewpoints that emerge from a western view of things.

When they write, they write in a ‘Western way’, dispassionate, un-poetic, informative as opposed to charismatic, with little use of rhymes, proverbs, analogies, amongst others, that they might be accustomed to using their own languages and which elevates the use of language as a mere tool of communication to one of inspiration.

In other words, together, this plausibly indicates a subconscious acceptance of the irrelevance of their own cultural perspectives in the global scheme of things.

The perspectives, emotive and communicative styles emerging from, for instance, Islamic universalism or Indian metaphysicalism are discarded for not having a 'goodness-of-fit' with the English language.

The Western mindset is unwittingly confounded with its linguistic corollary and adopted to a significant degree whilst their own cultural perspectives are discarded to make their respective treatises more Western-like.

But what is the Islamic perspective? What is the African or Indian perspective? And how can these be used in a formulaic fashion to help the West, amongst others, solve their problems?

The Islaamic world has for too long been understandably preoccupied with fending off allegations, or attempting to assimilate to Western standards in almost every arena comprising the phenomenon of Life that they have gradually began to confine their culturally-endowed perspectives to their own homes and communities.

In other words, the Muslim, when in the world, "do as the Westerners do", whilst "doing as the Muslim do" is confined to their communities or festival and cultural observances.

Thus, their own cultural assets and perspectives do not see growth in terms of its global relevance and its being of potential aid to the west and the rest of

the world. We forget that a perspective applied in one arena is further developed when applied in others.

I'm not saying that the Islamic perspective in its archetypal form is enriched by application in other situations, but that its full potential is not discovered by specific application only in Muslim matters.

Analogically, the archetypal value of the "plus" and "minus" symbols is not

we will begin to recognise its true value. It is then that the term, "Islaamic perspective", begins to mean much more than we currently recognise.

We know of Islamic universalism by way of many Muslims recognizing and empathizing with other Muslims despite their nationality.

How about, for instance, Islamic Global Universalism that sees Muslims developing a similar perspective that

Globalisation and see themselves, for a change, as part of The Solution.

Just as the democratic impulse in the West gradually led to the enfranchisement of the non-whites and women, the universal spirit of the Islamic world could very well provide the West, and the world, with solutions that can take that which has thus far been achieved by the west a hundred steps further.

Thus, in view of Muslims and Globalisation, it would be prudent to complement the question, "What is Islam in view of the World", with, "What can the world be in view of Islam."

It's time for Muslims, amongst others, to awaken to their potential as a part of The Solution.

Edwin Anthony
Written from an Islaamic perspective.

In my perusal of blogs, editorials, magazines, and so on, I rarely come across articles written by Muslims from an Islaamic perspective that address, for instance, Western issues from an advisory approach.

When they do speak on non-Islaamic related matters, they simply reiterate viewpoints that emerge from a western view of things.

discovered only by using it with the numbers 1 and 2. Again, the value of fire as a provider of light is not enriched but further discovered when one experiences winter.

Applying Islaamic perspectives only in Muslim concerns does not provide us the opportunity to further discover its potential by application in the global context in non-Muslim related matters.

It is only when it is applied empathetically and universally that

emphasises empathy for all of humanity despite their nationality? (In the West, such universalism has been confined to 'nation-states' and from which oxymoronic phrases such as "universal suffrage" emerge.) Or how about Islamic Ecological Universalism, where, in the true sense of the Universal spirit of Islam, empathy is extended to all sentient creatures?

These are just some of the perspectives that could have, or can emerge, once the Muslim begins to truly embrace



OPEN LETTER to Saudis*

By Tanya C. Hsu*

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Perhaps the land. Had I the chance to stay I would have searched until I found an answer.

A piece of my heart remained in the Kingdom. I can only hope that I may soon return to find out why.

Having returned from the Kingdom, four weeks in an abaya ['abaa-ah] and 'hijaab, I am angry and frustrated.

As an analyst specialising in Saudi Arabia, I knew much of what to expect, thus covering and not being able to drive were nonissues. Landing in Jeddah I dropped ten degrees body temperature switching from linen to an abaya.

Four weeks later, I flew through to Atlanta without removing my abaya, not only to test American reactions but because it was comfortable and practical.

In Riyadh's Bedu Souk I added a burqua [burqu'] and realised, for the first time in my adult life, men spoke directly to me rather than to a physique. That is respect.

Having completed my book on the Kingdom, I had been invited to the Saudi American Interactive Dialogue in Jeddah. Staying to gather material for a second book, I met with people from all walks of life: Rich, poor, mothers, working women; the highly successful, the unemployed, royalty, Bedouin market sellers, and those in between.

I met with Saudis by birth, Saudis by choice, and foreigners. I lived with Saudi families, those with domestic help and those without. All were open and eager to share their opinions.

I travelled freely across the country, an Arab ['Arab] woman alone. Fed monumental amounts of food in Saudi homes nightly, unable to escape such generous hospitality, I never witnessed men separate from women.

In Riyadh I used a Saudi friend's office for a fortnight, was treated equally and was privy to top-level business discussions. Thus began my irritation. I had expected to return to the U.S., defensive posture prepared. Since September 11, I have tried in vain to explain the Kingdom to a country reluctant to understand or listen, have been the target of attacks, and have had professional difficulty for insisting on clarity on Saudi issues.

It is acceptable in the US to be anti-war, anti-Bush, or support the Palestinians; it is not acceptable on either side of the political spectrum to be "pro-Saudi".

That is "sleeping with the enemy" or "hero worship". Little of Saudi Arabia, is covered in the West other than trade, oil, and proclamations of reform.

Sadly, within the Kingdom and despite access to satellite television, newspapers and the Internet, even Jarir Bookstore has yet to catch up: Only travel and photography books, or historical biographies of Gertrude Bell and Harry Philby were available. Not permitting political material available to a hungry public belies logic at this stage.

I experienced few inconveniences. Prayer time forces the habit of pausing. Time passes differently in the United States as we race from work to school to the grocery store to after-school activities to dinner, housecleaning and laundry, finally collapsing in exhaustion having barely spoken to our children eating in separate rooms at different times.

Families walk together along the Jeddah corniche, flying kites or riding donkeys,

barbecues permeating the air - vastly different to the deafening X-rated rap music that invades main streets in America as teens cruise.

So why am I angry?

During all my conversations one question remained unanswered. When asked, What makes you proud to be Saudi "being Muslim" or "being Arab" was as common a reply as "being the home of the Two Holy Cities". One can easily define Palestinian anger, Iraqi angst, or Syrian character, yet I received nothing on Saudi national patriotism. Can you not see?

For years you have publicly apologised for comparatively low levels of violence, lack of reform, or the slow pace of change.

Repeatedly I heard the despair and cynicism blinding you to what is happening in front of you: Palpable change, construction growth, new institutions, reform efforts, and the Mutawa [Mu'tawa']. You have much to be proud of, but your politeness and kindness allows the West to trample you, naming you a threat to "democracy" and the world.

You cannot let this continue. Pre-empt the increase in anti-Saudi hostility and stop re-emphasising your weaknesses. You are a dignified people, so take pride in your country in action, not just spirit. Explain to the world how you respect women, how safe and free from crime you are, and how family takes priority.

Demand how the U.S., world leader in murder, rape and domestic violence, dare accuse you of human rights abuses. Ask how Americans can

defend their preferred method of capital punishment by electrocuting women, minors and the mentally handicapped.

How, if democracy includes the export of the largest pornographic industry throughout the world, can they judge the Kingdom for its restrictions?

Why can a Saudi leave his wallet, laptop and digital camera on the front seat of a car, as I did, and return to find everything intact? Americans live in gated subdivisions with security alarms; child molesters roam free in every neighbourhood. Half empty compounds in the Kingdom are triple barricaded, one Alkhobar compound protected by five security walls and armoured trucks.

Murderers don't return to the scene of their crime, so why such fear? Nuns, priests, Jewish settlers, rabbis and Catholics cover their heads but Saudi women are "oppressed" for such?

Why apologise for your rate of progress when it took the United States two hundred years, until 1920, to grant women the right to vote? American women are paid seventy-five cents to the dollar compared to men; the Prophet's first wife was his employer, a successful and powerful businesswoman.

Another wife, Aisha ['a-ishah], fought in battle alongside men, and Islaam forbids racism. How then did it take until 1963 after riots and protests before blacks were granted civil rights, the end to segregation, and freedom?

Bias remains rampant and races still do not mix freely. Why can the U.S. government attack any Arab

nation when not one Arab state has ever threatened America? Is this "democracy"? More importantly, is this what you want?

Of course, there is much to fix within the Kingdom. All regions rise and fall. There is little difference in the speed of bureaucracy between Saudi Arabia, and Sweden or France; ministers settle in to roles of government power and have no desire for change.

You have a ready-made group available for pressing issues: The mutawa could be assigned to fine dangerous drivers (intent to kill is 'haraam) or punish

anyone seen littering: It is a disgrace to the religion, the environment and people's health.

