

# **ISLAMIC CENTRALISM**

**An Islamic Perspective on the  
Other**

**Revised Version**

**Adel El-Emary**

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**First published in Arabic in June 2006**

**Translated into English by the author, October 2024; revised in  
June 2026**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

**I would like to express my profound gratitude to my friend: Aida Seif al-Dawla for her valuable help in translating this book**

**Adel**

# DEDICATION

To My Wife

**Nadia  
al-Boughanmī**



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# **GLOSSARY**

**\* Abrogator and the abrogated:** Refers to a verse that replaces another or a ḥadīth that abrogates a Qur'ānic verse, whether in wording or in meaning.

**\* *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd*:** Literally “the People of Loosening and Binding.” This Muslim elite is qualified to act on behalf of the community in electing a caliph and offering counsel, and is often identified as the shūrā council.

**\* 'Ā'isha:** The youngest wife of the Prophet Muḥammad and daughter of his close Companion, Abū Bakr.

**\* Allah:** The proper name of God in Islam.

\* *Al-Hakimiyyah*: divine sovereignty; the belief that ultimate authority belongs to God alone.

\* *Al-jāhiliyyah*: An Islamic term referring to a state of life without divine guidance, characterized by moral corruption, social injustice, and spiritual estrangement. Historically, it described pre-Islamic Arabia, but modern thinkers use it to denote any society that turns away from God's truth, regardless of time or place. The term conveys a condition of deviation from divine guidance. There is no precise English equivalent; it is often rendered as Ignorance, indicating both the pre-Islamic era and any anti-Islamic mode of life. In this translation, the term *al-jāhiliyyah* is retained with this meaning.

\* **Apostate**: A person who renounces Islam.

\* **Ash'arism**, and its adherents the Ash'aris, constitute the predominant school of theological thought within Sunni Islam. Al-Ash'arī formulated a middle path between the doctrines of the Atharī and Mu'tazilites schools of Islamic theology, combining reliance on the sacred scriptures with theological rationalism regarding divine agency and attributes. Atharī theology is the Sunni creed that insists on accepting the Qur'an and Ḥadīth literally, without speculative reasoning.

\* **'Asabiyyah**: Refers to group solidarity, tribal loyalty, or communal identity. In Islamic usage, it often denotes allegiance to a group outside the broader Muslim community. Ibn Khaldūn's application of this concept to social cohesion is particularly profound.

\* **Companions (Ṣaḥābah)**: The followers of Prophet Muḥammad who met him, believed in his message, and died as Muslims.

\* **Dhimma**: A contract of protection granted to non-Muslim subjects (Dhimmīs) living under Islamic rule.

\* **Fatwā**: An advisory legal opinion issued by a qualified Islamic scholar. (Plural: Fatāwā)

\* **Fiqh**: Islamic jurisprudence; the discipline of deriving legal rulings from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

\* **Ḥadīth**: A report documenting the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad. The plural form is aḥādīth.

\* **Ḥanīfism, or Ḥanīfiyyah**: Pre-Islamic monotheism; in Islamic tradition, it refers to the primordial monotheism of Ibrāhīm and *Ḥanīfiyyah* are

considered Muslims before Muḥammad, following the same rituals and instructions.

\* **Ḥajj** (The Major pilgrimage): The Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city in Islam. It is a mandatory religious duty for all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey and supporting their families during their absence

\* **Iḥsān**: The excellence of faith; worshipping God as if one sees Him. Although one cannot see Him, one firmly believes that He is constantly watching. It is the expression of inner faith through both deed and action, a sense of social responsibility borne from religious conviction.

\* **Ijtihād**: Exerting effort to understand Sharī'ah rulings through intellectual striving; in precise terms, independent juristic reasoning to derive rulings from Islamic sources.

\* **Imām**: A leader, whether in prayer, community, or governance.

\* **Imāmate**: The office or institution of leadership (the Imām).

\* **Immigrants** (*Muhājirūn*): Muslims who migrated from Makkah at the beginning of the Islamic mission.

\* **Istibra'**: The waiting period to ensure a woman is not pregnant before entering a new marriage or transferring ownership.

\* **Jamā'ah** (The Congregation): refers to individuals who adhere to the beliefs and practices of the Prophet and his Companions, or to the orthodox Muslim community.

\* **Jihād**, literally meaning “striving” or “struggle,” refers to exertion in the path of God and encompasses spiritual, social, and military dimensions. While often rendered in English as “Holy War,” this translation reflects only one aspect of its broader and more complex meaning.

\* **Jihādīst**: A term used in contemporary discourse to describe militants who invoke the doctrine of jihād for political or revolutionary ends.

\* **Jizyah**: A poll tax imposed on adult, free, male non-believers (often referred to as Dhimmīs). It was also historically imposed on non-believing groups following their defeat or surrender to Muslim forces.

\* **Ka'bah**: The building at the center of the Great Mosque in Makkah, the most sacred site in Islam.



**\* Kharāj:** A land tax applied to conquered lands, regardless of direct state ownership.

**\* Kharijites** were an early Islamic sect with a democratic theory of the caliphate. According to their beliefs, any pious Muslim could become the caliph if mandated by the people. They are known for their puritanism and fanaticism. In their view, any Muslim who commits a major sin is considered an apostate, including the ruler.

**\* Kufr:** Derived from the Arabic root k-f-r, meaning to cover or to conceal. Historically, it referred to a farmer covering seeds with soil. In theological usage, however, *kufr* denotes the concealment of divine truth, the willful refusal to acknowledge God's oneness and the Prophet's message, or the denial of divine blessings, standing in direct opposition to gratitude.

#### Translator's Note:

Throughout this translation, the Arabic term *kāfir* and related expressions have been rendered as “unbeliever,” “non-believers,” or “non-Muslim,” even though the latter is more common in contemporary academic studies. This choice was made for consistency and clarity, in line with the author's intent. The term “disbeliever” carries a stronger connotation of active rejection, whereas “unbeliever” provides a more neutral rendering in modern English and better reflects the intended meaning in most contexts. Readers should therefore understand “unbeliever” here as a general designation for those outside the faith, without the polemical force that “disbeliever” may imply. However, “disbeliever” has been retained exclusively in direct quotations from sacred texts, in order to preserve the original theological nuance.

**\* Madīnah** is a city in Saudi Arabia, approximately 450 km north of Makkah. It is considered to be the second-holiest of three key cities in Islamic tradition, with Makkah and Jerusalem serving as the holiest and third-holiest cities, respectively.

**\* Maṣāliḥ mursalah:** A type of legal evidence based on achieving a general benefit for Muslims without a specific religious text affirming or negating them, yet aligned with the objectives of Sharī'ah in preserving religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. They are divided into five categories:

1. The preservation of religion.
2. The preservation of life.
3. The preservation of intellect.

4. The preservation of lineage.

5. The preservation of property.

\* **Mujahideen:** Those who engage in *jihād*. In modern political usage, the term often refers to armed militants.

\* **Mujtahid:** A scholar who has attained the level of expertise required to perform *ijtihād*, that is, to derive legal rulings directly from the primary sources of Islamic law.

\* **Muqtasid:** One who suffices with essentials; moderate in practice.

\* **Murji'ah** or **Murji'as:** Literally “Those who defer,” this sect disagreed with the views of the Kharijites, as well as the Sunnis, regarding those who commit major sins. They maintain that anyone who believes in the oneness of God cannot be judged an unbeliever, as judgment is entrusted to God alone on the Day of Resurrection.

\* **Mu'tazilites**, or **Mu'tazilah:** Islamic rationalists. A movement founded in the second century AH (eighth century CE). Its members were convinced that it was necessary to give a rationally coherent account of Islamic beliefs, particularly concerning divine justice and unity.

\* **Rāshidūn (Rightly Guided) Caliphs:** the first four successive caliphs who succeeded Prophet Muḥammad. They are: Abū Bakr, 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, and 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz is also frequently included in this category due to his perceived orthodoxy and justice. They are considered “Rightly Guided” because of their adherence to orthodoxy.

\* **Sabians:** Etymologically, the Arabic word signifies those who leave one religion to enter another, converts, or those who “incline” away from mainstream beliefs. The Sabians (*al-Ṣābi'ūn*) are a religious group mentioned in the Qur'an who are often grouped alongside Jews and Christians as “People of the Book.” Their exact identity remains a matter of debate; they have been historically associated with either the star-worshippers of Ḥarrān or the Mandaean community of Mesopotamia. Today, the term usually refers to the Mandaean community in Iraq and Iran.

\* **Sharī'ah:** Islamic law, derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

\* **Shaykh:** A term with multiple meanings, including cleric; a leader of an Arab tribe, family, or village; a leader in a Muslim community or organization, and a prominent person in some field such as music.

\* **Shi'ites:** The second-largest sect of Muslims after the Sunnis. Historically known as “Shi'at 'Alī” (the Party of 'Alī). The term Shi'ites often refers to the Twelver or Imāmī Shi'ites, the largest sect, but it is also used for other Shi'ites groups such as the Ismailis. Twelver Shi'ites believe that 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib (the fourth caliph after Muḥammad) and eleven Imāms from his descendants — through his wife Fāṭima, the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad — are infallible leaders whose obedience is obligatory according to divine statements in the prophetic tradition. They are regarded as the primary authority for Muslims following the death of the Prophet.

\* **Shūrā:** Consultation in Islamic governance; a process of collective decision-making.

\* **Shu'ubiyya** (anti-Arabism; Arabic: *الشعوبية*): A major social, cultural, and political movement in early Islamic history, particularly under the Umayyad Caliphate. It sought to oppose Arab supremacy and the Arabization of non-Arab civilizations. The vast majority of the Shu'ubis were Persian.

\* **Sufism:** A mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the Truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God, expressed through love and devotion. This is considered innate knowledge, or the esoteric dimension of faith. It refers to knowledge that does not rely on external senses for proof.

\* **Sunnah:** Linguistically, the term refers to a path, biography, or established norm. In Islamic usage, it refers to the aḥādīth of the Prophet—encompassing his statements, actions, attributes, and tacit approvals. It is categorized into three types: verbal, practical, and tacit. More broadly, it denotes the customary practices or traditions of a community.

\* **Sunni Muslims:** Also referred to as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah* (Adherents of the Prophetic Tradition and the community) or simply *Ahl al-Sunnah* for short. Some early Sunni scholars reportedly used the term “the Sunnah” narrowly to refer to Sunni doctrine in contrast to the creeds of Shi'ites and other non-Sunni sects. Literally, sunnah can mean nature, lifestyle, or a well-trodden path.

\* **Ṭāghūt:** False objects of worship; anything set up as a rival to God, including idols, tyrants, or systems that usurp divine authority

\* **Takfīr:** The act of declaring others to be unbelievers.

\* **Takfīri** is a term used to describe a Muslim who accuses others of unbelief.

\* **Taqiyyah** (dissimulation or permissible concealment): The practice of concealing one's true beliefs or religious identity typically to avoid persecution or significant harm.

\* **The four Sunni Imāms**: Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān ibn Thābit ibn Zūṭā ibn Marzubān al-Kūfī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Mālik ibn Anas, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Some also consider al-Shawkānī (Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Shawkānī) a fifth, though he was not affiliated with any of the four schools.

\* **The Hour**: A theological term referring to the Day of Resurrection and the end of time.

\* **The seven letters in Qur'ānic recitations**: A concept with no consensus regarding its meaning. Most scholars interpret it as verbal diversity and linguistic multiplicity in the characteristics with which the Qur'ān was revealed.

\* **'Umrah**: The minor pilgrimage to Makkah, distinct from Ḥajj.

\* **'Ushr land** (tithe land): agricultural land on which the tithe must be paid on its yield as *Zakāt*. It cannot be converted into *kharāj* land.

\* **Zakāt** (charity): One of the pillars of Islam, referring to obligatory alms. All Muslims whose wealth meets a specific minimum threshold are required to donate a portion of their assets annually. The standard rate is 2.5% of an individual's qualifying savings and wealth. Linguistically, the term means purification, in a legal context, it denotes the mandatory charitable contribution intended to redistribute wealth within the community.

\* **Zaydism, (Fiver Shi'ism)**: A branch of Shi'ites Islam predominantly found in Yemen. Emerging in the 8th century from the rebellion of Zayd ibn 'Alī against the Umayyads, it developed distinctive theological and political principles. Unlike other Shi'ites traditions, Zaydīs hold that any pious descendant of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib may assume the Imāmate, provided they demonstrate scholarly merit and lead armed resistance against injustice. This position rejects the doctrines of infallibility and occultation that characterize Twelver and Ismā'īlī Shi'ism.

## **PREFACE**

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Western media began to pose a central question: “Why do they hate us?” This inquiry was directed primarily at Muslims, particularly those in Arab societies. Responses varied according to ideological orientation. Conservative circles, especially those influenced by Zionist perspectives, argued that Muslims reject Western democracy, progress, and prosperity. A widely accepted view within Western discourse has been that Islam itself is inherently incompatible with modernity.

By contrast, more open-minded intellectuals sought to frame the issue in a fairer manner, situating it within the historical relationship between East and West. They identified objective factors contributing to resentment toward the West, particularly the United States, including the unresolved Palestinian question and Western support for authoritarian regimes. Notably, anti-American sentiment has also grown in Europe, while broader hostility toward the West has increased even among non-Muslim populations in underdeveloped countries. Despite these analyses, Western public opinion has yet to arrive at a comprehensive and satisfactory explanation, leaving the matter ambiguous.

Interpretations of the problem have led to divergent solutions. Many advocated the “war on terrorism” as the immediate response, while others called for addressing Arab and Islamic grievances, including a just resolution of the Palestinian question. Yet competing interests within Western circles continue to vie for dominance in shaping policy. Amidst the ongoing “war on terrorism,” Islam and Muslims faced intensified backlash, with Islam frequently portrayed as inherently aggressive. Comparable scrutiny, however, was not directed toward Zionism or Judaism. In addition, some voices urged for the removal of corrupt Arab regimes and the modernization of educational systems in Arab

**countries, framing these measures as essential for long-term stability.**

**In the aftermath of September 11, campaigns of racist hostility were directed at Arabs and Muslims through Western media, contributing to the perception of an impending long-term civilizational conflict. Intense feelings of animosity toward Muslims, particularly Arabs, surfaced across many Western societies. Media representations often portrayed them in a negative light, while manifestations of discrimination and persecution grew, especially in the United States, where numerous Arabs were detained without formal charges. Simultaneously, American military operations expanded to Afghanistan and later Iraq, accompanied by threats toward other states in the Arab East.**

**While the question “Why is there hostility toward us?” was posed in Western circles, the responses varied. Some explanations acknowledged Arab grievances, yet within Arab societies the question was not pursued with equal seriousness. Instead, answers were often predetermined, attributing Western hostility to greed for regional resources and colonial ambitions. Additionally, the influence of the Jewish lobby and the notion of a Jewish-Crusader conspiracy against Islam and Arabs were frequently invoked. Islamist discourse, in particular, reinforced the belief that hostility toward Islam itself was the root cause of conflict. Among elites and large segments of the population, the confrontation between Islam and the West was interpreted as a continuation of the Crusades, understood primarily in religious terms. Consequently, these responses were presented less as open inquiries and more as established truths, serving as reminders of historical grievances rather than stimulating genuine debate.**

**Many Muslim writers attribute responsibility to the West for establishing Israel in the heart of the Arab world, for the colonial occupation of Arab lands during the nineteenth century, and for various manifestations of Eurocentrism. These grievances are often**



presented as historically justified. Simultaneously, however, the West is frequently accused of conspiring against the Arab-Islamic world more broadly, with the alleged aim of subjugating or even annihilating it. Some writers express bitterness over the historical reconquest of Spain and Portugal, and the subsequent expulsion of Muslims and their Jewish allies from the Iberian Peninsula.

A prevailing view among Arab-Islamic thinkers is that Western hostility toward Islam and Arabs constitutes an absolute enmity, one that is incurable and deeply rooted. This hostility is often described as genetic or innate, sometimes framed in religious terms. Within this discourse, the West is portrayed as inherently “worldly,” representing a material civilization devoid of higher values, as argued by many Islamists, Arab nationalists, and other advocates of cultural identity.<sup>(1)</sup> In contrast, Arab-Islamic civilization is depicted as carrying the universal message of Islam, embodying spirituality and moral values.<sup>(2)</sup>

The rising waves of hostility in the West toward Arabs and Islam thus raise a pressing question: Why is there animosity toward us? To arrive at meaningful conclusions, it is necessary to seek realistic explanations, avoiding simplistic or purely metaphysical claims.

This book was first published online in Arabic in 2006; therefore, readers will find that the events and circumstances described pertain to that period, except for some updates that were added later.

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<sup>(1)</sup> 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī, *Secularism: A New Interpretive Model*, *Al-Ahrām* Newspaper, 16-4-2002.

<sup>(2)</sup> Adel Ḥusayn provides a pure example of this argument in his book *Toward a New Arab Thought*, laying the foundations of what is known as the Islamic civilizational project, after deciding to transition from socialism and Marxism to political Islam.

## **Notes:**

\* The sacred statements are written in blue text.

\* A note on the translation of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth: Numerous translations exist, and many of them are inaccurate. We therefore consulted multiple versions and adjusted the final wording to ensure greater accuracy.

\* The numbers of aḥādīth vary across different collections of the Prophetic Tradition and other Islamic references.

\* Phrases such as “God bless him” and “God grant him peace” have been omitted from quotations to facilitate easier reading.

\* The punctuation mark ' is used to denote the Arabic letters ع and ء. The ḥ (Ḥ) with a dot beneath represents the Arabic letter ح; the š (Ṣ) represents ص; the ṭ (Ṭ) represents ط; and the ḏ (Ḍ) represents ذ.

\* Regarding references:

1. References whose link or publisher is not specifically indicated either do not differ across editions (such as the Qur'ān), or are available on CDs published by al-'Aris Computer Company in Beirut, Lebanon. These CDs include works on Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'ānic sciences, and Prophetic Tradition (Aḥādīth) dictionaries, where the publisher or link is not specified. They are widely available throughout Arab countries.

2. References to the prophetic traditions include: *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, *Musnad Aḥmad*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *al-Musnad al-Jāmi'*, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, *Fath al-Bārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Ḥibbān*, *'Awn al-Ma'būd*, among others

3. Most of the sources and references are in Arabic, unless explicitly noted to the contrary.

4. We will rely primarily on sources recognized by broad sectors of the Muslim community, including the four major Sunni Imāms, their corresponding Shi'ite counterparts, and prominent scholars and writers whose moral authority is acknowledged either among Muslims at large or within significant constituencies.

\* The term “paranoia” is used in this book in its conventional, rather than medical, sense.



\* Several of the links to sources and references cited in this work are no longer active. While we have endeavored to provide updated links, their continued accessibility cannot be guaranteed. Readers wishing to consult the original materials are therefore encouraged to search for the references directly online.

\* The numbering of the aḥādīth may vary depending on the specific edition or source consulted.

\* The book is not a historical study but a book on the Islamic intellectual tradition; therefore, the past tense is used only when discussing past events.

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## **INTRODUCTION: CENTRALISM**

Centralism, as a cultural phenomenon, may be defined as the tendency to view others not merely as different but as inherently inferior. In this framework, the “self” is established as the normative benchmark, while the “Other” is construed as primitive, backward, distorted, immature, or even worthless. At best, the Other is perceived as a transitional stage on the path toward the ideal represented by the self. Consequently, the Other must disappear, assimilate into the supposed ideal, or remain subordinated to it. In brief, centralism entails conceiving the self as the universal model of reality, while the Other is reduced to a deviation from that norm.

This phenomenon is not new; it has appeared across different eras and cultures.

- Ancient China: Chinese thought often expressed cultural superiority over other peoples, though not in explicitly racial terms.

- **Ancient Greece:** There are references in some Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, concerning the natural superiority of the Greek race over the rest of the world. They believed that Greeks were created to rule the world, possessing the best characteristics of mankind. Aristotle considered the Greeks to be noble by nature, whereas he referred to the rest of humanity as barbarians. He believed that this division was a result of nature, similar to how it divided people into males and females, masters (who engage in mental work), and slaves (suitable only for manual labor). Aristotle argued that barbarians were created to be slaves, granting Greeks a natural right to rule and enslave the world.<sup>(3)</sup> Nevertheless, these notions did not crystallize into a dominant ideology nor did they exert a significant influence on Greek interactions with other cultures. Alexander the Great, in particular, diverged from Aristotle's recommendations, adopting a pragmatic approach in his treatment of conquered peoples.

- **Judaeocentrism:** This refers to strands within Jewish thought that emphasize the chosenness of the Jewish people, portraying them as God's treasured nation. Scriptural texts such as Deuteronomy 7:6 and Leviticus 20:24–26 underscore this distinction, presenting Jews as a holy people set apart by divine preference. Rabbinic literature, including the Talmud, further elaborates on this concept, sometimes accentuating exclusivity and superiority. Within this framework, divine election is interpreted not merely as privilege but also as covenantal responsibility,

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<sup>(3)</sup> Aristotle stated: *"But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female. Therefore, the poets say, it is met that Hellenes should rule over barbarians; as if they thought that the barbarian and the slave were by nature."* Politics, translated into English by Benjamin Jowett, Book One, p. 2.

reflecting a reciprocal commitment: God chose Israel because Israel first chose God and His Torah.

Orthodox Jewish Centralism (Ethnocentrism) maintains that a Jew is defined by matrilineal descent—that is, by birth rather than culture. Consequently, according to this definition, Jews are classified as a people (ethnos) rather than a religious community or communities (confession).

Traditional Judaism does not present Jewish culture or the Jewish people as a universal model to be emulated. Rather, it emphasizes the unique covenantal relationship between God and Israel, without a strong focus on proselytizing outsiders. By contrast, strands of what may be termed Missionary Judaism—though not representative of the prevailing current—advance a more universal vision. They portray the Jews as God’s messengers to humanity, tasked with disseminating Judaism as absolute truth and guidance.<sup>(4)</sup>

It is crucial to note that Judaeocentrism does not characterize the Jews as a whole. Many Jews reject notions of racial superiority or exclusivist interpretations of chosenness. Jewish communities have historically exhibited diverse perspectives, ranging from exclusivist to universalist and egalitarian approaches. Judaeocentrism can therefore be understood as one among several ideological or theological currents within Judaism, highlighting the broader phenomenon of cultural centralism, whereby groups construct self-images of superiority in relation to others.

**Eurocentrism:** Eurocentrism has long been the subject of observation, analysis, and critique. Yet, comparatively little intellectual attention has been devoted to other central tendencies

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<sup>(4)</sup> Lawrence J. Epstein presented this idea in detail in his book, *The Theory and Practice of Welcoming Converts to Judaism: Jewish Universalism*.

that have emerged throughout history. This neglect stems from the fact that Europe effectively established itself as the center of the modern world, exercising unrivaled global leadership until relatively recently. Such dominance provided a strong foundation for the diffusion of Eurocentric thought, even among non-European intellectuals.

The superiority of Europe—or the West more broadly—over the rest of the world, in military, economic, and technological terms, is undeniable, as evidenced by its near-global colonization. However, Eurocentrism extended beyond mere ideology. European culture asserted that this superiority was absolute, natural, structural, racial, and impermeable, claiming that it had always existed either in potential or in actuality. Consequently, world history was reframed as European history, with “the world” often conflated with Europe itself. Social science theories further reinforced this centrality, presenting Europe as the paradigmatic model of class struggle and democracy, while excluding many peoples from global history altogether.

Hegel, for instance, dismissed Africa as existing outside of history, interpreting African resistance to colonialism as evidence of a detachment from life,<sup>(5)</sup> while simultaneously ridiculing ancient Egyptian art.<sup>(6)</sup>

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<sup>(5)</sup> Hegel addressed the relationship of Black Africa to history, stating that in Negro (in his expression) life, the characteristic point is that consciousness has not yet attained the realization of any substantial objective existence, such as God or law, in which human existence is realized. Additionally, the distinction between his existence as an individual and his necessary existence (as a concept) did not yet exist, so he lacks knowledge of the absolute. For this reason, he does not understand that death is an objective law but sees it as an act of magic. He does not distinguish between himself and nature, which explains the extraordinary courage of these people in facing Europeans, despite being shot down by thousands in war with them. For this reason, he considered that Black Africa has no role in making history. *The Philosophy of History*, The Geographical Basis of History, pp. 96-120.

<sup>(6)</sup> He stated after expressing his admiration for Egyptian arts: “*For this reason the Egyptians, amongst the peoples hitherto mentioned, are the properly artistic people. But their works remain mysterious and dumb, mute and motionless, because here spirit itself has still*

Colonial expansion generated theories that framed domination as a civilizing mission rather than exploitation, with many—including Christian clerics—resorting to explicitly racist rationalizations. Expressions such as “the discovery of the New World” epitomize the essence of Eurocentrism.

Modern European culture not only diminishes the status of others but also appropriates their achievements, attributing them to Europeans. It claims primacy in all significant inventions, recording scientific progress through a European lens while neglecting or denying contributions from other civilizations. Strikingly, even the names of scientists and inventions were Europeanized when not directly attributed to European figures. The social sciences originated in Europe as intellectual responses to specifically European challenges, thereby acquiring a distinctly European character. Yet, following the independence of colonies after World War II, Eurocentrism came under increasing criticism from both the Third World and European intellectuals, as European supremacy waned and new civilizations rose.

Thinkers such as Samīr Amīn argue that Eurocentrism is both a product and an expression of capitalism. However, anti-capitalist thought also exhibits Eurocentric tendencies. The Marxist school, for example, which was influential in Europe for decades, conceives history as progressing through stages exemplified by European development, applying the same analytical tools to Eastern societies. In practice, Marxists in the East adopt similar approaches. Moreover, capitalism produces values that Eurocentrism arbitrarily labels as Western, even though they emerge universally. Capitalism in Japan, for instance, did not generate Japanese centralism, nor were Chinese centralism or Judaism products of capitalism.

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*not really found its own inner life and still cannot speak the clear and distinct language of spirit.” - Lectures on Fine Art, Chapter One, C, Symbolism Proper.*

**Eurocentrism can thus be understood as the outcome of intertwined factors: Europe’s overwhelming superiority and near-total domination of humanity, combined with the legacies of Greek and Roman culture, which, with modernization, assumed explicitly racist forms. Eurocentrism is marked by biological racism, both overt and covert, as seen in the enslavement of Africans and their dehumanization in European public discourse. Moreover, little time has passed since the era of Nazism and Fascism and the emergence of their philosophical foundations.**

### **Islamic Centralism:**

**This book seeks to analyze one particular dimension of Islamic culture: its centralist tendency. The focus here is not on what is commonly referred to as the “true religion” or on Islam in its entirety. First, engaging with the notion of “true Islam” inevitably leads into complex debates over textual authenticity, the accuracy of historical narratives, and the legitimacy of competing interpretations. Second, Islamic centralism is not the sole cultural phenomenon within Muslim societies, even if it is widespread. There are Muslims—both among the general population and within intellectual circles—who adopt at least partially anti-centralist positions and advance more balanced perspectives. Third, it is culture, rather than the sacred text itself, that plays a direct role in shaping actual events. From a practical standpoint, what proves most significant are the ideas advanced by people, including their exegeses of the sacred text. Engagement with the text itself—whether concerning the authenticity of its attribution, the meaning intended at the time of its emergence, or what is regarded as the authentic meaning, as well as the scrutiny of historical events—falls within the domain of specialized scholars. Accordingly, the sacred text is treated herein as one component of Islamic culture, alongside the broader non-material production of society, including values, morals, ideals, art, thought, and systems. According to the author,**

the notion of an authentic meaning is ultimately illusory; what is real is the meaning as understood by different communities across time and place, often extending beyond the apparent sense of the text. In brief, it is the people's intellectual production, even when they claim it derives from the sacred text. Despite the diversity of exegeses and shifting perceptions, the sacred text has remained central to Islamic culture, serving as the ultimate reference point and, for its proponents, an absolute authority over the mind.

**Ijtihād (independent reasoning) is suspended in the presence of the sacred text**

This principle is a well-established jurisprudential maxim in Islamic thought, particularly after the ascendancy of the Ash'arī school. Exceptions to this rule exist among rationalist thinkers, both classical and modern, who regard reason as an independent source of knowledge. For them, when reason conflicts with the text, the latter becomes subject to reinterpretation or even rejection. This approach characterizes Muslim rationalists in general, including the Mu'tazilites, Ibn Rushd (Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Rushd al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī), and their intellectual heirs.

Islamic legislation traditionally rests upon the Qur'ān, followed by the Sunnah, <sup>(7)</sup> and then *ijmā'* (consensus), <sup>(8)</sup> though this latter

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<sup>(7)</sup> The Sunnah refers to the teachings and practices of Prophet Muḥammad, including his practical teachings and traditions. Most Sunni scholars also include the Sunnah of the Rāshidūn Caliphs, as mentioned in a prophetic tradition: *You must keep to my Sunnah and to the Sunnah of the Khulafa' ar-Rashideen (the rightly guided caliphs), those who guide to the right way. Cling to it stubbornly* [literally: with your molar teeth]. *Beware of newly invented matters* [in the religion], *for every bid'ah* (innovation) *is misguidance*. (Musnad Aḥmad -16817). Often, the Sunnah of the Companions and the Successors is also added.

<sup>(8)</sup> Consensus in Sunni and Shi'ite Islamic jurisprudence is based on sacred texts, not on people's opinions. It remains subordinate to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and the opinion of Muslims, even if there is consensus, is not considered legitimate or a source of legislation unless it is based on the sacred text. Ja'far al-Subḥānī said: *"Consensus as it is is not one of the tools and sources of legislation, and its authority lies in its revelation of the realistic ruling*



source is famously rejected by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, one of the four leading Sunni Imāms. After consensus, jurists employ *qiyās* (analogical deduction), *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (unrestricted public interests), and the opinions of the Companions, juridical equity (*istiḥsān*), 'urf (custom), and *sadd al-dharā'i* (blocking the means). Mālik ibn Anas added the practice of the people of Madīnah, while others incorporate the consensus of the scholars of Kūfa, reflecting diverse contextual considerations. Ultimately, however, all these sources are understood as deriving their authority from the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Some jurists accept only the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, while certain contemporary voices propose replacing consensus with *shūrā* (consultation), thereby privileging majority opinion over unanimity, as noted by Heba Ra'ouf 'Ezzat.<sup>(9)</sup> A minority view places public interest above textual authority, arguing that interests embody the very purpose of the Sharī'ah. Najm al-Dīn al-Tūfī, originally a Ḥanbalī but later associated with Shi'ite thought,<sup>(10)</sup> exemplifies this position. Among modern thinkers, Gamāl al-Bannā prioritizes reason over Qur'ānic values, followed by the Sunnah and custom.<sup>(11)</sup>

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that was written upon the people before and after the consensus of the jurists,” *Sources and Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence According to both Schools*, p. 138.

<sup>(9)</sup> *Pluralism, the Arab Political Mind's Dilemma*.

<sup>(10)</sup> 'Alī Muḥammad Jarisha, *Maṣlaḥah Mursalah [Unrestricted Public Interests]: A Scholarly Study and Analytical Review*.

In addition, al-Tawfī states: “Public interest is the highest objective of the law, and it must be considered if a conflict arises between interest and the text—not as a matter of issuing *fatāwā* on the text, but as a matter of interpreting it. It should not be said that Sharī'ah knows best their interests, so let it be taken from its evidence because we have decided that caring for interests is one of the characteristics of Sharī'ah law, and it is the strongest and most specific, so we give priority to it in achieving interests.” Quoted by Gamāl al-Bannā in: *Can Sharī'ah be implemented?* Chapter Six.

<sup>(11)</sup> *Towards a New Islamic Jurisprudence*, Vol. Two, p. 3. Despite his numerous words about reason and its importance, he does not, in fact, give it the role that appears from making it a priority over the Qur'ān. What is understood from him is that he wants dealing with the sacred text to be more reasonable, or less irrational, by not dealing with weak



Others, such as Ibn Ḥazm (Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'īd ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī al-Zāhirī), <sup>(12)</sup> reject analogy altogether, while most Imāmī Shi'ites identify the sources of law as the Qur'ān, Sunnah, consensus, and reason—explicitly excluding jurisprudential analogy. <sup>(13)</sup> A small group, known as Qur'ānists, relies solely on the Qur'ān, with Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr being the most prominent contemporary representative.

Despite these divergences, scholars across traditions claim to ground their interpretations in the sacred text, asserting that others misunderstand it. For them, revelation—comprising the Qur'ān and the Sunnah—remains the primary source of legislation.

This study, however, does not seek to determine the “authentic” meaning of religious statements, their validity, or the occasions of revelation, which are often contested. Rather, it analyzes the concepts adopted by most Muslims and their intellectuals, insofar as they are accepted within Islamic culture. Thus, the focus is on meanings endorsed by respected jurists and embraced by the Muslim community, rather than on questions of authenticity or textual accuracy.

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Aḥādīth, by matching them with the Qur'ān, and avoiding contradictions in dealing with them. Rather, al-Bannā goes with a less rational doctrine than the predecessors when he denies any role for the reason in belief, considering that the heart, or conscience, is the first principle in belief, p. 195.

<sup>(12)</sup> He rejects analogy and opinion on the basis that the Qur'ān contains everything, based on verses, including: *Nothing have we omitted from the Book, a detailed exposition of all things.* *Al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār* [The ornamented with traditions], 100.

<sup>(13)</sup> Ja'far al-Subḥānī, *Sources and Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence According to Both Schools*, pp. 9-10. He describes the role of reason as follows: “*the jurisprudence of the Shi'ites is based on the definitive reasoning of the intellect that is free from doubt, and it is limited to the realm of positive and negative intellectual judgments, or definitive provisions, or clear qualitative benefits and harms. As for using analogy, juristic preference, benefits and harms, derived from reason, it is considered speculative reasoning and should not be relied upon. It is not valid to attribute the results of these proofs to God Almighty,*” p. 179.

This work discusses an aspect of Islamic culture that has been primarily developed by Arab peoples, in whom Islamic centralism found its clearest expression. It is important to note that Islamic culture, while universal in its mission, was historically articulated in Arabic and emerged within Arab society. Its foundational texts were revealed in Arabic and addressed circumstances specific to the Arabs. The Prophet and his Companions were predominantly Arabs, and Arab lands have remained the stronghold of Islam since its inception. Many great Muslim thinkers of non-Arab origin also became culturally Arabized, underscoring the central role of Arabic in shaping Islamic thought. The most flourishing periods of Islamic civilization coincided with Arab dominance in the East, surpassing in influence and creativity the later eras of Turkish or Mongol rule.

The culture of Islamic societies is not static or permanently fixed; rather, it has undergone significant transformations throughout history. The focus here is on what may be described as a centralist tendency within this culture—an orientation that, despite historical change, has retained certain enduring elements, particularly since the closure of the gate of *ijtihād* in Islamic jurisprudence in the seventh century AH (thirteenth century CE).

Although Arab societies have undergone significant social and cultural transformations—particularly in modern times, when the intelligentsia adopted semi-secular orientations—the traditional Islamic heritage has remained resilient. It continues to be invoked whenever deemed necessary and has never been entirely displaced, <sup>(14)</sup> despite successive shifts in Islamic discourse. This persistence is partly due to the fact that, notwithstanding profound global changes, many fundamental structures remain intact: social classes, governments, exploitation, wars, and the distinction between Muslims and non-believers, among other enduring phenomena.

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<sup>(14)</sup> The author analyzed this phenomenon in an article titled: *The Status of the Intelligentsia in the Social structure of Modern Egypt*.

Undoubtedly, there are Islamic thinkers who present interpretations they claim to derive from the sacred text, yet their approaches are more open and less centralist. Among these figures are Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, and, in more recent times, Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, Gamāl al-Bannā, Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmāwī, and 'Abd al-Ḥāmid al-Anṣārī. Their contributions reflect an alternative vision of Islam—one that is more inclusive, humanistic, and receptive to others. This orientation is also represented by various *Sufi* traditions, which were, at certain points, regarded as currents of Islamic philosophy within the Arab world.

Nevertheless, the prevailing trend in Arab-Islamic culture continues to display a pronounced centralist tendency. This mainstream orientation, with its emphasis on Islamic centralism, represents the focus of the present analysis.

Throughout history, numerous sects and movements have emerged within Islam, often agreeing on certain points while diverging on others. It is therefore inaccurate to regard Islam as a single, uniform template. The focus of this work is on what may be described as a centralist tendency in Islamic culture—an orientation that, despite internal diversity, appears to be present to varying degrees across most currents. For the purposes of this book, the term “Islam” refers to this prevailing cultural tendency.

This book is not directed exclusively toward Islamic societies; rather, it addresses all individuals who employ logic, embrace demonstrative reasoning, reject myths and so-called miracles, and approach any text or idea as a subject for rational analysis and critique. It is intended for those who refuse to accept dogmas or sacred premises as unquestionable, and who maintain that nothing and no one should be exempt from critical examination.

Adel El-Emary

October 2024

## Chapter One

### **ARABS AND 'AJAM<sup>(15)</sup>** **(Non-Arabs)**

*The Arab race is superior to the non-Arab race. Loving Arabs is a part of faith and hating them is considered hypocrisy or unbelief*

Ibn Taymiyyah

The Arabic language distinguishes between the Arabs and other peoples, known as *al-'Ajam*. Naṣr Abū Zayd describes this distinction as a form of value-based classification, one that elevates the Arabs to a position of superiority and accords their language the status of the language. In this framework, non-Arabic languages are implicitly regarded as deficient in expressive capacity, thereby

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<sup>(15)</sup> *'Ajam* refers to a non-Arab who does not speak eloquently and does not make his words clear, even if he is an Arab. There may also be a non-Arabic dialect on his tongue.

marginalizing their speakers. <sup>(16)</sup> According to the Arab scholar al-Jāḥiẓ, an eloquent person is simply someone whose speech is understood by others, regardless of their language. He argues that language proficiency is not limited to Arabic speakers, as individuals who speak Persian, Hindi, or Latin / Romance languages can also be considered eloquent. For al-Jāḥiẓ understanding and communication are the key factors in determining eloquence, rather than the specific spoken language. By arguing against the notion of Arab superiority in language comprehension, he emphasizes that linguistic understanding constitutes a universal human capacity.

Al-Jāḥiẓ's perspective challenges traditional notions of language proficiency and highlights the importance of effective communication across different linguistic backgrounds. He adds that when people say “eloquent and 'Ajam,” it reflects their interpretation of the term 'Ajam. However, when they say “Arabs and 'Ajam” without mentioning “eloquent and non-Arab,” they do not mean eloquence versus ineloquence. Rather, they denote by 'Ajam anyone who does not speak Arabic or whose speech is unintelligible to Arabs. <sup>(17)</sup> The citation was intended to clarify the distinction that Arabs make between the eloquent and the non-eloquent, based on the view of one of the most significant Arab Muslim thinkers, who was a prominent rationalist.

If eloquence is indeed relative, as al-Jāḥiẓ suggests, then why do Arabs designate others with a distinct name rather than merely describing them as lacking eloquence? In fact, everyone is “'Ajam” to one another, since the term itself denotes vagueness and inarticulacy. It implies that non-Arabic languages are inherently obscure and deficient in expressive capacity, not simply unintelligible to Arabs.

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<sup>(16)</sup> Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zeid, *The Necessity of Renewing Arab Feminist Discourse*.

<sup>(17)</sup> *Book of Animals*, Vol. One, p. 10.

Although Arabs recognize the relativity of eloquence—as evident in al-Jāḥiẓ’s writings—the dichotomy of Arab versus ‘Ajam, or eloquent versus non-Arab, nevertheless conveys a sense of linguistic pride. It elevates Arabic to the status of the language, implicitly positioning it above all others. This linguistic distinction thus reflects not only cultural identity but also a claim to superiority embedded within Arab-Islamic discourse. It is significant that the Arabs call the dictionary a *mu’jam*, a word derived from ‘Ajam which explains the meanings of ambiguous words and suggests that foreignness is associated with ambiguity.

Within Arab intellectual and cultural traditions, Arabic has often been regarded as the language of eloquence, esteemed as both the most expressive and the most linguistically rich. The principal justification advanced for this claim is the revelation of the Qur’ān in Arabic, which confers upon the language a sacred status. This perception continues to be prevalent among Arab communities, where Arabic is not merely valued as a distinguished language but is also celebrated as possessing unparalleled richness and aesthetic beauty. It is described as *“the most comprehensive in expression, capable of distinguishing subtle differences in meaning and of condensing multiple senses into a few words when the speaker so intends. Moreover, it differentiates between pairs of near-synonyms by assigning each a distinct abbreviated form, alongside other unique features of the Arabic language.”*<sup>(18)</sup>

After the advent of Islam, this pride became twofold: rhetorically, as it preceded Islam, and religiously, as it is a sacred language. It is the language of the people of Paradise, according to the ḥadīth: on the authority of Abū Hurairah, he said: The Messenger of God said: **I am an Arab, the Qur’ān is in Arabic and the tongue of the people of Paradise is Arabic.**<sup>(19)</sup> It is also attributed

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<sup>(18)</sup> Mar’ī ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥanbalī al-Qudsī, or Mar’ī al-Karmī, *Forged gold: on the Virtue of the Arabs and the Superiority of Knowledge over Lineage*, p 40.

<sup>(19)</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that he said: **Learn Arabic, for it is a part of your religion.** <sup>(20)</sup>

Arabs, in general, regard eloquence as the essence and ultimate purpose of language. This explains the elevated status of poets in pre-Islamic society, where poetry wielded an influence comparable to that of the sword. Arabs valued their poets as protectors of the tribe through their words, whether in times of peace or war. Consequently, the miracle of the Qur'ān has been understood to be linguistic in nature. Although language is a human creation, scholars and linguists were unable to produce any text that rivals the Qur'ān in eloquence. This inability was presented as the most compelling evidence of the Qur'ān's divine origin., representing the primary proof provided by the text itself regarding its source.

Sometimes, merely listening to a few verses of the Qur'ān was enough for some Arabs to declare their faith in Islam, based on its eloquence and musicality, which surpassed the poetry they were accustomed to. Therefore, the mere recitation of the Qur'ān alone was enough to convert some Arabs to Islam, <sup>(21)</sup> while those who rejected it saw magic in the Qur'ān because of its eloquence. Rhetoric in general continues to have a significant effect on Arab listeners, often captivating them to the extent that the form of speech overshadows its substantive content. <sup>(22)</sup>

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<sup>(20)</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>(21)</sup> This issue is addressed by many classical and modern scholars. Gamāl al-Bannā, who is one of the enlightened, expanded on its description, highlighted the importance of this phenomenon and analyzed it. Refer to: *Towards a New Islamic Jurisprudence*, Vol. Two, Chapter Seven, Understanding the Qur'ānic Discourse as it Should be, p. 154.

<sup>(22)</sup> The definition of eloquence according to *The Dictionary of Language Principles*, Vol. One, by Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Fares ibn Zakariya: It is the act of reaching something. They say: “I have reached the place,” when they arrive there. Also, eloquence is what the eloquent tongue is praised for, because it achieves what it intends. When they say: “The knight has reached.” it means he extends his hand to the reins of his horse to increase its speed.



The Qur'ān establishes a linguistic distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs, referring to languages other than Arabic as '*Ajamī* (non-Arabic). This is illustrated in Sūrah 41:44, which notes that had the revelation been delivered in a foreign language, objections would have arisen regarding its clarity. Central to the Qur'ān's miraculous nature is its eloquent Arabic expression, described as “plain, clear Arabic:” **In plain, clear Arabic language, without any defect, so they may become righteous** (Sūrah 39:28), and reinforced by the challenge to produce a comparable surah: **If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce one surah comparable to it and call upon all your witnesses, other than God, if what you say is true** (Sūrah 2:23). These passages emphasize that the Qur'ān's Arabic is not merely a medium of communication but a rhetorical challenge to its immediate audience, particularly the Arabs of Makkah, the birthplace of the Prophet Muḥammad and the most significant Arab city at the time of the emergence of Islam. Despite this linguistic and cultural context, the Qur'ān presents Islam as a universal message, directed not solely at Arabs but at humanity at large, as underscored in Sūrah 34:28. <sup>(23)</sup> This dual emphasis—on the Arabic language as a vehicle of revelation and on Islam's global mission—reflects the interplay between particularity and universality in Islamic self-understanding.

The logical implication of this argument is that non-Arabs (*'Ajam*) do not directly recognize the Qur'ān's linguistic miraculousness, nor does it constitute a challenge for them in the same way it does for native speakers of Arabic. If the Qur'ān's message is intended for all peoples, the question arises: how can they be convinced of its divine nature when its miracle lies in Arabic eloquence? It follows, therefore, that Arabs, as the first recipients of

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<sup>(23)</sup> Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī (Ibn Kathīr) interpretes the preceding verse as follows: In plain, clear Arabic language; that is, one that is clear, manifest, and plain. Most exegetes have agreed that what is meant by all around it refers to all Arab and non-Arab communities.



the revelation in their language, bore the initial responsibility of conveying the message to non-Arabs. Nevertheless, Islamic tradition emphasizes that the duty of conveying the message ultimately extends to all Muslims, regardless of ethnicity.

The choice of Arabic as the language of revelation and of Prophet Muḥammad as an Arab is not perceived by the Muslim Arab elite as arbitrary. This perception contributed to the development of doctrines emphasizing Arab superiority, despite the broader Islamic affirmation of equality among Muslims. Ibn Taymiyyah, one of the most prominent scholars of Islam, articulates this view explicitly. He argues that, according to the belief of the followers of *al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, the Arab race is superior to non-Arabs ('Ajam), including Hebrews, Syriacs, Romans, and Persians, and that within the Arabs, the Quraysh tribe holds primacy, with the Banū Hāshim considered the most distinguished. The Prophet's lineage was seen as both a reflection and reinforcement of this hierarchy. Ibn Taymiyyah further asserts that the superiority of the Arabs, Quraysh, and Banū Hāshim is not solely attributed to the Prophet's lineage but also to their inherent excellence. Moreover, love for Arabs is framed as a sign of faith, whereas hating them and being hostile toward them is considered unbelief or a cause of unbelief, implying their superiority. In addition, the prohibition of hating Arabs is emphasized more than hating other groups, as it can lead to apostasy and hating the Prophet, further highlighting their privileged position. Because hatred toward them is tantamount to unbelief or hypocrisy, Arab superiority is framed as both theological and moral. This doctrinal position illustrates how linguistic and ethnic identity becomes intertwined with religious authority, shaping perceptions of hierarchy within the broader Islamic tradition.<sup>(24)</sup>

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<sup>(24)</sup> *The Necessity of the Straight Path.*

What is understood from these words is that the selection of Muḥammad was not prior to the selection of the Arabs to carry the message; Muḥammad's Arabism was not a coincidence. Rather, he was chosen as an Arab due to the provided precedence of Arabs over non-Arabs in the first place.

Islamic heritage literature often highlights the moral qualities attributed to Arabs prior to Islam, describing them as possessing noble and praiseworthy traits by nature. One report, transmitted by the Ḥadīth scholar Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bazzār, through his chain of narration, relates that Salmān al-Fārisī said that the Arabs gained a special status because the Prophet favored them. For this reason, he held that non-Arabs should neither marry their women nor lead them in prayer.<sup>(25)</sup> Such traditions reflect the esteem accorded to Arabs within certain strands of early Islamic thought, linking their perceived natural disposition toward goodness with their privileged status in relation to the Prophet.

Ibn Ḥanbal, the mentor of Ibn Taymiyyah, emphasizes the recognition of the rights and merits of the Arabs, affirming their preeminence.<sup>(26)</sup> He cites the words of the Prophet: **To love them is to have faith, whereas to despise them is to embody hypocrisy,** thereby framing affection for Arabs as a religious virtue and hostility toward them as a sign of spiritual deficiency. This statement reflects how early theological discourse intertwined ethnic identity with markers of faith and hypocrisy, reinforcing the perceived superiority of Arabs within certain strands of Sunni thought.

There are more bases in the sacred text for this distinction concerning Arabs, as in the Prophetic tradition: **When God created creation, He sent Gabriel to divide the people into two groups: the Arabs and the 'Ajam. The best among them were the Arabs. He**

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<sup>(25)</sup> Mar'ī al-Karmī, Op. cit., pp. 48-49.

<sup>(26)</sup> *The Book of Creed.*

further divided the Arabs into two groups: the Yemen and Muḍar, with Quraysh being the best among them. Then He chose me from the best group. <sup>(27)</sup>

Moreover, Prophetic traditions emphasize the obligation of Muslims to love the Arabs, framing such affection as a religious virtue. One narration in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*- 3928 states: **Whoever cheats the Arabs will not be included in my intercession and will not receive my affection.** Another saying conveys: **Whoever loves the Arabs has loved me, and whoever hates the Arabs has hated me.** <sup>(28)</sup> Similarly, in *Musnad Aḥmad* -23346, Salmān al-Fārisī is reported to have been told by the Prophet: **Do not hate me and leave your religion.** When Salmān asked how he could hate the Prophet, the response was: **You hate the Arabs, so you hate me.** This same report appears in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*- 3927. Collectively, these traditions link love for Arabs with love for the Prophet himself, and hostility toward them with unbelief or hypocrisy. Such narrations illustrate how ethnic identity was integrated into theological discourse, reinforcing the perceived superiority of Arabs within certain strands of early Islamic thought.

The best among the Arabs in the Islamic heritage are the Quraysh. It is significant that the ten people promised Paradise by name were all from Quraysh, despite the decisive and fundamental contribution made by the Anṣār (people of Madīnah) to the victory of Islam. <sup>(29)</sup> High status is also accorded to the people of Badr, al-

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<sup>(27)</sup> Cited from: ‘Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *Al-Sira al-Ḥalabiyya* [The Ḥalabī Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad], Vol. One, p. 42.

<sup>(28)</sup> Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Maʿrifat ʿUlum al-Ḥadīth* [Knowledge of the Sciences of the Ḥadīth and the Enumeration of their Types], p. 118.

<sup>(29)</sup> Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq - ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ibn Nufail ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzza ibn Riyah ibn Qart al-Qurashī al-ʿAdawī - ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān ibn Abū al-ʿĀṣ ibn Umayyah ibn ʿAbd al-Shams ibn ʿAbd al-Manāf al-Umayyad - ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib ibn ʿAbd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim ibn ʿAbd al-Manāf al-Qurashī al-Hāshemī - Al-Zubayr ibn Al-ʿAwām ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzza ibn Qusayy ibn Kilāb - Saʿd ibn Mālik ibn Wahib ibn Abd Manāf ibn Zahra al-Qurashī - Abū ʿUbaidah ibn al-Jarrah, is ʿAmer ibn ʿAbd

Ḥudaybiyyah, and the people of the Pledge of Ridwān, who are promised not to enter Hell: **A man who witnessed Badr and al-Ḥudaybiyyah will not enter Hell** (*Musnad Aḥmad* – 26637); **No one who pledges allegiance under a tree will enter Hell** (*Musnad Aḥmad* - 14485).

It is clear that the first group is more virtuous, as they are mentioned by name one by one.

One of the famous statements attributed to Muḥammad is that when he passed by 'Uthmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Rabī'ah, he said: **May God curse him, for he hated the Quraysh.**<sup>(30)</sup>

Prophetic traditions also highlight the privileged status of the Prophet's household within the broader Arab community. One narration states that God created creation, chose the children of Adam, then selected the Arabs from among them, Muḍar from the Arabs, Quraysh from Muḍar, and Banū Hāshim from Quraysh, culminating in the Prophet Muḥammad being chosen from Banū Hāshim. A ḥadīth proceeds: **So whoever loves the Arabs will love them because of my love, and whoever hates the Arabs will hate them because he hates me.**<sup>(31)</sup> This tradition underscores the hierarchical framework in which Arab identity, and specifically Quraysh and Banū Hāshim, are elevated, linking ethnic and tribal affiliation directly to religious virtue and loyalty to the Prophet. Such narrations illustrate how notions of lineage and divine selection are integrated into theological discourse, reinforcing both Arab preeminence and the Prophet's unique status.

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Allāh ibn al-Jarrah - Talḥa ibn 'Ubaid Allāh ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Amr ibn Ka'b ibn Sa'd al-Qurashī al-Tamimī - 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Awf, one of the eight early converts to Islam - Sa'īd ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl al-'Adawī al-Qurashī.

<sup>(30)</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah* [The Attainment in Distinguishing the Companions], 7772.

<sup>(31)</sup> It is narrated from al-Ḥafiz ibn Taymiyyah through well-known chains to Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣaḡhanī with his chain to Ibn 'Umar from the Prophet. Mar'ī al-Karmī, *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

The preference accorded to Quraysh in Islamic tradition is often explained not in terms of race but rather in relation to their wisdom and religious standing, even prior to Islam. A ḥadīth in *Musnad Aḥmad* -16423 states: **A Qurashī has twice the strength of a man other than Quraysh.** When asked about its meaning, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, the pioneer of systematic codification, interpreted it as referring to the nobility of opinion. Before Islam, Quraysh were described with honorific titles such as “the people of God,” “the inhabitants of God,” “the people of sanctity,” and “the inhabitants of the Abode of God.” These designations reflect the elevated status attributed to Quraysh in pre-Islamic and early Islamic discourse, situating them as custodians of sacred space and bearers of moral authority.<sup>(32)</sup>

In the practice of rituals, many senior Islamic scholars agree that the Arabic language should also be imposed. Mālik said: I dislike for a man to call upon a foreign language in prayer.<sup>(33)</sup> According to Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī: It is not permissible to recite the Qur’ān in a foreign language, whether he is good at Arabic or not, whether during prayer or outside it.<sup>(34)</sup> Ibn Ḥazm believes that whoever recites in a foreign language during prayer has undoubtedly not read the Qur’ān.<sup>(35)</sup>

This tendency toward Arab superiority finds resonance among many modern Islamists, particularly within Sunni circles. While it is

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<sup>(32)</sup> Al-Baghdadī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb ibn Umayyah ibn ‘Amr, elaborates in depth on the merits of Quraysh based on prophetic tradition and various other sources in his work titled: *Al-Munammaq min Akhbār Quraysh* [The Ornamented Accounts of Quraysh], 1, p. 26.

<sup>(33)</sup> *Al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā* [The Compendium of Mālikī Jurisprudence], 1, p 161.

<sup>(34)</sup> Al-Nawawī, *al-Majmu' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab* [Commentary on al-Muhadhdhab]. N.B.: *Al-Muhadhdhab* is a treatise on the jurisprudence of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, by Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī.

<sup>(35)</sup> *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, A Treatise on the Principles of Islamic Legal Rulings, No. 2. p. 87.

partly an ideological inheritance from earlier traditions, its persistence is also shaped by modern factors, including the influence of European racial theories, the Arab aspiration for liberation and unity, and ongoing confrontations with Western colonial and racial ideologies. Historically, the peak of Arab exclusivism occurred during the Umayyad era, when Islam was often portrayed as the religion of the Arabs. The Umayyads resisted the integration of non-Arabs into the Muslim community, designating converts as *Mawālī* (clients and loyalists), imposing jizyah even on those who had embraced Islam, and excluding them from the ruling elite. Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī is reported to have prohibited non-Arabs from leading communal prayers, further reinforcing this exclusivist stance. By contrast, the 'Abbāsīd era witnessed a significant decline in such tendencies, as Persians played a central role in establishing the dynasty. Indeed, nearly all 'Abbāsīd caliphs were born to non-Arab slave mothers, with only two exceptions, reflecting a more inclusive and cosmopolitan character within the ruling elite.

In modern Islamist thought, Ḥasan al-Bannā articulates a hierarchical view of nations, asserting that while each people possesses distinctive moral virtues, Arabism embodies the most abundant share of excellence. He cautions, however, that such attributes should not serve as grounds for aggression. Al-Bannā further contends that one factor contributing to the decline of the Islamic polity was the transfer of authority to non-Arabs.<sup>(36)</sup> Similarly, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī, an Indian Islamist intellectual, underscores the centrality of the Arab role in Islam's global mission, emphasizing the Arab world's geographical, cultural, and political advantages in disseminating the faith and assuming leadership within the Muslim community.<sup>(37)</sup> Muḥammad Shawqī al-Fangarī,

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<sup>(36)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Our Invitation.*

<sup>(37)</sup> *What Has the World Lost with the Decline of Muslims*, Vol. Five, Chapter Two, Leadership of the Arab World.



albeit indirectly, reinforces this perspective by portraying Arabs as the foremost community, entrusted with the transmission of what he describes as the optimal way of life.<sup>(38)</sup>

Islamic tradition does not accord Arabs any inherent excellence in matters of judgment or punishment, a notion explicitly refuted in numerous prophetic traditions. Distinction is framed primarily in moral terms, with accounts highlighting that non-Arabs such as Ṣuhaib al-Rūmī, Salmān al-Fārisī, and Bilāl al-Ḥabashī surpassed thousands of Arabs in virtue. The Arabs' perceived advantage lay in their capacity to transmit the divine message; yet, prophetic traditions indicate that failure to uphold this responsibility could result in its transfer to other communities.<sup>(39)</sup> While the religious mission and its propagation remain paramount, certain traditions nonetheless affirm the Arabs' right to political leadership within the Muslim community—a prerogative they retained for several centuries, during which the spread of Islam coincided with the expansion of Arab authority.

Islamic heritage portrays the Arabs as uniquely entrusted with the transmission of the divine message, a role justified by the attribution of four distinguishing qualities: intellectual acuity, strong memory, civilizational simplicity, and legislative aptitude. Their relative isolation from other communities has been interpreted as reinforcing these traits. Collectively, these characteristics are believed to render them particularly suited to comprehend and internalize the religion, to preserve it faithfully, to assimilate its moral framework with immediacy, and to integrate its legislative dimensions. In this narrative, other communities are

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<sup>(38)</sup> *Muḥammad Shawqī al-Fangarī, Islam and Contemporary Economic Theories.*

<sup>(39)</sup> It is recorded in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*- 3260 on the authority of Abū Hurairah that: The Messenger of God one day recited this verse: **If you turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you.** They said: “Who will replace us?” The Messenger of God struck Salmān’s shoulder (who was Persian), then said: **“This and his people, this and his people.”**

depicted as lacking grounds for contestation, thereby underscoring the Arabs' assumed eligibility for religious leadership. <sup>(40)</sup>

Islamic tradition acknowledges the distinction between Arabs and 'Ajam while maintaining the original semantic connotation of the latter term. The privileging of Arabic is justified by its role as the language of revelation, thereby conferring upon Arabs the honor of bearing the message and conveying it to others. Makkah, designated as *Umm al-Qurā* (the Mother of Cities), is portrayed as the religious epicenter of the world, a status derived from Qur'ānic references (Sūrah 42:7). *Al-Bayt al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred House) is described as the primordial sanctuary, its foundations being attributed to Adam, with reports indicating that its foundations go back to Adam and extends down to the lowest seventh earth, directly beneath the Throne of God and corresponding to *al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr* (the inhabited house) in the seventh heaven, where angelic circumambulation occurs. <sup>(41)</sup> The obligation of the Ḥajj (major pilgrimage), enjoined upon Muslims once in a lifetime for those who are able to undertake it (Sūrah 3:97), reinforces the sacrality of Makkah, along with the Arabian Peninsula more broadly, often designated as the Holy Land. The Qur'ān (Sūrah 9:28) prohibits unbelievers from entering the sacred mosque, and prophetic traditions are cited as recommending the expulsion of polytheists (those who worship others besides God) from the Peninsula. <sup>(42)</sup>

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<sup>(40)</sup> Nāṣir ibn Solimān al-'Omr, *Arabia between Privilege and Responsibility*: In the papers on the civilizational mission of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

<sup>(41)</sup> It is recorded in a large number of prophetic traditions, including No. 3137 in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The details are explained by al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makkah wa-mā jā'a fīhā min al-āthār* [The Reports of Makkah and the Traditions Related to It], Vol. One.

<sup>(42)</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -3099 records that “*Ibn 'Abbās said: Thursday, and what is Thursday? Then he cried until the gravel became wet with his tears. The pain of the Messenger of God became severe, so he said: Bring me that I may write for you a will that you will not go astray after me. So they quarreled, and it is not appropriate for a Prophet to quarrel, and they said: Has he become delirious? Ask him. He said: Leave me alone, for what I am doing is good. I advise you to do three things: expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula, and treat the*



While Jerusalem's *al-Aqṣā* Mosque initially functioned as a sacred locus, the subsequent reorientation of the *Qibla* to Makkah consolidated its status as Islam's holiest site. Later sectarian developments introduced additional sacred geographies, including non-Arab locales such as Qom in Iran. Nevertheless, the Arabian Peninsula has retained primacy, with some narratives identifying it as the cradle of civilization, given the association of the Grand Mosque with Adam's foundational act.<sup>(43)</sup> Contemporary practice reflects a discrepancy between tradition and pragmatism: although "non-believers"<sup>(44)</sup> are permitted to reside and work in the Peninsula, access to Makkah and Madīnah remains restricted, with violations deemed highly serious.

The sacred text regarding the sanctity of Makkah introduces another dimension: the caliphate, as established within the cognitive framework, must remain with Quraysh. This requirement is mentioned in the authentic prophetic traditions as recognized by Arab Islamic scholars, the majority of the four Sunni jurists and Imāms, and the Shi'ites. Not all Islamic sects accept the notion of Quraysh's perpetual superiority in leadership. Groups such as the Khārijites, Mu'tazilites, and certain Ash'arīs and Zaydīs express disagreement with this belief. Moreover, whereas many ordinary Muslims may have acknowledged the idea in theory, it has been far less common in practice in later eras. The Prophetic Sunnah nevertheless reinforces the privileged status of Quraysh. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, it is reported: **Imāmate will continue among Quraysh as long as two of them remain. The righteous among the people will follow their righteousness, and the ungodly will follow the ungodly**

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*delegation in the same manner as I used to reward them... He remained silent about the third one, or he said it and I forgot."*

<sup>(43)</sup> *The Arabian Peninsula between Honor and Mandate.*

<sup>(44)</sup> This word will be written without quotation marks afterward so that the text is not filled with these marks.

among them.<sup>(45)</sup> Similarly, *Musnad Aḥmad* -4376 records: Now, O people of Quraysh! You are worthy of Imāmate as long as you do not disobey God. But if you disobey Him, He will send someone to replace you. These narrations suggest that Quraysh's favored status is conditional, dependent upon their obedience to God, and not an unconditional racial privilege. This conditionality highlights the dissonance between inherited notions of tribal preeminence and the broader Islamic emphasis on moral and spiritual responsibility.

Makkah was also singled out for not imposing Kharāj on its land,<sup>(46)</sup> despite its conquest by force according to the doctrine of most jurists. Its people were not given a choice between Islam and the sword, as were the rest of the Arab polytheists.<sup>(47)</sup>

In Islamic thought, a distinction is drawn between Arabs and non-Arabs, with the former accorded a privileged status. According to several prominent scholars—including Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfah, the early Shāfi'ī doctrine, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyyah (Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn 'Abd al-Salām ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī), and even

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<sup>(45)</sup> This is the Ḥadīth that, according to Ibn Kathīr, Abū Bakr was used as evidence to assume the caliphate after the death of Muḥammad in the meeting of *al-Saqifah* (a banquet hall) of Banū Sa'da. *The Beginning and the End*, Vol. Five, p. 268. Ibn Kathīr attributes his words to Imām Aḥmad: “So, Abū Bakr and 'Umar hurried up until they reached their destination, then Abū Bakr spoke and did not leave out anything that was revealed about the Anṣār and the Messenger of God did not mention anything about them except that he mentioned it and said: You knew that the Messenger of God said: ‘If the people took a valley and the Anṣār took a valley, I would take the Valley of the Anṣār.’ And you know, Sa'd, that the Messenger of God said while you were sitting: ‘The Quraysh are the rulers of this matter, so the righteousness of the people follows their righteousness, and the ungodly follows the ungodly of them.’” However, this historical narrative has been rejected by principal Islamic references, both Sunni and Shi'ite.

<sup>(46)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimma* [Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant], p. 60.

<sup>(47)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya discusses the advantages of Makkah over the rest of the earth in detail in his big book *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hudā Khair al-'Ibād* [Provisions for the Hereafter in the Guidance of the Best of Servants], Vol. One.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb—the alternative to conversion for Arab polytheists is death, rather than the payment of jizyah or enslavement, which is interpreted as a form of honoring them. This position has been widely shared among scholars, though later Shāfi'ī jurists, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in certain contexts, and al-Shawkānī diverge, maintaining that death is preferable to slavery in specific cases.

The lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad occupies an exalted place in the Islamic conscience, particularly the Prophet's household (*Ahl al-Bayt*), who are accorded special reverence by both Shi'ites and Sunni Muslims alike. Their love represents a foundational bond that transcends sectarian divisions and manifests across diverse aspects of culture and religious devotion. Many Arab Muslims still identify as *Ashrāf* (nobles) or *Sādah* (masters) on the basis that they are descended from 'Alī's two sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn; their descendants are scattered throughout various Arab countries.

Before Islam, Arabs took pride in their language for its distinctive eloquence, according to their claim. Islam considered the Arabic language, just as the Arabs did before, as the language, while denying racial discrimination between Arabs and non-Arabs, declaring that: **There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab except through *taqwā* (piety) and good deeds** (*Al-Musnad al-Jāmi'*–15693). **The most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you** (Sūrah 49:13)- it emphasizes the definition of Arabism based on the tongue, that is, in the act of speaking Arabic. Thus, the advantage of the language extends to the advantage of the one who does good deeds, meaning the true Muslim.

Islam thus advances Arab centralism to a new stage. Humanity is categorized into believers and non-believers, while vestiges of the earlier distinction between Arabs and 'Ajam remain embedded. This division is particularly associated with the Quraysh, who are regarded as the most knowledgeable, their wisdom being inherently linked to eloquence—understood as clarity and impactful

expression. A common belief among Arabs today is that the dialect of Quraysh is the most eloquent among Arab dialects, reinforced by the claim that the Qur'ān was revealed in it. This belief supports the notion of Qurayshī superiority over other peoples, though the linguistic superiority of their dialect remains uncertain.

In fact, the Qur'ān is not composed solely in the dialect of Quraysh but rather in the elevated register of Arabic used by the elite, incorporating stylistic elements from multiple tribal dialects. It is certain, however, that the Qur'ān contains numerous Arabic words alongside non-Arabic terms, a point acknowledged by the majority of scholars in the field.<sup>(48)</sup> Islam transformed the foundations of tribal honor in Arab society. Before Islam, prestige was determined by kinship ties, service to the *Ka'bah*, and financial influence. With the advent of Islam, however, precedence was redefined in terms of devotion to the faith and service to its cause, with particular emphasis on the Prophet Muḥammad's family. Those closest to the Messenger ideologically -and especially his kin-who embraced Islam, are accorded the highest status.

In this way, Islam transcended the earlier division between Arabs and 'Ajam, while simultaneously preserving aspects of it. The distinction was denied and retained—effectively sublated. As a result, Arab centralism became inseparably intertwined with Islam, giving rise to Islamic centralism. Its foundation was ideological, rooted in the Arabic language, rather than purely ethnic as before. Arab identity became the vessel of Islam, since Arabic is established as the language of the sacred text and, according to tradition, the language of Paradise. Consequently, Arabic acquired a sacred

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<sup>(48)</sup> This issue is analyzed in detail by Jawād 'Alī, *A comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Chapter 133. The author also analyzes it in: *Linguistic problematics in the Qur'ān: An analytical study*.

status and Arabism—embodied in the tongue—was itself sanctified.  
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## Chapter Two

### BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

*Philosophers, if their divine sciences were well-proven and pure from speculation, like their arithmetic sciences, they would not have disagreed about it, just as they did not disagree about arithmetic*

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī

\* Islamic centralism begins with a seemingly simple premise, one shared with other monotheistic traditions: that God is the sole deity in existence, as affirmed in the Qur'ān, prophetic tradition, and jurisprudence. All other gods are deemed false and imaginary, while God alone is presented as the true and absolute reality. In certain interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence, beliefs that contradict core tenets are classified as falsehood and unbelief, and may be subject to legal sanctions.

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(49) The author analyzes the issue in a study titled: *The Origins of Racial Attitudes in Arab Thought*.

This conviction is firmly embedded in Islamic thought, despite the fact that many of the deities worshipped by non-believers were tangible and corporeal—natural phenomena such as the moon or Venus, animals, idols, and even Jesus, who was humanized according to the faith of his followers. By contrast, God in Islam is not incarnated before humanity, yet His followers determined that all other forms of worship must be excluded. This marks the beginning of exclusion, disdain, and condescension toward others. Islam does not recognize the legitimacy of worshipping beings other than God; rather, it categorizes such practices as polytheism (*shirk*), a heinous crime and one of the gravest sins, which is explicitly described as unforgivable. Islam does not compel belief in God, as expressed in the Qur'ān (Sūrah 18:29): **Let him who will believe, and let him who will reject**. However, unbelief is not framed as a legitimate right but rather as a violation of the innate covenant between God and humanity. The Qur'ān (Sūrah 7:172) recalls this covenant, describing how God took testimony from the descendants of Adam, asking: **And when your Lord took from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves, [saying], “Am I not your Lord?” They said, “Yes, we testify,” lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “Indeed, we were unaware of this.”** This passage underscores the theological principle that faith in God is embedded in human nature from birth, and rejection of Him constitutes a departure from this innate commitment. Thus, while the Qur'ān acknowledges human freedom of choice, it simultaneously situates belief as a divinely mandated obligation rooted in the very essence of human existence. Therefore, choosing a deity other than God or denying Him is considered a betrayal of the covenant; consequently, it is not recognized by Islamic thought as a human right. God is the power of absolute sovereignty and control; He knows everything, and is capable of everything. He created the world out of nothing, as most scholars and ordinary Muslims believe, except for some rationalists who believe that He is not



capable of illogical actions and does not know the particulars. Some Muslim philosophers, accused of unbelief and heresy, believe that He did not actually or historically create the world but He is only its logical reason. This centralist foundation is expressed in the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* (monotheism). For most Muslims, it is regarded as an absolute truth, accepted without the need for demonstrative evidence capable of convincing humanity at large. It is embraced with the same certainty as the universal belief that fire burns paper. In Islamic thought, *Tawḥīd* is not merely a theological claim but a self-evident reality, forming the cornerstone of faith and the starting point of Islamic centralism. Throughout history, Islamists have made strenuous efforts to prove the existence and unity of Allah, and that He is the true God, not just a human idea. Thousands of books and articles have been written in this field. In comparison, proving that fire burns paper does not require writing any book or article because it is a clear and obvious fact.

Islam does not permit the alteration of the nature of God, as many other religions allow, nor does it permit the sanctification of anything other than Him or what He sanctifies. Rather, it defines the sole acceptable mission for a human being as submission and obedience to Allah alone. This serves merely as a preamble to the exclusion of other beliefs and doctrines. While Islam shares monotheism with other heavenly faiths, it surpasses them in its abstraction of the Divine and its emphasis on His simple, absolute oneness. It admits no hypostases as in Christianity, and portrays God as universal, rather than a local deity like Jehovah. It does not recognize later monotheistic religions (such as al-Aḥmadiyyah and al-Bahā'iyyah). Furthermore, in Islamic thought, God is an absolute authority over human beings rather than merely a helper to them; their sole mission in existence is to worship Him by submitting to His instructions. Within this framework, individuals do not possess the right to object or dissent; rather, they must only follow.



In practice, following the conquest of Makkah—according to Islamic historical sources—Muḥammad was keen to destroy the idols of the Arabs, while either executing their custodians or compelling them to embrace Islam. He also prohibited the worship of any deity other than God within the Arabian Peninsula. Notably, Islam differentiates between polytheists, the irreligious, and *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the People of the Book). Although the latter are also accused of polytheism, their recognition of God grants them a special status in Islam; their perceived polytheism or unbelief is considered lesser in degree than that of others, as they are closer to the principle of divine unity or the recognition of God's absolute authority.

\* The mainstream current in Islamic doctrine—represented by al-Ash'arī and the Sunni traditions following the decline of the Mu'tazilites—maintains that the Qur'ānic text is uncreated and therefore eternal, akin to the Lord Himself. Although acknowledged as the Word of God, this Word is considered eternal; God speaks from eternity, and His Book is inscribed on *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz* (the Preserved Tablet), <sup>(50)</sup> remaining unchanged. This doctrine appears to be in dissonance with concepts such as *al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* (the abrogator and the abrogated) and *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the occasions of revelation). Consequently, the sacred text in Islamic thought is regarded as transcendent rather than historical.

Those who challenge this view have frequently been branded unbelievers, both by scholarly elites and the wider community. In contrast, the Mu'tazilites—who emphasized rationalist approaches but have nearly disappeared—along with a small number of modern thinkers like Muḥammad 'Abduh, have questioned this prevailing conception. Their efforts highlight the discrepancy between traditionalist insistence on transcendence and reformist

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<sup>(50)</sup> It indicates in most Islamic readings a heavenly preserved record of all that has happened and will happen, including the Qur'ān.

attempts to situate the text within historical and cultural contexts. Within mainstream discourse, the Qur'ān is understood to contain absolute Truth and to encompass all knowledge. This eternal speech, existing beyond reality and human limitations, is contrasted with human speech, which is necessarily incomplete and historical.

Islamists therefore adopt a strict stance against any discussion of the historicity of the text, even when such arguments arise from within the Muslim community. The most contemporary and salient precedent is the case of Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd in Egypt—a rigorous reformist scholar who encountered profound institutional and legal repercussions for his inquiry into the historicity of the text. This understanding of the Qur'ān underpins its consideration as suitable for all times and places. While 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān standardized the *muṣḥaf* (written form of the Qur'ān), the absence of diacritical marks in early manuscripts allowed for diverse canonical readings. <sup>(51)</sup> Over time, scholars established seven recognized *qirā'āt* (readings), among which the narration of Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim became the most prevalent across the Islamic world.

Deviation from these established readings—particularly from 'Āṣim's—has often been treated as grounds for *takfīr* (accusations of unbelief or apostasy). The words of the Qur'ān themselves came to be revered, and the standardized written text acquired a sacred status. Even the material form of the Qur'ān—the ink and paper—

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<sup>(51)</sup> The seven or ten readings have been a subject of research throughout Islamic history. It is certain that multiple variants of the written Qur'ān once existed in terms of wording, which 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān burned them. Some of the foundational sources on this topic include Abū 'Amr al-Dānī, *The Seven Ahruf* [Modes of Qur'ānic Recitation]—*al-Ḥujja fī al-Qira'at al-Sab'* [The Evidence for the Seven Qur'ānic Readings] attributed to Ibn Khalawayh—Ibn Khalaf al-Muqri', *The Guide to the Seven Readings*—Muḥammad ibn Maḥmud Ḥawa, *Al-Madkhal ila 'Ilm al-Qira'āt* [An Introduction to the Science of Qur'ānic Recitations]. Among the Shi'ites, who reject the idea of multiple readings, Murtaḍā al-'Askarī addressed the issue in his book *The Holy Qur'ān in the Interpretations of the Two Schools*, Book Two, Chapter Six. This issue is addressed analytically in the author's own book, *Linguistic Problematic in the Qur'ān: An Analytical Study*.

has been sanctified, with prohibitions against placing objects upon it, or sitting or standing on it. Thus, the Qur'ān is not only preserved as divine speech but also venerated in its physical manifestation, reinforcing its transcendence and authority in Islamic culture.

\* The innate religion (the religion of nature or *fiṭrah*): Islam, as presented by Muḥammad and believed by both the elite and ordinary Muslims, is deemed the religion of human nature. **So set your face toward the religion, as a *Ḥanīf* [pure natural believer] in Allah's *fiṭrah* (i.e., Allah's nature upon which He created mankind). There is no change in Allah's creation. That is the righteous religion, but most people do not know** (Sūrah 30:30). The word “*Ḥanīf*” is used in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth to denote a Muslim. The origin of the word in the language, according to most sources, is deviation and crookedness. It was used in ancient times to denote deviating from the prevailing religion, an expression that undoubtedly belittles the status of apostates from the religions of the fathers. It was later used by Arabs to describe those who were circumcisers, pilgrims, or the followers of the religion of Ibrāhīm, who was considered in the ancient Eastern tradition an outsider, or a dissident from the religion of his people. After the emergence of Islam, the meaning of the word became the contrary: the one who leans toward the righteous religion, thus the use of the word exalted those described as Ibrāhīmīc or Muslim, and minimized the Others, the polytheists. Instead of the meaning of crookedness and deviation, it became straightness and following the righteous religion. <sup>(52)</sup>

In conclusion, the verse under consideration conveys that every individual is inherently born into a state of Islam. This condition is

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<sup>(52)</sup> There are many sources to be consulted, including dictionaries, collections of prophetic traditions and their commentaries, as well as exegeses of the Qur'ān. Al-Kalbī analyzed the issue in his book *al-Aṣṇām* [Idols]. Likewise, Jawād 'Alī in: *A Comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Chapter 75: al-Ḥanafa.

not to be interpreted merely as an intellectual construct, ideological commitment, or formal religious affiliation; rather, it signifies an innate disposition embedded within the very essence of human nature. It is not contingent upon a particular historical or cultural context, nor bound to a specific time or place. Rather, as jurists and the wider community firmly believe, it is valid for all times and circumstances, being intimately connected to the very structure of human existence as living beings. The Qur'ān confirms that God has taken a covenant from every newborn to believe in Him, as mentioned above. Every born person, therefore, implicitly carries faith in God, or potentially knows Him. This means he has the possibility of recognizing Him when he grows up. That is why the Qur'ān also mentions: **God has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs devoid of all knowledge, but He has given you hearing, sight and minds, so that you may be grateful** (Sūrah 16:78). A person is born without acquired knowledge, yet according to Islamic belief, God entered into an innate covenant with humanity before their physical formation, while they were still in the loins of their forefathers. In this covenant, each soul responds by affirming belief in God. Thus, faith is understood as innate, preceding conscious thought or worldly experience, and embedded within human nature itself. Every human carries this hereditary potential for faith, as is evident in the expression “loins” used in the Qur'ān. While the commentary on the Qur'ān differs from one exegete to another on this issue, the explanation for what the Qur'ān contains is found in the Ḥadīth. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -7156 mentions: **My Lord has commanded me to teach you what you did not know of what he taught me this day. I created all of my servants as *Ḥanīf* [meaning pure] beings. However, the devils led them away from their religion and prohibited for them what I made lawful. I also commanded them not to associate partners with Me.**

Clearly, the meaning of *Ḥanīf* in Islam is close to the meaning of Muslim, in the view of most exegetes of the Qur'ān, who interpret

*Ḥanīfism* as Islam according to the religion of Ibrāhīm, or as monotheism for God and the rejection of polytheism. It can be concluded from the collective writings of Qur'ānic exegetes and prophetic tradition scholars that Ḥanīfism represents Islam prior to the Prophethood of Muḥammad. The *ḥanīf* tradition, associated with figures such as Ibrāhīm, is understood as the primordial monotheism that preceded and anticipated the final revelation. In this sense, Islam is seen not as a new religion but as the continuation and culmination of the original faith, reaffirming the covenant of pure monotheism that existed before Muḥammad's mission. The Qur'ān (Sūrah 3:67) describes Ibrāhīm as neither Jew nor Christian, but wholly devoted to God, underscoring the primordial orientation toward monotheism. This theme is reinforced in the Prophetic tradition: -6452 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* records: Every child is born on the *fiṭrah*, then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian, just as an animal gives birth to a perfect animal. Do you find in it any blemish? Likewise, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -6710 states: There is no newborn who is born except upon the religion. In the narration of Abū Bakr from Abū Mu'āwiya: Except upon this religion, until his tongue makes it clear. These narrations highlight the belief that faith in God is embedded in human nature from birth, while deviation into other religions is attributed to external influences. Together, the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth present *fiṭrah* as a universal theological principle, situating monotheism as the original covenant and natural orientation of humanity. The issue is addressed in the same sense with great detail in classical commentaries, including: *Fath al-Bārī*, *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī*, and *'Awn al-Ma'boud*. <sup>(53)</sup>

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<sup>(53)</sup> Here is an example of an explanation of “*fiṭrah*” by Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓīmābādī in his book *'Awn al-Ma'boud on Sunan Abū Dāwūd* [An Explanation of Sunan Abū Dāwūd], in the Chapter on the practices of polytheists: Every newborn, meaning every child of Adam, is born upon the *fiṭrah*, that is, as a Muslim. His parents teach him Judaism and make him a Jew, or teach him Christianity and make him a Christian. This is akin to a camel, which gives birth to sound offspring, complete in all their parts.

This implicit Islam (potential, in Aristotelian terminology) is understood in some modern approaches as *fiṭrah*—a natural disposition latent within the human being. It is sometimes likened metaphorically to a genetic trait- that is, an inherent predisposition which can be actualized in reality.

Thus, humans are deemed born Muslim by nature. If someone deviates from this path, they may have lost their way unintentionally, linguistically speaking, or they may have strayed from the Truth knowingly. Any path other than Islam is considered unrighteous, regardless of the individual's intentions. Anyone who is not a Muslim is considered a non-believer, as he conceals and distorts the Truth, whether intentionally or inadvertently. Some extremists believe that it is natural for a person to belong to a specific group in Islam. They maintain that the majority of Muslims are naturally inclined toward the beliefs of the *Salaf* (predecessors), without the need for teachings or instructions. According to them, anyone who is not misguided by theological innovators and does not study their books is naturally part of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (adherents of the Prophetic Tradition).<sup>(54)</sup> Although Islam is understood, in a general sense, as the innate religion of submission to God, it is held to have preceded the specific mission

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The meaning is that the animal, when born, is free from damaged ears and other defects until its owners cause it to have imperfections. Similarly, the child is born upon the *fiṭrah*, and if left alone, he remains free from defects, but his parents mislead him and drive him toward unbelief.

Ibn al-Qayyim notes that the scholarly disagreement regarding the meaning of *fiṭrah* in this Ḥadīth arose because the Qadariyya (Mu'tazilite) utilized it to argue that disbelief and disobedience are not determined by Divine Decree (*qada'*), but are rather innovations initiated by humans themselves. Consequently, a group of scholars attempted to counter them by interpreting *fiṭrah* as something other than Islam. However, such reinterpretation is unnecessary; the reports transmitted from the *Salaf* [pious ancestors] indicate that they understood the term *fiṭrah* exclusively to mean Islam. *Shifā' al-'Alīl fī Masā'il al-Qaḍā' wa-al-Qadar wa-al-Ḥikmah wa-al-Ta'līl* [The Healing of the Ailing: On Matters of Divine Decree, Predestination, Wisdom, and Causality], pp 282-300.

<sup>(54)</sup> Safar al-Ḥawālī, *The Ash'arite Methodology in Islamic Creed*.



of Muḥammad. With Muḥammad's prophethood, Islam came to be identified with his message, which is regarded as the completion of religion, while earlier revelations are viewed—within Islamic thought—as having been distorted. Consequently, Islam became inseparable from the Muḥammadan advocacy, and belief in Muḥammad is considered a necessary condition for one to be a Muslim, regardless of good deeds or belief in God alone. In this light, figures such as Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Jesus, and Moses are described in the Qur'ān as Muslims, in the broader, universal sense of submission to God.

\* It is important to note that the definitions of Muslim and believer are not unanimously agreed upon among Muslims. While a detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of this discussion, the most common and general definitions are examined here. <sup>(55)</sup>

Islamic spirituality is often described as progressing through three stages: Islām (submission), Īmān (faith), and Iḥsān (spiritual excellence). This triad, articulated in the famous ḥadīth of Gabriel, serves as a foundational framework in Islamic thought. <sup>(56)</sup>

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<sup>(55)</sup> These differences were presented by some Islamic writers such as 'Abd al-Qaḥir ibn Ṭahār ibn Muḥammad al-Baḡdādī in his book *Distinctions Among the Sects*.

<sup>(56)</sup> Narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and others from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: “One day while we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah, there appeared before us a man with exceedingly white clothes and exceedingly black hair. No signs of travel were visible on him, and none of us knew him. He came and sat down facing the Prophet, resting his knees against his knees and placing his hands on his thighs. He said: O Muḥammad, tell me about Islam. The Prophet replied: *Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayer, to give zakāt, to fast in Ramaḍān, and to perform pilgrimage to the House if you are able to find a way to it.* He said: You have spoken the truth. We were astonished that he asked and then confirmed the answer. He said: Tell me about faith (Iman). The Prophet replied: *It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in destiny, both its good and its bad.* He said: You have spoken the truth. He said: Tell me about spiritual excellence (Iḥsān). The Prophet replied: *It is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you.* He said: Tell me about the Hour. The Prophet replied: *The one who is asked knows no more about it than the one who is asking.* He said: Then tell me about its signs. The Prophet replied: *That the slave-girl will give birth to her mistress, and that you will see the barefoot, naked, destitute shepherds*



**Definition of Islam:** The simplest and clearest definition of Islam is the one stated in the prophetic tradition (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* – 79): **Islam is built on five pillars: testifying that there is no god but God, and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, establishing prayer, paying *zakāt*, performing Ḥajj to the House and fasting Ramaḍān.** This is the definition adopted by Arab-Muslim public opinion, and is unanimously agreed upon by Sunni jurists. Some contend that Islam can reside in the heart only and not in words, while most Islamic scholars consider pronouncing the two testimonies of faith to be a pillar of Islam, in addition to agreeing to the rest of the five pillars (or the ten for the Imāmī Shi'ites). With respect to the observance of prayer, Ḥajj, and the payment of *zakāt*, some juristic opinions maintain that those who deny these practices in principle are to be regarded as unbelievers—a position that reflects the mainstream doctrinal view. Others, however, extend the charge of unbelief to those who merely neglect their performance.

Faith is a subsequent stage of Islam, and various jurists differ on its definition. In the prophetic tradition: **Faith is that you believe in God, His angels, His books, meeting Him, His messengers and believing in the resurrection** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -50). In another narration, it is described as: **faith in God, faith in His angels, faith in His books, belief in His Messengers, belief in the Last Day and belief in fate either good and evil** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -190). According to the Sunnis in general, and in the words of Abū Ḥanīfah, faith is acknowledgment and certification. It is a higher level of Islam, <sup>(57)</sup>

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*competing in constructing tall buildings. Then he departed, and I stayed for a while. Then the Prophet said: O 'Umar, do you know who the questioner was? I said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: This was Gabriel. He came to teach you your religion."*

<sup>(57)</sup> In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -50 it is stated: **The Prophet was standing among the people one day, and Gabriel came to him and said, 'What is faith?' He said, Faith is that you believe in God, His angels, His books, meeting Him, His messengers, and believing in the resurrection. He said, 'what is Islam?' He responded that Islam entails worshipping Allah without associating anything with Him, performing prayers, giving the obligatory charity, and fasting during Ramaḍān. He said, 'what is Iḥsān?' He responded that you worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not, then know that He sees you.**

and also according to his expression: “It is the submission and obedience to the commands of God Almighty.”<sup>(58)</sup>

According to the opinion of most Sunnis, Islam can be considered the declaration of faith with the tongue, while the place for faith, is in the heart. Among Sunnis in general, faith implies Islam, and thus it also involves action; namely, belief within the heart, words upon the tongue, and actions with the body. It is not enough for someone to believe in God; they must also believe in Islam, which recognizes all previous messengers, angels, and the unseen in general.

*Iḥsān* succeeds faith; it is a lofty spiritual station, defined as: **to worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then He sees you** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* – 50).

These are the meanings actually used in the prevailing Islamic culture.<sup>(59)</sup>

\* **Unbelief:** In the Arabic language, unbelief is defined as covering or masking.<sup>(60)</sup> Islamic discourse uses the Arabic word in its general

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<sup>(58)</sup> Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'man, *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar* [The Great Compendium of Theology], No. 63 and 67.

<sup>(59)</sup> In a challenging effort to bridge the deep division between Muslims and non-believers, Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmāwī sought to uncover what he believed to be the true core of Islam and faith. He considers all followers of the Ibrāhīmī religions as Muslims, while restricting the concept of a believer to followers of Muḥammad. *The Core of Islam*, 3rd edition. This can be considered an incomplete attempt to portray Islam as tolerant toward the People of the Book. On the other hand, Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr takes a bolder approach by providing two definitions of a Muslim: a behavioral definition that recognizes a Muslim as a peacemaker, and a doctrinal definition that defines a Muslim as one who submits to God alone. *The Essence of Islam*.

<sup>(60)</sup> In *Asās al-Balāgha* [The Foundation of Eloquence], al-Zamakhsharī elaborates on this as follows: “The linguistic root of Kufr denotes the act of covering or concealing. It is said: ‘The clouds kafarat (covered) the sky,’ and ‘the goods were kafarat (concealed) within the vessel.’ Similarly, the night is described as Kāfir (the coverer) because its darkness shrouds all things. A warrior is also termed Kāfir when wearing mail armor—a garment donned over the primary attire to shield it. Furthermore, the wind is said to kafarat (obscure) the remains of a campsite, and the farmer kafarat (covered) the seeds in the soil; thus, tillers are traditionally referred to as Kuffār (planters/coverers). A knight may be described as Mukaffar or

meaning, adding a special religious dimension. Linguistically, unbelief means covering and veiling, but in Islamic usage, what is hidden is “the Truth” and “the blessings of God.” One covers or hides something that is directly in front of him; that is, he knows or realizes the Truth while he hides or denies it. According to the new religious dimension of the word, one may deny the Truth and God’s blessings only if he is misguided, deviant, and corrupt. Even if he does not know the Truth, it is present in his innate nature, (*fiṭrah*) included in his very composition itself. He fails to discover it only if he is not sound or rational enough. The Qur’ān accuses him of foolishness: **When it is said to them: “Believe as the others believe,” they say: “Shall we believe as the fools believe?” Nay, of a surety they are the fools, but they do not know (Sūrah 2:13).**

In Islamic doctrine, *Shayṭān* (Satan) is portrayed as the paradigmatic example of manifest unbelief. He possesses full knowledge of God, spoke to Him, disobeyed the command to prostrate before Adam, and openly challenged Him. Moreover, he

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*Mutakaffir when fully clad in armor, effectively 'covering' himself with weaponry. In the natural world, a bird is termed Mukaffar if it is densely covered with feathers. A mukaffar bird is one covered with feathers. A mukaffar man refers to a benefactor whose kindness is not acknowledged. Moreover, when a person is commanded to perform a task but carries it out contrary to the instructions, it is said to him: You are mukaffar, so-and-so, meaning that his action has caused harm and annoyance. In other words, his deed is deemed mukaffar—not praiseworthy—because he has spoiled it.” No. 2, pp. 140-141.*

In the work titled: *The Dictionary of the Maghrib in the Classification of Arabized Vocabulary*, authored by al-Mutarriẓī, the term *al-Kufr* is defined as originally signifying the act of concealing or covering. It is stated that one may say *kafarahu* or *kaffarahu* when referring to the act of covering or concealing something. Furthermore, in *The Tongue of the Arabs*, by Ibn Manzūr; *al-Kufr* is described as ingratitude towards a blessing, which stands in contrast to gratitude. *Al-Kufr* represents the denial of a blessing and is fundamentally opposed to thankfulness. In relation to the words of the Almighty: **Indeed, in each [of them] we are disbelievers** (Sūrah 43:24), this implies that we are deniers. To unbelieve (*kafar*) in the blessings bestowed by Allah signifies the act of denying and concealing them. A person is referred to as *Mukaffar* if he ungratefully denies favors despite the kindness shown to him. A person is labeled as an unbeliever due to his denial of Allah’s blessings; the term is derived from the concept of concealing, and some scholars suggest that it arises from the notion that his heart is covered.

is resolved to oppose Him perpetually by seducing humans, diverting them from His path, and leading them astray. He stands as the epitome of unbelief. He is fully aware of God, just as he is aware that his destiny is Hell, characterized by eternal torment; yet he remains indifferent and unafraid. He embodies unbelief in its strictly religious sense, defined as the recognition of the Truth coupled with its denial. Here, the Truth refers to the divine blessings bestowed upon him and upon the world. He not only disregards these blessings and fails to offer gratitude to God, but actively opposes Him. Consequently, Satan came to be regarded as the undisputed leader of the faction he himself established, namely *ḥizb al-shayṭān* (the Party of Satan).

Unbelief is the opposite of faith, which is the highest degree of Islam, and it is a serious disease. Thus, Islam is not unbelief in relation to other faiths; not only because it is the Truth, but mainly because it is innate and inherent. Therefore, it is not merely considered a sound doctrine, and not the only sound doctrine, but the doctrine that all human beings innately realize is true, unless they have been brainwashed by their guardians. This is the cornerstone of the difference between faith and unbelief. The difference is not relative, and therefore, not mutual, not considered a relative value judgment in Islam, but rather an absolute Truth contained in the nature of all people, whether they are aware of it or not: **For the disbelievers, it is alike whether you forewarn them or not, they will not accept the faith \* God has sealed their hearts and ears; their eyes are covered; and a grievous punishment awaits them.** (Sūrah 2:6-7). Some of them disbelieve with full awareness, **they deliberately say of God what they know to be a lie** (Sūrah 3:75).

In the view of most Islamists, unbelievers are regarded as inherently corrupt, regardless of their convictions: **When it is said to them: “Do not spread corruption in the land,” they say: “We are but doers of good” \* But, they indeed are the ones who do spread**

corruption, though they do not realize it (Sūrah 2:11-12). So the unbelievers—regardless of their belief that they have a valid opinion and good intentions, or their lack of conviction for one reason or another—are seen as nothing but corrupt or sick. They are not merely different, but necessarily an enemy, even if they do not fight Islam in practice.

Regarding guidance and misguidance, they are from God: He whom God guides is indeed rightly guided, but for him whom He lets go astray you can never find any protector who would point out the right way (Sūrah 18:17); To such as Allah rejects from His guidance, there can be no guide: He will leave them in their trespasses, wandering in distraction (Sūrah 7:186); If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people, but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases (Sūrah 16:93).

<sup>(61)</sup> The majority of orthodox Islamic scholars uphold the doctrine of divine predestination, asserting that guidance and misguidance reside solely within God's will. This stands in fundamental contrast to Mu'tazilite rationalism, which emphasized human agency but was systematically suppressed during the 'Abbāsīd era. In the modern age, the neo-Mu'tazilite tendencies of Muḥammad 'Abduh and his disciples are marginalized within Islamic thought, as contemporary proponents of these reformist ideas continue to face significant institutional and political constraints. This trajectory

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<sup>(61)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī comments on this verse in his exegesis of the Qur'ān, stating: *“Among you, He made you into people of various sects. He helped people to believe in Him and act in obedience to Him, so they were believers, and He failed those who were deprived of His favor, so they were unbelievers.”*

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, in his interpretation of the verse, mentions that when God charged people with fulfilling the covenant and forbade breaking it, He also explained that He is capable of uniting them in this fulfillment and all the doors of faith. However, by divine decree, God leads astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. The “will” here refers to God, as most exegetes understand it, except for a few, such as Muḥammad Metwally al-Sha'arāwī. Al-Sha'arāwī interpreted it differently, arguing that God guides those who seek guidance, likening the process to exam committees evaluating answer papers.

underscores the enduring dissonance between doctrines of divine determinism and rationalist approaches to human agency throughout Islamic intellectual history.

Within this framework, *kufr* (unbelief) is seen not as a matter of personal choice or subjective perspective, but rather as a predetermined destiny assigned to particular individuals, comparable to an inherent congenital condition. This conception parallels the understanding of Islam as an innate or quasi-genetic disposition. As articulated by Sayyid Quṭb, God fashioned human beings with distinct, non-replicable predispositions, instituting divine ordinances that govern guidance and misguidance, thereby manifesting His absolute will. <sup>(62)</sup> To confirm the divine will in this matter, the Qur'ān declares: **This is because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter, and Allah will not guide those who reject Faith (Sūrah 16:107); God does not guide the unjust people (Sūrah 28:50). Indeed, God does not guide the lying blasphemer (Sūrah 39:3); Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies (Sūrah 40:28); Then when they went wrong, Allah let their hearts go wrong. Indeed, Allah does not provide guidance to those who are defiant wrongdoers. (Sūrah 61:5).** These verses are tied to particular historical circumstances, each addressing a distinct group of unbelievers whom God, by His will, has chosen not to guide. The Qur'ān will be accepted by those who believe: **For those who believe, it is guidance and healing. But as for those who do not believe: there is heaviness in their ears, and it is blindness for them (Sūrah 41:44).** The essential point is that, in Islamic thought, God wills that people exist either as believers or as unbelievers: **He created you. Some of you are disbelievers, and some of you are believers. (Sūrah 64:2). If your Lord had willed, everyone on earth would have believed (Sūrah 10:99).**

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<sup>(62)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 16.



Regarding the verse: **Your Lord brought forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and called them to bear witness about themselves** (Sūrah 7:172) along with the tradition recorded in *Musnad Aḥmad* (no. 313) convey a theological perspective on predestination. They describe Adam as the progenitor from whom God symbolically draws forth two categories of descendants: one destined for Paradise and the other for Hell. Each group is portrayed as being divinely directed toward actions consistent with its ultimate fate, so that those created for Paradise are guided to righteous conduct until death, while those created for Hell are led to sinful conduct until death. The Prophet's response to a question about human agency underscores the deterministic framework: individuals act in accordance with the destiny assigned to them, and their final outcome is the fulfillment of that divine decree.

The controversy surrounding this question was particularly pronounced during the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd periods. However, following the ascendancy of the Ash'arite school, the issue ceased to occupy the same level of prominence. Mainstream Islamic thought subsequently adopted the Ash'arite position, which maintains that God has endowed human beings with the capacity for choice, thereby rendering them accountable for their decisions. Simultaneously, as Sayyid Quṭb emphasizes, God determines the predisposition that inclines each individual toward one decision or another. Thus, the human being is simultaneously free and predestined, with the individual will ultimately inseparable from the volition of God. <sup>(63)</sup>

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<sup>(63)</sup> The relationship between human and divine will in Islamic thought is generally inconclusive and features with various conceptions. The most famous of these are the *Qadariyya* school of thought among the Mu'tazilites (where man chooses his actions), the Determinism of the Jahmiyyah (where God determines man's actions), and the moderate Ash'arī stance (where God gives man freedom of choice, which is not independent of God's volition). Some Ash'aris and Sunnis adopt each other's approach, and the same writer sometimes presents conflicting opinions.



According to Islamic teachings, the concept of *qadar* (divine predestination) is firmly rooted in both the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. The Qur'ān states that each person's fate in the afterlife is determined from the beginning, emphasizing divine sovereignty over human fate: **To God belongs everything in the heavens and the earth. Whether you reveal what is within yourselves or conceal it, God will call you to account for it. He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills. God is Able to do all things** (Sūrah 2:284). <sup>(64)</sup>

This principle is further elaborated in several aḥādīth. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -3138, the Prophet describes how an angel records a person's livelihood, lifespan, deeds, and ultimate destiny while still in the womb. The narration underscores that even apparent human choices ultimately conform to what has been divinely decreed. Similarly, *Musnad Aḥmad* -15833 and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -6719 report that the angel asks whether the unborn child will be miserable or happy, male or female, before inscribing the individual's destiny in a record that cannot be altered.

Another narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -6719 illustrates this doctrine through a dialogue between the Prophet and 'Ā'isha. When 'Ā'isha remarked that a deceased child was surely among the birds of Paradise, the Prophet corrected her, explaining that God had already created the inhabitants of Paradise and Hell, assigning them their places even before birth. This highlights the theological conviction that ultimate salvation or damnation is predetermined by divine will.

The prevailing conviction within Islamic thought holds that Muslims will be held accountable for their deeds on the Day of

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<sup>(64)</sup> The majority of exegetes—such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Sa'dī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, al-Baghawī, and others—agree that the particle “He” in this context refers to God Himself, who punishes and shows mercy as He wills; that is, in accordance with the divine will: He punishes with justice and forgives with mercy. The expression **He punishes whom He wills** recurs verbatim in several Qur'anic chapters.

Judgment, with their good and bad actions weighed against one another. By contrast, unbelievers are judged only insofar as their corruption is exposed and their punishment intensified. Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that “*an unbeliever has no good deeds to outweigh his bad deeds,*”<sup>(65)</sup> since all of his actions are deemed evil by virtue of his unbelief. This conception prevails among Muslims, though the Mu'tazilites, Kharijites, and Brahmans diverged by affirming that good and evil are intrinsic qualities of actions—some discernible through reason, such as lying, and others through adherence to religious law, such as purity and prayer. For them, it is necessary to recognize good and evil rationally, embrace the good, and avoid the bad; thus, even unbelievers may perform good deeds. The Imāmī Shi'ites likewise acknowledge the role of reason in discerning good and evil, but only within limits, restricting it to general matters where reason and Islamic law coincide. The Mu'tazilites, however, maintained that if reason conflicts with religious law, the textual statement must be reinterpreted or set aside, thereby equating moral value with the inherent content of the act rather than its legal origin or the intention of its agent. This rationalist orientation was ultimately eclipsed in Islamic thought, first with the defeat of the Mu'tazilites and later with the decline of Muḥammad 'Abduh's reformist project. In its place, actions are judged primarily by intention, forming the theoretical basis for rejecting values not grounded in Islamic law, even if they might be esteemed by human custom. Good is defined as that which is performed for the sake of worshiping God, while evil is that which is pursued for worldly ends, both determined by divine law. Al-Bazdawī observes that the ruling of an action is considered good because it is commanded by God, not because of reason, since reason in itself is not obligatory. Ultimately, what God and His Messenger declare constitutes the Truth, irrespective of content. Although jurists employing analogy

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<sup>(65)</sup> *An Epistle to the People of Baḥrain on the Issue of the Unbelievers Beholding Their Lord.*

seek to uncover the rationale behind rulings, their aim was not to evaluate the sacred texts themselves, but rather to use those rationales as a basis for deriving jurisprudential rulings not explicitly stated in the text. Criticism of the sacred text is traditionally regarded as a taboo within Islamic thought.

\* The unbeliever is not merely an Other with a different perspective, nor is he simply an enemy of Islam due to his opposition. Rather, the text defines him as fundamentally misguided, deviant, and evil—value judgments that Islam treats as absolute.

In Islamic discourse, the era preceding the Muḥammadan mission in the Arabian Peninsula is designated as *al-jāhiliyyah*, a term employed in a religious sense. It does not merely denote a chronological period, but rather signifies the customs and practices repudiated by Islam. Accordingly, ideas, customs, or practices resembling those of the pre-Islamic era are likewise designated as *jāhiliyyah*. Islam, from its own perspective, marked a definitive break with the pre-Islamic era, portraying it as a domain of error and corruption, and thus as wholly condemnable. This period is not interpreted as the product of particular historical circumstances or socio-cultural conditions, but rather as profane and foolish. Within Islamic cultural memory, the pre-Islamic era is depicted as a time of darkness characterized by corruption and injustice—an image deeply entrenched in the consciousness of both ordinary Muslims and much of the intellectual elite.

These ideas are articulated not only in the Qur'ān but also extensively throughout the works of classical, modern, and contemporary Islamic scholars—whether characterized as hardline or moderate—and even within official Arab governmental discourse. Occasionally, some appeal to Qur'ānic verses that appear to suggest otherwise, such as those praising Jesus and monastic communities. Yet such appeals overlook the fact that these verses do not pertain to the definition of unbelief or unbelievers. More

significantly, they disregard the vast corpus of Islamic heritage disseminated through media and public discourse, as well as the convictions that Muslims themselves consistently and explicitly affirm. <sup>(66)</sup>

\* Classical Islamic thought does not present previous religions as independent doctrines, but rather as successive stages within the broader framework of Islam. The Qur'ān emphasizes that all prophets were monotheists who submitted to God, even if their followers later altered the scriptures. For instance, Ibrāhīm is described as **neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a monotheist, a Muslim** (Sūrah 3:67). Similarly, Jacob's final words to his sons affirm continuity in worship: **We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrāhīm, Ishmā'el, and Ishāq (Isaac); one God; and to Him we submit** (Sūrah 2:133). <sup>(67)</sup>

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<sup>(66)</sup> For instance, Mohamed 'Imārah stated during a televised conversation on one of the satellite channels that Islam acknowledges the existence of the Other, whereas the Other does not reciprocate such recognition. He emphasized that Islam recognizes Moses and Jesus, while others do not acknowledge the Prophet Muḥammad. This raises the question of whether Islamic thought acknowledges that non-believers are simply people who differ intellectually, rather than being described as having “disease in their hearts,” as having distorted their scriptures, or as unbelievers and enemies of Islam just because they deny it? It also raises the issue of whether the irreligious, who constitute a significant portion of humanity, are recognized within this framework. In traditional Islamic thought, the category of the Other is generally identified with the unbeliever (*kāfir*). The question remains whether Islam acknowledges the unbeliever as merely a different person and accepts the legitimacy of his difference. Classical jurisprudence and most schools of thought do not adopt this perspective, though a few reformist voices argue otherwise. Critics note that Islamist discourse often employs terms such as “recognition” or “humanity” in ways that diverge from their broader philosophical meanings, sometimes leading to rhetorical inconsistencies.

<sup>(67)</sup> Even the etiquette and customs of Islam are considered innate. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* - 5755: ...On the authority of Abū Hurairah, **The *fiṭrah* is five or five of the *fiṭrah* are circumcision, puberty, plucking the armpits, trimming the nails, and trimming the mustache.** And in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -557:...**On the authority of 'Ā'ishah, she said: The Messenger of God said: “Ten things are part of the *fiṭrah*: trimming the mustache, growing the beard, using the siwak, inhaling water, cutting the nails, washing the knuckles, plucking the armpits, shaving the pubic hair, and squeezing out water.” Zakaria said: Musab said: I forgot the tenth. It is most likely rinsing the mouth. Qutaybah added: Waki` said: Reducing**

This theological perspective is reinforced in the Ḥadīth, where the Prophet declares: **The Prophets are brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -3370). This statement underscores the unity of divine revelation across history, while acknowledging variations in legal rulings and practices suited to different communities and times. Thus, Islam views itself not as a new religion, but as the culmination and preservation of the original monotheistic faith shared by all prophets.

\* The question of the distortion of the Torah and the Gospel has long been debated among Islamic thinkers, who differ in their interpretations. Some argue that distortion refers to the misinterpretation of meaning, while others maintain that it entails the alteration of the textual content itself.

In any case, consensus holds that the Muḥammadan message constitutes the final revelation, and that all People of the Book who reject it are classified as unbelievers. Among Muslims generally—and particularly in the contemporary era—the prevailing view is that both the Torah and the Gospel have undergone distortion.

Islamic teachings emphasize the universality of divine guidance, asserting that every community has been sent a messenger, thereby eliminating any claim of ignorance regarding the divine message (*Sūrah* 10:47). Within this framework, the advent of Islam is understood to have rendered the message accessible to all peoples of the earth. Consequently, no community can claim exemption from awareness of Islam, except in cases where individuals are raised in

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*water means cleansing oneself.* Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭahmān reports, *on the authority of Shu'bah, on the authority of Qatada, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālīk, who said: The Messenger of God said: "I rose to the Sidra tree* [A great Ziziphus spina-christi (*Sidr*) tree located in the seventh heaven with its roots in the sixth heaven] *and saw four rivers: two visible rivers, and two hidden rivers. As for the two visible ones, they are the Nile and the Euphrates. While the two hidden ones, they are other two rivers in Paradise. I was brought three cups: a cup containing milk, a cup containing honey and a cup containing wine. So I took the one in which there was milk and drank, and then I was told: You and your community have attained the fiṭrah.* *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -5483.

unbelief and remain entirely unfamiliar with the “righteous message” because of their particular circumstances. This perspective underscores the principle of accountability, placing human responsibility within the broader narrative of universal revelation.

Early Islamic discourse reflects a complex and evolving attitude toward other monotheistic communities. Qur'ānic verses initially emphasize inclusivity, affirming that Jews, Christians, and *al-Ṣābi'ūn* (Sabians) who believe in God and the Last Day and act righteously will be rewarded (Sūrah 2:62). The Qur'ān also instructs Muslims to engage the People of the Book in dialogue **in the best manner** (Sūrah 29:46). However, subsequent passages articulate a more exclusivist stance, categorizing Jews and Christians as unbelievers for attributing divinity to figures such as 'Ezra and Jesus, or for affirming doctrines of the Trinity (Sūrah 9:30–31; 5:72–73). These verses underscore that associating partners with God constitutes unbelief, and that salvation is contingent upon adherence to Islam alone (Sūrah 3:85; 3:19). Within this framework, even those who profess belief in God but do so in ways contradictory to Islamic monotheism are not recognized as true believers. Rather, they are classified as unbelievers, and in some interpretations, as polytheists to a degree. This trajectory highlights the dissonance between early universalist expressions and later exclusivist formulations, revealing Islam's ongoing effort to delineate its theological boundaries in relation to other religious traditions.

Ibn Taymiyyah, in his work *The Necessity of the Straight Path*, offers a detailed analysis of the theological errors he attributes to Jews and Christians. He argues that the unbelief of the Jews stems from failing to act upon their knowledge, whereas the unbelief of the Christians arises from acting without sound knowledge. This framework reflects his broader concern with the balance between knowledge and practice in religious life. The overwhelming



majority of jurists and scholars, ancient and modern -whether they are extremists or moderates- maintain that Jews and Christians are unbelievers. While a minority of thinkers—such as Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmawī, and Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr—adopt more flexible interpretations of the Qur'ān, emphasizing its overarching purposes; mainstream Muslim opinion has historically regarded the People of the Book as unbelievers. This perspective has remained deeply embedded in Islamic culture across centuries.

Islamic sources present a differentiated view of Jews and Christians in relation to polytheism. While certain Qur'ānic verses (e.g., 9:30–31) describe them as engaging in forms of *shirk* (polytheism) by attributing divinity to figures such as 'Ezra or Jesus, they are nonetheless distinguished from outright polytheists. This distinction rests on their partial affirmation of divine oneness and possession of a revealed scripture, albeit considered distorted. The Qur'ān acknowledges that some among them continued to adhere to elements of their scripture prior to its alteration. Both the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition employ the terms *kufr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (polytheism) variably—sometimes interchangeably and at other times with distinct meanings. Juristic discourses reflect this nuance: Abū Ḥanīfah and his disciples, for instance, classify Jews and Christians as unbelievers but not polytheists, defining polytheism specifically as the worship of another deity alongside God. This interpretive distinction underscores the complexity of Islamic theological categorization of non-Muslim communities.

Islamic tradition articulates a nuanced hierarchy among unbelievers, distinguishing those from the People of the Book as comparatively closer to Islam, especially Christians. The Qur'ān affirms that Jews and polytheists are the most hostile toward believers. Simultaneously, Christians are described as nearest in affection, owing to the presence of priests and monks among them and their relative humility (Sūrah 5:82). This proximity is further



reinforced in prophetic traditions, which state that a convert to Islam from among the People of the Book receives a double reward, whereas a convert from polytheism receives a single reward. Such formulations underscore the perception that, despite theological divergence, Christians and Jews occupy a position of relative nearness to Islam compared to other groups, thereby reflecting Islam's differentiated approach to religious others.<sup>(68)</sup>

The prevailing doctrinal stance in Islamic thought indicates that acknowledging Muḥammad's prophethood is an essential condition for belonging to the community of believers—indeed, it carries equal weight to mere belief in the existence of the Creator. The polytheists of Makkah did not deny God's existence; rather, their conflict revolved around recognizing the authority of prophethood and its comprehensive religious and worldly implications. Consequently, affirming the message became the fundamental criterion for lifting the label of disbelief, even in the absence of inner certainty. This is reflected in the Qur'anic text differentiating between Islam as an outward status and faith as an inward state: **The Beduin say: We attained to faith. Say (to them): believers you are not. Rather say: We have submitted ourselves, for true faith has not entered your hearts.** (Sūrah 49:14).

This recalls the words of Ibn Taymiyyah regarding the unbelief of even those who are characterized by piety, asceticism, worship, and knowledge- such as rabbis and monks- regardless of their morality and meekness.<sup>(69)</sup> Despite their love for God and their humane behavior, mainstream Islamic thought considers them unbelievers because they do not believe in Muḥammad's prophethood and his message. This implies that true faith is tied to following the path of Islam in particular. Other paths of faith are considered unbelief by almost all Muslims. Ibn Taymiyyah explains

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<sup>(68)</sup> Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *The Series of Authentic Aḥādīth*, 304.

<sup>(69)</sup> *The Distinction between the Allies of God and the Allies of Satan.*

that unbelief arises only when the Messenger is disbelieved in what he has conveyed, or when one refrains from following him despite knowing his truth. He cites as examples the unbelief of Pharaoh, the Jews, and others of similar disposition. <sup>(70)</sup>

\* The tension between faith and Islam (in the post-Muhammad sense) versus unbelief forms the foundation of how most Islamists categorize human beings. Muslims are considered the followers of the righteous religion, while non-believers are seen as unbelievers. The definition of unbelief by most Islamic scholars retains the literal meaning of the word in the Arabic language after adding the religious dimension, contributing to the basic relationship of Islam with the world. In widely held Islamic thought, non-believers are not just seen as others but as enemies of God, rebels against His blessings, deserving of punishment either by God or by Muslims. The Qur'ānic verse: **Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands** (Sūrah 9:14) is often cited to emphasize this view. Moreover, the term “enemy of God” is commonly used to describe unbelievers or those accused of unbelief. It is noteworthy that an enemy of God is regarded as an enemy of Muslims, and conversely, an enemy of Muslims as an enemy of God.

If faith is understood as the antithesis of unbelief, then Islam represents both a departure from unbelief and an acknowledgment of the Truth. It offers guidance even prior to the attainment of full faith. A believer is necessarily a Muslim; however, a Muslim is not necessarily a true believer, for he may merely acknowledge the pillars of Islam without embodying genuine faith. According to the prevailing opinion of the vast majority of senior jurists, unbelief, does not always entail denial of the Creator; it may also encompass the rejection of one of the pillars of Islam, <sup>(71)</sup>

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<sup>(70)</sup> *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revelation*, Vol. One.

<sup>(71)</sup> It is stated in the dictionary *Lisān al-'Arab* [The Language of the Arabs]: “*Al-Qatamī* said: It was narrated on the authority of the Prophet that he said: Fighting a Muslim is

Islamic jurisprudence addresses the issue of unbelief with great attention, yet jurists do not agree on its specific meaning. A Muslim, too, can become an unbeliever, despite his claim to Islam: **A man becomes a believer in the morning and an unbeliever in the evening, and a man becomes a believer in the evening and an unbeliever in the morning** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -273).

It is also possible, according to a few scholars with broader perspectives, for one who rejects religion not to be classified as an unbeliever. This view is found among certain Mu'tazilite figures such as al-Jāḥiẓ and al-'Anbarī,<sup>(72),(73)</sup> and, in more recent times,

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*unbelief, cursing him is unbelief, and whoever turns away from his father has unbelieved. Some scholars said: unbelief is of four types: unbelief of denial where one does not know God at all, and does not acknowledge Him, unbelief of ungratefulness, unbelief of stubbornness, and unbelief of hypocrisy. Whoever meets his Lord with anything like that, will not be forgiven, but He forgives anything less than that to whomever He wishes. As for the unbelief of denial, it is that he unbelieves in both heart and tongue, and does not know what is mentioned to him of monotheism. Likewise, it was narrated in the Almighty's saying: **As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.** That is, those who unbelieved in the Oneness of God. The unbelief of ungratefulness is when one confesses with his heart, but does not acknowledge it with his tongue, he is then an ungrateful unbeliever, just like Satan. Of this type is the Almighty's saying: **when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them, although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without Faith, when there comes to them that which they should have recognized, they refuse to believe in it but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith.** Regarding the unbelief of stubbornness, it is that one knows God in his heart and acknowledges it with his tongue, but does not confess Him out of envy and transgression like the unbelief of Abū Jahl and others like him. As for the unbelief of hypocrisy, it is that he confesses with his tongue but unbelieves in his heart."*

<sup>(72)</sup> Al-Jāḥiẓ holds that anyone outside the religion of Islam—whether Jew, Christian, or materialist—is sinful if he opposes it out of obstinacy against his own conviction. If he examines the matter but fails to grasp the Truth, he is excused and not sinful. If he does not examine it because he does not know that examination is obligatory, he too is excused. The only one who is sinful and punished is the obstinate, for God Almighty does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. These others are unable to attain the Truth and cling to their beliefs out of fear of God, since the path of knowledge is closed to them. As for 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Anbarī, he maintained that every jurist is correct in matters of rational theology just as in matters of jurisprudential branches.

(Quoted from Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, p. 349).

scholars like Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt<sup>(73)</sup> and Gamāl al-Bannā. For them, unbelief entails not merely the denial of Islam, but doing so with stubbornness and arrogance. In other words, unbelief arises when one encounters the Islamic call, comprehends it, and then rejects it obstinately. A primary example in this regard is Satan, who possesses full knowledge of God, yet insists on disobedience

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<sup>(73)</sup> Yāsīn al-Sālimī, *'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Anbarī – The Meaning of His Approval of the Theologians in the Fundamentals of Religion and the Basis for That*.

<sup>(74)</sup> He states: “*The dividing line between Islam and unbelief is as follows. Whoever does not believe in the existence of Allah, or does not believe in His Oneness and His transcendence above resemblance, incarnation, and union, is outside Islam. Whoever does not believe in His unique management of the universe and His control over it, or in His sole deserving of worship and sanctification, is also outside Islam. Likewise, whoever allows the worship of a created being by another created being, or denies that Allah has messages to His creation—sent by His messengers and revealed through His books by His angels—is not a Muslim. Whoever does not believe in what the books contain from the messengers, or differentiates between the messengers by believing in some and rejecting others, is not a Muslim. Whoever denies that the worldly life will perish and be followed by another abode—the abode of recompense and eternal residence—or believes instead that worldly life is eternal and never ends, or believes that it will perish permanently with no resurrection, reckoning, or recompense, is not a Muslim. Whoever does not believe that the fundamental principles of Allah’s law, in what He has prohibited and enjoined, are His religion that must be followed, but instead prohibits for himself what he sees as prohibited and obligates for himself what he sees as obligatory, is not a Muslim. Whoever does not believe in any of these aspects, and does not accept any of these conditions, is not a Muslim. The rulings of Muslims do not apply to him in their dealings with Allah, nor in their dealings with each other. This does not mean that whoever does not believe in any of that is necessarily an unbeliever in the sight of Allah, destined for the Fire. Rather, it means that the rulings of Islam do not apply to him in this world. He is not required to perform the acts of worship that Allah has enjoined on Muslims, nor is he prohibited from what Islam has forbidden, such as drinking alcohol, eating pork, and trading in them. Muslims do not wash him when he dies, nor do they pray for him. A Muslim relative does not inherit from him, just as he does not inherit from a Muslim relative when he dies. As for the ruling of his unbelief in the sight of Allah, it depends on his denial of those beliefs—or of any of them—after they have been conveyed to him correctly, and he has been convinced of them within himself, but refuses to embrace them and testify to them out of stubbornness, arrogance, greed for temporary wealth or false status, or fear of corrupt blame. If those beliefs have not reached him, or have reached him in a distorted or incorrect form, and he is not of the discerning people, or he is of the discerning people but has not been guided to them, and he continues to seek and ponder seeking the Truth until death overtakes him while he is still seeking, then he is not an unbeliever deserving eternal dwelling in the blaze in the sight of Allah.*” *Islam: Doctrine and Sharī’ah*, p. 19.

and even opposition to Him. He thus stands as the undisputed leader of unbelief.

According to Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, unbelief is divided into two categories: behavioral unbelief, which refers to coercion in matters of religion and persecution—particularly when it reaches the level of expulsion from one’s homeland followed by armed conflict; and doctrinal unbelief, which signifies the denial of God, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers. Judgment in matters of doctrinal unbelief, however, is deferred to God on the Day of Judgment. The Qur’ān underscores that adjudication of doctrinal differences is postponed until the Hereafter and belongs to God alone; no human being has the authority to declare another guilty of doctrinal unbelief. On this basis, Maṣṣūr categorically rejects accusations of doctrinal unbelief, insisting that no one may hold another accountable for their creed. To do so would be to claim divinity, thereby rendering the accuser himself an unbeliever. <sup>(75)</sup>

Unbelief itself is divided into original unbelief and apostasy, the latter being considered more severe by the consensus of both Sunni and Shi’ite scholars. Other classifications also exist, such as “major unbelief,” which takes one out of the fold of Islam, and “minor unbelief,” which, according to the majority of scholars, does not expel the person from the religion. These categories encompass verbal, action-based, and belief-based unbelief, as well as the distinction between unbelief in divine blessings versus unbelief in the greatness of God.

Some scholars further divide it into unbelief through denial, arrogance, or defiance—which may coexist with cognitive recognition—as well as turning away, doubt, and hypocrisy, as distinct from apostasy. Additionally, some distinguish between unbelief and polytheism among non-Biblical peoples. Polytheism itself is typically divided into:

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<sup>(75)</sup> *Types of unbelief in the Day of Judgment*, B2 F3.

**Major polytheism:** This includes the polytheism of supplication, intention (will and purpose), obedience, and love.

**Minor polytheism:** This encompasses acts such as swearing by other than Allah, *riya'*, (showing off), and hidden polytheism.<sup>(76)</sup>

However, the vast majority of Muslims agree that, at least, anyone who declares they are not a Muslim is an unbeliever. This is the meaning that will be used for the purposes of this book; the terms unbeliever, non-believer, and disbeliever are used interchangeably to denote a non-Muslim.

## Chapter Three

### THE CHOSEN COMUNITY

*If people agreed on one path, and loved without enmity or hatred, there would be no difference between Truth and falsehood, believers and unbelievers, or the saints of the most merciful and the saints of Satan*

Suleimān ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb

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<sup>(76)</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim analyzes in detail the types and degrees of unbelief in his book *Madārij al-Sālikīn bayna Manāzil Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'in* [The paths of the wayfarers between the stations of: You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help].



Islam is presented in Islamic theology as the word of God, embodying absolute truth, justice, and goodness. Goodness is understood to originate from God, whereas evil is attributed to the whispers of devils. Within this framework, the universe is divided into two opposing parties. The Qur'ān describes the party of God as those who believe in Him and the Last Day, even if this belief places them in opposition to their closest kin. God strengthens their faith and promises them eternal reward in Paradise (Sūrah 58:22). Conversely, the party of Satan consists of those who are led astray, forgetting the remembrance of God, and ultimately destined for loss (Sūrah 58:19).

Satan is portrayed as the archetype of unbelief, and the world is thus polarized between believers and unbelievers. The Qur'ān further emphasizes that the human soul is endowed with an innate awareness of righteousness and wickedness, granting individuals the capacity to choose between good and evil. This moral responsibility is framed within the purpose of creation: **I have only created jinn and men, that they may serve Me** (Sūrah 51:56).<sup>(77)</sup> For most Muslims, worship entails complete obedience to God, expressed through adherence to religion. Since religion is defined as Islam—revealed in successive forms throughout history—both humans and jinn are obligated to follow it.

In Islam, the Qur'ān is considered the seal of the heavenly books, and the pinnacle of all knowledge, whether religious or otherwise. Consequently, the ideal human being is the one who studies it: **The best of you are those who learn and teach the Qur'ān** (*Musnad*

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<sup>(77)</sup> In Islamic theology and Arabian folklore, jinn are characterized as supernatural, intelligent entities created from smokeless fire and endowed with magical powers, such as the ability to fulfill wishes or to haunt particular places. They have free will, enabling them to choose between good and evil. Generally, they are unseen by humans, although they can take on various forms, including those of animals or humans. Additionally, they are answerable to God in a manner similar to humans; therefore, they can be either believers or nonbelievers.



*Aḥmad* -414). Furthermore, a well-established conviction among the majority of Muslims and their jurists is that the Qur'ān encompasses all that is necessary, a claim the text itself repeatedly emphasizes: **We have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a Guide** (Sūrah 16:89). **Nothing have We omitted from the Book** (Sūrah 6:38). Accordingly, Muslims are understood to possess the absolute Truth, with their religion serving as the definitive standard for good and evil, right and wrong. This conception has remained stable throughout Islamic history. Islamists, however, differ regarding the permissible scope of *ijtihād*: some seek to expand it, while others restrict it. In general, Islamic scholars affirm that the sacred texts provide all essentials, including the very foundations of *ijtihād*. Despite linguistic reinterpretations that seek to demonstrate Islam's openness to thought and *ijtihad*, there is near consensus among Islamic scholars across the ages that Islam presents the absolute and final Truth. The notion of the validity of the Sharī'ah for all times and places remains a central concept within the Islamic epistemological framework across its various schools, a vision that presupposes the perfection and comprehensiveness of the text. A very small minority of Islamists whose orientations elevate reason above the text are exempted.

Islamic theology presents the world as divided between Muslims, who embody the party of God, and unbelievers, who are associated with the party of Satan. Within this framework, it is considered reasonable that God favors Muslims, since they are aligned with divine truth. The Qur'ān further emphasizes that the mission of Muḥammad represents the final religious advocacy, making Islam the ultimate and absolute truth. Consequently, the Muslim community at the time of revelation was regarded as the bearer of this truth and, by extension, the best of all communities in history: **You are the best community ever brought forth for mankind** (Sūrah 3:110).

Exegetical traditions, both classical and modern, offer varying interpretations of this verse. Some commentators restrict its application to those who migrated with the Prophet to Madīnah, whereas the majority understands it as referring to the entire Muslim community. Ibn Kathīr (Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī), citing authorities such as Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, 'Aṭīyyah al-'Awfī, 'Ikrimah ibn Abū Jahl, 'Aṭā' ibn Abū Rabāḥ, and al-Rabī' ibn Anas, affirms that the community of Muḥammad is the best of all nations. Al-Shawkānī similarly notes that this excellence was inscribed in *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* (the Preserved Tablet), and that it becomes manifest once the community embraces the faith. These interpretations collectively underscore the theological conviction that the Islamic community holds a privileged status among human societies, rooted in its reception and preservation of divine Truth. <sup>(78)</sup>

Among modern Islamic thinkers, Sayyid Quṭb offers a distinctive interpretation of Sūrah 3:110, which describes the Muslim community as **the best community ever brought forth for mankind**. Quṭb emphasizes the passive construction of the verse, arguing that it implies divine craftsmanship in molding the Muslim community and bringing it forth from the unseen realm known only to God. He regards this emergence as a deliberate act, positioning the Muslim community to play a unique role in history. For Quṭb, this privileged status entails responsibility: the community is not merely the best by virtue of faith, but is charged with assuming leadership over humanity. Muslims, he insists, must provide others with their ideological, moral, and intellectual system, rather than passively receiving from external sources. In his view, the community's excellence is inseparable from its duty to guide mankind toward goodness, justice, and divine truth.

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<sup>(78)</sup> His exegesis of the Qur'ān titled in Arabic: *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr* [The Omnipotent's Grant of Victory], Sūrah 3.

This interpretation reflects Quṭb's perspective of Islam as a comprehensive system encompassing ideology, morality, and social organization. It underscores his conviction that the Muslim community's superiority is not only theological but also functional, rooted in its mission to lead humanity under God's guidance.<sup>(79)</sup> At the time the Qur'ān was revealed, Muslims were not the most knowledgeable or industrialized people, but they were the most obedient to God. One of the first divine commands entrusted to them was to convey Islam throughout the earth. Hence, the community is not only the best because of its faith, but also because it is charged with disseminating Truth and justice. The Qur'ān describes it as a community of justice: **Thus We have made you the community of the middle way, so that you may stand witness against the rest of mankind, and the Messenger shall be a witness against you** (Sūrah 2:143). Here, **the middle way**<sup>(80)</sup> is interpreted as justice, framed as an absolute and abstract concept- as if it were a matter of universal consensus- overlooking how its meaning and application vary across different cultures and social settings.

The leader of this community and **the Seal of the Prophets** (Sūrah 33:40) is regarded as the master of all creation, and his infallibility is accepted by virtually unanimous agreement among Muslims—including jurists and the general public—throughout the ages. Even his apparent mistakes are often interpreted as intentional acts meant to teach the distinction between right and wrong. The Messenger's role is pivotal, especially since pre-Islamic Arabs already acknowledged the existence of God; their primary dispute

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<sup>(79)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Vol. Two, pp. 147-148.

<sup>(80)</sup> It is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* –7185: **Noah will be brought on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be said to him: "Have you conveyed the message?" He says: "Yes, O Lord," and his community is asked: "Did he convey the message to you?" They say: "No warner has come to us." He says: "Who are your witnesses?" He says: "Muḥammad and his community," and you will be brought, and you will bear witness. Then the Messenger of God... recited: Thus We made you a moderate community so that you may be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you** (Sūrah 2:143).

with Muḥammad concerned his Prophethood. For instance, when Muslims conquered Makkah, Abū Sufyān agreed to declare faith in God but hesitated to affirm Muḥammad's Prophethood, remarking: "As for this, there is something in my soul even now."<sup>(81)</sup> Moreover, Muḥammad invited people to believe in him before presenting Islam in its entirety, revealing the religion gradually over twenty-three years. In effect, he asked them to trust both what he said then and what he would say and do in the future, granting him a form of unconditional mandate.

From its inception, Islam has emphasized Muḥammad's central role—not only within the faith but for the entire world and existence itself. The Qur'ān asserts that Muḥammad is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel, which Jews and Christians are said to have distorted. The Prophetic biography, as elaborated by Muslim authors across the centuries, often includes accounts of extraordinary signs surrounding his birth. Among these are reports of testimonies attributed to the *jinn*. In some narrations, the *jinn* are described as having spoken to their human companions about the advent of the Prophet, signaling a shift in the spiritual order. It is mentioned that one of them said: There is no god but God, and another informed his companion that the awaited Prophet had been sent from the lineage of Lu'ayy ibn Ghālib (the eighth grandfather of Muḥammad).<sup>(82)</sup> It was even said that Satan wailed four times: when he was cursed, when he was expelled from Paradise, when the Messenger of God was sent, and when *al-Fātiḥah* (Sūrah 1) was revealed.<sup>(83)</sup> Some Jews were also purported to have been aware of the news of his birth as the future messenger and to have announced it.<sup>(84)</sup> This is in addition to the visions of the Negus and

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<sup>(81)</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad*, file 91 of 116.

<sup>(82)</sup> Details are mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, *The Beginning and the End*, Vol. Two, p. 408.

<sup>(83)</sup> *Ibid.*, file 32 of 239.

<sup>(84)</sup> Among these *Isrā'īliyyāt* (mythological Jewish tales), Ibn Kathīr quotes the following account: "Hishām ibn 'Urwa narrated on the authority of his father, on the authority of

the events surrounding the illumination and shaking of the palaces of the Sassanid Emperor (Khusraw), which resulted in the collapse of fourteen balconies, the extinguishing of the sacred fire of Persia, and the drying up of Lake Sāwah. <sup>(85)</sup> Dozens of other miraculous events, both earthly and cosmic, <sup>(86)</sup> have been cited.

Muḥammad thus occupies a position directly beneath God in the minds of the vast majority of Muslims. Muḥammad Quṭb describes him as the most complete and greatest personality in all of human existence from its beginning to its end. <sup>(87)</sup> The majority of Muslims believe he is the best of all creation, <sup>(88)</sup> though a minority restricts

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*'Ā'ishah, who said: A Jew lived in Makkah and traded there. When it was the night in which the Messenger of God was born, he said in a gathering of the Quraysh: 'O people of Quraysh, has anyone been born among you tonight?' The people said, 'By God, we do not know.' He said, 'God is the greatest! If you have missed it, there is no problem. Look and memorize what I am telling you: The Prophet of this community was born tonight. There is a mark between his shoulders with interspersed hairs resembling the mane of a horse. He will not suckle for two nights because a demon from among the jinn put his finger into his mouth and prevented him from nursing.' The people left their gathering, astonished at his words and his speech. When they reached their homes, each person informed his family, and they said: 'By God, a son was born to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and they named him Muḥammad.' So the people met and said: 'Have you heard the account of the Jew, and have you heard of the birth of this boy?' They set off until they came to the Jew and told him the news. He said: 'Come with me so that I can look at him.' They took him along and went to Āminah [the mother of Muḥammad]. They said: 'Bring your son to us.' So she brought him out, and they uncovered his back for him. He saw that mole and fell unconscious. When he woke up, they said to him, 'What is the matter with you? Woe to you!' He said, 'By God, the prophethood of the Children of Israel has disappeared. Are you happy about it, O people of Quraysh? By God, he will attain supreme power over you, the news of which will spread to the East and the West.'"* Ibid.

<sup>(85)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(86)</sup> Most myths related to this topic are mentioned in *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa* [Proofs of Prophethood], by Ismail al-Aṣbahānī, as well as in al-Bayhāqī's *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa wa Ma'rifaat Aḥwāl Ṣāḥib al-Sharī'a* [Proofs of Prophethood], which is full of a very large number of supernatural events related to Muḥammad's Prophethood.

<sup>(87)</sup> *Our Contemporary Reality*.

<sup>(88)</sup> Nāṣir al-Albānī doubts this idea in his response to Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, stating: *"The doctor [referring to Ramaḍān al-Būṭī] claimed that the Prophet is the best of all creatures in the sight of Allah, and this is a belief that cannot be proven except by a clear and definitive statement, either a clear and definitive verse or a frequently narrated and definitive Ḥadīth. So*

this superiority to humanity alone. In Islam, faith in God alone is insufficient; one must also affirm Muḥammad as the Messenger of God.

The notion of the best community entails not only proclamation but also responsibility: the Muslim community must lead humanity in realizing God's vicegerency on earth. Its excellence depends on promoting virtue and preventing vice, which are defined exclusively by Islamic law. In brief, virtue is Islam itself. The community is charged with a sacred mission—struggling against unbelief, defeating it, and establishing the sovereignty of Islamic law. Since sovereignty requires embodiment in a community, it follows that the sovereignty of Islam is realized through the sovereignty of Muslims. For Quṭb, the community actually exists only insofar as it fulfills this mission: if it advocates goodness, commands right, and forbids wrong while believing in God, it exists and is truly Muslim; if it fails, it ceases to exist in essence, and Islam is not realized within it.<sup>(89)</sup>

Thus, the Islamic community remains a community “in itself” until it fulfills its mission, at which point it becomes “for itself,” realized as the best community ever brought forth for mankind. Its purpose is not neutrality but proactive engagement—to convert others either to Islam as a faith or to Islam as a comprehensive system of life. Neglecting this mission forfeits its claim to superiority. The meaning here diverges sharply from the Jewish notion of the Chosen People. The Muslim community's excellence is conditional upon confronting unbelief and bringing unbelievers into the fold, as affirmed in the prophetic tradition.

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*where is the statement that proves that he is the best of all creatures in the sight of Allah? It is known that this issue is a matter of disagreement among scholars, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah stopped at it. Whoever wants details should refer to the explanation of the doctrine of Imām Abū Ja'far al-Tahawī.” Intercession, Its Types and Rulings, Chapter Four, Seventh doubt.*

<sup>(89)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān, Sūrah 3.*



Regarding the practical application of enjoining right and forbidding wrong, the Ḥadīth offers an even more assertive interpretation: **The best of people for people; you will bring them with chains around their necks until they convert to Islam** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -4439). Enjoining right and forbidding wrong is directed against the Abode of Unbelief through striving in the way of God with one's self and wealth. <sup>(90)</sup> If a day comes when the community of Muḥammad is weakened, Islam has provided multiple means of promoting virtue that are flexible and merciful: **Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue, and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, and that is the weakest of faith** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -140). The same principle applies to promoting virtue within the territory of Islam directed at Muslims. Therefore, the mention of the hand, the tongue, and the heart allows for selecting the appropriate tool for each situation.

The eloquent discourse on peaceful coexistence, international cooperation, and Islam's acceptance of others lacks a genuine theoretical foundation, particularly given that Islamic jurisprudence has remained largely unchanged for centuries. The concepts embraced by both the elite and the ordinary faithful have shown little evolution. Ultimately, no Islamic scholar can deny the prevailing and widely accepted meaning of the notion of the best community in Islam. Within this framework, good and evil are not conceived as coexisting; rather, evil is located in the Other—the unbeliever- even when they share certain principles and values with Islam. The two opposing camps are thus inevitably defined: the party of God and the party of Satan who are necessarily positioned as enemies.

### The Notion of Enmity Toward Unbelievers:

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<sup>(90)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong*.



The prevailing Islamic thought today, as in earlier periods, enjoins Muslims to harbor enmity toward unbelievers, especially within orthodox currents such as Ḥanbalism. Some scholars even mandate the expression of hostility, unless circumstances necessitate dissimulation (*taqiyyah*—concealing one's true belief).<sup>(91)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb al-Zur'ī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī, or Ibn al-Qayyim) clarifies that *taqiyyah* does not constitute allegiance to unbelievers; rather, it is a temporary measure permitted when believers fear harm. He explains that the divine prohibition of alliance with unbelievers implies an obligation of hostility, disavowal, and opposition, except in cases of necessity. Ibn Taymiyyah similarly defines *Wala'* (loyalty) as love and closeness, while *Bara'* (enmity) originates in hatred and detachment.<sup>(92)</sup> These definitions reflect a broader theological framework in which relationships with non-Muslims are conceptualized through the categories of allegiance and disavowal. The discourse highlights the dissonance between doctrinal ideals and pragmatic considerations, such as the permissibility of *taqiyyah* in contexts of danger.

A contemporary Ḥanbalī scholar outlines a two-part framework for enmity. The first principle is inward enmity, which he considers essential to faith; harboring hostility toward unbelief and its followers is presented as a requirement of belief, and its absence is said to nullify faith. The second principle concerns the outward expression of this enmity, viewed as a duty and a condition of religious righteousness. If this enmity remains hidden in the heart without being acted upon, it is interpreted in different ways—either as outright unbelief, as a minor sinful allegiance, or as *taqiyyah*, depending on the situation. Another contemporary Ḥanbalī

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<sup>(91)</sup> *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id* [Marvels of benefits], 3, p. 69.

<sup>(92)</sup> *The Distinction between the Allies of God and the Allies of Satan*.

authority goes further, insisting unequivocally on hatred of non-believers, characterizing them as enemies of God, His Messenger, and the believers, and asserting that Muslims nurture this hostility in their hearts.<sup>(93)</sup> There is a basis for this hatred in the Qur'ānic statements: Say: “Obey God and the messenger.” If they turn their backs, God does not love the disbelievers. (Sūrah 3:32). Believers do not take My enemies, who are your enemies as well, for your friends (Sūrah 60:1). You will not find any people who believe in God and the Last Day loving those who resist God and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers, their sons, their brothers or their kindred (Sūrah 58:22). If God does not love unbelievers, how can His believing servants love them? They are seen as necessarily enemies of Islam because they are deviant and corrupt, even if they perceive themselves to be right. Their corruption prevents them from recognizing the clear and undeniable Truth—evident to any rational mind—which is that God exists and the message of Muḥammad is the Truth from their Lord. If a Muslim loves a non-believer for his own sake—a possibility that cannot be denied—Islamic tradition emphasizes that such affection must not override loyalty to God. Thus, love cannot exist without its counterpart in disavowal, for one must not love a non-believer without reservation. The believer's ultimate allegiance is to God; while natural human affections may exist, they must remain subordinate to faith. The believer is reminded to always remember that the other is an unbeliever and, consequently, an enemy of God. This idea was highlighted by Ibn Taymiyyah, who emphasizes that loyalty among believers must be grounded in faith itself, rather than being contingent upon moral perfection. He contends that the believer bears a religious duty to uphold loyalty toward fellow Muslims for the sake of God, even in the face of their injustices. In his view, acts of injustice do not annul the essential bond of faith, which continues to serve as the foundation of

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<sup>(93)</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn, *al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* [Loyalty and Disavowal].

communal solidarity. This interpretation underscores the precedence of religious identity over moral failings in determining the contours of collective allegiance within the Muslim community. <sup>(94)</sup>

The origin of the matter, as previously indicated, lies in the conception that unbelievers are aligned with Satan, who incites humanity to disobedience and rebellion against the sovereignty of God. They are portrayed as adversaries of the community of believers, waging war against God's cause on earth. This framework underpins the notion of perpetual hostility between Muslims and unbelievers. <sup>(95)</sup> Within Islamic thought, the issue is articulated under the rubric of *al-Walā' wa-l-Barā'* (Loyalty and Disavowal), which divides humankind into two opposing camps: the Allies of the Most Merciful and the Allies of Satan. Their fundamental relationship is defined by enmity and confrontation.

Muslims, therefore, are enjoined to disavow unbelievers, just as God Himself declares disavowal in Sūrah 9, save for those bound by treaty: **A proclamation from God and His Messenger is hereby made to all mankind on this day of the greater pilgrimage: God is free from obligation to the idolaters, and so is His Messenger (Sūrah 9:3).** Sūrah 9 is interpreted as establishing a permanent paradigm of relations between believers and unbelievers, predicated upon hostility, combat, subjugation, or even annihilation. Consequently, peace treaties were to be dissolved and replaced with temporary arrangements, thereby rendering conflict the normative state of interaction between the two parties.

Disavowal, in this sense, signifies the abrogation of permanent covenants and the renunciation of affection or loyalty toward unbelievers. A permanent covenant implies enduring peace and

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<sup>(94)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

<sup>(95)</sup> The issue is discussed by Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd al-Qaḥṭān, in a book titled: *Loyalty and Disavowal in Islam*, Chapter Two, p. 64.

mutual goodwill—precisely what the Qur'ān is understood to have nullified unequivocally, with the exception of agreements involving unbelievers residing under Muslim authority, contingent upon their submission. Such arrangements are not construed as genuine peace or affection, but rather as surrender and subjugation, a condition characterized by humiliation.

It is commonly accepted, outside of certain Christian teachings, that individuals are not expected to love their enemies. In this respect, Islam is not anomalous; rather, it explicitly enjoins its adherents to harbor enmity toward unbelievers, designating this sentiment as “hatred for the sake of God.” There is no Islamic statement similar to the well-known passage in the Gospel of Matthew: **You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** <sup>(96)</sup>

The more moderate and pragmatic Islamists try to mitigate the issue of hatred toward others in official discourse. They declare that Islam calls for human brotherhood, peace, and love among peoples, without abandoning the practice of *takfīr* (accusing others of being non-believers, or identifying a Muslim as an apostate) toward non-believers. Yūsuf 'Abd Allāh 'Alī Al-Qaraḍāwī, for example, repeatedly issued fatāwā regarding this matter, emphasizing the importance of engaging in dialogue in the best and kindest manner, beautiful preaching, and being fair with the dhimmīs. Most significantly, he consistently distinguished between the People of the

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<sup>(96)</sup> Chapter Five, verses 43-48.

Book and the irreligious, preferring the former group. This preference is evidenced by the fact that Islam allows Muslims to eat their food and marry their women. He also advocated alliances with unbelievers against more hostile adversaries, a position that recalls the Maoist theory of primary and secondary contradictions. Al-Qaraḍāwī engaged in interfaith dialogue with the stated aim of identifying shared ground among all participants, while emphasizing that such dialogue was not intended to unify religions. (97)

Secular Muslims adopt a more tolerant doctrine toward others, rejecting the notion of inherent enmity toward non-believers. Some even deny that the People of the Book should be described as unbelievers, and in certain cases they extend this reinterpretation to other groups as well.

Despite efforts by certain moderates to downplay or deny the injunction to harbor hostility toward unbelievers, the more uncompromising trend remains prevalent within Islamic culture. This prevailing orientation aligns with the apparent meaning of Qur'ānic pronouncements and with the majority of exegetical interpretations advanced by authoritative scholars. Within the broader Islamic intellectual milieu, the most resonant and influential voices continue to be those who adopt a less tolerant and more doctrinaire stance toward others. (98)

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(97) *Al-Walā' wa-l-Barā' and the Concept of Brotherhood with Non-Muslims* [Loyalty and Disavowal in Islam, and Brotherhood with Non-Muslims], *Sharī'ah and Life* program, "Al Jazeera" T.V., November 8, 2001.

(98) Leaders of moderate Islam have repeatedly been subjected to bitter criticism by extremists. For example, in his work *Loyalty and Disavowal and the Muslim Brotherhood*, Muḥammad ibn Hādī al-Madkhalī strongly criticized figures such as Ḥasan al-Bannā, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī, Fathī Yakan, and 'Abd al-Majīd al-Zindānī.

## Chapter Four

### **THE CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND UNBELIEF**

*A person's religion cannot be upright - even if he monotheizes God and abandons polytheism - except through enmity toward the polytheists, and declaring enmity and hatred toward them*

Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb

If the distinction between faith and unbelief is conceived as equivalent to the opposition between good and evil, or between God and Satan, then the possibility of love, compassion, or mercy between the two is excluded; instead, their relationship is framed as an eternal struggle. The Prophet, moreover, was not content merely with affirming the Truth, but, as he presented himself, was charged with the responsibility of conveying the divine message. Thus, he began actively calling others to Islam.

It is well established that following his migration to Yathrib (Madīnah), Muḥammad was not simply a preacher in the manner of other thinkers, but rather assumed the role of a statesman. His advocacy, initially characterized by preaching, soon took on a political dimension once he secured the allegiance of the people of Yathrib. At that point, he established an Islamic polity that owed him loyalty, and the dissemination of Islam became the mission of the state itself rather than a personal undertaking. This mission encompassed:

- Conveying Islam to various tribes through ambassadors and official correspondence.
- Engaging in military expeditions to subdue tribes.
- Securing financial resources through raids and the disruption of enemy caravan routes.
- Forming alliances with diverse tribes and negotiating truces, including with Quraysh.
- Employing financial incentives and gifts to draw Arabs to Islam by “reconciling their hearts.”
- Expanding territorial control through conquest and the incorporation of lands.

In this way, Muḥammad utilized all available means to propagate the message and extend the domain of the Islamic state, thereby elevating the “Word of God.” Whereas only a few responded during the initial phase of peaceful preaching, mass conversions followed the establishment of the state and the adoption of institutional methods of dissemination. After the migration to Madīnah, persuasion was no longer limited to rational dialogue; rather, intimidation, inducement, and polemical critique of opponents became crucial and effective instruments in advancing the cause. For example, consider the Prophet Muḥammad’s letter to Heraclius, ruler of the Byzantine Empire, as reported in Islamic historical sources and cited in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -4435: **In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, from Muḥammad, the servant of God and His Messenger, to Heraclius, the Great of the Romans, peace be upon whoever follows the right guidance: As for what follows, I invite you to convert to Islam. May God reward you.**

This is also his letter to Khusraw: **In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful. From Muḥammad, the servant of God and His Messenger, to Khusraw the Great of Persia, peace be upon**



those who follow the right guidance and believe in God and His Messenger. Believe in Allah and His Messenger and testify that there is no god but God alone, without a partner, and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger. I call you to the call of God, for I am the Messenger of God to all people, to warn whoever is alive. If you convert to Islam you will be safe, but if you refuse, then you will bear the sin of the Magians, those who are your followers.<sup>(99)</sup>

His message to the people of Yemen stated: Whoever prays our prayers, faces our *Qibla*, and eats our slaughtered animals, is a Muslim under the protection of Allah and His Messenger. However, whoever refuses must pay *jizyah*.<sup>(100)</sup>

He also sent the same content to the people of Baḥrain: If you establish prayer, pay *zakāt*, remain sincere to God and His Messenger, give a tenth of the palm trees and half a tenth of the grain, and do not raise your children as Magians, you will receive what you surrendered for. However, the Abode of Hell belongs to God and His Messenger. If you refuse, you must pay the *jizyah*.<sup>(101)</sup>

The advocacy of Islam in the countries neighboring Madīnah did not proceed simply by sending preachers and opening discussions. Rather, the peaceful call was intertwined with promises, threats, raids, and campaigns. If Muḥammad's letters to kings are taken into consideration, they appear to presuppose a conviction that unbelievers already recognize Islam as the Truth. The issue, therefore, is presented not as one of inquiry or deliberation, but simply as the acknowledgment of this presumed Truth. Muslims did not envisage that others would require extended periods of reflection, comparative study, or intellectual examination before

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<sup>(99)</sup> 'Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 346.

<sup>(100)</sup> Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *The Book of the Conquests of Lands*, file 6 of 29.

<sup>(101)</sup> Ibid.

contemplating a change of religion—religions in which they had been raised and which had shaped their cultural identity.

Mechanisms such as raiding, the imposition of jizyah, the threat of war, and the distribution of gifts—including those directed toward individuals “whose hearts are to be reconciled” as mentioned in the Qur’ān—played a notable role in the dissemination of Islam. Within the early Islamic context, punitive measures against critics of the faith were considered legitimate, and Muḥammad himself is reported to have sanctioned actions such as execution, confiscation of property, and public denunciation. He also employed ridicule against rival beliefs and individuals, exemplified by his renaming of Abū al-Ḥakam ibn Hishām as *Abū Jahl* (the father of ignorance), a designation that has endured in Muslim memory to the present.

This advocacy was not intended to conclude with the death of Muḥammad. Rather, the Islamic community inherited a sacred duty: to disseminate Islam, proclaim the Truth across the earth, and engage in jihād against unbelief wherever it may be encountered. This mission was pursued through the same methods employed by Muḥammad, encompassing both peaceful and militant approaches. Within this framework, advocacy for Islam is articulated as comprising two forms of invitation: the first involves compelling conversion through armed struggle, while the second consists of proselytism by conveyance or *tablīgh* (conveying), as formulated by Abū Bakr al-Kāsānī.<sup>(102)</sup>

This conflict is rooted in deep-seated enmity between the two camps: **The disbelievers are your manifest enemies** (Sūrah 4:101). This hostility is reciprocated by Muslims toward unbelievers as stated in Sūrah 58:22 mentioned above.

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<sup>(102)</sup> *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' fī Tartīb al-Sharā'i'* [The Unique Masterpieces in the Organization of the Legal Rulings], Vol. Seven, p. 100.

Islamic sources frequently portray the relationship between belief and unbelief as one of inherent tension and conflict. The Qur'ān instructs Muslims to struggle until religion is devoted exclusively to God: **Fight them until there is no more *fitnah* (discord) and religion becomes exclusively to God** (Sūrah 8:39). This directive has been interpreted as establishing a permanent opposition between the “camp of faith” and the “camp of *kufr*,” a relationship that cannot be reduced to friendship or peace.

The conflict manifests in multiple forms. At times, it appears as an intellectual debate, as in the dialogue between a believer and his companion: **Do you deny Him who has created you out of dust, and then out of a drop of sperm, and in the end fashioned you into a man?** (Sūrah 18:37). At other times, it takes the form of preaching and argumentation conducted with wisdom and kindness (Sūrah 16:125), or factional disputes within communities, such as the division among the Thamūd (Sūrah 27:45). Ultimately, it can escalate into armed conflict, as in verses that describe believers fighting in the cause of God whereas unbelievers fight in the cause of evil (Sūrah 2:217 and Sūrah 4:76).

Underlying this portrayal is the theological conviction that truth and falsehood are mutually exclusive. The Qur'ān declares: **Truth has now arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is, by its nature, bound to perish** (Sūrah 17:81). If Truth does not act, falsehood will act because it cannot tolerate the presence of its counterpart, and this is the essence of the relationship between believers and unbelievers: **That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehoods, whereas those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord.** (Sūrah 47:3). This dichotomy frames the ongoing enmity between the two camps as not merely historical or social, but as rooted in the very nature of reality, where truth must assert itself and falsehood cannot coexist with it.

Islamic sources do not prescribe a single, uniform method for engaging with unbelievers; rather, they underscore the necessity of

disseminating Islam through means deemed effective and contextually appropriate. Both the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth delineate a spectrum of approaches, ranging from intellectual dialogue and moral persuasion to, in certain circumstances, physical struggle. A well-known tradition recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -140, illustrates this gradation: **Whoever among you witnesses an evil act should strive to change it with his hand. If that is not possible, then let him change it through speech. And if that too is beyond his capacity, then he must at least disapprove of it in his heart—for that is the weakest degree of faith.** This narration underscores the principle that Muslims are obligated to respond to wrongdoing, but the method of response varies according to circumstance and capacity. The emphasis on the dissemination of Islam by all viable means reflects a broader theological conviction that truth must be actively upheld, whether through direct action, verbal advocacy, or internal moral resistance.

However, the Qur'ān contains verses that explicitly reject coercion in matters of belief :**Let there be no compulsion in religion** (Sūrah 2:256), **your duty is to inform, and Ours is the reckoning** (Sūrah 13:40), **you have no control over them** (Sūrah 88:22).<sup>(103)</sup> The natural approach to this is to convey the message to the unbelievers and present the matter to them, on the basis that it is the *fiṭrah* religion (innate religion), which confirms what was

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<sup>(103)</sup> According to the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr, “*Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and others said: you have no control over them, meaning you do not instill faith in their hearts. Ibn Zayd said, you are not the one who forces them to believe. In his Musnad (Hadith 3300), Imām Aḥmad recorded that Wakī' narrated to us on the authority of Jābir: I have been commanded to fight them until they testify that there is no god but Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God. If they do that, they have withheld from you their blood and their wealth except by right, and their reckoning is with God Almighty. Then the Prophet recites: So remind. You are only a reminder. You have no control over them. This was also narrated by Muslim in Book of faith -21, al-Tirmidhī -3341, and al-Nasā'ī -2443.*” Al-Zamakhsharī expresses the same meaning in his exegesis of the Qur'ān, titled: *Al-Kashshāf* [The Expositor of the Truths of Revelation] regarding this verse: **no control** means you force them to believe but you do not have authority over them; but you are an advocate and a motive, 4, p. 393.

previously revealed in the holy books by prophets sent to all communities. However, while unbelievers may have the right to reject the call spiritually, in political reality, they must submit to Muslims: **Fight against the People of the Book who do not truly believe in God and the Last Day, do not treat as prohibited that which God and His Messenger have prohibited, and do not follow the religion of Truth, until they agree to pay the submission jizyah with a willing hand, while they are being humbled (Sūrah 9:29) In the prophetic tradition: The best of people for people; you will bring them with chains around their necks until they convert to Islam (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī -4439) and the same meaning in (6773) and (2879). A vivid example is what Muḥammad said to 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib during the Battle of Khaybar: Fight them until they testify that there is no god but Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God. If they do that, they have withheld from you their blood and their wealth except by right, and their reckoning is with God Almighty (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim –6175).**

It is evident from the foregoing that disseminating Islam without coercion means not forcing faith into the hearts of unbelievers—something that does not require scriptural justification, since it is physically impossible. The matter is essentially an attempt at peaceful invitation in the beginning, followed by coercion through the threat of death or the payment of jizyah. By choosing to pay jizyah, the unbeliever acknowledges submission to the authority of the religion of God, without professing its faith.