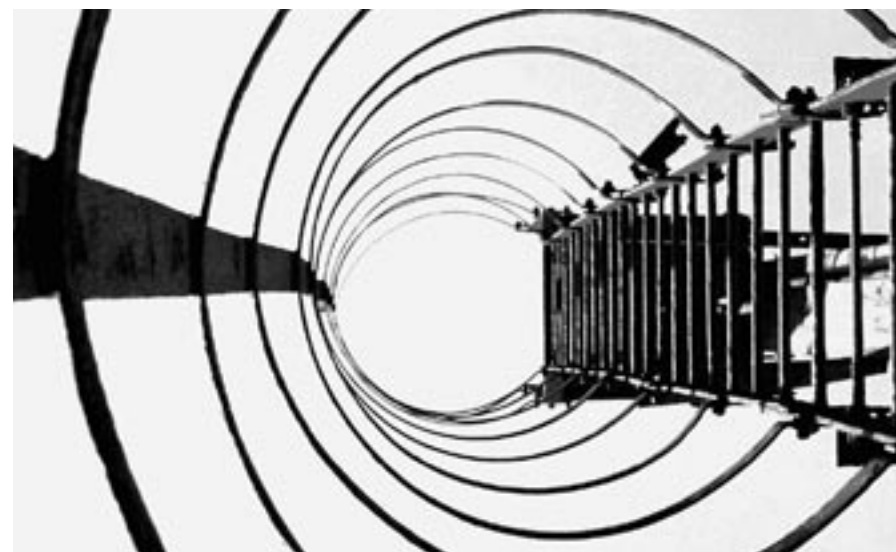
Globalisation and technology are here to stay, so as Mu'hamad Bin 'Abdulwahhaab brought reform for the sake of unity in the eighteenth century, again use ijtihaad (individual interpretation) and contextualization to unite for the sake of the Kingdom, Islaam, and national pride.

There is indeed something enigmatic about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - perhaps the people, perhaps the history,

Notes

* Appeared at Arab News on Monday 30 May 2005 and republished with permission from the author.

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The Four Fundamentalisms And the Threat to SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

(Part 2 of 2)

By Robert Jensen*

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Technology

Religious, national, and economic fundamentalisms are dangerous. They are systems of thought -or, more accurately, systems of non-thought; as Wes Jackson puts it, "fundamentalism takes over where thought leaves off" <http://www.oriononline.org/pages/oo/sidebars/America/Jackson.html>- that are at the core of much of the organised violence in the world today.

They are systems that are deployed to constrain real freedom and justify illegitimate authority. But it may turn out that those fundamentalisms are child's play compared with U.S. society's technological fundamentalism.

Most concisely defined, technological fundamentalism is the assumption that the increasing use of increasingly more sophisticated high-energy, advanced technology is always a good thing and that any problems caused by the unintended consequences of such technology eventually can be remedied by more

technology. Those who question such declarations are often said to be "anti-technology," which is a meaningless insult. All human beings use technology of some kind, whether it's stone tools or computers.

An anti-fundamentalist position is not that all technology is bad, but that the introduction of new technology should be evaluated on the basis of its effects -predictable and unpredictable- on human communities and the non-human world, with an understanding of the limits of our knowledge.

Our experience with unintended consequences is fairly clear. For example, there's the case of automobiles and the burning of petroleum in internal-combustion engines, which gave us the interstate highway system and contributes to global warming.

We haven't quite figured out how to cope with these problems, and in retrospect it might have been wise to go slower in the development of a transportation system based

on the car and think through the consequences.

Or how about CFCs and the ozone hole? Chlorofluorocarbons have a variety of industrial, commercial, and household applications, including in air conditioning. They were thought to be a miracle chemical when introduced in the 1930s -- non-toxic, non-flammable, and non-reactive with other chemical compounds.

But in the 1980s, researchers began to understand that while CFCs are stable in the troposphere, when they move to the stratosphere and are broken down by strong ultraviolet light they release chlorine atoms that deplete the ozone layer.

This unintended effect deflated the exuberance a bit. Depletion of the ozone layer means that more UV radiation reaches the Earth's surface, and overexposure to UV radiation is a cause of skin cancer, cataracts, and immune suppression.

But, the technological fundamentalists

might argue, we got a handle on that one and banned CFCs, and now the ozone hole is closing. True enough, but what lessons have been learned?

Society didn't react to the news about CFCs by thinking about ways to step back from a world that has become dependent on air conditioning, but instead looked for replacements to keep the air conditioning running.

So, the reasonable question is: When will the unintended effects of the CFC replacements become visible? If not the ozone hole, what's next? There's no way to predict, but it seems reasonable to ask the question and sensible to assume the worst.

This technological fundamentalism makes it clear why Jackson's call for an ignorance-based worldview is so important. If we were to step back and confront honestly the technologies we have unleashed -out of that hubris, believing our knowledge is adequate to control the consequences of our science and technology- I doubt any of us would

ever get a good night's sleep.

We humans have been overdriving our intellectual headlights for some time, most dramatically in the second half of the 20th century.

Most obviously, there are two places we have gone, with reckless abandon, where we had no business going - into the atom and into the cell.

On the former: The deeper we break into the energy package, the greater the risks we take.

Building fires with sticks gathered from around the camp is relatively easy to manage, but breaking into increasingly earlier material of the universe - such as fossil fuels and, eventually, heavy metal uranium- is quite a different project, more complex and far beyond our capacity to control.

Likewise, manipulating plants through selective breeding is local and manageable, whereas breaking into the workings of the gene -the foundational material of life- takes us to places we have no way to understand.

We live now in the uncomfortable position of realising we have moved too far and too fast, outstripping our capacity to manage safely the world we have created.

The answer is not some naïve return to a romanticized past, but a recognition of what we have created and a systematic evaluation of how to step back from our most dangerous missteps.

Redefining a Good Life

Central to that project is realising that we have to learn to live with less, which we can accomplish only when we recognize that living with less is crucial not only to ecological survival but long-term human fulfilment.

People in the United States live with an abundance of most everything -except meaning. The people who have the most in material terms seem to spend the most time in therapy, searching for answers to their own alienation.

This "blessed lifestyle" -a term Bush's spokesman used in 2000 to describe the president's view of U.S. affluence- perhaps is more accurately also seen as a curse.

Let's return to CFCs and air-conditioning. To someone who lives in Texas, with its miserable heat half the year, it's reasonable to ask: If not air-conditioning, then what? One possible reasonable response is, of course, to vacate Texas, a strategy I ponder often.

More realistic: The "cracker house," a term from Florida and Georgia to describe houses built before air-conditioning that utilize shade, cross-ventilation, and various building techniques to create a livable space even in the summer in the deep South.

Of course, even with all that, there are times when it's hot in a cracker house -so hot that one doesn't want to do much of anything but drink iced tea and sit on the porch. That raises a question: What's so bad

about sitting on the porch drinking iced tea instead of sitting inside in an air-conditioned house?

A world that steps back from high-energy/high-technology answers to all questions will no doubt be a harder world in some ways.

But the way people cope without such "solutions" can help create and solidify human bonds. In this sense, the high-energy/high-technology world often contributes to impoverished relationships and the destruction of longstanding cultural practices and the information those practices carry.

So, stepping back from this fundamentalism is not simply sacrifice but an exchange of a certain kind of comfort and easy amusement for a different set of rewards.

Articulating this is important in a world in which people have come to believe the good life is synonymous with consumption and the ability to acquire increasingly sophisticated technology.

To miss the way in which turning from the high-energy/high-technology can improve our lives, then, supports the techno-fundamentalists, such as this writer in the Wired magazine: "Green-minded activists failed to move the broader public not because they were wrong about the problems, but because the solutions they offered were unappealing to most people.

They called for tightening belts and curbing appetites, turning down the thermostat and living lower on the food chain. They rejected technology, business, and prosperity in favour of

returning to a simpler way of life.

No wonder the movement got so little traction. Asking people in the world's wealthiest, most advanced societies to turn their backs on the very forces that drove such abundance is naïve at best."

Naïve, perhaps, but not as naïve as the belief that unsustainable systems can be sustained indefinitely.

With that writer's limited vision -which is what passes for vision in this culture- it's not surprising that he advocates economic and technological fundamentalist solutions: "With climate change hard upon us, a new green movement is taking shape, one that embraces environmentalism's concerns but rejects its worn-out answers.

Technology can be a font of endlessly creative solutions. Business can be a vehicle for change. Prosperity can help us build the kind of world we want. Scientific exploration, innovative design, and cultural evolution are the most powerful tools we have.

Entrepreneurial zeal and market forces, guided by sustainable policies, can propel the world into a bright green future." <http://wirednews.com/wired/archive/14.05/green.html>

In other words: Let's ignore our experience and throw the dice. Let's take naiveté to new heights. Let's forget all we should have learned.

What's Next?

So far, it appears my criticism has

been of the fundamentalist versions of religion, nation, capitalism, and high-technology. But the problem goes deeper than the most exaggerated versions of these systems.

If there is to be a liveable future, religion as we know it, the nation-state, capitalism, and what we think of as advanced technology will have to give way to new ways of understanding the world and organising ourselves.

We still have to find ways to struggle with the mystery of the world through ritual and art; organise ourselves politically; produce and distribute goods and services; and create the tools we need to do all these things.

But the existing systems have proven inadequate to the task. On each front, we need major conceptual revolutions.