Peaceful relations between Muslims and unbelievers are not categorically excluded. The sources acknowledge the possibility of conducting trade, and even of concluding military alliances between the two parties. Such arrangements are stipulated in Qur'ānic verses and were practiced by Muḥammad himself. Indeed, reconciliation with unbelievers may extend to the payment of jizyah

when circumstances require. <sup>(104)</sup> Yet these accommodations are understood to be provisional, as will be addressed further.

These seemingly contradictory actions are not, in fact, contradictory. What remains essential is the dissemination of the message; once it has been proclaimed, any measure that advances the Word of God may be employed—whether peaceful or militant—depending on the strength of the Muslim community and the prevailing balance of power at a given moment. Even covenants may be dissolved. This principle was enacted following the revelation of Sūrah 9, which instructed that unbelievers who had entered into pacts with Muslims be granted a period of four months, or until the expiration of any fixed-term agreement. Thereafter, they were no longer to enjoy Dhimma (covenantal protection), except in cases where a polytheist sought refuge with Muslims, unless one or some polytheists sought asylum: **Disavowal by God and His Messenger to those of the idolaters with whom you have made a treaty (Sūrah 9:1); Announce to them: You may go freely in the land for four months, but you must realize that you can never escape God’s judgment, and that God shall bring disgrace upon the disbelievers (Sūrah 9:2); The treaties are not dissolved with those Pagans with whom you have made a treaty and who have honored their obligations [under the treaty], and have not**

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<sup>(104)</sup> Some jurists, such as al-Awzā’ī, permit Muslims to reconcile with unbelievers by paying jizyah to them if necessary. Al-Shāfi’ī also approves of the same principle in case of fear of the supremacy of the unbelievers or a calamity befalling the Muslims. It is stated in *al-Umm* [The Foundational Reference of Islamic jurisprudence], Vol. Four, p. 199: “*There is nothing worse for Muslims than giving unbelievers anything under any circumstances to refrain from attacking them, because being killed as a Muslim is martyrdom, and Islam is too precious to give a polytheist the upper hand over its followers. Muslims slay and are slain, and they adhere to the Truth. However, in the event that a group of Muslims fights while fearing defeat due to the large number of the enemy compared to their small number, there is no harm in giving some of their wealth to secure safety from the polytheists. This falls under the ruling of necessity.*” This is addressed by Ibn Rushd in *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* [The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid], Book of jihād, Chapter Six.



aided anyone against you. To those fulfil your obligations until their treaties have run their term (Sūrah 9:4); If any of the idolaters seeks asylum with you, grant him protection, so that he may hear the word of God, and then convey him to his place of safety. That is because the idolaters are people who lack knowledge (Sūrah 9:6); Fight them: God will punish them at your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them; and will grant you victory over them and will grant heart-felt satisfaction to those who are believers (Sūrah 9:14). The text emphasizes the supremacy of divine authority, suggesting that religious adherence should ultimately be directed toward God. The means of achieving this—whether through peaceful engagement or conflict—are presented as contingent upon historical circumstances and the balance of power.

The text suggests that, within this framework, the rejection of Islam after its proclamation carries significant consequences for non-believers. These consequences are described as extending to matters of life and property, particularly in cases where the Call to Islam has been made publicly or individually and subsequently refused, including refusal to submit through the payment of jizyah. As for the periods of reconciliation, they are temporary expedients in cases of incapacity to enforce the Word of God: **Let not believers take unbelievers for their allies in preference to believers. Whoever does this has cut himself off from God, unless it be that you protect yourselves against them in this way (Sūrah 3:28); Inform the hypocrites that they will have a painful punishment (Sūrah 4:138); those who ally themselves with disbelievers instead of believers. Do they seek glory in them? All glory belongs to God (Sūrah 4:139); O believers do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies. They are allies of one another. Whoever of you allies himself with them is indeed one of them. God does not bestow His guidance on the wrongdoers (Sūrah 5:51).**

The underlying premise is that Islam must ultimately prevail in the world, whether through peaceful invitation or armed struggle.



This imperative is not framed as coercing belief, but rather as compelling submission to the word of God. Such submission may be achieved either through conviction or through the payment of jizyah and acquiescence to Islamic rule, which necessarily entails the authority of Muslims. <sup>(105)</sup> Those who refuse to submit may face severe consequences, including death.

At the end of time, the paradigm shifts. When Jesus returns to rule the world and establish justice, he will no longer accept the payment of jizyah—not out of mercy toward unbelievers, but in fulfillment of absolute Truth. He will accept only Islam or the sword, for he will not permit the mere existence of unbelief upon the earth. This expectation is emphasized in traditions recorded in both *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: **Let Jesus, son of Mary, descend among you as a righteous Imām and a just ruler. He will kill the pig, break the cross, impose jizyah, and accept nothing but Islam.** In this vision, Jesus eradicates unbelief, which Islamic thought presents as the ideal resolution to the challenge of religious pluralism.

Prior to Jesus’s advent, unbelievers are to be subjugated, with the notable exception of Arabs, who—according to the doctrine of most jurists—must either embrace Islam or face eradication. Only a minority of Islamic thinkers reject this scenario. <sup>(106)</sup>

Al-Qurṭubī, among other exegetes, categorizes the call to Islam into two distinct phases: the Makkan stage and the Madīnan stage. He interprets verse 2:190 as the first command to fight, noting that prior to the *Hijrah*; Muslims were instructed to engage in peaceful argumentation and forgiveness. Upon migration to Madīnah,

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<sup>(105)</sup> Jurists differ as to whether jizyah can be taken from unbelievers in general or from the People of the Book only. This subject will be discussed later in detail.

<sup>(106)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya discusses in detail the development of the means of Muḥammad’s advocacy of Islam mentioned above in his book *Zād al-Ma’ād fī Hadā Khayr al-’Ibād* [Provisions for the Hereafter in the Guidance of the Best of Servants], Vol. Three.

however, the command shifted toward armed struggle. Ibn Kathīr, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, and others further subdivide the Madīnan stage into two phases: initially fighting only those who initiated attacks against Muslims, and subsequently, as reflected in Sūrah 9, engaging in broader conflict with unbelievers in general.

The majority of Islamic scholars concur that the dissemination of Islam constitutes a religious obligation and that removing obstacles to its spread is necessary to elevate the word of God. Accordingly, armed struggle against those who obstruct the conveyance of the message—identified as the leaders of unbelief—is classified as jihād in the path of God. In this framework, unbelievers, whether residing within Islamic territories or beyond, are considered obligated either to embrace Islam or to pay jizyah.

The consensus among Islamic scholars affirms that it is permissible to harm non-treaty unbelieving groups by any available means. Muḥammad himself is reported to have employed such measures against hostile forces: kidnapping members of enemy tribes (as with the Banū 'Aqīl), intercepting caravan routes (as with Quraysh), assassinating leaders (as with Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf), burning palm groves (as with the Banū al-Naḍīr), and destroying fortresses (as at a-Ṭā'if). These actions were undertaken without targeting women, children, or other non-combatants—such as the elderly, the insane, or the disabled—except in cases where adversaries used them as human shields. Such precedents continue to serve as reference points, though they are periodically re-examined and reprioritized in light of shifting power dynamics and strategic objectives.

The underlying principle is that mainstream Islamic thought does not recognize alternative worldviews from two perspectives: first, Islam is regarded as absolute Truth, rendering all other systems false; second, the very existence of unbelievers is considered illegitimate and must be subordinated to Islam in one form or another. Islam's acknowledgment of pluralism is thus interpreted

as recognition of an unwarranted reality. This represents the prevailing trend, with the exception of rare secular Muslim voices. Islamic thought may be described as comprehensive, offering a totalizing system while permitting diversity only within its own framework. Even within Islam, sectarian diversity is constrained, as most sects do not recognize one another.

The practice of *takfīr* (accusing others of unbelief) has continued from early history to the present day. While Islamic thought allows non-believers to live within an Islamic society, they are often placed in a lower social and legal status under Islamic rule. This leads to different types of discrimination and limitations, which will be analyzed in detail later.

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## Chapter Five

# THE CONCEPT OF AL-JIHĀD IN MAINSTREAM ISLAMIC THOUGHT

*I was sent with comprehensive speeches and supported with terror. While I was sleeping, the keys to earth's treasures were brought to me and placed in my hand*

A Prophetic tradition

One of the most important concepts in Islam is al-jihād, often rendered as holy war, though its semantic range extends beyond this association. In the collective consciousness of many Muslims—both among the elite and the general public—it has been predominantly linked to armed struggle against unbelievers. The word has been used as a synonym for fighting unbelievers by many senior Islamic scholars,<sup>(107)</sup> as in the case in many verses of the Qur'ān, and a large number of aḥādīth as well.<sup>(108)</sup>

The broadest meaning of jihād, as recorded in *Tāj al-'Arūs*, encompasses struggle against three entities: the external enemy, the devil, and the self. This interpretation is linked to the Qur'anic verse: **And strive hard in God's cause as you ought to strive.**<sup>(109)</sup> In a similar manner, *Lisān al-'Arab*, which is the classical Arabic lexicon, characterizes jihād as participating in a significant struggle against adversaries and exerting effort in the service of God. In the Ḥadīth, jihād is contextualized after the conquest of Makkah, emphasizing sincerity in striving and fighting unbelievers. Linguistically, jihād is an intensive form, denoting the maximal exertion of effort, involving the exertion of effort in war, speech, or any form of endurance.<sup>(110)</sup>

What indicates its great importance is that it is possible to postpone some acts of worship in order to face imminent aggression, or to achieve a necessary victory. Indeed, jihād has often been regarded within Islamic thought as superior even to Ḥajj, one of the central pillars of Islam. This prioritization reflects the perception

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<sup>(107)</sup> *Al-Umm* by al-Shāfi'ī, *Provisions of the Qur'ān*, by al-Shāfi'ī, *The Collection of Fatāwā* (advisory opinions) by Ibn Taymiyyah, *Striving to Seek Jihād*, by Ibn Kathīr, *Sharḥ al-Siyar al-Kabīr* [The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law], by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Saḥl al-Sarakhsī.

<sup>(108)</sup> These narrations are documented in a monograph titled: *Seventy Prophetic Traditions on Jihād*, by Ibn Baṭṭah al-Ḥanbalī.

<sup>(109)</sup> Page 1945.

<sup>(110)</sup> *Lisān al-'Arab* [The Tongue of the Arabs].

that jihād directly serves to defend and advance the faith, whereas Ḥajj—though obligatory—remains primarily a personal act of devotion: **The Messenger of God... was asked: Which deeds are best? He said: Faith in God. He said: Then what? He said: Jihād for the sake of God. He said: Then what? He said: An accepted Ḥajj** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -26). This corresponds to what is articulated in the Qur'ān, specifically in Sūrah 9:19, where the relative merits of jihād and Ḥajj are addressed. It is not possible for one who does not acknowledge the fundamental obligations of Islam to regard fighting as jihād. Jihād is defined as an action undertaken for the sake of God, with the explicit aim of elevating His word and disseminating Islam, without pursuit of worldly gain. Consequently, it is considered jihād only when carried out by believers. In such cases, it is deemed more meritorious before God than acts of worship themselves. This is affirmed in the prophetic tradition: **Standing for an hour in the path of God is better than praying on the Night of Power at al-Ḥajar al-Aswad (the Black Stone)**<sup>(111)</sup> (*Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* -4513). Likewise, *Musnad Aḥmad* -1639 records: **The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is prayer, and its pinnacle is Jihād in the path of God.** One of the greatest obligations in Islam is enjoining right and forbidding wrong, which Ibn Taymiyyah—Shaykh al-Islām—maintained reaches its fullest expression through jihād.<sup>(112)</sup>

Some Sunnis consider jihād to be one of the pillars of Islam, based on the belief that it is an individual obligation rather than a collective one. Since they view it as mandatory for every Muslim, they regard it as a fundamental aspect of the religion. This interpretation can be found in works such as *al-Faridah al-*

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<sup>(111)</sup> *Al-Ḥajar al-Aswad* is a revered object set into the eastern corner of the Ka'bah in Mecca.

<sup>(112)</sup> *Enjoining Right and Forbidding Wrong.*

**Gha'ibah (The Missing Obligation)<sup>(113)</sup> and other publications by militant Islamist movements.**

Certain jurists have argued that the highest form of jihād is the struggle against oneself, rather than physical fighting.<sup>(114)</sup> However, most scholars reject this view and consider the ḥadīth supporting it to be fabricated. Among those who reject the distinction between the “greater” and “lesser” jihād is the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Ḥasan al-Bannā. He adopts the concept of jihād in

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<sup>(113)</sup> Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salam Farag.

<sup>(114)</sup> *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī* [A Commentary on *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*], Book of Purification, Chapter on Perfecting Ablution. It is also addressed in *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl* [The Refinement of Perfection in the Biographies of Prophetic Tradition Narrators] by Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī, where it is called jihād of the heart (Vol. 2, p. 144); in *Sharḥ al-Zurqanī on Imām Mālik's Muwatta'* [Al-Zurqānī's Commentary on the Muwaṭṭa' of Imām Mālik], Vol. 1, p. 557 and Vol. Three, p. 23; and in *Sharḥ al-Nawawī 'ala Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [Al-Nawawī's Commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*], Chapter on the Virtue of Perfecting Ablution despite Hardship, as well as in several places in *Fath al-Bārī: Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. It is also noted by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in his book *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hudā Khayr al-'Ibād* [Provisions for the Hereafter in the Guidance of the Best of Servants], Vol. Three, under “The Levels of Jihād:” “Once this is understood, jihād is divided into four levels: jihād of the self, jihād of Satan, jihād of the unbelievers, and jihād of the hypocrites. I. The Jihād against the self is articulated in four stages: striving to acquire knowledge of divine guidance and the true religion; striving to act upon what has been learned, for knowledge without practice is of little benefit; striving to convey this knowledge to others, lest one conceal what Allah has revealed; and striving to endure the hardships and opposition encountered in calling people to Allah. When these four stages are perfected, one attains the rank of a godly scholar (Rabbānī). II. Jihād against Satan consists of two levels: striving to repel the misconceptions and doubts that Satan casts to undermine faith, and striving to repel the corrupt desires and whims that he casts. The first results in certainty (Yaqīn), and the second results in patience (Sabr). God declares, “And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and when they were certain of Our signs” (Sūrah 32:24). III. Jihād against unbelievers and hypocrites consists of four levels: by the heart, the tongue, wealth, and the person. Jihād against unbelievers is most specifically associated with the hand, whereas jihād against hypocrites is most specifically associated with the tongue. IV. Jihād against the perpetrators of injustice, heretical innovations, and Evil consists of three tiers: first, through action if one is capable; if not, then through speech; and if still unable, then striving with the heart. These are the thirteen levels of jihād, and: *Whoever dies without having fought [in the way of Allah] or having resolved in his heart to do so, dies upon a branch of hypocrisy.*”



the sense of fighting unbelievers with the sword. Moreover, he argues that many Muslims mistakenly believe fighting the enemy to be the lesser jihād, while the greater jihād is the struggle of the self, citing a narration that “we return from the lesser jihād to the greater jihād.” Al-Bannā notes that this narration is not an authentic prophetic tradition, but rather a saying attributed to the Islamic scholar, narrator, and a Qur’ān reciter; Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abla, as explained by Ibn Ḥajar. He criticizes the use of this narration as a means to divert attention from the importance of combat, preparation, and intention. In his final comment on the matter, al-Bannā emphasizes that scholars across different schools of thought unanimously agree that jihād is a collective obligation for the Muslim community to disseminate its message, and an individual duty to defend against attacks. <sup>(115)</sup> Ḥasan al-Bannā’s conception of jihād reflects the ideological orientation of the Muslim Brotherhood rather than a traditional juridical framework. His rejection of the ḥadīth concerning the “greater Jihād” illustrates the movement’s emphasis on armed struggle as a central duty. This framing reconceptualizes jihād not as a spiritual metaphor, but as a foundational political instrument central to the Brotherhood’s identity. The same idea was espoused by Muṣṭafā Mashhūr, a later General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. <sup>(116)</sup>

Dozens of Prophetic traditions emphasize the virtue of jihād with the sword. In *Musnad Aḥmad* -16702, it is reported that a man asked the Messenger of God: **What is Islam? He replied: Islam is that your heart is submitted to God Almighty, and that Muslims are safe from your tongue and your hand. The man asked: Which Islam is better? The Prophet said: Faith. The man asked: What is faith? The Prophet replied: Faith means believing in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the resurrection after death.**

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<sup>(115)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, The Epistle of al-Jihād.*

<sup>(116)</sup> *Jihād is the Path.*



The man asked: Which faith is better? The Prophet said: Migration. The man asked: What is migration? The Prophet replied: Migration is to forsake evil. The man asked: Which migration is best? The Prophet said: jihād. The man asked: What is jihād? The Prophet replied: jihād is fighting the disbelievers when you meet them. The man asked: Which jihād is better? The Prophet said: [The one] whose horse is hamstrung and whose blood is shed. The Messenger of God then said: There are two deeds that are the best deeds, unless one performs the same as them: an accepted Ḥajj (greater pilgrimage) or an 'Umrah (a lesser pilgrimage).

With regard to jihād for women, the sources emphasize that their equivalent form of striving is Ḥajj. According to 'Ā'isha, the prophet said regarding women: **Your jihād is Ḥajj** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -2810). Thus, combat is not obligatory for women, though it is not prohibited. <sup>(117)</sup> In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, there is evidence that women, when present in contexts of jihād, are assigned supportive roles rather than direct combat. Their participation is described as providing water, tending to the wounded and retrieving arrows. These functions illustrate that women's involvement in jihād are framed within auxiliary and logistical capacities, complementing the martial efforts of men. <sup>(118)</sup> However, the practical Sunnah provides evidence that women could participate in combat if they chose to. During Muḥammad's lifetime, some women fought in the battles of Khaybar and Hawazin. Notably, Nusaybah Umm 'Ammara took part in Uḥud and other campaigns, and she lost her arm in the war against Musaylimah. Umm Salīm is also reported to have participated in the Muslim army that undertook the campaign

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<sup>(117)</sup> Refer to *Al-Umm*, Book of Jizyah, Who is not obligated to Perform Jihād? No. 4, p. 174.

<sup>(118)</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Expeditions, Chapter on Women's Raids and Fighting with Men.

against Cyprus, <sup>(119)</sup> whereas Ghāliyah al-Baqmiyyah is noted for her role in fighting al-Baqmiyyah alongside the Wahhābīs against the forces of Muḥammad 'Alī. <sup>(120)</sup>

The Makkan stage constitutes an exception in Muḥammad's advocacy. During this period, the Qur'ān defines the concept of jihād in a peaceful sense. In Sūrah 25: 51–52 it states: **Had We so willed, We could have sent a warner to every city. Do not obey the disbelievers, but strive most vigorously against them with this Qur'ān.** Exegetes have interpreted the notion of jihād here as jihād with the Qur'ān—that is, intellectual and spiritual struggle—or as jihād of the self, coupled with steadfast endurance in the face of harm inflicted by unbelievers. <sup>(121)</sup>

Jihād in Islamic thought encompasses a wide range of actions, from the peaceful call to Islam and ritual observance to armed struggle. <sup>(122)</sup> Classical sources indicate that jihād has been considered obligatory for Muslims following the Prophet's migration to Madīnah, whereas prior to this it was regarded merely

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<sup>(119)</sup> Gamāl al-Bannā, *Al- Hijāb* [The Headscarf], Chapter Five.

<sup>(120)</sup> Hamad al-Jasser, *Woman in the Intellectual and Social Life of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb*.

<sup>(121)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī's exegesis notes regarding the verse, *“But strive against them with this Qur'ān, a great striving.”* Ibn Kathīr adopted this same view. Al-Qurṭubī also records that Ibn 'Abbās interpreted the passage as meaning “with the Qur'ān,” while Ibn Zayd understood it as “with Islam.” Al-Qurṭubī adds, *“It was also said: ‘with the sword’—but this is far-fetched, since the sūrah is Meccan, revealed before the command to fight.”* Similarly, Al-Bayḍāwī's commentary explains: *“The meaning is that they exert themselves in nullifying your truth, so oppose them with exertion in resisting them and removing their falsehood—‘a great striving’—because striving against the foolish with proofs is greater than striving against enemies with the sword. Alternatively, it is because opposing them and showing enmity while in their midst, despite their arrogance and dominance, is a greater trial; or because it constitutes a striving against all disbelievers, since [the Prophet] was sent to all communities.”*

<sup>(122)</sup> **The believer struggles with his sword and his tongue.** *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* -4617. **Strive against the polytheists with your money, your souls, and your tongues.** Narrated by Imām Aḥmad (11992), Abū Dāwūd -2504, al-Nasā'ī -3096, and al-Darimī -2475.

as permissible.<sup>(123)</sup> Ibn Rushd divides jihād into four categories: the jihād of the heart, involving resistance to sinful desires; the jihād of the tongue, expressed through enjoining right and forbidding wrong; the jihād of the hand, exercised by authorities in preventing wrongdoing and implementing punishments; and the jihād of the sword, directed against polytheists for religious purposes. Despite this diversity, Ibn Rushd emphasizes that, in jurisprudential usage, the term most often refers specifically to armed struggle against unbelievers, framed as a religious duty rather than a pursuit of political dominance, to bring them from unbelief to Islam.<sup>(124)</sup>

In the legal texts of Sunni jurists, the term jihād is often used synonymously with fighting, to the extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Ḥanafī jurists define jihād as the call to the true religion, coupled with fighting against those who refuse to accept it, involving the sacrifice of both wealth and life.<sup>(125)</sup> Thus, this definition combines the missionary dimension with the combative dimension, viewing jihād as a means to spread the Islamic faith and ensure adherence to it.

Meanwhile, Mālikī jurists view jihād essentially as a *Farḍ kifāyah* (collective obligation) upon Muslims, comparable in importance to performing the Ḥajj pilgrimage. They emphasize that it remains an obligation even under an unjust ruler and falls upon every free, adult, and capable male.<sup>(126)</sup>

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<sup>(123)</sup> *Al Umm*, Book of Jizyah, the Origin of the Obligation of Jihād.

<sup>(124)</sup> Quoted from: *At-Tāj wa-al-Iklīl li-Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* [The Crown and the Garland on the Abridgment of Khalīl], Book of Jihād and the Rulings of Competition, Chapter on jihād and its rulings.

N.B.: *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* is regarded as one of the most authoritative texts in Mālikī jurisprudence.

<sup>(125)</sup> Al-Samarqandī, *Tuḥfat al-Fuqahā'* [The Jurists' Masterpiece], Book of Expeditions."

<sup>(126)</sup> Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī, Op. cit., Book of Jihād and the Rulings of Competition.

Ḥanbalī jurists also define jihād as a collective obligation, except in specific cases where it becomes an individual obligation: when a Muslim is physically present on the battlefield, when besieged, during a surprise enemy attack, or in the event of a general mobilization. They require parental permission for those wishing to volunteer for jihād, unless there is a direct attack. Furthermore, they consider *ribāṭ*—stationing oneself at the frontiers to protect the borders and deter the enemy—as a highly recommended Sunnah; its minimum duration is an hour, while its complete form extends to forty days. They also stress the Imām’s role in preventing those who incite chaos or weaken the army’s morale, asserting that soldiers must obey and remain steadfast with him. <sup>(127)</sup>

In Shāfi’ī jurisprudence, jihād is viewed as “fighting in the cause of Allah” and the rulings associated with it. This concept is grounded—prior to scholarly consensus—in Qur’anic texts such as: **Fighting is prescribed for you; fight the Pagans all together; slay them wherever you encounter them.** It is further supported by Prophetic aḥādīth, including the narration in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*: **I have been commanded to fight the people until they say, there is no god but Allah,** and in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: **A morning or a late morning in the path of God is better than the world and what is in it.** <sup>(128)</sup> Thus, the Shāfi’īs link jihād to foundational texts that render fighting part of the Sharī’ah obligations related to protecting and spreading the religion.

Additionally, Ibn Rushd mentions that the subject of jihād is based on two main principles: the first concerns understanding the pillars of war and its related organization and rulings, while the second addresses the rules regarding the property of combatants if

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<sup>(127)</sup> ‘Abd al-Qadir Badran, *The Shortest of Epitomes in Jurisprudence According to the School of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, Book of Jihād.

<sup>(128)</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī, *Persuasion in Resolving the Words of Abū Shujā’*, Book of Jihād Rulings.

seized by Muslims.<sup>(129)</sup> In this way, he defines the general framework of jihād through two essential aspects: the military structure on the one hand, and the rulings concerning the spoils of war on the Other.

In conclusion, Islamic jihād presupposes conversion to Islam as its foundational prerequisite; only then can jihād be undertaken as an act performed for the sake of God. Within this framework, it is conceived not as a pursuit of worldly gain, but as a divinely oriented struggle aimed at elevating the word of God and advancing the faith. The pinnacle of Islam is jihād against unbelievers with the sword, despite the importance of jihād with the tongue and wealth. It is not governed by a specific time, but rather according to the prophetic tradition: **Jihād will continue until the Day of Resurrection**. In practice, prevailing Islamic thought equates jihād with armed struggle against unbelievers, a meaning consistently employed by reputable jurists and reflected in Islamic public opinion, both classical and modern. The religious connotation of jihād is explicit: it signifies religious fighting, not warfare for worldly purposes such as land or wealth. Its objective must be the support of Islam. This is the meaning in which it is presented theoretically in Islam.

Within this framework, jihād is divided into two categories: defensive and offensive, or jihād of conquest. Defensive jihād is prescribed when unbelievers occupy Muslim lands or prepare to attack them; in such cases, Muslims are obligated to repel aggression until the threat is removed. This obligation is individual, extending outward from the affected community to neighboring regions. Some moderate Sunni scholars, particularly those seeking to modernize the doctrine, argue that defensive jihād alone represents the legitimate form of Islamic struggle.

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<sup>(129)</sup> *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* [The Beginning of the *Mujtahid* and the End of the *Muqtasid*], Book of Jihād.

Offensive jihād, however, is described clearly by Safar al-Ḥawālī as the highest form of struggle: he explains that it begins with calling to and establishing the religion of God within oneself and within society. Once this foundation is secured, then believers go out and conquer communities and open countries to adhere to the religion of Islam, submit to it, and submit to its rulings. <sup>(130)</sup> In his view, this process represents a gradual progression: first internal discipline and communal consolidation, followed by outward expansion and conquest.

Its legitimacy is reinforced by several prophetic traditions, such as: **Whoever dies without having invaded, or without even contemplating it, dies upon a branch of hypocrisy** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* - 4887). Other traditions emphasize the Prophet's vision of the world's treasures and the command to fight in God's name without excess, treachery, mutilation, or harm to infants (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* -3952; *Musnad Aḥmad* -17754). Offensive jihād is considered a collective obligation: if undertaken by capable Muslims, it is waived for others. <sup>(131)</sup>

*Shi'ī Imāmī* jurists, however, maintain that offensive jihād is conditional upon the presence of the infallible Imām. Since the occultation of Muḥammad al-Mahdī ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī in 941 CE, only his eventual reappearance authorizes such campaigns. Consequently, the Iranian war against Iraq was not termed jihād, but rather an “imposed war,” effectively synonymous with defensive jihād.

By contrast, Sunni jurists are unanimous in affirming the legitimacy of offensive jihād. Classical authorities such as al-Shāfi'ī

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<sup>(130)</sup> *The Current Sharī'ah Ruling on al-Jihād*. The source is a lecture titled: *The Obligations of Muslims Regarding God's Blessings*.

<sup>(131)</sup> 'Uthmān ibn Jum'a Damirīyah addresses the issue of jihād and its motives in Islam, whether in the sacred texts or *fiqh*, presenting a wonderful and very clear presentation, well supported by the sacred text and opinions of jurists and Islamic intellectuals, in *The Purpose of jihād in Islam*.



argue that the Muslim Imām must annually dispatch expeditions into the lands of polytheists, provided the Muslims are strong enough to prevail.<sup>(132)</sup> The Ḥanafī doctrine similarly requires that unbelievers first be invited to Islam before fighting commences, even though they are deemed culpable for disbelief by reason alone. This initial invitation is considered a divine mercy, removing any possible excuse. Fighting, therefore, is not imposed for its own sake but as a means of calling to Islam. Two forms of calling are distinguished: by the tongue (preaching) and by the hand (fighting). Since preaching is less costly, it must precede combat. Once the call has been extended, fighting becomes permissible, though renewing the call is preferable in hopes of eliciting acceptance.<sup>(133)</sup>

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, recognized as one of the most prominent Islamic political theorists, distinguishes between two categories of polytheists in *dār al-ḥarb* (the territory of war). The first group comprises those who have been invited to Islam but rejected it. In their case, the commander of the Muslim army has two options: either to confine them within their homes, threatening them with fighting and burning, or to warn them openly of war and call them to combat. The second group consists of those who have not yet received the call to Islam. Al-Māwardī notes that such groups are rare, given the universal dissemination of the Prophet's message, except perhaps among distant peoples such as the Turks and Byzantines at the frontiers of the East and West. For these, it is forbidden to attack them suddenly without first extending the call to Islam, presenting the proofs of prophethood, and offering evidence to guide them to the truth. If they persist in unbelief after the call has been made, they are to be fought like those who had already received the invitation. He cites the Qur'ānic directive:

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<sup>(132)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of Jihād, Elaborates on the Obligations Associated with al-Jihād, 4, p. 177.

<sup>(133)</sup> *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' fī Tartīb al-Sharā'i'* [The unique masterpieces in the organization of the legal rulings], Vol. Seven, p. 100.

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. <sup>(134)</sup> Ibn Rushd's presentation reflects the same principle. <sup>(135)</sup> The purpose of jihād of conquest is thus framed as the removal of obstacles erected by unbelievers against the dissemination of Islam. <sup>(136)</sup>

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya articulated with notable clarity the role of jihād through armed struggle. He maintained that rational individuals could be persuaded through argumentation and the presentation of evidence, but those who remained unmoved by such reasoning required confrontation through the sword. In his view, God commanded that unbelievers be engaged with after being called to Islam, so that proof would be established and excuses removed, ensuring that those who reject the message do so on the basis of clear evidence, while those who accept it do so with full awareness. The sword, therefore, serves as reinforcement for the argument, correcting stubbornness and putting an end to the ungrateful. Ibn Qayyim concluded that God has stated that the religion of Islam was founded upon the guiding Book and upheld through the sword. Then he added from the poetry of Abū Tammām:

*Naught but revelation—or the blade's keen edge  
Whose gleam lays low all who wander astray  
This is the remedy for the scholar's affliction  
And this is the remedy for the ignorant's plight* <sup>(137)</sup>

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<sup>(134)</sup> *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya wa-al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya* [The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices], Vol. Four, Appointing a Leader for al-Jihād, p. 72.

<sup>(135)</sup> Ibn Rushd, Op. cit., Book of Jihād, Chapter Four, Conditions of the War.

<sup>(136)</sup> Refer to Ḥasan al-Bannā: *Peace in Islam*, chapter titled: The Purposes of War in Islam (the book is originally a part of the *Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*).

<sup>(137)</sup> *Hidāyat al-Ḥayārā fī Ajwibat al-Yahūd wa al-Naṣārā* [Guidance for the Perplexed in Responses to Jews and Christians].

After the Islamic advocacy became widespread, rejection of Islam by unbelievers came to be interpreted as outright refusal of God's religion, rebellion against Him, and submission to the devil. In this framework, disbelief was no longer seen merely as ignorance or lack of exposure, but as conscious opposition to divine truth. Therefore, jihād came to be regarded as necessary, whether through preaching and calling to Islam, through financial expenditure in its support, through fighting to impose jizyah, or through armed confrontation with unbelievers who reject Islam and their subsequent submission to Muslim authority. In the prophetic tradition: **I was sent with the sword before the day of resurrection, so that God alone will be worshiped with no partner; my livelihood will be placed under the shade of my spear, and humiliation will be imposed on whoever disobeys my command** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -5107). The Qur'ān calls for fighting unbelievers closest to the Muslims: **Believers, fight those of the disbelievers who are next to you, and let them find you tough** (Sūrah 9:123). Most exegetes agree that the meaning of **next to you** is the closest to the furthest in geography, or proximity of home and lineage, <sup>(138)</sup> as al-Baghawī says, for example. The Qur'ān is also clear in defining the goal of Islamic advocacy: **He is the one who sent His messenger with guidance and the true religion to make it prevail over all other religions; even if the polytheists dislike it** (Sūrah 61:9).

The opinion that Islamic jihād is only to defend the Abode of Islam against the aggression of unbelievers—that is, denying offensive jihād—has little support among jurists and preachers. Many Islamists, even moderate ones, have confronted this trend with criticism and censure on many occasions. For example, Sayyid Quṭb harshly criticized this opinion, strongly defending the inherent right of Islam to establish its own system to include all of humanity,

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<sup>(138)</sup> Exegeses of al-Qur'ān by Ibn Kathīr, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Baghawī, al-Sa'dī, as well as al-Shāfi'ī in *Provisions of the Holy Qur'ān*.

Muslims and non-believers, through jihād. He argues that such apologetic readings diminish the true scope and significance of jihād within Islam. In his view, Islam, as the final divine message to humanity, possesses an inherent right to establish its own comprehensive system on earth. This system was not intended solely for Muslims but for all of humanity, offering a framework that guarantees freedom of belief without coercion. Quṭb maintains that the establishment and preservation of this universal Islamic order requires jihād—not merely as a defensive measure, but as a proactive means of expansion and consolidation. He criticizes both external detractors, such as Crusaders and Zionists who accuse Islam of being a religion of the sword, and internal defenders who, in their eagerness to refute such accusations, limit jihād to defensive action. For Quṭb, jihād was indispensable to realizing Islam’s global mission and ensuring the flourishing of its system for the benefit of all humanity. <sup>(139)</sup>

Ḥasan al-Bannā also cites the prophetic tradition: **Whoever dies without fighting or intending to fight will die a death of *jāhiliyyah***, in his discussion of the concept of jihād, as he perceives it. <sup>(140)</sup> Muṣṭafā Mashhūr follows the same path, articulating a vision of jihād that extends beyond the notion of repelling aggression. He emphasizes that jihād is not merely defensive but constitutes a central mechanism for establishing the Islamic state, empowering the religion, and facilitating the global dissemination of Islam.

In his perspective, preparation for jihād is essential, requiring sustained effort and long-term commitment, since the mission is measured not by individual lifespans but by the broader project of rebuilding nations and advancing religious advocacy. Mashhūr frames the struggle between truth and falsehood as an enduring conflict, one that would expand in scope over time, accompanied by

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<sup>(139)</sup> *Characteristics and Foundations of the Islamic Worldview*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>(140)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, The Epistle of Teachings, al-Jihād.

the rise of jihād's banners, divine support for believers, and the sacrifice of martyrs. Ultimately, he envisions jihād as indispensable for achieving God's victory and securing the establishment of Islam on earth. <sup>(141)</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood articulates a set of foundational slogans that encapsulate its ideological orientation: "Allah is our ultimate objective, the Prophet is our exemplar, the Qur'ān is our constitution, jihād is our way, and death for the sake of Allah is our loftiest aspiration." Comparable formulations can be found in the writings of Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī, Sayyid Quṭb, and within various Islamic movements characterized as "revolutionary."

Debates periodically emerge among moderate and radical currents regarding the specific conditions under which jihād becomes an individual obligation, as well as the relevance of parental consent—issues not addressed in this discussion. What remains broadly accepted, however, is the valorization of armed struggle against non-believers, irrespective of whether Muslims or non-believers initiate hostilities. In both scenarios, such an action is framed as a defense of religion. The underlying rationale is that the very existence of unbelief constitutes an act of aggression against God's sovereignty. This aggression is not limited to military confrontation, but may also manifest through the defamation of religion, criticism of Sharī'ah in public discourse, or the establishment of political systems and cultural traditions perceived as antithetical to Islam. Sayyid Quṭb, for instance, describes such phenomena as a usurpation of the divine prerogative to govern the world.

Within this interpretive framework, the mere presence of non-believers living beyond the authority of Islamic governance is construed as a perpetual state of aggression against believers. This perspective is reinforced by Qur'ānic references, such as the

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<sup>(141)</sup> *Jihād is the Path.*

characterization of non-believers as **manifest enemies** in Sūrah 4:101.

The notion of defensive jihād—defined as the protection of Islamic territories—has often been distinguished from offensive or expansionist forms of struggle. From this perspective, defensive action is considered instinctive, requiring neither scriptural injunctions nor promises of Paradise, since self-preservation is a natural human response. Consequently, when examining the rhetoric used to motivate Islamist militants, scholars note that the emphasis tends to shift toward encouraging offensive campaigns against non-believers. Within this interpretive framework, jihād in practice is frequently equated with conquest, whereas defensive warfare is not classified as jihād in the strict sense, precisely because it arises spontaneously and does not necessitate a formal obligation. On the other hand, conquest is seen as an obligation and a religious duty to disseminate the word of Islam. If Muslims are tasked with invading, it is logical that the invaders must also defend themselves. In the words of Shaykh Salmān al-'Awda, a prominent Wahhābī preacher: *“Animals defend themselves; does self-defense need legislation?”*

The jihād against the People of the Book is considered by some to be superior to the jihād against polytheists. According to the prophetic tradition recorded in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (2488): **A woman named Umm Khallad came to the Prophet asking about her son, who had been killed. The Messenger said to her, May God bless your son; He has the reward of two martyrs. She said: Why is that, O Messenger? He said: Because he was killed by the People of the Book.** Ḥasan al-Bannā's interpretation of this prophetic tradition underscores his expansive conception of jihād. He maintains that the text imposes an obligation to fight not only polytheists but also the People of the Book, with the promise of a double divine reward for those who engage in such combat. For al-Bannā, jihād is not confined to confrontations with idolaters; rather, it extends to all who resist submission to Islam. This reading reflects his broader



understanding of jihād as a universal religious duty, integral to the establishment and defense of Islamic authority. <sup>(142)</sup>

Classical Islamic jurisprudence generally does not prohibit actions such as seizing land or plundering wealth if the goal is to strengthen the advocacy and dissemination of the “religion of Truth” in the context of invading the land of unbelievers to annex it to the Abode of Islam. This opinion is held not only by hard-line jurists, but also by the most moderate ones.

Within the Ḥanafī legal tradition, jihād has been described as encompassing actions directed against non-believers, including armed confrontation and measures such as the appropriation of property, the destruction of temples, and the removal of idols. The underlying objective is understood as strengthening the religion through combat against groups identified as hostile, including polytheists, rebellious dhimmīs, apostates, and transgressors, with the stipulation that fighting should commence only after the formal delivery of the call to Islam. If such groups refrain from engaging in hostilities, the responsibility of the Imām is nevertheless to dispatch expeditions to *dār al-ḥarb* (the abode of war) once or twice annually. In this framework, the broader Muslim community is obliged to support him. <sup>(143)</sup>

In classical Islamic thought, jihād is frequently elevated above other forms of religious practice, regarded as the most meritorious of actions. Correspondingly, the material gains derived from spoils and booty are described as the most honorable form of livelihood, surpassing income obtained through productive labor. As previously mentioned, a ḥadīth alludes to this: **I was sent with the sword before the day of resurrection** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -5107). Ibn

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<sup>(142)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, The Epistle of al-Jihād.

<sup>(143)</sup> Cited from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaimān al-Kulaibulī, *Majma' al-Anhur fī Sharḥ Multaqa al-Abḥur* [Commentary on *Multaqa al-Abḥur* in Ḥanafī Jurisprudence], Book of Expeditions.

Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, in *Fath al-Bārī: Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, explains that the ḥadīth points to the virtue of the spear, affirms the permissibility of war spoils for this community, and clarifies that the Prophet's provision was assigned to him from these spoils rather than from other forms of gain. Based on this, some scholars consider spoils of war to be the best form of earning. Moreover, the term “humiliation” in this context refers to the payment of jizyah. <sup>(144)</sup> It is stated in another ḥadīth: If you devote yourselves to agriculture, engage in trade by means of usurious transaction, and abandon jihād, God will inflict upon you humiliation that He will not remove until you return to your religion (*Musnad Aḥmad* -5553). This is why the Companions disliked entering the land of Kharāj for agriculture as it distracts from jihād. It is recorded in history that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb prevented Muslim warriors from working in agriculture so that they would not slacken in their pursuit of jihād. He established the *Dīwān* (a military register/pension system) specifically to ensure that the soldiers remained a professional, standing army dedicated to jihād, rather than becoming landowners. <sup>(145)</sup>

In traditional Islamic culture, Islamic advocacy is not limited to preaching and guidance, but is conceived as a dynamic project aiming to remove material and political obstacles that hinder its spread. This approach transcends persuasion through words to

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<sup>(144)</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī: Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Expeditions, What was said about Spears.

<sup>(145)</sup> Quoting Abū al-Faraj ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Al-Ḥikam al-Jadira bi-l-Idhā'a* [Wisdoms worth Broadcasting from the Aḥādīth of the Prophet]: “*Makḥul said: When Muslims came to the Levant, the crops of the Hula were mentioned to them, so they planted. This news reached 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and he ordered that their matured crops, ready for harvest, be burnt. He then wrote to them: God has placed the livelihood of this community in the tips of its spears and under its blades. If they sow, they will be like other people. Al-Bayḍāwī narrated with his chain of transmission on the authority of 'Umar that he wrote: Whoever is satisfied with crops and acknowledges them, jizyah will be imposed on him. When some asked about taking a farm for the children, he responded: We did not come as farmers, but we came to kill the farmers and eat their crops.*”

encompass the exercise of political authority, the transformation of non-Muslim systems, the imposition of legal and financial obligations (such as jizyah and kharāj) on unbelievers, and the use of force to neutralize any material or intellectual opposition that confronts this project. From this perspective, Islam is often portrayed as a worldview that does not simply coexist with non-Islamic social orders but seeks to transform them. The believer is thus positioned not in passive acceptance of systems grounded in unbelief, but in active engagement aimed at reshaping them into Islamic frameworks. This conceptualization has been consistently articulated within traditional Islamic thought across both classical and modern contexts.

However, recent intellectual currents within the Islamic sphere have sought to move beyond the traditional emphasis on offensive jihād, advocating instead for forms of coexistence with non-Muslim communities. Yet, many of these initiatives—such as those advanced by al-Qaraḍāwī or the Egyptian Islamic Group’s 1997 declaration to suspend violence—are often interpreted as tactical adjustments rather than fundamental redefinitions of doctrine, predicated upon the principle of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (unrestricted public interest). This is evident in the content of the initiative and the supplementary revisionist literature issued by the group. <sup>(146)</sup> Leaders like Karam Zuhdī, a prominent figure of the Islamic

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<sup>(146)</sup> *The Non-Violence Initiative: A Realistic Vision and Jurisprudential Outlook*. This was presented briefly at the link:

[http://www.murajaat.com/Books/mobadert\\_wagf\\_alonf.doc](http://www.murajaat.com/Books/mobadert_wagf_alonf.doc)

The other four booklets on retreat from violence by the Islamic Group are published on the following links:

[http://www.murajaat.com/Books/mobadert\\_wagf\\_alonf.doc](http://www.murajaat.com/Books/mobadert_wagf_alonf.doc)

[www.murajaat.com/Books/hormet\\_alglo\\_fi\\_aldain.doc](http://www.murajaat.com/Books/hormet_alglo_fi_aldain.doc)

[http://www.murajaat.com/Books/taslet\\_alathow.doc](http://www.murajaat.com/Books/taslet_alathow.doc)

[http://www.murajaat.com/Books/alnosh\\_w\\_altbain.doc](http://www.murajaat.com/Books/alnosh_w_altbain.doc)

Group in Egypt, have argued that armed struggle is not an end in itself, but a means whose legitimacy depends on its effectiveness in achieving broader objectives.

While a minority of secular and reformist thinkers call for a principled departure from the paradigm of conquest, their influence remains limited. Historically, projects of expansion have not enjoyed significant support among Muslim publics in recent decades, despite the propaganda of the Muslim Brotherhood and the proponents of jihād, largely due to shifting geopolitical realities and the pressing challenges of everyday life. Nevertheless, the cultural memory of early Islamic conquests continues to hold symbolic weight, with figures such as Khālīd ibn al-Walīd and the early caliphs revered as exemplars of supreme religious and political achievement.

In contemporary discourse, the concept of jihād has undergone a notable transformation: from an emphasis on expansion to a focus on the defense of Muslim lands, both near and far. Thus, the priority of jihād's aim has changed. During the era of Islam's prosperity, the focus was on offensive jihād, supported by the existence of one or more Islamic states. However, with the disintegration of the the caliphate and the exposure of Islamic lands to historical invasions and modern colonialism, defense became the priority—as seen in the jihād in Palestine, Chechnya, and Afghanistan.

More recently, debates have extended to the legitimacy of resistance against Muslim rulers perceived as failing to uphold Sharī'ah, drawing on precedents such as Ibn Taymiyyah's rulings against the Tatars.<sup>(147)</sup> The practice of declaring governments, and at times entire Muslim societies, to be apostates has occupied a significant place in the discourse of extremist movements. This position is frequently compared to that of the historical Kharijites,

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<sup>(147)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28, and *The Grand Fatāwā*, No. 3, p. 534 ff.

who regarded major sins as tantamount to unbelief and legitimized armed resistance against Muslim rulers. As a result, contemporary jihādīst groups are often accused of perpetuating a Kharijite framework in their ideological approach. <sup>(148)</sup>

Despite these shifts, the notion of conquest has not been entirely abandoned within Islamist thought, even among moderates who frame their positions as a pragmatic reordering of priorities. Secular perspectives, which restrict jihād to defensive purposes, remain outside this interpretive framework.

## Chapter Six

# TOWARD THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ISLAM

*The Muslim Brotherhood affirms its alignment with even the most ardent nationalists in their devotion to the homeland and their dedication to its liberation and advancement, supporting all who sincerely pursue these aims. Yet, whereas nationalist aspirations may culminate in the restoration of the nation's sovereignty and glory, for the Brotherhood this represents only one stage of a broader mission. Beyond national liberation, their vision extends to elevating the banner of the Islamic ummah across the globe and ensuring that the Qur'ān's message is proclaimed universally*

Ḥasan al-Bannā

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<sup>(148)</sup> This is an extremist sect that emerged in the early history of the Islamic State after Muḥammad's death, during the reign of the 4<sup>th</sup> caliph. They believed that any Muslim, irrespective of his descent or ethnicity, is qualified for the role of caliph, provided he is morally flawless. It is the duty of Muslims to rebel against and depose caliphs who commit a major sin. Most Kharijite groups branded as unbelievers those who had committed a grave sin, and the most militant declared killing of such unbelievers to be licit, unless they repent.

The final victory of Islam is deemed inevitable, not only according to exegeses of the sacred texts, but also because all Muslims, ancient and modern, are certain of the validity and inevitability of this prophecy. It is a divine promise, and only a matter of time before it is fulfilled: **It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the religion of Truth, so that he may cause it to prevail over all other religions, however hateful this may be to the polytheists (Sūrah 61:9).**

It is reported that the Prophet declared: **The earth was folded to me all, so that I could see its east and west, and I was given the yellow or red and white treasures, meaning gold and silver (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim -7207).** In another narration he said: **I was sent with concise yet comprehensive speech and supported with awe. While I was sleeping, the keys to the treasures of the earth were brought to me and placed in my hand (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī -6861, Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān -6254).** In *Musnad Aḥmad* -22726, it is recorded: **The easts and wests of the earth will be opened to you, and its inhabitants will be in Hell, except for those who fear God and embrace the Truth. Additionally, in Musnad Aḥmad – 16632: This matter will reach as far as night and day have reached (meaning everywhere), and God will not leave a house of clay nor of wool without this religion entering it with the honor of the mighty, or the humiliation of the humble, with which God honors Islam, and with humiliation, with which God humiliates disbelief. In the same Musnad -23429: There will not remain on the surface of the earth a house made of clay or wool but God will enter the word of Islam into it, with glory or humiliation. God will either exalt them and make them among its people, or humiliate them and they will be submitted to it (meaning the word of God). The same prophetic tradition is repeated in Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān -6585, and elsewhere.**

At the beginning of his mission, according to Muslim belief, the Prophet of Islam asked the Quraysh to follow him, promising them



immense gains: I want to focus on one word that the Arabs believe in and the non-Arabs pay jizyah to them with it. They asked: What is it? He responded: Ten things. They asked: What are they? He said: There is no god but Allah. They responded by standing up, shaking their clothes, and saying: Make the gods one god! This is indeed a strange thing. He continued reciting until he reached the point: They have not yet tasted My Punishment! (*Musnad Ahmad* – 3417).

Early Islamic thought, as reflected in both public and intellectual discourse, evolved from notions of Quraysh leadership toward a broader conception of Muslim authority. With the establishment of the Madīnah polity, the emphasis shifted from tribal dominance to a universal framework in which identity was defined by faith rather than ethnicity. Within this paradigm, sovereignty is articulated not as an end in itself, but as a means to uphold the supremacy of God’s word, with economic and political structures oriented toward religious legitimacy. Qur’ānic injunctions emphasizing the superiority of believers (Sūrah 3:139, 47:35) reinforce the idea that Muslims, as the **best community brought forth for mankind**, are entitled to preeminence both locally and globally. Thus, the inseparability of Islamic sovereignty from Muslim political authority became a central theme in the conceptualization of power and legitimacy.

The legal relationship between Muslims and unbelievers can be summarized as follows:

### Globally:

#### The Dissemination of Islam:

The concept of jihād has historically encompassed both the defense of Muslim territories against external threats and the active dissemination of Islam beyond its borders. Within this framework, the removal of obstacles to the propagation of the faith—even

through coercive means—was often legitimized as part of a broader religious mission. Consequently, the idea of expansion into non-believer lands occupies a prominent place in Islamic cultural memory.

Despite efforts by moderate voices to reinterpret or downplay this dimension, exegetical traditions, classical and modern jurisprudence, and educational and religious discourses have frequently celebrated the legacy of conquest and the vast reach of Islamic empires. This celebration intensifies during periods of Islamist ascendancy, though it coexists with narratives of victimhood when Muslims faced external aggression. Critiques of this legacy remain marginal, often stigmatized within public opinion, which tends to resist questioning the historical achievements of Islamic expansion.

Philosophically, this discrepancy reflects the duality of jihād as both a defensive and expansionist paradigm, while historically it underscores the enduring pride in past conquests even as contemporary Islamist movements rarely advocate invasion as a practical project.

Hasan al-Bannā, the foundational ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, articulates a layered framework for Islam's objectives in war. His doctrine of jihād and territorial expansion synthesizes classical jurisprudence with modern anti-colonial aspirations, categorized as follows:<sup>(149)</sup>

- \* **Defensive Mandates:** The immediate necessity of repelling aggression and safeguarding the “five necessities”: family, self, wealth, homeland, and religion—alongside the physical liberation of the homeland.

- \* **Ensuring freedom of religion and belief for believers who are targeted by unbelievers trying to sway them from their faith.**

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<sup>(149)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, The Epistle of al-Jihād.*

**\* Safeguarding the message and ensuring its universal accessibility, and clarifying the responses of individuals and communities to it. Islam has often been framed as a comprehensive program of social reform, embodying ideals of truth, justice, and moral order. From this perspective, barriers to its dissemination are historically understood as challenges to be removed, sometimes through coercive means, though belief itself is not to be compelled.**

**This framework also establishes differentiated modes of engagement: believers are regarded as members of a fraternal community; those under covenant or protection are entitled to rights and security; and hostile groups are to be confronted proportionally, with peace extended when aggression ceases.**

**\* Political Discipline: The use of force to address treachery, treaty violations, or internal rebellion against the established Islamic order.**

**\* Supporting oppressed believers wherever they may be and aiding them against oppressors.**

**Beyond immediate defense, al-Bannā's discourse contains a distinct expansionist element. He redefines "patriotism" not as being limited to modern borders, but as a religious impulse to "conquer the lands and rule the world" under the banner of Islamic justice. He explicitly links the Qur'ānic mandate of **fighting until there is no more persecution** (Sūrah 2:193) to what is framed as a divinely sanctioned expansion, which he argues was superior to Western imperialism.<sup>(150)</sup> This vision extends to the restoration of former Islamic territories,<sup>(151)</sup> specifically citing the historical**

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<sup>(150)</sup> Ibid., Our Invitation.

<sup>(151)</sup> Ibid., An Invitation to the Youth.

Khedivial Egyptian influence in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Zeila, Harar, and Massawa) as a prerequisite for global Islamic unity.<sup>(152)</sup>

The same doctrine is supported by Muṣṭafā al-Siba'ī (one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, who died in 1964), who argues: War is a battle waged by Islam to liberate the community from external aggression, and to secure religious freedom and social justice for all peoples.<sup>(153)</sup> Islamic scholars agree that Sūrah 9 is the last Sūrah of the Qur'ān, in addition to Verse 281 of Sūrah 2 and the last verse in Sūrah 4.<sup>(154)</sup> Its verses have abrogated previous verses, or completed their provisions, according to those who reject the idea of abrogation.<sup>(155)</sup> Regardless of the historical veracity of this claim, the idea is deeply embedded in the Islamic intellectual tradition. As for Sūrat al-Tawbah (Sūrah 9), commonly translated as “Repentance,” it is also referred to by various titles—such as the Sūrah of Dispensation (*Sūrat al-Barā'ah*) and the Sūrah of Torment (*Sūrat al-'Adhāb*)—each of which conveys aspects of Islam’s restrictive conditions for non-believers in one form or another, according to statements from various scholars. Sūrah 9 has often

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<sup>(152)</sup> Ibid., Chapter titled: *The Meeting of Heads of Regions and Jihād Centers held in Cairo on September 8, 1945*, it is stated: “After that, we want our southern borders to ensure that our rights are preserved in Eritrea, then Zela, Harar, and the Upper Nile. Those areas whose soil was mixed with the blood of the Egyptian conqueror, constructed by the Egyptian hand, and the Egyptian flag fluttered in its skies. Then it was usurped from the body of the homeland unjustly and aggressively and there is no international agreement or legal status that gives the right to it to anyone other than Egypt, even if others refuse that. It is our duty not to receive the borders of our country from others and to return to our history in that regard and to see what a heavy price we paid in blood and lives for the sake of securing our borders is not for colonial ambitions or geographical gains, but for vital necessities that cannot be circumvented or exceeded.”

<sup>(153)</sup> *Peace and War in Islam: A Systematic Study*.

<sup>(154)</sup> Al-Naysabūrī, *The Discourse on the Last Revelation of the Qur'ān*.

<sup>(155)</sup> Some Muslim scholars reject the idea of abrogating the sacred statements, meaning abrogating rulings. This includes Abū Muslim al-Isfahanī ibn Baḥr and modern scholars such as Rashīd Ridā, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, Muḥammad al-Khudarī, Muḥammad Abū Zahra, and Sayyid Quṭb.

been interpreted within Islamic tradition as authorizing the termination of treaties and legitimizing armed struggle against non-believers, either to secure submission through faith or through the payment of jizyah. In contemporary discourse, however, moderate scholars often avoid invoking this Sūrah when responding to accusations of Islamic aggression, instead highlighting verses and traditions that emphasize peace, coexistence, and freedom of belief. Such selectivity reflects broader attempts to reconcile Islamic heritage with modern international norms. This divergence underscores a dissonance between classical jurisprudence, which often celebrates expansion and conquest, and contemporary reformist approaches that stress defensive jihād or prioritize coexistence.<sup>(156)</sup> The emergence of concepts such as the “jurisprudence of prioritization” illustrates efforts to adapt the ideal of Islamic supremacy to current conditions of weakness, postponing offensive strategies while maintaining them as ultimate objectives.<sup>(157)</sup> Philosophically, this reflects the enduring debate over whether jihād should be understood primarily as a defensive necessity or as a universalist mission, while historically it highlights the shifting interpretations of Sūrah 9 in response to changing political and social realities.

Exegetical traditions surrounding the so-called “verse of the sword:” **When these months of grace are over, slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive, besiege them, and**

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<sup>(156)</sup> *Al-Faridah al-Gha'ibah* [The missing obligation] by Muḥammad Abd al-Salam Farag, who was executed along with the four who assassinated President Sadat, is a clear and frank constitution for jihādists who are not interested in *Taqiyyah* like moderate Islamists.

<sup>(157)</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī, for example, discusses jihād without denouncing the concept of offensive jihād; instead, he suspends its application on the basis that there are now no obstacles to disseminating Islam worldwide through peaceful advocacy, as governments allow pluralism and modern means of communication are available. His words certainly imply that if the peaceful call is obstructed, campaigns would be justified. He also does not denounce the idea of conquest in itself but rather emphasizes that it is no longer necessary at present; refer to *The Jurisprudence of Prioritization*, p. 61.

lie in wait for them at every conceivable place. Yet if they should repent, take to prayer and pay the *zakāt*, let them go their way (Sūrah 9:5) have played pivotal roles in shaping Islamic conceptions of war and treaty relations. Many classical commentators (including Ibn Kathīr, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū Sa'īd 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Bayḍāwī, and Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Ālūsī) interpret the verse as abrogating prior conciliation with polytheists, citing reports that no covenant remained valid after the revelation of Sūrah 9. Others, however, reject the notion of abrogation, arguing instead that each verse retains applicability depending on historical circumstances, thus emphasizing contextual interpretation. <sup>(158)</sup> However, some restrict the matter to the polytheists of Makkah, such as Ibn al-'Arabī. <sup>(159)</sup>

Exegesis of the “Verse of the Sword” (Sūrah 9:5) provides the basis for a significant legal distinction regarding the treatment of polytheists. While a literalist reading suggests a binary choice between conversion and combat, historical application suggests a more nuanced jurisprudential stratification. Many classical jurists argue that the absolute ultimatum of the verse applies exclusively to the Arabian polytheists, who are viewed as having fundamentally apostatized from the original monotheism (*al-Ḥanīfiyyah*) of Ibrāhīm. <sup>(160)</sup> Consequently, they were treated under the legal

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<sup>(158)</sup> Such as Muḥammad al-Ghazālī in his book *Kayfa Nata'amal Ma'a al-Qur'ān* [How to Approach the Qur'ān], p. 75.

<sup>(159)</sup> He states, “*The Almighty’s saying, **So slay the polytheists**, is specific to every unbeliever in God, such as an idol worshipper, but in reality it is general to everyone who unbelieves in God. However, due to the strength of the word, its use is restricted to the Arab polytheists, to whom the covenant was made, and those of their kind.*” *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [The Legal Rulings Derived from the Qur'ān], Sūrah 9.

<sup>(160)</sup> The first person to introduce its worship, according to Islamic sources, was a person called Luḥayy ibn Ḥarītha ibn 'Amr ibn 'Amir al-Azdī, and he was the grandfather of the tribe Khuza'ah). *Idols*, by al-Kalbī.



framework of apostasy, for which no jizyah was accepted. However, some believe that jizyah should not be taken from non-Arab polytheists either, but rather that they should have the choice between Islam and death; this, however, was not the majority opinion.

In contrast, as the conquests expanded into Persia and India, the majority of scholars (notably in the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools) extended the status of dhimmah to non-Arab polytheists. By treating them as functionally equivalent to the People of the Book, Muslim administrators could collect jizyah rather than enforcing the death penalty. This pragmatic legal evolution indicates that the Verse of the Sword is often interpreted through a territorial and historical lens rather than as a universal mandate for the elimination of all non-monotheists.

Sayyid Quṭb's <sup>(161)</sup> interpretation of Sūrah 9 is particularly significant because he treats it as the culmination of Qur'anic rulings on relations with non-believers. His statement that *“the temporary provisions mentioned have not been abrogated, so it is not permissible to act on them... after the revelation of the final rulings in Sūrah 9”*

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<sup>(161)</sup> In his commentary on Sūrah 9 in *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Sayyid Quṭb addresses what he describes as “defeatist tendencies” among certain Muslims. He argues that these individuals, overwhelmed by contemporary weakness and external criticism—particularly Orientalist critiques of jihād—rely on provisional rulings while neglecting Islam's broader vision. According to Quṭb, such rulings were revealed for specific circumstances and cannot be viewed as Islam's ultimate position.

He stresses that the Qur'anic conception of jihād is not limited to defensive struggle but is fundamentally aimed at liberating humanity from subjugation to man-made systems, ensuring exclusive devotion to God. For Quṭb, the weakness of Muslims stems not from Islam itself but from their departure from its principles. He warns that attributing this weakness to Islam reflects a sense of defeat and a lack of confidence in the faith.

Quṭb further explains that while temporary rulings—such as treaties or limited concessions—may be applied in particular contexts, they do not represent Islam's final approach. The ultimate rulings, revealed in Sūrah 9, outline a comprehensive framework for striving against oppression and injustice. Thus, the Muslim community must persist in improving its condition, removing obstacles, and working toward the application of these final rulings, rather than resigning itself to provisional measures as permanent solutions.

reflects a methodological stance: earlier verses of tolerance or truce are not erased, but they are subordinated to the “final rulings” of chapter 9, which he sees as definitive. Quṭb positions Sūrah 9 as the conclusive framework for Muslim dealings with unbelievers, suggesting that the Qur'an's trajectory moves from provisional tolerance to permanent confrontation once the Muslim community is strong enough. Regarding dynamic application, he emphasizes *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) as the mechanism by which Muslims determine which rulings apply in different historical circumstances. This allows flexibility, but always with the understanding that the final rulings of Sūrah 9 remain the ultimate reference point. He explicitly ties this to the era of Islamic conquests, arguing that the expansion of Islam was carried out under these definitive rulings. This situates his interpretation within a narrative of Islam's global mission and dominance. In the framework of Islamic Centralism, his reading reinforces the idea that Islam's normative position is one of supremacy, with earlier conciliatory measures seen as tactical, not permanent.

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Thus, despite historical transformations, the idea of conquest continues to hold a measure of respect within the collective unconscious of Muslims. At present, however, attention is directed primarily toward defensive jihād rather than offensive jihād, a stance that corresponds to the current state of weakness experienced by the Muslim world; even notions of expansion are now articulated within a defensive framework. Nevertheless, the concept of conquest and the liberation of peoples remains embedded in Islamic thought, occasionally resurfacing—often cautiously—in Islamist writings, depending on the boldness of the author. Most significant is the refusal, shared by Islamists and broader public opinion, to condemn the historical record of

conquest or to acknowledge the exploitative, colonial character of the Islamic expansions.

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**\* *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār al-Kufr* (The Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief):**

Just as Islam categorizes humanity into believers and unbelievers—into the party of God and the party of Satan—it also divides the earth into the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief, with additional intermediary classifications.

There are no precise definitions in the sacred texts for the concepts of the *Dār al-Islām* (the Abode of Islam) and *Dār al-Kufr* (the Abode of Unbelief). Similarly, Islamic jurisprudence has not reached a conclusive or universally accepted meaning for these terms; multiple divisions and varying definitions exist. Beyond these differences, what is significant is that classical Islamic jurisprudence, deeply embedded in Islamic culture for centuries, has consistently maintained that the world is essentially divided into an Abode of Islam and a land of unbelief. The apparent implication of this division is that religious affiliation constitutes the primary distinction in Islam—contrasting, for example, with class divisions in Marxist thought. Religion, therefore, is regarded as the fundamental determinant of identity and belonging.

Despite the fragmentation of the Abode of Islam into numerous states following the establishment of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, the conviction that religion forms the core of identity has remained widespread. Even amid wars among Muslim communities and the rise of international alliances that included both Muslim individuals and nations, this belief has persisted for centuries. On this basis, Islamic thought has traditionally held that Muslims residing in the Abode of War are obliged to struggle alongside Muslims in the Abode of Islam—even against the country in which they live—thus

potentially functioning as a “fifth column” in favor of the Abode of Islam. Within prevailing jurisprudential discourse, such action is not considered national treason but rather a noble jihādīst duty, since “Islamic citizenship” is viewed as the essential nationality. Extremist Islamists, and some moderates as well—particularly non-Arabs—oppose nationalist ideology, often regarding it as part of a Western conspiracy against Islam.

The broadest definition of *Dār al-Islām* is any territory where Islamic law is enforced or observed. Although this definition is relative—given that *takfīr* has historically been a common tool used by Muslims against one another and their states—it is nevertheless the definition upon which most prominent jurists agree. The Ḥanafī school, generally the most lenient, holds that the Abode of Islam ceases to exist when non-Islamic legislation prevails, such as the non-punishment of adultery, usury, or alcohol consumption, or when a non-Islamic state lies between two Islamic states, or when Muslims are denied residence or security.

A minority of jurists consider a country part of the Abode of Islam if Muslims are able to perform their rituals and apply aspects of Sharī'ah, even if the state is not governed entirely by Islamic law. Some jurists stipulate that the ruler must be Muslim, while others require that the judge must be Muslim or elected by Muslims.<sup>(162)</sup> Rarely, more open-minded Islamists have argued that any country where Muslims can freely practice worship and invite others to Islam should be considered part of the Abode of Islam, thereby including certain Western countries within its scope.

According to these definitions, *Dār al-Islām* is not fixed but encompasses any land where the requisite conditions apply, including conquered territories. Thus, *Dār al-Islām* is determined

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<sup>(162)</sup> Tamer Bağenoğlu, *The Rights of Non-believer Subjects in Islamic Jurisprudence*.

by the furthest point where Islam is implemented. <sup>(163)</sup> Jihādists and extremists, however, restrict the definition to lands where a Muslim state is established, divine law prevails, and Muslims support one another. Anything outside this framework is deemed the Abode of War, where a Muslim’s relationship is limited to combat or treaty, but is never recognized as *Dār al-Islām*. <sup>(164)</sup>

The most widely accepted definition of the Abode of Unbelief is any territory where non-Islamic rulings are enforced, regardless of the number of Muslims residing there. Consequently, the Abode of Unbelief is essentially defined as any land not considered *Dār al-Islām*. <sup>(165)</sup> Jurists also identify the Abode of Transgression, referring to Muslim lands whose inhabitants rebel against the Imām, and the Abode of Apostasy, referring to Muslim lands whose people renounce Islam. <sup>(166)</sup>

Unbelievers are further classified into categories, as outlined by Ibn al-Qayyim and accepted by the majority of jurists: belligerents and those under covenant. The latter group is divided into three: (1) dhimmīs (people under covenant), (2) those under truce, and (3) *ahl al-Amān* (those under a security guarantee). Jurists devote separate sections to each category, such as truce, security, and dhimmah. Terms like “covenant” and “pledge” encompass all these arrangements, signifying protection under a binding contract. <sup>(167)</sup>

The categories of unbelievers can then be outlined as follows:

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<sup>(163)</sup> This thesis reminds one of a phrase attributed to David Ben Gurion that Israel’s borders are the last point at which an Israeli soldier stops.

<sup>(164)</sup> Sayyed Quṭb, *Milestones along the Way*.

<sup>(165)</sup> ‘Abbās ‘Alī ‘Amīd al-Zanjānī, presents a detailed study on the division of the world from different Islamic points of view, which he summarizes in six theories, titled *The abode of Islam*.

<sup>(166)</sup> ‘Abbās ‘Alī al-Zanjānī, *Dār al-ridda* [The Abode of Apostasy].

<sup>(167)</sup> *Rulings Concerning the People under the Covenant*, p. 167.

### **Section One: People of War (Belligerents):**

These are unbelievers who have not entered into a dhimmah contract and do not enjoy Muslim protection or covenant. Their blood and wealth are considered permissible, meaning that Muslims may lawfully kill belligerent unbelievers and seize their property. The prophetic Sunnah affirms this ruling, and Muḥammad applied it in his campaigns against polytheists. Belligerents are not limited to active combatants but include all inhabitants of the Abode of War capable of fighting, even if they do not initiate hostilities. Likewise, unbelievers who refuse a covenant with Muslims are deemed belligerents, even if they seek peaceful coexistence.

### **Section Two: People under Covenant**

#### **1. The Dhimmīs (Protected People under Covenant):**

These are non-Muslims who openly profess their unbelief while residing in the Abode of Islam. They are required to pay jizyah and comply with the provisions of Islamic law. Their status renders their lives and property inviolable; it is impermissible for Muslims to attack them, as they are under the pledge and protection of the Muslim community.

#### **2. People under Truce:**

This category refers to non-Muslims with whom Muslims conclude a treaty to suspend hostilities for a specified period, based on considerations determined by the Imām. Such treaties are not intended to establish perpetual peace, as that would undermine the essence of jihād. Rather, they are entered into when Muslims are in a position of weakness. During the treaty period, the lives and property of the treaty partners are safeguarded, and any violation of the covenant is strictly prohibited: **O believers fulfill your commitments** (Sūrah 5:1). Once the treaty expires, their status



reverts to that of combatants, and their protection ceases. Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī even describes truces as one of the permissible deceptions of war. In his view, temporary agreements with adversaries could be strategically employed without compromising the ultimate objective of victory, since the suspension of hostilities was not an end in itself but a tactical measure within the broader framework of conflict.

### **3. *Ahl al-Amān* (The People under Security Guarantee):**

This group consists of non-Muslims who enter the Abode of Islam under a guarantee of safety, such as merchants, artisans, professionals whose skills are needed by Muslims, foreign envoys, and refugees seeking protection. Their lives and property are inviolable for the duration of their stay, provided they honor the agreements established with the Muslim community.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence recognizes the right of the Islamic state and its citizens to grant asylum to non-believers; however, this right is reserved primarily for Muslims. By contrast, dhimmīs (those under covenant) are excluded from exercising this prerogative, which is reserved for Muslims alone. This distinction effectively diminishes the status and rights of non-believers holding Islamic citizenship, positioning them as guests rather than full proprietors of their homeland, since they lack the authority to extend asylum to others of their category—a right accorded exclusively to Muslims.

Based on this division, the relationship between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief can be categorized as follows:

1. A war relationship where there are no treaties or agreements.
2. A covenant relationship.
3. Ibn Taymiyyah referred to situations in which a territory lies between these two categories—neither the Abode of War nor the

Abode of Islam—as a complex relationship.<sup>(168)</sup> Contemporary extremist groups have appropriated this notion to describe Muslim countries whose governments do not fully implement Sharī'ah law, classifying them as neither an Abode of Islam nor an Abode of Unbelief.<sup>(169)</sup>

### War Relationship:

#### \* The Abode of Unbelief is an Abode of War:

The mainstream perspective within Islamic jurisprudence holds that the Abode of Unbelief is, by definition, an Abode of War unless bound by a treaty with the Abode of Islam. This view asserts that the fundamental relationship between Islam and unbelief is one of conflict, aimed at disseminating the religion and establishing its supremacy.<sup>(170)</sup> Unless a peace treaty exists, lands of unbelief are deemed lands of war, open to conquest by Muslims.

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<sup>(168)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28, Chapter titled: He was asked, about the City Mārdīn is it a City of War or a City of Peace?

<sup>(169)</sup> Such as 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Jarbou', *On the Obligation of Migration from the Abode of Unbelief to the Abode of Islam*.

<sup>(170)</sup> According to Ibn Rushd, Abyssinia and the Turks were excluded according to some jurists: “It was narrated on the authority of Mālik that he said, 'It is not permissible to begin with Abyssinia or with the Turks in war, as it was narrated that the Messenger said, *leave Abyssinia as long as they leave you*. Mālik was asked about the authenticity of this narration, but he did not admit it. He said, *People are still avoiding their campaigns*.” [The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid], Book on Jihād, Chapter Two.

However, al-Ṭabarī mentioned, quoting Abū Ja'far that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb tried to invade it in the twentieth year AH, but the campaign failed: “Al-Waqidi said, “In this year, i.e., the year twenty, 'Umar established the administrative apparatus. In that year, 'Umar sent 'Alqamah ibn Mujazziz al-Mudlajī to Abyssinia through the sea. This is because Abyssinia assaulted an extremist side of the Abode of Islam, but Muslims were injured, so 'Umar made it a duty to never carry anyone into the sea again. As for Abū Ma'shar: This battle (called al-Asawda) at sea took place in the year thirty-one.” *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, pp. 516-517.

The belligerent is allowed to shed blood with no protection or covenant, according to al-Shawkānī,<sup>(171)</sup> just as the life of a non-believer is not inviolable except through the establishment of a covenant of protection.<sup>(172)</sup> In the absence of such a covenant, his blood is considered legally vulnerable by default, with protection arising only through contractual agreement with Muslims.

The majority of jurists, both classical and modern, have upheld the doctrine that the fundamental relationship between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief is war, with peace regarded as temporary and exceptional. This doctrine rests on a foundational principle in Islamic thought: sovereignty over the world is considered a natural right of Islam alone. Those who deny this right are deemed illegitimate and aggressors against the sovereignty of God, warranting war until Islam prevails over the inhabitants of the earth. The Qur'ān explicitly supports this notion: **God's will to establish the Truth in accordance with His words and to wipe out the disbelievers** (Sūrah 8:7). Numerous aḥādīth reinforce this perspective.

A minority of Islamic thinkers, however, argue the opposite: that the basis of the relationship between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War is peace. Among them are Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā,<sup>(173)</sup> 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād,<sup>(174)</sup> Maḥmūd Shaltūt,<sup>(175)</sup> Aḥmad Sobḥī Maṣṣūr,<sup>(176)</sup> and Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī.<sup>(177)</sup> Al-Zuḥaylī

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<sup>(171)</sup> *As-Sayl al-Jarrār al-Mutadaffiq 'ala Hada'iq al-Azhār* [The rushing torrent overflowing onto the gardens of flowers], p. 904.

<sup>(172)</sup> 'Ala' al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Mas'ūd al-Kāsānī, *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' fī Tartīb al-Sharā'i'* [The Unique Masterpieces in the Organization of the Legal Rulings], Book of Expeditions, Vol. Seven, p. 101.

<sup>(173)</sup> Commentary on the Qur'ān, known as *Tafsīr al-Manār*, first edition 1346 AH, 1928 AD, al-Manār Press in Egypt, Vol. Ten, p. 306.

<sup>(174)</sup> 'Abd al-Sattār 'Alī al-Satoḥī, *War Ethics in Islam*.

<sup>(175)</sup> *Islam is a Faith and Law*, pp. 453 ff.

<sup>(176)</sup> *The Overlooked Dimensions of 'Umar's Biography*, and: *Hermeneutics of the Qur'ān*.

argues that jihād is a form of what is now called “proactive defense,” a means for the ruler to protect the spread of advocacy or to defend Muslims (p. 125). He maintains that conquest is permitted only if the conquered state has assaulted Islam or is preparing to attack Islamic lands. Thus, the issue is not an inherent right to expansion and sovereignty exercised whenever circumstances are favorable, but rather a matter of proactive defense.

He further argues that jurists of both the Sunni and Shi'ite traditions, during the era of jurisprudential ijtihād in the second century AH, regarded war as the fundamental basis of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. This perspective was grounded in the division of the world into two spheres and relied on a literal and general reading of Qur'anic verses without attempting to reconcile or harmonize them (p. 130). He rejects that doctrine, arguing that the reason for fighting in Islam is aggression, not unbelief (pp. 131-132). Ultimately, he concludes that the juristic opinion—that war is the basis of the relationship—is not a binding argument, as it was a historically contingent judgment.

Despite this, al-Zuḥaylī is unable to go as far as Shaltūt or Maṣṣūr. He maintains that preventive defense encompasses scenarios where proselytizers are targeted—specifically through the restriction of the freedom of preaching—or where *fitnah* (religious strife) is instigated (p. 93). Thus, he considers peace to be conditioned upon the freedom of Muslims to proselytize, without calling for a reciprocal right for non-believers. Moreover, he does not object to the three options (Islam, jizyah, or the sword) (p. 98), contenting himself with denying that peace only prevails when the law of Muḥammad is followed worldwide (p. 97). He also implicitly concurs with the jurists he criticizes insofar as he accepts the principle that peace is fully realized only when Islam prevails as a system rather than merely as a religion. In this view, peace is

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<sup>(177)</sup> *The Effects of War in Islamic Jurisprudence - a Comparative Study.*

achieved through the submission of non-Muslims to Muslim authority, particularly as he refers to permanent covenants in the form of dhimmah contracts, rather than to the temporary agreements found elsewhere in Islamic jurisprudence.

Al-'Aqqād expresses similar ideas in a more cautious manner. He emphasizes that relations in the Islamic constitution are peaceful unless Muslims are forced into war for self-defense or to prevent aggression. Yet he justifies the imposition of jizyah on the People of the Book as a precautionary measure, viewing them as naturally allied with polytheists. He also considers non-Muslim countries without treaties to be enemy territories, ultimately conditioning peace on the Muslims' right to proselytize.<sup>(178)</sup>

The author's concern is not to adjudicate "true Islam" but to highlight, even through al-Zuhaylī's words, that the majority of jurists have consistently deemed war the basic relationship between Islam and unbelief.

Those who argue that peace is the fundamental principle governing relations between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief rely on certain Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions that call for peace with non-aggressive unbelievers and prohibit initiating warfare unless the other side begins hostilities or demonstrates an intention to do so. Nevertheless, no one denies that spreading Islam is a constant objective for Muslims. The majority holds that the sword should not pursue this objective directly; rather, the preparation of military power is intended to secure the delivery of the divine message to all humanity. This, in turn, implies compelling non-Muslim states to open their doors to Islamic preachers, or otherwise having those doors forced open by military means. Simultaneously, almost all agree that the borders of Muslim states should not be opened to preachers of other religions or sects, and that the state should prohibit any local activity opposed to

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<sup>(178)</sup> *War Ethics in Islam*, p. 23.

Islam, in accordance with the provisions of the sharī'ah, which even public opinion among Muslims broadly accepts in this regard. Most Islamists further reinforce the claim that warfare in Islam is defensive in nature, asserting that the conquests were not aimed at worldly gain but at spreading the faith, while presenting the imposition of the Islamic order and the transmission of its message through offensive action as something other than aggression.

However, this argument is insufficient. Islam begins with a peaceful invitation, but war follows if unbelievers refuse to accept it or pay jizyah. At minimum, Muslims demand that unbelievers not obstruct the call—militarily or politically—by preventing Muslims from preaching or practicing their rituals. If they refuse, fighting is deemed legitimate. Thus, claiming that peace is the basis of relations is untenable, since offering unbelievers only the choice between Islam, jizyah, or war is itself a form of coercion.

Jurists agree that war does not begin without warning, though some hold that the universal proclamation of Islam suffices as such a warning. The implicit threat of war is evident in Muḥammad's letters to Khusraw and Caesar, which combined the call to Islam with the warning of conflict, without offering dialogue or public debate. If peace were truly the basis, Muslim leaders could have dispatched preachers worldwide to invite people to Islam, especially given the freedom of travel at the time. Instead, they preferred the threat of war.

If a paradigm of permanent peace is to be established within Islamic political thought, it would necessitate a reevaluation of classical legal concepts such as jizyah and territorial expansion in favor of recognizing religious pluralism as a legitimate sociopolitical reality. However, significant discrepancy remains, as traditionalist discourses—supported by various scholarly circles—continue to emphasize the concept of *al-Hakimiyya* (divine sovereignty) and the global mission of Islam as central theological mandates. Sayyid Quṭb offers a clear articulation of his



understanding of the peace Islam seeks: “When Islam strives for peace, it does not aim at a superficial peace limited to securing the territory where Muslims reside. Rather, the peace envisioned by Islam is that religion—understood as the governing law of society—be devoted solely to God, that all obedience be directed to Him alone, and that no group of people assumes lordship over others.”<sup>(179)</sup> This conception applies not only to extremists, but also to most Islamists in general.

The discourse within Islamic jurisprudence regarding the relationship between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Unbelief is characterized by a persistent duality of interpretation. While classical frameworks often prioritize expansionist doctrines, a contemporary current of scholars argues that peace—based on invitation rather than conflict—is the foundational state.<sup>(180)</sup> However, within traditionalist circles, this “peace-oriented” model is frequently characterized as a minority position, particularly when it advocates for non-aggression regardless of the actions of non-believer polities. Such perspectives are often situated at the intersection of modernist reform and secular thought. Furthermore, within the legal frameworks that prioritize peace, many jurists emphasize that any potential conflict must be preceded by formal warning and invitation. In this view, such preliminary stages are not considered an escalation of hostilities, but rather a mandatory legal prerequisite that distinguishes legitimate engagement from sudden, unannounced warfare.

Certain Islamist discourses suggest a pragmatic suspension of the classical binary between *Dār al-Islam* and *Dār al-Ḥarb*. This shift is often framed not as a theological rejection of the classical model, but as a strategic adaptation to the current geopolitical vulnerability of the Muslim world—an approach rooted in political

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<sup>(179)</sup> *Milestones along the Way*.

<sup>(180)</sup> The two opinions are analyzed in some detail by 'Abbās al-Dhahabī in *International Relations under Islamic Governance*. He is one of the proponents of the principle of peace as the basic relation, belonging to *Shi'is*.

realism. For instance, some contemporary theorists<sup>(181)</sup> re-categorize Western societies as *Dār al-Da'wah* (the Abode of Advocacy). This re-classification serves a dual purpose: it avoids the legal obligation of hostilities associated with *Dār al-Ḥarb* while circumventing the total legal assimilation implied by *Dār al-Islam*, thereby carving out a space for Muslims to operate within secular legal frameworks without renouncing traditional doctrines.

The tactical shift in Islamist rhetoric—often characterized by humanitarian or democratic slogans—does not necessarily signify a departure from foundational doctrines. Rather, it may represent a strategic prioritization aimed at avoiding premature confrontation with superior external powers. Scholarly analysis often identifies a bifurcation between outward-facing diplomatic discourse and inward-facing communal mobilization.

Central to this discrepancy is the classical jurisprudential view of peace treaties as inherently provisional. In the framework of al-Māwardī<sup>(182)</sup> and subsequent traditionalist thought, the caliph's

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<sup>(181)</sup> Shaykh Muḥammad 'Akkām, one of the prominent Islamic preachers in Syria had a dialogue with “al-Bilad” magazine, published in Lebanon on 12/4/1997.

<sup>(182)</sup> “What is required of him regarding general matters are ten things: First, preserving the religion according to its established principles and what the community's predecessors agreed upon. If an innovator or a deviant person with doubt arises, the Imām explains the evidence to him, clarifies what is right, and applies the necessary rights and limits so that the religion is guarded from error and the community is protected from deviation. Second, implementing rulings between quarreling parties and resolving disputes to ensure justice prevails, preventing oppressors from transgressing and protecting the rights of the oppressed. Third, protecting the homeland and the sanctities to ensure people can live their lives and travel safely without fear of deception or harm. Fourth, implementing penalties to ensure that God's prohibitions are not transgressed and to safeguard the rights of His servants. Fifth, fortifying borders with defensive measures and forces to prevent enemies from raiding and violating forbidden areas or shedding the blood of Muslims or those under covenant. Sixth, engaging in Jihād against those who resist Islam after being invited to embrace it, until they convert or enter into the dhimmah to uphold the supremacy of God over all religions. Seventh, the collection of fay' and alms (sadaqat) according to what the Shariah prescribes—both by explicit text and by juristic reasoning (ijtihād)—without fear or coercion. Eighth, estimating gifts and treasury dues without extravagance or frugality, and paying them promptly without delay. Ninth, assigning reliable and honest individuals to delegated responsibilities and entrusted resources

mandate includes the pursuit of Islamic sovereignty as a permanent objective, even if pragmatic necessity dictates temporary conciliation or alliance with non-believer polities. Consequently, the acceptance of a permanent, egalitarian peace with unbelief — without some form of Islamic primacy—is often viewed by traditionalists as a deviation from the established purpose of jihād

The discussion here clearly concerns peace in the military sense rather than peace as a foundational principle, since the military conflict between Islam and unbelief is the central tenet of the prevailing Islamic perspective. During periods of weakness, Muslims can invoke the rulings of the Makkan period, referring to Muḥammad’s means of preaching when he lacked power in Makkah, At that time, he resorted to dialogue, tolerance, and leniency, stating: **Be patient, for I have not been ordered to fight.**

In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, the claim that Islam is a “religion of peace” implies the establishment of peace not between equals, but rather through the hegemony of Islam over non-believers. Certain interpretative traditions within Islamic political jurisprudence maintain that the expansion of Islam’s political authority is a mandatory duty. This perspective advocates for the establishment of hegemony over non-believer territories, often through military means or the imposition of jizyah, as a manifestation of divine sovereignty.

#### **Exegetical Debates on Peace and War:**

The verse 35 in Sūrah 47 states: **Do not waver and call for peace whereas you have the upper hand.** Ibn Kathīr interprets this as a prohibition against weakness in the face of adversaries and against

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*to guarantee effective management and the safeguarding of funds. Tenth, personally overseeing matters and reviewing circumstances to lead the community’s policies and safeguard the nation, avoiding overreliance on delegation due to personal pleasures or worship, as even trusted advisors may deceive.” Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya [Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices] Chapter One, The Imāmate Contract, pp. 40-41.*

seeking peace or compromise when Muslims are in a position of strength. The divine phrase **you have the upper hand** is understood to signify superiority over the enemy. Nevertheless, Ibn Kathīr qualifies this by noting that if non-believers are more numerous and powerful, and the Imām judges that peace or a treaty would serve the community's interest, he may do so. <sup>(183)</sup>

Al-Qurṭubī discusses the relationship between verses that appear to contradict one another, noting scholarly disagreement regarding their rulings. Some hold that the verse, **But if they incline toward peace, then incline toward it** (Sūrah 8:61) was abrogated, contending that God forbids reconciliation unless Muslims are in need. Others argue the opposite—that it abrogated the later verse, or that the two were revealed at different times, one being specific and the other general. The prevailing exegetical view is that peace with unbelievers is permissible only when necessary, particularly if Muslims are too weak to confront them. While most exegetes adopt this doctrine, al-Shawkānī, however, proposes several possibilities, including that the verse prohibits initiating peace but does not forbid accepting it if unbelievers propose it, thereby avoiding the conclusion of abrogation. <sup>(184)</sup>

The most widely accepted position in Islamic thought is the former: appeasement in weakness and confrontation in strength. Many Islamists openly affirm this logic, emphasizing that Shari'ah policy requires actions to be taken according to textual directives, interpreted in light of prevailing circumstances, without neglecting other scriptural imperatives. <sup>(185)</sup> This principle reflects the “jurisprudence of prioritization,” a pragmatic legal framework. The prophetic tradition literature explicitly outlines the logic of

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<sup>(183)</sup> *Commentary on the Glorious Qur'ān.*

<sup>(184)</sup> *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr* [The Omnipotent's Grant of Victory], Sūrah 37:35.

<sup>(185)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Khāleq, in a comment on the two aforementioned verses in *Al-shūrā within the Islamic System of Governance.*

**Islamic warfare against unbelievers: Fight in the name of God, for the sake of God. Fight those who disbelieve in God, but do not commit excesses, betray, mutilate, or kill infants. When encountering polytheist enemies, offer them three options. Accept whichever they choose and refrain from harming them. Invite them to Islam; if they accept, welcome them. Then invite them to migrate to the land of the believers, where they will share equal rights and responsibilities. If they decline, inform them they will be treated as Muslim Bedouins, subject to God's law but excluded from spoils unless they fight alongside Muslims. If they refuse, demand jizyah; if they comply, accept it. If they resist, seek God's help and fight them.”** (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* -2958).

Islamic tradition emphasizes that non-Muslims are to be invited to Islam. If they refuse, classical juristic discussions present two main options: either conflict, or reconciliation under certain conditions such as paying jizyah. These rulings, however, are rooted in specific historical and legal contexts, and contemporary scholarship often debates their applicability to modern times. Once Islamic advocacy had become widespread in the Prophet's era, certain juristic interpretations deemed fighting obligatory without prior warning. The prophetic Sunnah provides evidence for this, including accounts of surprise raids such as the Prophet's campaign against Banū al-Muṣṭaliq. Classical sources also mention tactics such as burning fortresses, destroying buildings, and cutting trees, though these rulings are framed within the norms of warfare at that time. <sup>(186)</sup>

Even when warning is given, it is essentially a warning of war unless unbelievers surrender, abandon their faith, or submit by paying jizyah or *zakāt* to the Muslim caliph. Peace, in this framework, is synonymous with surrender. Compromise

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<sup>(186)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *Al-Mabsūt* [The Expanded], Chapter on The Army's Dealings with the Unbelievers.

agreements seen as unfavorable to Muslims, such as the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, are considered provisional arrangements, not ultimate solutions; they are subject to annulment when conditions allow, as exemplified by Sūrah 9, which nullified treaties with unbelievers and mandated combat.

Since the justification for Islamic warfare at the strategic level is unbelief itself, *takfīr* is used throughout Islamic history to justify fighting various groups, including those who identify as Muslims. *Takfīr* was employed by both state authorities and their opposition. For instance, Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Ḥanafī, the judge of Damascus (d. 556 AH), is reported to have said: “*If I had authority, I would impose the jizyah tax on the Shāfi’īs.*” Similarly, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṭūsī (d. 567 AH) is quoted as saying: “*If I had a command, I would impose jizyah on the Ḥanbalīs.*” Moreover, it was declared in Damascus and elsewhere: “Whoever follows the religion of Ibn Taymiyyah, his property and blood are permissible.” Hatim al-Ḥanbalī also statically asserts: “*Whoever is not a Ḥanbalī is not a Muslim,*” while Abū Bakr al-Muqrī, a preacher in the mosques of Baghdad, uncompromisingly declared the Ḥanbalīs to be unbelievers. When the Shāfi’ī scholar Ibn al-Qushayrī arrived in Baghdad in 469 AH, his disparagement of the Ḥanbalīs led his companions to attack the Ḥanbalī leader, ‘Abd al-Khāliq ibn ‘Īssa, sparking a violent conflict. Furthermore, Caliph al-Wāthiq, when negotiating the release of four thousand captives from the Romans, stipulated that only those who affirmed the Mu’tazilite doctrine that the Qur’ān is created would be released and rewarded; those who believed otherwise remained in captivity. Thus, the legal consequences of unbelief were imposed on those who rejected the Mu’tazilite position, just as Aḥmad ibn Naṣr was executed for maintaining that the Qur’ān is uncreated.<sup>(187)</sup>

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<sup>(187)</sup> Cited from: Ayatollah Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Pluralism and Freedom in Islam: A Study on Freedom of Belief and Sectarian Diversity*.



Scriptural justifications were mobilized to legitimize these exclusionary practices, such as the tradition: **My community will be divided into seventy-three sects. One is in Paradise and seventy-two are in Hell. It was said: O Messenger of God, who are they? He answered: They are *al-Jamā'ah***<sup>(188)</sup> (*Sunan Ibn Mājah* – 3992).

Some contemporary Islamic intellectuals claim that all of Islam's battles were fought in self-defense,<sup>(189)</sup> citing verses that call for the rejection of aggression. They argue this was the case prior to Sūrah 9, which abrogated what came before it or annulled treaties with the unbelievers according to the prevailing opinion — the outcome, in either case, is the same. This claim overlooks two fundamental realities: first, Islamic thought in general views other religions primarily as distortions of earlier divine revelations, thereby classifying them as unbelief; second, it disregards Islam's historical pursuit of global sovereignty. Denying the expansionist nature of early Muslim conquests contradicts well-documented history. Furthermore, Muslim communities generally take pride in the historical expansion of the state, lament its decline, and aspire to the restoration of a perceived golden age. Some writers even attempt to justify past invasions, including the Ottoman conquests, which were often marked by aggression against both non-Muslim and Muslim populations. The denial of offensive jihād by certain moderates appears largely aimed at a Western audience. Such rhetoric does not constitute a rejection of Sharī'ah per se, but rather a denial of the historical existence of a concept that has been deeply rooted in Islamic jurisprudence for centuries. If contemporary exegetes seek to reinterpret sacred texts to exclude notions of supremacy, they are engaging in an entirely separate hermeneutical project.

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<sup>(188)</sup> The term *al-Jamā'ah* refers to those individuals who adhere to the beliefs and practices of the Prophet and his Companions.

<sup>(189)</sup> The reader encounters this view in the works of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, and at times in those of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī and Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī.

This represents an attempt to reformulate Islamic culture by curbing expansionist and aggressive tendencies, as well as the desire for global domination, thereby challenging its centralist orientation.<sup>(190)</sup> Some thinkers with an Islamic-secular orientation pursue this project, though they are sharply criticized by more radical voices such as Sayyid Quṭb.<sup>(191)</sup> Quṭb, for instance, rejects efforts to reinterpret jihād in purely defensive terms: *“Attempting to find defense justifications for Islamic jihād in the narrow sense of the modern concept of defensive warfare and seeking support to prove that the facts of Islamic jihād were merely to repel aggression from neighboring forces against the Islamic homeland (the Arabian Peninsula) reflects little awareness of the nature of this religion and its role on earth. It also heralds defeat against the pressure of today’s reality in the face of the cunning orientalist attack on Islamic jihād.”*<sup>(192)</sup>

**\* Expelling the unbelievers from the Arabian Peninsula:**

Islam initially permitted the presence of non-Muslims from the People of the Book in the Arabian Peninsula; Muḥammad accepted jizyah from them, and Abū Bakr and 'Umar initially continued this practice. Later, however, 'Umar resolved to expel them, relying on statements attributed to Muḥammad—a policy that remained largely undisputed by early authorities, jurists, and public opinion. The Jews of Fadak<sup>(193)</sup> and Khaybar were expelled in the year 20

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<sup>(190)</sup> The issue of jihād in Islam is summarized well and with complete clarity by Ibn Kathīr in the Book *Al-Ijtihād fī Talab al-jihād* [Striving in the Pursuit of jihād].

<sup>(191)</sup> These include Naṣr Abū Zeid, Ḥasan Ḥanafī, and others.

<sup>(192)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 8.

<sup>(193)</sup> 'Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 85.

AH,<sup>(194)</sup> then the Christians of Najran were deported to Najrāniyyah,<sup>(195)</sup> despite their dhimmah Covenant remaining intact.

Among the relevant aḥādīth are those mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -2986: **Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula and reward the delegation in a way that I used to reward them. Ibn 'Abbās said: He remained silent about the third, or he said, so I forgot about it. And in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -4548: I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula until I will not leave anyone but a Muslim. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* -232, 233: Expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula - Expel the Jews of Ḥijāz and the people of Najran from the Arabian Peninsula.**

Some jurists permit limited exceptions. Ibn Ḥanbal allows unbelievers to enter the Ḥijāz for trade for a few days,<sup>(196)</sup> while Abū Ḥanīfah is the only leading jurist to permit dhimmīs entry into the Sacred Mosque.

The principle remains influential despite changing circumstances. In contemporary Saudi Arabia, non-Muslims are prohibited from entering certain sacred territories, though they may enter temporarily for work. They are treated as *Ahl al-Amān* (People under Security), but are not permitted to establish places of worship or practice their faith publicly. This policy resonates with the slogan of al-Qā'ida: Expel the unbeliever armies from the sacred territories.

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<sup>(194)</sup> Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 516.

<sup>(195)</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futuḥ al-Buldan* [The Book of the Conquests of Lands], Vol. One, file 5 of 29. (Najrāniya is a region in Iraq).

<sup>(196)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 62.

### **\* Rules of war in Islam:**

#### **Calling to Islam before the invasion:**

As previously noted, the early Islamic state adhered to the principle of inviting non-Muslims to Islam before battle, offering three options—conversion, payment of jizyah, or war. This practice, however, was short-lived. Soon afterward, raids and invasions were launched without prior warning or presentation of alternatives. A notable case is the conquest of al-Andalus, which followed years of careful preparation.<sup>(197)</sup> Islamic jurisprudence eventually sanctions invasions without warning, on the grounds that Islamic preaching had become sufficiently widespread. Once the message of Islam was deemed adequately disseminated, further invitations or warnings regarding conversion or payment of jizyah are considered unnecessary.

#### **Covenants:**

The Qur'ān commands Muslims to fulfill contracts and covenants in more than one verse: **Fulfil the Covenant of Allah when you have entered into it, and break not your oaths after you have confirmed them** (Sūrah 16:91), **A covenant with Allah must (surely) be answered for.** (Sūrah 33:15), and **be true to all your promises, for you will be called to account for all that you promise** (Sūrah 17:34) among other verses. However, in Sūrah 9, the discourse shifts, as addressed before.

Islamic jurisprudence permits the termination of indefinite covenants after four months, while temporary covenants are to be completed in full. Thus, the Qur'ān did not command a treacherous annulment but rather prescribed a four-month warning for those bound by indefinite agreements. One of the titles of the relevant

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<sup>(197)</sup> Refer to Muḥammad Abū Zayd Ṭanṭawī, *Fath al-'Arab li al-Andalus* [The Arab Conquest of al-Andalus.]

Sūrah 9 signifies Muḥammad's exoneration from treaties with unbelievers.

A committee of exegetes at al-Azhar interprets this verse as annulling only the covenants of traitorous unbelievers who failed to uphold their agreements.<sup>(198)</sup> This opinion, however, is neither widespread nor easily justified, since betrayal would normally warrant immediate annulment rather than a four-month reprieve. Nevertheless, it represents a notable attempt by al-Azhar scholars to soften the severity of classical jurisprudence toward unbelievers.

The Qur'ān also states: **If you fear treachery from any people, throw back their covenant to them on equal terms** (Sūrah 8:58). The meaning here is that if betrayal is suspected, Muslims must openly declare the covenant broken so that its termination is not considered treachery.

The aḥādīth are more flexible. Ibn Ḥazm narrated: The Messenger of God said to the commanders of his brigades: **If you besiege the people of a fortress or a city and they want you to subject them to the rule of God, do not do so, for you do not know whether you agree with the ruling of God regarding them or not. Instead subject them to your rule, and then judge them. For it is easier for you to contravene your protection than to contravene the protection of God.**<sup>(199)</sup> It is narrated with the same meaning in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -1731 and *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* -2612. Al-Sarakhsī (Shams al-A'immaḥ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Sahl), a Ḥanafī scholar, explains this matter in detail,

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<sup>(198)</sup> *Al-Muntakhab fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Selected Commentary on the Noble Qur'ān ], by A Committee of al-Azhar Scholars.

<sup>(199)</sup> *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* [A Treatise on the Principles of Islamic Legal Rulings,] 8, p., 108.

acknowledging the possibility of breaking the covenant if the commanders of the armies deem it in their interest.<sup>(200)</sup>

Muslims are bound by covenants in warfare if they are concluded in the name of God or His Messenger. Otherwise, such agreements may be revoked according to considerations of interest, as maintained by the Ḥanafī school. The principle underlying this view is that war is inherently based on stratagem and deception, a notion affirmed in the prophetic Sunnah: **War is deception**” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -4494), and reiterated across numerous other sources.

According to the practical Sunnah, the Messenger broke the established convention in the Arabian Peninsula not to fight during the sacred months. In Rajab, which followed the first Battle of Badr, the Prophet sent 'Abd Allāh ibn Jaḥsh with eight of the Emigrants and wrote him a letter ordering him to open it after two days had passed. When he finally opened it, he found: *“If you look at my letter, go until you reach a palm tree between Makkah and Ṭaif. So, observe the Quraysh and gather information for us.”* He did not order them to fight, and they walked until they reached the palm tree, where a caravan passed to the Quraysh. Muḥammad’s Companions deliberated among themselves and expressed concern that if the adversaries were left unchallenged during the night, they would enter the Sacred Mosque and thereby avoid confrontation. They further cautioned that any attempt to kill them would constitute a violation, since such an act would occur during the Sacred Month.

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<sup>(200)</sup> *The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law*, Chapter on Commandments of Princes. He states: *“We have explained the benefits of the prophetic tradition. Then we clarified what he said at the end of this Ḥadīth: and if they want you to give them the protection of God, then do not give them. He explained that he disliked this, not as a prohibition, but rather as a means of breaking the covenant when necessary. Al-Awzā’ī used to say: It is not permissible to grant God’s protection to the unbelievers, and he adhered to the apparent meaning of this prophetic tradition. This wording is also found in a Ḥadīth narrated by ‘Alī who said: Do not grant them the protection of God or of me, for my obligation is the protection of God. Yet it is disliked by us for a reason that is not prohibitive. That is, you may need to veto it for the benefit you perceive, and breaking their covenants is easier than breaking God’s covenant and the covenant of His Messenger.”*



They agreed to kill whomever they could among the enemy and seize their possessions. To achieve this, they shaved the head of one of their number in order to deceive the Quraysh into believing they were merely peaceful pilgrims. <sup>(201)</sup>

After the Qurashī lowered their guard, the Muslims attacked, killing some and capturing two. The Prophet and his companions initially condemned the act as a violation of the sanctity of the sacred months, while the Quraysh accused them of treachery. Yet God supported Ibn Jaḥsh against the Prophet and his companions with the verse: **They ask you about fighting during the sacred month. Say, Fighting during it is deplorable, but to bar others from God's path, to disbelieve in Him, to prevent access to the Holy Mosque, and to expel its people from it are more deplorable in the sight of God** (Sūrah 2:217).

Muḥammad broke his covenant with the Jewish tribe of Banū Qaynuqā', citing a conflict between some of its members and a Muslim. He besieged and captured them, initially deciding to execute their men, but ultimately expelled them under pressure from 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl, a prominent tribal leader in Madīnah. Islamic sources claim that the Banū Qaynuqā' broke the covenant first, but Ibn Hishām's account complicates this narrative. The account describes how an Arab woman brought merchandise to sell in the marketplace of Banū Qaynuqā'. A jeweler attempted to persuade her to uncover her face, but when she refused, he tied the hem of her garment to her back so that, upon standing, her body was exposed to ridicule. The woman cried out, prompting a Muslim man to attack and kill the jeweler. In retaliation, members of the Jewish community killed the Muslim. This incident led the Muslim's family to seek assistance from other Muslims, escalating tensions and ultimately sparking conflict

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<sup>(201)</sup> Shaving or cutting hair of the head is obligated before or after the minor pilgrimage ('Umrah).

between them and the Banū Qaynuqā'.<sup>(202)</sup> The record then explains the details of their siege and the decision to kill their men, settling instead on expelling them from Madīnah with only what their camels could carry —excluding weapons— and confiscating the rest of their wealth. It was a collective punishment for the behavior of a few members of the tribe. The covenant binding the tribe was thus annulled in response to the misconduct of individuals against a single Muslim, rather than against the Muslim community as a whole.

Muḥammad also broke the famous Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah through a Qur'ānic revelation: **O you who believe! When believing women come to you emigrating, test them. God is Aware of their faith. And if you find them to be faithful, do not send them back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful for them, nor are the others lawful for them** (Sūrah 60:10). The treaty had stipulated that Muslims would return any Makkan who came to them, but this verse commanded otherwise in the case of women, thereby annulling part of the agreement. Some exegetes explicitly mention this, such as Ibn Kathīr, who states: *“So God broke the covenant between Himself and the polytheists regarding women in particular, and He prevented returning them to the polytheists.”* Al-Qurṭubī likewise affirms that the verse abrogated the treaty’s stipulation concerning women.<sup>(203)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī explains that the “test” mentioned in the verse was to discern whether women emigrated out of anger or out of genuine faith; if the latter, they were to be accepted. He concludes that the verse abrogated the treaty’s rejection of women.<sup>(204)</sup> Sayyid Quṭb,

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<sup>(202)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(203)</sup> “God Almighty revealed what He revealed about believing women; it indicates that the condition regarding the return of women is abrogated thereby.” *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* [Commentary on the Glorious Qur’ān].

<sup>(204)</sup> This is the statement of al-Ṭabarī in his exegesis: *“Because the covenant was made between the Messenger of God and the polytheists of Quraysh in the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, that the Muslims would return to the polytheists whoever came to them as a Muslim, so that condition was invalidated with respect to the women if they came as believing emigrants, and*

despite a lengthy introduction that reveals his awareness of the dilemma, ultimately concedes the same point. He describes the ruling as embodying the fairest principle of justice—what he terms “absolute justice”—even though it entailed breaking the covenant.<sup>(205)</sup>

This incident highlights a clear distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim women in the application of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah. Muslim women who emigrated to Madīnah were not to be returned to the unbelievers of Makkah, while unbelieving women remained subject to the treaty’s stipulations and were returned. The result was an unequal application of the covenant, reflecting explicit religious discrimination.

### The Rape of Women During Wartime:

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*they were tested and found to be believers. This is why Muslims were commanded not to return them to the polytheists.”*

<sup>(205)</sup> In his commentary on Sūrah 60, Sayyid Quṭb explains that these rulings were revealed in the aftermath of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah. The treaty stipulated that anyone who left Quraysh—even if they shared the same faith—was to be returned. While the Prophet and his companions were encamped at al-Ḥudaybiyyah, believing women arrived, seeking migration to join the community in Madīnah. Quraysh demanded their return in accordance with the treaty. Since the treaty’s wording did not explicitly address women, the verses were revealed prohibiting the return of believing women to the unbelievers, lest they be tempted away from their faith while still vulnerable.

Quṭb points out that the text was not decisive regarding women, so the verses came to prohibit returning the believing female emigrants to the unbelievers, as a protection for them from religious trial in view of their weakness. In his exegesis he highlights that these rulings were not built upon reactions or reciprocity, but upon the principle of justice in itself—a feature he regards as a general characteristic of Islamic legislation in its internal and international dealings. The first step was to examine the sincerity of these women’s migration, ensuring it was not motivated by personal grievances, worldly gain, or romantic pursuit, but solely by devotion to God and His Messenger. Ibn ‘Abbās reported that the Prophet would test them by asking: “*By God, I did not leave out of hatred for a husband; by God, I did not leave one land for another; by God, I did not leave seeking worldly gain; by God, I left only out of love for God and His Messenger.*”

Arabs and other tribes—such as the Hebrews and other Semitic peoples—had since ancient times practiced the enslavement of the enemy’s women and children during war. When Islam emerged, it did not abolish this custom; rather, it was practiced by the Prophet of Islam and the caliphs who succeeded him, both Arabs and non-Arabs (such as the Ottomans and others). Islam—as was the case before it—granted its combatants the right to have sexual intercourse with female captives. Naturally, this does not occur with consent or acceptance, but rather under the duress of captivity and the coercion of arms. Categorically, it is an act of rape. It is a well-documented historical fact that during the Battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, the Muslims captured many women and desired to have intercourse with them while avoiding pregnancy, by practicing coitus interruptus. However, the Prophet authorized them to have intercourse with them in the standard manner. This account is preserved in the biographical literature and, more significantly, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -4049 it is recorded: **We went out with the Messenger of God for the battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, and we took some of the Arabs as captives. We desired women, and celibacy became too hard for us. We wanted to practice coitus interruptus. When We asked the Messenger about that, he said: You need not do it. For there is no soul that God has destined to exist until the Day of Resurrection, but that it will come into being.** The same narrative is repeated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* –3499.

The Prophetic Sunnah permits sexual relations with female captives taken in war—a practice also endorsed by prominent jurists such as al-Shāfi’ī. According to this tradition, if the Imām distributes the spoils of war and grants a man a captive as his share, he may have intercourse with her once her *istibra’* (the waiting period to ensure she is not pregnant) is complete.<sup>(206)</sup> Ibn

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<sup>(206)</sup> *Al Umm*, the Book of the Life and Conduct of al-Awzā’ī, Concubinage of Female Captives, 7, p. 371.

Qayyim al-Jawziyya noted that the Prophet used to take polytheist women as captives and allow his companions to have relations with them after the completion of their waiting period (one menstrual cycle), as narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khūdri.<sup>(207)</sup> During the early expansion of Islam, male combatants were typically executed, while women and children were enslaved as part of the spoils of war. These captives were treated as property to be sold, and sexual relations with female captives were permitted. Such practices were established during the era of Muḥammad—as seen in the Banū Qurayẓa incident—and served as a legal precedent that continued thereafter.

During the reign of the caliphs, including the Rāshidūn, the Arabian Peninsula saw the arrival of women and children from Egypt, the Levant, and other regions as captives of war. Classical Islamic heritage texts often record these events, sometimes presenting them with a tone of pride.

This practice is frequently attested in accounts of the Islamic conquests, particularly in territories such as Egypt, the Levant, and Central Asia that were incorporated through military campaigns. Historical sources indicate that such acts were at times committed by Muslims against fellow Muslims, as exemplified by the incident of al-Ḥarra in 683 CE, when Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah's army entered Madīnah.<sup>(208)</sup>

The rationale behind the permissibility of sexual relations with female captives in classical Islamic law stems from the Qur'ānic text: **All married women are forbidden to you, except those your right hands possess** (Sūrah 4:24). Exegetes consistently interpret **those your right hands possess** as referring to concubines, as explained by Ibn Kathīr. Moreover, the Prophet allowed sexual relations with female captives whose marriages to non-believers

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<sup>(207)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 1.

<sup>(208)</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *History of the Caliphs*, No. 1, p. 158.

were dissolved by wartime displacement during the battle of Awtās or Khaybar.<sup>(209)</sup>

The Prophet Muḥammad himself had a son, Ibrāhīm, with his concubine Maria bint Shamoun the Copt (Māriya *al-Qibṭiyya*).<sup>(210)</sup> He also had another concubine, Rayḥāna bint 'Amr ibn Ḥudhāfa, though no children were born to her.<sup>(211)</sup>

The permissibility of sexual relations with female captives in classical Islamic law is derived from the Qur'ān (Sūrah 4:24), which exegetes consistently interpret as referring to concubinage. Jurists, in accordance with the prophetic Sunnah, agree that it is permissible to divide spoils either while still in the abode of war or upon returning to Muslim territory. Since captives are legally classified as property that can be exchanged like other forms of wealth, sexual relations with female captives from among the unbelievers are considered permissible after distribution, even within the abode of war. Jurists emphasize that Muslims are obligated to treat female captives with kindness, in the same manner as other slaves under their ownership, extending to the possibility of emancipating them, marrying them, or both.

Regarding the issue of sexual relations, although female slaves could be treated well in daily life, the institution of concubinage inherently raised questions of consent, since the relationship was structured within slavery. Some jurists drew analogies to the marital framework, in which the prophetic Sunnah emphasizes a

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<sup>(209)</sup> 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Āmir, *Aḥkām al-Asrā wa-al-Sabāyā fī al-Ḥurūb al-Islāmiyya* [The Rules of Prisoners and Captives in Islamic Wars], pp 331-332.

<sup>(210)</sup> This is mentioned repeatedly in biographical books, and no one deviated from stating this as a fact. Refer to Ibn Hishām's book *Biography of the Prophet*, *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Ibn Ishāq's *Biography of the Prophet*, *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf* [The Sweet-Scented Garden], and others.

<sup>(211)</sup> Ibn Ishāq, *The Prophetic Biography*. He states: "The Messenger of God had in his possession Rihāna bint 'Amr ibn Hudhafa, from whom he did not have a son until he died, and Marya, the mother of Ibrāhīm, a Coptic woman, who bore him Ibrāhīm," p. 133.



wife's obligation to respond to her husband's sexual requests: **If a man invites his wife to his bed, but she refuses, the angels curse her until morning** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -5072). This ḥadīth, repeated many times in prophetic tradition books, is known to most women and men throughout the world of Islam. Rape in this case appears to be a modern concept, and while it was accepted during the era of Islamic rule, this historical reality remains unchanged. Islam did not abolish the premodern custom of taking captives in war, and many jurists maintain its validity across time and place. Religious authorities often presented these rulings as universally applicable. Within this framework, sexual relations with female captives are permitted under concubinage, though rape and coercion are explicitly prohibited in Islamic law. Historical sources nevertheless indicate that abuses occurred in practice, as in other societies of the era.

It is fair to point out that there are minor hints in heritage works that Muḥammad, at a late stage in the Battle of Khaybar in the year 7 AH, stipulated that in order to have intercourse with a female slave, she must first menstruate once: **Who would have believed in God and the Last Day, should not have intercourse with a slave girl from captivity until she menstruates. Likewise, Abū Sa'id narrated that the Prophet forbade during the year of Awtas to have intercourse with a pregnant woman until she gives birth or a non-pregnant woman until she menstruates** - Narrated by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*.<sup>(212)</sup> However, there is evidence suggesting that Muslims did not always adhere to this rule, even with regard to prisoners of civil wars, as was the case in the Battle of al-Ḥarrah.<sup>(213)</sup>

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<sup>(212)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī* [A Comprehensive Work of Islamic Jurisprudence], Vol. 42, chapter titled: If Someone has a Female Slave, they Should not have Intercourse with her or Kiss her Until They have made Sure that She is not Pregnant.

<sup>(213)</sup> In 63 AH, the scholars of al-Madīnah renounced their allegiance to Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah as caliph and pledged allegiance to 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥaṇṣalah. Consequently,

Hence, classical jurists hold that a Muslim is permitted to engage in sexual relations with female captives taken in war. If such a woman is married and her husband remains in the abode of war, her marriage contract is deemed dissolved. Consequently, intercourse with her is not classified as adultery under Islamic law. However, if she and her husband are taken captive together, jurists differ on the matter.<sup>(214)</sup> This stands in contrast to the situation of Muslim prisoners; if a man or his wife is taken captive, their marriage contract is not dissolved.<sup>(215)</sup>

### The ruling on killing women, the elderly, and children in war:

Some sacred texts and others prohibit the killing of women, the elderly, and children in war, whether Muslims or unbelievers, in addition to isolated monks who do not help the rest of the unbelievers against Muslims, as well as the blind and disabled in general if they are not actively fighting. Many prophetic traditions state this and are known to most Muslims. However, this prohibition is not absolute; the interests of the state often take precedence over such considerations. Therefore, conflicting aḥādīth can be found: In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* –2945, it is mentioned regarding the killing of women and children during night raids: **The Prophet passed by al-Abwa or Waddan, and he was asked about the people of the house**

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Yazīd's army attacked al-Madīnah, killing many of its inhabitants and taking others captive (*al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Ibn Sa'd, vol. 5, file 61 of 118). Al-Suyūṭī noted that the death toll among the Quraysh and the Anṣār reached 306 men (*Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, vol. 1, p. 159). Furthermore, Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī reported that one thousand virgin girls were violated during this event (*Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-A'lām*, vol. 2, p. 585). In *The Beginning and the End*, Ibn Kathīr cited some early scholars (*al-salaf*) who stated that one thousand virgins were killed [or defiled] during the assault, while also quoting 'Abd Allāh ibn Wahb on the authority of Imām Mālik that seven hundred retainers of the Qur'an were slain that day (vol. 6, p. 262).

<sup>(214)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 31.

<sup>(215)</sup> 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Āmir, *Ibid.*, citing Qāḍī Muḥammad ibn Farāmūz, *Durar al-Ḥukkām fī Sharḥ Ghurar al-Aḥkām* [The Pearls of the Judge].

who were attacked at night among the polytheists, resulting in injuries to some of their women and children. He said: They are among them. And I heard him saying: There is no protection except for God and His Messenger.

To explain the issue in detail, al-Sarakhsī argues that the restriction on the killing of women and children is based on the lack of justification for killing them, rather than the existence of inherent legal protection. Thus, it is not categorically forbidden to kill them; one who kills a woman or child faces no expiation and is not required to pay blood money. However, al-Sarakhsī maintains it is generally forbidden to kill them to preserve a benefit for Muslims and because they lack the primary justification for execution, which is active warfare. The Messenger referred to this in a prophetic tradition: **They are among them**. This means that the descendants of the polytheists share their status in that they possess no divinely granted legal infallibility. According to al-Sarakhsī, the Prophet said: **Do not kill offspring or hired workers because of disbelief, even if it is a greater crime, as disbelief is between the servant and his Lord, and the penalty for such a crime is delayed until the Day of Judgment. As for penalties hastened in this world, they are sanctioned for the benefit that accrues to the community, primarily to ward off the harm of fighting. This justification does not apply to those who do not fight; instead, it is a benefit for Muslims to keep them as slaves to serve their own interests.** <sup>(216)</sup>

Based on this ḥadīth, some jurists hold the view that women and children must not be killed because they are considered the property of the Muslims. <sup>(217)</sup> They are captives whose value is estimated in money and who can be sold as commodities. Therefore, it is deemed illogical for a person to destroy his own wealth. Jurists differ

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<sup>(216)</sup> *The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law*, Chapter on Those Who it is not Allowed to Intentionally Killing from Amongst the Unbelievers.

<sup>(217)</sup> On the authority of Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

regarding monks, the blind and elderly men who do not fight, in addition to the mentally disabled, farmers, laborers, and slaves. Mālik, Abū Ḥanīfah, and their companions argue that the blind, the insane, monks, and the elderly should not be killed, and that some of their property should be left for their sustenance. Al-Thawrī (Abū 'Abd Allāh Sufyān ibn Sa'īd ibn Masrūq al-Thawrī al-Kūfī.) and al-Awzā'ī argue against killing the elderly, with al-Awzā'ī (Abū 'Amr 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Amr ibn Yaḥyā al-Awzā'ī.) specifically stating, “Do not kill the farmers.” Al-Shāfi'ī, on the other hand, advocates for killing all of them. <sup>(218)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah and others hold that it is permissible to strike the enemy with a catapult even if this leads to the killing of women and children. <sup>(219)</sup> These views serve as the foundation for contemporary jihādists in their justification of the September 11 attacks <sup>(220)</sup> and other operations.

It is agreed that executing enemy delegations is not permissible.

#### Regarding burning trees and destroying the enemy's economy:

In the prophetic Sunnah, certain wartime measures against non-believers are deemed permissible when they serve the strategic interests of the Muslim community. One example is the Prophet Muḥammad's command to cut down the palm trees of Banū al-Naḍīr. When this was carried out, members of the tribe protested, accusing him of contradicting his own prohibition of corruption. They questioned whether such destruction could be reconciled with his claim to righteousness, and some even charged the Muslims with hypocrisy for condemning corruption while engaging in it. Reports indicate that these accusations unsettled

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<sup>(218)</sup> Ibn Rushd, *The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid*, Book of Jihād, Chapter Three, file 13 of 28.

<sup>(219)</sup> *The Grand Fatāwā*, No.3, p. 7 - Al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibin* [The Garden of the Seekers], No. 10, p. 244.

<sup>(220)</sup> *Ghazwat September 11: A Study of the 9/11 Attacks*.

some Muslims, creating dissonance between their ethical intuition and the divine command.<sup>(221)</sup> Other narrations describe the Jews calling out from their fortresses, insisting that God would not sanction such acts and urging that the outcome be left to whichever side prevailed. Within the Muslim ranks, opinions diverged: some acknowledged the truth of the criticism, while others maintained that the trees were cut down deliberately to spite and weaken the enemy.<sup>(222)</sup> This episode illustrates the clash between moral sensibility and the demands of revealed instruction in the context of early Islamic warfare.

The Qur'ān supported both groups of Muslims: **Whatever their palmtrees you may have cut down or left standing on their roots, it was done by God's leave, so that He might disfavor the transgressors.** (Sūrah 59:5).

In his exegesis, al-Qurṭubī discusses the ethical dilemma surrounding the destruction of property during the siege of Banū al-Naḍīr. The incident began when the Prophet was questioned regarding the consistency of his prophetic mission—which advocates for righteousness—with the act of felling and burning palm trees, a deed characterized by his detractors as earthly corruption. This confrontation created a significant internal division among the Muslims; one group favored preservation, viewing the trees as divine provision, while another advocated for their destruction as a strategic means to demoralize the enemy. The subsequent Qur'anic revelation addresses this discord by validating both perspectives, clarifying that both the act of cutting and the decision to abstain are in accordance with the divine will, thereby absolving those who acted of any sin.

This precedent of utilizing fire as a strategic instrument is further documented in the foundational ḥadīth literature. Both *Ṣaḥīḥ al-*

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<sup>(221)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Two, p. 361.

<sup>(222)</sup> *The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law*, p. 53.

*Bukhārī* (2954) and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (4508) record the specific instance where the palm groves of Banū al-Naḍīr were burned. Furthermore, historical reports attributed to 'Urwa (Ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām ibn Khuwaylid al-Asadī al-Madīnī) describe a military expedition to the village of Ubna, where the Prophet issued a command to launch a morning raid. This directive was not merely a tactical maneuver to catch the inhabitants unprepared, but also included explicit instructions to burn crops, trees, and dwellings as part of the broader military engagement. <sup>(223)</sup>

In al-Ṭā'if, he ordered the burning of the palace of Mālik ibn 'Awf al-Naṣrī and the destruction of his people's vineyards. Likewise, he commanded the cutting of Khaybar's palm trees until 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb encountered those carrying out the task. When 'Umar attempted to stop them, they replied that the Messenger himself had given the order. 'Umar then approached him, saying: “You ordered the cutting of the palm trees.” He confirmed: “Yes.” 'Umar responded: “Did not God promise you Khaybar?” He answered: “Yes.” 'Umar continued: “Your palm trees and those of your companions are being destroyed. Therefore, instruct a caller to announce the prohibition of cutting palm trees.” <sup>(224)</sup>

According to al-Sarakhsī, when Abū Bakr instructed the army heading to the Levant not to cut down palm trees, this was a matter of prudence rather than prohibition. He reasoned that the Levant would eventually belong to the Muslims, and thus Abū Bakr did not wish to damage what would become their property—similar to the precedent in Khaybar. Scholars generally agree that cutting down

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<sup>(223)</sup> Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓimābadī, *'Awn al-Ma'būd 'Ala Sunan Abū Dāwūd* [Explanation of the Prophet's Sunnah Collected by Abū Dāwūd], Book of Jihād, Chapter on Burning in Enemy Lands, p. 172.

Abna is the name of a place in Palestine between Ashkelon and Ramla.

<sup>(224)</sup> *The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law*, p. 55.



trees is permissible when necessity dictates. Ibn Taymiyyah explains this by noting that it is not more significant than the taking of lives. <sup>(225)</sup>

### Methods of killing:

Muslims are forbidden from mutilating the dead, as Muḥammad said: **Do not commit excesses, do not deceive, and do not mutilate** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -22648). Likewise, humiliation is prohibited: **If one of you strikes, let him avoid the face** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -7392). He also said: **Indeed, God has prescribed excellence in all things. If you kill, then kill well; if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each of you sharpen his blade and slaughter his sacrifice** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -16812). Killing by burning is also forbidden according to prophetic traditions. Nevertheless, historical sources record that Abū Bakr ordered the burning of apostates and those who refused to pay zakāt, <sup>(226)</sup> while it is recorded that 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib ordered the burning of heretics. 'Umar is likewise reported to have approved of burning unbelievers, as narrated by Mālik, and it was also permitted by Sufyān al-Thawrī. Furthermore, some jurists argue

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<sup>(225)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

<sup>(226)</sup> It is mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* - 2950:.. On the authority of 'Ikrimah, “'Alī burned a group of people. He informed Ibn 'Abbās who said: If it had been me, I would not have burned them. The Prophet said, **do not torture by the punishment of God.**” The incident was mentioned in several references, including: *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-l-A'lām*, [Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures] by al-Dhahabī, No.2, p. 361, *The Beginning and the End* by, Ibn Kathīr, Vol. Eight, p. 329. Al-Qurṭubī in his interpretation of the verse of the sword (Sūrah 9:5) states: “*The reports came in prohibiting mutilation. Despite this, it is possible that al-Ṣiddīq, when he killed the apostates by burning with fire, by stones, by throwing from mountaintops and by digging into wells, was related to the generality of the verse. Likewise, 'Alī burning a group of apostates may be an inclination toward this doctrine, and based on the generality of the word. God knows best.*” This is also mentioned in other Islamic references.

that such measures are allowed only when the enemy initiates them.  
(227)

### Killing the wounded:

Most jurists permit this in the case of rebels. (228) At the Battle of Badr, the Muslim side finished off the wounded 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah, following the duel that took place between three Muslims and three of the unbelievers. 'Amr ibn Hishām was also killed while he was wounded and unable to move. (229) Similar practices occurred in subsequent battles, including the civil wars. (230)

### Excessive Killing in War:

The Qur'ān states: **Therefore, when you meet the disbelievers [in battle], strike their necks until you have inflicted slaughter upon them; and then secure their bonds. Thereafter, either generosity or ransom** (Sūrah 47:4). Thus, war begins with decisive violence intended to weaken the enemy before captivity is permitted. Sūrah 8:67 further emphasizes: **It is not for a Prophet to take prisoners before he has subdued the enemy. You desire the materials of this world, but God desires the Hereafter.** (231) God reproached

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(227) *The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid*, Chapter Three, file 13 of 28.

(228) This is the doctrine of most Sunni jurists. The rebels are those who rebel against Muslim ruler, and they are the Kharijites who say that the one who commits a major sin is an unbeliever. Therefore, they declare the ruler who commits major sins an unbeliever, justifying rebellion against him, contrary to the thought of the Sunnis.

(229) Ibn Hishām, *Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad*.

(230) An example of this is one of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib's men in the Battle of Ṣiffin, whose name was Mahrez, was nicknamed Mukhadkhad (the Churner). That is because he took a goat to Siffin and brought along a container of water. If he found a man from Alī's companions wounded, he gave him water to drink. If he found a man from Muawiyah's party, he butted him with the goat until he killed him. Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim, *The Battle of Ṣiffin*, Vol. Eight, p. 519.

(231) Al-Qurṭubī, in his exegesis of the Qur'ān, explains the verse **until you inflict slaughter upon them** as an exaggeration in killing. Ibn Kathir interpretes it as "you destroy them by

Muḥammad after Badr for agreeing to ransom captives, which is often interpreted as an exhortation to more decisive killing.

Islam distinguishes between dead Muslims and dead unbelievers. Muslims who die in battle are martyrs destined for Paradise, while unbelievers are regarded as occupying the lowest rank, regardless of their role in war. Thus, the Muslim slain in battle is considered superior, even if he was the aggressor.

### The legal ruling concerning captives:

Concerning captives, the Qur'ān (47:4) permits release either freely or for ransom. Conversely, Sūrah 9:5 commands: **Slay the polytheists wherever you encounter them.** Scholars debate whether one verse abrogates the other or whether both remain authoritative. In the Prophetic Sunnah, diverse precedents exist: Muḥammad urged kind treatment of captives,<sup>(232)</sup> yet some were executed at Badr, including 'Uqbah ibn Abū Mu'ayṭ and al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith.<sup>(233)</sup> Additionally, a blind man from the Banū Qurayẓa tribe was killed after being captured. It is well-known in Islamic history and widely accepted among Muslims that Muḥammad ordered the killing of all adult male prisoners from the Banū Qurayẓa tribe, whether they were combatants or not. He did not limit it to the leaders or those who had broken their treaty or were

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*killing.*” Al-Ālūsī interpretes the verse as signifying the infliction of recutting and severe killing upon them. Similarly, Sayyid Quṭb, in his interpretation of Sūrah 47, mentions the verse: “*Strike their necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, secure their bonds. ‘Subduing’ means killing them until the enemy’s power is destroyed and collapses, leaving them unable to attack or defend themselves. At that point, there is no choice but to seize those who have been captured and bind them firmly. Regarding the enemy, while they are still strong, the goal of subduing and killing them is to destroy that danger.*”

<sup>(232)</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥābah* [The Attainment in Distinguishing the Companions], No. 10252.

<sup>(233)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Two, p. 257 - Al-Ṭala'i, *Aqḍiyat Rasūl Allāh* [The Legal Decisions by the Prophet], No. 1, p. 31.

carrying weapons, alongside the enslavement of women and children.<sup>(234)</sup> Shāfi'ī jurists thus justify killing adult men who refuse Islam or jizyah.<sup>(235)</sup> Muḥammad adopted several approaches in dealing with prisoners, including releasing them freely, exchanging them for Muslim captives, accepting ransom, or requiring them to teach Muslims literacy skills. He is also reported to have ordered the torture of a Jewish captive from Khaybar to extract information about the location of hidden treasure. Some jurists cite this precedent to justify the coercion of non-believers, either to compel confessions or to punish violations of agreements. In such cases, it is the perceived interests of the state that prevail, rather than adherence to a fixed moral principle.

When Muḥammad conquered Makkah by force, the prevailing opinion among jurists—except primarily the Shāfi'īs—is that he granted pardon to all its inhabitants. This view rests on a narration widely accepted among ordinary Muslims, though not always subjected to critical scrutiny. The narration reports: O people of Quraysh, what do you say? What do you think? They replied: You are a noble brother and the son of a noble kinsman. The Messenger then declared: I say as my brother Joseph said: There will be no blame on you today... Go, for you are free. According to the report, the people departed as though raised from their graves and subsequently embraced Islam. Yet he ordered the execution of nine individuals, including 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd ibn Abū Sarḥ and 'Ikrimah ibn Abū Jahl, even if found within the *Ka'bah*.<sup>(236)</sup> This

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<sup>(234)</sup> Ibn Hishām, in his work *biography of the Prophet*, estimated their number to be between 600 and 900. Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Nimrī mentioned the number between 600 and 700, *Pearls: An Abridgement of the Prophetic Campaigns and Expeditions*, p. 181. Burhān al-Ḥalabī estimated the number to be between 600 and 750 in *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Two, p. 447.

<sup>(235)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of Ruling in Fighting the Polytheists, on Captivity, 4, p. 305.

<sup>(236)</sup> Some were not killed for various reasons, including the conversion of some to Islam and the intercession of some Muslims for others. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya deals with this in

demonstrates that the execution of prisoners was not limited to war criminals, as al-Qaraḍāwī argues in a television interview, but extended to critics of the Prophet or those deemed threats to the Islamic state.

The Companions also chose to execute certain captive unbelievers. Khālid ibn al-Walīd repeatedly carried out executions of prisoners during his campaigns, including a massacre at the Battle of 'Ayn al-Tamr. He captured members of the Arab Christian army, including its commander, while the remaining fighters sought refuge in a fortress. After besieging them, he rejected their plea for peace unless they accepted his authority. Once they surrendered, he bound them in chains, seized the fort, and ordered the execution of all, including those previously captured.<sup>(237)</sup>

Thousands of Persian prisoners and their Arab Christian allies were likewise killed in the Battle of Ullais. Khālid ordered their slaughter, with reports indicating that 18,000 were killed in the river and the total number of dead reached 70,000.<sup>(238)</sup>

In a major rebellion in Khurāsān in 150 AH, the army of al-Manṣūr, the second 'Abbāsīd caliph, executed 14,000 prisoners.<sup>(239)</sup>

### Jurists' Divergent Opinions on War Prisoners:

Jurists and exegetes express diverse opinions on the treatment of prisoners of war. Ibn Kathīr, in his commentary on Sūrah 8:67, notes that the majority of scholars consider the ruling to be variable, granting the Imām discretionary authority. He may

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detail in: *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hudā Khair al-'Ibād*, Vol. Three, a Chapter on his ruling in the conquest of Makkah.

<sup>(237)</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *The Beginning and the End*, Vol. Six, p. 637.

<sup>(238)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 314.

<sup>(239)</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *History of the Caliphs*, 1, p. 195.

execute captives, as occurred with Banū Qurayẓah; ransom them with money, as was the case with the prisoners of Badr; exchange them for Muslim captives, as in the case of the woman and her daughter returned by Salamah ibn al-Akwa'; or enslave them. This reflects the doctrine of al-Shāfi'ī and a group of scholars.

Other jurists disagree, maintaining that the Imām may kill captives who refuse Islam, enslave them if deemed necessary for the interests of Islam, release them under Muslim protection, or ransom them either for captives or money. One Shāfi'ī opinion even permits freeing them without ransom, though many senior jurists reject this, arguing that it has been abrogated by Sūrah 9:5: **Slay the polytheists wherever you find them**. Al-Shāfi'ī further states that it is permissible to kill “*any adult polytheist who refuses to accept Islam or pay jizyah*,” adding that while inviting captives to Islam is commendable, killing them without such an invitation remains allowed. <sup>(240)</sup>

According to Ḥanbalī doctrine, the Imām has four options: execution (even under torture), enslavement with the full application of slavery provisions such as sale or emancipation, ransom through money or captives, or pardon. Conversion to Islam immediately nullifies punitive measures, leading to emancipation and eliminating the choice between slavery, ransom, or execution. <sup>(241)</sup>

**Child Captives:** Jurists establish special provisions for child captives. If a child is captured together with his parents, he remains in their religion, since he follows them, and may be exchanged. However, if captured alone and taken to the Abode of Islam, “*it is not permissible to redeem him thereafter, because he has become a Muslim*

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<sup>(240)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of Ruling in Fighting the Polytheists, on Captivity, 4, p. 305.

<sup>(241)</sup> *The Ordinances of Government*, Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā', p. 141.



according to his new homeland.”<sup>(242)</sup> When Muslims divide spoils in the land of war—including children—jurists differ: some permit redemption if they have reached adulthood, while others prohibit it, arguing that their incorporation into the Abode of Islam was established through division and sale.<sup>(243)</sup> If the captor is a Muslim, the child is deemed to convert to Islam. If the captor is an unbeliever within the Muslim army, or if no evidence exists, the child is not declared Muslim, and his children follow him either way.<sup>(244)</sup>

**Destiny of Unbeliever Prisoners:** The fate of unbeliever captives is determined by the Imām according to perceived interest, and may include:

- Execution, permissible according to the majority of jurists and obligatory for most Ḥanafīs.

- Acceptance of blood money, recognized by all jurists except the Ḥanafīs.

- Release in exchange for Muslim prisoners, rejected by most Ḥanafīs.

- Release in exchange for labor or without ransom.

- Enslavement and sale of captive women and children, though most jurists disapprove of selling men; al-Shāfi’ī permits it.<sup>(245)</sup>

- Release under Muslim protection.<sup>(246)</sup>

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<sup>(242)</sup> *The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law*, 1588.

<sup>(243)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(244)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(245)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of Rulings in Fighting the Polytheists and the Issue of War Money, Chapter on ransom of captives, 4, p. 268.

<sup>(246)</sup> Jurists discuss in detail the Islamic ruling on war prisoners in their numerous books, usually under the title “Book of expeditions.” For example, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Nawawī al-

Among contemporary scholars, some reject execution, adhering instead to the Qur'ānic verse permitting generosity or ransom.<sup>(247)</sup>

**Muslim Prisoners Held by Muslims:** Islamic jurisprudence prohibits killing or enslaving Muslim captives, as well as taking their women and children captive or engaging in sexual relations with such women. Even if polytheists convert to Islam, it is not permissible to enslave, sell, or exploit them sexually. Nevertheless, historical chronicles record violations of these principles. During Abū Bakr's reign, women from Muslim groups opposing his caliphate were taken captive.<sup>(248)</sup> After the killing of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā', members of the Prophet's household were taken captive by the Umayyads. Similarly, following the Battle of al-Ḥarraḥ in 683 CE, sources describe widespread abuses in Madīnah, including the captivity of women. Some accounts even allege sexual violence, though historians debate the extent and reliability of these reports, as mentioned above.

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Dimashqī reviews the topic in *The Garden of the Seekers*, from the perspective of Shāfi'i jurisprudence.

It is also reviewed from the point of view of the Ḥanafī jurisprudence in *The Expanded*, by al-Sarakhsī.

<sup>(247)</sup> Among them is Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *The Impact of War on Islamic Jurisprudence: A Comparative Study*, and Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, various writings.

<sup>(248)</sup> When Abū Bakr sent his armies to fight the apostates and those who refused to pay the Zakat, he sent a message with each of their leaders to the tribe they were heading toward. The text of the message was as follows: "I sent to you - so-and-so - in an army of the Muhajireen, Anṣār, and Followers with goodness, and I ordered him not to fight anyone or kill them until he invites them to the message of God. Whoever responds to him, accepts and refrains, does good deeds before him, and helps him in it. Whoever refuses, I commanded him to fight them accordingly, not leaving any of them alive, but to burn them with fire, kill them all, and enslave the women and children, accepting only Islam from them. Whoever follows it, it is better for him, and whoever abandons it, God will not be powerless. I commanded my Messenger to read my book in every gathering of yours, and the caller to call to prayer. So when Muslims call for prayer and they and they did the like stop fighting them and let them accept before you and guide them to what is right." Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 258.

**Arab Polytheists:** A special ruling applies to Arab polytheists. According to the Ḥanafī school, peace treaties and commitments are not to be accepted from them; they must be invited to Islam without coercion. If they refuse, they are considered apostates, subject to execution, and their women and children are enslaved. Women of apostates and their descendants, being originally Muslim, are compelled to return to Islam, whereas the women and children of Arab polytheists are enslaved but not forced to convert. This practice follows the precedent of Muḥammad, who took women and children captive at Awtās and divided them, and of Abū Bakr, who took captives from Banū Ḥanīfah. If this is permissible for apostates, it is all the more so for the Arab polytheists; however, the men among them are not enslaved.<sup>(249)</sup> Al-Shāfi'ī, however, diverges in his later school of thought, permitting the enslavement of Arabs, citing the precedent of Muḥammad's enslavement of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq captives.<sup>(250)</sup>

**Muslim Captives:** The Qur'ān prescribes the freeing of slaves as atonement for certain sins, including manslaughter, but in some verses this liberation is restricted to believing slaves. **Whoever kills a believer by mistake must free a believing soul from bondage and pay an indemnity to his family, unless they forego it by way of charity. If the victim belongs to a people who are at war with you, while he himself is a believer, then let his killer free a believing soul from bondage. If the victim belongs to a people with whom you are bound by a covenant, then the penalty is an indemnity to be paid to his family and the freeing of a believing soul from bondage.** (Sūrah 4:92). The Qur'ān calls for the liberation of a slave without specifying their religion in Sūrah 5:89, Sūrah 58: 3, and Sūrah

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<sup>(249)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded*, Book of Expeditions, Section on the Apostates.

<sup>(250)</sup> Ibid., Vol. Two. p. 379.

90:13. Exegetes differ on what is meant by the soul in these four verses, and some of them, such as Ibn al-'Arabī in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (The Legal Rulings Derived from the Qur'ān) consider that what is meant is a believing soul, based on the prophetic tradition: **Whoever frees a believing slave God will free every limb of his from Hell** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* –4226). Today, most Muslim thinkers emphasize the Qur'ān's broader call to emancipation and human dignity, moving beyond sectarian distinctions.

**Spoils of War:** Jurists distinguish between spoils taken from unbelievers and those taken from Muslims. The legal status of the spoils of war captured by Muslims from non-Muslims differs from that of those captured by non-Muslims from Muslims. The former becomes a formal ownership that cannot be revoked except with the voluntary consent of the captors themselves, whereas the latter does not attain the same legal standing. If the unbelievers convert to Islam, they must return the spoils to their owners, and if those spoils fall into the hands of Muslims as spoils, their owners have the right to recover them as property before division. There is disagreement over their right to recover them as value if they have been divided. The focus here is not on the details mentioned in the books of Islamic jurisprudence, but rather on the essence of the issue. The broader issue is the legal discrimination established by most jurists between spoils of unbelievers and spoils of Muslims, generally favoring Muslims—except for most Ḥanafī scholars, who adopt a more balanced approach. This distinction illustrates how *fiqh* historically privileged Muslims, but modern reformists argue for equal treatment under international law.

### **Assassination of Opponents:**

According to certain historical sources, the practical Sunnah of Muḥammad includes the assassination of opponents among the

unbelievers who criticized him or his message. In contemporary terms, these opponents were intellectuals, poets, and public figures who opposed or spoke out against him. Many accounts report that Muslims, under direct command from Muḥammad, assassinated individuals who criticized his advocacy, including those who attacked him in poetry or rhetoric, even if they were not combatants. Examples include Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf, Asmā', and Umm Qirfa, some of whom were killed in particularly brutal ways. The prominence of poetry and rhetoric in Arab society at the time explains why poets were targeted, as their influence was comparable to that of media figures in later eras. It may also explain the extent to which Arabs were influenced by the Qur'ān, which had the impact of poetry on them.

Some early sources record assassinations of opponents, which later jurists debated in terms of legitimacy:

#### 1. Umm Qirfa (Fāṭima bint Rabī'a ibn Badr al-Fazāriyya):

She was an elderly woman of high status among her people, renowned for her honor and family connections. Reports state that she cursed Muḥammad and allegedly prepared thirty riders from her sons and grandsons to attack Madīnah and kill him, though some sources dispute this claim. Muḥammad ordered Zayd ibn Ḥāritha to kill her. According to some accounts, she was executed in a particularly brutal manner, though historians differ on the details and reliability of these reports. <sup>(251)</sup> Biographical sources add that her daughter and 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ada were brought to

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<sup>(251)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 253. It is also mentioned sometimes in detail and sometimes briefly regarding the method of killing in books of expeditions, including: *Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad*, by Ibn Hishām, and *The Sweet-Scented Garden, The Principal Sources on the Prophet's Campaigns and Expeditions*.

Muḥammad, and her daughter was handed over to Salamah ibn al-Akwa', who had captured her.<sup>(252)</sup>

## 2. Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf

His assassination is detailed in various works of Islamic history. A member of the Ṭayy tribe, Ka'b reacted to the Muslim victory at Badr by questioning its legitimacy, lamenting the Quraysh dead, and composing poetry against Muḥammad. He traveled to Makkah, incited opposition, and upon returning to Madīnah, composed verses that included flirtation with Muslim women. Muḥammad asked: Who will kill Ibn al-Ashraf for me? Muḥammad ibn Maslama volunteered, and together with Abū Nā'ila (Ka'b's milk-brother) and others, devised a plan. They lured him out of his fortress at night under the pretense of conversation. Once Ka'b was reassured, they attacked him. Initial sword strikes failed, but Muḥammad ibn Maslama used a blade to stab him fatally. His death spread fear among the Jewish tribes of Madīnah, who feared similar reprisals.<sup>(253)</sup>

## 3. Al-Yasīr ibn Razām

Ibn Hishām narrates that he was in Khaybar mobilizing the Ghatafān tribe to attack the Muslims. Muḥammad dispatched 'Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah with companions to meet him. They persuaded him to accompany them to Muḥammad, promising honor. On the way, 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs carried him on his camel. Eleven kilometers from Khaybar, al-Yasīr regretted the journey and attempted to draw his sword. Ibn Anīs struck him, severing his foot, while al-Yasīr retaliated with a stick.<sup>(254)</sup>

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<sup>(252)</sup> Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, *The Principal Sources on the Prophet's Campaigns and Expeditions*, file 30 of 47.

<sup>(253)</sup> The story is presented in detail and in various narrations by al-Ḥafiz ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, book of *al-Maghāzī*, Chapter on the killing of Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf.

<sup>(254)</sup> *Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad*, by Ibn Hishām, The Raid of 'Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah to kill al-Yaseer ibn Razām.



#### **4. Asmā' bint Marwān:**

She criticized Islam and the Prophet in her poetry, inciting opposition. Muḥammad sent 'Umair ibn 'Uday al-Khattamī to kill her. 'Umair entered her house, where some of her children were sleeping, and she had a baby on her chest that she was breastfeeding. He moved the baby away from her bosom, and pierced her chest with his sword, killing her. <sup>(255)</sup>

#### **5. Salām Ibn Abū al-Ḥaḳīq:**

He was a Jew from Khaybar, known for inciting hostility toward Muḥammad and Islam. Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf had been killed by Muslims from the tribe of al-Aws. The Khazraj tribe, seeking equal honor, asked Muḥammad's permission to kill someone else who was worthy of his hostility to Islam. They mentioned Ibn Abū al-Ḥaḳīq, who was in Khaybar. Muḥammad granted it, instructing them not to harm women or children.

Five men went out to him, reached his home at night, and closed the rooms of the house over those inside them until they reached his room. They asked to meet him. His wife came out and asked who they were. They replied that they were Arabs in search of food. She said that their friend was in his room to which they could go and see him. When they entered, they shut the room between themselves and her. His wife screamed, but they beat him while he was on his bed with their swords. Then 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs held his sword to his stomach until he killed him.

When they reached the Messenger, they disputed over who had struck the fatal blow. Each claimed credit. Muḥammad examined their swords and declared that 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs's sword bore the decisive mark. <sup>(256)</sup>

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<sup>(255)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 222.

<sup>(256)</sup> Ibn Hishām, Op. cit.

**6. Abū 'Afak the Jew (his full name is unknown; this is the kunya by which he was commonly known):**

The man in question was elderly, reportedly one hundred and twenty years old, and renowned for opposing Muḥammad through his poetry. Muḥammad ordered that he be killed, and Sālim ibn 'Umayr volunteered to carry it out. On a hot summer night, he found 'Abū Afak asleep in the courtyard of his house. Approaching quietly, Sālim thrust his sword into his side, pressing down until the blade pierced through into the bedding beneath him. <sup>(257)</sup>

**7. Khālid Ibn Sufyān al-Hudhalī:**

In the fourth year after the *Hijrah*, Muḥammad learned that Khālid ibn Sufyān al-Hudhalī was residing in the 'Urnah valley, an area near Makkah, and was gathering forces to fight the Muslims. He instructed 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs to assassinate him, describing his appearance and noting that a shiver would be felt upon meeting him. Ibn Anīs set out with his sword and met Khālid at the time of the afternoon prayer, finding him near his home with his wives. Upon seeing him, he felt the described shiver. Fearing distraction from prayer, he performed it while walking toward him. After conversing briefly and walking together, Ibn Anīs suddenly attacked, striking him with the sword and killing him, while leaving the women unharmed. He then returned to Muḥammad and reported what had occurred, whereupon Muḥammad welcomed him and declared that his face had prospered, thereby affirming his action. <sup>(258)</sup>

**8. Hubayra Ibn Abū Wahb al-Makhzoumī:**

He was a prominent warrior and poet of the Quraysh who frequently ridiculed Islam and the Prophet Muḥammad.

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<sup>(257)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 222.

<sup>(258)</sup> *The History of Messengers and Kings*, by al-Ṭabarī, Vol. Two, p. 208. The Issue is also mentioned in other references, such as *The Beginning and the End*, by Ibn Kathīr.

Consequently, he was proscribed (his blood was declared licit), prompting him to flee to Najran, where he remained until his death.  
(259)

### **The Rules of War:**

The regulations governing warfare between Muslims differ from those applied in conflicts with unbelievers. Al-Māwardī outlines eight distinctions: (260)

1. The intention in fighting Muslims is deterrence rather than killing, whereas killing polytheists and apostates is permissible.

2. Muslims are fought in their advance but not in their retreat, whereas it is permissible to fight apostates and combatant unbelievers whether they are advancing or retreating.

3. Wounded Muslims are not to be killed, while the wounded among polytheists and apostates may be finished off.

4. Their captives should not be killed and those captives who are guaranteed not to return to fighting are released. Those whose return is not guaranteed shall be imprisoned until the end of the war and then released afterward. Captives of polytheists and apostates, however, may be killed.

5. Their wealth should not be taken as spoils, nor are their women and children to be taken captive.

6. Seeking the assistance of an unbeliever in fighting other Muslims is not permissible, whereas it is permissible in fighting against unbelievers.

7. A truce with them is not permitted, nor do they pay jizyah.

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(259) Jawād 'Alī, *A Comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Chapter 163.

(260) *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Vol. Five, Chapter Two, on Fighting the Rebels.

8. Siege engines ('aradas, similar to catapults) may be used against Muslims, but their dwellings are not to be burned, nor are their palm trees to be cut down.

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### **The State of Covenant (Treaty Relations):**

#### **Covenant of security:**

The security covenant refers to a temporary agreement established between Muslims and hostile non-believers, or certain groups among them. During the validity of the covenant, those granted protection are considered to be in a state of trust; once the covenant expires, they revert to their prior status as combatants. Jurists elaborate the legal conditions in detail, which are summarized as follows:

1. **Authority to Conclude Peace:** The Imām or his deputy may establish peace with unbelievers in general, or with the inhabitants of a specific region. A regional governor may also conclude peace with the people of a village or town under his jurisdiction if deemed advantageous. However, if a private individual independently concludes a truce, and those parties to it enter Muslim territory, their presence is not legally binding. They are to be returned to their land without harm, since they entered under the presumption of protection.

2. **Necessity and Interest:** A truce may be concluded if Muslims have a need or interest in it—for example, if they are in a weakened state due to lack of manpower or resources, if the enemy is distant, or if there is hope of non-believers embracing Islam through association, acceptance of jizyah, or cooperation against other adversaries. If a truce request is detrimental to Muslims, the majority opinion is that it should be rejected, though a minority of jurists permit it.

**3. Validity of Conditions:** The covenant must be free of invalid stipulations, such as retaining Muslim captives, returning escaped Muslims, confiscating Muslim property, or concluding a dhimmah contract for less than a dinar. Conditions such as residence in the Hijāz, entry into the Sacred Sanctuary, importing alcohol into Muslim lands, or returning Muslim women who fled are invalid. Likewise, requiring Muslims to pay money (except in cases of necessity), torturing prisoners, or besieging Muslims is impermissible.

**4. Duration:** The covenant must be limited to a legitimate period. If Muslims are weak or in need, the Imām may conclude peace for up to four months, but not more than a year. The total duration must not exceed ten years. <sup>(261)</sup>

The Qur'anic foundation for this covenant is found in Sūrah 9:6: **If any of the idolaters seeks asylum with you, grant him protection so that he may hear the word of God, then convey him to his place of safety.** The purpose is not merely to secure safety, but to allow the unbeliever to hear the word of God. Because fighting enemies is the general rule, security is permitted only when Muslims are weak and enemies are strong. Hence, jurists typically address this topic in works on jihād and military expeditions.

**Nullification of the Covenant:** The covenant may be nullified if its period is extended beyond the permissible limit, or if betrayal occurs—for example, espionage, communication with enemies during war, killing a Muslim, seizing property, or insulting the Prophet. In such cases, assassination is not permitted; rather, they must be notified before hostilities resume. Security also lapses upon expiration of the covenant, departure from Muslim lands, or if the Imām deems the presence of the protected person harmful to Muslim interests.

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<sup>(261)</sup> Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyiddīn Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *The Garden of the Seekers*, Book of jizyah and truce contract, Chapter Two on the Dhimma Contract.

If the protected person leaves Muslim territory leaving behind property, his heirs have no claim to it; it is confiscated by the Islamic state. However, if he dies within Muslim lands, his heirs retain inheritance rights.

**Absence of Covenant:** Anyone entering Muslim lands without a security covenant is not protected by law. Jurists permit Muslims to kill, enslave, or seize their property, which is considered war booty. If entry occurs by accident or necessity (e.g., shipwreck or plane crash), the ruler has the discretion to release, enslave, or execute them.

If a Muslim kills a non-believer under covenant, Muslims must pay blood money, according to most jurists. Apostates, however, are categorically excluded from such covenants and are subject to execution.<sup>(262)</sup>

### Treaty of Peace:

The treaty of peace is an agreement concluded between *Dār al-Islām* (Abode of Islam) and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (Abode of War). It establishes a temporary truce for a specified period, after which the reconciled territory reverts to its original status of war. Some jurists permit the treaty to be unspecified in duration, though not permanent, with the understanding that it may be terminated at any time should circumstances necessitate it.<sup>(263)</sup> In the Qur'ān, there is a precedent for the possibility of terminating agreements with a specified deadline, as seen in Sūrah 9.

### Dhimma Covenant

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<sup>(262)</sup> *Al-Majmu' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, Book of ransoms [Commentary on al-Muhadhdhab].

*Al-Muhadhdhab* is a treatise on the jurisprudence of Imām al-Shāfi'ī, by Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī.

<sup>(263)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 168.



The dhimmah covenant is established between Muslim authorities and the inhabitants of conquered territories who choose to retain their faith while agreeing to pay jizyah. Upon its conclusion, Shari'ah (Islamic law) applies to these unbeliever communities, who thereby come under the protection of the Muslim state. The territory itself is fully incorporated into *Dār al-Islām*. Unlike the treaty of peace, this covenant is regarded as permanent.

### Relations with unbelievers within Islamic Lands: The Dhimma Contract

#### *Al-Shurūt al-'Umariyyah* (The 'Umari Conditions): A Comparative and Historical Analysis:

A distinction must be drawn between *al-'Uhda al-'Umariyya* (The Pact of 'Umar) and *al-Shurūt al-'Umariyya* (the 'Umari Conditions), as they represent two distinct historical and legal traditions. The Pact of 'Umar refers specifically to the pledge of protection granted by the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to the people of Jerusalem — a document recorded in various early forms, notably by al-Ya'qūbī.<sup>(264)</sup> Conversely, the 'Umari Conditions are presented in Islamic historiography as a broader framework for the reconciliation between the Caliphate and the dhimmī populations across conquered territories. These conditions were adapted by subsequent dynasties, including the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids, and Ottomans, reflecting the evolving socio-political contexts of their respective eras.<sup>(265)</sup>

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<sup>(264)</sup> “Your blood and wealth are safe. Your churches will not be inhabited or destroyed, unless you commit a wrongful act and there are witnesses.” Shāfiq Jasser Aḥmad Maḥmūd, *The Pact of 'Umar*.

<sup>(265)</sup> These are the 'Umari Conditions. They have changed from time to time, and it is not known with precision what 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb actually stipulated. What matters here is not its attribution to 'Umar in particular, but to Islamic jurisprudence and thought. Contemporary Islam does not disapprove of them as a principle, even if it has changed and modified them according to the circumstances. However, some still speak as Ibn 'Asākir or

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya records a version of the so-called 'Umari Conditions, attributed to the people of al-Jazīrah, who sought protection under specific terms. These stipulations imposed restrictions on church construction, public religious practices, attire, and social interactions. For example, dhimmīs pledged not to build or renovate churches, not to display crosses or ring bells publicly, not to imitate Muslims in dress or language, and to host Muslim travelers. Breach of these terms would void the covenant. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb himself reportedly added two further conditions: dhimmīs should not purchase Muslim captives, and anyone who intentionally struck a Muslim would forfeit protection. (266)

The conditions, as handed down, reflect a framework of subordination designed to regulate the presence of unbelievers within Muslim lands. They emphasize visible differentiation, restrictions on religious expression, and obligations of hospitality. From a critical historical perspective, however, the narrative raises questions: it is difficult to conceive that a community would voluntarily impose such restrictive and discriminatory measures upon itself. This suggests that the conditions were more likely dictated under political or military pressure, later codified and attributed to 'Umar to lend them historical legitimacy.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is reported to have imposed stipulations that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya later categorized into six thematic areas:

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Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya did. Refer, for example, to the electronic magazine, *al-Bayān*, Wednesday 26 Safar 1426 AH - 6 April 2005, *The Position on the Other Opinion – An Islamic Legal Perspective*, by Muḥammad ibn Shaker al-Sharīf. This long article speaks exactly as Ibn Qayyim did and according to the 'Umari Conditions.