I don't pretend to have answers, nor should anyone else. We are at the beginning of a long process of redefining what it means to be human in relation to others and to the non-human world. We are still formulating questions.

Some find this a depressing situation, but we could just as well see it as a time that opens incredible opportunities for creativity.

To live in unsettled times -especially times in which it's not difficult to imagine life as we know it becoming increasingly untenable- is both frightening and exhilarating. In that sense, my friend's acknowledgement of profound grief need not scare us

but instead can be a place from which we see clearly and gather the strength to move forward.

What is that path? Tracking the four fundamentalisms, we can see some turns we need to make.

- **Technologically:** We need to stop talking about progress in terms that reflexively glorify faster and more powerful devices, and instead adopt a standard for judging progress based on the real effects on humans and the wider world of which we are a part.

- **Economically:** We need to stop talking about growth in terms of more production and adopt a standard for economic growth and development based on meeting human needs.

- **Nationally:** We need to stop talking about national security and the national interest -code words for serving the goals of the powerful- and focus on people's interests in being secure in the basics: food, shelter, education, and communal solidarity.

- **Religiously:** We need to stop trying to pin down God. We can understand God as simply the name we give to that which is beyond our ability to understand, and recognize that the attempt to create rules for how to know God is always a failed project.

I want to end by reinforcing the ultimate importance of that recognition: Most of the world is complex beyond our ability to comprehend. It's not that there's nothing we can know through our rational faculties, but that it's essential we recognise the limits of those faculties.

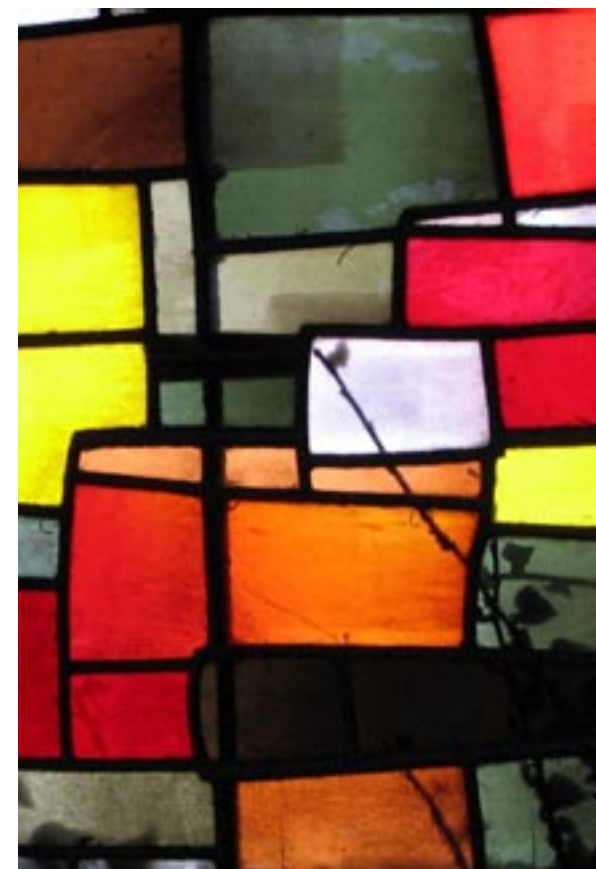
We need to reject the fundamentalist streak in all of us, religious or secular, whatever our political affiliation. We need to stop mistaking cleverness for wisdom. We need to embrace our limits -our ignorance - in the hopes that we can stop being so stupid. When we do that we are coming to terms with the kind of animals we are, in all our glory and all our limitations.

That embrace of our limitations is an embrace of a larger world of which we are a part, more glorious than most of us ever experience.

When we do that -if we can find our way clear to do that- I think we make possible love in this world. Not an idealised love, but a real love that recognises the joy that is possible and the grief that is inevitable.

It is my dream to live in that world, to live in that love. There is much work to be done if we want that world. There is enormous struggle that can't be avoided. When we allow ourselves to face it, we will realise that ahead of us there is suffering beyond description, as well as potential for transcending that suffering.

There is grief and joy.
And there is nothing to do but face it.



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The END OF HISTORY and ISLAAM

By **Abdelwahab Elmessiri** ['Abd Alwahhaab Almiseery]

What is the view from within- a Muslim's view- on the relationship between Islaam and the West?

We have to place the concrete experience of the Muslims with the West in a complex historical context. The first dialogue between the West and Islaam was an armed one.

The imperialist troops of Europe marched on Africa and Asia, and pounded Muslim societies with superior military technology.

Despite the imperialist onslaught, however, many Arab thinkers called for an adoption of Western modernity, for it had produced coherent societies with a sense of purpose, stable family structures, humanistic value systems, and impressive technological achievements.

Western modernity, to use post-modern terminology, was logo-centric, based on stable epistemological, moral, and signifying systems. Imperialism, Zionism, racism, and the genocide of Native Americans were all marginalised as mere deviations from an otherwise wholesome humanistic culture.

Looking for alternative modernity: This last fact encouraged Muslim intellectuals to deepen their critique of Western modernity and to reexamine their own Islaamic heritage

in the hope of finding a new basis for the evolution of a new modernity, one that does not necessarily end with the death of God, the death of man, the destruction of nature and a veritable end of history.

But why do some Western scholars perceive this return to our roots as a threat to their well-being?

I have argued elsewhere that Western modernity is based on a metaphysics of immanence that denies transcendence.

The world is seen as self-activating, self-transforming and self-explanatory. The laws immanent in nature are sufficient as a basis for explaining both man and nature. This is the basis of Western rationalism.

Within that frame of reference, the sources of man's motivation and conduct have to be found within his material self or within natural laws. In other words, man is reduced to nature, the human is reduced to the material.

As a result of this process, man began to be defined not in terms of his needs, longings, desire to transcend, namely not in terms of his full human complexity, but rather in terms of the simple laws of nature.

This accounts for the centrality of the

natural or physical science model, which presupposes a natural man in the Western imagination.

On the concrete social level, this abstract concept takes two concrete forms: economic man (Adam Smith and Marx), and libidinal man (Freud). The world founded by Western modernity operated in terms of this image of man.

I am not here referring to the whole Western intellectual tradition, but to what I term the "operative paradigm"- namely the paradigm that underlies concrete political, military and economic decisions. Dissenting humanistic and anarchistic voices do not contribute to the formation of the operative paradigm.

To envisage an image of man different from the one propagated by Western modernity, to develop (or even dream of) a modernity that would not necessarily result in reification and commodification, and to see the natural sciences as inadequate in charting man's full complexity: to do this is to represent a real threat, for this new image of man cannot be easily accommodated within the restricted parameters of technological rationalism and value-free rationalisation.

Max Weber predicted that this process, if left unchecked, will turn society into something

like a workshop, and will land man in an iron cage, where everything is calculated, instrumentalised.

The multi-nationals and the Pentagon operate in terms of a global market that is no different from Weber's iron cage- a market for one based either on Christian values or on a secularised version thereof. They reject this insane unilinearity and mentality of conquest.

Muslims can definitely engage in a dialogue with those elements. We can all cooperate in the attempt to evolve a more humane and complex modernity.

But there is another form of dialogue; what I have referred to as an "armed dialogue", in the sense that by resisting we can force the imperialist other to recognise our existence and our rights.

Can you elaborate?

The overarching paradigm in modern Western civilisation is Darwinism. By its very nature it cannot accept rational dialogue.

Darwinism is committed to evolution, process and survival, its main mechanism is struggle and conflict, and the only way it can resolve conflict is through power.

Men are either supermen who dominate, or

submen who accommodate and submit.

Israel is the living symbol of that in our midst An armed fortress, a little Prussia that bulldozes houses and breaks the bones of a people for one of the main rights enshrined in liberal democracy, namely the right to self determination. This state is supported and subsidised and armed by the liberal west.

Are you implying some kind of basic contradiction between theory and practice in the West?

Western modernity paints a picture society based on the principles of utility, pleasure and self-interest. But of course this is too simplistic and therefore impossible.

A process of patching up, of cosmetic "complexification" takes place. This is notable in Fukuyama's work. At one point, the value-free physical science model is presented as the ultimate model, then in the next chapter, his discussion of the dignity of man comes out of nowhere.

How can we relate the dignity of man to the laws of physics and nature? So is he revising the whole paradigm? Or is he using two paradigms? If something is of material use but comes in conflict with ideas of human dignity, how can the conflict be settled? The West has opted for the dominance of utility. Dignity is merely a decoration.

So does this amount to a clash of cultures?

The fact of the matter is that there is an Islaamic culture based on the idea of a monotheistic God. Islaam is a symbol of all those cultural formations that still espouse ideas of transcendence. including Western humanism itself.

So it is not a case of Islaam versus the West. It is a case of one civilisation based on the denial of transcendence or committed to technological rationalism as opposed to any civilisation advocating transcendence and humanism.

I think this is what Huntington means when he singles out Islaam and Confucianism in the

"clash of civilisations.

His terminology is very confused but, like Fukuyama, he believes in the end of history, the eventual triumph of the secular, the Western and the moder (all synonymous in his discourse).

The only difference, however, is that Fukuyama says we are already there, while Huntington argues that some people are lagging behind, the process is not yet complete, and "something" must be done about it That "something" is the history of Western imperialism.

How can we explain the sudden abundance of literature declaring the end of history?

Western modernity paints a picture society based on the principles of utility, pleasure and self-interest. But of course this is too simplistic and therefore impossible. A process of patching up, of cosmetic "complexification" takes place.

Actually, for me, it is not that sudden. I discovered America in 1963, and right away I discovered the end of history.

The whole enlightenment project with its view of the past as a history of backwardness and darkness implies a negation of history. The technological Utopias of the Renaissance are all based on an idea of end of history.

Hegel's view of history reaches its fulfilment in the end of history. The idea of America as a new Zion falls within the same pattern.

Fascist ideologies and some revolutionary ideas postulate an end to history. Walt Whitman speaks of America, a new Zion, "scienusing" the past, and terminating history.

But all of this is simply a manifestation of the deeper pattern of applying the natural science model to human society. It meant the liquidation of the category of man as we know it.

The end of history is actually the end of human history, and the beginning of natural history. But there is another dimension. I think the West has discovered that its hegemony is weakening and has replaced confrontation with seduction, war with deconstruction.

The end of history, and post-modernism, have that in common: they are based on a denial of any possibility of transcendence or reform.

They advocate passivity. This is a perfect

strategy for a declining west, when everybody is asked to erase his historical memory and forget his identity in order to become an economic or libidinal man who trades and enjoys in a passive way.

He does not seek reform or change or transcendence. But passivity and pragmatism is for us; the West has its guns. Israel with its nuclear arsenal is an apt symbol of this end of our history, of this deconstruction of the human and the transcendental.

You spoke in your last book of an Islaamic project What would be its main features? Part of our Islaamic project is defending man against secular nihilism and amorality, technological rationalisation and

instrumentalisation.

Western modernity is based on the conquest of nature, exploitation, and war. What about modernity that is based on equilibrium?

Developing along Western lines is impossible, because Western modernity is consumerist and wasteful of natural resources. Twenty per cent of the world's population uses 80 to 85 per cent of its natural resources.

Western modernity, by definition cannot be duplicated. We seek a new modernity based not on a revolution of rising expectations and infinite progress, but rather on the idea of a human mind at peace with itself, committed to the sanctity of man and of nature, and therefore not bent on conquest and plunder a modernity that balances productivity with ideas of justice, ideas of individual human rights with the rights of the human community.

Many Western scholars are not at all satisfied with the certainties of Western democracy and its empirical assumptions its Hobbesian, Darwinian ideologies.

Muslims can cooperate with these elements in the attempt to construct a new modernity one that does not do away with man, and that does not declare the end of history.

* Abdelwahab Elmessiri is an Arab thinker and writer. He has a Ph.D. in English and comparative literature from Rutgers University, U.S.A. He published scores of books and articles. Amongst which is "The Encyclopaedia of Jews, Judaism, and Zionism" which has eight volumes and is a result of 25 years research and critical inquiry with a team of 30 researchers.

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Little Mosque on the Prairie: HUMANISATION Through HUMOURISATION

By Hayat Alyaqout [Hayaat Alyaa'qoot]
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Thanks to Youtube and Google Video, I have been able to bask in the sun of a wonderful comedy.

Little Mosque on the Prairie, which is now in its second season, will for sure hit your funny bone, but it will also hit a raw nerve; Muslims in North America after September 11th.

Zarqa Nawaz, A Canadian from Pakistani roots, created the series that is cantered around a small mosque in fictitious town in the prairies called "Mercy".

Acting as mini melting pot, Mercy accommodates different types of people. On the Muslims front, there is Hamoudi Family. Yasir Hamoudi [Yaasir 'Hammoodi], the father, does not seem to be very concerned Islaam as much as he is concerned about his business.

His wife Sarah -who works for the mayor of Mercy- embraced Islaam but is not that happy with many of its teaching.

Rayyan [Rayyaan], their daughter, pious and outspoken, is a physician and is totally different than them.

There is also Fatima [Faa'timah], who comes from African roots. She runs a café and also runs on the same track as the old Imaam Baber does; they both think that while equals evil.

Babers' daughter, Layla, is a teenager in struggle to live hip and satisfy her father's requirements.

But this is not Babers' main concern, because a new Imaam has arrived, Amaar [Ammaar]. A young, open-minded, ex-lawyer, freshly imported from Toronto is killing Baber with his "lax" decisions.

Non-Muslims include Fred Tupper. A paranoid host of the daily radio show who dedicates his morning program "Wake Up People" to incite the town against Muslims. On the other hand, Reverend Magee is so tolerant with Muslims and admits that his church is



not as popular as the mosque.

Actually it was him who gave Muslims the chance to have a mosque by renting a part of his Parish to them.

Ann Popowicz is Mercy's mayor. Her role in the series is not confined to encounter with Muslims -usually through her PR officer Sarah- but also encounter with the issue of women in power.

Your cheeks will hurt when you learn about the "Halaloween", An Islaamic equivalent of the Halloween introduced by Ammaar, or when Baber -the over protective father -insisted to accompany the children- was rewarded with the greatest deal of candies because everyone though he was disguised as Osama Bin Laden!

Or when Yasir's mother come from Lebanon and tries to convince Yasir to take a second wife and the hilarious -yet meaningful- chaos begins, or when an open house in the mosque ends up with an explosion.

The show was not flawless though. It had goofs such as a mistake in a verse of the Holy 'Qura~n recited by Baber in the first episode, or when Sarah tries to pray and jumps right from bed to the praying carpet without doing the ablution which is a must before praying.

She also seems to be fatigued and is praying all the time which is not true. Muslims pray five times a day and the prayer takes less than 5 minutes.

Humanisation through humourisation is the strategy of the series. It shows Muslims as normal human beings who might be good or bad or in between, who have their good side but also have flaws which could be funny.

That was the strategy of Seinfeld which aimed at normalising the Jewish character. Laughing could cure almost everything, including misinformation and even myths!

The Mainstream Modest Muslim Woman

By Nadia Ali* [Naadiyah 'Aly]
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We are about to witness a revolution where Muslim women are bringing the power of iqra into the 21st century. No longer sitting back waiting for someone else to produce a medium by which their voices can be heard.

In fact Muslim women have become pioneers in the magazine business, bridging the void between Islaam and the West, creating glossy magazines by which words convey the needs of today's Muslim Woman.

Islaam is being presented for the world to see, from the U.S.A. to the U.K. where there are no skimpy clad girls, or advertising for non-halaal products; just the good stuff makes it to publication.

The Muslim woman is presently being seen in a light that at long last gives her a voice in Western society's media discussing everything from fashion to what's cooking, but the appeal goes further and draws in non-Muslims who are now able to see Muslim women in a new vein, one that dispels the stereotype and gives her attributes, character and emotion.

So, the doors have been opened by the pioneer Muslim women who have

become editors and publishers of great Muslim magazines. Such magazines already exist on racks in shops such as *Azizah* (U.S.), *Muslim Girl Magazine* (U.S.A.), *Sisters Magazine* (U.K.), and *Emel* (U.K.).

Every Muslim magazine mentioned is designed on par with their Western counterparts with full colour, eye-catching designs and complimented with high-quality photographs that express the views of thinking Muslim women.

Azizah magazine which originates in the U.S.A. was created in 2002 by founding Editor *Tayyibah Taylor*. The magazine is designed for the contemporary, educated Muslim woman who is confident about her Islaamic faith and continually seeks to improve all aspects of her life. Topics such as special reports, lifestyle and departments grace the pages of this magazine.

For founding editor Ausma Khan's of *Muslim Girl Magazine* which is published in the U.S.A., the content was not so rigid and more of a challenge in putting together as she says, *"Our target audience is 18-24 year old Muslim women. Essentially, we hope*



to enlighten, celebrate and inspire our audience by telling their stories, celebrating their values and providing information, guidance and entertainment within the parameters of values they hold dear."

At *Muslim Girl Magazine* given that the audience is impressionable young Muslims whose interests are very diverse including fashion, peer pressure and consist of American teenagers who have lots of questions they want answered

Ausma says, *"We want to engage with young women and hear them speak, rather than preaching at them. And we want them to know that our magazine is a place where they can ask any question or share any problem that is on their minds without fear of criticism or dismissal."*

This is visible through the content of the magazine which features local and international Muslim girls who do extraordinary things. Ausma goes onto to say that, *"We were inspired*

to start the magazine as a result of Muslim Girl's desire to share the positive contributions they make in their society and communities every day."

Did You Know?

The total Muslim population in the U.K. is 1.6 million of which 48 per cent are female (*Office of National Statistics, U.K., 2004*)

Across the Atlantic Ocean "*Emel*" named to sound like the letters M and L, as in Muslim Life, as well as the Arabic word for "hope" is a lifestyle magazine that celebrates contemporary British Muslim culture.

Created in 2003 by founding Editor Sarah Joseph, it is designed with both females and males in mind and features Muslim-inspired inventions and personality profiles.