(266) *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 205.

**1. Religious Structures and Commerce:** regulations concerning the construction and maintenance of churches, hermitages, and related matters.

**2. Hospitality:** obligations regarding the treatment of Muslim travelers and wayfarers.

**3. Protection of Muslims and Islam:** prohibitions against actions that could harm Muslims or undermine the Islamic faith.

**4. Distinctive Dress and Social Differentiation:** requirements ensuring that dhimmīs are visibly distinguished from Muslims in clothing, modes of transport, and other social markers.

**5. Prohibited Practices:** restrictions on the public display of actions and words deemed offensive or contrary to Islamic norms.

**6. Economic and Social Relations:** rules governing partnerships and everyday interactions with Muslims. <sup>(267)</sup>

Ibn Qayyim elaborated on these six areas in detail, presenting them as the foundational framework for defining the relationship between Muslims and unbelievers within Islamic lands.

Al-Māwardī later refined these stipulations in the context of the jizyah contract, dividing them into two categories: the obligatory and the recommended:

\* The obligatory conditions include six binding stipulations: unbelievers must not disparage the Qur'ān, insult the Prophet, slander Islam, harm Muslim women, attempt to proselytize Muslims away from their faith, attack their property, or assist hostile forces. These are considered inherent rights, binding without explicit stipulation, and any violation constitutes a breach of the covenant.

\* The commendable conditions include six recommended stipulations: adopting distinctive attire, refraining from surpassing

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<sup>(267)</sup> Ibid.

Muslims in architectural grandeur, avoiding the public ringing of bells or recitations, concealing the consumption of alcohol and the display of crosses or pigs, burying their dead discreetly, and refraining from riding horses (though permitted to ride mules and donkeys). These are not binding unless explicitly stipulated, but once included, they become enforceable and individuals can be disciplined for violations. However, if not stipulated, failure to observe them does not invalidate the covenant. <sup>(268)</sup>

Additional conditions were introduced over time, particularly concerning the dress and equipment of dhimmīs—for example, the use of wooden stirrups instead of metal, sandals with two straps, or distinctive saddle modifications such as replacing the *qurbūs* (metal frame) with wooden pieces. <sup>(269)</sup>

Many caliphs followed what was attributed to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, including 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib <sup>(270)</sup> and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, who are considered exemplars by the majority of Muslim jurists. In addition, al-Manṣūr, al-Rashīd, al-Mahdī, al-Ma'mūn, al-Mutawakkil, and al-Muqtadir also adhered to these principles. <sup>(271)</sup>

The various versions of the 'Umari conditions which evolved over time, according to many Islamic sources, first appeared more than two and a half centuries after the Caliph's death. What is significant here is that Islamic jurisprudence sanctions harsh versions of these conditions and attributes them to the Caliph

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<sup>(268)</sup> *The Ordinances of Government*, Chapter Thirteen, Regarding the Status of Jizyah and the Kharāj.

<sup>(269)</sup> Abū Yūsuf Ya'qoub ibn Ibrāhīm, *Al-kharāj*, p. 72.

<sup>(270)</sup> “*Ibn al-Mubarak mentioned on the authority of ... that 'Alī told the people of Najran that 'Umar was wise in the matter and I will not change anything that 'Umar did.*” Al-Sha'bi said: “*'Alī said when he came to al-Kūfah; I did not come to untie a knot that 'Umar had tied.*” *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 206.

<sup>(271)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ibid.*, Chapter on the status of Muslim Caliphs with the Dhimmīs, p. 87. The chapter is extensive, in which Ibn Qayyim explains the situation of the dhimmīs during the eras of a number of caliphs.

'Umar. Thus, they have become entrenched in Muslim culture, exerting a clear impact to date.<sup>(272)</sup> Examples include al-'Ezaby Pasha conditions —undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior— regarding the construction of churches issued in 1934 in Egypt.

Some details are discussed below:

### First. Freedom of Belief

#### The punishment for apostasy in Islamic jurisprudence:

According to the majority of classical and contemporary jurists, once a person converts to Islam, they have no recognized right to reconsider or renounce their decision. This position has been consistently upheld across centuries and is rarely treated as a matter open to debate, whether among ancient, medieval, or modern scholars, nor within broader Muslim public opinion. The minority view—that apostasy should not be punished by death—has historically been regarded as an outlier, finding little resonance within mainstream Islamic thought and practice.<sup>(273)</sup> Classical Sunni jurists across the four schools (Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī) generally agree that apostasy is punishable by death, though they differ on specific conditions and procedures. Even the more “lenient” Ḥanafī position does not reject the punishment outright, but allows for delays and opportunities for repentance. This consensus has been almost absolute within Islamic public opinion throughout history. Modern cases—such as that of Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd in Egypt—illustrate how cultural attitudes continue to endorse the principle, focusing on denying the occurrence of apostasy rather than defending freedom of belief.

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<sup>(272)</sup> Shāfiq Jasser Aḥmad Maḥmūd analyzes and discusses this in a way that is very useful for researchers in his book *The Pact of 'Umar*.

<sup>(273)</sup> This is exemplified by the perspectives of Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr and Gamāl al-Bannā, both of whom adhered to the same doctrinal school, alongside a contingent of other reformist Islamist scholars.

Apostasy is traditionally classified into two types: *Milli* apostasy, referring to converts who later renounce Islam, and *Fitrī* apostasy (innate apostasy), referring to those born to Muslim parents who abandon the faith. Definitions of apostasy vary, but most jurists agree that denying what is “necessarily known of the religion”—such as core obligations—constitutes apostasy.

The dhimmah covenant does not extend to apostates. According to Islamic texts, apostates are viewed as individuals who have abandoned the true religion after having received it, a condition interpreted as stemming from the corruption of their nature and leading to despair regarding the possibility of their guidance. For this reason, jurists exclude them from the protections granted under the dhimmah.

By contrast, the dhimmah was historically applied to the People of the Book —Jews and Christians—who were permitted to reside under Muslim rule under specific conditions. A minority of jurists expand the scope of the dhimmah to include all non-believers, with the notable exception of apostates. Apostates, in this view, are allowed to remain in Muslim territories only temporarily to be exposed to Islam, with the hope that they may eventually be guided back to the faith.

The Qur'ān does not explicitly stipulate death for apostasy. Some exegetes, such as Abū Qalābah al-Jarmī, interpret Sūrah 5:33 as applying to apostates, though the verse more directly addresses those who wage war against God and His Messenger. The prophetic tradition, however, includes explicit reports: **Whoever changes his religion, kill him** (Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān 4389; Sunan al-Nasā'ī -4059<sup>(274)</sup>). Another narration in *Musnad Aḥmad* (4424) states: **It is not permissible to shed the blood of a Muslim except in three cases: life**

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<sup>(274)</sup> When referring to Sunan al-Nasā'ī, what is meant is *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*. [The Major Sunan of al-Nasā'ī].



for life, adultery by a married person, and one who abandons his religion and separates from the community.<sup>(275)</sup>

It is not the concern of this study to determine the authenticity of these prophetic traditions, as that lies outside the scope of the present discussion. What is of greater relevance here is the fact that Islamic culture has historically incorporated this issue and embraced it decisively. The more pressing matter, therefore, is not whether the prophetic traditions are authentic in a technical sense, but rather that the majority of Muslims have accepted them as authentic and binding. This widespread acceptance has had a profound impact, embedding the punishment for apostasy deeply within Islamic legal and cultural traditions.

The principal point of divergence among jurists concerns whether repentance should be offered, and for how long. Al-Shawkānī<sup>(276)</sup> holds that execution can be immediate, while the majority allows three days for repentance.<sup>(277)</sup> Al-Nakha'ī (Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd ibn Qays ibn Aswad al-Nakha'ī al-Kūfī) argues for a lifelong opportunity, a position which Ibn Qudāmah (Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī al-Ḥanbalī) rejects as contrary to Sunnah and consensus.<sup>(278)</sup> Other opinions extend the period to a month or more. Severe cases—such as blasphemy, repeated apostasy, or

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<sup>(275)</sup> In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -6772, it is narrated by Abū Mūsā that the Messenger of Allah said, “Go to Yemen, Abū Mūsā.” He then sent Mu'ādh's ibn Jabal after him. When Mu'ādh arrived, the Messenger of Allah threw a pillow to him and said, “Sit down and observe.” Mu'ādh saw a man who had converted from Judaism to Islam and then back to Judaism, bound before him. Mu'ādh asked about the man, and the Messenger of Allah explained the situation. Mu'ādh refused to sit until the man was executed, and the Messenger of Allah ordered his execution.

<sup>(276)</sup> *The Rushing Torrent Overflowing onto the Gardens of Flowers*, p. 869.

<sup>(277)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, Sūrah 2:217-218.

<sup>(278)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The Sufficient*, Book of the Apostate, Chapter Three.

insults against God and the Prophet—are generally deemed punishable without the option of repentance.

There are notable differences among jurists regarding how repentance for apostasy is handled. A common position suggests that apostates should be imprisoned until they repent, with most jurists specifying a period of three days. During this time, the apostate is urged to reconsider their unbelief through dialogue and admonition; while simultaneously facing the looming threat of execution should they persist. This process, in effect, combines imprisonment with psychological and social pressure, making repentance less a matter of free conviction than of coercion.<sup>(279)</sup> The mechanism bears a striking resemblance to the practices of the European Inquisition during the Middle Ages, specifically in its combination of imprisonment and psychological pressure.

The author contends that this mechanism bears a striking resemblance to the practices of the European Inquisition during the

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<sup>(279)</sup> It is attributed to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that he strongly disapproved of immediate executions for apostasy: *“Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Qarī narrated that a man came to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb from Abū Mūsā and asked him about the people, so he told him. Then 'Umar said, is there any news from the Maghreb? He said, Yes, a man renounced Islam after converting. He said, What did you do with him? He said, We brought him close and struck his neck. 'Umar said, 'Why did you not imprison him for three days, feed him a loaf of bread every day, and wait to see if he repented and returned to the command of Allah? O Allah, I did not attend, and I am not satisfied with what I have heard.' This was narrated by al-Shāfi'ī. Another report from 'Umar was also narrated by Mālik in Al-Muwatta' [The Well-Trodden Path] from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Qarī from his father. Al-Shāfi'ī said that those who do not delay in dealing with apostates claimed that this report from 'Umar is not authentic. Al-Bayhaqī narrated a similar report from Anas, who said, 'When we descended upon Tustar, he mentioned the Ḥadīth, stating, I went to 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, and he said, O Anas, what did the six men from Bakr ibn Wa'il do who apostatized from Islam and joined the polytheists? He said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, they were killed in battle.' 'Umar said, 'Was there no other option for them but to be killed?' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'I would have offered them Islam, and if they refused, I would have them imprisoned'”* Quoted from al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awtār Sharḥ Muntaqa al-Akḥbār*, Vol. Eight, Apostasy, Chapter on Executing an Apostate.

Middle Ages, specifically in its combination of imprisonment and psychological pressure.

The jurists hold varying opinions regarding the punishment for apostate women. According to al-Ṣan'ānī (Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa'id al-Ṣan'ānī al-'Amrī al-Yamanī), most jurists believe that apostate women should be killed because the prophetic tradition states: **Whoever changes his religion, kill him**—which is interpreted to apply to both males and females. Additionally, Ibn al-Mundhir, citing the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, transmits a prophetic tradition in which it is stated that an apostate woman should be executed. <sup>(280)</sup> Mālik, al-Awzā'ī, al-Shāfi'ī, and al-Layth ibn Sa'd argue that she should be killed just as an apostate man is killed; their evidence is the apparent meaning of the prophetic tradition, indicating that the word “whoever” includes both males and females. In contrast, al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfah, and their followers argue that apostate women should not be killed but instead imprisoned, coerced to convert to Islam, and subjected to beatings every three days until they convert. <sup>(281)</sup> Mu'ādh ibn Jabal reported that when Muḥammad dispatched him to Yemen, he instructed him regarding cases of apostasy. If a man abandoned Islam, Mu'ādh was to invite him to repent, and if he refused, he was to be executed by beheading. In the case of a woman who apostatized, the instruction was likewise to invite her to return to Islam; if she declined, she should be asked again to repent. 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib also states that apostate women must repent and should not be killed. <sup>(282)</sup> Some believe that apostate women cannot be

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<sup>(280)</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ismail al-Ṣan'ānī, *Subul al-Salām, a commentary on Bulūgh al-Marām* [Attainment of the Objective According to Evidence of the Legal Rulings], Chapter on Felonies; Chapter on Killing the Offender and the Apostate, 2, p. 383.

<sup>(281)</sup> *The Jurists' Masterpiece*, Book of Expeditions, Chapter on Taking Jizyah and Ruling of Apostates.

<sup>(282)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazarī: *Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Schools*, Book of Retaliation, Chapter on Discretionary Punishment.

killed, yet no punishment is imposed on those who do kill them.<sup>(283)</sup> However, a few jurists rule that apostate women should be killed even if they return to Islam.<sup>(284)</sup>

This divergence highlights the dissonance between textual literalism and pragmatic jurisprudence. More significant than the authenticity of individual prophetic traditions is the historical reality that most Muslims accepted them as binding, thereby embedding the punishment for apostasy deeply within Islamic legal and cultural traditions.

The fatāwā also address the case of a pregnant apostate and her child. If a woman insists on apostasy while pregnant, her execution is postponed until after childbirth. Should she secure a wet nurse and the child accepts the nurse, the woman is executed; otherwise, the punishment is delayed until she completes breastfeeding.

A child is not deemed an apostate until reaching puberty and explicitly expressing unbelief. If one parent is Muslim, the child is considered Muslim from birth. Jurists, however, disagree on the status of a child whose parents are apostates—whether such a child should be regarded as Muslim, an apostate, or an original unbeliever. The issue is complex, and the fatāwā are numerous and varied.

Islamic heritage texts record instances of apostasy punishment during the lifetime of Muḥammad and under the rule of the caliphs.<sup>(285)</sup> Reports mention, for example, the execution of a woman during the caliphate of Abū Bakr<sup>(286)</sup> and the burning of certain heretics by 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. Other sources, however, suggest that

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<sup>(283)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded, Book of Expeditions*.

<sup>(284)</sup> Ibn Rushd, *The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid*, file 28.

<sup>(285)</sup> The sources are countless, including *Al-Umm*, Chapter on the apostate from Islam, and the disagreement regarding the apostate, where he discusses issues, such as executing an apostate woman.

<sup>(286)</sup> *Al-Umm*, No. 1, p. 298.

Muḥammad did not consistently order the execution of apostates, indicating that such measures might have been context-specific, linked either to the formative period of the Islamic polity or to particular political considerations.

Some accounts maintain that apostates were not generally executed, except for those who refused to pay zakāt during Abū Bakr's reign. In these cases, it is argued that they were punished not for apostasy per se but for rebellion against the state.<sup>(287)</sup> However, this reasoning seems problematic, as many of these groups appear to have fought primarily in self-defense.

Regardless of the disputed historical details, the notion of punishment for apostasy has deep roots in Islamic legal discourse.

Jurists also debate the appropriate method of executing an apostate. One opinion maintains that the individual should be killed by the sword, while Abū al-'Abbās ibn Surayj argues that the purpose is not necessarily execution but rather coercion into repentance, achieved through beating and stabbing until the person either prays or dies.<sup>(288)</sup> It was further established in legal discourse that unbelieving women are not to be killed, since the killing of unbelievers was restricted to combatants. Women and children, instead, can be taken captive, enslaved, or sold, but not executed solely on account of their unbelief. A distinction, however, is drawn between unbelieving women and apostate women: whereas non-combatant unbelieving women are exempt from execution, apostate women may be subject to capital punishment. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that apostasy warrants death even for non-combatants, contending that unbelief and neglect of religious duties constitute

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<sup>(287)</sup> This is an argument presented by some who say that the basis of the relationship between Muslims and unbelievers is peace. An example of this is what 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād mentioned in his article *War Ethics in Islam*.

<sup>(288)</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf Fayrūzābādī al-Shīrāzī, *al-Muhadhdhab* [The Refined Manual of Shāfi'ī Jurisprudence], Book of Prayer, a Chapter on the Ruling of one who Abandons Prayer.

graver sins than committing prohibited acts. This position carries significant influence within the Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Ḥanbalī schools of law, as well as among many early Muslim scholars. <sup>(289)</sup>

Further disagreement arises concerning non-believers who convert to religions other than Islam. Mālik and the majority of jurists hold that such individuals should not be punished, since their new faith would have been tolerated had they embraced it initially. By contrast, Shāfi'ī jurists uphold the view that converts to religions other than Islam should be executed. Some Ḥanbalī authorities, however, reject the permissibility of such conversions without endorsing capital punishment. They argue that conversion to a false religion is tantamount to apostasy, and that only Islam or the person's original faith can be accepted. If the individual refuses to return, they are to be threatened, imprisoned, and beaten. When asked whether such a person should be killed, the Imām responded in the negative. <sup>(290)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah summarizes the debate, noting two narrations: one requiring execution if the individual does not revert, and another allowing repentance on the grounds that the person has abandoned a false religion. In certain cases, such as a Jew converting to Christianity, the prescribed response was return to the original faith rather than execution, though punishment by beating and imprisonment is permitted. More severe measures are suggested for conversions to religions outside the People of the Book, such as Zoroastrianism, due to implications for dietary laws and marriage. <sup>(291)</sup> These discussions illustrate the diversity of juristic opinion on the treatment of apostasy and religious conversion within Islamic law.

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<sup>(289)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 18, Chapter on Verbal Justice and Honesty, Side Six.

<sup>(290)</sup> Al-Buhūtī, *al-Rawḍ al-Murbi' Sharḥ Zād al-Mustaqni'* [The Flourishing Garden], Book of Jihād, Chapter on the Dhimma Covenant and its Rulings.

<sup>(291)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The SuffICIENT*, Vol. 48.



Concerning conversion to Islam, scholars do not view it as a state of *fitnah* (spiritual trial or deviation). Instead, it is regarded as divine guidance (*Huda*) and the attainment of the Truth, based on the implicit assumption that Islam is the absolute Truth that aligns inherently with human nature (*fitrah*). Consequently, conversion to Islam is regarded as a superior act of ascension, while leaving it is viewed as a regression. Even the Arabic term for apostasy conveys this notion, signifying retreat, reversal, or turning back. Within Islamic thought, apostasy is associated with moral corruption, sedition, and hostility toward the community.

From a rational standpoint, however, this perception is challenged. Historical evidence demonstrates that many individuals labeled as apostates or heretics made notable contributions to civilization, and some even sacrificed greatly in service of the Islamic caliphate itself. Paradoxically, contemporary Islamists sometimes express pride in such figures, celebrating their achievements as part of Islamic heritage while still categorizing them as unbelievers in doctrinal contexts. This discrepancy underscores the complexity of the discourse surrounding apostasy, conversion, and the broader relationship between religious identity and social belonging in Islamic history.

One of the distinctive principles of classical Islamic jurisprudence is the differentiated treatment of apostates, unbelievers, and hypocrites. Apostates are subject to capital punishment, and unbelievers are obligated to pay the *jizyah* tax, yet hypocrites—those who outwardly profess Islam while inwardly unbelieving—are treated in this world as Muslims. Their ultimate judgment is deferred to God on the Day of Resurrection, unless their hypocrisy is definitively proven. A hypocrite, in this sense, is someone who conceals unbelief for fear of harm, a practice associated with *taqiyyah* (concealing belief to avoid material or moral danger).

Islam permits hypocrites to live among Muslims, marry among them, and inherit from them, since they publicly declare Islam and

no human authority can ascertain the state of their hearts. This distinction prevents arbitrary accusations of unbelief. Neither the Qur'ān nor the Ḥadīth prescribes worldly punishment for hypocrisy, thereby privileging the hypocrite over the openly unbelieving. The dilemma, however, lies in the impossibility of definitively identifying hypocrisy, while unbelief can be openly recognized. This discrepancy reflects the absence of freedom in Islamic jurisprudence to change one's religion, since genuine choice presupposes the possibility of reversal. As a result, hypocrisy is tolerated over honesty.

Moreover, Islam permits dissimulation in certain circumstances, allowing Muslims to conceal their faith or intentions toward non-Muslims under the principle of *taqiyyah*, a doctrine acknowledged in both Sunni and Shi'ite traditions, albeit with certain distinctions.<sup>(292)</sup> This underscores the pragmatic dimension of Islamic law, which distinguishes between outward conformity and inward conviction, leaving the latter to divine judgment.

If a person's hypocrisy is formally established—an act resembling an inquisition—he is not classified merely as a hypocrite but rather as a heretic. In such cases, Sunni jurists unanimously hold that execution is warranted. Within this consensus, the Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools maintain that the individual should be executed immediately without being offered the opportunity to repent, and that execution remains obligatory even if repentance is later expressed. Repentance, in this view, does not absolve the individual of punishment; rather, execution is carried out as a disciplinary measure rather than as a direct consequence of unbelief.

Nevertheless, the individual continues to be regarded as Muslim with respect to ritual obligations: he is to be washed, shrouded, prayed over, and buried in Muslim cemeteries. His ultimate fate is

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<sup>(292)</sup> Bāsim 'Āmir: *The Distinction between Shar'ī Taqiyya and Shī'ī Taqiyya*.

deemed a matter left to divine judgment.<sup>(293)</sup> This position illustrates the discrepancy between doctrinal severity in addressing perceived heresy and the continued recognition of communal and ritual belonging within Islamic law.

Regarding the distinction between an apostate and a heretic, Ibn Qudāmah—known for his strict interpretation of Islamic law—recounts a story about 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. He reported that a man who had converted to Christianity was brought before 'Alī, who asked him to repent. When the man refused, 'Alī executed him. Subsequently, a group of individuals who were praying but were known to be heretics were brought before 'Alī. They denied their heresy, claiming to be Muslims. Nevertheless, 'Alī executed them without offering repentance. He then clarified that he gave the Christian a chance to repent because he openly admitted his apostasy, whereas the heretics, who were proven to be heretics, did not acknowledge their deviation, leaving no opportunity for them to return to Islam. For those who deny their apostasy, repentance is not expected, since their unbelief is already established by evidence.<sup>(294)</sup> It follows from this reasoning that an unbeliever whose unbelief is proven—and who denies it—is to be put to death without being asked to renounce their faith. This appears logical: why ask someone to renounce a faith they deny holding? Yet they are executed because their unbelief has been established by evidence. The means of establishing this is an inquisition; otherwise, how could their inner thoughts be uncovered?

Islamic jurisprudence generally distinguishes between a Muslim and an unbeliever who is compelled to change religion. Because “Islam is superior and can never be surpassed,” an unbeliever forced to embrace Islam is judged to be Muslim, whereas Muslims

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<sup>(293)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jazarī, *Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Schools*, Book of Retaliation, Ruling of Discretionary Punishment, Ruling of the Heretic.

<sup>(294)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The SuffICIENT*, Vol. 48, Book of the Apostate.

compelled to utter words of unbelief are not judged to be unbelievers, provided their hearts remain firm in faith.<sup>(295)</sup>

Islamic history witnessed periods of persecution directed at the *zanādiqah* (heretics), who were accused of outwardly professing Islam while practicing beliefs considered contradictory to it or promoting ideas opposed to official Islam (usually Sunni). The caliph al-Mahdī was zealous in pursuing and exterminating the *zanādiqah*, searching for them across the lands, and executing them on mere accusation. His successor, the caliph al-Hadī, followed the same policy.<sup>(296)</sup> In fact, a bureau was established in 783 to prosecute the *zanādiqah* during al-Hadī's reign, with branches in the provinces. In prison, they were given the choice between returning to Islam and execution.<sup>(297)</sup>

Public opinion among scholars and even the common people tends to accept this type of persecution even in the contemporary era. Trials were held against the *zanādiqah* that resembled inquisition-style proceedings, and many of them were executed according to numerous traditional sources. Examples include:

\* Al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, a Mu'tazilite, who was killed by Khālīd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qusrī, the governor of al-Kūfah, by order of the Umayyad caliph, Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik in the year 742.

\* Al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, who was crucified after enduring severe humiliation.

\* Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, one of the first Muslim theologians to believe in humanity's ability to choose freely: caliph Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik ordered that his hands and feet be cut off, and that

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<sup>(295)</sup> Abū Bakr ibn Mas'ūd ibn Aḥmad al-Kashanī Ala' al-Dīn, *The Unique Masterpieces in the Organization of the Legal Rulings*, Vol. Three, p. 100.

<sup>(296)</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* [History of the Caliphs], pp 198-202.

<sup>(297)</sup> Khālīd Azzām, *Encyclopedia of Islamic History – The 'Abbāsīd State*, pp 74-75.

he be hung at the gate of Damascus; he subsequently ordered that his tongue be cut off, on charges of promoting Mu'tazilite doctrine.

\* Al-Suhrawardī (the “murdered” Suhrawardī), for whom the jurists of Aleppo, with the approval of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, established an inquisition court, and ruled that he be killed in 1191 AD.

\* Al-Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (after whom the Jahmiyya were named). He agreed with the Mu'tazilites on fundamental matters but differed on some issues including his belief in determinism. He was killed by Salīm ibn Aḥwaz, a prince and a military commander in the Umayyad state, in the year 128 AH.

\* 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa', executed for his criticism of Islam.

\* 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Abū al-'Awjā, known for his heretical views.

\* Bashshār ibn Burd, the poet, killed in 784.

\* Ṣāliḥ ibn 'Abd al-Quddūs, killed in 783.

\* Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Warrāq, a researcher and theologian who presented skeptical religious views. Originally a Mu'tazilite, he was later accused of atheism and heresy. He was exiled to Ahvaz and died there in 909 AD.

Islamic jurisprudence also prescribes other punishments for apostasy. The four Sunni schools unanimously hold that apostasy annuls the marriage contract. If apostasy occurs before consummation, the contract is annulled immediately. If it occurs after consummation, Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfah differ on whether annulment should be immediate, while al-Shāfi'ī maintains that it should be delayed until the end of the waiting period. Ibn Ḥanbal transmits two narrations, reflecting both positions. A married apostate loses certain rights, and the property of the apostate is inherited by the Muslim community (i.e., the state), rather than by the apostate's family.

The question of capital punishment for apostasy holds enduring significance in both classical and contemporary Islamic discourse, among scholars and lay Muslims alike. Opposition to this position has, in many contexts, been deemed sufficient grounds for declaring the objector an unbeliever. Moderate voices have largely aligned with hardline positions, with only a few exceptions that have attracted limited support. Contemporary Islamic thought has not substantially retreated from this issue, which remains highly significant for Islamists. Nevertheless, this persistence endures despite the Qur'ān not stipulating an earthly punishment for apostasy, the considerable doubts surrounding its application in the Prophetic Sunnah, and the relative ease with which religious freedom can be justified within Islamic frameworks.

When the “moderate” scholar Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī sought to soften the discourse on apostasy to present Islam as tolerant, he acknowledged the existence of scholarly dissent regarding execution—an opinion generally regarded as marginal within mainstream Islamic jurisprudence. He further argued that execution should be carried out not because of apostasy itself but rather due to the sedition it allegedly causes. <sup>(298)</sup> Moderate scholars in general, such as 'Abd al-Ṣabūr Shāhīn and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, commonly advance this justification.

This reasoning, however, does not account for situations such as a Muslim converting to Christianity, nor does it explain the sedition that—allegedly—occurred when millions of Western Christians became irreligious. Moreover, it implicitly denies the individual's right to think freely and to change beliefs. On the contrary, coercion in religion, suppression of dissenting opinions, and restrictions on freedom of belief can themselves be considered forms of sedition. Al-Qaraḍāwī accepts the notion of intellectual apostasy but rejects the right of the apostate to publicly announce

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<sup>(298)</sup> An interview on Al Jazeera Channel (Qatar) on January 31, 2005.



his views, while granting Muslims the right to express theirs—an evident form of religious discrimination.

Within this framework, the concept of sedition remains vague, appearing to equate to turning people away from Islam. Such an argument is easily appropriated by authoritarian regimes, which have historically used it to suppress opponents. In fact, Sunni jurists employ this rationale to justify calls to refrain from revolting against the Muslim ruler, regardless of his actions.

Al-Qaraḍāwī explicitly calls for the punishment of secularists, including those who are not irreligious, accusing them of apostasy. He stated: *“The secularist who rejects the principle of Sharī'ah law essentially has no part in Islam except in name and is considered an apostate from Islam. It is necessary to call him to repentance, address any doubts or suspicions he may have, present arguments to him, and if necessary, the judiciary should rule on his apostasy. He should be stripped of his affiliation with Islam, and his Islamic nationality may be withdrawn. Distinctions should be made between him and his spouse and children. The rulings of apostates should be applied to him both in life and after death.”* <sup>(299)</sup> Later, in a book published in 1993, al-Qaraḍāwī issued fatāwā distinguishing between aggravated and simple apostasy, and between the proselytizer and the private individual. He argues that aggravated apostasy—such as that of Salmān Rushdie, who actively propagated his views—warrants more severe legal consequences. In such cases, he recommends following the majority of jurists and the apparent meaning of the aḥādīth, in order to eliminate perceived harm and prevent social unrest. <sup>(300)</sup>

Nevertheless, there are marginal Islamic voices—at times accused of heresy—that reject the execution of apostates. Among them are Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, who, like other Qur'anists, rejects the

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<sup>(299)</sup> *Islam and Secularism Face to Face*, Vol. Two, Defining Concepts, Secularism and Atheism.

<sup>(300)</sup> *Characteristics of the Islamic Society we Aspire to*, Vol. One, Chapter One, Muslim Society and Confronting Apostasy.

aḥādīth entirely; Gamāl al-Bannā; and Maḥmūd Shaltūt, who questioned the authenticity of the narrations concerning apostasy. Yet, these voices find little resonance with the general public.

This intransigence reflects a concern that the broad popular base from which certain groups derive their power might fragment should individuals turn away from their faith. Indeed, permitting apostasy would make public discussion and critique of religious interpretations acceptable, allowing people to reflect on their beliefs without fear. It would bring hidden issues to light and reduce the fear associated with leaving the religion—especially in an age of advanced science and diverse sources of knowledge. Authorities may also fear losing ideological control over the masses. Additionally, some religious institutions are concerned with maintaining their social roles and resources, viewing the potential shrinking of their base as a direct threat to their interests.

The issue of executing the apostate is often linked to the social acceptance of the hypocrite, provided no signs of disbelief emerge to expose their views. This suggests a prioritization of social and ideological conformity. The hypocrite is preferred over the unbeliever because the former remains within the established social and legal framework, whereas the apostate breaks free from it. This departure represents a significant challenge to traditional control mechanisms, even though allowing the apostate to leave could be seen as an opportunity for spiritual purification within the community. This stance indicates that certain traditionalist interpretations can function as tools of social and political control.

### **Conclusion**

This divergence highlights the tension between scriptural literalism and pragmatic jurisprudence. Of greater concern than the historiographical authenticity of individual prophetic traditions is their broad historical acceptance as binding precedents. This

consensus deeply embeds the penalties for apostasy within Islamic legal frameworks and cultural traditions. Consequently, the issue reflects more than a mere legal construct; it represents a social reality that continues to influence contemporary discourse on religious pluralism and the right to dissent in Muslim societies.

### **Punishment for Criticizing Islam, the Messenger, and the Companions:**

Classical Islamic jurisprudence devotes considerable attention to the penalties prescribed for disparaging Islam, the Prophet, his Companions, and members of his household. Mālikī jurists, for example, maintain that even reproach directed at the Prophet's wives may warrant capital punishment.<sup>(301)</sup> This prohibition encompasses dhimmīs as well, who are forbidden from inviting Muslims to their religion or irreligion, since such invitations are construed as an implicit denigration of Islam and a violation of the dhimmah covenant.

The Qur'ān declares: **But if they break their pledges after having concluded a treaty with you, and revile your religion, then fight these archetypes of faithlessness that have no respect for a pledge** (Sūrah 9:12). Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse as furnishing textual authority for combatting those who ridicule Islam. He explains that when polytheists abrogate their covenants and insult the faith, they are to be fought as “chiefs of unbelief,” for they recognize no sanctity in oaths. Jurists consequently derive from this passage the ruling that those who satirize the Prophet or Islam are liable to execution. Similarly, al-Zamakhsharī (Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Zamakhsharī al-Khawārazmī) contends

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<sup>(301)</sup> Among them are Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Mawaq, *At-Tāj wa-al-Iklīl li-Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* [The Crown and the Garland on the Abridgment of Khalīl], Book of Blood Claims, a Chapter on Apostasy.

that non-believers who mock Islam thereby annul their covenant and forfeit its protection. <sup>(302)</sup>

Most jurists (including al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī) agree that the phrase “they broke their oaths” means that they have no covenant. <sup>(303)</sup> Senior jurists accredited by Muslim public opinion agree on the execution of anyone who defames Islam, whether in deed or in word, with the exception of Abū Ḥanīfah, who stipulates that the individual should be asked to repent first, <sup>(304)</sup> while permitting the execution of anyone who does so repeatedly. <sup>(305)</sup>

Scholars within the Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanbalī traditions extend this ruling to innovators whose doctrines contradict the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, while Mālikī jurists sometimes apply it to sects such as the Qadariyya (Mu’tazilites), framing it as “corruption on earth” rather than apostasy. <sup>(306)</sup>

Classical Islamic jurisprudence contains significant debate regarding the punishment for neglecting prayer. Jurists generally hold that whoever denies one of the pillars of Islam, such as prayer, should be asked to repent, and if repentance is refused, capital punishment may be applied. Some issue fatāwā extending this ruling to those who abandon prayer, regardless of whether they deny its obligation. <sup>(307)</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal maintains that neglecting prayer constitutes unbelief, thereby removing the individual from Islam and warranting execution if repentance is not forthcoming.

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<sup>(302)</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshaf* [The Expositor of the Truths of Revelation], No. 2, p. 251.

<sup>(303)</sup> Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wil Ay al-Qur’ān* [The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur’ān], 12913.

<sup>(304)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded*, Book of Expeditions, Chapter on Apostates.

<sup>(305)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimma* [Legal Rulings Concerning the People under the Covenant], p. 265.

<sup>(306)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Collection of Fatāwā*, vol. 28.

<sup>(307)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The Sufficient*, Book of the Apostate.

In contrast, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, and al-Shāfi'ī consider such individuals transgressors rather than unbelievers. Mālik and al-Shāfi'ī argue that discretionary execution can be applied, while Abū Ḥanīfah prescribes discretionary punishment short of death.<sup>(308)</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal extends this reasoning further, advocating execution for those who declare wine permissible.<sup>(309)</sup>

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, it is obligatory for the ruler to ensure that all Muslims perform the prescribed prayers, and to punish those who neglect them, in line with what he describes as the consensus of the Muslim community. He maintains that if a group collectively refuses to perform prayer, they should be fought and, if necessary, subjected to capital punishment. Similarly, he extends this reasoning to other obligations such as *zakāt*, fasting, and prohibitions against universally forbidden acts, including incestuous marriages and forms of corruption.

With regard to individuals who abandon prayer, Ibn Taymiyyah argues that they should first be punished by beating and imprisonment until they comply. The majority of scholars, however, hold that if a person refuses to pray after being asked to repent, execution may be warranted. A key point of contention among jurists is whether such individuals should be killed as unbelievers or as immoral Muslims. Most early scholars maintain that if the individual acknowledges the obligation of prayer yet refuses to perform it, they should be executed as unbelievers. If they deny its obligation altogether, then they are considered unbelievers by unanimous consensus, alongside those who deny other fundamental duties and prohibitions.<sup>(310)</sup>

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<sup>(308)</sup> Cited from Muḥammad al-Ṣālīḥ al-'Uthaymīn, *Ḥukm Tarīk al-Ṣalāh* [The Ruling on Abandoning the Prayer], Chapter One.

<sup>(309)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(310)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

Much of this discourse is found in classical Islamic jurisprudence and continues to be practiced in countries that implement Islamic law, where *Salafist* movements call for its enforcement. In mainstream Islamic thought, belief is closely tied to behavior. It is therefore insufficient for an individual merely to affirm the doctrine of Islam; they must also demonstrate adherence through prescribed conduct. <sup>(311)</sup>

Although the Qur'ān does not stipulate worldly punishments for most pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* behaviors, jurists often endorse severe sanctions for actions deemed anti-Islamic. These include major sins—and in some cases minor ones—though scholars differ on how to define a major sin and whether its commission renders the individual an unbeliever or simply a transgressor.

Classical Islamic jurisprudence generally holds that if non-believers under the dhimmah contract openly preach beliefs contrary to Islam, this constitutes a breach of the covenant. As a

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<sup>(311)</sup> Here is a complete paragraph on the ruling of those who abandons the prayer according to Shāfi'īs, from the book *Al-Muhadhdhab* [A Treatise on the Jurisprudence of Imām al-Shāfi'ī], by al-Fayrūzābādī, Book of prayer, as a model for dealing harshly with those who change their mind or change the rituals of their religion: “*Chapter on the ruling concerning those who abandon prayer: Whoever is obligated by God’s command to perform the prayer and neglects it—if he denies its obligation—he is deemed an unbeliever and executed for apostasy, since he has rejected God’s instruction. If he abandons prayer while acknowledging its obligation, he is also subject to execution. Al-Muzanī, however, holds that such a person should be beaten but not killed. The evidence for execution is the Prophet’s statement: I was forbidden to kill those who pray. Because prayer is one of the pillars of Islam, it cannot be substituted or compensated with wealth. Thus, forsaking it warrants execution, similar to rejecting the two testimonies of faith. As for the timing of execution, there are two opinions. Abū Sa’īd al-Istakhrī maintains that neglecting the fourth prayer, once its time has elapsed, warrants execution after being warned: ‘Pray, otherwise we will kill you,’ since leaving any prayer without excuse is impermissible. Abū Ishāq holds that neglecting the second prayer, once its time has elapsed, suffices for execution after warning. In both cases, repentance is required, just as in the case of an apostate, for such neglect is no less serious than apostasy itself.*”



result, their protection under the dhimmah is considered void, and they become liable to capital punishment.<sup>(312)</sup>

The 'Umari Conditions explicitly stipulate that dhimmīs are forbidden from promoting their religion or inviting others to it. One of the conditions states: “We will not show polytheism, promote our religion, or invite anyone to it.”<sup>(313)</sup> These restrictions are intended to preserve the supremacy of Islam in public life and to prevent challenges to its doctrinal authority.

The reverse is not true; a Muslim possesses not only the right, but a duty to present Islam to unbelievers, invite them to it, and demonstrate the rituals of the religion, unless the conditions are unfavorable for Muslims in a non-Muslim land.

However, the unbeliever enjoys a relative advantage over the Muslim in the Abode of Islam when it comes to blaspheming the Messenger.<sup>(314)</sup> There is a consensus that any Muslim who blasphemes the Messenger must be killed. In contrast, jurists disagree on the ruling for dhimmīs who blaspheme, insult, or belittle him. The majority believe that they should be killed, with the exception of Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Thawrī and their followers among the scholars of al-Kūfah. They argue for punishment at the ruler’s discretion, on the grounds that the individual’s polytheism is already a greater sin.<sup>(315)</sup>

No precise and definitive determination of blasphemy is given. What is clear is that any form of criticism, questioning of the Prophet’s intentions, or accusations of committing immoral acts constitutes blasphemy or insult. The only advantage that the

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<sup>(312)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 232.

<sup>(313)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205

<sup>(314)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah addresses this issue in Islamic jurisprudence, reviewing in detail the various opinions and jurisprudential foundations for the punishment prescribed in his book *The Drawn Sword against the Insulter of the Messenger*.

<sup>(315)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī in his *Commentary on the Qur’ān*, surah 9:12.

unbelievers enjoy here is found in the fatāwā of Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Thawrī, nothing more. The Sunnah is generally interpreted as requiring the execution of anyone who criticizes the Messenger. This is why Muḥammad, in the year of the conquest of Makkah (*Fath*), pardoned those who had sought to expel him but did not pardon those who had criticized him.

Likewise, criticizing Islam in general or blaspheming it is punishable by death according to many scholars. Ibn Ḥazm issued a fatwā stating that anyone who insults religion or ridicules it, and whoever insults or mocks God, one of the angels, one of the Prophets, a verse from the Qur'ān or any sacred rite, is an unbeliever and an apostate,<sup>(316)</sup> deserving to be killed. Ibn Qudāmah stated that whoever insults God, or mocks Him, His verses, His messengers or His books, has committed unbelief, whether done in jest or in earnest.<sup>(317)</sup>

Ḥanafī scholars acknowledge that whoever insults God should be asked to repent, but whoever insults one of the Messengers should be killed without being offered the chance to repent because human rights (meaning the rights of the Prophet) do not allow for repentance in this context, unlike the rights of God.<sup>(318)</sup>

The bottom line is that, in classical Islamic thought, public criticism of Islam is generally not accepted, and the freedom to openly question or debate religion is restricted. Dialogue, by its nature, involves declaring ideas that may oppose Islamic teachings, and classical jurists often view such opposition as impermissible. What is meant here by “unbelievers” includes those who doubt religion and those who follow religions other than Islam. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly discusses the role of dialogue, freedom of thought, and interfaith exchange in modern

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<sup>(316)</sup> *Al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār* [The Ornamented with Traditions], 2308.

<sup>(317)</sup> *The Sufficient*, Vol. 48, The Book on the Apostate.

<sup>(318)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded*, The Book on the apostate.

contexts, emphasizing that historical rulings were shaped by specific social and political circumstances.

By contrast, Muslims possess the right and even the duty to disseminate their doctrine, and thus criticize other religions. Islamic preachers find no embarrassment in working freely in the lands of unbelievers to disseminate their religion, yet they often demand the elimination of non-believer missionaries, and demand the beheading of critics of Islam. Whether in sacred texts, or the exegeses approved by the prevailing religious institutions, these authorities deny the right to criticize the religious text, and the human right to change one's religion. Simultaneously, they claim that Islam is a religion of tolerance that acknowledges freedom of belief thus ignoring its actual content. Islam theoretically recognizes freedom of belief. **There is no compulsion in religion**, but what is often ignored is that freedom of belief is inherent to human nature. A person believes what he considers to be true, even if he is forced to declare otherwise, unless he convinces himself of certain ideas because of the pressures imposed on him. In this regard, Islam does not introduce anything unique. On the contrary, it limits a person's right to express opinions regarding beliefs, which is how the modern world perceives the concept of freedom of belief.

The Islamic reaction to one's position toward religion varies. Any criticism of Islam, even if it is based on information from books of Islamic jurisprudence and aḥādīth, or even statements by scholars or Islamic militants, is usually described as a speech full of hatred and malice against Islam, and the critic is described as spreading poison against Islam out of hatred and enmity, without plausible justification. However, if an Orientalist praises one aspect of Islam, he is treated as a hero and described as fair, just, and objective because he has recognized the Truth. It is as if Islam being the Truth were an absolute fact that must be realized by all human beings.

Moreover, most jurists agree on the necessity of punishing those who criticize the Companions of the Prophet. Some consider those who insult the Companions as apostates and call for their execution. Others view them as sinful and misguided without declaring them as apostates, but still believe in the necessity of punishing them at the ruler's discretion until they repent. If they do not repent, the punishment is repeated until they show signs of repentance. <sup>(319)</sup> Moreover, most Muslim governments reject the portrayal of Prophets and prominent Companions in artistic works. The Islamic Research Institute in Cairo advances an unusual argument: “*The Prophet or the Companion shifts in the human mind's perception from the absolute to the finite.*” <sup>(320)</sup> Therefore, the Prophet and the Companions are subsumed within the category of the absolute.

### Second. Jizyah:

\* The Qur'ān commands Muslims thus: **Fight against the People of the Book who do not truly believe in God and the Last Day, do not treat as prohibited that which God and His Messenger have prohibited, and do not follow the religion of Truth, until they agree to pay the submission jizyah with a willing hand, while they are being humbled (Sūrah 9:29).**

Al-Ṭabarī states in his interpretation of this verse: “As for His saying: *while they are being humbled*, its meaning is: *And they are humiliated and oppressed... The humiliated person is said to be submissive.*” Some writers demonstrate creativity in depicting how unbelievers are to be humiliated while they pay the jizyah, in order to achieve what

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<sup>(319)</sup> Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Dhahabī, *Refutation of the False Accusations Concerning Mu'āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān*.

<sup>(320)</sup> The author could not view the fatwā itself. However, here is a statement from the council's member, Abd al-Mu'tī Bayoumī, quoted from *al-Bayān* magazine, March 24, 2006: “*There are fatāwā issued by the academy in the past that reject the depiction of Prophets or senior companions because the depiction of a Prophet or companion shifts in the perception of the human mind from the absolute to the finite.*”

the Qur'ān stipulates.<sup>(321)</sup> The interpretation most accepted by jurists is that the meaning of “humbled” is adherence to the provisions of Islam, which includes everything being discussed here, such as the 'Umari Conditions. Alternative interpretations of the

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<sup>(321)</sup> Al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī details the specific procedures for collecting jizyah within his seminal legal text, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn* (The Garden of the Seekers):

Some jurists describe a procedure in which the non-believer stands while the collector sits, ordering him to remove his hand from his pocket, bend his back, lower his head, and pour the payment into the scale. The recipient then seizes his beard and strikes his cheeks. According to certain authorities, this is considered a form of humiliation. The question arises: is such a form obligatory or merely recommended? Two views exist, the stronger of which holds that it is recommended.

From this discussion follow several questions: may a non-believer appoint a Muslim to pay jizyah on his behalf, may a Muslim guarantee it for a non-believer, or may a non-believer transfer the obligation to another? If humiliation is deemed essential to the act of payment, then delegating a Muslim is impermissible. If, however, the purpose is simply to collect the money, and humiliation is inherent in the act of payment itself, then appointing a Muslim agent is permissible. The majority of scholars judge that if a dhimmī appoints another dhimmī, it is acceptable; if a Muslim is appointed in the Dhimma Contract, it is likewise permissible, since humiliation pertains to the act of payment, not to the drafting of the contract.

The first method described above, however, lacks any sound precedent. It is mentioned by some Khurasanī jurists, but the majority holds that jizyah should be taken gently, like the collection of debts. It was never reported that the Prophet or the Rightly Guided Caliphs employed such humiliating practices. Al-Rāfi'ī, in the opening chapter of his Book of jizyah, explains that the most reasonable interpretation is that humiliation lies in subjecting the dhimmīs to the rulings of Islam and enforcing them upon him. The greatest humiliation, he argues, is for one to be judged by a law he does not believe in and compelled to accept it.

Al-Zamakhsharī interprets the Qur'anic phrase similarly, stating that it implies taking jizyah with humiliation and disgrace: the payer must come on foot, not mounted, hand it over while standing as the collector sits, stammer in humiliation, be addressed with derogatory terms, and be told “pay jizyah,” even as he pays it, and even be struck on the neck. Source: *al-Kashshāf*, Vol. Two, p. 263. Al-Buhūtī maintained that they should be humiliated when collecting jizyah, requiring them to remain standing while their hands are pulled. This is in accordance with the saying that they are subdued. Source: *Al-Rawḍ al-Murbi' Sharḥ Zād al-Mustaqni'* [The Flourishing Garden], Book of Jihād, Chapter on the Protection Covenant and its Rules, file 10, p. 315.

verse are rarely found. <sup>(322)</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim affirms the same idea, arguing that the imposition of jizyah represents a condition of humiliation and subordination, which he considers equivalent to personal enslavement. His reasoning rests on a juridical argument: if acknowledging the other party's belief in exchange for enslavement is permissible, then acknowledging it in exchange for jizyah is even more so. He further contends that the penalty of jizyah exceeds that of enslavement, since enslavement applies to categories exempt from jizyah, such as women and children. Ibn al-Qayyim also responds to the legal opinion that prohibits the enslavement of women from the People of the Book—as reported in one of the two positions attributed to Imām Aḥmad—by noting that historical practice included the enslavement of female captives from idol-worshipping groups, with their masters permitted sexual relations after the completion of their waiting period. He cites the narration of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī as textual evidence for the historical occurrence of such enslavement. <sup>(323)</sup>

Many exegetes confirm that this verse abrogated previous ones, including: **Forgive and forbear until God makes known His decree** (Sūrah 2:109). <sup>(324)</sup> The apparent meaning of the verse is that it does not apply to all People of the Book—an interpretation some Islamists use to mitigate the restrictions of jizyah—but rather to

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<sup>(322)</sup> The same doctrine is held by Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, al-Bayḍāwī, and other scholars. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, for example, states: “*jizyah and kharāj are two rights to which God brought the Muslims from the polytheists. They come together in three ways, and separate in three ways, and then their rulings branch out. The aspects in which they come together, one of them is that each of them is taken from a polytheist who has a dhimmah to humble them.*” *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Chapter Thirteen, on the Status of Jizyah and Kharāj, p. 221. In *Al-Muntakhab Commentary*, the committee explains the meaning of humbled as: “*submissive, obedient, and not rebellious, contributing to the Islamic budget.*” *Al-Muntakhab fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Selected Commentary on the Noble Qur'ān], by A Committee of al-Azhar Scholars.

<sup>(323)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 1.

<sup>(324)</sup> For example, refer to al-Ṭabarī's interpretation of the last verse.



those who have not embraced Islam. As the verse explicitly states, these are those who do not prohibit what God and His Messenger have prohibited, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth. Practically, this encompasses almost all Christians and Jews. Can one understand it otherwise? This is indeed what the vast majority of exegetes and jurists conclude, and what was upheld by all the caliphs.

Some jurists have issued a fatwā stating that jizyah is taken only from the People of the Book, as is explicit in the verse, and also from the Magi, according to the Prophetic Sunnah.<sup>(325)</sup> The caliph 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān levied jizyah on the Berbers,<sup>(326)</sup> and some authorities extended it to include the Sabians and the Samaritans.<sup>(327)</sup> Abū Ḥanīfah maintains that it is levied on all non-Arab unbelievers, whether People of the Book or polytheists, but excludes Arabs, with the exception of the People of the Book among them.<sup>(328)</sup> Mālik adds that it is permissible to impose jizyah on all unbelievers, including the People of the Book, the Magians, and pagans. Ibn al-Jahm holds that jizyah is accepted from all non-believers, except the Quraysh, which he explains as an honor for them due to their relationship to the Messenger of God—essentially the same position as Abū Ḥanīfah.<sup>(329)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī

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<sup>(325)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 81.

<sup>(326)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of jizyah, who joins the People of the Book, 4, p. 184.

<sup>(327)</sup> Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm, *Al-kharāj*, p. 69.

<sup>(328)</sup> Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaiman al-Kulaibulī, *Majma' al-Anhur fī Sharḥ Multaqa al-Abḥur* [Commentary on *Multaqa al-Abḥur* in Ḥanafī Jurisprudence], Book of expeditions.

<sup>(329)</sup> Al-Māwardī, *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Chapter Thirteen, on the Status of Jizyah and Kharāj. He mentions that Abū Ḥanīfah permits the collection of jizyah from idol-worshippers if they are non-Arabs, but does not permit its collection from them if they are Arabs, p. 223.

further notes that this was because all of them had converted to Islam on the day of the conquest of Makkah. <sup>(330)</sup>

Those who argue that jizyah should not be collected from Arab polytheists or others who are not People of the Book contend that the alternative is execution unless they convert to Islam. The concept of jizyah, in addition to being a symbol of submission, serves as an alternative to death -as a ransom for one's life. It is a condition for allowing unbelievers to live in the Abode of Islam.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya clarifies this matter with precision, arguing that jizyah was instituted as a mechanism for humiliation and subjugation rather than a commercial fee for residency. He disputes the characterization of jizyah as rent based on several points: had it been a rental charge, it would have been mandatory for women, children, and the disabled. Furthermore, certain groups, such as the Christian Banū Taghlib, would not have been exempt, nor would they have been required to pay double the *zakāt* rate imposed on Muslims. <sup>(331)</sup>

He further contends that, unlike standard leases, jizyah is not defined by a specific timeframe or the market value of the benefit received, which often exceeds the tax itself. Ultimately, he asserts that the primary intent of jizyah is to establish a state of subordination, concluding that the argument for it being a form of rent is fundamentally flawed from multiple legal and logical perspectives. <sup>(332)</sup>

If Muslims commit themselves to refraining from killing non-believers, it follows that they also bear the responsibility of safeguarding them from harm more broadly—whether the threat

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<sup>(330)</sup> His interpretation of the aforementioned verse.

<sup>(331)</sup> Banū Taghlib agreed to pay double the amount of *zakāt* as a condition for not being called jizyah, as they were averse to the name.

<sup>(332)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 4.

comes from Muslims or others—since such individuals are considered part of the national community. However, this was not agreed upon in all cases. For example, when Cyprus was conquered, Muslims required its inhabitants to pay seven thousand dinars annually, and the same was required of the Romans. In addition, they were not entitled to military protection in the same way as Muslims. Instead, they were expected to serve as informants or “eyes” for Muslims against external enemies, and invasion routes were to pass through their territories. <sup>(333)</sup>

The original concept of jizyah implies submission in exchange for becoming *mawālī* (loyalists) to the Muslim state, and thus living a humble life as servants in the Abode of Islam, rather than in exchange for protection, as some Islamists assert. If it is taken from another country or tribe, it is received in exchange for their submission, in addition to protection from other invaders. If they pay the jizyah; it is forbidden to fight them because the Qur’ānic verse on jizyah makes its payment the objective of fighting them, so once they pay it, it is no longer permissible to fight them. <sup>(334)</sup> The claim that jizyah was imposed in exchange for protection is interpreted by some scholars as an attempt to present the tax in a more favorable light. However, historical evidence suggests that the dhimmah contract functioned as a compulsory arrangement, imposed by the stronger party upon the weaker. In this sense, jizyah is comparable to coercive tribute or protection money, where funds are extracted under compulsion in return for security. <sup>(335)</sup> This practice mirrors pre-Islamic dynamics. Nomadic Arab tribes practiced similar extractions with the nearby cities of the Levant, migrating to graze there and, where possible, imposing a tribute on

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<sup>(333)</sup> *Book of Lessons and Record of Beginnings and Events*, Vol. Two, p. 576.

<sup>(334)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The Sufficient*, Vol. 53, Book of Jizyah.

<sup>(335)</sup> Protection: It is a tax imposed by the prince or sultan on some lands, shops, ships, and fortunes, and the prince protects the person who pays that tax. *Al-Warrāq’s Dictionary of Verified Terms*.

those cities in exchange for “protecting” them from attacks by other nomads.<sup>(336)</sup>

The tributes collected by Muslims may be lower than those imposed by other peoples, at least in the early stages of the Islamic conquest, but this difference does not change the nature or concept of the jizyah.

The sparing of the blood of the dhimmīs is not understood in Islamic legal discourse as an acknowledgment of the validity of their religion. Rather, it is framed as an opportunity for them to encounter Islam and Islamic society, with the hope that they might eventually convert. Acceptance of jizyah is therefore accompanied by elements of humiliation and submission, intended to remind non-believers of the punishment and disgrace awaiting them in the afterlife should they persist in unbelief.<sup>(337)</sup>

If they commit to paying the jizyah, Muslims must desist from fighting them and must even protect them. This is because they become subordinate or loyalists to Muslims.

Ibn Qudāmah articulated a protective dimension of the dhimmah contract, emphasizing that once the Imām grants such a covenant, he is obliged to safeguard its recipients from harm—whether from Muslims, from external enemies, or even from other dhimmīs. This duty was grounded in the covenant itself, which bound the Muslim polity to uphold the security of non-believer subjects. Supporting this view, he reported that 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib had affirmed this principle and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, in his will to his successor, advised him to fulfill his covenant with them, to fight on their behalf, and not to burden them with more than they can bear.<sup>(338)</sup>

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<sup>(336)</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *A Comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Chapter Thirty Two.

<sup>(337)</sup> Waseem Maḥmūd Faḥ Allah, *The Brief of the Legal Rulings Concerning the People under the Covenant*.

<sup>(338)</sup> Ibid.

These statements highlight the reciprocal nature of the dhimmah arrangement: while it imposed obligations of submission on non-believers, it simultaneously imposed binding responsibilities of protection and justice on the Muslim leadership. This duality situates the dhimmah not merely as a fiscal or political mechanism, but as a covenantal framework integrating non-believers into the moral and legal order of the Islamic state.

Islamic history records that Muslims returned the jizyah to its owners when they were forced to withdraw from a territory under pressure from enemy armies, due to their inability to protect them. On this basis, some jurists justify the jizyah as having been in exchange for protection. In fact, the return of the jizyah due to the inability to protect was an implementation of a term of the dhimmah covenant as a whole, including the humiliating 'Umari Conditions, and the rest of the obligations of both parties. Not returning it in conditions of hit-and-run between Muslims and Romans would have been considered a strategic mistake on the part of the Muslims because it would undermine their credibility with other peoples, and might lead to their alliances with the Romans.

\* Some Islamists strive to portray the jizyah in Islam as a civilizational achievement, unprecedented in human history, arguing that it offers a remarkable advantage to the unbelievers.<sup>(339)</sup> If this were the case, why did Islam not recognize equality, where Muslims pay to the unbelievers, or vice versa, in exchange for protection? In fact, Muslims paid the jizyah as a form of submission in times of defeat and humiliation only. Al-Qaraḍāwī even went so far as to claim that the dhimmīs were happy with it,<sup>(340)</sup> thus ignoring the numerous revolts carried out because of the

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<sup>(339)</sup> Munqidh ibn Maḥmūd al-Saqqār, *jizyah Tax in Islam*.

<sup>(340)</sup> Interview with “Al Jazeera” on 10/12/1997.

excessive jizyah and kharāj, in addition to various other taxes.<sup>(341)</sup> Hasan al-Bannā, for instance,<sup>(342)</sup> also attempts to justify the jizyah by arguing that it is imposed in exchange for exempting non-believers from military service. This ensures they avoid the embarrassment of participating in a religious act that is foreign of their religion. This army carries out the mission of jihād, which is a sacred Islamic mission, and the Islamic army may even fight their co-religionists. He even considered it a “*privilege in the form of a tax.*” This statement emphasizes the discriminatory and religiously oppressive nature inherent in the jizyah, rather than the opposite. One Islamist preacher wrote that in exchange for jizyah, Muslims sacrifice their lives for the sake of the dhimmīs.<sup>(343)</sup> If his words were translated into a traditional Islamic terminology, the implication is that Muslims struggle in the cause of the unbelievers. That is, for the cause of Satan, not for the cause of God, and for a few dinars instead of Paradise. Is such reasoning tenable? Another Islamist endeavors to find a linguistic solution to the problem of the relationship between dhimmah and citizenship,<sup>(344)</sup> attempting to bridge this conceptual gap. Yet, it is unlikely that non-believers

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<sup>(341)</sup> The Copts initiated their first revolution in 107 AH after the collector of the kharāj decided to increase it by five percent. Egypt’s second major revolution occurred during the reign of al-Mahdī and lasted from 167 to 169 AH in Upper Egypt and the Delta, triggered by the collector’s strict enforcement and increase of the tax. The Arabs who had settled in the eastern al-Hawf region also staged multiple revolts. They rebelled three times during the rule of al-Rashīd. The first revolt took place in 178 AH due to a hike in the kharāj value, the second in 186 AH because of land survey manipulation, and in 191 AH, they completely abstained from paying taxes. All these uprisings were swiftly quelled. However, the Arabs of al-Hawf launched a major revolt during the reign of al-Ma’mūn in 214 AH. Although it was initially suppressed, it resurged in 216 AH, with both Copts and Arabs in Lower Egypt joining forces. The unrest persisted until al-Ma’mūn’s personal intervention in 217 AH. (Source: Adel El-Emary and Sherif Younis, *The Emergence of Kharāj in the Islamic Era*).

<sup>(342)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, The Epistle of al-Jihād.

<sup>(343)</sup> For example: Munqidh ibn Maḥmūd al-Saqqar, *jizyah Tax in Islam*.

<sup>(344)</sup> Hanī Faḥs, *From Dhimma to Citizenship: Liberating Meaning and Humanity*.



would find satisfaction merely by saying that humility, the 'Umari Conditions and the various components of jizyah are the most beautiful things in history, despite their heaviness and being collected in a humiliating way. Indeed, historical records indicate that at certain times, the necks of the dhimmīs were sealed when collecting the jizyah tax. Then the seals were broken and replaced with a mark hung around the neck, presented by the tax collector as a sign of payment of jizyah.<sup>(345)</sup> This is based on the order of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: “Seal the necks of the dhimmīs with lead, make their girdles visible (meaning they wear wide girdles over their clothes), let them cut the forelocks of their heads and make them ride on the sides of their mounts.”<sup>(346)</sup>

The imposition of jizyah is not unique in the broader history of conquest, as similar practices of taxation on the vanquished existed in other civilizations. What distinguishes the Islamic case is its framing within a religious context, presented as a fulfillment of divine justice and a means of subordinating those of different faiths. This religious dimension gives the practice a distinctive cultural significance, embedding it within Islamic legal and social traditions. Some scholars compare this to colonial systems of exploitation, noting that while the degree and form of subjugation varied, the underlying dynamic of domination and identity transformation was present in both. In certain respects, Islamic conquest is described as more intrusive, particularly in its settler character and its impact on the cultural identity of the conquered peoples.

According to the consensus of most jurists, the Jizyah in the Abode of Islam is imposed on every sane, adult male once a year, based on the lunar calendar. It is a levy taken annually, with

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<sup>(345)</sup> Tamer Baginoğlu, *The Rights of Non-believer Subjects in Islamic Jurisprudence*, cited from al-Ya'qūbī.

<sup>(346)</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam al-Qurashī al-Maṣry, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa al-Maghrib* [The Conquests of Egypt and North Africa], p. 151. The intent is for the rider to be positioned with both legs on one side to demean him.

humiliation and disdain, as an alternative to execution and as a condition for residency in the Abode of Islam. It is not imposed on children, women, the insane, those with severe disabilities, the blind, the elderly near death, hermaphrodites, slaves, or the destitute who are unable to pay.<sup>(347)</sup> Consequently, it is taken only from those capable of fighting—or those of an age and condition suitable for combat—to confirm its significance: that it is in exchange for sparing the blood of the non-believer.<sup>(348)</sup> However, this consensus is not absolute; some jurists consider it obligatory on free men and slaves, males and females, the destitute and the rich, including monks, provided they are adults.<sup>(349)</sup> Furthermore, Islam introduced new dimensions to the issue of jizyah, in that some caliphs and senior jurists approved its imposition on those who died during the year. Among these jurists are al-Shāfi'ī, and perhaps Ibn Ḥanbal. The caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ordered this, as mentioned in Islamic heritage books, who has been described as Righteous. It was also attributed to him that he imposed the head tax on monks at the rate of two dinars per head.<sup>(350)</sup> Jurists further stipulate that jizyah is not accepted in the form of carrion, wine, or pigs because these are religiously forbidden.<sup>(351)</sup>

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<sup>(347)</sup> Al-Buhūtī, *Ibid.*

<sup>(348)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī states in his *Commentary on the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 9: 29: “*Our scholars say: What the Qur'ān indicates is that jizyah is taken from the fighters and this is a consensus among the scholars that the jizyah is only imposed on free adult men who fight, excluding women, offspring, slaves, insane people who have lost their minds, and senile old men. They differed among the monks. Ibn Wahhāb narrated on the authority of Mālik that it should not be taken from them. Mutarrif and Ibn al-Mājjishūn stated: This is if they did not become monks after imposing it. This is if they have not converted after it was imposed, but if it is applied to them and then they convert, their conversion does not exempt them from paying jizyah.*”

<sup>(349)</sup> Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār* [The Ornamented with Traditions], 960.

<sup>(350)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(351)</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Al-kharāj*, p. 69.

\* In addition to the jizyah, there is also the land tax (kharāj). Land is assessed according to the affiliation of its owners at the time of its conquest by Muslims, and a levy is imposed based on its area and fertility. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya describes jizyah as the tax on individuals, and kharāj as the tax on land. <sup>(352)</sup> The Caliphate relied on kharāj as the principal source of revenue for the treasury. Unlike jizyah, the land tax is imposed on the land itself, regardless of the identity of its owner—even if the owner is a woman, an elderly person, or otherwise exempt from military service. In this way, the restriction of taxation to fighters alone, which some Islamists commend, is circumvented.

Al-Māwardī presents a clear explanation of the difference between jizyah and kharāj. They have three common aspects and differ in three others, after which their rulings branch out. They meet in the following:

1. Each of them is taken from an unbeliever under covenant and with humiliation
2. Both are booty for the treasury, to be spent on the Muslim public.
3. They are collected annually.

They differ in the following:

1. Jizyah is based on a textual source, while *kharāj* is derived from juristic reasoning; an *ijtihād*. <sup>(353)</sup>
2. The minimum amount of jizyah is determined by the Sharī'ah, whereas its maximum is determined by *ijtihād*. As for kharāj, both its minimum and maximum are determined by *ijtihād*.

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<sup>(352)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 245.

<sup>(353)</sup> But it is part of the practical Sunnah, as Muḥammad imposed it on the people of Khaybar.

3. Jizyah is taken from unbelievers and is dropped upon their conversion to Islam, whereas kharāj is collected from both unbelievers and Muslims.

Jizyah is imposed on the heads, and its name is derived from the concept of retribution, either as a punishment for their unbelief by taking it from them with humiliation, or as a reward to Muslims for granting protection to unbelievers. <sup>(354)</sup>

There are many differences among scholars regarding the rulings of kharāj, which is not the focus here. The primary objective here is to reveal the clear discrimination between Muslims and unbelievers regarding the land tax, which consistently favors Muslims.

Kharāj is divided into two types:

1. Kharāj *al-Ṣulḥ* (peace settlement): This refers to what Muslims agree upon with unbelievers through a peace treaty without active fighting. In this case, kharāj is waived if the landowners convert to Islam or sell their land to Muslims.

2. Kharāj *al-'Anwa* (forcefully seized land tax): When Muslims seize land through warfare, it becomes the property of all Muslims and a permanent kharāj is imposed on it. <sup>(355)</sup> Its owners are not permitted to sell it, and they must still pay the kharāj even if they convert to Islam. This applies unless the land is distributed among the conquerors, as happened with half of the land of Khaybar. <sup>(356)</sup>

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<sup>(354)</sup> *The Ordinances of Government*, Chapter thirteen, regarding the status of jizyah and kharāj.

<sup>(355)</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa Akhbāruha* [The Conquest of Egypt and Its History]. According to him, a man converted to Islam during the reign of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and he said, “Remove jizyah from my land,” and 'Umar said, “No, your land was conquered by force.” Chapter titled jizyah.

<sup>(356)</sup> According to Ibn Qudāmah's account (in brief): Land is divided into two categories—the land of peace and the land of conquest. The land of peace refers to any territory whose people voluntarily joined the banner of the Islamic State without resistance. Such land remains the property of its inhabitants, who are required to pay a

If the owner of the land converts to Islam, a tenth is also added to the tax, as a levy imposed on Muslims. This is the opinion of the majority of jurists and the doctrine of the Sunni Imāms, with the exception of Abū Ḥanīfah.<sup>(357)</sup> However, jizyah is waived for him.

Thus, the taxation of land differs between the land of unbelievers taken by force and that of Muslims. The kharāj applies to the land itself. For Muslim-owned land, 5% or 10% of the production is paid, depending on the irrigation system, regardless of the quantity. By contrast, kharāj land carries a predetermined tax, or a set percentage of production based on the land's productivity, its actual yield, or the type of crop. In this way, the state secures the

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kharāj. This kharāj is subject to the same ruling as jizyah, and it is waived once they embrace Islam. They retain the right to sell, gift, or mortgage their land. Likewise, any territory whose people accepted Islam, such as Madīnah, remains in the possession of its owners without kharāj, and they may dispose of it freely.

By contrast, land conquered by force—where its inhabitants were expelled and the territory was not distributed among the conquerors—becomes the collective property of the Muslim community. A fixed kharāj is levied annually on its occupants, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, and this obligation is not waived upon conversion to Islam or transfer to Muslims, since it is regarded as a form of revenue. Historically, no land conquered by force was divided among Muslims except Khaybar. Territories such as the Levant, Iraq, and Egypt were not apportioned.

Abū 'Ubad, in the *Book of Revenues*, narrates that 'Umar intended to divide the land among the Muslims, but Mu'ādh advised him: *“By God, if you divide it today, the great revenue will fall into the hands of a few, then it will vanish, and eventually be inherited by one man or woman. Later, another generation will come seeking refuge in Islam, but they will find nothing. So establish a system that suffices for both the first and the last.”* 'Umar accepted Mu'ādh's counsel.

Similarly, al-Majshun reports that Bilāl said to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb regarding villages conquered by force: *“Divide them among us, and take a fifth.”* 'Umar replied: *“No, I will preserve them as booty for the Muslims.”* When 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ conquered Egypt, Ibn al-Zubayr urged him to divide it, but 'Amr refused until he had consulted the Commander of the Faithful. 'Umar instructed him: *“Leave it as it is.”* (Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, Vol. 4, *Book of Zakāt*).

<sup>(357)</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*.

largest possible amount of *kharāj* while ensuring that those working the land subsist at a level sufficient to survive. <sup>(358)</sup>

Additionally, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb imposed a commercial tax on merchants traveling from one country to another as follows:

- Half of the tithe on the people under covenant once a year.
- A quarter of the tithe on Muslim merchants.
- A tithe on merchants from *dār al-ḥarb* (the Abode of War). <sup>(359)</sup>

While *jizyah* is not imposed on women and children, scholars offer various justifications for the unequal taxation imposed on non-believers. For example, the Ḥanafīs argue that “*taxation is for protection, and the need for protection of unbeliever merchants is greater than that of Muslims because thieves are more likely to covet the wealth of the people under covenant.*” This reasoning, however, is criticized for its lack of clarity and logical coherence. <sup>(360)</sup> The argument presumes that non-believers are inherently more vulnerable to theft, yet it does not adequately explain why this should necessitate higher taxation, nor does it account for the broader social and economic realities of mixed communities. Such justifications reveal the discrepancy between theological or legal rationales and practical considerations, highlighting how fiscal discrimination was often framed in terms of protection and subordination rather than equitable economic logic.

The most plausible opinion is the one al-Qaraḍāwī attributes to Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī. He holds that most Muslims at that time were engaged in defending the Islamic homeland, leaving trade in the hands of unbelievers. Therefore, the scholars concluded that

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<sup>(358)</sup> Details of the *kharāj* on *kharāj* land and the land of '*ushr*' are provided by Abū Yūsuf, *Al-kharāj*, pp. 32-39.

<sup>(359)</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Non-believers in the Islamic Society*, cited from Imām Abū 'Ubaid al-Qasim ibn Salām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl* [Book of Revenue], verified by Muḥammad Khalīl Harās.

<sup>(360)</sup> Ibid., citing Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Babartī, *al-'Inaya Sharḥ al-Hidāya* [Care in Explaining Guidance], Vol. One, p. 532.



reducing the tax on Muslim merchants would encourage trade and protect their commercial interests.<sup>(361)</sup> Expanding on this economic angle, a second justification is the one mentioned and adopted by al-Qaraḍāwī: namely, that the amount of jizyah was less than the amount of zakāt. Therefore, the commercial tax imposed on unbelievers was doubled in order to achieve equality between them and Muslim merchants.<sup>(362)</sup> However, this interpretation appears arbitrary because jizyah was not a fixed amount but was determined by the ruler according to feasibility and interest, as most scholars and even al-Qaraḍāwī himself states in the same book, and as will be discussed later. However, the positive aspect here is that al-Qaraḍāwī accepts the principle of equality in burdens, which is encouraging; yet, he does not complete this rationale by rejecting the inequality acknowledged by the early scholars, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and the Islamic heritage as a whole. Thus, the idea of discrimination against unbelievers remains ready to be invoked when necessary under various pretexts, such as supposed equality and conditional tolerance.

\* Jurists differ regarding the specific amount of jizyah. The prevailing opinion is that it is determined by the Imām, based on the circumstances and the long-term interests of the state. In line with this rationale, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb instructed his commanders to show leniency toward the poor among those liable for jizyah, emphasizing that if they could not afford it, the amount should be reduced, and if they were in need, they should be assisted, since the purpose was not to burden them temporarily but to ensure sustainable compliance. Jizyah was also imposed variably according to the type of crop.<sup>(363)</sup> Similarly, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ refused to set a fixed ceiling for the jizyah imposed on the Copts. When

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<sup>(361)</sup> Ibid., al-Maudūdī, *The Rights of the Dhimmīs in the Islamic State*, p. 25.

<sup>(362)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(363)</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Al-kharāj*, pp. 20-22.

asked by the ruler of Akhna to specify a set amount so that people could prepare, he responded that the community served as a treasury for the state: if the needs of the government were great, the tax would be increased, and if the needs were lighter, the burden would be eased. <sup>(364)</sup> This position reflects the view that the tax should remain flexible, responsive both to the state's requirements and to the payer's ability to contribute.

Drawing from the precedents of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, jurists maintain that jizyah should be graduated according to the payer's financial capacity. *"It is narrated on the authority of Ibn Abū Nāḥīḥ, who said, I asked Mujāhid why 'Umar imposed higher jizyah on the people of the Levant than on the people of Yemen; he replied that it was according to their prosperity, indicating that jizyah may be increased or decreased according to what is tolerable."* <sup>(365)</sup>

Its total amount was not small. The head jizyah reached forty *dirhams* for those who dealt in silver currency and four dinars for those who dealt in gold, which is not much, but an amount of oil and grains was added to that. According to al-Maqrīzī, on the authority of Yazīd ibn Aslam, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb instructed the commanders of the armies not to impose jizyah except on the adults who were able to pay, with specific amounts for different regions and different crops. They owed a handful of wheat and three installments of oil every month for every person from the Levant and the Peninsula, in addition to animal fat and honey (the quantity of which was not specified). For those from Egypt, an *ardabb* (48 kg) of grain was due each month from every individual. They were also required to provide clothing of the same quality that the caliph distributed to the people. In addition, they had to host any Muslim

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<sup>(364)</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawa'iz wa al-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khitat wa al-Athar* [Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments], 1, p. 146. It is also mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa Akhbāruhā* [The Conquest of Egypt and Its History], mentioning jizyah.

<sup>(365)</sup> Qudāmah ibn Ja'far, *Al-kharāj and the Scribal Profession*, p. 226.

who stayed with them for three days. The people of southern Iraq were liable for fifteen *ṣāʿ*'s (equal to 30 kg) of wheat plus *wadak* (animal fats). In addition, the necks of the men who were eligible for jizyah were sealed. As for kharāj, it may reach the equivalent of several times the tithe—a third or sometimes half on some crops, as happened with the people of Khaybar during the reign of Muḥammad himself. <sup>(366), (367)</sup>

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<sup>(366)</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Op. cit.*, pp. 28-29

<sup>(367)</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, in his *Muqaddimah* (The Prolegomena), records the revenues collected during the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn in remarkable detail. He lists the kharāj from various regions as follows (per annum):

- Southern Iraq: 27.8 million dirhams twice, 200 Najrani garments, and 240 pounds of seal clay.
- Kankar: 11.6 million dirhams twice.
- Kurr of the Tigris: 20 million and 800 dirhams.
- Ḥalwān: 4.8 million dirhams twice.
- Ahwaz: 25,000 dirhams annually, along with 30,000 pounds of sugar.
- Fars: 27 million dirhams, 30,000 bottles of rose water, and 20,000 pounds of black oil.
- Kermān: 4,2 million dirhams twice, 500 Yemeni garments, and 20,000 pounds of dates.
- Makrān: 400,000 dirhams once.
- Al-Sind and beyond: 11.5 million dirhams twice, and 150 pounds of Indian oud.
- Sijistān: 4 million dirhams twice, 300 garments, and 20 pounds of candied vanad.
- Khurasān: 28 million dirhams twice, 1,000 silver ingots (naqra), and four braziers.
- Jurjān: 12 million dirhams twice and 1,000 pieces of raw silk.
- Qumis: 1 million dirhams twice and 500,000 silver ingots.
- Ṭabarīstan, Ray, and Nahavand: 6.3 million dirhams, plus 600 Ṭabarī carpets, 200 axes, 500 garments, 300 handkerchiefs, and 300 shirts.
- Rayy: 12 million dirhams twice and 20,000 pounds of honey.
- Hamadān: 11.3 million dirhams twice, plus 1,000 pounds of pomegranate syrup and 12,000 pounds of honey.
- Between al-Baṣra and al-Kūfah: 10 million dirhams twice and 700,000 dirhams.
- Masabadhān and the dinār: 4 million dirhams twice.
- Shahrazūr: 6.7 million dirhams twice.
- Al-Moṣul and its surroundings: 24 million dirhams twice and 20 million pounds of white honey.
- Azerbaijān: 4 million dirhams twice.
- Al-Jazira and the Euphrates region: 34 million dirhams twice, plus 1,000 slaves, 12,000 jars of honey, ten bazzārs (a type of textile), and 20 garments.

\* A few scholars, such as Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, <sup>(368)</sup> hold that unbelievers are not recognized in Muslim lands with jizyah unless Muslims are in need of them; if they are no longer needed, they are evacuated, as were the people of Khaybar, and if they remain, they must either surrender or pay jizyah while they are humbled — as the Qur'ān declares — or they must be killed.