Sisters Magazine which also originates from the U.K. was inspired by founding editor Nai'ma Roberts who is also author of the book "*From My Sisters' Lips*", says her inspiration for starting *Sisters Magazine* derived from the response she got from her book "*I wanted to continue the inspiration and connections between my sisters in Islaam. I wanted to publish a magazine that reflected a confident Islaamic ethos and one that I would be proud to represent.*"

The content of *Sisters Magazine* began as an online only magazine but, but due to popular demand a printed magazine was made possible.

Na'ima says, "*We cover every aspect of a woman's life, from her relationship with Allaah to her relationship with*

herself as a woman and with her family, community and the outside world. And we have great fashion, food and décor ideas too!"

One theme that runs in all of the said magazines is the topic of fashion as it relates to the Muslim woman. Assuming that just under 50 percent of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims are females these magazines are promoting a unique trend in clothing under the heading of modest fashion, showcasing ideas and creations put together by the mix and match process of store bought clothes to highlighting clothing lines by Muslim designers.

This is not to say that da'wah is not a feature in these magazines. They actively invite all to the way of Islaam, be it through poetry, real life stories or direct quotes and references to the 'Qura~n.

Ausma, of Muslim Girl Magazine states that they feature inspirational stories about real-life girls who are wonderful exemplars of Islaam, "*we have several columns where we answer questions on ethical or moral dilemmas from a faith-based perspective, for those who are seeking information on how Islaamic values translate into real-world choices.*"

Na'ima of Sisters Magazine says, "*Our da'wah is subtle but it is definitely there: we only quote authentic sources and we encourage the Sunnah, always. We address the realities of living Islaam but always in an encouraging, hopeful way.*"

Conveying the message is in fact a responsibility of each and every Muslim, according to his or her ability and with a magazine at their disposal these

founding editors aim to spread the word of Islaam.

For a long time the world of Muslim women has been largely misunderstood and misinterpreted, but through the changing times and pioneer Muslim women such as Ausma Khan and Na'ima Roberts the birth of Muslim magazines is set to become the empowerment tool for the 21st century.

The very words that grace the pages show the elegance of modest behaviour and dress, strengthening faith and empowering the Muslim woman in a worldwide Islaamic network of Muslim women.

The knowledge-based glossy Muslim magazines encourages proper Islaamic belief and behaviour encouraging a surge of interest from non-Islaamic readers breaking down cultural borders and changing the negative image of Islaam in the Western press.

So, get ready, for the Mainstream Modest Muslimah has arrived in glossy magazines created by Muslims, written for Muslims, featuring Muslims that you can have delivered to your post box or in-box. All of which are bringing a better understanding of what Muslim women are really about to an audience who are ready to read.

Websites

Muslim Girl Magazine, U.S.A.
Editor: Ausma Khan
www.muslimgirlworld.com/mag/

Sisters Magazine, U.K.
Editor: Na'ima Roberts
www.sisters-magazine.com

Azizah Magazine, U.S.A.
Editor: Tayyibah Taylor
www.azizahmagazine.com

Emel Magazine, U.K.
Editor: Sarah Joseph
www.emelmagazine.com

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By Jinan Shbat* [Jinaan Shabt]
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As I wake up everyday, get up and begin my morning routine, I sometimes feel as though I have it harder than most.

As a Muslim woman in an American society, staying true to my beliefs and representing my faith can develop into a challenge.

Since 9/11, Muslims have been viewed in such a negative light, that it has become imperative on each and every Muslim man and woman to represent their faith with the utmost dignity and decorum. With all the ignorance we face on a daily basis, this is sometimes difficult.

The biggest fear Muslims have faced (and will probably continue to face) is the fear of assimilation. While we do not strive to change ourselves to fit the mold, we sometimes are reluctant to act out or normal routines, so as not to scare away our fellow citizens.

I have seen fellow employees who have been afraid to pray or fast because of what their co-workers might say. This is America; land of the free. The last time I checked, we were able to practice our religion freely, without any fear of persecution.

Many Muslims have faced discrimination since 9/11; it is unfortunate that we as a society have had to deal with such blatant hatred. However, this hatred has led to the spread of a disease that has crippled America; ignorance.

With this ignorance, people who are driven by their fear have attacked and placed blame on those who have no connection with Muslims or the Islamic faith; people such as Hindus and Sikhs have had to face threatening advances and physical harm.

It is not fair to assume that one of a certain colour is part of a group; people should be given the benefit of the doubt.

Don't get me wrong; Muslims should not be blamed for 9/11. As a group,

No Fear of the Future

they held no more responsibility than Christians did after Timothy McVeigh bombed the Oklahoma City Federal building. A few people do not represent the majority; Muslims condemned the attacks.

As a religion, Islam preached peace and civility; the killing of innocent people is not encouraged, and tolerance of others regardless of religion or ethnic background is embraced.

After all, most Muslims are not from the Middle East; in large part, they originated in Africa and East Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Muslims are all over the world, from South America to Australia to Europe.

So, what does this mean for Muslims? Where are we heading as a people? At what point do we allow ourselves to be conformed by the majority, and where is the line that draws us apart from others? Many fear that our religious strength will decline as we try to assimilate; others feel that unless we do so, we will be alienated in our communities.

How many times have we heard of our mosques being attacked? In my community, Muslims have lived there for over 80 years; yet a mosque was vandalised after moving into a new neighbourhood. We hold multi-faith events with surrounding synagogues and churches, yet there are still some people who are ignorant and uneducated.

We try to infiltrate the media with events and recognition of 'Eid, yet most people do not know that Muslims have their own holiday.

The future of Muslims depends on just that: the Muslims. No other group will be able to tell us how to act, and what to do. We will need to revert ourselves to the days when Islam first began, when things weren't complicated and everyone practiced what they preached.

To delve into our own actions, each person with their own agenda, that is what will bring us down. We don't have to assimilate if we don't want to; but what we have to do is stay true to ourselves and set the best example.



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IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE : Essence of Life in a Globalised World

By **Hicham Maged** [Hishaam Maajed]
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At the threshold of the 21st century, humanity enters its third phase of the undoubtedly dynamic development which is broadly considered the consequence of 'Western Civilisation' that was modelled according to sequential notions, starting with 'Renaissance', 'Age of Enlightenment', 'Industrialisation' and 'Western Modernity' in its successive discourses in the 20th century.

Chronology and Terminology

Renaissance is perceived as the cornerstone of those sequential processes that looked back into the ancients' heritage to restore.

Nevertheless, it is claimed that 'Middle Ages' intermediated the 'Classic Antiquity' and 'Renaissance'. Those ages are known also as 'Dark Ages' but an inquisitive question rises: were they really dark ones?

Let us explore the darkness. Whoa! It is not merely a 'black hole' in the space of humanity; there are dimmed lights of a predecessor civilisation named 'Islaamic Civilisation', was prevailing. Ironically, it is described a dark era just because it

was neither painted with Michael Anglo's nor Renoir's brushes. Full Stop!

Tracing back the Roots

Accordingly, one can not simply ignore the influential impact of Islaamic Civilisation upon its successor, the western, not merely via preserving and reviving the heritage of predecessor antiquities, but mainly for its prosperous contribution to the human race development in various realms; either being scientific, logic or ethic.

Terms like *scientific*, *logic* and *ethics* might surprise occidental mind and leads to another inquisitive question: but how come that an irregular religion that spread by fire and sword of some barbarians who call themselves Muslims to produce such civilisation?

Let us explain for whoever might care about understanding because before you communicate you should know!

Islaam Decoded

Westerns produced their civilisation according to their system, so rationally, Muslims must have sort of system that persuaded them to do so either. This system is 'Islaam'. I'm not as much

interested in presenting the output of Islaamic Civilisation as in scratching this surface. Hereby I shall explain the system rationally yet I ought to precede this by terminology of the system itself.

Rationally speaking, I can illustrate Islaam as a system that compromises the complexity of human being which exists into a 'duplex state'; not merely 'body' but also 'soul'. Such dual parts interact within a homogenous milieu where the resultant force of both 'logic' and 'spirit' is bestowed in order for human being to work precisely to fulfil a special mission on Earth.

Nevertheless, such system can not exist alone; rather an 'Almighty power' guide it in order to sustain its stability, thus a 'doctrine' for soul to believe in and 'law' for his body to follow is ought to be taught via some 'messengers'.

Now I ought to translate this into the terminology of the system itself:

- **Creator:** Allaah the omnipotent of universe and no God except him;
- **Creation:** Man is his viceroy for fulfilling the mission of urbanising Earth;
- **Doctrine:** Allaah legislated 'a'qqdah

which is the Islaamic creed that man ought to belief in;

- **Law:** Allaah legislated sharee'ah which is the Islaamic law that man ought to follow;
- **Messenger:** Allaah sent to mankind prophets and messengers to reveal the message; and thus Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H) was not merely the prophet of Islaam but also "*Seal of the Prophets*."

Consequently, sharee'ah depends on in two main fundamental sources:

- **Holy 'Qura~n:** Textbook of Islaam which was revealed to Prophet Mu'hammad Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.);
- **Prophetic Sunnah:** Teaching, 'hadeeths (saying) of Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) that complementary explained and legislated according to the revelation.

The reward for fulfilment the goal of creation is not merely urbanisation; in other words welfare of humanity in the mundane life, but mainly is considered as the validation to get a final reward in the Hereafter and this is the complete worshiping to Allaah.

This is an extremely briefed fundamental

framework to understand Islaam which is not enough for who want to elaborate more.

Islaam in Action

Since human being is the focus of Islaam, sharee'ah tends to improve human attribute. Thereby a complete moral system aroused that aimed to balance between physical and spiritual needs in order to interact better either on the individual scale; behaviour, or the social scale; manners.

Moreover, both Man and Woman are the basic elements of the society to form *Family* which is the pattern of the society. Outside family, there is brotherhood and cooperation according to modesty. Consequently, Islaam persuades Muslims to establish justice among the community.

On the global scale, it's not merely the 'ethical message' to convey; there is also the *Pursuance of Knowledge* which is a mandatory act upon Muslim being male or female according to the great prophet's 'hadeeth and the 'Qura~n⁽¹⁾. Consequently, 'Qura~n urges Muslims⁽²⁾ to look into the book of nature and use their minds.

This is the keystone to unlock the passion to know that portrayed Muslims; thus they seek for the past civilisations' Science, Philosophy or in other words not merely for know but mainly to understand and add.

This is what happened exactly by Muslims scientists and philosophers; which can be perceived as worshipping Allaah on the major scale; humanity as they do on the minor scale; personal obligations upon every Muslim alone.

Muslims then became bearers of a universal message of Islaam to inform mankind; yet informing means that Muslims ought to convey not to force because there is no compulsion in religion; everybody is free wither to embrace it or not. This is what the dark ages looked like however civilisations rises and falls according to many factors that varies either internally or externally.

West Decoded

Therefore interacting with Islaamic Civilisation via many channels, either in Andalusia (Spain under the Islaamic Empire) or The Crusades had paved the route for Midvale Europe to walkthrough.

Nevertheless based upon European Midvale troubles, antagonism between European intellectuals of the Renaissance and the Church occurred and thus Western Civilisation portrayed itself with the secular mask which separated the Church from the State.

Consequently, 'Secularism' became the milieu to develop and thus "materialism" with all the discourses among the philosophical inputs since the Renaissance till nowadays preached under "Humanism" to achieve 'utopia' of the human flourishing era. Hereby humanity superficially appears developing in accelerated velocity, noticeably since the middle of the 20th century.

West in Action

Nevertheless, since nothing in the world is absolute, therefore we need to determine our reference point for the nature of such development. If we referenced it to the merely "scientific-technical" origin, then we agree however what is the situation in case the origin is

"human"?

In other words, we are achieving on the pragmatic scale but do the same is being achieved on the human one?

My answer and so other intellectuals do is no. Questions like 'why I live', 'what I'm doing', 'What is life', 'Why this happens' are still valid without any significant answers. Moreover, what has been expected as human flourishing is simply still far away.

Despite the successive response for their pragmatically mundane needs, western Civilisation entered a dilemma of falling to response for the spiritual needs of humans.

In other words, developing in what appears as an infinite scientific-technical progress is not apparently associated with an equal progress in the morality system. The outcome of such dilemma is gradual increasing in the magnitude of human problems not merely on the personnel's scale, but also on the global ones too which is more influential.

As the 21st century arrives, another wave of the 'old universal world' according to the western civilisation came into light under the aspects of 'globalisation' which superficially aims to fulfil the same 'old goals' after changing the actors from 'national state' to 'multinational corporations' and thus 'universal world' became 'globalised'. Moreover, it is not merely an economic wave but rather a socio-economical, and cultural ones that simply profound cultural societies.

Justice vis-à-vis Injustice

Humans are free to choose whatever

belief to follow, one can argue that no problem for increasing all terminologies start with prefix 'self-' but how about our other field problems? Are not they global too starting from Hunger, Illiteracy, Poverty, Child Pornography, Fanaticism, and ends with Global Warming?

Hereby, despite being produced back in 1936, I recall Charlie Chaplin's motion picture "Modern Times" and see it portrayed this dilemma; starting from the machine that insanely fed him till he faint and got nervous breakdown and ending with his walking with his girl.

The real dilemma is human egotism that see the world merely from one perspective regardless the majority. Ironically this contradicts with 'Democracy' itself! Do not we know that 'One man's meat is other man's poison' therefore isn't better to understand his taste instead of forcing him to merely eat others' meat? What if he is vegetarian?

Let us listen to each other; maybe Muslims have a better solution!

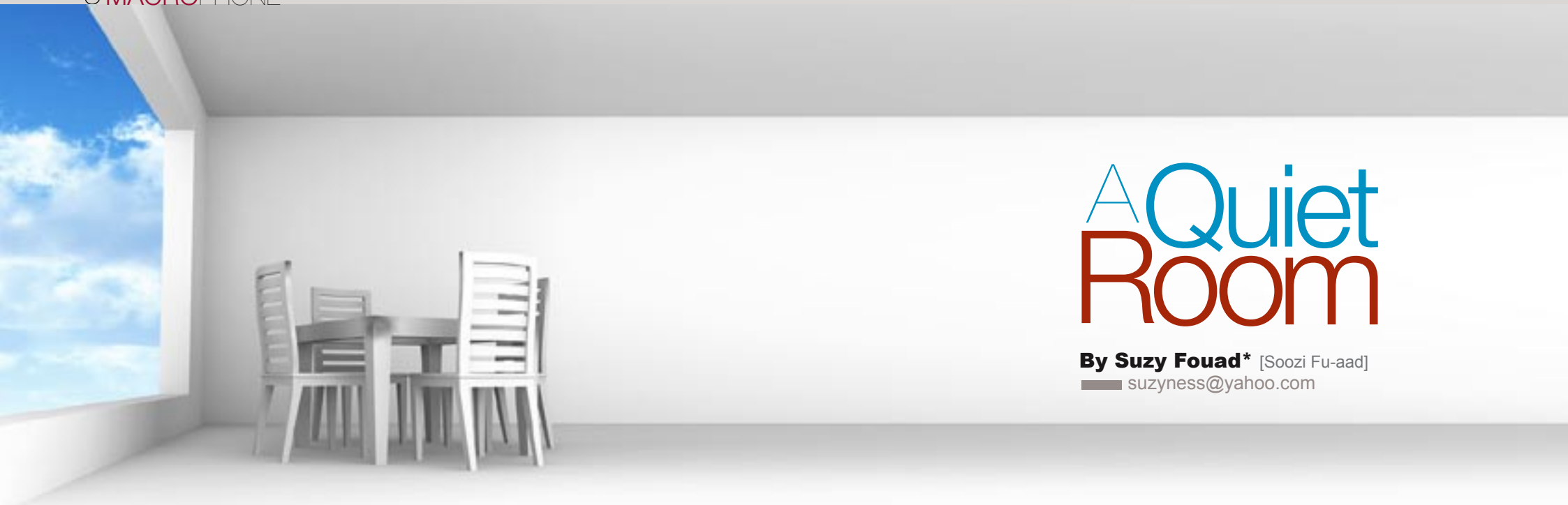
Quotes

"We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples" (the Holy 'Qura~n, Chapter of Alanbiyaa-, verse 107).

Notes

(1) "Read: In the name of thy Lord who createth," (The Holy 'Qura~n, Chapter Al'ala'q, verse 1)

(2) "Lo! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allaah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allaah's sovereignty) for people who have sense." (The Holy 'Qura~n, Chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 164)



A Quiet Room

By Suzy Fouad* [Soozi Fu-aad]
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A quiet room, with only the sounds of rain falling

A window to look out of and see birds chirping, one another they are calling

Calling to gather atop the trees in a state of tranquillity

To join together and worship Allaah the All Mighty

Over and beyond the sun slowly rises on the distant sea

Obedying Allaah the All Powerful, running its daily cause faithfully

Finishing its job as it makes its exit to the west

And out comes the next awaited guest

Twinkling in the night sky, the stars make their entrance
 The moon makes its way as well with no need for repentance

All of Allaah's creatures worship him flawlessly night and day

Couldn't we humans be the same way

His grace and mercy bestow us with brains above all creatures

Yet compared to them we bare the most unpleasant internal features

Floating through life in selfish headlessness

Moving in slow motion with little or no progress

I, among multitudes, am shackled in dependency,

Dependency on people, comfort, and being worry free
 But when the sun makes its debut entering from the west
 When we will no longer await our sky's twinkling guests

* Suzy Fouad was born and raised in the U.S.A. to Egyptian parents whose number one priority was nurturing a strong religious foundation in her. She came to realize that there would always be a weakness in this foundation without the 'hijaab.

When the sounds of rain dripping quickly disappear

When the blowing trumpet is all that we hear

What will be your answer, did you do your part?

Did you at least let compassion fill your heart?

Despite being a hard decision socially, it was an easy one spiritually, so she finally started wearing the hijab at fourteen years old after much deliberation. In an effort to sort through the emotions that occur when making such a commitment, she turned to poetry writing. She has since gotten married and become an elementary school teacher.

ISLAAMIC FINANCING: An Economic Boom

By **Dania Al-deen*** [Daaniah Addeen]
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The essence of every industry and company lies within finance. Due to the great influence from globalisation, Islaamic finance has grown exponentially in recent times.