Refraining from paying jizyah—if done deliberately and the dhimmīs persist in their refusal—nullifies the dhimmah contract and releases Muslims from its obligations. Scholars differ in their ruling: some believe in the right of Muslims to execute them unless they convert to Islam. <sup>(369)</sup> Others, like Abū Ḥanīfah, reject their execution and instead suggest seizing their wealth or taking their descendants captive unless they fight, contenting themselves with deporting them to the Abode of War, while taking jizyah from them

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- Armenia: 13 million dirhams twice, 20 engraved robes, 530 pounds of saffron, 10,000 pounds of Syrian musk, 10,000 pounds of sandalwood, 200 mares, and 30 camels.
  - Qinnāsrin: 400,000 dinars and 1,000 loads of oil.
  - Damascus: 420,000 dinars.
  - Jordan: 97,000 dinars.
  - Palestine: 310,000 dinars and 300,000 pounds of oil.
  - Egypt: 1,920,000 dinars.
  - Barqa: 2 million dirhams twice.
  - Africa (Tunisia): 13 million dirhams twice and 120,000 dirhams.
  - Yemen: 370,000 dinars, excluding goods.
  - Ḥejāz: 300,000 dinars.
  - Andalusia: As reported by reliable historians, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nāṣir left in his treasury five thousand million dinars, repeated three times, amounting to 500,000 quintals (a unit of weight equal to 100 kilograms). Some accounts of caliph al-Rashīd's era also record that the treasury received 7,000 quintals plus 500 quintals annually.

Al-Balādhurī also mentions that the revenue from southern Iraq during the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was one hundred million dirhams. *The Book of the Conquests of Lands*, file 18 of 29.

<sup>(368)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

<sup>(369)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, various places including p. 261 and p. 263.

forcibly like debts. If they refuse to leave voluntarily, they are forced to leave. <sup>(370)</sup>

\* Muslims are obligated to pay *zakāt*, whereas non-Muslims under Islamic rule pay *jizyah*. The distinction between the two lies not only in terminology but also in their nature and significance. *Zakāt* is a religious duty and one of the pillars of Islam. It is calculated as a fraction—typically one-tenth, half of a tenth, or a quarter of a tenth—depending on the type of wealth, and is imposed only on Muslims who possess a surplus above a defined minimum for one year. Importantly, it is not levied on the poor, a position upheld by the majority of authoritative jurists.

By contrast, *jizyah* forms part of the dhimmah contract. It is paid by non-Muslims in return for the right to reside in the Abode of Islam while maintaining their faith. Some Islamist thinkers argue that, upon the return of Jesus, *jizyah* will be abolished and unbelievers will be compelled to convert or face death. Following conquest, the lands of non-Muslims are incorporated into the Abode of Islam, and their inhabitants come under Muslim protection, though subject to governance according to interpretations of *Sharī'ah*.

Unlike *zakāt*, *jizyah* is not intended as a contribution to public welfare or poverty relief. Rather, it symbolizes submission and reinforces Muslim authority. It is imposed as a head tax on able-bodied men capable of bearing arms, rather than as a percentage of income. This reflects the fundamentally different relationship between the Islamic state and its Muslim versus non-Muslim subjects. Some scholars attempt to reinterpret *jizyah* as compensation for exemption from military service. For instance, al-Qaraḍāwī seeks to justify it on these grounds, likening it to modern monetary substitutes for conscription. <sup>(371)</sup>

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<sup>(370)</sup> Al-Māwardī, *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>(371)</sup> Interview with “Al Jazeera” channel on 10/12/1997.

In fact, the Shaykh deliberately ignores the following:

1. Jizyah is compulsory, and there is no room for choice because the alternative is Islam or death. Regarding refraining from paying it after accepting the dhimmah contract, the punishment, according to the most moderate jurists, is its collection by force, along with expulsion from the Abode of Islam. Indeed the original rule is not conscription versus jizyah. Historically, Islam prohibited unbelievers from defending their countries and from carrying weapons since Muslims first occupied them, except under certain conditions, and only the Ḥanafīs were an exception. Abū Ḥanīfah recognizes the legitimacy of dhimmīs joining the Islamic army without restrictions, including their participation in fighting Muslims revolting against the state. However, he characterizes this by saying that “*seeking help from polytheists against them is like seeking help from dogs.*”<sup>(372)</sup> Recently in 1997, the General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Muṣṭafā Mashhūr, demanded their expulsion from the Egyptian army and the reimposition of jizyah, which is one of the demands of the jihādists. He subsequently denied what he had said in the face of the violent criticism his statement had sparked among secularists.

Jizyah in Islam is the result of a coercive relationship between the rulers and the ruled, which can only be collected through coercion. There is no historical evidence of a voluntary dhimmah contract being signed between two peoples or states of equal status.

2. Joining a Muslim army as an unbeliever does not automatically exempt them from paying jizyah; rather, they may receive compensation for their military service.<sup>(373)</sup> If they join with the permission of the ruler, they may be entitled to a small discretionary share according to most jurists. However, if they are hired, they are only entitled to their wage. If they volunteer

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<sup>(372)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded, Book of expeditions*, Chapter on the spoils.

<sup>(373)</sup> 'Abd al-Qadīm Zallūm, *Wealth in the State of the Caliphate*, p. 67.



independently, some, like the Shāfi'īs, believe they are not entitled to anything.<sup>(374)</sup> The Mālikī school holds varying opinions, ranging from allowing them to take all spoils if they fight independently of Muslims, to awarding nothing if they fight within the Muslim army, unless the unbelievers are the majority or equivalent to the Muslims.<sup>(375)</sup> It is agreed among most jurists that a division of unbelievers, such as dhimmīs, does not have the right to share in the spoils, even if they participate in fighting alongside the Muslim army. This distinction has been interpreted by some scholars as a form of religious discrimination, since it limits the legal rights of non-Muslims in comparison to Muslims. However, it is mentioned in history that Muḥammad included unbelievers in the distribution of spoils.<sup>(376)</sup> Imām Aḥmad, in one of his opinions, believed that they should be entitled to a share of the spoils. By contrast, not participating in jihād does not make a Muslim obligated to pay jizyah.

Moreover, a Muslim ruler may suspend the collection of jizyah temporarily, not as a matter of principle, but in exchange for the military participation of non-Muslims alongside Muslims, depending on circumstances and the interests of the state. Conversely, while Muslims might in times of weakness agree to pay jizyah themselves, such an arrangement is categorically rejected as a principle. Therefore, Muslims paid jizyah to the Byzantines for certain periods, as happened with Mu'āwiyah, when he paid them a jizyah of one hundred thousand dinars annually while he was busy

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<sup>(374)</sup> Muhyiddīn ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī, *The Garden of the Seekers*, p., 239.

<sup>(375)</sup> *The Crown and the Garland on Khalīl's Abridgment*, Book of Jihād and the Rulings of Competition, Chapter on Jihād and its Rulings.

<sup>(376)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah mentioned in *The Sufficient*, Book of jihād: “*Al-Zuhrī narrated that the Messenger of God sought help from some Jews in his war, so he contributed to them... and it was narrated that Safwan ibn Umayyah went out with the Prophet on the day of Khaybar while he was still a polytheist. He contributed shares to him and gave him from the share of those whose hearts have been reconciled.*”

in the war with 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. The 'Abbāsids also paid it to them when their state weakened. In addition, Muslims agreed with the people of Azerbaijan during that period,<sup>(377)</sup> but this was not a general rule in dhimmah contracts.

3. Jizyah is imposed on unbelievers only, and not on the entire population; therefore, it is waived upon the unbeliever's conversion to Islam.<sup>(378)</sup> Additionally, it is a head tax, whereas *zakāt* is an obligation on wealth paid only by those who are able.

4. In Islamic history, before modernization, there was no compulsory conscription, but rather professional or voluntary soldiering, in exchange for either a donation from the treasury, or a share of the spoils.<sup>(379)</sup>

5. A Muslim combatant also pays *zakāt*, and he does not have the right to be exempted in exchange for conscription.

6. Jizyah is not only imposed on unbelievers residing in the Abode of Islam. It can be imposed on independent countries, cities, and tribes. This is among the possible conditions for the relationship between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of Covenant.

The people under covenant, who reside in their own countries, have safety for their souls and their property if they enter the Abode of Islam. However, they may reside there for four months

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<sup>(377)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 540.

<sup>(378)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, in *Al-Kāfi* (The Sufficient), states: “Since jizyah is imposed as a form of humiliation, it is not required of one who converts to Islam during the year. It is a penalty that becomes obligatory due to unbelief, and conversion to Islam nullifies it—just as repentance cancels the punishment for killing.”

<sup>(379)</sup> Al-Māwardī divided the soldiers into two categories: the stipendiary soldiers (*al-mustarziqa*) and the volunteers. The stipendiary soldiers are those enrolled in the *dīwān* as warriors. They receive stipends from the public treasury according to their rank and need. The volunteers are those not registered in the *dīwān*—including Bedouins, nomads, and the inhabitants of villages and towns—who join the mobilization (*al-naḥr*). *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, p. 70.

only or less than a year without jizyah. Between those two timeframes, there is disagreement. It is necessary to leave them in peace, much like the dhimmīs, but it is not necessary to defend them.<sup>(380)</sup>

### Third. Juridical Relationships:

\* Al-qisās (Retaliation): Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal hold that an unbeliever is not equal to a Muslim; the same principle applies to the security of those who come from a country of unbelievers as messengers, or merchants, or the like. Others consider them equivalent.<sup>(381)</sup> However, if a Muslim kills an unbeliever, or a person who is secured, by deception, he should be subject to the death penalty according to Mālik and al-Shāfi'ī. But if a Muslim and an unbeliever kill another unbeliever together, only the dhimmī is killed according to al-Shāfi'ī, Mālik, and Ibn Ḥanbal. However, the discrimination in this matter is not agreed upon among jurists. The Ḥanafīs argue that a Muslim is to be killed for an unbeliever, whereas the majority reject this principle,<sup>(382)</sup> according to the prophetic tradition: **A Muslim should not be killed for killing a disbeliever** (*Musnad Aḥmad* – 6644).

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<sup>(380)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(381)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Collection of Fatāwā*, vol. 28, Chapter: The Punishment for Killing.

<sup>(382)</sup> Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah* [The Jurisprudence of the Sunnah], Vol. Two, p. 528, records Ibn Rushd's summary of the scholarly debate:

Regarding the question of whether a believer may be executed for killing a dhimmī unbeliever, scholars expressed three opinions:

- Some held that a believer should not be killed for an unbeliever. Among those who adopts this view are al-Shāfi'ī, al-Thawrī, Aḥmad, Dāwūd, and others.
- Others maintain that he should be killed. This is the position of Abū Ḥanīfah, his companions, and Ibn Abū Laylā.

*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* -1412, states: **The blood money for a disbeliever is half the blood money for a believer.** Scholars have different opinions regarding the blood money for Jews and Christians. Some follow what was narrated on the authority of the Prophet, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who state that the blood money for a Jew and a Christian is four thousand dirhams, and for a Magian eight hundred dirhams. Others like Mālik ibn Anas, al-Shāfi'ī, and Ishāq ibn Rahawayh believe that the blood money for a Jew and a Christian is the same as that for a Muslim. Sufyān al-Thawrī and the scholars of al-Kūfah also support this view.

As Imām Aḥmad narrates -6993: **The Messenger of God, addressed the people in the year of the conquest of Makkah, “the Muslims are one hand against everyone else, their blood is equal and a believer is not killed for a disbeliever.”** On this basis, many jurists have argued that a Muslim, even a slave, should not be killed for an unbeliever, even a free one; likewise, free people—even a dhimmī—should not be killed for a slave, even a Muslim. If a free dhimmī kills a Muslim slave, he must pay his value, and he shall be killed for violating the covenant. <sup>(383)</sup>

It is debated among jurists how much blood money should be paid if a Muslim kills an unbeliever. Some suggest it should be half of the Muslim's blood money, a third of it, or the same as what

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- Mālik and al-Layth take a middle position, stating that he should not be killed except in cases of treachery—specifically when the killing involves deceit, such as laying the victim down and slaughtering him for his wealth.

This discussion is recorded in Ibn Rushd's *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* [The Beginning of the *Mujtahid* and the End of the *Muqtaṣid*], Vol. Two, Book of retribution].

<sup>(383)</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālīm ibn Dhawayān, *Manār al-Sabīl Sharḥ al-Dalīl* [The Beacon of the Path], Book of criminal offenses, Chapter on the Conditions of Retaliation for the Killed.

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān stipulated, which was approved by Abū Ḥanīfah.<sup>(384)</sup>

Al-Nawawī summarizes the opinions as follows:

According to Abū Ḥanīfah, the blood money for an unbeliever is the same as that for a Muslim, whereas Mālik believes it should be half.

According to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, if the unbeliever is killed intentionally, his ransom is equal to the blood money of a Muslim. If the killing is accidental, then one must pay half of the blood money of a Muslim. Thus, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal combines the opinions of Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik.

According to al-Shāfi'ī, the blood money for a Jew and a Christian is one-third of the blood money for a Muslim, whether intentional or accidental. This is the doctrine of 'Umar, 'Uthmān, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab, al-Ḥasan, 'Ikrimah, Abū Thawr Ibrāhīm ibn Khālīd al-Kalbī al-Baghdādī, and Iṣḥāq ibn Rahawayh, based on what al-Shāfi'ī narrates on the authority of Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab that 'Umar made the blood money for a Jew and a Christian four thousand dirhams, and the blood money for a Magian is eight hundred dirhams. According to him, Suleimān ibn Yasar and Mālik said: The blood money for a Magian is eight hundred dirhams, and for a Magian woman is half the blood money for a Magian man; however, it is also argued to be the same.

The leading jurists -according to al-Nawawī- hold that the blood of non-believers is not equivalent to that of Muslims; faith is a prerequisite for the validity of blood money, and it is not valid without it. Furthermore, by analogy: just as a woman's blood money is reduced relative to a man's due to her being female, so too must the blood money for a non-believer be reduced relative to that

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<sup>(384)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Collection of Fatāwā*, vol. 34, Book of Felonies.

of a Muslim woman due to his lack of faith, for blood money is based on differentiation.<sup>(385)</sup>

The most acceptable view in Islamic public opinion and practice, as stated in Islamic historical sources, is that a Muslim should be killed for an unbeliever, but not for a belligerent one. The prophetic tradition, **A Muslim shall not be killed [in retaliation] for a disbeliever**, is understood to refer to a belligerent unbeliever, even though it is not explicitly stated, leaving room for exegesis. The point being emphasized here is that this issue was debated among jurists, with the majority adopting a double standard, but not all caliphs or Muslims accepted this inequality. The intellectual reference remains present and could be invoked again with the rise of extremist ideologies. Contemporary Islamic extremists believe that a Muslim should not be killed for an unbeliever and criticize those who hold a different view. This stance led to Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī facing harsh criticism from Ḥanbalīs.<sup>(386)</sup>

Muḥammad al-Ghazālī recounted an incident where a Bedouin killed an American engineer in a Gulf country, and scholars of prophetic tradition deemed retaliation impermissible. However, the government, feeling embarrassed, resolved the issue by executing the criminal as a matter of discretionary Islamic policy.<sup>(387)</sup>

\* Testimony in courts: In Islamic jurisprudence, the testimony of an unbeliever against a Muslim is not accepted by most jurists. Indeed, the majority of jurists from the Mālikīs, Shāfi'īs, Ḥanbalīs, and Imāmī Shi'ites argue that the testimony of an unbeliever is not permissible even against another unbeliever. The Qur'ān stipulates justice in testimony: **Take for witness two persons from among you** (Sūrah 65:2). Furthermore, it states: **get two witnesses, out of your**

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<sup>(385)</sup> *Commentary on al-Muhadhdhab*, Book of blood money, Chapter on blood money.

<sup>(386)</sup> Among them is Nāṣir ibn Hamad al-Fahd, *Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī: An Outline of His Thought*.

<sup>(387)</sup> *The Prophetic Sunnah between the Scholars of Fiqh and the Scholars of Ḥadīth*.



**own men** (Sūrah 2:282). In prevailing Islamic jurisprudence, both classical and modern, the unbeliever is categorized as inherently unjust. The Ḥanafīs are an exception to this, arguing that their testimony against Muslims has been abrogated while their testimony against each other is not. Similarly, al-Shawkānī clarifies that Muslims are commanded to adhere to their law and accept the testimony of some unbelievers against others. He argues that rejecting such testimony would result in the loss of numerous legal rights in cases where no Muslim witnesses are present. He attributes this necessity to the social reality of the time, noting that daily interaction and proximity occur primarily within their own circles, as Muslims maintain distinct living and social spaces. Thus, permitting their mutual testimony is seen as a practical measure to ensure justice and protect interests within their respective communities.<sup>(388)</sup> This pragmatic approach highlights how some jurists navigate the tension between theological doctrine and social realities. As for the testimony of Muslims, it is permissible for all sects according to the consensus of jurists. Ibn Abū Laylā, a contemporary of Abū Ḥanīfahh, maintains that the acceptance of non-Muslim testimony was conditional upon the unity of religion—that is, it was admissible only when both the witness and the litigant belonged to the same religious community: if their religions coincide, the testimony of some against others is admissible; but in cases of difference, the testimony of one religious group against another is not accepted. He justifies this position by arguing that presumed hostility arising from divergent beliefs undermines the integrity of testimony, drawing an analogy with the non-acceptance of their testimony against Muslims. Conversely, he emphasizes that, by the same logic, Muslim testimony against them should also not be accepted. Nevertheless, Muslim testimony is admissible against all other religious groups, and this is attributed to the superior status of Islam, which renders the testimony of a Muslim legally

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<sup>(388)</sup> *The Rushing Torrent Overflowing onto the Gardens of Flowers*, No. One, 775.

and doctrinally binding upon others.<sup>(389)</sup> This hierarchy reinforces the foundational premise of Islamic centralism within the judicial apparatus. According to al-Sarakhsī (one of the Ḥanafīs), if a Muslim travels and death approaches him and two men from the People of the Book bear witness to his will, their testimony is not permissible. However, Ibn Abū Laylā argues the contrary, and this is the view of Shurayḥ ibn al-Ḥarith, who used to say: The testimony of the People of the Book against Muslims is not accepted in anything except in a will in the case of travel. This was reported from Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, based on the words of the Qur'ān: **two just men of your own (brotherhood) or others from outside if you are journeying through the earth, and the chance of death befalls you** (Sūrah 5:106).<sup>(390)</sup>

Al-Shāfi'ī permits the testimony of idol-worshippers, arguing that they are not people of a revealed scripture that they subsequently rejected or altered, but rather they went astray by merely following the practices of their forefathers. In contrast, he does not permit the testimony of the People of the Book, on the grounds that they had altered their scriptures, as stated in the Qur'ān.<sup>(391)</sup>

There are those who believe that the testimony of one unbeliever against another of a different religion is not acceptable, whereas others accept it, though they disagree on the details. Some accept the testimony of a Jew against a Christian and a Christian against a Jew, whereas others maintain that the testimony of each sect is accepted only against its own members, but the testimony of a Jew

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<sup>(389)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded, Book of Testimonies*, Chapter on Those Whose Testimony is not Permissible.

<sup>(390)</sup> Ibid., Book of Disagreement of Abū Ḥanīfah and ibn Abū Laylā.

<sup>(391)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of *Ḥudūd* (Prescribed Penalties) and the Description of Banishment, Chapter on the Punishment of Dhimmīs if they Commit Adultery, No. 6, p. 154.

against a Christian is not accepted, nor a Christian against a Jew.  
(392)

Ibn Ḥanbal believes that the testimony of an unbeliever should not be accepted under any circumstances, on the basis that an unbeliever is neither legally just nor satisfactory, except in the case of a will during travel if there are no Muslims present.<sup>(393)</sup>

\* The provisions of Islamic law apply to non-Muslims in matters of criminal transactions and punishments, such as the prohibition of adultery.<sup>(394)</sup> The Imām is obliged to consider the Islamic rulings concerning life, property, and honor, and to enforce prescribed punishments for acts they themselves regard as forbidden, but not for those they deem permissible.<sup>(395)</sup> An example of the former is adultery,<sup>(396)</sup> while an example of the latter is drinking alcohol—unless they bring the case before a Muslim judge, who will then rule according to Islamic law, regardless of whether the act is permitted or prohibited in their own religion. It is worth noting in this context that some judges in Egypt today may reject the testimony of a non-Muslim against a Muslim in personal status cases, based on the official state school of thought, which is the Ḥanafī school.

\* The general rule is that a Muslim does not inherit from an unbeliever and vice versa. However, the opinions of jurists differ in

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(392) Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Mughnī*, [A Comprehensive Work of Islamic Jurisprudence], Book of Testimonies.

(393) Ibn Qudāmah, *Al-Kaḥfī fī Fiqh al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* [The Sufficient in the Jurisprudence of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal], Book of Testimonies, Chapter: Whose Testimony is Accepted and Whose Testimony is Rejected, No. 4, p. 271.

(394) Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Islamic Jurisprudence and its Proofs*, 1, 5890.

(395) Al-Buhūtī, *The Flourishing Garden*, No. 1, p. 300.

(396) Regarding the ruling of adultery for married couples, jurists differ on the ruling for unbelievers. Abū Ḥanīfah argues that the punishment for unbelieving males and females is flogging, not stoning, because Islam is a condition for the existence of chastity, which requires severe punishment. Quoted by Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī, *Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*.

details. The most moderate positions are those of Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfi'ī, who argue that Muslims inherit from each other, and the unbelievers in general inherit from each other. Mālik believes that members of all religions may inherit from each other, while some divide them into three categories: Jews, Christians, and other religions. Others, perhaps including Aḥmad, argue that every sect of the unbelievers other than the People of the Book inherits from each other, such as the Magians, the idolators, and the sun worshipers. <sup>(397)</sup> Jurists rely on the aḥādīth, including this narration in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -4094: **A Muslim does not inherit from a disbeliever, nor does a disbeliever inherit from a Muslim.** An apostate does not inherit from a Muslim, unanimously. Regarding the inheritance of an apostate by a Muslim, jurists differ: According to al-Shāfi'ī, Mālik, Rabī'ah ibn al-Ḥasan, Ibn Abū Laylā, and others, Muslims do not inherit from them; rather, their wealth is used as booty for Muslims. By contrast, it was narrated on the authority of 'Alī, Ibn Mas'ūd, and others that their Muslim heirs inherit from them. Abū Ḥanīfah, the Jurists of al-Kūfah, al-Awzā'ī, and Ishāq hold this view. Al-Thawrī and Abū Ḥanīfah maintain that what the apostate earns during their apostasy belongs to the Muslims, whereas others argue that all their wealth goes to their Muslim heirs. <sup>(398)</sup>

**\* Shuf'ah (Pre-emption):**

Jurists have long debated the right of pre-emption for non-believers. While some scholars recognize the right of non-Muslims to exercise pre-emption in the property of Muslims, others dispute this position. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya reinforces the latter view, arguing that Islamic law does not grant a non-believer priority in

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<sup>(397)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant, Inheritance between People of two Different Religions*, p. 163.

<sup>(398)</sup> Al-Nawawī's, *Sharḥ al-Nawawī 'ala Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim], Book of Obligations, Explanations of Aḥādīth.

shared access or property competition, citing the prophetic tradition: **If you meet them on a road, force them to the narrowest part of it.** Therefore, how can they be given the right to seize property that belongs to you when there is competition? This stance aligns with the position of Imām Aḥmad and is supported by some of his companions who cite the ḥadīth: **There is no pre-emption for a Christian.**

**\* Marriage:**

Islamic jurisprudence across various schools establishes a clear legal distinction between marriages involving Muslims, People of the Book, and polytheists:

1. Muslims intermarry freely among themselves, regardless of ethnic background, language, or other differences. This has been the prevailing view both in the present and historically for centuries. It stands in contrast to an earlier opinion, once adopted by many jurists, which held that a non-Arab Muslim should not marry an Arab woman on the grounds of presumed incompatibility. This is the opinion of some senior jurists, including the Ḥanafīs, <sup>(399)</sup> although there is no prophetic tradition indicating this. On the contrary, while direct prophetic traditions are absent, historical accounts suggest that the marriages of Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ and Salmān al-Fārisī to Arab women were initially rejected by the brides' families during the Prophet's lifetime on the grounds of a lack of social equivalence. Nevertheless, both men eventually succeeded in marrying other Arab women, highlighting the early Islamic discrepancy between tribal customs and the new egalitarian faith.

2. Prohibition regarding Polytheists: Marriage to polytheists is categorically prohibited based on Sūrah 2:221: **Do not marry**

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<sup>(399)</sup> Among the sources: Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded, Book of Marriage*, Chapter on equivalence - Muḥammad Amīn ibn Abdīn, *Ibn Abidīn's Commentary*, The Book on Marriage, Chapter on Equivalence.

women who associate partners with God unless they embrace the true faith... And do not give your women in marriage to men who associate partners with God unless they embrace the true faith. Here, jurists consider the People of the Book either as unbelievers who are not polytheists, or as polytheists of a distinct category.

3. Marriage to Women of the Book: The majority of Sunni jurists permit a Muslim man to marry a woman from the People of the Book (specifically Jews and Christians), citing Sūrah 5:5: **the virtuous women from among the believers and the virtuous women from among those who were given revelations before you are also lawful to you.** This permissibility is further reinforced by a prophetic tradition: **We marry the women of the People of the Book, but they do not marry our women.** And according to 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Jarīr, from 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who says: The Muslim may marry a Christian woman, but the Christian may not marry a Muslim woman ('*Awn al-Ma'būd* -276 and 2817 in the edition of al-Maktaba al-Shāmila).

However, this majority view is not without notable dissent. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar adopts a stricter interpretation, arguing that the Christian doctrine regarding the divinity of Jesus constitutes a form of *Shirk* (polytheism), which is prohibited in Sūrah 2:221. In his commentary recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (5164), Ibn 'Umar argues that Islamic law forbids believers from marrying polytheist women. He maintains that attributing divinity to Jesus—who is regarded as a servant of God—constitutes a supreme form of polytheism that justifies such a prohibition. Similarly, Imām Mālik expresses a scholarly dislike for these marriages, although he does not explicitly forbid them. <sup>(400)</sup>

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<sup>(400)</sup> Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā* [The Compendium of Mālikī Jurisprudence], The Third Book of Marriage, chapter titled: Marriage between Polytheists and the People of the Book, Conversion of One Spouse to Islam; Captives; and Apostasy.



The legal consensus among Sunni and Imāmī jurists further restricts this permission by excluding female slaves from the People of the Book, following Sūrah 2:221: **Do not marry disbelieving women, until they believe**, and Sūrah 60:10: **And do not hold on to ties with disbelieving women.**<sup>(401)</sup> A unique scholarly outlier is al-Shawkānī, who expands the definition of the People of the Book to include Magians, based on a prophetic tradition stating: **Follow the Sunnah of the People of the Book with them.**<sup>(402)</sup>

The majority of scholars acknowledge that the Qur'ān distinguishes between polytheist women and the People of the Book: **It is inconceivable that the disbelievers among the people of the earlier revelations and the idolaters could have ever changed their ways until there had come to them the clear evidence of the Truth (Sūrah 98:1); Indeed, those who disbelieve from the People of the Book and the polytheists will be in the Fire of Hell, to stay there forever (Sūrah 98:6).** Therefore, the prohibition is limited to marrying unbelieving women who are not from the People of the Book. While the Magians are considered among the People of the Book regarding the imposition of jizyah, they are not considered as such in the case of marriage. No prominent jurist makes an exception here except al-Shawkānī.<sup>(403)</sup>

However, traditional jurisprudence does not differentiate between polytheists and the irreligious, treating both equally as unbelievers. A central concern among jurists, instead, is the distinction between the People of the Book and polytheists. The

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<sup>(401)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The Sufficeint*, Book of Marriage, Chapter on who is Forbidden to Marry.

<sup>(402)</sup> *The Rushing Torrent Overflowing onto the Gardens of Flowers*, Book of Marriage, p. 354.

<sup>(403)</sup> This contradiction is evident, and Ibn Qayyim could not justify it. Refer to *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 158. Among those who allow the consumption of the sacrifices made by the Magians and the practice of marrying them was Abū Thawr, as referenced by Ibn Qayyim, *Ibid.*, Chapter Concerning Jizyah.

difficulty lies in whether Jews and Christians should be classified as People of the Book or as polytheists. There is an Islamic conviction that previous scriptures are distorted, and are therefore not the Books intended by the Qur'ān. Ultimately, this discussion is extensive. Regardless of the numerous jurisprudential opinions on the specific status of the People of the Book, the majority of jurists uphold the permissibility of a Muslim man marrying a virtuous woman from among them.

However, jurists do not permit the marriage of a Muslim to any woman of the Book, but only to those who are not among the belligerents. Ibn 'Abbās, for example, permits it only for women of the People of the Book who pay jizyah, and forbids marriage to anyone else. Mālik generally dislikes marriage to the People of the Book, without declaring it forbidden, whether they are dhimmīs or from among the people of war. Al-Shāfi'ī dislikes marriage to the People of the Book residing in the Land of War and even to a Muslim woman residing in that land. Moreover, he dislikes to a lesser extent marriage to the People of the Book in general. <sup>(404)</sup>

The Ḥanafī scholars mention that 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib disliked this; nonetheless, they follow the view that it is permissible for Muslims to marry Christian women in the land of war. However, it is still disliked because if they marry them, they may choose to live there. <sup>(405)</sup> In addition, neither Abū Ḥanīfah nor al-Shāfi'ī forbid marriage to the females of belligerents, though they do dislike it.

In a more contemporary context, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī adopts a restrictive approach, introducing several stringent conditions and cautionary warnings regarding marriage to non-believing women. His discourse often emphasizes a perceived moral gap, employing

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<sup>(404)</sup> *Al-Umm*, 4, p. 282.

<sup>(405)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded, Book of Marriage*, Chapter on Marriage of People of War.

polemical language to question the compatibility of such unions.<sup>(406)</sup> While he frames the original permissibility as a sign of Islamic tolerance, critics argue that this perspective remains hierarchical. Conversely, secular and irreligious frameworks are often presented as more pluralistic, as they generally permit marriage based on individual choice regardless of religious affiliation.<sup>(407)</sup>

4. Most jurists and ordinary Muslims believe that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to marry an unbelieving man under any circumstances, based on the Qur'ānic verse: **O believers, when believing women come to you emigrating, test them. God is Aware of their faith. If you ascertain that they are believers, do not send them back to the disbelievers. They are not lawful (as wives) for them, nor are those lawful for them** (Sūrah 60:10). The rationale in classical jurisprudence is that guardianship belongs to the man, and a non-believing man cannot assume guardianship over a Muslim woman due to the perceived superior status of Muslims.<sup>(408)</sup> This represents the prevailing judgment in the tradition. Additional, though less central, reasons are cited, including the notion that preventing such marriages reflects kindness and compassion toward non-believers, since husbands are responsible for accompanying their wives to places of worship.

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<sup>(406)</sup> *Muslim Marriage with Women of the Book – Principles and Regulations.*

<sup>(407)</sup> *Islam and Secularism Face to Face, Chapter Two, Defining Concepts: The Framework of the Relationship with Non-Believers.*

<sup>(408)</sup> According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, “It was forbidden for them to marry Muslim women because it involved a kind of superiority over them.” *Legal Rulings Concerning the People under the Covenant*, p. 110. According to the Shāfi’is, “Muslim women are categorically forbidden, by the Qur’ān, from marrying polytheists. This prohibition extends to the polytheists among the People of the Book, in order to prevent any breach of loyalty between Muslims and polytheists.” *Al-Umm, Book of Marriage.*

This prohibition is often justified as an act of kindness and mercy. A few modern thinkers, such as Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr<sup>(409)</sup> and Ḥasan al-Turabī,<sup>(410)</sup> diverge from this stance.

In cases where a wife converts to Islam before her husband, jurists agree that she must refrain from marital relations until his conversion. This consensus is grounded in evidence from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. However, jurists differ regarding the annulment of the marriage contract: the prevailing opinion holds that the contract is suspended rather than annulled, allowing the marriage to continue if the husband converts before the expiration of her waiting period. If the waiting period expires without his conversion, the contract is annulled. Some jurists also allow the wife to wait voluntarily, in which case the marriage is resumed without the need for a new contract. These variations reflect broader debates about how conversion reshapes marital obligations and contracts in Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>(411)</sup>

5. Books of Islamic jurisprudence excel in explaining the meticulous details of the conditions for marriage and divorce among unbelievers from the dhimmīs (protected communities), whether among themselves or between them and Muslims. They also cover marital relations in these cases, including the practice of worship by the wife and the public expression of her faith—details that need not be elaborated upon here.

Despite all these complexities, Islamists take pride in what they call the tolerance of Islam, particularly regarding this issue. Some

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<sup>(409)</sup> *Loyalty and Disavowal in Islam - an Analytical Rreading of Sūrah 60 of the Qur'ān.*

<sup>(410)</sup> In an interview with “al-Sharq al-Awsat” newspaper, on Sunday, April 9, 2006, he stated: “*The claim that a Muslim woman is prohibited from marrying a Christian man is unfounded. Such restrictions have no basis in religion and are not derived from the principles of Sharī'ah law.*”

<sup>(411)</sup> Al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awtār Sharḥ Muntaqā al-Akḥbār*, Vol. Six, Chapter on Unbelieving Spouses. In this section, he cites Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s opinion, describing it as extremely good.

claim, for example, that Islam is more open regarding marriage to women of Scripture than other religions; <sup>(412)</sup> yet, no one mentions the absence of such tolerance toward irreligious individuals or followers of non-Abrahamic religions. Marriage in the lands of the unbelievers has been a civil matter for decades, with no role for religion or religious institutions. When civil marriage is proposed within the Muslim world, the religious establishment often reacts with strong opposition. In many cases, advocates are met with calls for punishment, and little tolerance is shown—even when the issue is framed in terms of human rights.

**\* The Prescribed Punishment for *Qadhf* (false accusation of fornication or adultery) in Islamic Jurisprudence:**

Jurists differ regarding the punishment of a Muslim and a dhimmī if either of them accuses the other of fornication or adultery.

The first opinion, held by the majority of jurists, is that no *ḥadd* (the fixed punishment of eighty lashes) is applied to the Muslim if he slanders a man or woman from the People of the Book; instead, the offender is disciplined at the judge's discretion.

The second opinion, attributed to scholars such as al-Zuhrī, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, and Ibn Abū Laylā, is that the *ḥadd* applies if the woman has a child by a Muslim.

The third opinion states that if a Muslim slanders a Christian woman married to a Muslim, he is subject to flogging.

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<sup>(412)</sup> In some countries, the Church rejects marriages across different Christian denominations or between Christians and adherents of other religions. Yet, Christianity in its origins does not recognize denominational divisions, and the Bible permits divorce only in cases of adultery. It is important to note that the existence of Christian or Jewish restrictions does not necessarily imply what is often termed Islamic tolerance. On the contrary, Islamic scripture imposes significant limitations on interfaith marriage. More broadly, it appears that no religion defines tolerance in matters of faith in the manner of secularists and the irreligious.

According to al-Qurṭubī, citing Ibn al-Mundhir, most scholars hold the first view, namely that no *ḥadd* is applied. However, all agree that if a Christian slanders a free Muslim, he receives the same punishment as a Muslim: eighty lashes. <sup>(413)</sup>

Ibn Rushd refers to the disagreement among jurists regarding slander that necessitates the prescribed punishment. They agree that accusing someone of fornication or denying their lineage, if the mother is a free Muslim woman, requires the penalty. However, they differ in cases where the mother is non-Muslim or enslaved. Mālik rules that the penalty must be applied regardless of whether the mother is free or enslaved, Muslim or non-Muslim. In contrast, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī holds that no penalty is due if the mother of the person slandered is a slave or a woman from the People of the Book, aligning his reasoning with the views of al-Shāfi'ī and Abū Ḥanīfah. <sup>(414)</sup> These differing views highlight the broader debate within Islamic jurisprudence regarding the extent of legal protection afforded to non-Muslims in matters of honor and reputation.

#### **\* Children's Religion:**

The child follows the religion of their parents. If they are from two different religions, then the superior religion dictates the child's status, given the principle that Islam is supreme, and that which is

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<sup>(413)</sup> *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [The Compendium of Qur'ānic Rulings], Sūrah 24:4-5. Al-Qurṭubī states, “The majority of scholars reached a consensus that there is no prescribed legal punishment (*Ḥadd*) for anyone who slanders a man or a woman from the People of the Book. However, Al-Zuhrī, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, and Ibn Abū Laylā state that the *Ḥadd* punishment applies if she has a child by a Muslim man. A third opinion suggests that if one slanders a Christian woman married to a Muslim, the *Ḥadd* punishment of flogging is applies. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mundhir notes: 'The vast majority of scholars are in agreement with the first opinion; I have not encountered anyone who disagrees with it.' Conversely, if a *dhimmī* slanders a free Muslim, he is subject to the same penalty as a Muslim, which is eighty lashes; I know of no disagreement regarding this rule.” Ibid.

<sup>(414)</sup> *The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid*, Book of Qadhf (Slander, i.e. False Accusation of Adultery) file 28 of 28.



closest to it is better than the more remote. That is, preference is given to the Muslim, then to the Christian, rather than the Jew or the polytheist. This legal preference underscores the hierarchical nature of communal identity.<sup>(415)</sup> But if one of the parents converts to Islam, the child is considered a Muslim, with the exception of a dhimmī woman who conceives a child with her master. In this case, the child follows the father's religion, but the marriage is annulled in order to preserve the honor of the Muslim woman.<sup>(416)</sup>

If a Muslim and an unbeliever disagree about the lineage of a child born outside marriage, the child is attributed to the Muslim.

If a child is judged to be a Muslim following his parents, but reaches puberty as an unbeliever without declaring Islam, then, according to the Ḥanafīs, they are coerced to convert to Islam, but are not killed. However, if they pronounce the testimony of faith after puberty, they face execution if they subsequently apostatize.<sup>(417)</sup>

The details regarding the religion of children are endless, and they all depend on the Qur'ānic concept that Islam is the religion of nature, as discussed in detail above. Therefore, it is the righteous religion, and jurists expect unbelievers to acknowledge this concept as an absolute Truth. Based on this premise, they accept the rulings of Islamic jurisprudence in determining a child's religion. The prophetic tradition is more explicit on this point: **If one of the**

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<sup>(415)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya states: *“As for the ruling on whether a child follows his father or mother, the child follows the better of his parents in religion. If a father from the People of the Book marries a Magian woman, then the child follows the father. If a Magian marries one of the People of the Book, then the child follows the People of the Book. If one of them is a Jew and the other is a Christian, then it is apparent that the child is a Christian, as stated by the companions of Abū Ḥanīfah, because Christians believe in Moses and Jesus, while Jews unbelieve in Jesus. Therefore, Christians are closer to Muslims.”* *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 140.

<sup>(416)</sup> Tamer Bağenoğlu, *Ibid.*

<sup>(417)</sup> Al-Samarqandī, *The Jurists' Masterpiece*, Book of Expeditions, Chapter on Taking Jizyah and Ruling of Apostates.

parents converts to Islam, custody of the child remains with the Muslim parent. Ibn 'Abbās and his mother were among the oppressed, and he did not remain with his father who followed the religion of his people. He declared: Islam is superior and can never be surpassed. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -78).

The rationale behind considering Islam to be supreme is its status as the absolute Truth.

If the discussion were to be extended, it becomes necessary for jurists to consider taking the children of unbelievers from the dhimmīs to be raised by Muslims, thereby saving them from being declared unbelievers by their parents. However, it is difficult to contemplate this option, as it is impossible to implement. Nevertheless, a precedent exists in early Islamic history; 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb stipulated that the Arab Christians of Banū Taghlib, who refused to pay jizyah, must pay *zakāt* equal to twice what Muslims pay. He also stipulated that they should not allow their children to be Christianized. <sup>(418)</sup> However, it appears that they did not uphold this commitment and allowed their children to be Christianized. The caliph 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib later threatened them, stating, “*If I were to focus on Banū Taghlib, I would kill their fighters and take their offspring, as they have violated the covenant and have been disowned by Christianizing their children.*” <sup>(419)</sup>

A practical example may clarify the issue of the religious affiliation of children. If a non-believing man converts to Islam and divorces his non-believing wife, custody of the children is transferred to the Muslim father. Conversely, if the wife converts to Islam, the children are placed under her care. A case illustrating this principle occurred in Egypt, where a court revoked the custody rights of a Christian father after the mother embraced Islam. In its

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<sup>(418)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 26.

<sup>(419)</sup> *Ibid.*

ruling, the court declared: “*The children must follow the most righteous religion, and Islam is the most correct of religions.*”<sup>(420)</sup>

#### **Fourth. Freedom of Worship:**

The so-called 'Umari Conditions, as previously noted, include stipulations concerning the places of worship of unbelievers. The consensus of the majority of Muslim jurists on this issue can be summarized by the following points from Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's book *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*:

1. It is not permissible to construct temples for the dhimmīs in Islamic lands or their surrounding areas, including territory conquered by force and thus belonging to Muslims. A license in this regard may be granted only as an exceptional case, if the Imām is certain that the building of churches and temples serves Muslim interests.

2. It is permissible to repair and modify damaged temples, and to rebuild churches and temples that have collapsed, according to the Mālikī, Shāfi'ī, and Abū Ḥanīfah schools. However, the condition is that these temples must be located in a place where a peace treaty was made with their owners; meaning they were not taken by force.

3. Ḥanbalīs and some of the Shāfi'īs hold that it is impermissible to construct places of worship, nor is it permissible to restore those that have fallen into ruin within Muslim lands; rather, if such buildings are erected, they must be demolished.<sup>(421)</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah argues that Christian complaints regarding the demolition of churches lack valid grounds, and considers them

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<sup>(420)</sup> Quoted from: Sayyid al-Qimnī, *Thank You Ibn Lādin*, Vol. Two, p. 138, First Edition, 2004. The woman confirmed this in a television interview in April 2006.

<sup>(421)</sup> Al-Māwardī states, “*If they reconstruct temples, it should be demolished over them,*” *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, p. 256.

contrary to established juristic consensus. He emphasizes that the leading authorities of the four schools of law, along with prominent jurists such as al-Thawrī and al-Awzā'ī, agree that the ruler has the authority to demolish churches in territories conquered by force—such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria—if he deems it to serve the public interest. He maintains that such action is not unjust but rather falls within the ruler's legitimate powers, which must be obeyed. Ibn Taymiyyah concludes with a legal implication: refusal by Christians to submit to state rulings in this matter constitutes a violation of the covenant, making their blood and wealth permissible. <sup>(422)</sup> In conclusion, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that Muslims are not considered to have wronged them, since this position reflects the consensus of jurists.

Many modern scholars attempt to mitigate the severity of this clear discrimination. The abundance of such writings is merely a response to the explicit differentiation found in the works of major jurists. Among these scholars, al-Qaraḍāwī stands out as a representative moderate voice of the Muslim Brotherhood. He exerts considerable effort to maneuver around the issue without explicitly stating his own position. After citing the views noted above, he adds that some Muslim jurists from the Zaydī and Mālikī schools permit the People of the Covenant to establish churches and other places of worship within the abode of Islam. He ignores the weak influence of this viewpoint in Islamic culture, avoids explicitly endorsing these opinions or calling for full freedom of worship, and overlooks the fact that the 'Umari Conditions have been applied throughout most of the Islamic world. For instance, the conditions for building churches remain highly complex in a major country like Egypt and are prohibited in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. He justifies the acceptance of the 'Umari Conditions, stating verbatim: *“All that Islam asks of unbelievers is to respect the feelings of Muslims and the*

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<sup>(422)</sup> A *Treatise on Churches* edited and commented on by 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Alī al-Shibl.

sanctity of their religion. They should not display their symbols and crosses in Islamic territories, nor establish a church in an Islamic city where they did not have a church before. This is because displaying and establishing can challenge Islamic sentiments, potentially leading to strife and unrest.”<sup>(423)</sup> He proceeds to describe this treatment as “tolerance unparalleled in human history.” A very limited minority, particularly secular Muslims, differs from this approach, advocating for genuine freedom of worship for religious minorities in Muslim countries.

4. It is permissible for a Muslim to enter the temples of unbelievers and pray in them, whereas unbelievers are not allowed to enter mosques as held by the majority of Muslims. However, some scholars acknowledge that this is permissible, such as al-Sarakhsī.<sup>(424)</sup> It is also reported from Abū Ḥanīfah that he permitted both the People of the Book and polytheists to enter mosques. Al-Shāfi’ī and Ibn Ḥazm maintain the permissibility of polytheists entering *al-ḥill* mosques, meaning those other than the Sacred Mosques. In contrast, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal holds two opinions: the first is that they are not allowed to enter *al-ḥill* mosques without the permission of a Muslim, based on the fact that the Prophet’s delegation from Ṭa’if came to him, and he took them to the mosque before they converted to Islam. This internal legal flexibility demonstrates that restrictions are not universally rigid across all classical schools.

The second opinion is that their entry is not permissible, as the narrative indicates that Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī came to ‘Umar with a Christian, whose handwriting impressed ‘Umar. ‘Umar said, “Tell this scribe of yours to read his book to us.” Abū Mūsā responded, “He does not enter the mosque.” ‘Umar asked why, and when he found out the man was a Christian, he reprimanded Abū Mūsā, saying that a person in a state of *janābah* (major ritual impurity) is

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<sup>(423)</sup> *The Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society.*

<sup>(424)</sup> *Sharḥ al-Siyar al-Kabīr* [The Great Commentary on Expeditions and International Law], Chapter on Polytheists Entering the Mosque.

prevented from entering the mosque, and a polytheist should be even more so. <sup>(425)</sup>

In general, it was not acceptable in Arab-Islamic history for unbelievers to enter mosques, except in exceptional and extremely rare circumstances. The matter remains completely rejected by Muslim public opinion. The reason is that unbelievers are impure, according to the verse: **Believers, know that the idolaters are certainly impure; so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque** (Sūrah 9:28). The exegetes unanimously agree that the verse prohibits unbelievers from approaching the Grand Mosque in Makkah, whereas others believe that this applies to mosques in general. In light of this theological impurity and the necessity of protecting mosque from all forms of defilement, <sup>(426)</sup> jurists conclude that unbelievers should not enter mosques or Islamic sacred territories.

After the conquest of Makkah, Muslims forbade unbelievers from performing pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah*, even though it was considered a holy house by Arab polytheists. Following the revelation of Sūrah 9, Muḥammad announced: **No polytheist will perform Ḥajj after the year, nor will anyone circumambulate the Ka'bah naked** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -367). It is noteworthy that Arab polytheists were given a choice between Islam and death, and they were the ones who had originally made the pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah*. The *Ka'bah*, previously revered by Arab polytheists, was redefined as an exclusively Islamic sanctuary, built by Adam, and then by the Prophet Ibrāhīm. Some scholars draw parallels with contemporary debates over al-Aqsa Mosque, where religious Jews attempt to seize it as the location of Solomon's Temple. However,

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<sup>(425)</sup> Ibn Qudāmah, *The Sufficiency in the Jurisprudence of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, 4, p. 180.

<sup>(426)</sup> Ibn al-'Arabī in his interpretation of the verse, *The Legal Rulings Derived from the Qur'ān*.



the historical evidence for Adam and Ibrāhīm is not as clear as it is for Solomon. Despite these differing levels of evidence, the Arab polytheists sanctified the *Ka'bah* in their own way, and did not prevent Muslims from praying in it or performing Ḥajj except in the year of al-Ḥudaybiyyah. Muslims, on the other hand, did not allow unbelievers to have access to the *Ka'bah*, as they believed that only followers of Islam have a right to it.

#### **Fifth. Restrictions on Dhimmī Women Leaving their Homes:**

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya mentions under the title *The Corruption of Morals of the women of the People of the Book* that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb wrote to the people of the Levant to prevent the women of unbelievers from entering baths with Muslim women. Ibn Qayyim also cites the opinion of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who expresses disapproval of allowing dhimmīs to view the nakedness of Muslims. Ibn al-Qayyim justifies this position by referring to Abū al-Qāsim, who maintains that the women of the People of the Covenant can not be considered trustworthy in matters concerning Muslims, and that their involvement carries the risk of corruption. According to him, the Prophet Muḥammad prohibited Muslim women from mingling with other women and describing them to their husbands as if they were looking at them. This is interpreted to mean that such interactions lead to the description of a Muslim woman to a dhimmī woman's husband as if he were watching her.<sup>(427)</sup> This legal anxiety over moral contamination serves to enforce a strict social separation between the two communities.

Jurists have extensively debated this issue, and no one has significantly deviated from accepting these rules.<sup>(428)</sup> This enduring

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<sup>(427)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 249.

<sup>(428)</sup> Abū Ḥanīfah, regarded as the most moderate among the Sunni jurists, states:

*“If an unbeliever rents a house in al-Kūfah for one year, paying dirhams to a Muslim, and he establishes within it a private place of prayer—not for the congregation—the owner has no*

consensus reflects how classical jurisprudence prioritizes communal hierarchy and the preservation of Muslim honor over social integration.

### Sixth. Prohibition from Holding Sovereign Positions in the Islamic State:

The Qur'ān states: **O believers, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies** (Sūrah 5:51) - **God will give disbelievers no means of overcoming believers** (Sūrah 4:141). Accordingly, all Imāms unanimously reject the guardianship of an unbeliever over a Muslim in general, including the Ḥanafīs.<sup>(429)</sup> al-Shāfi'ī adds that there is no guardianship for an unbeliever over another unbeliever.<sup>(430)</sup> Even assuming the position of judge is rejected by scholars, except for the Ḥanafī school, which allows an unbeliever to serve as a judge among his own religious community.<sup>(431)</sup> The Shāfi'īs generally agree that an unbeliever may arbitrate between unbelievers but not act as a formal judge. According to them, the judiciary is not valid except for one who possesses fifteen

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*right to prevent him, since residence entails such use. However, if he seeks to establish a public place of worship and ring the bell therein, the owner may forbid him. This is not due to ownership of the house, but rather as an act of forbidding evil. Non-Muslims are prohibited from maintaining churches in Muslim lands, and thus any Muslim has the right to prevent them, just as the landlord may forbid his tenant.”*

This ruling is linked to the statement of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb: *“There is no church or castration in Islam.”* The intended meaning is the prohibition of building churches within Islamic territory. Al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ* [The Expanded], Book of Rents, Chapter on Renting Apartments and Houses.

<sup>(429)</sup> Al-Kashanī, for example, *The Unique Masterpieces in the Organization of the Legal Rulings*, Vol. Two, p. 272. He states: *“Because the Sharī'ah cuts off the guardianship of the unbelievers from the believers as stated in the Almighty's saying, **God will give the disbelievers no means of overcoming the believers.**”*

<sup>(430)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book about Fighting Rebels.

<sup>(431)</sup> Al-Māwardī, *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Chapter Six, Judicial Jurisdiction.

characteristics, the first of which is being a Muslim. Consequently, the guardianship of an unbeliever is not valid, even over an unbeliever. However, appointing an unbeliever to arbitrate between them is viewed as a form of leadership and not a form of judgment.<sup>(432)</sup>

Regarding ministerial positions, some jurists, such as al-Māwardī, argue that it is permissible for dhimmīs to hold ministries of execution, but not ministries of sovereignty, as they do not involve decision-making power but only the execution of orders.<sup>(433)</sup> This view is accepted by most contemporary Islamists.

Statements from the Qur'an, the Ḥadīth, and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs indicate that entrusting non-believers with senior or sensitive positions in the state is viewed with caution. Based on these sources, many classical jurists argue that such appointments should be avoided, particularly in matters involving sovereign authority:

If they meet you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you for evil: and they desire that you should reject the Truth (Sūrah 60:2); It is never the wish of the disbelievers from among the People of the Book, nor of the polytheists, that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord (Sūrah 2:105); Many of the People of the Book wish, out of envy on their part, to turn you back into disbelievers, after the Truth has become clear to them. (Sūrah 2:109); Never will the Jews nor yet the Christians be pleased with you unless you follow their faith (Sūrah 2:120); Believers, do not take for your intimate friends men other than your own folk. They will spare no effort to corrupt you. They love to see you in distress. Their hatred

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<sup>(432)</sup> *Al-Iqna' fī Ḥall Alfaz Abū Shujā'* [The Persuasion in Explaining the Words of Abū Shujā'], Book of Cases and Testimonies.

<sup>(433)</sup> *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Vol. Two.

has already become apparent by [what they say with] their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is even much worse (Sūrah 3:118).

This stance is also reflected in the prophetic tradition, including what is recorded in *Musnad Aḥmad* -11698 and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* - 5209: **Do not seek light from the fire of the polytheists.** Al-Suyūṭī explains this prophetic tradition as follows: What is meant by fire here is opinion. That is, do not consult them, as he compares opinion to light in times of confusion.<sup>(434)</sup> In his book *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimma*, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya exerts considerable effort to demonstrate a perceived lack of loyalty among the dhimmīs toward the Islamic state and their natural propensity for treachery, citing the Qur'ān and various examples.<sup>(435)</sup>

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was strict in this regard, serving as a foundational authority for Muslims. The strong rejection of using unbelievers in positions of state authority is often attributed to him. Among his sayings are the following: Do not show them favor, for Allah has cast them aside; do not honor them, for Allah has humiliated them; nor trust them, for Allah has rendered them untrustworthy; do not employ the People of the Book, for they consider bribery permissible; and seek assistance in your affairs and for your subjects from those who fear Allah; I will not accept advisors other than believers; thus, it is generally held to be impermissible to employ the People of the Covenant as scribes, or to rely on them in any other matters of buying and selling.<sup>(436)</sup>

However, many non-Rightly Guided caliphs and governors deviated from these instructions. Starting as early as the Umayyad period, they employed non-Muslims in roles such as tax collection and record-keeping, often against the wishes of the jurists.

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<sup>(434)</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Sharḥ Sunan al-Nasā'ī* [Commentary on *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*], Book of adultery, explanations of the prophetic traditions.

<sup>(435)</sup> pp. 97-98.

<sup>(436)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī's interpretation of Sūrah 3:118.

Although Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ordered the removal of dhimmīs from such positions, his directive was not strictly enforced, and they remained in office long after.<sup>(437)</sup> Later, al-Qurṭubī lamented the state of Muslims in his era, noting that the situation had shifted toward appointing the People of the Book to sensitive roles like secretarial and administrative positions. He argued this granted them social and political influence over certain rulers and *amīrs*, whom he described as lacking in discernment.<sup>(438)</sup> This historical complaint confirms that the jurists continued to view such integration as a corruption of the proper order. Modern scholars often view these deviations as evidence of Islamic tolerance, whereas they were, in fact, violations of Islamic jurisprudence, much like the instances where various caliphs drank wine or engaged in “Debauchery,” as described by Muslim historians. Does this imply that Islamic culture permits drinking? Or does it simply show that the conduct of certain caliphs was not strictly Islamic?<sup>(439)</sup>

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<sup>(437)</sup> 'Abd al-Karīm Muḥammad Muti' al-Hamdawī, *The Jurisprudence of Governmental Ordinances*, Vol. Four, Chapter Two: The Initials of Political Classification.

<sup>(438)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(439)</sup> Ḥanafī jurists are often characterized by a relative leniency regarding intoxicating beverages. Ibn Ḥazm states that “*Abū Ḥanīfah allows the consumption of raisin soak (juice) if cooked, date soak if cooked, and grape soak if cooked until two-thirds of it evaporates. If these drinks cause intoxication, Abū Ḥanīfah deems it permissible. He believes that there is no specific punishment unless one drinks an amount that necessarily causes intoxication, in which case there is a punishment. Additionally, if one consumes fermented fig wine, fermented honey juice, fermented apple juice, wheat, barley, or corn syrup and becomes intoxicated or does not become intoxicated, there is no punishment according to Abū Ḥanīfah.*” Source: *Al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār* [The Ornamented with Traditions], No. 2296. This perspective is also echoed by Ibn Rushd, who mentions that “*the Iraqī jurists, including Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Abū Laylā, Sharīk, Ibn Shubramah, and most of the Baṣra scholars, as well as Abū Ḥanīfah and other al-Kūfahn jurists, believe that what is forbidden among all intoxicating wines is the intoxication itself, not the essence.*” *The Beginning of the Muḥtāḥid and the End of the Muḥtasid*, Vol. One, Section 4, Book of Food and Beverages. This view can be found in Ḥanafī jurisprudence books, such as al-Kāsānī's book *Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i' fī Tarrīf al-Sharā'i'* [The Unique Masterpieces in the Organization of the Legal Rulings], Vol. Five, p. 116: “Where he states that drinks made

Islamic concepts regarding the guardianship of dhimmīs remain prevalent in Arab and Muslim countries today among jurists, the public and even statesmen. It is significant that a thinker regarded as enlightened, such as Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, attempts to mitigate the inherent inequality in the concept of guardianship. However, he approaches the issue within the same traditional framework discussed here:

1. He justifies everything that Islam decides regarding the 'Umari Conditions and other matters. 2. He does not alter the paradigm of the dhimmīs' status. Rather, he calls for granting them some positions, based on the fact that Muslims are now a majority in Muslim countries, so their control is no longer a threat. 3. He argues that guardianship in the modern era is institutional rather than individual, reducing the perceived risk of non-believers joining these bodies. 4. To reinforce the prevailing Islamic rationale, al-Bishrī stipulates the following for unbelievers to join judicial bodies:

\* The commission should consist of Muslims, signifying that its authoritative framework must be Islamic law.

\* The majority of members of the commission should be Muslims.

\* It should aim to promote the general interest of Islam, which is the well-being of the Islamic community, in accordance with the specific regulations of the concept of “interest” used by jurists. <sup>(440)</sup>

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, often regarded as a representative of moderation within the contemporary Islamic movement, nevertheless rejects the possibility of non-Muslims holding the presidency of an Islamic state. In his view, non-Muslims may work

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*from date wine and raisin soak of the lowest degree are permissible to drink, and nothing is forbidden except drunkenness from them. These drinks are considered pure, can be sold, and the person who destroys them is responsible, according to the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah and Abū Yūsuf.”*

<sup>(440)</sup> Public Authority for Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society.



within the institutions of the state, but certain positions carry unique requirements that exclude them. The presidency, he argues, embodies both religious and worldly dimensions, for the Imāmate and the Caliphate stand as successors to the Messenger of God in establishing the religion and governing worldly affairs through it. For this reason, he maintains that such a role cannot be entrusted to non-Muslims. <sup>(441)</sup>

### Seventh. Social Relations between Muslims and non-believers in Islamic Jurisprudence:

In this section, the position of Islam, as viewed by most Islamic jurists and intellectuals, is examined:

\* The sacred texts, as interpreted by classical and contemporary scholars, generally prohibit Muslims from taking non-believers as intimate friends. This principle is closely tied to the doctrine of *al-Walā' wa-l-Barā'* (Loyalty and Disavowal), discussed in Chapter Three. Historically, this idea was widely accepted across Islamic societies, though its prominence diminished during the colonial era. It has resurfaced with the rise of the contemporary Islamic “awakening,” including in large countries such as Egypt.

One of the most influential modern scholars seeks to justify this principle while softening its impact on his audience. At one point, he equates befriending non-believers with an act of national betrayal, insisting that no religious or political system permits its followers to abandon the community to which they belong in order to pledge loyalty to another. In the language of patriotism, he explains, such behavior is nothing less than treason. Although he acknowledges the possibility of establishing friendly relations with dhimmīs and provides examples to illustrate this relationship, he ultimately reaffirms the primacy of religious identity, concluding

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<sup>(441)</sup> Interview with “Al Jazeera” channel on 10/12/1997.

that Islam emphasizes the superiority of the religious bond over every other bond, whether lineage, region, race, or class.<sup>(442)</sup>

The Qur'ān appears to command harshness toward unbelievers: **O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them** (Sūrah 9:73). Al-Qurṭubī, in his exegesis and as echoed by other commentators, acknowledges that this verse abrogates all earlier injunctions of pardon, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

However, most jurists agree that it is permissible for a Muslim to congratulate an unbeliever on occasions such as marriage, childbirth, or returning from travel. It is also permissible to give alms to unbelievers, spend on relatives, and visit and respect unbelieving parents. Moreover, Muslims may attend the funeral of an unbeliever and participate with them in work, trade, or similar activities.

Returning to verse 28 of Sūrah 3: **Let not believers take unbelievers for their allies in preference to believers**, it is found to make an exception regarding loyalty to unbelievers: **Unless it is to protect your own selves against them**. This means that they may be appeased if the Muslim fears them, which is the interpretation of most major exegetes.<sup>(443)</sup>

\* The authentic ḥadīth outlines that a Muslim, when meeting an unbeliever, is instructed to narrow the path for him: **If you meet one of them on your path, force him to a narrower one** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -5615). The same tradition is mentioned in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* -499–500. However, ordinary Muslims in the most civilized Muslim countries do not accept such an idea.

If an unbeliever says to a Muslim, “May God have mercy on you” after sneezing, the Muslim must respond with “May God guide

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<sup>(442)</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*, Chapter Five.

<sup>(443)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Tha'alabī, al-Baghawī, and al-Ālūsī.

you.” The same applies when an unbeliever sneezes, as illustrated in the tradition of Abū Mūsā: The Jews would deliberately sneeze in the presence of the Prophet, hoping that he would say to them, “May God have mercy on you.” Instead, he would reply, “May God guide you and set your mind at ease.” It is also disliked to shake hands with them, as this is considered a Muslim hallmark.<sup>(444)</sup> Moreover, the unbeliever should be humbled in all interactions with Muslims. He should not sit while a Muslim stands, should not be glorified, and should not be greeted first except out of necessity. The response to his greeting should be limited to “and upon you.” His passage may be restricted, and a sign placed on his house.

\* Residing with unbelievers in the same house is considered by certain scholars to be unbelief, based on the tradition: **I disassociate myself from those who live among the polytheists in their lands** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*- 2815). Another tradition states: **Whoever resides with a polytheist in his country is like him** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'*- 6062).

\* Visiting a sick unbeliever is accepted by all major jurists, in accordance with the Prophetic Sunnah. The Prophet visited his sick Jewish neighbor and invited him to Islam. However, no one calls for this as an expression of human love and solidarity. Rather, the matter is considered an opportunity to present Islam to unbelievers. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -1332 narrates: A Jewish boy was serving the Prophet and fell ill. The Prophet visited him, sat at his head, and said: **Convert to Islam**. The boy looked at his father, who said: Obey Abū al-Qāsim (Muḥammad). So he converted to Islam. The Prophet then said: **Praise be to God who saved him from Hell**.

\* A Muslim woman must choose a Muslim doctor to treat her, so as not to expose her nakedness to an unbelieving doctor. The principle that “necessities permit prohibited things” applies, but

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<sup>(444)</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālim ibn Dhawayan, *The Beacon of the Path*, Book of Jihād.

management by an unbelieving doctor remains principally prohibited.

\* According to strict jurists, it is not permissible for an unbelieving woman to see what is considered the nakedness of a Muslim woman. Ibn Ḥanbal maintains that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman to uncover her head in front of women of the People of the Book. He adds that women from Judaism and Christianity should neither kiss Muslim women nor look at their hair. Some jurists argue that a Muslim woman should not remove her veil before Jews and Christians because she is not considered one of their women. Ibn Ḥanbal, however, reasons that neither Jews nor Christians, nor those outside their communities, would look at her genitals or kiss her during childbirth. As for hair, he concludes, there is nothing wrong with it– or so he hopes.<sup>(445)</sup> Other jurists also argue that Muslim women should not remove their veils before Jews and Christians.

\* Classical Islamic jurisprudence instructs Muslims to avoid imitating and resembling unbelievers in their clothing, habits and mannerisms. In *Musnad Aḥmad* -5106, it is recorded: **Whoever imitates a people is one of them.** It was also reported on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb that it is forbidden to live with them, learn their languages and writing, celebrate with them on their holidays,<sup>(446)</sup> and wear uniforms like theirs.<sup>(447)</sup> Among the

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<sup>(445)</sup> *Aḥkām al-Nisā'* [Legal Rulings Concerning Women], narrated by Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, 34-36.

<sup>(446)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Necessity of the Straight path*.

<sup>(447)</sup> It is stated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -5366: ... on the authority of Abū 'Uthmān. He said: "Umar wrote to us while we were in Azerbaijan: 'Beware of luxury, the dress of the polytheists, and the wearing of silk.'" *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*-5389 records: "'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ narrated that the Messenger of Allah saw me wearing two garments dyed with safflower and said, **These are the clothes of the disbelievers, so do not wear them.**"

well-known examples of forbidden loyalty to the unbelievers are:  
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1. Dressing and speaking like them.
2. Residing in their country.
3. Traveling to their country for leisure and pleasure.
4. Considering them as close relatives and seeking their advice.
5. Using their dating system, especially the Gregorian calendar which reflects their rituals and holidays.
6. Naming Muslim children after them.
7. Participating in their holidays, assisting in their celebrations, congratulating them or attending their events.
8. Praising and admiring their culture and civilization, and being impressed by their ethics and skills without considering their false beliefs and corrupt religion.
9. Asking God for forgiveness and praying for mercy for them.

Ibn Taymiyyah holds that outward participation with non-Muslims is a means that leads to loyalty and affection toward them, and that it contains no benefit compared to separation and avoidance. This results in continued relationships dictated by custom. Hence, *al-salaf* (the pious predecessors) cite these verses as evidence for the prohibition of seeking non-Muslim assistance in matters of governance, namely, appointing them to positions of authority. An example of non-imitation, as he presents, is cited in the ḥadīth: **The Jews and the Christians do not dye [their hair], so distinguish yourselves from them.** (449)

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(448) 'Abd al-Mālik al-Qasīm, *Loyalty and Disavowal*.

(449) *The Necessity of the Straight Path, The Prohibition of Taking Jews and Christians as Allies.*

Some jurists consider whoever imitates them to be an unbeliever; as such imitation signifies love and acceptance of their unbelief—even if the imitator is unaware of this intention. They demand repentance because, according to their words, the imitator resembles them in their *jāhiliyyah* and acquires one of their characteristics. <sup>(450)</sup>

Abū al-Faraj ibn Rajab provides more details on Muḥammad's view on what he calls the imitation of the unbelievers:

\* He forbids prayer at sunrise and sunset, justifying it by saying: **At that time the disbelievers prostrate to it, and the prostration at that time becomes an imitation of the apparent image.**

\* He also says: **Disagree with the polytheists, be contrary to them; grow beards and trim mustaches.** In another narration, **trim the mustaches, let the beards grow long and distinguish yourselves from the Magians.**

\* He orders prayer in sandals, in contrast to the People of the Book. It is narrated that he states: **None among us imitates others. Do not imitate the Jews or Christians, for the Jews raise their palms in prayer.** (Narrated by al-Tirmidhī).

\* He forbids imitating them on their holidays.

Abdullāh ibn 'Umar emphasizes that residing in lands dominated by polytheists, participating in their celebrations such as Newroz, and adopting their customs until death leads to being gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection. Imām Aḥmad also expresses disapproval of shaving the back of the neck, identifying it as a practice associated with the Magians. He further asserts that imitation of such customs renders a person aligned with them. <sup>(451)</sup>

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<sup>(450)</sup> 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Barī al-Ahdal, *The Decisive Sword against Those Who Take the Unbelievers as Allies*.

<sup>(451)</sup> Abū al-Faraj ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *The Wisdoms Worthy of Broadcasting*.



The justification offered for prohibiting imitation of non-believers, as outlined in the aforementioned statements, is to prevent the formation of bonds of affection that might compromise Islamic cultural identity—expressed here in contemporary terms. Muslims must preserve their distinction and uniqueness, and thus their pure identity. This reflects a deep fear for Islam regarding the impact of cultural mixing and rapprochement with other traditions.

Furthermore, the discourse asserts that non-believers actively conspire against Muslims, suggesting that their outward dedication to their own doctrines mirrors the proselytization efforts found within certain Islamist movements. This perspective often draws on Qur'ānic warnings against being “unsettled” by those lacking conviction, interpreting such verses as a mandate to avoid deceptive interactions. Consequently, this narrative suggests that even in the absence of overt conflict, a persistent scheme of deception remains.<sup>(452)</sup> This rhetorical tendency toward differentiation fosters a generalized suspicion of non-believers, presenting them as a potential threat to the cohesion and survival of the Muslim community.

The final justification for Muslims not resembling unbelievers is the assertion of superiority: Muslims are considered superior, whereas unbelievers are viewed as subordinate, according to the sacred text. However, the required distinctions cannot be described solely in terms of transcendence or its opposite. What is required is distinction in itself, so that identities are not mixed and the uniqueness of Islam is not lost.

\* Regarding congratulating unbelievers on certain occasions, Islamic jurisprudence does not prohibit it completely, though conditions apply. It is agreed that speaking at these events is akin to speaking in offering condolences or visiting the ill. One must avoid phrases that indicate approval of the unbeliever's religion, such as:

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<sup>(452)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī Interpretation of Sūrah 3: 118.

“May Allah bless your religion,” “May you find comfort in it,” “May Allah honor you,” or “May Allah dignify you.” Instead, one may say: “May Allah honor and dignify you with Islam,” and similar expressions. Congratulating unbelievers on their religious rituals is unanimously rejected, such as congratulating them on their holidays or fasting by saying: “Happy holiday to you,” and similar phrases. Despite this prohibition, whoever says it is not considered an unbeliever.<sup>(453)</sup> Some contemporary scholars, including al-Qaraḍāwī,<sup>(454)</sup> accept congratulating unbelievers on their holidays without these conditions, considering the changes of the times, which has led to criticism from Salafis.<sup>(455)</sup> The Egyptian Fatwa council (*Dār al-Ifta'*) has also permitted congratulating them, provided that the phrases used do not contradict Islamic beliefs.<sup>(456)</sup>

\* Greetings: In the Qur'ān, Muslims are instructed to return a greeting: **When you are greeted with a greeting, answer it with a better greeting or with its like** (Sūrah 4:86). This directive applies to the People of the Book, though the Qur'ān does not specify who should initiate the greeting. The details are provided by the Prophetic Sunnah and the Sharī'ah. In this ḥadīth: **Do not initiate the Jews and the Christians with the greeting of peace. If you meet one of them on the road, force him to its narrowest part** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* -5615). Jurists unanimously agree that a Muslim should not initiate a greeting to an unbeliever, with a few exceptions. Ibn 'Abbās considers it permissible to initiate greetings with them, as do some Shāfi'īs, as mentioned by al-Ṣan'ānī. According to him, al-Māzarī of the Mālikī school explains that it is permissible to say to a non-Muslim, “Peace be upon you” in the singular form, but not

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<sup>(453)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 84.

<sup>(454)</sup> *Congratulating Christians on their Festivals as an Act of Righteousness*.

<sup>(455)</sup> Maher ibn Dhāfer al-Qaḥṭānī, *A Critical Refutation of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's View on Congratulating Christians on Their Religious Holidays*.

<sup>(456)</sup> *Congratulating Christians on their Festivals as an Act of Righteousness*.

“Peace be upon you,” in the plural. He supports this view by citing the Qur'anic verse 83 of Sūrah 2: **Speak fair to the people** and the Prophetic traditions that command the spreading of peace. <sup>(457)</sup> Some argue based on the Prophetic Sunnah, that if a Muslim mistakenly initiates a greeting to an unbeliever, he can retract it. According to al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī, it is not permissible to initiate greetings of peace with the People of the Covenant. If one greets someone without knowing their identity and they turn out to be a dhimmī, it is recommended to retract the greeting by saying, “I take back my salutation,” as a form of disparagement. Instead, one may greet a dhimmī with other expressions such as “May God guide you” or “Good morning.” If a dhimmī greets a Muslim with *Salam* (peace), the reply should not exceed “And upon you.” <sup>(458)</sup> However, this position is not widely accepted among the Muslim public.

As for responding to greetings, al-Şan'ānī notes that scholars agree that one should respond to the People of the Book, but only with the phrase “and upon you.” He explains that in Imām Muslim’s narrations the wording includes the conjunction “and.” Al-Khaṭṭābī (Abū Sulaymān Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Khālīd ibn Ishāq al-Khaṭṭābī al-Būstī) observed that most ḥadīth transmitters narrated it with the conjunction, while Abū Muḥammad Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna transmitted it without it. Al-Khaṭṭābī argues that omitting the conjunction makes the reply a direct reflection of their words, restricted to them alone, whereas including it implies shared participation in what they said. Amīr al-Şan'ānī concludes that both forms—whether with or without the conjunction—are valid according to transmitted reports, since even

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<sup>(457)</sup> Amīr al-Şan'ānī, *Subul al-Salām, Commentary on Bulugh al-Maram* [Attainment of the Objective According to Evidence of the Legal Ruling], Chapter on Jizyah and Truce, 2, p. 499.

<sup>(458)</sup> Muḥyiddīn ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī al-Dimashqī, *The Garden of the Seekers*, 10, p. 230.

if the conjunction implies participation, death applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and thus there is no objection. <sup>(459)</sup>

\* **Addressing:** According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, it is not permissible to address or refer to unbelievers with any word or title that implies respect or submission, such as “my lord” or “my master.” Referring to them as *Mu'izz al-Dawla* (honor of the state) or *Adud al-Dawla* (supported by the state) is likewise not allowed. It is also impermissible to call them “sound,” “righteous,” “supported,” “virtuous,” or by similar titles. If someone is called by any of these names, a Muslim should not address them with it. Instead, if he is Christian, one should say “O Christian” or “O Cross-bearer,” and for a Jew, “O Israelite” or “O Jew.” Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya lamented the shifting socio-political dynamics of his era, noting a significant transformation in the status of religious minorities within the state’s hierarchy. He observed that these groups had attained unprecedented levels of social prestige and administrative influence, increasingly occupying high-ranking positions and exerting control over the sultanate’s financial resources. Central to his critique was the adoption of honorific titles and traditionally Muslim names by these individuals, which he viewed as a departure from earlier periods when distinct naming conventions clearly demarcated religious identities. Ultimately, he framed these changes as a reflection of the evolving nature of political authority and the specific social configurations of the time considering that each era has its own rulers and men. <sup>(460)</sup>

\* Jurists analyze the issue of eating food, specifically referring to the meat cooked by the People of the Book, following the Qur’ān: **The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them** (Sūrah 5:5). Contemporary jurists generally prohibit consuming animals killed in a non-Islamic manner, as this

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<sup>(459)</sup> Op. cit., No. 2, p. 499.

<sup>(460)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 252.

may constitute carrion, though some permit it. Likewise, it is not permissible to eat what is slaughtered for religious occasions based on the verse: **He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, pork, and any meat consecrated to other than God** (Sūrah 2:173). There are some unusual opinions among jurists on this matter, including one attributed to al-Shāfi'ī, who prohibits eating food prepared by Arab Christians, based on the opinion of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. <sup>(461)</sup>

Regarding the sacrifices of unbelievers who are not People of the Book, the majority of scholars prohibit eating them, including al-Shāfi'ī <sup>(462)</sup> and Abū Ḥanīfah. <sup>(463)</sup> By analogy, the latter and 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib prohibited the sacrifices of Arab Christians because they viewed them not as original Christians but as apostates. This is because all Arabs are considered originally *Hanifites*, following the religion of Ibrāhīm; thus, the conversion of some of them to a religion other than Islam makes them apostates. For the same reason, some believe that they should not pay jizyah but should be given the choice, like other polytheists, between Islam and the sword. The majority of scholars conclude that the apostate's sacrifices should not be eaten, while Ishāq maintained that their sacrifices are permissible, and al-Thawrī considered them disliked. The reason for this difference of opinion lies in whether the apostate is regarded as belonging to the People of the Book or not. <sup>(464)</sup>

In addressing the distinction between the People of the Book and other unbelievers, al-Qaraḍāwī bases his ruling on the import of meat. He argues that meat products originating from the People of

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<sup>(461)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>(462)</sup> *Al-Umm*, Book of Expeditions of al-Awzā'ī, The Sacrifice of the Apostate, No. 7, p. 784.

<sup>(463)</sup> Al-Sarakhsī, *The Expanded*, Book of Beverages.

<sup>(464)</sup> Ibn Rushd, *The Beginning of the Mujtahid and the End of the Muqtasid*, Vol. One, Chapter Five.

the Book, such as chicken or preserved beef slaughtered by methods like electric shock, are permissible for Muslims to consume, provided that such practices are deemed acceptable within their own religious framework. This permissibility, he maintains, is grounded in the generality of Qur'anic verses. Conversely, meat imported from communities outside the Abrahamic faiths is considered impermissible, since such communities are not recognized as People of the Book within this framework. <sup>(465)</sup>

The same principle applies to what a Muslim eats from hunting: the permissibility of consuming land-game depends on the identity of the hunter. According to this view, the hunter must be either a Muslim, a member of the People of the Book, or someone regarded as analogous to them, such as Zoroastrians and Sabians. <sup>(466)</sup> This academic rendering highlights the jurisprudential distinction al-Qaraḍāwī draws between scriptural communities and others and how this distinction shapes practical rulings on food consumption.

Furthermore, jurists have discussed extensively the use of unbelievers' utensils by Muslims. A ḥadīth permits their use only out of necessity: **If you find utensils other than theirs, do not eat from them. However, if you do not find any, wash and eat from them** (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* –1560).

In addition, other personal conditions were imposed historically:

\* Preventing them from wearing the turban and other items that distinguish Muslims. <sup>(467)</sup> They were required to walk only with a

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<sup>(465)</sup> *What is Permissible and what is Forbidden in Islam*, Vol. Two.