This has caused a great influx of interest in the subject. It is a vital issue since it highlights an aspect that is a part of every individual's daily livelihood; money.

There has been controversy in regards to whether contemporary Islaamic finance is truly abiding by Sharee'ah or is it just another business tactic.

Attention to this has been manifested due to the similarities in practicality between conventional financing and some contemporary Islaamic financing institutions.

There may appear to be a fine line drawn to distinguish the two. Both methodologies will certainly consist of many similar characteristics due to their nature as financial instruments.

However, there are fundamental differences that set them apart. These basic attributes should be distinguished

in order to make clear what can be categorised as Islaamic. This topic can be very intense therefore we will only brush upon the basic principal's that led to the development of Islaamic finance.

There are two major prohibited facets; Riba and 'garar. Riba basically can be defined as interest. This is anything that is collected or retrieved in excess of original amount exchanged. There are assortments of verses from the 'Qura--n and 'hadeeths that reiterate this concept such as:

Muslim narrated on the authority of Aboo Sa'eed Al'kudry]:

"Bilaal visited the Messenger of Allaah (P.B.U.H.) with some high quality dates, and the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) inquired about their source. Bilaal explained that he traded two volumes of lower quality dates for one volume of higher quality. The Messenger of Allaah (P.B.U.H.) said: "this is precisely the forbidden Riba! Do not do this. Instead, sell the first type of dates, and use the proceeds to buy the other."

Unlike Riba that is clearly prohibited, 'garar is permissible to a certain extent. 'Garar refers to selling risky or ambiguous products. There are many rulings in Islaam in regards to its extent of its allowance. During the time of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.), it was mentioned in the following 'hadeeth by A'hmad and Ibn Maajah narrated on the authority of Aboo Sa'eed Al'kudry:

"The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) has forbidden the purchase of the unborn animal in its mother's womb, the sale of the milk in the udder without measurement, the purchase of spoils of war prior to their distribution, the purchase of charities prior to their receipt, and the purchase of the catch of a diver."

In analysing the above 'hadeeth, it is safe to assume that it is impermissible to sell entities that are apparently unclear of their results.

From a financial perspective this can be applied to investments that are unreasonably risky such as forward, future, options, and other derivative securities.

Insurance companies also have many characteristics that are prohibited by garar due to their equivocal nature. These rulings were put into place to protect the needs of an individual and the society as a whole.

Now that we covered the underlying significance on why [Islaamic banking is necessary, we can take a look at its evolution from one bank to becoming an international trend flared by globalisation.

During the last three centuries finances and economies were greatly influenced and occupied by the West enforcing conventional westernised ideologies of financial markets.

What caused the spread of Islaamic finance? Firstly, the outbreak of freedom for development caused Islaamic countries to have the opportunities to establish their own system that coincides with their values and beliefs.

Though, nationalism played a key role in the accelerated economic movement, religion was a significant force that made many turn to Islaam for guidance.

The theory of Islaamic economic system was outlined throughout the 'Qura~n and the Sunnah since the establishment of Islaam.

However, speculating on what initiated the recent international disposition, it can be credited to the first official theological movement that appeared in 1940 through 1960.

This was intended to actually develop a whole economic system rather than just gearing toward Islaamic finance.

In launching the economical process, there were main ideas that were emphasised on such as Islaam's guidelines on modern consumption, assisting the unfortunate, avoiding waste, promoting business enterprises, justice, fairness and many more importance issues.

Capitalism and socialism was denounced. Sharee'ah scholars and Muslim economists with the help of businessmen worked together in developing blueprints of the ideal Islaamic financial institutions.

The first actual modern application was in Egypt by *A'hamad Annajjaar*. The seventies was the decade that Islaamic financing became open to the world and many institutions opened such as the *Dubai Islaamic Bank* (1975), the *Faisal Islaamic Bank of Sudan* (1977), the *Faisal Islaamic Bank of Egypt* (1977), and the *Bahrain Islamic Bank* (1979). The trend even spread over the Asia-Pacific with Philippine *Amanah Bank* and *Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad*.

The first one that was established in west was in 1978, the *Islaamic Finance House of Luxemburg*. This of course

was a breakthrough creating endless financial opportunities for Muslims around the world.

The decade of the 1980's was the period where the subject received a lot of academic attention. Islaamic economies began to emerge as a part of business educational programs.

With the breakthrough of technology, the world began learning about the subject and soon developed an outburst of knowledge sharing through internet, conventions, media, and of course the spread of the industry.

These launched academic outlets caused a wealth of knowledge to disseminate on a world wide scale. As for the 1990s it was a period of further developments.

Sharee'ah compliant mutual funds were created developing a new outlook for investment in the Muslim world.

These funds were designed only to accept companies that abide by Islaamic guidelines. The next vital step that was taken was the creation of the Dow Jones Islaamic Index established by various well known scholars.

Of course, with these advancements, it created a need for technology catered to Islaamic processes for these financial assets. Hence, this is one of the factors causing Islaamic finance to have a strong influence with globalisation.

As for private sector, Islaamic] banking became a booming industry. By 21st century there were 200 Islaamic financial institutions with assets over \$160 billion, deposits of above \$100 billion, and more than \$8 billion in capital.

The Gulf region and the Middle East consisted of 40% and the other 40% was in southern Asia. As for the remainder 20% it lied in Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Most of these banks are considered relatively small in assets when compared with conventional financial institutions.

What is the actual benefit reaped from these developments? Well firstly, it targets conserving an economical atmosphere that revolves around justice and fairness for individuals and the society as a whole.

It helps maintain stability by acquiescing an undertaker's loan repayment to correlate with the actual revenue earned, which allows lenders to earn profit yet at the same time permit borrowers to be profitable.

It is more efficient in a sense it evaluates profitability of potential borrower projects rather than merely looking at credit ratings.

In conclusion, Islaamic finance will help nullify inflation and depend less on speculation causing a healthy financial market and overall economy.

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THE Pacifism of Islaam

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According to the 'Qura~n, war represents an "unwanted obligation" which has to be absolutely carried out with strict observance of particular humane and moral values and resorted only when it is inevitable.

In a verse, it is explained that those who start wars are the disbelievers and that God does not approve wars:
"...Each time they kindle the fire of war, Allah extinguishes it. They rush about the earth corrupting it. Allah does not love corrupters." (Chapter of Almm-idah, verse 64)

A closer examination of Prophet Mu'hammad's life reveals that war is a method resorted for defensive purposes only in unavoidable situations.

The revelation of the 'Qura~n to Prophet Mu'hammad lasted for 23 years. During the first 13 years of this period, Muslims lived as a minority under a pagan rule in Makkah and faced much oppression. Many Muslims were harassed, abused, tortured, and even murdered, their houses and possessions were plundered.

Despite this however, Muslims led their lives without resorting to any violence and always called pagans to peace.

When the oppression of pagans escalated unbearably, Muslims emigrated to the town of Yathrib, which was later to be renamed Medina, where they could establish their own order in a more friendly and free environment.

Even establishing their own political system did not prompt them to take up weapons against aggressive pagans of Makkah.

Only after the following revelation, the Prophet commanded his people to get prepared for war:
"Permission to fight is given to those who are fought against because they have been wronged - truly God has the power to come to their support - those who were expelled from their homes without any right, merely for saying, 'Our Lord is God'" (Chapter of Al'haj, verses 39-40)

In brief, Muslims were allowed to wage war only because they were oppressed and subjected to violence. To put it in

another way, God granted permission for war only for defensive purposes. In other verses, Muslims are warned against use of unnecessary provocation or unnecessary violence:
"Fight in the Way of God against those who fight you, but do not go beyond the limits. God does not love those who go beyond the limits." (Chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 190)

After the revelations of these verses, war occurred between Muslims and pagan Arabs. In none of these wars, however, were the Muslims the inciting party. Furthermore, Prophet Mu'hammad established a secure and peaceful social environment for Muslims and pagans alike by signing a peace agreement (Hudaybiya) which conceded

to the pagans most of their requests.

The party who violated the terms of the agreement and started a new war was again the pagans. However, with rapid conversions into Islaam, the Islaamic armies attained great power against the pagan Arabs and Prophet Mu'hammad conquered Makkah without bloodshed and in a spirit of tolerance.

If he willed, he could have taken revenge on pagan leaders in the city. Yet, he did not do harm to any one of them, forgave them and treated them with the utmost tolerance. Pagans, who would later convert to Islaam by their own will, could not help admiring such noble character of the Prophet.

The Islaamic principles God proclaims in the 'Qura~n account for this peaceful and temperate policy of Prophet Mu'hammad. In the 'Qura~n, God commands believers to treat even the non-Muslims kindly and justly:
"...God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you over religion or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just. God merely forbids you from taking as friends those who have fought you over religion and driven you from your homes and who supported your expulsion..."
 (Chapter of Almunta'hanah, verses 8-9)

The verses above specify the outlook of a Muslim on non-Muslims: A Muslim should treat all non-Muslims kindly and avoid making friends only with those who show enmity to Islaam.

In case this enmity causes violent attacks against the existence of Muslims, that is, in case they wage a war against them, then Muslims should respond them justly by considering the humane dimensions of the situation.