<sup>(466)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(467)</sup> The turban is a cloth wrapped around the head in a specific manner, which classical Muslims adopted as a symbol. According to the reports concerning one of the most credible Caliphs and Muslim jurists, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, “*people from the Banū Taghlib tribe who were under his rule entered wearing turbans resembling the appearance of Arabs. They asked him to classify them as Arabs. He asked who they were, and they responded that they were Banū Taghlib. He questioned if they were not among the average Arabs, and they*



leather girdle, not to wear a *taylasan*, pants with a *sirwal* (a thick, tight-fitting belt like a ring), or smooth sandals, and they were forbidden from keeping weapons in their houses. They were not to enter the bathhouse on Friday until the Friday prayer was concluded. <sup>(468)</sup>

- \* Not parting their hair like Muslims.

- \* Preventing them from riding with saddles; they were permitted to ride donkeys, but not horses.

- \* Cutting their forelocks, meaning shaving the front quarter of their hair—an order attributed to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

The purpose of this differentiation was to distinguish unbelievers from Muslims. Treatment differed accordingly, as unbelievers were required to perform certain duties toward Muslims, as mentioned in the 'Umari Conditions. Ibn Taymiyyah articulates that the conditions imposed upon the dhimmīs were intended to ensure clear differentiation between them and the Muslims. This distinction was to be maintained in matters such as clothing, hairstyle, modes of transportation, and other outward markers. The rationale behind these stipulations was to prevent any resemblance that might lead to an unbeliever being treated in the same manner as a Muslim. <sup>(469)</sup>

Discrimination against the dhimmīs continued until the modern era, when Muḥammad 'Alī abolished it in Egypt and the territories he annexed. Dhimmīs often resisted these conditions, and some

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*responded that they were Christians. He then asked for scissors, cut their forelocks, removed their turbans, and shortened their cloaks by an inch to wrap around themselves. In addition, he instructed them not to ride horses but to ride donkeys and mules with their both legs hanging down on.”* The same caliph also ordered that Christians should not wear a *qabā'* (a garment similar to a cloak), silk clothing, or a turban (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*).

<sup>(468)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 237.

<sup>(469)</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *The Grand Fatāwā*, No. 6, p. 180.

rulers overlooked their enforcement, though orders were occasionally reissued to ensure compliance.<sup>(470)</sup> This rigid distinction is no longer applicable today, and no one demands it. It has been overcome, yet jurists still defend it in principle, as part of history, justifying it by the necessity of differentiation due to differences in burial ceremonies and inheritance systems. This also underlies the refusal of contemporary Islamists to abolish the religion field on identity cards, which they view as a modern substitute for earlier forms of discrimination.

Other conditions included:

- \* Not displaying polytheism.
- \* Not preventing relatives from converting to Islam, while the opposite was forbidden since it constituted apostasy requiring execution.
- \* Respecting Muslims and standing up for them if they wished to sit.
- \* Not displaying a cross or any of their books in Muslim public spaces.
- \* Not ringing bells except secretly, nor raising their voices when reciting in churches in the presence of Muslims.

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<sup>(470)</sup> Al-Jabartī recorded that when the month of Jumada al-Awwal began on Sunday in the year 1233 AH, a public decree targeted those who violated the traditional dress codes, including Copts and Levantine Christians, to adhere to their uniforms of blue and black and not to wear white turbans because they had exceeded established limits. They were wearing colorful and expensive Kashmiri shawls as turbans and riding large horses, mules, and ponies, with servants carrying sticks in front and behind them to chase away people along their path. Observers would mistake them for state dignitaries. Additionally, they carried weapons, and some of them even fashioned crossbows for use alongside rifles and bullets. Al-Jabartī concluded that it would be beneficial if this prohibition continued. (*ʿAjāʾib al-Āthār fī al-Tarājim wa-al-Akhhbār*, Vol. 3), file 127 of 131.

What has been discussed above regarding the relationship of Muslims with unbelievers in the Abode of Islam does not cover everything. The Shari'ah contains numerous detailed forms of discrimination not highlighted here, focusing instead on basic examples. Jurists also address issues such as the ownership of female slaves, slaves converting to Islam, or a female slave giving birth to a child who converts to Islam. They discuss punishments for insults and physical conflicts between Muslims and unbelievers, the rights of a Muslim's wife from the People of the Book to attend church or temple, her right to read her Holy Book publicly or privately, her relationship with her children in matters of religion, and many other topics not addressed here as they do not contribute to the current issue.

Historically, these rules were applied with varying degrees of rigor. Some periods witnessed intense extremism and discrimination, while at other times, Islamic authority was more lenient, depending on state interests and the orientation of the ruling elite. Dhimmīs enjoyed greater rights under less strict caliphs. Golden periods included the rule of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī and the Andalusian era. At the beginning of the Arab-Islamic conquest, conquerors sometimes showed leniency to gain sympathy, even abolishing earlier persecutions, such as the Roman oppression of the Orthodox Church in Egypt. The 'Umari Conditions were lighter in some respects. In general, Jews fared better under Islamic rule than under Roman authority.

Contemporary Islamists vary between strictness and leniency, adjusting positions according to circumstances. Some rearrange priorities, ignoring matters that do not affect the strength of the Islamic movement. A few have sought to produce a new Islamic jurisprudence that is more open in principle, rather than merely tactical.

### Eighth. Conditions for Nullifying the Covenant

It has already been noted that Ibn Taymiyyah, citing Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, <sup>(471)</sup> stated that the Imām is not obligated to accept People of the Covenant into the Abode of Islam unless there is a benefit to the Muslims in doing so. This implies that the dhimmah contract is optional for Muslims but mandatory for unbelievers. However, this is a marginal opinion in classical jurisprudence. Most scholars reject breaking the covenant except for violations by the covenantor. The four Sunni schools differ:

\* Ḥanafīs: If an unbeliever takes up arms against Muslims or joins the land of war, their blood is shed and their wealth is forfeited. Otherwise, the individual is punished for violating protection without terminating the covenant. Refusal to pay jizyah leads to deportation to the Abode of War, while jizyah is taken by force. Some crimes do not negate dhimmah but may incur death as a discretionary punishment, such as spying or cursing the Messenger.

\* Shāfi'īs: The covenant is broken if the unbeliever takes up arms, allies with the land of war, refuses Islamic laws, or refuses to pay jizyah or kharāj.

\* Mālikīs: They add conditions such as disseminating one's religion among Muslims, harboring spies, or satirizing Islam, God, or the Messenger.

\* Ḥanbalīs: This school is more stringent, as explained in Abū Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā's *The Juridical Issues*. If dhimmīs commit acts forbidden to them but not harmful to Muslims, the majority agrees this does not break the covenant. If harmful, however, it does. <sup>(472)</sup>

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<sup>(471)</sup> *The Collection of Fatāwā*, Vol. 28.

<sup>(472)</sup> Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā', *Al-Masā'il al-Fiqhiyya* [The Juridical Issues], Book of Expeditions, Breaking the Dhimmī Covenant who Violated the Conditions, No. 2, pp 385-386.

**Ibn Taymiyyah provides numerous jurisprudential justifications for breaking the dhimmah covenant, in accordance with the 'Umari Conditions.<sup>(473)</sup> His student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, addresses this in detail and simplifies it as follows:<sup>(474)</sup>**

**If an unbeliever refuses to pay jizyah and does not comply with Islamic rulings, then they have broken the covenant. Similarly, if they continue to engage in activities that they are required to abandon and do not forbear from actions that harm Muslims and others in terms of money or lives, eight cases are identified:**

- 1. Meeting to fight Muslims.**
- 2. Committing adultery with a Muslim woman.**
- 3. Engaging in adultery under the guise of marriage.**
- 4. Seducing a Muslim to leave their religion.**
- 5. Highway robbery.**
- 6. Harboring any spy for the polytheists.**
- 7. Refusing to assist Muslims with guidance.**
- 8. Killing a Muslim.**

**Likewise, if they criticize or insult:**

- 1. God,**
- 2. His Book,**
- 3. His religion,**
- 4. and His Messenger.**

**Whether or not the Imām stipulates that such actions constitute a breach of the covenant, the most correct opinion holds that they do.**

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<sup>(473)</sup> *The Drawn Sword against the Insulter of the Messenger.*

<sup>(474)</sup> *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 263.

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## Chapter Seven

# AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

*The reality of the battle waged by Jews and Christians, in every land and at every time, against the Muslim community is rooted in doctrine. Though they may quarrel among themselves, they always unite in opposition to Islam and Muslims*

Sayyed Quṭb

The Other, the non-Muslim, is merely a subject; either for Islamization, for killing, or for submission by paying the jizyah. This is in relation to the strategic relationship, which is interspersed with tactics such as signing peace treaties and various other temporary agreements.

In principle, considering the doctrine of *Taqiyyah*, everything is permissible—including insulting the Prophet and the religion itself— if Muslims feel compelled to do so, as mentioned earlier. The current decline in Islamic propaganda by more far-sighted movements, which may appear more moderate, is therefore unsurprising. Such retreats may be tentative or tactical, depending on their stance toward ancient heritage and the extent to which they reject or justify it. Some moderates in the Islamic arena now propose the idea of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and the



rest of the world as a principle. They cite verses from the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, and examples that are not directly related to this principle, such as: **We have made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know one another** (Sūrah 49:13); **We have honored the sons of Adam** (Sūrah 17:70); and in a ḥadīth: **People are equal like the teeth of a comb**.

According to classical Islamic thought, humanity is generally categorized into Muslims and non-believers, while other bases of division are considered secondary. Religious division is viewed as the primary distinction —or in Marxist terms— the primary contradiction, while other contradictions such as class, nationality, and ethnicity are secondary. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī maintains that Islam places the religious bond at a higher rank than any other bond, such that the relationship of a Muslim with another Muslim is stronger than their relationship with a non-Muslim, even if that non-Muslim is one of their closest relatives, such as a father, son, or brother. He adds that this principle is not unique to Islam alone but reflects the nature of every religion and belief, noting that anyone who reads the Bible will find this meaning emphasized in more than one place. <sup>(475)</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī's statement highlights a central premise in Islamic thought: all religions view humans primarily through the lens of belief. Religion is the center of life, and Islam reshapes other perspectives in its image. From this standpoint, Islamic scholars interpret global and local conflicts, as well as the course of human history. The locomotive of history is seen as the conflict between the party of God and the party of Satan, led by *Iblis* with God's permission since creation, aiming to divert humans from their sacred mission of worshiping God. This approach extends to Islamist analyses of societies and non-Islamic currents: Israel is based on the Torah, Europe is Christian or Crusader, communist countries are atheist states, and Marxism is viewed as unbelief, though reality is far more complex. Hence, every crisis in Islamic

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<sup>(475)</sup> *Non-Muslims in the Islamic Society*, Chapter Five.

societies, and indeed humanity at large, is attributed to straying from God's path.

This mode of thought characterizes Islamic culture, including contemporary strands. Yet, in practice, Islamic societies have been moving toward secularization for decades, and not all Muslims think in this way. Many no longer aspire to establish a global Islamic state. Class conflict exists independently of religious disagreement, and national affiliations have deepened. The idea of an Islamic League has lost much support as local interests and national sentiments prevail. Still, nostalgia for Islamic unity persists among many Muslims, though more as a theoretical wish than a concrete project.

### **1. Rejecting 'Asabiyyah (Tribalism/ Communal Identity)**

This refers to tribalism and nationalism. Islam rejects tribal affiliation, as stated in the prophetic tradition: **Stop this, for it stinks** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -4785); **Whoever calls for 'Asabiyyah does not belong to us; whoever fights over fanaticism does not belong to us; and whoever dies upholding 'Asabiyyah does not belong to us** (*Sunan Abū Dāwūd* -5121). Despite this strong criticism of tribalism, Muḥammad initially relied on his affiliation with Banū Hāshim and accepted their support when he began his mission. His uncle, al-'Abbās, though not yet a Muslim, attended the pledge between the Prophet and the people of Madīnah, expressing concern for his nephew's protection. After migrating to Madīnah, the Prophet also established agreements and alliances with local tribes and communities to secure peace and cooperation. However, all of this was within the framework of the call to Islam, which rejects tribalism. Despite this, he maintained a special place for the family of Muḥammad and Quraysh in general, without transcending the idea of Arab superiority over other peoples. Arabs, and especially the Prophet's household, were seen as

carriers of the sacred message and the most suitable for it from the beginning. Thus, God chose Muḥammad from among the Arabs. This priority is not racial but cultural, linked to Islam in terms of initial reception, preservation, and dissemination.

This explains why some contemporary Islamic schools, particularly in the Arab world, accept the idea of Arab nationalism as a means to establish an Islamic state. Ancient Islam was not fundamentally different: Arab identity was often synonymous with Islam. Consequently, Islamic scholars and thinkers criticize what they refer to as *Shu'ubiyya* (anti-Arabism).<sup>(476)</sup>

Non-Arab peoples who have converted to Islam retain aspects of their ancient cultures, including ethnic, tribal, and national affiliations to varying degrees. Nevertheless, allegiance to Islam remained paramount throughout history until the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate. Populist movements opposing Arab rule emerged in some countries, particularly Iran, seeking to regain control over their lands. The caliphs suppressed these movements forcefully, while Arab intellectuals strongly criticized them, accusing them of hostility toward Islam. Arab Islamists did not perceive them as independence movements. Despite acknowledging diversity, Islamic scholars never embraced populism and viewed Arab dominance as nearly synonymous with Islamic rule. The accusation of *Shu'ubiyya* continues to be directed at independence movements from Arab rule in certain regions, such as Iraq.

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<sup>(476)</sup> In *Tāj al-'Arūs* [The Bride's Crown], it is noted: "Ibn Manzur states: The plural term peoples (*al-'Ajam*), to the extent that those who disparage the affairs of the Arabs are termed *Shu'ubī*. This attribution is made to the plural form due to its prevalence in denoting that specific category, similar to the usage of *Anṣārī*. These are the *Shu'ubiyya*—a faction that does not grant precedence to Arabs over non-Arabs, nor recognizes any inherent excellence of the former over the latter. Regarding the *Ḥadīth of Masruq* [Ibn al-Ajda']—which mentions a man from the *Shu'ub* who embraced Islam yet continued to be charged the *jizyah* until 'Umar ordered it ceased—Ibn al-Athir commented: 'The *Shu'ub* here refers to the non-Arabs (*al-'Ajam*).'" (Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*).

Moreover, Arab scholars, jurists, and Islamists persist in viewing both ancient and modern *Shu'ubiyya* with disdain.

In the modern era, nationalist movements emerged, including Arab nationalism and local national movements specific to various Arab and Muslim countries. The concept of nationhood in the Islamic world shifted from unity based on religion to national identity grounded in language and other factors emphasized by Arab nationalists. Notably, the rise of Arab nationalism coincided with the emergence of secularism, which was never fully embraced in the Arab world; rather, it was reinforced by the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate. Yet, Islamic references persist, resurfacing whenever secularist regimes falter. Islamic concepts remain latent within both Arab nationalism and regional national movements. Michel 'Aflaq, the principal theorist of Ba'athism, underscores this connection despite being Christian.<sup>(477)</sup>

Most Islamists considered the Western and socialist camps to be a single front against Islam. For example, Muḥammad Quṭb characterized Europe as encompassing what he referred to as the

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<sup>(477)</sup> Michel 'Aflaq announced in a broadcast speech that he initially loved Islam as a result of his love for the Arabs. But over time, his focus shifted entirely to Islam, arguing that the Arabs are nothing but the community of Islam, and that *Arabism* is nothing but a necessity to support Islam.

From reviewing the various works of Michel 'Aflaq, it becomes clear that he regarded Islam as the fundamental pillar of Arab identity, the spirit of the Arab revolution, and the source of its human and civilizational values. He stressed that Islam had matured Arabism, bringing it to perfection, greatness, and an enduring legacy, transforming a collection of tribes into a great civilized Arab nation. 'Aflaq also described Islam as the soul of Arabism and the creator of its moral and social values, granting it a universal human role and an eternal mission. According to him, Islam preserved Arabism during times of fragmentation and loss, serving as a synonym for patriotism and the defense of land and sovereignty.

Furthermore, he argued that the conception of Arab nationalism actually emerged from the very core of Islam, and that patriotism, Arabism, and Islam are one in essence. 'Aflaq portrayed Arabism as a revolution ignited by Islam, which became a global human revolution and an eternal mission, since the Arabs were the first to bear the responsibility of spreading Islam, protecting it, and embodying its values in their modern renaissance.

whole West, including its American and Russian elements. <sup>(478)</sup> Similarly, Adel Ḥusayn, often described as an enlightened Islamic thinker, espoused the same view, regarding the West and its two alleged camps as a single unit inevitably hostile to Islam and committed to a secular culture opposed to Islamic culture. <sup>(479)</sup> Indeed, many Islamists interpret history as a struggle between Islam and its supposed enemies—virtually all others. Other conflicts, including the Cold War between the West and the socialist bloc, were considered secondary to the imagined confrontation between Islam and the world, especially the West and its allies.

Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, a respected Islamist, argues that the main result of the First World War was not the victory of the Allies over the Central Powers or the emergence of the Soviet Union, but rather the dismantling of the last remaining traditional institutions that had resisted Western colonial expansion. He emphasizes that this transformation paved the way for Western domination across the globe, with the Arab Islamic region being the most profoundly affected by these changes. <sup>(480)</sup> In his view, the sharp division of the world caused by the emergence of socialism is less significant than the completion of colonization in Arab countries.

The foundational stance of Islam is consistently one of hostility toward nationhood in general because it undermines the concept of dividing the world into Muslims and unbelievers. Many Islamic writers criticize, sometimes harshly, nationalism in general, on the basis that it unites people who may differ in belief, making the importance of faith secondary. Since belief, by definition, is Islam, nationalism is generally considered an erroneous idea. <sup>(481)</sup> The Qur'ān expresses the same meaning: **We have made you into**

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<sup>(478)</sup> *Contemporary Ideological Schools of Thought*, footnote 1.

<sup>(479)</sup> *Toward a New Arab Thought*.

<sup>(480)</sup> *Secular-Islamic Dialogue*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>(481)</sup> This concept is discussed in detail by Muḥammad Quṭb, *Op. cit.*

peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other. The most honorable of you in the sight of God are those who are most pious. (Sūrah 49:13). A respected Islamic scholar such as al-Ṭabarī, in his commentary, holds that the verse means that the most noble before the Lord is the one who is most cautious of Him, by fulfilling His obligations and avoiding His sins — and not the one with the greatest lineage or the largest clan.

Consequently, it is clarified that the Qur'anic verse emphasizes piety as a fundamental component of Islam; for acquaintance is “in God,” according to the common Islamic expression. Thus it is understood that acquaintance and affection are understood to be conditioned upon faith in the true religion: Islam.

Many Islamists have reached the point of denying even the effect of modern nationalism. In their view, the conflict of religions remains the driver of history, especially the conflict between Muslims and unbelievers. Muḥammad Quṭb, despite his monitoring of the emergence of nationalisms and the West's shift away from the idea of religion itself, maintains the idea of the conflict of religions as a driver of history. When he begins to analyze nationalism, he calls it inhuman and aggressive. Ultimately, he concludes that the emergence of nationalism in the West did not end the idea of the Crusades. Rather, Europe continued to achieve Crusader goals, which were summed up in eliminating Islam, despite the emergence of nationalism, and even the Westerners' abandonment of religion, or its separation from the state and society. Their goal shifted from supporting Christianity over Islam to defeating Islam. So the global conflict has not become truly national, despite the emergence of nationalism.<sup>(482)</sup> He reconstructs

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<sup>(482)</sup> He pointed out: “When nationalisms emerged in Europe, they were infused with a crusading spirit toward Muslims. Competition became, among other things, a competition to colonize the Islamic world and attempt to Christianize its people through the missionary campaigns that always accompanied Western colonialism —sometimes paving the way for it, and sometimes relying on its presence— but always accompanying it. Even when these nationalisms became completely secular, the crusading nature of colonial campaigns



European thought in his own mind in the form of his Islamic thought. It is the same approach as that of an Islamic writer who was once a Marxist. This is Adel Ḥusayn, who, as mentioned before, describes all Western thinkers, all its social classes and all its nationalities, as possessors of a secular civilization, opposite to Islamic civilization, and united to compete with other peoples. Crucially, he considers the process of modernizing Europe to be an arrangement of the house from within for the sake of the goal of conquest.<sup>(483)</sup> He also considers the international conflict as a civilizational conflict, the most important poles of which are Islamic heavenly civilization and Western material civilization. Adel Ḥusayn maintains the same rationale as Muḥammad Quṭb, viewing European thought as an inverted image of Islam. Europe modernizes and strengthens itself for the sake of “jihād” against other civilizations, just as Islam devotes everything to the sake of jihād to make the word of God supreme, according to what its supporters claim. These ideas are prevalent in all influential Islamic intellectual trends.

The position of Islamists on Arab nationalism varies significantly. Some supporters of the Ottoman Empire, who lament its collapse, consider the emergence of Arab nationalism as part of a Western conspiracy against Islam.<sup>(484)</sup> Another faction accepts it as a

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*remained unaffected. Colonialism did not reduce the amount of missionary activity accompanying this intervention. This may seem contradictory at first glance. How can Europe neglect religion in its private life, and then remember it in its attack on the Islamic world? In fact, what Europe recalled —and still remembers to this moment— toward the Islamic world, is not the religious spirit, as Europe has completely disengaged from its religion. Rather, it is the Crusader spirit that was once clothed with religion, it remained ferocious even after it lost its original source and became an existing thing that has no relation to the religiosity of its companions. It is hatred, detestation, and abhorrence for Islam and Muslims, not on behalf of Christianity as a religion, but on behalf of the Europeans as enemies of Muslims,”* (Muḥammad Quṭb, Op. cit.).

<sup>(483)</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>(484)</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ramaḍān (a Libyan Islamist killed by Gaddafi’s men in 1980 in London) published a book titled *The New Populism - Chapters in history and politics*,

temporary stage, or a station, in achieving the victory of Islam over the West. This latter view is clearly defined in the words of the prominent thinker; Muḥammad al-Ghazālī. He emphasizes the centrality of the Arabs within the broader Islamic world. He argues that, although the Muslim community is composed of diverse races, it accords special respect to the Arabs and venerates their language. This is because the Arabs are regarded as the intellectual and spiritual core of Islam, given that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic, the Prophet was of Arab heritage, and Makkah remains the sacred center of worship. Al-Ghazālī maintains that if the Arabs recognize their identity and uphold their position, they constitute an integral part of the final divine message. In this view, their status cannot be undermined by any believer nor denied by any fair-minded person.<sup>(485)</sup> Many others elaborate on this point.

The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Ḥasan al-Bannā, outlines the movement's position on nationalism in his famous epistles. He affirms what he calls “the nationalism of glory” and “the nationalism of the ummah,” while rejecting what he terms “the nationalism of ignorance” and “the nationalism of aggression.” The latter forms, in his view, diminish the value of other national identities—including Arab nationalism—except when directed toward uplifting humanity through the spread of Islam. He believes that no people in history had grasped this meaning as profoundly as the Arab contingent of the Prophet's Companions.<sup>(486)</sup>

Al-Bannā considers the bond of faith to be the most sacred of ties. He argues that the limits of patriotism are defined by creed, not—as nationalists claim—by territorial boundaries or geographical

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strongly criticizing the idea of Arab nationalism, and portraying its rise as a Western conspiracy against Islam. The book is not available now.

<sup>(485)</sup> *Qadha'if al-Ḥaqq* [Powerful Arguments for Truth], Chapter Four, Arab Nationalism and its Meaning.

<sup>(486)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Our Invitation.

frontiers. Accordingly, he emphasizes that every land inhabited by a Muslim is, for his movement, a homeland with its own sanctity, holiness, and love, deserving of loyalty and sacrifice. All Muslims in these lands are regarded as family and brothers, for whom the Brotherhood cares and shares their feelings. He thus calls for a form of nationalism that he describes as belonging to God. <sup>(487)</sup>

Some call this “Islamic nationality,” <sup>(488)</sup> as a framework for the global Islamic movement and as an alternative to nationalism based on cultural components other than Islam. Ḥasan al-Bannā refers to *Islamic nationality* in substance, if not in name. He specifies that nationalism in the Islamic political sense features borders based entirely on faith. <sup>(489)</sup> Establishing a global Islamic State is a declared strategic goal for Islamists in general, even supporters of Arab nationalism, such as Ḥasan al-Bannā, but they differ regarding the tactics and the extent of gradually implementing this vision.

In contrast, al-Maudūdī (and his students) reject the idea of patriotic nationalism in principle, calling for Islamic unity and what he terms Islamic Nationalism. <sup>(490)</sup>

## 2. The Religious Nature of Governance in Islamic Thought

The issue discussed here is governance in Islamic thought in terms of its relationship with religion and its position toward unbelievers.

When 'Alī 'Abd al-Razīq published his book *Islam and the Principles of Governance* in 1925, stating that Islam does not define

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<sup>(487)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(488)</sup> Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *The General Characteristics of Islam*, Chapter Three: Comprehensiveness.

<sup>(489)</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>(490)</sup> The Islamic government, Chapters five and Six.

a system of governance, Muslim public opinion, jurists, religious scholars, and the state opposed him, leading to his retreat. Only a few, including the Najdat —followers of Najdah ibn 'Amer al-Ḥanafī, the leader of a group of Kharijite faction— questioned the necessity of government in early Islam. They argued that if justice can be administered, there is no need for the state because that is its mission. Some Mu'tazilites, such as Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm, Hishām ibn 'Umar al-Fuṭī, and 'Abbād ibn Suleimān, also believed that if all people followed Sharī'ah provisions, the caliphate would become unnecessary. Sunni Muslims generally consider the Imāmate a necessity in Islam. Some see it as a necessity based on reason, whereas the majority believe it is based on Sharī'ah provisions. Imāmī Shi'ites consider it one of the pillars of Islam and a divine obligation to be led by *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet's household) in particular.

Today, Islamists do not doubt the necessity of the state, but they disagree on the nature of the required ruling system. The modern view is that Islam prescribes a system of government as long as it recognizes the Islamic state. In Islamic heritage, books were written about the system of government in a general manner, such as “*The Ordinances of Government*” by both al-Māwardī and Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā' al-Ḥanbalī. Furthermore, modern and contemporary Islam has not presented a clear and specific system of government, except for the theory of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist applied in Iran. Islamists typically emphasize the moral foundations of governance and aim to emulate the state of the Messenger and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. It can be inferred from their writings that their ideal Islamic government system is their own rule, despite their denial of it. It is noteworthy that Ḥasan al-Bannā bases his conception of the Islamic political system on al-Māwardī's aforementioned book.<sup>(491)</sup>

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<sup>(491)</sup> Op. cit., *Our Internal Problems in Light of the Islamic System*.

The concept that Islam is simultaneously a religion and a state dominates the Muslim consciousness in near-absolute terms. In Islam, the state is regarded as Muslim, even though it is a legal entity that does not perform acts of worship. The main concept is that it applies Sharī'ah law in all aspects. This is why Islamists maintain a strong interest in *fiqh*, which they consider a broad and complex science, dictating that Islam must be the sole reference in a Muslim's life.

Traditional Islamic thought rejects the idea of nationalism or ethnic affiliation in favor of religious affiliation, and it also takes a similar stance on social affiliation, including class divisions and the distinction between rulers and the ruled. The ultimate goal for human beings is to worship one God, and individuals should do everything to achieve this goal. Thus, their attitudes toward different social systems and classes should be related to the realization of this goal, regardless of their actual social interests. The implementation of Sharī'ah is believed to lead to justice, freedom, and happiness for all human beings.

The prevailing Islamic thought regarding government can be summarized as follows:

In an Islamic State, the ruler must be a Muslim, and unbelievers are prohibited from ruling or holding sovereign positions. This is because the ruler in an Islamic State has a dual role, both religious and worldly, and describing the ruler as a caliph implies this role. The caliphate is seen as succeeding the Prophethood in safeguarding religion and world politics. The title "Commander of the Faithful" indicates leadership of Muslims, not the presidency of a state encompassing all religions and groups.

In today's Sunni Islam, the caliphate is no longer a slogan for immediate implementation, partly because it is difficult to realize and partly because there are more pressing issues for Islamists. Instead, many advocate for the Islamization of social systems from

the grassroots level, whereas some call for the application of Islamic law by existing governments. Revolutionaries among them may demand the immediate establishment of Islamic governments through coups led by their own movements.

In Sunni Islam, which is the dominant tradition, it is not necessary for the ruler to be a cleric, nor for clerics to hold political power. This has not been the case throughout Islamic history. Their role is limited to consultation and advice only, constituting the religious authority for the ruler, from whom he derives the decisions he makes based on Sharī'ah law. Yet, in a country that claims to rule according to a very complex and difficult divine law, specialists in this law must have a crucial intellectual role, especially since their influence on the common masses is effective. Therefore, clerics historically exercised influence and relative independence from political authority in many periods, despite the most prominent of them being subjected to imprisonment and torture, such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Mālik ibn Anas, and Abū Ḥanīfah, who died days after his imprisonment, possibly poisoned.

Sunni Islamists vehemently deny that the Islamic State is necessarily a religious state, insisting that it is a state they call “civil.” That is, it is ruled by non-clerics, which is what was actually witnessed in history. As for the theory of *Guardianship of the Jurist* among the Shi'ites, the jurist must be knowledgeable of Islam, its rulings and regulations. He is chosen by the Assembly of Experts, and considered a representative of the absent Imām until he returns. Thus this Islamic State is theocratic, and the jurist is considered infallible by some and not infallible by others. <sup>(492)</sup>

Various groups of Islamists adopt different positions regarding the question of the origin of the caliph:

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<sup>(492)</sup> Montazerī, Grand Ayatollah discussed this subject in his book *Studies on the Guardianship of the Jurist and the Jurisprudence of the Islamic State*.



For the Shi'ites, the Imām must be from the Prophet's household, specifically from the descendants of the Prophet's lineage, as mentioned in statements from the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth on which they rely. The Imām, according to this concept, is a divine appointment, and his choice is not related to the will of humans, so he is considered infallible. <sup>(493)</sup> During the period of the “Major Occultation,” as they call it -which is the period during which the Imām from the Prophet's household is absent- the community may choose someone to rule, provided that he has specific qualities and characteristics mentioned in the sacred texts. Thus, he is appointed by God through qualities and characteristics and by the community as a person. Consequently, Shi'ites, most of whom are from Persian and non-Hijazi tribes, do not stipulate that their actual Imām must be an Arab, as they are waiting for the supposed absent Imām. It seems that this Shi'ite position from the beginning was a challenge to the Umayyads, the Arabs who usurped the caliphate from 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib by force.

On the other hand, Sunnis historically maintained that the Imām must be from Quraysh, and this is unanimously affirmed by the senior jurists on the basis of authentic aḥādīth that explicitly recommend it. <sup>(494)</sup> The Umayyads adhered to that, insisting that the

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<sup>(493)</sup> The Shi'ite references here are very numerous. It suffices to refer to some of them: *The Imāmate in the Sources of the Sunnis* by Ala' Eddin al-Sayyid Amīr Muḥammad al-Qazwinī, *Imāmī Shi'ī Doctrines* by Muḥammad Redha al-Muzaffar, Chapter Three, *Al-shūrā within Imāmate* by 'Alī al-Milanī, and *Recognition of the Imāmate*, by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī al-Tehrānī.

<sup>(494)</sup> Al-Māwardī defines the conditions for the Imāmate as follows: “As for those eligible for the Imāmate, seven conditions are stipulated for them. One of which is justice according to its universal conditions. The second is knowledge enabling independent juristic reasoning (*ijtihād*) regarding complex issues and rulings. The third is the integrity of the senses, such as hearing, sight, and tongue, so that what is perceived through them is correct. The fourth is the soundness of members from a deficiency that prevents full movement and rapid recovery. The fifth is the opinion that leads to the policy of the folks and the management of interests. The sixth is courage and help that lead to protecting the homeland and jihād against the enemy. The seventh is lineage, which is that he is from the Quraysh due to the text being mentioned in it and the consensus being reached on it.” Op. cit., pp. 19-20.

Imām be of pure Arab lineage, just like them, excluding mixed elements.<sup>(495)</sup> They did not stipulate that he must be from the Prophet's household or even a Hashemite (*al-Hāshimiyyūn*, or the Banū Hāshim- the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) in general. Unlike the 'Abbāsids, all of whose successors were sons of non-Arab slave women, except for Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāh (the first 'Abbāsid caliph) and Abū Mūsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Rashīd al-Amīn (the seventh 'Abbāsid caliph), the later 'Abbāsids abandoned this requirement, contenting themselves with the fact that the Imām must be a Qurashī on his father's side, like them.

As for the Kharijites, they rejected the condition of the Imām being Qurashī, and were content with him being Arab and subsequently Muslim only toward the end of their rule. A few of them also rejected the idea of the necessity of the state altogether, as mentioned.

The Ottomans did not care about the origin of the caliph, but they made the office hereditary among themselves. The Mongols

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There is a prophetic tradition from which it can be understood that the Imām may not necessarily be from Quraysh: *Al-Bukhārī* -6984: [Musaddad told us, he told us... The Messenger said :Listen and obey, even if an Ethiopian slave is appointed over you.](#) However, this was not understood literally by the majority of scholars. Al-'Asqalānī, in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, explained this prophetic tradition and responded to the few who argue that the Imāmate of the Quraysh is not obligatory: Ibn Baṭṭāl quoted al-Muhallab as saying that the statement "Listen and obey" does not necessitate that the authority appointing a slave is anyone other than a Quraysh Imām. Since it is established that the Imāmate belongs exclusively to the Quraysh, and the community has unanimously agreed that it does not initially belong to slaves, al-'Asqalānī notes that it is possible for him to be called a slave considering what he was before emancipation. Nevertheless, if a slave truly gains power by force, his obedience is obligatory in order to prevent strife, unless he commands the disobedience of God. It is also said that what is meant is that if a slave is appointed as the governor of a province, for example, he must be obeyed, meaning it does not imply that the slave holds the Grand Imāmate. (Al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, Book of Rulings). Ibn al-Jawzī similarly commented that what is meant here is someone who is employed by the Imām, not someone who assumes the Supreme Imāmate. (Ibid., Book of Adhān).

<sup>(495)</sup> 'Alī Aḥmad, *Manifestations of Arabization in the Umayyad Era*.

did the same. The last manifestation of this issue occurred after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate, when the King of Egypt wanted to be the caliph of the Muslims, and some clerics attempted to trace his lineage back to Muḥammad. This effort aimed to satisfy the Qurashī requirement for the Imāmate, although his Albānian origin was no secret.

Notably, the majority of Muslims today do not pay attention to the condition of the ruler being Qurashī. Additionally, many modern writers deny this condition, considering the aḥādīth reported regarding it to be fabricated, including 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, Muḥammad Abū Zahra, and 'Alī Ḥosnī al-Kharbouthī. Some thinkers also try to find a jurisprudential justification for canceling this condition, thereby bypassing the aḥādīth that stipulate it. <sup>(496)</sup> Ultimately, this issue is no longer relevant for Islamic public opinion, since a Qurashī affiliation holds no modern practical justification. The Quraysh nowadays have no specific interests or even an actual existence.

Evidently, each Islamic school interprets the matter within its own framework and historical context.

### Who Determines Guardianship:

\* Within Sunnī political theology, the governing principle dictates that the sovereign is appointed by a select collegiate body known in juridical discourse as *ahl al-shūrā* (the People of Consultation) or, as termed in the Māwardian lexicon, *ahl al-ikhtiyār* <sup>(497)</sup> (the People of Choice). According to the general consensus of scholars, this body is comprised of jurists who are *Mujtahids* (independent legal reasoners) whose authoritative opinions are central to the issuance of fatawā and the deductive inference of legal rulings, alongside

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<sup>(496)</sup> An example is Fahmī Huwaidī in his book *The Qur'ān and Power: Contemporary Islamic Issues*, Chapter One."

<sup>(497)</sup> *The Ordinances of Government and Religious Offices*, Chapter One, on the Imāmate Contract, p. 17.

individuals possessing specialized expertise in various administrative and civil affairs. Additionally, they should have a type of natural leadership or authority among the people, such as family leaders, tribal Shaykhs, and heads of community groups are also considered part of the people of *al-shūrā*.<sup>(498)</sup> Some scholars believe that there are different levels within the people of *al-shūrā*. For general matters, like selecting the ruler and declaring war, the general public can participate. However, for technical and specialized matters, or for managing the community's politics and affairs in general, the *Shūrā* Council of the decision-makers in Islamic Governance should be involved.<sup>(499)</sup> While some argue that all *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd* (the people of *al-shūrā*) should participate in selecting the ruler, others, like Ibn Ḥazm,<sup>(500)</sup> believe this is impractical and therefore reject it.

\* Alternatively, the preceding Imām appoints him as his successor, similar to the method by which 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was chosen by Abū Bakr.

\* Alternatively, he is chosen in the manner of 'Uthmān, following 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's recommendation of six specific Companions.<sup>(501)</sup>

\* Others add a fourth method: the usurpation of power by force. These include Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī.<sup>(502)</sup> The same doctrine is

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<sup>(498)</sup> Cited from Ḥasan al-Bannā, *The Epistles*, The system of government.

<sup>(499)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Khāleq, *Al-shūrā* within the Islamic System of Governance, file 4 of 5.

<sup>(500)</sup> *Al-Fasl fī al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [The Distinction Regarding Religions and Sects], Vol. Three, p. 3 ff.

<sup>(501)</sup> According to al-Māwardī, The Imāmate is established in two ways: one is by the choice of the “people of *al-shūrā*” and the other by a recommendation of the last Imām, Op. cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>(502)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [The Compendium of Qur'ānic Rulings], Sūrah 2: 30 notes: “If someone who is qualified for leadership overpowers and seizes it by force and dominance, it has been said that this can be a fourth way. Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-

held by Ibn Ḥanbal, according to the narration of 'Abdūs ibn Mālīk al-Qaṭṭān, as mentioned by Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā' al-Ḥanbalī,<sup>(503)</sup> and Ibn Ḥazm adopts the same principle in less severe language.<sup>(504)</sup> This is the means by which Mu'āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān took charge.

Another method is also added, which is supported by most Sunni jurists, at least in practice: the inheritance of power. This follows the example of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah and subsequent caliphs, including the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids, Ottomans, and Mongols.

A few scholars maintain that there exists a statement designating Abū Bakr, whereas another group identifies al-'Abbās as the intended successor.<sup>(505)</sup> A larger group of jurists, however, rejects

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*Tustarī was asked: What should we do if someone takes control of our land and becomes the leader? He said: You should respond to him and grant him the rights he demands. Do not reject his actions, do not run away from him, and if he entrusts you with a secret of a religious matter, do not disclose it. Ibn Khawiz Mandad said: If someone seizes power without consultation or choice and people pledge allegiance to him, then the allegiance is valid for him, and Allah knows best."*

Ibn Kathīr, in his commentary on the same verse, explains: "*Imāmate is obtained through appointment, as some Sunni scholars say about Abū Bakr, through indication to him as others say, through appointing another caliph after him as Abū Bakr did with 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, by leaving the choice to a council of righteous people as 'Umar did, by the consensus of the people of al-shūrā (Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd) to him or by one of them pledging allegiance to him, in which case it becomes obligatory for the majority to follow. The Imām of the two Holy Mosques spoke of consensus about that. And Allah knows best. Alternatively, it can be obtained through compelling obedience to prevent discord and disagreement."*

<sup>(503)</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal states: "*And whoever defeats them with the sword until he becomes a caliph and is named Commander of the Faithful, it is not permissible for anyone who believes in God and the Last Day to spend the night without recognizing him as an Imām over him, whether righteous or immoral, for he is the Commander of the Faithful."* Cited from: Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā', *The Ordinances of Government*, p. 20.

<sup>(504)</sup> "*If the Imām dies without appointing a specific successor, then a suitable person should step forward for the Imāmate, and one or more people should pledge allegiance to him. If another person challenges him, even if it is immediately after him, the right belongs to the first person, regardless of whether the second is better, equal, or lesser than him."* *Al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* [The Distinction Regarding Religions and Sects], Vol. Three, p. 3 ff.

<sup>(505)</sup> Exegesis by al-Qurṭubī, Sūrah 2: 30.

the notion of any such statement altogether and instead confines the matter to communal choice, a position upheld by figures such as Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, al-Baghdādī, al-Māwardī, and al-Ghazālī.

Traditional Islamic literature does not record that dhimmīs (People of the Covenant) have the right to participate in selecting the ruler, who must necessarily be a Muslim. This is because the concept of citizenship does not exist in Islamic thought; rather, dhimmīs are considered subjects of the Islamic State. They live under a covenant, protected by Muslims in the Abode of Islam, including lands annexed peacefully. Their residence continues on the condition that they adhere to the dhimmah contract, which grants them protection but not ownership of the land. Some jurists even argue that the Muslim ruler has the right to expel them at will, regardless of their adherence to the contract. In both cases, they are treated as residents under the covenant, not citizens or landowners.

The principle of equality among all inhabitants of a country is rejected in mainstream Islam. Although the Muslim Brotherhood raises the slogan “They have what we have and they owe what we owe,” they never translate it into practical principles, nor do they adhere to it even in their propaganda. Their writings insist on discrimination, classifying non-Muslims as dhimmīs and excluding them from certain rights, such as rulership, which is considered a religious position. They never endorse issues such as the unrestricted building of churches or the right to preach Christianity, viewing these as violations of the covenant. Militant Islamists, by contrast, are more consistent: their slogans align with their principles, without the ambiguity or inconsistency of the Brotherhood.

Historically, Muslims never proposed democracy in any form. The caliph was depicted not as accountable to the people but as a ruler with absolute authority, unconstrained by consultation or a



constitution.<sup>(506)</sup> Furthermore, Islamic history shows no precedent for electing the caliph by the general public; indeed, 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib explicitly rejected this.<sup>(507)</sup>

In modern times, moderate Islamic currents suggest that members of *al-Shūrā* may be elected by the public, but most insist they must be Muslims. Even Imām Muḥammad 'Abduḥ, one of the prominent reformers, adheres to this view. He requires obedience to rulers on the condition that they be Muslims, faithful to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and selective in their opinions, as they are regarded as **those in authority among you** (Sūrah 4:59).

Rashīd Ridā explicitly endorses the participation of non-believers in the House of Representatives, yet he justifies this inclusion not on democratic or humanistic grounds, but on the basis that such participation ultimately serves the interests of Muslims.<sup>(508)</sup> Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the former Shaykh of al-Azhar and a prominent scholar known for his moderate legal rulings, also stresses that those entrusted with responsibility should be people of knowledge and

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<sup>(506)</sup> The author tried to find out Ibn Rushd's point of view on the matter, but it was not found that he had a clear opinion on the subject of governance. There is no evidence that he proposed the idea of democracy or the constitution as some of his fans claim in scattered articles. All he did was criticizing irrational governance, corruption and tyranny, in hints in his book *Summary of Plato's Political Philosophy*.

<sup>(507)</sup> After the killing of 'Uthmān, common people sought to appoint 'Alī as caliph, but he initially refused. Al-Dhahabī recounted the story as follows:

*"The news reached 'Alī, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr, who rushed in, distraught, and found him slain. 'Alī asked: 'How was he killed while you were at the door?' He struck al-Ḥasan, pressed against al-Ḥusayn's chest, and sharply rebuked Ibn al-Zubayr and Ibn Ṭalḥa. Angered, he returned to his house, and people flocked to pledge allegiance to him. He said: 'This is not for you, but for the people of Badr. Whoever they approve is the caliph.' Not one of the veterans of Badr withheld allegiance from 'Alī. Ṭalḥa was the first to pledge, followed by Sa'd. Then 'Alī went to the mosque, ascended the pulpit, and received the pledges of Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, Sa'd, and the rest of the Companions. Afterwards, he summoned the people and asked for Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, but Marwān and his relatives fled." Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures, Vol. Two, p. 252.*

<sup>(508)</sup> *Commentary on the Wise Qur'ān*, spanning many separate pages.

reason in both religious and worldly matters. He emphasizes that they must possess sound judgment and practical experience across the different aspects of life. There is no doubt that what he means here by religion is Islam. A few contemporary Islamists believe that *ahl al-shūrā* should include some of the dhimmīs; provided that they possess certain qualities and that they constitute an insignificant minority of the total.

Ḥasan al-Bannā accepts the principle of the parliamentary system, including the election of its members, and he draws upon al-Māwardī's doctrine regarding the guardianship of non-believers in general. He maintains that a government can be considered Islamic as long as it does not openly disobey the Sharī'ah, and implements its provisions and teachings. He further argues that seeking assistance from non-believers is permissible when necessary, provided it does not involve sovereign positions. For al-Bannā, the form or type of government is of little consequence, so long as it remains consistent with the general rules of the Islamic system of governance. <sup>(509)</sup> Among the general mandates are the Council of *ahl al-shūrā* as well as the judiciary and provincial governorates.

These numerous disputes throughout the ages have a clear relationship with the existing social and political power dynamics and historical experiences and developments. For example, the recent change in the position of the Muslim Brotherhood on the idea of democracy is nothing but a product of their inability and repeated failure in direct confrontations with the authorities, in addition to the imbalance of international power after the fall of the socialist camp, and thus the latent Western threat. Moreover, their broad public support secures them more votes. Therefore, their democratic call is currently limited to electoral democracy, with some limited engagement with non-Muslims, to ensure the votes of some of them in elections and to neutralize the impact of secularists to a greater or lesser extent. Also, their recognition of some new

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<sup>(509)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, The Epistle of Teachings.*

rights of non-Muslims seems to have a positive effect, as it spares them side battles and does not undermine their influence, after their political base has expanded.

The traditional position of early Sunni Islamists toward their Muslim ruler was obedience in general, as long as he maintained his faith. This position is based on a prophetic tradition: **Whoever obeys me has obeyed God, whoever disobeys me has disobeyed God, whoever obeys the ruler has obeyed me, and whoever disobeys the ruler has disobeyed me** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* -4468).

The leading Sunni jurists advocate obedience to an unjust ruler on the grounds that he is a Muslim. The only one among them who permits rebellion against such a ruler is Abū Ḥanīfah. In reality, however, the Ḥanafīs themselves turn against Abū Ḥanīfah by adopting what the rest of the Sunni jurists advocate. Historically, the movement most stringent in insisting on revolt against an unjust ruler was the Kharijite movement. One of their sects, the Wa'idis, held as a core doctrine the *takfīr* (excommunication) of anyone who committed a major sin. <sup>(510)</sup> This belief justified their rebellion against various caliphs, including 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib. They grounded their position in the famous prophetic tradition: **Whoever among you sees an evil let him change it by his hand, if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart, which is the weakest of faith.** <sup>(511)</sup> The Mu'tazilites also advocated the idea of rebelling against a corrupt Muslim ruler, based on their concept of enjoining right and forbidding wrong. Meanwhile, Sunni scholars believe that changing the wrongdoings of the ruler, other than unbelief, should be done through advice and

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<sup>(510)</sup> Al-Shahrastānī, *A Comparative Study of Religions and Sects*, Section One, Vol. One, Chapter Four.

<sup>(511)</sup> Ibn Ḥamzah al-Ḥusaynī, *al-Bayān wa al-Ta'rīf fī Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* [Explanation and Definition Regarding the Reasons for the Noble Prophetic Tradition], p. 1541.

sincere counsel only, and they do not declare a person committing a major sin as an unbeliever unless he considers it permissible.

What most scholars agree upon is that there is no obedience to a created being if he disobeys the Creator, according to a prophetic ḥadīth. Abū Bakr declared it upon assuming the caliphate: “Obey me as long as I obey God regarding you, and if I disobey Him, then there is no obedience to me over you.”<sup>(512)</sup> Therefore, many jurists and scholars permit revolting against the ruler if he violates what is agreed upon regarding matters of religion. One of the most prominent Ḥanbalī jurists, Ibn Qudāmah explains that it is part of the Sunnah to listen to and obey the leaders of the Muslims, whether they are righteous or immoral, provided they do not command disobedience to God. He also clarifies that whoever assumes the caliphate and is accepted by the people, or overpowers them by force until he becomes caliph and is called “Commander of the Faithful,” obedience to him becomes obligatory and opposition or rebellion against him is forbidden, since such actions risk splitting the unity of the Muslims and causing *fitnah* (civil strife).<sup>(513)</sup>

Al-Shawkānī explicitly limits the condition for revolt against a ruler to cases of unbelief or abandonment of prayer. He explains that there are successive prophetic traditions prohibiting rebellion against the Imāms unless they openly display unbelief or neglect prayer. If the ruler does not commit either of these, then rebellion against him is not permissible, even if he reaches the height of injustice. Instead, it remains obligatory to enjoin good and forbid evil to the extent of one’s ability, while obedience to him is required except in matters of disobedience to God. He also notes that it is confirmed in the authentic prophetic tradition that any rival Imām

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<sup>(512)</sup> Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *The Series of Authentic Aḥādīth*, 179.

<sup>(513)</sup> *Lum'at al-I'tiqad* [A Glimpse of Creed], p. 40.

who comes to dispute the authority of the first should be killed, considering this a sufficient deterrent and admonition.<sup>(514)</sup>

Injustice, tyranny and mismanagement are not agreed-upon justifications for rebellion against the ruler, but explicit departure from what is necessarily known from religion was generally considered sufficient justification. The textual support in this context is the authentic aḥādīth: **We do not dispute the ruler unless we see clear disbelief that you have proof from God (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim - 4727); The best of your Imāms are those you love and they love you, you pray for them and they pray for you. The worst of your Imāms are those you hate and they hate you, and you curse them and they curse you. It was said, O Messenger of God, shall we not reject them? He said: No, as long as they establish prayer among you (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim -4760). The Qur'ān also provides support for this approach: Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you dispute over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger (Sūrah 4:59).** The last part of the verse indicates that Sharī'ah as a reference is a condition for obedience, and that disagreement is surely possible between the flock and the ruler, so the Sharī'ah must be resorted to. The Qur'ān does not explicitly indicate what is to be done if the ruler rejects the rule of Sharī'ah. Therefore, the role of aḥādīth becomes critical. Those who opposed the rule of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān justified their revolt by claiming that he had committed apostasy, even though the underlying reasons were corruption and mismanagement. Accordingly, they buried him in Jewish cemeteries until the Umayyads ruled and reinterred him in Muslim cemeteries.

Contemporary Islamists base their calls to revolt against secular governments on the above pretext, sometimes declaring the rulers' unbelief as a justification for the struggle against them and raising the basic slogan of applying Sharī'ah, without providing a clear

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<sup>(514)</sup> *The Rushing Torrent Overflowing onto the Gardens of Flowers*, p. 940.

political program. Moderates avoid calling for a direct revolt against the unjust ruler and do not concern themselves with the *takfīr* of the government. They have a real project for gradual change by putting pressure on the authorities and actively penetrating the apparatuses of power, whether state authority or other institutions, achieving success that extremists have failed to achieve by clashing with governments.

Most contemporary independent Islamists tend to reject the traditional Sunni doctrine of *al-sam' wa al-ta'a* (hearing and obeying) the Muslim ruler in order to prevent *fitnah* (strife). They call for peaceful struggle for some and violent struggle for others, even against a Muslim ruler who does not adhere to Sharī'ah law. The criterion is the political and practical Islam of the ruler, not just his verbal and doctrinal Islam. Loyalty is now to the “politically Islamic” ruler -as opposed to the *Jāhili* ruler—rather than the Muslim in the doctrinal sense.

This idea has its roots in early Islam, particularly within the Ḥanafī school of thought. The idea of revolting against the unjust ruler is proposed based on the verse: **And pay no heed to the counsel of those who are given to excesses \* who spread corruption on earth instead of setting things to rights** (Sūrah 26:151-152), sometimes among the Sunnis, and more often by the Shi'ites in ancient and modern times, especially the Twelvers or Imāmīs, taking into account that a just ruler cannot be just unless he is a Muslim. <sup>(515)</sup>

One of the tasks of the Islamic State in jurisprudence and contemporary political Islam is to disseminate the Islamic message on earth, as advocated by contemporary Islamic thinkers such as

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<sup>(515)</sup> One controversial opinion is that a just non-believer ruler is preferable to a Muslim ruler who is unjust, and this is the view of Ibn Ṭāwūs (from the Shi'ites). Reference: Rashīd al-Khayyūn, *Ibn Ṭāwūs's Fatāwā before Hulagu Khān*: Prior to the Mongols' Conversion to Islam.



al-Maudūdī, Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb, and adopted by official Islamic institutions like al-Azhar and religious institutions in Saudi Arabia. It is not only the task of individuals and civil society, but the state must also assume the responsibility of conveying Islam and removing obstacles to its dissemination worldwide, as outlined in the goals of war mentioned by Ḥasan al-Bannā. This idea implicitly calls for jihād in the sense of conquest, though it is not explicitly stated for understandable reasons. The Islamic State is tasked not only with protecting its citizens but also with a sacred religious mission to expand the Abode of Islam using appropriate means for each era, a principle espoused by all factions of political Islam. For instance, Ḥasan al-Bannā believes that the state should embody the idea, protect it, and be accountable for conveying it to all people and achieving its objectives.<sup>(516)</sup> It is inherently an expansionist state. If the caliph serves as the leader of Muslims worldwide, he will also be the leader of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, who are expected to be loyal to him rather than to unbelievers in their own countries.

### 3. Social Hierarchy:

Islamic thought does not deny the existence of social classes, but the Qur'ān and the aḥādīth criticize those who hoard money and exploit the poor, without calling for the abolition of social classes. Instead, they use the expression: **He who has made you inherit the earth and has raised some of you by degrees above others** (Sūrah 6:165). Exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Qurṭubī consider these ranks to include degrees of wealth, while some like Ibn Kathīr add morals, virtues, vices, appearance, shapes, and colors. Islam does not have noble titles except for royal titles in certain eras. It does not adopt a specific social class, unlike socialists who prioritize the working class or marginalized groups. Islam focuses on social

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<sup>(516)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Our Invitation.*

solidarity, kindness toward the poor and the rejection of unjust hoarding of funds or methods that violate Sharī'ah law.

However, Islam divides humanity into different classes based on religious criteria, equating people only as the teeth of a comb. The best among them are the most pious who fear God and submit to Him by following Sharī'ah provisions. Islam changes the concept of class by categorizing people based on their proximity to or distance from Islam. The classes preferred by Islam are those closest to the Prophet's House, the Companions, scholars, jurists, and religious leaders, described as **those in authority among you** in the Qur'ān. Hence, religion becomes the main determinant of social classes.

The most pious person is considered the best, and not only in the eyes of God. Islamic thought holds the classes of the Companions, followers, scholars, and jurists in high respect and reverence, sometimes even reaching the point of sanctification. Criticizing Companions among Sunnis is seen as a serious offense deserving punishment, which could even lead to death. Insulting figures like Abū Bakr and 'Umar is considered blasphemy or a major sin by Sunnis, warranting severe punishment.<sup>(517)</sup> The prophetic tradition recommends following the Sunnah of the first four caliphs: **You should adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, bite on it with your teeth** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -16818). Regarding the reverence of Islamic clerics, there is no doubt about it. Scholars discuss various classes of Companions, such as exegetes, prophetic tradition narrators, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāẓ* (the Qur'ān Memorizers), Ḥanbalīs, and Shāfi'īs.<sup>(518)</sup> Even the Companions

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<sup>(517)</sup> Readers may refer to Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Ilqām al-Ḥajar liman Zaka Sab Abū Bakr wa 'Umar* [Casting the Stone at Those Who Praise the Revilers of Abū Bakr and 'Umar]. This work compiles numerous hadiths on the virtues of Abū Bakr and 'Umar while detailing the severity of defaming them.

<sup>(518)</sup> There are numerous Islamic sources that deal with these class divisions, including, for example, the Major Strata, by Ibn Sa'd, which is regarded as his most principal book, *Ṭabaqat al-Huffaz* (those who memorize the Qur'ān ) by al-Suyūṭī, *The Classes of Qur'ānic Exegetes*, by al-Suyūṭī, *Classes of the Ḥanbalī*, by Ibn Ya'la al-Ḥanbalī.

closest to Muḥammad are divided into twelve classes, <sup>(519)</sup> which is widely accepted by scholars. Muḥammad is considered the master and the best of mankind because he carried the sacred Islamic message and possessed rights that were not granted to other Muslims. So: **The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves** (Sūrah 33:6). Al-Qurṭubī explains certain aspects regarding Muḥammad that differentiate him from other Muslims. Some of the obligations imposed on him included praying at night (*Tahajjud*), performing the *Ḍuḥā* (mid-morning prayer), offering sacrifices, praying the *Witr* (night-time prayer), using a toothpick (*Siwāk*), paying off the debts of those who died in difficulty, consulting with people concerning visions or dreams about non-legal matters, giving his wives the choice to stay or leave him, and performing any act perfectly.

There are also ten things forbidden to him, including receiving *zakāt* for himself and his family, accepting voluntary charity,

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<sup>(519)</sup> They are according to al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī in his book *Ma'rifat 'Ulum al-Ḥadīth* [An Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth]. It is quoted here briefly:

The first class consists of people who converted to Islam in Makkah, such as Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, and others. The second class includes the people of *Dār al-Nadwa* (a council hall or assembly house for Quraysh tribe). When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb converted to Islam and demonstrated his conversion, he accompanied the Messenger to *Dār al-Nadwa*, where a group of the people of Makkah pledged allegiance to him. The third class of Companions comprises those who migrated to Abyssinia. The fourth class includes those who pledged allegiance to the Prophet at al-'Aqaba (a site in Makkah). The fifth class consists of the companions of the second 'Aqaba, and the sixth class includes the first Emigrants who reached the Messenger while he was in Quba', before they entered Madīnah, where a mosque was built. The seventh class comprises the people of Badr. The eighth class includes those who immigrated between the battle of Badr and the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah. The ninth class comprises the people who pledged allegiance of al-Riḍwān in al-Ḥudaybiyyah under the tree. The tenth class includes the emigrants between the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah and the Conquest of Makkah, including Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, 'Amr ibn al-'As, Abū Hurairah, and others. The eleventh category comprises those among the Quraysh who embraced Islam following the Conquest of Makkah. This group included both those who converted out of genuine conviction and those who submitted out of political expediency or coercion. The twelfth class includes boys and children who saw the Prophet during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

appearing contrary to what he conceals, removing his war clothing until God judges between him and his opponents, eating while reclining, consuming foul-smelling foods, replacing his wives, marrying a woman who dislikes his company, marrying a free woman from the People of the Book, or marrying a female slave.

God forbade him things that He did not forbid others, as an honor and purification for him. These include writing, composing and teaching poetry, and looking at the worldly enjoyments of others. The things permissible solely for him number sixteen in total: the *ṣaḥī* (the choice part of the spoils), consisting of items he chose from the spoils before division, such as a female slave, a slave, a garment, or a sword; taking one-fifth of one-fifth of the bounties, continuing a fast for more than a day; having more than four wives; contracting marriage with the word “gift” (meaning without using the word marriage); marriage without a guardian; marriage without a dowry; and marriage in the state of *Iḥram* (during pilgrimage).<sup>(520)</sup> Furthermore, the requirement for equal turns between spouses is dropped for him; if he sets his sight on a woman and desires her, it is obligatory for her husband to divorce her so that he can marry her; he freed *Ṣafīyya* and made her emancipation his dowry; he entered Makkah without being in *Iḥram*; he fought in Makkah; his estate cannot be inherited; his marriages continue after death; and if he divorces a woman, she remains his wife in status, meaning she can not marry after him. Additionally, it was permissible for him to take food and drink from the hungry and thirsty, despite any fears of his own destruction, according to God’s saying: **The Prophet has more claim on the believers than they have on their own selves and his**

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<sup>(520)</sup> This is a sacred state that a Muslim must enter to perform the major or minor pilgrimage. During this time, a man must not tie knots or wear stitched clothing. Sandals and flip-flops may contain stitching, but they should leave the ankle and the upper part of the foot uncovered. Men are also prohibited from covering their heads, while both women and men are prohibited from wearing gloves.

**wives are their mothers** - every Muslim should defend the Prophet with their own life, and it is permissible for him to take a part of the common land for himself. <sup>(521)</sup>

Among the most revered figures in Muslim public belief, especially among the Shi'ites, are the members of the Prophet's household. Many alleged miracles have been attributed to some of them, especially al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, who is revered even among Sunnis. <sup>(522)</sup>

Among the most esteemed of human beings are the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. It is not permissible, according to the Sunnis, for anyone to mention any of their faults or mock them. Whoever does so deserves, according to the words of Ibn Ḥanbal and many others, punishment by the ruler, who has no right to pardon him, but rather must punish him and ask him to repent. If he does not repent, his punishment should be repeated, and he should be kept imprisoned until he dies or repents. <sup>(523)</sup>

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The status of the Prophet's wives is also significant: **O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other woman if you fear God** (Sūrah 33:32). Ibn Kathīr explains that God addressed the wives of the Prophet, stating that if they fear Him as He commands, no other women equal them in virtue or status. Many Muslims

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<sup>(521)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [The Compendium of Qur'ānic Rulings] Sūrah 33: 50.

<sup>(522)</sup> Raḍī al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ṭāwūs summarized the miracles that allegedly occurred on the day of the killing of al-Ḥusayn, one tenth of which did not occur on the day of the killing of millions of other people. They include: When al-Ḥusayn was killed, the wild pigeons supplicated against his killers and the sky rained blood and ashes. Ibn Ṭāwūs quoted it from a large number of Sunni and Shi'ite books. *al-Malḥūf 'alā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf* [The Grieved for the Martyrs of Karbalā'].

<sup>(523)</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-'Aqidah* [The Book of Creed].

consider them to be their behavioral ideals. There are dozens of aḥādīth that praise Muḥammad's wives, favoring them over other women and granting them exceptional privileges, even *Karamāt*,<sup>(524)</sup> including: **No one who married them will enter Hell.**<sup>(525)</sup> The Prophet's traditions give preference to 'Ā'isha and Khadīja along with Maryam and Āsiyah: **None of the women were perfect except Maryam bint 'Imrān, 'Ās'iyah, the wife of Pharaoh, and the superiority of 'Ā'isha over women like the preference of porridge over other food (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī –3341); The best women in the world are Maryam bint 'Imrān and Khadīja bint Khuwaylid (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim –6224), in addition to some of Muḥammad's daughters. Fāṭima holds a distinguished position: The best women of Paradise are Khadīja bint Khuwaylid, Fāṭima bint Muḥammad, Maryam bint 'Imrān, and Asiya bint Muzahim, the wife of Pharaoh (Al-Sunan al-Kubrā by al-Nasā'ī –8355); Fāṭima is only a part of me (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim –6261).**

The importance of considering those classes that have disappeared is that their members are considered the ideals of devout Muslims; their value is not merely historical but remains present as heritage. At all times, certain classes are preferred by Muslims, particularly scholars, senior clerics, and those who adhere more than others to Sharī'ah law and to the heritage attributed to the aforementioned historical classes. As for the class to which obedience is required, it is undoubtedly, for Sunnis, the political ruling class, on the condition that it adheres to Sharī'ah, even if it usurps power by force and practices forms of injustice as

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<sup>(524)</sup> A supernatural phenomena, attributed to some people known for their piety and getting close to the Creator in many religions in Islamic tradition, specifically within Sufism. They are distinct from prophetic miracles, as they are granted to non-prophets as a sign of divine favor and spiritual closeness. Despite the term *karāma* is Arabic and deeply rooted in Islamic theology, the concept exists in many religious traditions.

<sup>(525)</sup> Ibn 'Asākir ('Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh) presents forty Aḥādīth on the virtues of Muḥammad's women in *The Book of Forty on the Virtues of the Mothers of the Believers*.



understood in Islamic thought. Opinions contrary to this doctrine are very rare among the Sunnis, as mentioned above.

The first caliph who officially divided people into classes based on religion was the caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He recorded their names and determined each person's share of the spoils of war, known as *al-'ata'*, (stipend). He started with those who were closer to the Prophet, with his wives first, and 'Ā'isha being the foremost among them; she therefore received the largest '*ata'*'. Then he distributed to those who had precedence and virtue in Islam. This division did not exist during the time of his predecessor Abū Bakr. 'Umar distributed the spoils generously to relatives and companions, leading to the emergence of vast wealth among the close companions.

Nevertheless, scholars have identified particular groups of people as classes, such as classes of physicians, the class of poets, the class of Shāfi'īs, and Ḥanbalīs. In fact, any group can be subdivided into classes. Yet the broader social division has already been discussed—one that categorizes people according to their relationship to Islam, which constitutes the primary distinction. These scholarly classifications do not encompass society as a whole, since most individuals are not poets or doctors, but rather Muslims or loyalists, defined by their proximity to or distance from the status of the Prophet and his family.

The highest classes in Islamic culture are therefore the most important for Islam itself, since its ultimate goal is to establish religion. Social, moral, and political reforms are not ends in themselves; rather, they serve the higher aim of implementing Islam.

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## Chapter Eight

### AL-ḤAKIMIYYAH AND AL-JĀHILIYYAH

*In Islamic society, the fundamental principle upon which the state is established is the sovereignty of God, rather than human authority*

Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī

\* The first to use the term *ḥākimiyyah* was Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī,<sup>(526)</sup> who exerted great influence in the Arab world, followed by Sayyid Quṭb,<sup>(527)</sup> who was apparently strongly influenced by al-Maudūdī, and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī, who devoted significant attention to *ḥākimiyyah* as a concept.<sup>(528)</sup> It has since become a widespread term in contemporary Islamic writings, and the notion of divine sovereignty, in its political sense, has gained dominance among influential Islamic movements in the Arab world and beyond.<sup>(529)</sup>

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<sup>(526)</sup> *Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms.*

<sup>(527)</sup> *Milestones along the Way.*

<sup>(528)</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī posits that Muslim superiority in the Middle Ages stemmed from adhering to a revealed divine law, rather than human legislation, which is viewed as a source of error. The revised text specifies that human-made law is considered a cause of ignorance, error, and injustice, reinforcing the argument in *What Did the World Lose with the Decline of Muslims.*

<sup>(529)</sup> Although Ḥasan al-Hudaybī tried to downplay the importance of the term and did not commit himself to using it, he later acknowledged in his response to al-Maudūdī that he was completely convinced of its meaning. He explained rather than criticized what al-Maudūdī meant by his term. *Preachers Not Judges*, Chapter Five, p. 32.

The earliest use of the concept, however, can be traced to the army of Mu'āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān during the famous Battle of Ṣiffīn, when they called for arbitration by the Qur'ān. The Khārijites rejected the outcome and declared: There is no command except that of God.<sup>(530)</sup> The intention here was to issue a judgment, not to establish a political system. The saying is derived from the Qur'ān: **The command rests with none but Allah. He declares the Truth, and He is the best of judges** (Sūrah 6:57). The phrase none can command except Allah is repeated in Sūrah 12: 40, 67, and has been interpreted in various ways, including: God's authority in delaying or hastening punishment, His decisive judgment between truth and falsehood, and His sole prerogative to decide what He wills. These are unspecific verses open to interpretation. Another verse states: **They do not truly believe unless they make you judge in all disputes between them, and then find in their hearts no resistance to accepting your decisions and submit fully** (Sūrah 4:65). All interpretations agree that believers must accept Muḥammad's rulings without objection, naturally presuming that he judged according to the Sharī'ah. This forms part of the practical Sunnah.

In the prophetic tradition, the idea of *ḥākimiyyah* appears implicitly: **I came to the Prophet with a cross of gold around my neck. He said: O 'Adī, cast off this idol. Then I heard him reciting from Sūrah 9: They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords apart from God. He explained: Indeed, they did not worship them, but when those scholars declared something lawful, they accepted it as lawful; and when they declared something forbidden, they accepted it as forbidden** (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī* – 3199). Although the terms prohibition and permission are literally used in the context of religious legislation, Islamic jurisprudence extends them far beyond, encompassing detailed aspects of daily life. Through *ijtihād*,

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<sup>(530)</sup> It was mentioned by Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Umam* [The Comprehensive Chronicle], Vol. Five, file 56 of 202.

jurists address emerging realities in light of Islam's definitive injunctions.

In his book *The Artistic Representation in the Qur'ān*, Sayyid Quṭb employs the concept of Godliness, not in relation to systems of governance, but to intellectual and value systems that explain existence and define its relationship with man. He argues that Godliness is the hallmark of the Islamic worldview, rejecting human attempts to explain the universe or construct a comprehensive philosophy of existence. He dismisses various philosophies and theories, considering Islam a fully sufficient divine thought and warns against human efforts to renew or reform religious thought.<sup>(531)</sup> According to him, the Islamic perception is not something that develops independently in itself; rather, humanity develops within its framework. (p. 20); instead, it is characterized by stability (p. 38). In this sense, Godliness serves as a logical foundation and theoretical introduction to *ḥākimiyyah*, especially since Quṭb's thought ultimately revolves around this concept.

Among Shi'ites, *al-ḥākimiyyah* as a political system is a well-established idea, both historically and in modern times, particularly since the Imāmate is regarded as a divine appointment.

For contemporary Sunni scholars, the concept of divine sovereignty means deriving all behavior, legislation, and systems from God, referring to the Sharī'ah in all matters. Since God

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<sup>(531)</sup> *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa-Muqawwimātuḥu* [Characteristics and Foundations of the Islamic Worldview], p. 30. He states: "The divine conception that man has received from God is a purely esoteric gift. It has exempted weak, ignorant humans from toiling in it and spared them the trouble of creating it and wasting their energy in this field for which God did not provide them with evidence or tools. This allows them to focus on receiving this gift, managing it, adapting to it, and making it the foundation of their life approach, a measure of their values, and a guiding principle that they reach and adhere to. If they deviate from it, they go astray, get confused, and come up with laughable and tearful misconceptions and deviations. They suffer and become miserable with the curricula and systems they establish based on that deep ignorance."

commands existence, He also commands human beings as individuals and communities. If the aim of Islamic advocacy is to spread the true religion, then the minimum requirement is to make God's word supreme by establishing an Islamic order in life generally. The goal is to guide humanity, whether believers or non-believers, according to God's law. The right to legislate, formulate theories, and produce values belongs to God alone; humans have no right to invent rules that contradict Islam. Islam, as most of its thinkers present it, is essentially a call to liberate man from servitude to others. Extremists, moderates, and enlightened Islamists all agree on this, differing only in wording. Not only jihādists or extremists insist on *ḥākimiyyah*; nearly all Islamists do.

Al-Qaraḍāwī, regarded a prominent moderate, emphasizes that Islam clearly identifies the authority that has the right to permit and prohibit, removing it from the hands of human beings regardless of their religious or worldly rank, and assigning it solely to Almighty God. He argues that no rabbis, monks, kings, or sultans possess the right to permanently forbid anything for humans, and whoever does so exceeds their limits and violates God's exclusive right to legislate. He adds that those who accept and follow such prohibitions effectively make these figures partners with God, which constitutes polytheism. He supports this by citing the Qur'anic verse condemning those who believe in partners of God who decree things He does not authorize: **Do they believe in alleged partners of God who ordain for them things which God has not sanctioned** (Sūrah 42:21).<sup>(532)</sup> The only exceptions are those who grant the human mind independent authority without reference to sacred texts, considering man autonomous to some degree from God and capable of independent action. These include certain Muslim rationalists, both ancient and modern.

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<sup>(532)</sup> *The Permissible and The Prohibited in Islam*, sixth edition, Vol. One, Chapter: Permissibility and Prohibition are the Right of God Alone.

The theoretical translation of this concept is that God Himself is the supreme head of the Islamic State, the leader of Muslims worldwide, and the ultimate authority of their party—contrasting *Hizb Allah* (the Party of God) with the Party of Satan, as described in the Qur'an. In this worldview, God created the world not to abandon it, but to actively rule every aspect of life. This divine authority is reflected in the verse: **Your allies are God, His Messenger, and those who believe—those who pray regularly, give charity, and bow down** (5:55). Building on this theological foundation, Abū al-A'la al-Maudūdī successfully campaigned to embed this principle into Pakistan's constitution, formally recognizing God as the sovereign ruler of the state. <sup>(533)</sup>

As for the practical translation of the concept of *ḥākimiyyah*, it requires Muslims to establish a global Islamic system, in accordance with Islamic law. Individuals are also expected to behave in accordance with this law, or at least submit to the authority of Islam based on divine legislation. This completely contradicts the idea of secularism, which entails separating religion from all areas of life, including the state.

The term *ḥākimiyyah* is not limited to the political dimension alone. Rather, it is presented at three levels: social, which relates to the behavior of individuals and social relationships, legislative, which relates to legal enactments, and political, which relates to the policy of the state as a whole. In fact, the sacred texts of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth included many matters of life for the individual and society, leaving little for the Muslim individual to determine independently. Sharī'ah law interferes in many detailed matters, including sexual relations, food and drink, the way of eating and dressing, and even greeting others, so that one finds a legal

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<sup>(533)</sup> *The Constitutional Objectives Program* in 1949 stipulates: “God, Almighty, the King, has willed to grant the State of Pakistan the power and authority to exercise it through the mediation of its people within the boundaries he has set for it, which is the sacred deposit.” *The Role of Islam in the Emergence of Modern State of Pakistan*.



reference for most actions. The basic and sacred references for Sharī'ah law are the Book and the prophetic Sunnah, including aḥādīth and actions, since Muḥammad was not just a preacher but also a statesman, whose actions are considered sacred sources of legislation.

Islam, according to the prophetic Sunnah and as presented throughout history—whether in Islamic jurisprudence or written history—is unequivocally a state before it is a religion, and Muḥammad was not secular in any way. Rather, he ruled by revelation, seeking the help of wise people in detailed technical matters while deciding the vast majority of political decisions of a strategic or principled nature without such consultation. Gabriel was his inspiration, and even when he responded to the demands of those around him, or their objections to any Qur'ānic statements, he responded to them through revelation. Therefore, political Islam does not speak of the Islamic State without basis. The fact that Islam considers the moment of *Hijrah* (immigration of Muḥammad from Makkah to Madīnah) as the beginning of history is not insignificant. This moment marked the beginning of the formation of the Islamic State and the actual start of disseminating its doctrine on a large scale. It is also significant that the Madīnan period receives intense attention from both the Muslim elite and ordinary believers, and its history is much clearer than the Makkan period, even regarding the personal history of Muḥammad.

In fact, *ḥākimiyyah* as a concept is deeply rooted in Islamic thought from its earliest stages. It can be confidently stated that traditional Islam itself, in practice, embodies *ḥākimiyyah*. It assesses the behavior of individuals and groups based on whether it is permissible or forbidden in the religious sense of the terms. It is not about purely moral categories such as good or bad, or right or wrong -since what is permissible is considered good and right, whereas what is forbidden is seen as evil. The focus is not on the content, but rather on the legal source, aim and intent. It is evident

that the criterion for determining what is forbidden and what is permissible lies in Sharī'ah law, in God's authority to evaluate behavior, and, of course, in His choosing it in the first place. The prevalent notion that *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) ceases to exist in the presence of the sacred text forms the fundamental theoretical basis for the concept of *ḥākimiyyah*, highlighting that the text does not explain itself; instead, is sometimes taken literally, sometimes its meaning is interpreted, and often selectively used, depending on circumstances and immediate objectives. Muslim scholars endlessly debate the interpretation of sacred statements, thereby reinforcing the reverence for the statements themselves, despite the diversity of meanings and interpretations. Contemporary Islamic thought notably recalls ancient formulations, including those found in *fiqh*, and reinterprets them with new meanings in novel contexts. *Al-ḥākimiyyah*, in practice, is shaped not directly by God but by the established notions of Islamic culture. By contrast, certain doctrines and legal rulings have remained relatively stable over time, such as the notion of punishment for apostasy. Yet not all matters display such continuity, especially regarding what emerges as the most crucial issue for political Islam: the question of power. The political question has not been resolved by a single, permanent model but has taken on various forms throughout history: the Rāshidūn Caliphate, the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd monarchies, and later sultanate or imperial forms of government. Regarding contemporary political Islam, the issue of authority appears to be the most sensitive, as it intersects with the concepts of *Shūrā*, democracy, the modern state, and religious legitimacy. Consequently, it has not been addressed with the same rigor found in some other jurisprudential rulings but has remained a domain open to interpretation, *ijtihād*, and reinterpretation.

\* Ignorance in pre-Islamic times refers to acting under the sway of passion, emotion, and enthusiasm without reflection or reasoning. Islam added other meanings to this term; indeed, the

**Qur'ān** uses the word ignorance four times with different meanings: as a description of belief: **Others, who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about God; thoughts of pagan ignorance.** (Sūrah 3:154); in the context of ruling: **Do they desire to be ruled by the law of pagan ignorance? But for those who are firm in their faith, who can be a better lawgiver than God?** (Sūrah 5:50); in reference to women: **Stay quietly in your houses and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of Ignorance** (Sūrah 33:33) and in relation to intolerance: **The disbelievers fanned fury in their hearts, the fury of ignorance** (Sūrah 48:26).