All forms of barbarism, unnecessary acts of violence and unjust aggression are forbidden by Islaam.

In another verse, God warns Muslims against this and explains that rage felt for enemies should not cause them to drift them into injustice:
"You who believe! Show integrity for the sake of God, bearing witness with justice. Do not let hatred for a people incite you into not being just. Be just. That is closer to heedfulness. Heed God (alone). God is aware of what you do."
 (Chapter of Almm-idah, verse 8)

The Meaning Of The Concept Of "Jihaad"

Another concept that deserves clarification due to the content of this article is the concept of "Jihaad". The exact meaning of "Jihaad" is "effort". That is, in Islaam, "to carry out Jihaad" is "to show efforts, to struggle".

Prophet Mu'hammad explained that "the greatest Jihaad is the one a person carries out against his lower soul". What is meant by "lower soul" here is the selfish desires and ambitions. A struggle given on intellectual grounds against anti-religious, atheist views is also a form of Jihaad in its complete sense.

Apart from these ideological and spiritual meanings, struggle in the physical sense is also considered as "Jihaad". However, as explained above, this has to be a struggle carried out solely for defensive purposes. The use of the concept of "Jihaad" for acts of aggression against innocent people, that is for terror, would be unjust and a great distortion.

Compassion, Tolerance And Pacifism In Islaam

To state briefly, the Islaamic political doctrine is extremely peaceful and moderate.

This fact is also confirmed by many non-Muslim historians and theologians. One of these is the British historian, Karen Armstrong, a former nun and a renowned expert on Middle East history.

In her book, *Holy War*, in which she examines the history of the three great divine religions, she comments:
"... The word Islaam comes from the same Arabic root as the word peace and the 'Qura~n condemns war as an abnormal state of affairs opposed to God's will: "When the enemies of the Muslims kindle a fire for war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to create disorder in earth, and Allah loves not those who create disorder." ('Qura~n 28:78).

Islaam does not justify a total aggressive war or extermination, as the Torah does in the first five books of the Bible. A more realistic religion than Christianity, Islaam recognises that war is inevitable and sometimes a positive duty in order

to and oppressions and suffering. The 'Qura~n teaches that war must be limited and be conducted in as humane a way of possible.

Mu'hammad had to fight not only the Makkans but also the Jewish tribes in the area and Christian tribes in Syria who planned on offensive against him in alliance with the Jews.

Yet this did not make Mu'hammad denounce the People of the Book. His Muslims were forced to defend themselves but they were not fighting a holy war against the religion of their enemies.

When Mu'hammad sent his freedman Zaid against the Christians at the head of a Muslim army, he told them to fight in the cause of God bravely but humanely.

They must not molest priests, monks and nuns nor the weak and helpless people who were unable to fight. There must be no massacre of civilians nor should they cut down a single tree nor pull down any building. This was very different from the wars of Joshua." (1)

Following the death of Prophet Mu'hammad, Muslims continued to treat the members of other religions with tolerance and respect. Islaamic states became the secure and free home of both Jews and Christians.

After the conquest of Jerusalem, Caliph Omar calmed the Christians who were in fear of a massacre and explained

to them that they were secure. Furthermore, he visited their churches and declared that they could continue to practise their worship freely.

In 1099, four centuries after the conquest of Jerusalem by Muslims, Crusaders invaded Jerusalem and put all Muslims inhabitants to the sword.

Again, contrary to the fears of Christians, Saladin, the Muslim general who captured Jerusalem and saved the city from invasion in 1187, did not touch even a single civilian and did not allow a single soldier to plunder. Moreover, he allowed the invading Christians to take all their possessions and leave the city in security.

The periods of Seljuk Turks and the Ottoman Empire were also marked by the tolerance and justice of Islaam. As is known, Jews who were expelled from Catholic Spain found the peace they sought on the lands of Ottoman Empire, where they took refuge in 1492.

Sultan Mehmed, the conqueror of Istanbul, also allowed Jews and Christians religious freedom. Regarding the tolerant and just practises of Muslims, historian A. Miquel states the following:

“The Christians were ruled by a very well administered state which was something that did not exist in the Byzantium or Latin sovereignty.

They were never subjected to a systematized oppression. On the contrary, the Empire, and foremost

Istanbul, became a refuge for the much tortured Spanish Jews. They were never forced to accept Islaam.” (2)

John L. Esposito, a professor of Religion and International Politics at the Georgetown University, makes a similar comment:

“For many non-Muslim populations in Byzantine and Persian territories already subjugated to foreign rulers, Islaamic rule meant an exchange of rulers, the new ones often more flexible and tolerant, rather than a loss of independence.

Many of these populations now enjoyed greater local autonomy and often paid lower taxes... Religiously, Islaam proved a more tolerant religion, providing greater religious freedom for Jews and indigenous Christians.” (3)

As is clarified in these words, history never witnessed Muslims as “makers of mischief”. On the contrary, they brought security and peace to the people from all nations and beliefs inhabiting the large territory over which they reigned. (For further reference, see *Justice and Tolerance in the Koran*, by Harun Yahya, 2000)

In brief, compassion, peace and tolerance constitute the very basis of the values of the 'Qura~n and Islaam aims to wipe mischief out of the earth.

The commands of the 'Qura~n and the ways Muslims practised them throughout history are so clear as to leave no room for dispute.



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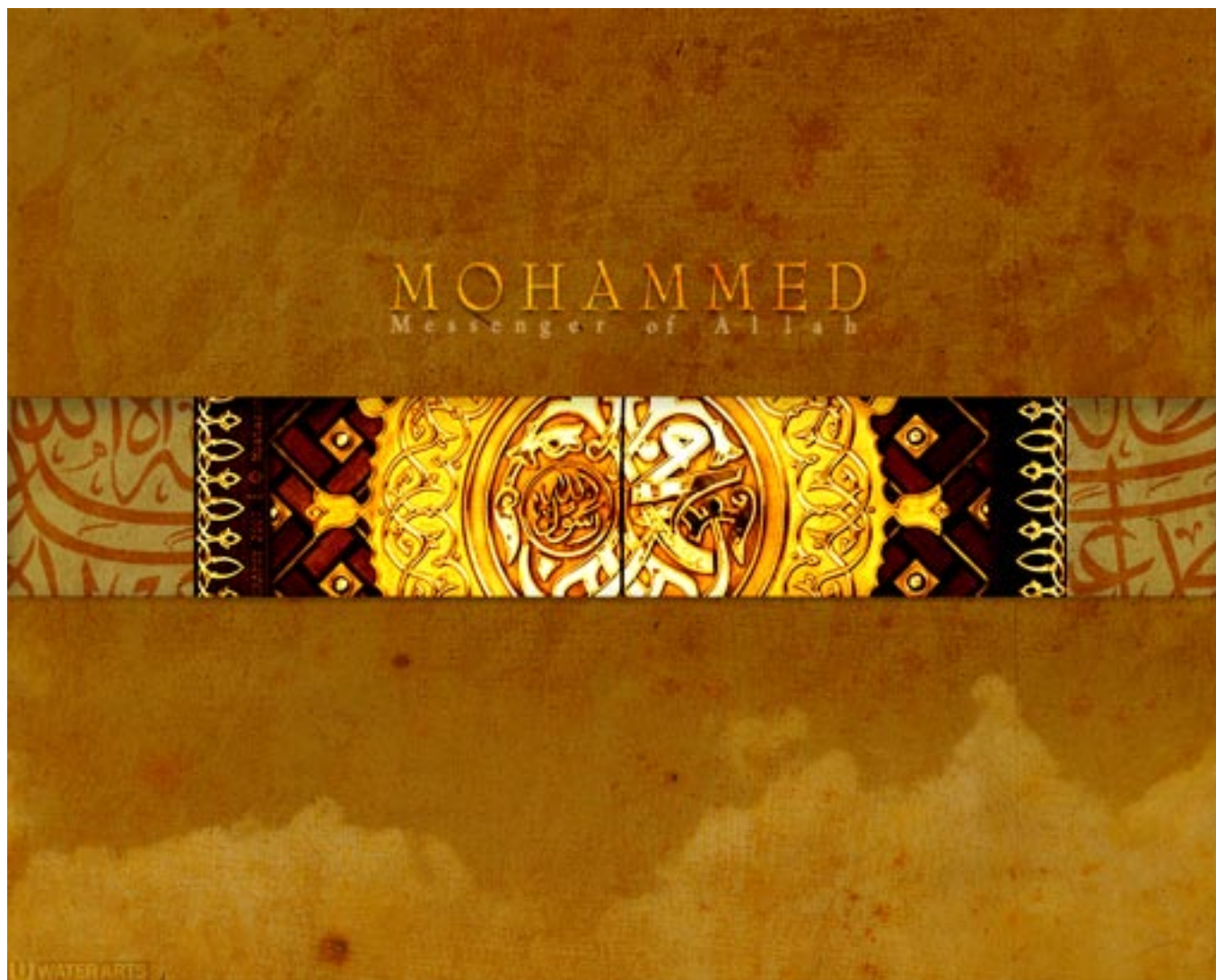
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Messenger of Allah [Allaah]

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