In the prophetic tradition, the meaning is the same but more detailed: In *al-Bukhārī*- 33: **O Abū Dharr, you insulted him for his mother. You are a man of ignorance. He who slaps his cheeks, rips his pockets, and prays in an ignorant way is not one of us – 1271 ; Whoever sees something in his leader that he hates, let him be patient, for no one who separates from the group by an inch and dies will die a death of ignorance –1978 . And in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* – 2114; **Four traits in my Ummah (community) are among the matters of *jāhiliyyah* which they will not abandon: boasting of high status (noble descent); disparaging lineages, seeking rain by the stars, and wailing (over the dead).** These are a few examples of many occasions the word is mentioned.**

It is evident from the above that ignorance encompasses:

1. Lack of knowledge and information.
2. Barbarism, the opposite of forbearance, i.e., extreme arrogance, tyranny, and anger. <sup>(534)</sup>

Ignorance among Arabs includes both meanings, used by Islam in both senses.

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<sup>(534)</sup> Refer to al-Raghib al-Asfahani, *Al-Mufradat fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* [Vocabulary of Unfamiliar Terms of the Qur'ān,] and al-Fayrūzābādī, *The Comprehensive Dictionary*.

3. What is contrary to the doctrine of Islam, on the basis that Islam is knowledge and anything else is ignorance, which is the ignorance of God and turning away from His guidance. <sup>(535)</sup>

4. The period before Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in general.

These meanings allow the description of events chronologically subsequent to Islam as *jāhiliyyah*, which Ibn Taymiyyah referred to as restricted ignorance. It may exist in some Muslim lands and among many Muslim individuals. <sup>(536)</sup>

The term of *al-jāhiliyyah* is derived from ignorance, in the sense of lack of knowledge, and in the sense of foolishness and lack of reason. Describing others as *Jāhili* implies belittling, degrading and condescending to them. In this context, Islam is considered the absolute standard for knowledge and reason, ideal for all human beings. It is not a doctrine that belongs solely to its adherents, but rather the absolute standard for the righteous lifestyle to which all people must aspire to, whether willingly or unwillingly. Islamists, even hard-liners, maintain that faith cannot be imposed on people, but that the Islamic lifestyle can be enforced. <sup>(537)</sup> Underestimating others is not related to the content of their values and ideas versus

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<sup>(535)</sup> In the words of Muḥammad Quṭb in his book *The Twentieth Century jāhiliyyah*.

<sup>(535)</sup> *The Necessity of the Straight Path*.

<sup>(536)</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>(537)</sup> Sayyed Quṭb states: “Islam is not merely a belief. As we have pointed out, Islam is a declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men. Thus it strives from the beginning to abolish all those systems and governments that are based on the rule of man over men and the servitude of one human being to another. When Islam releases people from this political pressure and presents to them its spiritual message, appealing to their reason, it gives them complete freedom to accept or not to accept its beliefs. However, this freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings, making some men lords over others. Whatever system is to be established in the world ought to be on the authority of God, deriving its laws from Him alone. Then every individual is free, under the protection of this universal system, to adopt any belief he wishes to adopt. This is the only way in which the religion can be purified for God alone.” *Milestones along the Way*.

the content of Islam, but rather this judgment is based on the mere difference of the source. Human thought in general is considered ignorant compared to divine thought. That is, everything that is not Islam is considered inferior.

No matter how advanced a society may be in sciences and systems, and no matter how firmly it adheres to morals and noble values, it remains in a state of *jāhiliyya* unless it derives all of this from Islam. Contemporary Islamists with the most extremist tendencies rely on this idea to describe the entire era as *jāhiliyyah*. This concept includes all rational trends in modern culture. Nationalism, socialism, the call for individual freedom of body and mind, equality between men and women, and secular thinking in general are considered *jāhiliyyah* from their point of view. Muḥammad Quṭb rejects the notion that *al-jāhiliyyah* should be confined to ignorance of science or the absence of values regarded as noble. He argues that it is not a historical period that has ended irreversibly, but rather an enduring essence that appears in diverse forms depending on context, environment, and circumstances. Despite these variations, all such manifestations remain expressions of *jāhiliyyah*. Quṭb further emphasizes that it is not the antithesis of science, knowledge, civilization, material progress, or intellectual, social, political, and human values, as some critics suggest in reference to either pre-Islamic Arabia or the twentieth century. Instead, he defines *jāhiliyyah*, in line with the Qur'ān, as both a psychological condition that resists divine guidance and an organizational framework that refuses to govern according to God's revelation. <sup>(538)</sup>

\* The concept of *jāhiliyyah*, with its contempt and disdain for modernity, which makes man its ultimate goal, is a completely plausible introduction to the Islamic call to eliminate this ignorance and dominate the divine culture: Islam. It is now clearly understood

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<sup>(538)</sup> *The Twentieth Century Jāhiliyyah*, Introduction.

why Western people, or supporters of modernity, consider Islam a danger to civilization. One of the stated goals of mainstream Islamists is to eradicate the contemporary culture of *jāhiliyyah*. Islamic jurists do not stop attacking it fiercely, even though the voices of the more far-sighted among them deny this and call for Islam's ability to coexist with others, mostly for the sake of *Taqiyyah*, acknowledging the sincerity of a minority of secular Muslims. The Qur'ān itself calls for peaceful coexistence as well as it rejects peace in certain conditions. Every decision is based on the balance of power: **But if the enemy inclines toward peace, you also incline toward peace** (Sūrah 8:61); **So do not waver and call for peace while you have the upper hand** (Sūrah 47:35). Muḥammad himself, and some caliphs after him, practiced both policies, depending on the state of Islam; whether it was in a position of weakness or strength.

The concept of *jāhiliyyah* did not have much importance in traditional Islamic thought, due to a lack of objective necessity. However, newly fundamentalist Islam, which has been widely held for decades, is interested in reviving it in the face of the dominance of modern civilization and the clear decline in power of Muslim countries. This is why contemporary Islamists are interested in the non-chronological meaning of *al-jāhiliyyah* as a condition that characterizes either an individual or a society. It may be partial, related to a behavior or a specific characteristic, or total, related to the belief itself. In the latter case, the individual or society is taken out of Islam and considered unbelieving. An individual, society, or a state may commit an act of *al-jāhiliyyah*, and the individual may be considered a *Jāhili* person if their belief becomes contrary to the religion of Islam. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb identifies 128 aspects of *al-jāhiliyyah*, some of which relate to belief, others to acts of worship and others to specific behaviors, presenting them as matters in which the Prophet departed from the practices of the people of *jāhiliyyah*—both polytheists and People of the Book—



knowledge of which is indispensable for every Muslim. <sup>(539)</sup> The Ottoman hegemony in his time was accompanied by the supremacy of *Sufism* and its heresies, which Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb criticized in his treatise, which also includes a critique of some beliefs of the Shi'ites, the Mu'tazilites, and other sects.

Dominant Islamic thought, starting with Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī, then Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī, then the Quṭb brothers, and then various jihādī schools, is interested in *al-jāhiliyyah* as an objective state that characterizes entire social structures, states, and civilizations, including Islamic societies in name, according to the estimation of these schools. It is clear that the new addition produced by contemporary Islam is describing a society as a whole, or a specific system of life, as *jāhiliyyah*. In the context of jihād against modern ruling systems and social systems in Muslim countries, the concept of *al-jāhiliyyah* has recently expanded in response to the rise of modernity and secularism in the Islamic world.

Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī, regarded as one of Sayyid Quṭb's influential intellectual sources, outlined the mechanisms through which *al-Jāhiliyyah* could re-emerge in Islamic society after the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. This occurred through the introduction of cultural elements from non-Islamic civilizations, such as Greek philosophy, Persian and Indian literature and arts. This led to the infiltration of atheistic ideas and skeptical tendencies into the Islamic community.

By contrast, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī attributed it to the emergence of *jāhiliyyah* tendencies among the statesmen of the Islamic government in the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd eras, with the

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<sup>(539)</sup> 128 Aspects of *al-jāhiliyyah*.

exception of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz.<sup>(540)</sup> He also describes European societies in their entirety as *jāhiliyyah*.<sup>(541)</sup>

Sayyid Quṭb articulates the situation in clear and definitive terms. He argues that, upon examining the foundations of modern ways of living, it becomes evident that the entire world is immersed in *Jāhiliyyah*—ignorance of God's guidance. In his view, material comforts and technological advancements do not mitigate this ignorance, since it is rooted in rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth. By transferring one of God's supreme attributes—sovereignty—to human beings, modern systems effectively make some men lords over others. Unlike the more primitive forms of ancient *Jāhiliyyah*, contemporary ignorance manifests in the claim that the authority to create values, legislate collective behavior, and choose ways of life rests with human beings, independent of divine prescription. For Quṭb, the consequence of this rebellion is the oppression of God's creatures. He points to the degradation of ordinary individuals under communist systems and the exploitation of individuals and nations under capitalist systems as direct corollaries of denying God's authority and the dignity bestowed upon humanity by Him. In this formulation, both communism and capitalism are condemned as manifestations of modern *Jāhiliyyah*, united by their rejection of divine sovereignty.<sup>(542)</sup>

Sayyid Quṭb expands the definition of *Jāhiliyyah* to include not only non-Muslim societies but also Muslim ones. He argues that these communities ought to be regarded as *Jāhili* due to their social structures not being fully submitted to God, rather than because they engage in the worship of other deities or direct acts of devotion

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<sup>(540)</sup> *What Did The World Lose With the Decline of Muslims*, Vol. Three, the Islamic Era, Chapter Two, the Era of Islamic Leadership, the Decline of Islamic Life.

<sup>(541)</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. Three, Chapter Three, the Role of Ottoman Leadership, a paragraph titled: the Renaissance of *Jāhili* Europe and its Rapid Progress in Natural Sciences and Industries.

<sup>(542)</sup> *Milestones along the Way*.

towards anyone apart from God. Despite their professed belief in divine unity, they still delegate God's legislative authority to various other power sources. From these alternative authorities, they derived their systems, traditions, customs, laws, values, and standards, which subsequently influenced nearly every facet of life.  
(543)

For Quṭb, the decisive issue is not theological affirmation of God's unity but the practical question of sovereignty (*ḥākimiyyah*). By transferring legislative authority from God to human institutions, Muslim societies had, in his view, fallen into the same condition of ignorance as non-Muslim societies. This radical extension of *Jāhiliyyah* underscores Quṭb's uncompromising critique: Islam is not merely a matter of belief but of comprehensive submission to divine law, and any deviation from this principle amounts to rebellion against God's sovereignty. This stance serves as a prelude to asserting the necessity of a truly believing group to transform the entire world by restoring God's sovereignty on earth once again.

Dominant contemporary Islamic thought often portrays modern civilization as bankrupt—despite its material achievements—incapable of generating authentic values. For decades, this claim has been echoed with emphasis on the notion that values must be metaphysical in origin, descending from heaven and inseparably tied to religion, specifically Islam in its successive formulations. Within this framework, the world is depicted as though it were entirely devoid of any values outside the religious sphere. Even an enlightened intellectual like 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī claims that the West has built a world devoid of values, a world that is purely secular, linking the absence of values directly to secularism. He defines comprehensive secularism as the separation of human, moral, and religious values from the state, society, and life in its

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(543) Ibid.

public and private aspects, so that the entire world turns into usable material. According to him, comprehensive secularism is characterized by the absence of philosophical, moral, ethical, or normative references. Therefore, personal strength becomes the only criterion, as the strongest is the one capable of employing the world and others for their own benefit.<sup>(544)</sup> He does not recognize true values except sacred and religious ones, meaning that the absence of religion is the absence of values. This is the claim of Islamic schools as a whole, even those who call themselves the New Enlighteners, such as Adel Ḥusayn and his companions.

Thus, they conveniently forget great values, such as human rights, public freedoms, respect for others, respect for work and science, appreciation of the fine arts, and honesty. Moreover, can there truly be a society without values? Can a society resembling a jungle achieve progress? This argument ignores the existence of a value reference for modern culture, whose proponents declare that it is a human production, without claiming inspiration from heaven. In response to this oversight, some admit that there are noble values and virtuous morals among jāhilī people and jāhilī societies. What is missing, as they see it, is adherence to the provisions of Islam, nothing more and nothing less.

Muḥammad Quṭb makes clear that the Qur'ān does not describe the Arabs as ignorant because they lacked scientific knowledge in fields such as astronomy, chemistry, medicine, or political organization, nor because they were deficient in material production or devoid of virtues and values. If that had been the case, he argues, the Qur'ān would have offered them alternatives in those domains. Instead, their ignorance was defined by their submission to desire and their rejection of divine rule. In response,

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<sup>(544)</sup> *One of the Manifestations of Total Secularization within the Zionist State*, The Egyptian newspaper: “Al-Sha'b,” 1/3/2003.

the Qur'ān presents Islam as the sole alternative to this state of ignorance.<sup>(545)</sup>

In line with this perspective, Islamic thought generally does not acknowledge genuine values apart from those of religion—particularly its own—and rejects the idea of their relativity or social derivation. It holds instead that such values must stem from a divine, heavenly origin, wholly independent of human creation.

\* The difference between *al-jāhiliyyah* and unbelief: *Jāhiliyya* represents a broader and more practical concept than that of *kufr* (unbelief). It is broader insofar as it encompasses not only unbelief but also sinful conduct and violations of Islamic teachings that may not amount to outright unbelief. It is more practical in that it refers to concrete social conditions and observable behaviors, whereas unbelief is primarily associated with doctrinal positions and inner convictions.

In most Islamic traditions, unbelief is defined as the conscious rejection of one of the pillars of Islam or of what is considered necessarily known from the religion, whether expressed verbally or held inwardly. Committing major or minor sins does not, according to the majority of Muslims, amount to unbelief. Faith entails both verbal profession and internal assent, while lapses in practical compliance do not automatically expel an individual from the religion, as maintained by most jurists. Classical Islamic discourse distinguishes between major unbelief, minor unbelief, and the unbelief of disobedience.

By contrast, *al-jāhiliyya* functions as a broader and more situational concept. It may describe particular behaviors—even those of close Companions of the Prophet, such as Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, who was characterized in a ḥadīth as exhibiting a trace of *jāhiliyya*. It can also denote social conditions or entire communities,

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<sup>(545)</sup> *The Twentieth Century jāhiliyyah*, Introduction.

including Muslim societies that are not devoid of goodness -an Islamic saying adapted from the ideas of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī- including Muslim societies. While Sunni jurists generally reject declaring individuals or groups as unbelievers without explicit rejection of Islam, one of its pillars, or denial of what is necessarily known from the religion, it is comparatively easier to classify behaviors, systems, or contexts as manifestations of *jāhiliyya* when they diverge from accepted Islamic law. In this framework, unbelief always entails *jāhiliyya*, but *jāhiliyya* does not necessarily amount to unbelief

The antithesis of *al-jāhiliyyah* is not Islam itself, but rather the principle of *ḥākimiyyah* (divine sovereignty), which includes two inseparable dimensions: the moment of belief or faith, and the moment of compliance. It is a doctrine and practical action. The absence of belief clearly leads to unbelief; whereas action based on belief only attains the meaning of *ḥākimiyyah* when it follows from genuine faith. As for non-compliance, that is, not practicing the faith; one does not necessarily leave Islam according to most Islamic schools.

Thus, the notions of *al-ḥākimiyyah* and *al-Jāhiliyyah* refine the discourse by situating it within the broader struggle between divine sovereignty and unbelief. In this framework, the confrontation between *al-ḥākimiyyah* and *al-Jāhiliyyah* emerges as a more specific and sharply defined conflict than the general opposition between Islam and unbelief. At this moment in the conflict, the Islamic struggle against unbelief becomes a direct struggle for power—intellectual, political, or otherwise. Sovereignty in Islam, in almost all its schools, belongs to God, whether at the level of His rule of the universe, at the level of the system by which society runs, or at the level of individual behavior. All beliefs, values, systems, and ways of life must be derived from the law of God. In this sense, *ḥākimiyyah* belongs to God. In *al-jāhiliyyah*, divine sovereignty is set aside, whether partially or totally in favor of human authority. In the first



case, God is the ultimate goal; everything is done for the sake of Him, not for purely worldly or life goals. Concern for human life, the self, the family, and society are ultimately oriented toward worshiping God: **I have only created Jinns and men, to worship Me** (Sūrah 51:56). This means obeying Him and following the system of life that He has drawn. <sup>(546)</sup> This is the meaning that all Muslims believe in, both their elite and the general public. In *al-jāhiliyyah*, the goal is the human self; its enjoyment and happiness, regardless of the compatibility of the means with Islam.

It is indeed possible to declare those in *jāhiliyya* unbelievers, depending on the extent of their ignorance: **Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are the disbelievers** (Sūrah 5:44). They may also be judged depraved: **Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are the sinners** (Sūrah 5:47), or evildoers: **Those who do not rule according to what God revealed are the evildoers** (Sūrah 5:45). In all three cases, Islam cannot remain passive or coexist with such conditions; rather, it must resist.

Extremist currents in early Islam, such as the Kharijites, and contemporary movements, went to extremes in declaring *jāhiliyyan* individuals who profess Islam to be unbelievers. They extended this judgment to entire countries (as in the writings of al-Maudūdī and Sayyid Quṭb), to societies that consider themselves Islamic (Sayyid Quṭb), and even to Western civilization in its entirety. This prompted more moderate voices to disavow such claims and attempt to refute them. Yet, they still uphold the framework of *ḥākimiyyah* versus *al-jāhiliyyah*, and declare unbelievers those who

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<sup>(546)</sup> Sayyid Quṭb explains the verse as the meaning of worship must be broader and more comprehensive than just performing rituals.

deny God's sovereignty or accept the legitimacy of authority other than His. <sup>(547)</sup>

Al-Hudaybī, speaking on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood, argues that Sovereignty belongs to God alone. He alone has the authority of command and forbid. This is our belief. Yet Allah has left many worldly matters to be organized by human reason within the framework of the purposes He has defined, provided that we do not make the prohibited permissible or the permissible prohibited. In Sharī'ah, actions are obligatory, prohibited, or permissible. He gives examples of human legislation, such as traffic laws, pest control, and regulations for professions and businesses. <sup>(548)</sup> It is unlikely that al-Maudūdī, Quṭb, or others ever intended such technical matters to be considered divine legislation. Rather, they referred to the legislation of principles and values, which must form the framework of all other laws. Al-Hudaybī, however, sought to mitigate the intensity of extremist positions.

It appears that al-Hudaybī was chiefly endeavoring to moderate the radicalism of the extremists. The dispute between the two sides does not hinge upon the notions of *al-ḥākimiyyah* and *al-jāhiliyyah*, or on the imperative of resisting *al-jāhiliyyah* in favor of *al-ḥākimiyyah*. Rather, it lies in whether or not to declare as unbelievers those Muslims who profess Islam yet commit major sins or exhibit *jāhiliyyah* tendencies. This marks the difference between

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<sup>(547)</sup> For example, Ḥasan al-Hudaybī, in his work *Preachers not Judges*, responds to Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī by refuting the notion that one should be declared an unbeliever merely for reciting the two testimonies of faith without fully understanding their meaning (p. 14), or for embracing Islam without immediate practice (p. 15). He also rejects the idea of declaring someone an unbeliever for committing a major sin unless they explicitly justify it (p. 17), and dismisses the *takfir* of those compelled into unbelief or sin within certain limits, provided their faith remains intact (p. 42).

Nevertheless, he upholds the concept of *al-ḥākimiyyah*, albeit with certain modifications, and his position does not substantially diverge from that of al-Maudūdī on this issue. For more information, refer to al-Maudūdī's booklet: *Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms*.

<sup>(548)</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

the Muslim Brotherhood and jihādīst movements and leads to divergent methods of struggle.

Extremists exalt violence as a means to seize power, framing it as a struggle against unbelievers. Moderates, by contrast, work more quietly, employing propaganda, advice, and gradual reform, targeting Muslims deemed ignorant or misguided. Yet they also resort to violence against those they consider true unbelievers, and at times even against those they regard as being in *jāhiliyyah*. This occurred repeatedly—for example, in assassinations carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood, Ḥasan al-Bannā's praise of violence against bars, and his threats of armed resistance if Sharī'ah were not applied.<sup>(549)</sup> Moreover, issuing *takfīr* opinions against opponents, even those who profess the two testimonies, has been used to justify jihādīsts in granting themselves a license to kill. A notable case was Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's testimony in the Farag Foda trial.<sup>(550)</sup>

The notion of *al-jāhiliyyah* extends the arena of conflict beyond that of mere unbelief, rendering the struggle more practical in nature. The central concern is not simply whether individuals believe, but whether the Sharī'ah is applied. *Al-ḥākimiyyah* may be understood as a form of practical faith, insofar as it emphasizes the restoration of divine sovereignty through law. For both al-Maudūdī and Quṭb, *al-jāhiliyyah* was closely associated with unbelief and polytheism, whereby humans elevate other authorities above God to legislate for themselves. What is novel in this framework is that individuals are free to accept Islam when invited, yet in the struggle against *al-jāhiliyyah*; freedom is reserved for the proponents of the

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<sup>(549)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Our Invitation, Chapter titled: Brotherhood, Power, and Revolution.

<sup>(550)</sup> He issued a fatwā before the court permitting ordinary individuals to carry out prescribed punishments when obstructed by the authorities—even if this contravenes the rights of the latter—while maintaining that such individuals do not themselves deserve punishment. In effect, this ruling implied that those who killed Farag Foda should not be lawfully executed.

call, who bear the sacred duty of restoring God’s sovereignty in society as it exists in nature. Within this paradigm, jihād is framed as a purely defensive endeavor, aimed at eliminating human encroachment upon divine sovereignty, which is determined by nature, and reclaiming authority seized by transgressors. At this level of conflict, judgments of belief and unbelief are rendered more straightforward and aligned with traditional *fiqh*. *Takfīr* is no longer contingent upon inner conviction but is instead determined by outward behavior, thereby exceeding the conditions set by classical jurisprudence. It becomes practical *takfīr*. Although doctrinal *takfīr* is not excluded, *al-Jāhiliyyah* is generally accompanied by doctrinal unbelief among most people worldwide. Moreover, Sayyid Quṭb—the first Arab theorist to articulate the *ḥākimiyyah-Jāhiliyyah* nexus—explicitly describes the populations of Muslim countries as doctrinal unbelievers as well. <sup>(551)</sup>

The theme of governance versus ignorance brings to mind the idea put forward by Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr regarding the division of faith and disbelief into doctrinal and behavioral aspects. For Maṣṣūr, the behavioral dimension refers to adherence to universally recognized noble human values, whereas Islamists interpret it in terms of compliance with the norms of Islamic jurisprudence. In this framework, ignorance is defined as unbelief in these values specifically.

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## Chapter Nine

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<sup>(551)</sup> He states in “*The Milestones*,” “*We are also surrounded by al-jāhiliyyah today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper.*”

# THE HEAVENLY AND THE MUNDANE

*The advantage of Islamic civilization over European civilization is that the former is based on a balance between the mind and the heart, whereas the latter is based solely on the mind, whether it is mathematical logic or material interest*

Gamāl al-Bannā

Islamists often describe the world as divided, both culturally and politically, into *al-ḥākimiyyah* and *al-jāhiliyyah*. Leaving aside the more radical views of al-Mawdūdī and Sayyid Quṭb, *al-jāhiliyyah* is usually understood to encompass Western civilization and its extensions within the Abode of Islam. This civilization is commonly labeled as *dunyawī* (mundane), a term that here carries a negative meaning drawn from the idea that earthly life is inferior to the hereafter. As a result, modernity is portrayed as materialistic, spiritually empty, centered on pleasure, and devoid of higher values.

Adding to this disparagement is the claim that modernist ideas are imported, foreign in origin, and threatening to identity—arriving not for dialogue but for conflict. Islamists overlook the fact that their own religion is imported in relation to other societies, asserting instead that it came from heaven for all humanity. They also depict modernity as wholly destructive, ignoring that all ideas, by their nature, challenge or displace existing ones. Consequently, modern civilization is cast as an enemy, rather than as a system containing elements that might enrich or transcend Islamic culture.

Secularism is a constant target of Islamist critique, regarded as the essence of evil in modernity because it opposes *ḥākimiyyah*, the central idea of political Islam. The central argument is that

secularism emerged in the West within particular historical circumstances—conflicts between religious and temporal authority, and between the Church and science. Islamists claim these conditions do not apply in Muslim societies, where no such conflict exists, and therefore secularism is an alien, hostile import. Yet this claim is contradicted by the reality that Islamic authorities often prohibit teaching scientific theories such as evolution, and many Islamists insist the world emerged from nothing, despite the scientific principle that matter is neither created nor destroyed. Notably, Ibn Bāz, former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, who died in 1999, famously denied the rotation of the earth around the sun and disputed the moon landing, though he acknowledged the global consensus that the earth is geometrically spherical <sup>(552)</sup> Many contemporary scholars likewise oppose advances in biological sciences, including genetic engineering, cloning, and gene therapy. Some even accuse secularism of causing the West's moral decline, contrasting it with Islamic civilization, which they claim balances body and soul, mind and heart.

At its deepest level, mundanity presents man as the universe's center and the ultimate aim of civilization, in contrast to Islam's vision of worshipping God as the supreme purpose. Whereas modernity allows man to determine his desires and needs, Islam presents divine law—values, principles, and systems decreed by God—as the path to true happiness. Any attempt to define human goals apart from religion is considered an assault on God, and thus *jāhiliyyah*.

Thus Islam places God in confrontation with man within a complete contradiction. Indeed, even the very notion of God differs: in Western culture He is regarded as a support for man (though He was ultimately set aside from its calculations), whereas in Islam man is in service to God.

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<sup>(552)</sup> Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, *Hermeneutics of the Qur'ān*.



A defining characteristic of Islam, both past and present—setting aside the rationalist currents that were historically condemned as heretical by the majority—is its reliance on specific values claimed to be of divine origin as its fundamental reference point. The ultimate objective is the attainment of divine satisfaction, whereby the individual is left with no alternative but to operate within this rationale: reason is exercised strictly within the normative framework dictated by the divine. From this standpoint, the believer engages with the Other and with reality, whether social or natural. Since God in Islam represents absolute authority, Islam itself becomes the supreme value and the ultimate point of reference. Consequently, concepts such as justice, love, and freedom are not treated as relative or open to interpretation; rather, they are presented as absolute concepts with a single meaning—the one defined by the religious establishment.

In this regard, moderates and extremists differ little; the discourse is nearly identical, with variations only in tone and aggressiveness. Despite this, Islamists sometimes go beyond distinguishing value structures by source, and even compare religious and secular systems on purely secular grounds—contradicting their own premises.

The Islamists' stance on modernity can be summarized in three trends:

The first line of argument advanced by many Islamic thinkers is that modern civilization is devoid of higher values and principles, stripping humanity of its nobility, whereas earlier times under the Islamic State were morally superior and more humane. A widely supported viewpoint holds that Western civilization is essentially materialistic, while Islamic civilization is distinguished by its spiritual dimension, which renders it more balanced. These sentiments are reflected in the writings of Ḥasan al-Bannā, the prominent Muslim Brotherhood thinker. He contends that Western civilization, though founded upon material science, mechanical

knowledge, discovery, and invention, and though it inundates global markets with the products of technological progress, fails to provide the human soul with light, hope, or faith. In his analysis, it offers no path to comfort or tranquility for anxious souls, treating man as though he were a machine, and thus leaving him fatigued by purely material conditions. According to al-Bannā, Western life provides only material diversions—sins, desires, alcohol, women, and noisy entertainment—without addressing deeper human needs.

<sup>(553)</sup> By contrast, he argues that Islam offers a superior system of values, encompassing human brotherhood, peace, freedom, social justice, family, work, knowledge, order, duty, and religiosity, which he elaborates in detail as the foundation of a more humane and holistic civilization.<sup>(554)</sup>

Furthermore, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī argues that modern Europe has descended into a form of materialistic *jāhiliyyah*, stripped of the spiritual teachings, moral virtues, and humanitarian principles that the Prophet had left as a heritage. In his analysis, European civilization emphasizes pleasure and material gain in individual life, power and conquest in political life, and aggressive patriotism and extreme nationalism in social life. This orientation, he maintains, represents a rebellion against human nature and ethical values, privileging machines and technological advancement over higher purposes and neglecting the ultimate aims of existence. Nadawī further observes that Europe's relentless pursuit of survival, discovery, and experimentation, coupled with its disregard for moral education and spiritual cultivation, amounts to ingratitude toward the message of the prophets. By intensifying materialism and wielding immense power without religious motivation or moral restraint, Europe, in his view, resembles a rampaging force that oppresses the weak and devastates both

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<sup>(553)</sup> *Peace in Islam.*

<sup>(554)</sup> *Ibid.*

resources and generations. He concludes that the withdrawal of Muslims from active participation in worldly affairs, their abdication of global leadership and religious stewardship, and their negligence toward both religion and society, created the vacuum that enabled Europe to assume the leadership of nations and succeed them in directing the course of world history. <sup>(555)</sup>

Sayyid Quṭb characterizes modern civilization as a destructive force that undermines the essence of human identity. In his view, contemporary society reduces the individual to either a machine or an animal, thereby eroding the balance of human nature. He argues that humanity is rushing toward decline, and that prevailing ideologies have failed to safeguard human dignity or preserve authentic human characteristics. For Quṭb, this crisis underscores the necessity of establishing an Islamic society—not merely a religious aspiration, but a humanitarian necessity and an innate inevitability. Such a society, he maintains, is essential to prevent the annihilation of human qualities and the collapse of human life itself. Central to his critique is the claim that excluding religion from public and private life constitutes the primary cause of modern civilization's moral and existential decline.

In his book *Milestones*, Quṭb asserts that the Western world no longer possesses values to offer humanity. He strongly criticizes both capitalist and socialist systems, declaring that the time has come for Islam to assume leadership of humanity. Islam, he argues, is capable of providing entirely new values—authentic, positive, and realistic—unlike anything humanity has previously known.

'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī argues that Western political thought, despite its relative effectiveness in practical reality among Western societies, remains in dire need of rationalization due to the

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<sup>(555)</sup> *What did the World Lose with the Decline of Muslims*, Vol. Five, Islam's leadership of the world, Chapter One.

decline of humanism in favor of materialism—a point he frequently emphasizes.

Adel Ḥusayn describes European values—both before and after modernization—as fundamentally mundane and anthropocentric. He argues that European thought places man at the center of society and even the universe, thereby elevating the individual and his material needs as the standard for choices and behavior. From this orientation, values such as utility, sensual pleasure, individualism, and intense competition emerge and flourish. Ḥusayn maintains that these values are not abstract but are concretely reflected in social life, institutional arrangements, and the theories that articulate and justify them. In his analysis, the trajectory of European civilization thus reveals a consistent prioritization of material and individual concerns over transcendent or collective dimensions of human existence.<sup>(556)</sup>

Gamāl al-Bannā, an innovative Islamic thinker, argues in one of his writings that Western civilization has historically prioritized enjoyment, profit, power, freedom, and control as its greatest goals. He suggests that its ruling values are freedom, power, order, and law, while comparatively less emphasis is placed on values such as mercy, goodness, forgiveness, and justice. This characterization reflects al-Bannā's broader critique of Western modernity, which he views as materially driven and insufficiently attentive to moral or spiritual dimensions.<sup>(557)</sup> In his critique of Western civilization, Gamāl al-Bannā overlooks socialist thought and its contributions to values such as equality and justice. He does not address attempts to establish socialist commons, workers' revolutions with egalitarian goals, or policies that have been implemented in many Western countries to promote social security and fairness. These include equality before the law, minimum income guarantees, maximum

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<sup>(556)</sup> *Toward a New Arab Thought*, p. 32.

<sup>(557)</sup> *Our Position on Secularism, Nationalism, and Socialism*.

working hours, progressive taxation, and the establishment of numerous charities and welfare organizations, including those dedicated to animal welfare. Such ideas and practices can be interpreted as embodying values of mercy, equality, and justice, which al-Bannā claims are absent from Western civilization.

Second. Some scholars acknowledge the existence of high values in modernity, yet they ultimately affirm the *jāhiliyyah* of this civilization because its values do not derive from a divine source. What matters is not merely the presence of values but their origin, and identifying this origin is considered crucial. This sentiment is frequently reiterated in Islamic writings. One scholar admits that Western concepts undeniably encompass values related to justice, equality, and fairness, as defined by positive law. However, he argues that these are neither righteous nor the most suitable for human life, attributing this to their materialistic and atheistic origins. Such values are deemed mundane precisely because they stem from a non-divine source. <sup>(558)</sup>

Many contend that no human being exists without values and standards, but the distinction lies in their source: divine or human. This difference marks the boundary between prophethood and *ṭāghūt* (tyranny). <sup>(559)</sup> Deriving values from human sources is described as a path to domination, deification, bias, exploitation, and coercion. <sup>(560)</sup> Translated into objective language, this means

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<sup>(558)</sup> 'Awaḍ ibn Muḥammad al-Qarnī, *Secularism-Historical Development and Conceptual Foundations*.

<sup>(559)</sup> The term *ṭāghūt*, or tyrant, originally meant the devil, the priest, or the magician among ancient Arabs. It has also been said that the word was applied to the houses of idols. The word is derived from the root *ṭaghā*, meaning to transgress, exceed limits, or rebel. Recently, it has come to refer to anything or anyone worshipped instead of Allah, or anyone who accepts claims of divinity or authority that belong only to Allah. Examples include: *Shayṭān* (Satan), idols or false gods, tyrannical rulers who demand obedience beyond God's law, and sorcerers or individuals claiming supernatural powers.

<sup>(560)</sup> Aḥmad al-Raysūnī - Muḥammad al-Zuḥaylī - Muḥammad ibn Shabīr, *Human Rights as the Core of the Objectives of Islamic Law*.

that contemporary Islam insists values must be derived from it alone, claiming a divine origin. Acknowledging Muḥammad as the messenger of Islam, without positing divine descent for this role, implies that values in every era and context are ultimately human constructs. Accordingly, contention should center on the substance of values rather than their origin—a debate Islamists frequently evade, apprehensive of the vulnerability of their argumentation.

Third. From denying the existence of noble values in modernity to acknowledging them while employing polemical rhetoric against their human source, a hybrid idea emerges. It is embodied in the phrase attributed to a European convert to Islam: Praise be to God that I got to know Islam before I got to know the Muslims. Similarly, Muḥammad 'Abduh famously remarked that in the West he encountered Islam without Muslims, whereas upon his return to the East, he found Muslims without Islam. Muslim writers often use such statements to praise aspects of Western civilization—freedom, equality before the law, respect for rights—while claiming that these values are borrowed from Islam. They emphasize that the West also contains non-Islamic elements, such as alcohol consumption, atheism, and the public display of women. Many Islamists argue that Europe adopted its advanced systems of administration and organization from Islam. Moreover, some occasionally add that Islam established human rights fourteen centuries ago, whereas Europe only came to know them two centuries ago. In this sense, Islam is regarded as the origin of all that modernity has produced in terms of noble values, rationalized systems, and freedoms, so that every virtue is attributed to Islam, while every defect is ascribed to modernity.

Thus, Islamists are sometimes compelled, under the pressure of facts, to acknowledge the superiority of European cultural values, even though they classify them as *Jāhilī*. They resolve this discrepancy by asserting that the true, unimplemented Islam is the actual source of these values. Hence, unbelievers may practice



goodness despite their unbelief, but such goodness is ultimately derived from Islam.

The distinction between the heavenly and the mundane recalls a central idea in mainstream Islamic thought: unbelievers do not possess good deeds. Good and evil are judged not by their content but by their origin. What is good is what the Sharī'ah has decreed; what is evil is what humans themselves have decided.

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## Chapter Ten

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAM'S ABSOLUTE SUPERIORITY

*I am the one whose verses let the blind behold, and whose words make the deaf listen*

Al-Mutanabbī

### 1. The Claim of Islamic Superiority:

The derivation of values from religion is presented as conferring absolute superiority. This is regarded as the primary reason for the

supremacy of Islamic values. These values are portrayed as fixed and absolute, grounded in the notion of absolute justice.

Islamists, however, have often resorted—as noted briefly in the previous chapter—to comparing the divine with the mundane in order to demonstrate the superiority of their worldly values, should their concepts be adopted, over those of modern civilization in general. This comparison has been advanced in various ways.

\* A further line of argument advanced by some Islamic thinkers is the claim that Islamic law is inherently more moral than man-made law, though such assertions are often presented without substantiating evidence. An illustrative example is found in the writings of Tāriq al-Bishrī,<sup>(561)</sup> who maintains that Sharī'ah has never established rights arising from corrupt moral behavior, nor permitted blessings to become curses, in contrast to man-made law, which at times recognizes usurpation as a legitimate source of kingship. Yet, al-Bishrī does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes “moral behavior,” a concept that is inherently relative and subject to interpretation. This lack of definitional precision weakens the claim, as it leaves the notion of morality unexamined and dependent on subjective assumptions rather than rigorous argumentation.

It can be argued with confidence that what Islamic jurisprudence permits—such as the sexual appropriation of captive women, the ownership of slaves, and the execution of apostates, among many other practices—bears no relation to morality from a modern humanistic perspective. Furthermore, if the famous claim that Islam is valid for all times is taken seriously, all such practices remain conceptually legitimate within contemporary Islamic thought. Moreover, while some thinkers criticize man-made law for recognizing usurpation as a source of kingship, classical Islamic jurisprudence itself explicitly sanctions the seizure of power. This

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<sup>(561)</sup> *Secular-Islamic Dialogue*, p. 35.

justification was applied to the rule of the Umayyads and later the 'Abbāsids, and even, according to some interpretations, to the succession of Abū Bakr (see chapter seven). Jurists also permit the appropriation of property belonging to non-covenant unbelievers during raids, legitimizing the plunder of lands and wealth, the imposition of jizyah and kharāj, and the enslavement and sale of captives in slave markets. These practices are defended through interpretations of sacred texts and jurisprudential opinions.

\* It is a fundamental tenet in Islam that committed Muslims will be admitted to Paradise on the Day of Resurrection. Simultaneously, Islam presents itself as offering practical benefits in this life; its teachings are said to provide advantages for individuals in this world as well. Islamic preachers make extensive efforts to demonstrate these benefits, often employing a secular approach that is theoretically rejected by most Muslims. Examples include strenuous attempts to prove the health benefits of fasting and prayer. Such claims are easily refuted and tend to persuade only those already predisposed to believe in Islam's superiority. For instance, the alleged health benefits of fasting do not necessarily justify fasting during specific hours or under extreme conditions. Dehydration in high temperatures and hunger in winter can be harmful, and medical professionals recognize that prolonged fasting may lead to serious complications. Similarly, simplistic efforts are made to demonstrate the social and health advantages of wearing the veil. A particularly unusual case involves a fabricated reference to a supposed scientific study claiming that cancer spreads rapidly in Europe due to women's exposure of their bodies—an argument that would logically require men to cover themselves as well.<sup>(562)</sup>

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<sup>(562)</sup> Quoted by the author (unnamed) from Muḥammad Kamel 'Abd al-Ṣamad's, *Scientific Miracles in Islam: The Prophetic Sunnah*. However, the account omits established medical knowledge regarding melanoma. Contemporary research indicates that melanoma is associated with genetic predisposition, environmental factors, and excessive sun

Other claims include the alleged superiority of the so-called Islamic economy over capitalist and socialist systems, often without evidence. Critics of banking highlight usury, while *zakāt* is portrayed as the finest system of social solidarity, as though taxation and forms of solidarity have not existed elsewhere, which is historically inaccurate.

This way of thinking can transcend Islamic centralism, since secular human criteria are used to evaluate Islam. Yet Islamists rarely sustain this “mundane” dialogue, as it fails to prove Islam’s superiority. They soon retreat to their original logic: Islam is superior because it is divine, not mundane, and because of a wisdom known only to God, who has charted for humanity the path to happiness.

## **2. Claims of Scientific Excellence:**

Some Islamists attribute the development of modern science to the influence of Islam. They argue that Islam preserved elements of Greek and Roman culture, which later facilitated Europe’s material advancement. The scientific achievements of Muslims during the Middle Ages, when Europe was in a period of decline, are also cited as contributions to the progress of science. Furthermore, it is often claimed that the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth contain knowledge consistent with modern scientific discoveries.

It is worth noting, however, that the scientific prominence of Muslim scholars over their Western counterparts emerged during the ‘Abbāsīd era. This was a period when non-Arabs—frequently accused of populism, heresy, or unbelief—played significant roles in governance. The caliphs themselves were not strictly committed to

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exposure—particularly sunburns—as well as the use of methoxsalen and lighter skin pigmentation. Epidemiological data show that the incidence of melanoma is approximately twenty times higher among white individuals compared to black individuals within the same population (both unveiled). Notably, the prevalence of melanoma has been declining since the 1990s. Multiple medical articles, [www.uptodate.com](http://www.uptodate.com).

the idea of *ḥākimiyyah* and frequently violated Islamic injunctions. In this period, a wide gap existed between Islamic culture and the policies of rulers, who at times persecuted jurists and religious scholars. The sciences and arts were largely advanced by innovators and thinkers accused of heresy, rather than by committed fundamentalists. Many of the great scholars, philosophers, and poets of Islam's prosperous era—those who shaped what is known as Islamic civilization—were skeptics or critics of traditional religious thought.

Prominent figures include Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, as well as Ibn Rushd, whom rulers and common people alike persecuted, accusing him of heresy and unbelief. When he fled to the city of Fez city in 1197 CE, the crowd seized him and placed him at the entrance of the mosque, where he was subjected to public humiliation as people spat at him upon entering and leaving.<sup>(563)</sup> Other notable figures include Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū 'Īsā al-Warrāq, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, al-Kindī, and Ibn Ṭufayl. Among them, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī stands out as one of the most prominent scholars in Islamic history and beyond. He was not an atheist, but he rejected organized religion altogether. Literary and philosophical figures such as al-Mutanabbī, Ibn al-Muqaffa', Ibn 'Arabī, al-Ḥallāj, Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, 'Umar al-Khayyām, and others were likewise accused of heresy. Books authored by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*,<sup>(564)</sup> the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arīs, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd were often banned or burned. Islamists nonetheless take pride in the civilization created by these figures, considering them Muslims in the context of

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<sup>(563)</sup> Shahīr Aḥmad Naṣr, *Ibn Rushd: The Arabs' Lost Opportunity*.

<sup>(564)</sup> *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*: (Brethren of Purity) refers to a secretive group of Muslim intellectuals active in Baṣra during the 10th century CE. They are best known for compiling the encyclopedic work *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity), a collection of 52 treatises covering philosophy, mathematics, natural sciences, music, ethics, and theology.

cultural pride, yet unbelievers in the context of their philosophical ideas—a contradiction often overlooked.<sup>(565)</sup>

The era of Hārūn al-Rashīd witnessed the greatest scientific renaissance of the Islamic state, even though the caliph himself was immersed in entertainment and prohibited pleasures, according to the expression of Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī.<sup>(566)</sup> By contrast, a caliph described as the most religiously strict—whom Muḥammad himself was said to have nominated for prophethood had it been possible<sup>(567)</sup>—ordered the destruction of libraries in conquered lands such as Egypt<sup>(568),(569)</sup> and Persia.<sup>(570)</sup> One source even reported that books were used to heat water in public baths.<sup>(571)</sup>

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<sup>(565)</sup> As an example, an article (without writer's name) titled *Islamic Civilization*, in which the writer expresses pride in the scholars and philosophers whom he considers to be Muslims and attributes their accomplishments to the Islamic religion, which “positive civilizations” aim to separate from the state.

<sup>(566)</sup> Cited from al-Suyūfī, *History of the Caliphs*, No. 1, p. 95.

<sup>(567)</sup> From the Aḥādīth: **If there was a Prophet after me, he would be 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -17076), and it is repeated in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (3686).

<sup>(568)</sup> Al-Maqrīzī mentioned the pillar column in Alexandria, stating: “*It is mentioned that this column was one of the columns that supported Aristotle's Hall, where wisdom was taught, and that it was a house of knowledge containing a library that was burned by 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ at the behest of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.*” *Al-Mawa'iz wa al-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khitat wa al-Athar* [Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments], Vol. One, p. 297.

<sup>(569)</sup> Al-Baghdadī mentioned: “*I also saw around the pillars of these columns good remains, some of them intact and some of them broken. It appears that they were roofed, and the columns supported the roof, with pillars having a dome on them for support. I see that it is the hallway where Aristotle and his followers used to study, and it is the house of knowledge that Alexander built. When he built his city, there was a library of books that 'Umar ibn al-'Āṣ burned with 'Umar's permission.*” *Al-Ifāda wa al-I'tibār fī al-Umūr al-Mushāhada wa al-Ḥawāḍith al-Mu'āyana bi-Arḍ Misr* [Lessons and Considerations from Observed Affairs and Incidents in Egypt], p. 28.

<sup>(570)</sup> Ibn Khaldūn recorded “*However, when Muslims conquered Persia and acquired countless books and papers of their knowledge, Sa'd ibn Abū Waqqas wrote to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to ask for his permission regarding them and to convey them to the Muslims. So 'Umar wrote to him to throw them into water. If what is in them is guidance, then God has guided us with more guidance than them, and if it is misguidance, then God has sufficed us.*



While contemporary Islamic thinkers in particular, as well as many of the earlier ones, condemn Greek philosophy and other European traditions—considering them foreign to pure Islam and the root of evil in modern Western culture—they simultaneously take pride in the fact that Westerners borrowed much of the sciences and the experimental method from Muslims. They overlook, however, that part of the credit for what Muslim scholars achieved in the field of the physical sciences goes back to those rational sciences within the European heritage. Yet they always attribute merit to Islam and deficiency to the Other.

The works of jurists, both classical and modern, abound with condemnations of philosophy and logic, even though jurists themselves employ these tools in formulating rulings. However,

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*So they threw them into water or into fire, and the Persian knowledge in them was no longer able to reach us.” Book of Lessons and Record of Beginnings and Events, p. 631.*

<sup>(571)</sup> Some historians have reported this account, as stated in *The Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Egyptian Coptic History*: A scholar named John Philoponus, known to Arabs as “Yahya the Grammarian,” asked ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to benefit from the books stored in the Roman repositories. ‘Amr informed the Caliph about the library, and the Caliph replied: *“If the books contain what agrees with the Book of God, then they are unnecessary. If they contain what contradicts the Book of God, then go ahead and burn them.”* Consequently, ‘Amr distributed the papyrus rolls to 4,000 baths in Alexandria to heat the water, and this continued for six months due to their abundance. The encyclopedia adds that Muslim historians such as ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Baghdadī and Ibn al-Qiftī narrated this story, and Abū al-Faraj ibn al-‘Abrī transmitted it from them.

Moreover, the author of *The History of the Coptic Church*, Mansī Youḥanna, reported: *“Ibn al-Qiftī, Abū al-Faraj al-Maltī, and others mentioned that when ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ conquered Alexandria, among its scholars was a man called Youḥanna the Grammarian. ‘Amr honored him and listened to his philosophical ideas, which both fascinated and unsettled him. John (Yahya) later said to ‘Amr: You have sealed the records of Alexandria; if there is benefit in them, we will not oppose you, but if not, we are more entitled to them. He requested the books of wisdom in the royal treasures. ‘Amr replied that he could not act without the permission of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. When ‘Umar was consulted, he responded: As for the books you mentioned, if they agree with the Qur’ān, they are unnecessary; if they contradict it, they are also unnecessary, so they should be destroyed. Thus, ‘Amr dispersed them among the baths of Alexandria, where they were burned in the furnaces, and they were exhausted after six months.”* Cited from Jaris al-Ḥamīs, *Sources of Contemporary Terrorism*.

they subject them to the approach of transmission, using analogical deduction as an alternative to logical reasoning. Extended reliance on logic was seen as colliding with statements regarding the unseen, which leads scholars to restrict its use to certain concepts while simultaneously criticizing it. Ibn Taymiyyah, widely recognized as the “Shaykh of Islam,” issued a fatwā entitled *Logic* in which he categorically prohibited the discipline and condemned its practitioners. He noted that Muslim scholars and religious leaders had consistently disparaged logic and those who pursued it, and he referred to a fatwā issued by later authorities in which prominent figures—including Imāms from the Shāfi’ī and Ḥanafī traditions—expressed strong opposition, calling for its prohibition and even punishment of its adherents.

One of the most influential Muslim thinkers, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, belittled the importance of the physical sciences: “*There are three types of sciences: Purely rational sciences, which are not encouraged or recommended by Islamic law, such as arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and other similar sciences, as they are prone to false suspicions... Sciences deemed true yet without benefit... Purely narrative sciences, like aḥādīth and exegeses, are easy, as they are equal in their independence. The strength of memorization is sufficient in transmission, and there is no room for reason in them. The most honorable sciences are those in which reason and hearing are combined, such as knowledge of fiqh and its principles.*” <sup>(572)</sup>

The fate of Ibn Ḥazm’s thought was not better than the Mu’tazilites thought. He was disqualified due to his adoption of logical analogy and his rejection of jurisprudential analogy.

In the history of early and contemporary Islamic thought, religious “science” is considered superior to physical and social sciences, by both the elite and the public. In Islamic intellectual tradition, the word “scientist” does not carry the modern meaning of someone working in physics, chemistry, or biology. Instead, it

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<sup>(572)</sup> *Al-Mustasfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl* [The Quintessence of Principles of Jurisprudence], No. 1, p. 4.

usually refers to a religious scholar — someone deeply versed in the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *kalām* (theology). So when classical texts mention a “‘ālim” (often translated as “scientist”), they mean a learned person in religious sciences, not a practitioner of experimental science as understood today. Over time, the term broadened in some contexts to include scholars of philosophy, medicine, and natural sciences, but its core meaning remained tied to religious knowledge. Islamists often claim that Islam encourages the pursuit of knowledge, even in China, and contemplation of the heavens, the earth, and creatures. Yet religious knowledge remains the priority and enjoys greater respect than worldly sciences. This explains the persistence of supernatural interpretations of certain natural phenomena—such as earthquakes and hurricanes—and even of everyday events like social and political changes, or crimes, whether among ordinary Muslims or many of their elites.<sup>(573)</sup>

Contemporary Islamist writers and preachers often attempt to diminish the value of Western scientific achievements. They emphasize what they call the “scientific miracles” of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, asserting that modern scientific and technological progress has been anticipated by Muslims for fourteen centuries. According to this view, Europe possesses no real scientific

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<sup>(573)</sup> For example, the East Asian tsunami in 2004 was interpreted as divine retaliation against the unbelievers. When it was discovered that it mainly affected Muslims, it was said that it was divine punishment for them because of the tourism they permitted.

Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muqbil ibn Ḥadī Wadā'ī, a Yemenī Wahhābī scholar, in his book *Elucidation of the Causes of Earthquakes and a Refutation of Atheistic Misinterpretations*, criticizes those who explain earthquakes in purely materialistic terms, accusing them of unbelief. He explains earthquakes as either divine punishment or a test for believers, based on the Qur'ān and Sunnah. He states: “*Whoever attributes events to nature and claims they are natural occurrences—if he implies that nature governs affairs—he is considered an unbeliever.*” He also supports this view by citing verses and Aḥādīth affirming that God alone directly disposes of the affairs of nature.

advantage over Islam.<sup>(574)</sup> They argue that the Qur'ān and the aḥādīth contain references to diverse scientific fields—such as the Big Bang theory, gene therapy, astronomy, marine sciences, anatomy, embryology, history, geography, geology, social sciences, legislation, and even the structural miraculousness of letters.<sup>(575)</sup> In reality, contemporary Muslims have not in fact surpassed the West nor extracted science from the Qur'ān. The fault, according to some claims, lies in foreign conspiracies, the penetration of unbelievers, and their control over Muslim lands—not in religion itself, which is said to contain all the reasons for progress. Yet no scientific discovery has ever been directly derived from Qur'ānic statements, despite the scientific prominence of Muslims during the Middle Ages and the supremacy of the Islamic Empire for centuries. Notably, none of the scholars of that prosperous era claimed to have extracted the foundations of modern scientific theories from the Qur'ān or Prophetic Tradition. Instead, many engaged with philosophy and Aristotelian logic, which led certain jurists and preachers to accuse them of unbelief. To this day, no contemporary scholar has conducted genuine scientific research, published in a respected journal, to prove the validity of any alleged Qur'ānic scientific theory. What is often presented in this regard remains mere absurdity.

Zaghloul al-Naggar and other proponents of scientific *i'jāz* (miraculousness) claim that Muslim researchers conducted experiments involving flies dipped into drinks, allegedly demonstrating the absence of pathogenic microbes and thereby confirming the authenticity of the “Ḥadīth of the Fly.” However,

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<sup>(574)</sup> Aḥmad Shawqī Ibrāhīm, *The Scientific Method in the Study of Scientific Miracles in the Qur'ān and Sunnah*.

<sup>(575)</sup> The most prominent exponent of the scientific miracle of the Qur'ān at the present time is Zaghloul al-Naggar. He has many articles published in one volume. Many preceded him, such as Muḥammad 'Abduh, Wahid al-Dīn Khān, Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī, 'Abd al-Razzaq Nofal, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Khaṭīb, Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd and Ṭanṭawī Jawhary.

these accounts do not provide publication details or accessible data, and scholars note the absence of verifiable evidence supporting such claims. <sup>(576)</sup> Some proponents of scientific *i'jāz* claim that fly farms exist in Germany where antibacterial drugs are produced and sold at high prices. However, no verifiable sources, publications, or institutional references are provided to substantiate this claim, and scholars note the absence of evidence in peer-reviewed scientific literature. <sup>(577)</sup>

Another author published a lengthy article titled *Camel's Urine between Islam and Modern Science*, claiming that research conducted in Sudan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia demonstrates significant benefits of camel urine and milk in treating difficult diseases, including diabetes, liver cirrhosis, eczema, allergies, wounds, burns, acne, nail injuries, cancer, and more. <sup>(578)</sup> If such claims are true, they should cause a global uproar among physicians and the public. Medicine remains powerless against diseases such as cancer and cirrhosis of the liver; if camel urine truly offers a cure, the entire world would be shaken—yet this does not occur.

It was also alleged that a Pakistani biologist, Aḥmad Khān, discovered Qur'ānic verses embedded in human DNA. These examples seem to reflect a state of religious mania. <sup>(579)</sup> The

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<sup>(576)</sup> *Al-Ahrām* Newspaper, November 11, 2003.

<sup>(577)</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Scientific Miracles in the Qur'ān and Sunnah*, prepared by: Al-Fallujah, *The Miracle of the Qur'ān in Flies*, prepared by: Firas Nour al-Ḥaq.

<sup>(578)</sup> The writer is called Abū Bakr, and the study referred to is titled *Camel Urine between Islam and Modern Science*.

<sup>(579)</sup> *Genetics and the Holy Qur'ān*,

<http://www.geocities.com/freethoughtMakkah/dnasri.html>

This topic completely disappeared from the internet after the publication of this book. It seems that this biologist did not exist at all. There is a nuclear scientist and another deceased religious scientist with the same name. It seems that what happened is a rumor spread by Islamists who support scientific miracles.

discourse on “scientific miracles” in the Qur’ān often relies on theories originally formulated by non-believers. In other words, the Qur’ān is said to contain scientific facts discovered only after its revelation. Claims of miracles validated by Muslim scholars based on Qur’ānic assumptions or aḥādīth are often similar to the ḥadīth about flies mentioned earlier. Some of these claims may not constitute miracles at all, such as the benefits of cupping and other traditional medical practices, which were known to ancient peoples and were not unique to Prophets.

What is particularly noteworthy is that scientific exegesis of the Qur’ān tends to shift in accordance with changes in scientific theory. Sayyid Quṭb himself acknowledges this instability, stressing that he avoids interpreting Qur’ānic verses through the lens of human scientific theories, since such theories may be correct at one point but later disproven.<sup>(580)</sup> Nevertheless, he ultimately engages in scientific interpretation, presenting supposed miracles across many sections of his work. He even admits this tendency when he links a Qur’ānic statement to the observable fact of the earth’s spherical shape, conceding that the verse compels him to make such a connection.<sup>(581)</sup>

Some exegetes and scholars categorically reject the notion of so-called “scientific miraculousness” in the Qur’an. Among them is Maḥmūd Shaltūt, who dismisses such claims as unfounded. Furthermore, the specificities of these purported miracles appear wholly capricious to any rigorous researcher, or even to a conscientious student, given their lack of methodological rigor. A number of writers—including some Islamists—comment critically on this trend. For instance, Bint al-Shaṭī' offered a sharp critique in the 1970s, targeting one of the leading advocates of scientific

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<sup>(580)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur’ān*, Sūrah 39.

<sup>(581)</sup> *Ibid.*



miracles at the time, Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, and underscoring the intellectual weaknesses of his approach.<sup>(582)</sup>

Islamic centralism reproduces mechanisms similar to those practiced by European centralism, particularly through the attribution of scientific discoveries developed in the West to Islam. This approach reflects an attempt to assert a civilizational precedence or epistemic authority for Islam in the field of science. Simultaneously, however, it reiterates the logic of cultural hegemony characteristic of European centralism, whereby the achievements of others are reinterpreted and incorporated into the framework of one's own civilizational identity. Consequently, this discourse raises questions about the objectivity of attributing modern scientific developments to Islamic references, and whether such claims represent an accurate historical reading or merely a reproduction of an identity-based narrative aimed at reinforcing cultural and religious legitimacy.

A striking example of this phenomenon is found in the statements of the well-known preacher Aḥmad Deedāt, who suggests that Western scientists may have secretly derived their cosmological views from Qur'ānic verses such as Sūrah 36:38–40: **The sun also runs its set course: that is laid down by the will of the Almighty, the All- Knowing \* And for the moon, We have determined phases until it finally becomes like an old date stalk.\* Neither the sun can overtake the moon, nor can the night outrun the day. Each floats in its own orbit.**<sup>(583)</sup> While such claims are rhetorically powerful, they lack methodological rigor and appear more apologetic than scholarly, thereby raising questions about the intellectual credibility of the scientific miraculousness discourse.

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<sup>(582)</sup> For example, Khālid Montaṣer, *The Myth of Scientific Miracles in the Qur'ān, The Scientific Miracle in the Qur'ān*, a collection of responses on: crimespeak@xoommail. Com and another on: <http://answering-islam.org.uk>.

<sup>(583)</sup> *Al-Qur'ān; the Ultimate Miracle*, pp.31-32.

In addition to the physical sciences, Islam presents the Qur'ān as the Book that contains everything, according to its own statements: **We have bestowed from on high upon you the Book to make everything clear, to provide guidance and grace and to give good news to those who submit themselves to God (Sūrah 16:89); We have not neglected anything in the Book (Surah 6:38).**<sup>(584)</sup> This notion emerged early in Islam. For example, Abū Bakr is reported to have said: *“If I had lost a camel’s headband, I would have found it in the Book of God.”* Throughout history, Muslims have believed that the Qur'ān encompasses everything, though not in detail. Consequently, the public often accepts claims of scientific miracles without scrutiny. For instance, the long-established Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahrām* devoted a weekly page to Zaghoul al-Naggar’s writings on the “scientific miracle in the Qur'ān,” reflecting popular enthusiasm.

Islamic institutions also embrace the issue. The First International Conference on Scientific Miracles in the Qur'ān and Sunnah was held in Islamabad in 1987, jointly sponsored by the Islamic International University, the International Authority for Scientific Miracles, and the Muslim World League. It gathered 228 scientists from 52 countries, with 160 observers and 78 papers selected from more than 500 submissions across 15 scientific fields.<sup>(585)</sup>

The declining ability of preachers to persuade people of Islam through traditional methods—which appear to have lost their

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<sup>(584)</sup> Al-Suyūṭī in his exegesis of the Qur'ān explained it as follows: *“Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abū Hatīm narrated on the authority of Ibn Zayd... he said: there is nothing that is not in that Book.”* Al-Tha'alabī in his interpretation said: *“The Book refers to the Qur'ān, which is what is required by the system of meaning in these verses.”* Moreover, Ibn Kathīr in his interpretation states: *“We have not neglected anything in the Books, meaning everyone’s knowledge is with God, and no one forgets from all of them his provision and management, whether it is on land or at sea.”*

<sup>(585)</sup> Muḥammad al-Amīn Wild al-Shaykh, *Overview of the Scientific Exegesis of the Qur'ān between Advocates and Critics*.

appeal—especially outside the Islamic world, drives them to adopt “scientific miracles” as an alternative weapon. A practical example is Aḥmad Deedāt’s book *Al Qur’ān; the Ultimate Miracle*, where he begins by arguing that Muḥammad, though illiterate, produced a book consistent with itself. Finding these arguments insufficient, he resorts to claims of scientific miracles, despite his evident lack of expertise in the physical sciences. This approach demands acknowledgment of the Qur’ān’s divine source and acceptance of its contents according to the exegesis of particular Islamic groups, rather than engaging with its ideas as intellectual discourse.

Thus, preachers avoid engaging in dialogue about the substance of Islam by focusing instead on proving its miraculous nature through a few verses—detached from the ideas it offers regarding individual conduct and the organization of life, which have largely lost their persuasive and attractive power for most people. This seems to be what Sayyid Quṭb recognized, as he insisted in his writings on beginning with instilling faith in people’s hearts, as a prelude to accepting everything in Islam; that is, first compelling them to embrace the principle of *ḥākimiyya* (God’s sovereignty), and then to accept His commands.

Over time, scholars, rationalists, secularists, and philosophers have attempted diverse exegeses of the sacred text. Yet conservative social classes and their elites often prevail, reinforcing narrower and more rigid readings. Historically, Islamists did not emphasize scientific miracles, nor did they seek to adapt European knowledge to demonstrate the precedence of religious texts, partly because of their community’s political, military, and scientific superiority. In contrast, contemporary Islam faces overwhelming Western dominance, internal decline, and Eurocentrism. Proponents now seek illusory superiority to compensate for real-world failures, as their societies struggle to keep pace with global scientific progress and are increasingly marginalized.

The stagnation of contemporary Islamic currents' propositions is attributed to the closure of their intellectual framework around specific historical readings. This leads to the adoption of ineffective defensive strategies instead of a comprehensive critical self-review and the utilization of civilizational models that achieved developmental leaps by transcending rigid ideologies.

### 3. Islam as the Normative Standard:

\* A third argument advanced by many Islamic scholars is that Islam constitutes the ultimate standard of values. This position raises the broader question of whether values can be ranked as “better” or “worse,” and whether such a hierarchy is intellectually useful. For the majority of Islamic scholars, the answer is affirmative: values are derived from religion, and outside of religion—particularly Islam—there can be no truly good values. Within this framework, what is considered “good” in Western civilization is understood either as originally stemming from Islam or as having been discovered belatedly, centuries after Islam had already articulated it. Consequently, scholars argue that if Western societies were to follow the path of true religion, they would save themselves the effort of trial and error and avoid the consequences of misguidance.

Islamist thinkers frequently claim that Islam equalizes human beings, grounding this assertion in Qur'ānic verses and in numerous aḥādīth that establish the universality of the call to Islam and the prohibition against discrimination among human beings. These include a tradition such as: “**People are equal like the teeth of a comb,**” and “**There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab except through piety.**” Such texts are interpreted as affirmations of Islam's universal advocacy and its rejection of 'asabiyyah (tribalism/ communal identity).

Yet, Islam's preference for some individuals over others ultimately rests on a single criterion: *taqwā* (piety). This principle is

explicitly articulated in the Qur'ān, Sūrah 49:13: **We have made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know one another. The most honorable of you in the sight of God are those who are most pious..** The verse promotes unity and mutual recognition among diverse groups, while simultaneously establishing piety as the standard of excellence.

Classical and modern exegetes consistently reinforce this interpretation. Al-Ṭabarī explains that the most honorable in God's sight is the one who fulfills divine duties and avoids sins, not the one with the largest household or community. Similarly, the contemporary Saudi scholar 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa'dī emphasizes that true honor lies in obedience to God and refraining from sin, rather than kinship, lineage, or social prestige.<sup>(586)</sup> Thus, while Islam affirms human equality in principle, it introduces a hierarchy based on moral and spiritual devotion, making piety the decisive measure of human distinction.

However, the linguistic meaning of the word is to take shelter or protect something. It is defined by the *Dictionary of Language Principles* as follows: “Protecting something from something with something else, fear God, that is, keep a buffer between you and Him. The Prophet said: *Protect yourself from Hellfire even if it is with half a date.*”

Piety, as stated in prophetic traditions, is to avoid polytheism: **He bound them to the word of piety, saying: There is no god but God) Musnad Aḥmad -20875). And in another one: God Almighty said, I am worthy of piety, whoever masters me and does not make a god with me, then he is worthy of being forgiven (Musnad Aḥmad -12188). It is also considered faith: He told us: Islam is open, and faith is in the heart. Then he pointed with his hand to his chest three times and said: Piety is here, piety is here (Musnad Aḥmad -12128). Rather it is the pinnacle of faith: Ibn 'Umar said: A servant**

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<sup>(586)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Naṣir al-Sa'dī, *Taysir al-Karim al-Mannan fī Tafsīr Kalam al-Raḥmān* [in the Exegesis of the Speech of the Most Merciful].

does not attain the true reality of taqwā (piety) until he refrains from that which arouses doubt within his heart (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book of faith). This meaning is mentioned repeatedly in prophetic traditions. Piety is different from behavior; its place is the heart, according to aḥādīth.

The fundamental principle is that human distinction lies in piety and faith, which transcend the formal boundaries of Islam. While Islam, as articulated by most of its thinkers and practiced by the majority of Muslims, is often reduced to verbal expressions and ritual observances, faith is rooted in the heart. It signifies reverence for God and the commitment to act in ways that safeguard one from His retribution.

Therefore, believers' conduct is not motivated by material or moral gains but by the pursuit of God's satisfaction, which requires carrying out His instructions as they are. Naturally, a believer is also a Muslim, adhering to Islam whether before or after the message of Muḥammad.

Piety itself has degrees. People differ in their loyalty to God according to their faith and devotion, just as they differ in their hostility toward Him according to their unbelief.

\* Prevailing Islamic thought generally refuses to adopt any external standard for evaluating its content. Islam is presented as the absolute criterion for truth precisely because it is regarded as the absolute Truth. Within this framework, the Islamic message is understood to transcend historical and cultural contingencies, positioning itself as the universal measure against which all other systems must be judged. One Shi'ite writer emphasizes that the Islamic message is distinguished by what he terms the "cubic" dimension, a formulation that conveys its three defining characteristics: eternity, comprehensiveness, and universality. This formulation underscores the conviction that Islam is timeless in scope, complete in its coverage of human life, and universally



applicable across peoples and societies. <sup>(587)</sup> The Qur'ān determines that it **is the Book in which there is no doubt, a guide for the righteous.** (Sūrah 2:2). All its provisions are inherently significant because they are divine, regardless of their opposition to those deemed unbelievers. They are regarded as the greatest and most humane, not for serving human interests directly, but because they embody God's rule—through which human welfare is ultimately realized, even if unnoticed. However, God's wisdom is above all wisdom. Humans also achieve their happiness in this world and the hereafter through it. Anyone who is hurt and upset by those provisions, or by some of them, is an unbeliever and is therefore following Satan. Slogans such as human rights and democracy are acceptable if they are consistent with Sharī'ah law, but they are not a standard for judging the latter. The roots of this principle are found in what was mentioned before; in the perception of most Islamists of what is good and what is bad. With the exception of Muslim rationalists, especially the Mu'tazilites, the vast majority of Sunnis in particular determine what is good and what is bad not by reason, but by Sharī'ah law. What Sharī'ah permits is good and what it prohibits is bad, regardless of its content. This was one of the issues of conflict in Islamic thought, until the Ash'aris triumphed over the Mu'tazilites, al-Ghazālī triumphed over the Muslim philosophers in the second round of conflict, and Ḥasan al-Bannā and his supporters triumphed over Muḥammad 'Abduh and his students. In all these rounds, *al-ḥākimiyyah* was victorious, represented in the text, against *al-jāhiliyyah*, represented in the human mind; considered impotent by those victors.

The criterion for differentiating people is faith. If God chooses this standard, it is natural that Muslims would choose it as well. The best people, societies, and systems are those that adhere most to the rules of faith; rejecting polytheism in all its forms, and making

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<sup>(587)</sup> 'Abd al-Karim al-Najaf, *The Islamic State as a Universal Polity*.

God's instructions the reference. Thus, purely human or worldly standards become irrelevant. Scientific progress, achieving justice, human realizations, building an egalitarian or advanced social system, are not criteria.

Therefore, it is not acceptable in mainstream Islamic thought to use these categories to judge the value and virtue of what Islam calls for. It is the divine standard, regardless of the results that may come from it. A practical example illustrates this idea: Islam forbids pork. If this meat solves a nutritional problem or provides benefits to those who eat it, like any other food, the Muslim mind begins to try to justify divine legislation by explaining its health risks. If it is answered with the possibility of subjecting pigs to health care, it returns to discovering that it is eating waste, forgetting that poultry in the Egyptian countryside does the same thing. If it is known that they are raised in an organized and scientific manner and fed in a good way, believers are forced to reveal the real justification for the prohibition, which is that there is a divine wisdom beyond the level of human understanding. Thus, the prohibition of pork is an absolute value with no justification, except its divine source. This is how any discussion of this kind ends, where Islamic values are based on being divine and therefore, in practice, self-justifying. Despite the claims by most jurists that Islamic legislation achieves the interests of humans and that this is its goal, prevailing Islam, ancient and modern, does not accept that the reference in legislation should be the visible interests of humans, under the pretext that there are unseen interests that people are not aware of, but God knows. Tenuous evidence is presented, including the famous tales of scientific miracles. Even those who advocate the priority of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (unrestricted public interest) as a source of legislation stipulate that these interests should not conflict with the sacred texts.

Choosing a specific system for managing society or a specific method of governance or behavior is not subject to the actual

perceived interests of the people, but rather to the extent of its consistency with Islamic instructions. Therefore, the actual goal of Islam is to implement itself, not to make people happy. However, it insists that people will be happy with its implementation, and if some of them deviate, they are the ones with a disease in their hearts. According to Ḥasan al-Bannā, every manifestation of renaissance that contradicts the rules of Islam and conflicts with the provisions of the Qur'ān is a flawed and unsuccessful experiment, from which nations will emerge with great sacrifices to no avail. It is better for nations that want revival to take the shortest path by following the provisions of Islam.<sup>(588)</sup> So what is the criterion for renaissance? It is the application of Islam itself.

The sacred text contains –as presented by the Islamists– everything, and if it contains many unspecific verses, it also contains definitive verses (however jurists and exegetes differed over them). In addition to verses directed to their time, it contains many general verses. jurisprudential *ijtihād* solves the problem of unspecific and temporary sacred statements. Regarding interim statements, or those relating to a specific situation that has ended, they continue to be used by analogical deduction if the same circumstances are repeated. For example, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb abolished the share of those whose hearts were to be reconciled, seemingly in violation of an explicit Qur'ānic statement. However, as scholars argue, this was not a principled abolition; rather, it was undertaken because Islam no longer required such concessions at that time. But if the need arises again, it can be re-implemented, according to some opinions.<sup>(589)</sup> So the abolition is neither of the statement nor of the ruling in general, rather, it is just a rearrangement of priorities.

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<sup>(588)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Our Invitation.*

<sup>(589)</sup> Al-Shāfi'ī, *Al-Umm*, Book of *Zakāt*, Chapter on the Department of Charity.

But the matter is not always straightforward and simple. Many scholars make efforts to show the extent of Islam's benefit to humanity in ways that are commonly acceptable by the general public. That is, it fulfills well-known traditional human ambitions. However, this is done in the manner of theologians, especially the Mu'tazilites, who were trying to prove the validity of Islam using Aristotelian logic, but starting from the assumption of its validity from the beginning, in the context of responding to the criticisms that it faced after the expansion of the Islamic State. Consequently, theologians were keen not to use a purely demonstrative approach, but rather kept in their minds the axiom of the validity of Islam before anything else, and were keen to reach results not contradictory to it. This is what contemporary Islamists do when they try to prove the benefits of Islam to civilization and its compatibility with worldly human aspirations for freedom, a decent life, and progress. <sup>(590)</sup>

However, they are sometimes frank and direct. Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, for example, explains that when discussing the relationship or dialogue between Islam and secularism, Islam should be understood as an approach that regards it as the foundation of legitimacy, the standard of judgment, and the framework of reference for social and political systems as well as behavioral patterns. In contrast, he views secularism as a departure from this orientation, deriving systems, relationships, and behavioral norms from sources other than Islam or religion. <sup>(591)</sup> Sayyid Quṭb offers a more categorical formulation, insisting that Sharī'ah is superior because it originates from God, whereas human laws cannot be compared to divine legislation. Yet, he emphasizes that the Islamic advocacy does not rest on demonstrating Sharī'ah's superiority; rather, its foundation

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<sup>(590)</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī's book *The Permissible and The Prohibited in Islam*, is an example of these attempts.

<sup>(591)</sup> *Secular-Islamic Dialogue*, p. 8.

lies in unconditional acceptance of divine law and the rejection of all other legal systems. For Quṭb, this uncompromising stance constitutes the very essence of Islam, and anyone who embraces it has already resolved the question without needing persuasion through appeals to beauty or excellence. <sup>(592)</sup>

\* Historical comparison demonstrates that different civilizations have offered divergent value systems. However, Islamic discourse, both ancient and contemporary, does not approach this divergence as a plurality of perspectives; rather, it rests upon a singular normativity that regards Islamic values as the sole reference point, while deeming all others inferior. From this standpoint, this discourse directs sharp criticism at modernity, alleging its immersion in material and sensory dimensions—commonly articulated under the rubric of the “spiritual crisis” in the West. Yet such criticism overlooks the fact that what is classified as decadence or bankruptcy from a centric perspective may, for other societies, represent value choices that secure their well-being. Moreover, this discourse encounters a methodological dilemma when it disregards the presence within the juridical heritage of principles that structurally conflict with the contemporary human rights framework, such as the legislation of polygamy, the system of slavery, and the ownership of enslaved women, referred to in the text as those whom your right hand possesses.

\* It is noteworthy that Islam consists of sacred texts and individual *ijtihād*, but it is often portrayed by Islamists, especially contemporary ones, as a single, indivisible sacred entity. The opinions of esteemed Companions, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, certain jurists, and Ḥadīth transmitters have been elevated to the status of sacred ideas. This perception extends to the belief that Islamists carry out all their actions in the name of God—including the assassination of opponents, the targeting of civilians, and

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<sup>(592)</sup> *Milestones along the Way.*

various political activities motivated by authoritarian, financial, or strategic interests. While Sunnism theoretically acknowledges the fallibility of the Companions, there remains a pervasive reluctance to critically examine figures such as Abū Bakr and 'Umar. This is particularly evident regarding the contentious 'Umari Conditions; questioning such a legacy often precipitates charges of heterodoxy or blasphemy within traditionalist circles.

Similarly, questioning the authenticity of works such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*—and, to a lesser extent, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*—can provoke similar accusations. In Egypt, for instance, ordinary Muslims often respond with the rhetorical question, “Did we make a mistake in *al-Bukhārī*?!” to emphasize the text’s status. In Sunni-majority countries, artists are prohibited from depicting figures such as Muḥammad, other Prophets, those promised Paradise, close Companions, or members of the Prophet’s household, as such portrayals are deemed sacrilegious by Islamists and by governments across much of the Islamic world.

Over time, with the decline of *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning), various movements have come to regard the teachings of their leaders as quasi-sacred, equating them with the Qur’ān itself rather than treating them as interpretations within the faith. This approach mirrors the practices of groups like the Kharijites and other sects. By contrast, eminent jurists such as Mālik and Shāfi’ī encouraged critical engagement and did not demand blind adherence to their opinions over those of other scholars. Yet this critical spirit is rarely embraced by contemporary Islamists.

While numerous sacred texts caution against division within the Muslim community, Islamic history is characterized by sectarian conflict and the suppression of dissent. A prominent example is the experience of the Mu'tazilites, who shifted from being persecutors of their opponents to being persecuted themselves, as well as the intense confrontations between the Ḥanbalīs and the Ash'arites. This pattern reflects the conceptualization of Islam as an absolute



normative standard: if a single interpretation is held as the sole truth, then unity is only permissible under its specific banner, while all other perspectives are necessarily dismissed as heresy or deviation.

Even so, it remains difficult to subject Islamic history to radical criticism, particularly with respect to the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and, at times, other prominent figures. This issue frequently results in attempts to justify Ottoman history, to the point where the broader Islamic history itself is treated as sacrosanct. Some assert that every page of this history is unblemished, while others contend that its record of cruelty stands in stark contradiction to the idealized image advanced by Islamist thinkers. These acts are often dismissed as anomalies or deviations from authentic Islam, despite their recurrent presence throughout its historical trajectory. Scholars often justify the wars among the Companions—even those promised Paradise—by arguing that such conflicts were merely the result of differing opinions and sincere efforts, and that all participants remained righteous. This sectarian zeal, however, has led Islamic groups to declare one another unbelievers: Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Wahhābīs have each, at times, branded rival sects as outside the fold of Islam. In the end, Islamic culture itself has been elevated to a sacred status.

\* Currently, several Muslim reformers—who identify as enlightened—seek to reconcile their beliefs with modern societal requirements by extracting modernity from within Islam, even if this necessitates moving beyond literal interpretations while remaining within the faith. They argue that Islam permits exegesis that transcends surface meanings, presenting the religion as a secular and democratic framework that respects others and upholds human rights. While this approach might appear to signal a departure from Islamic centralism, it actually reflects a perspective that regards Islam as all-encompassing, incorporating even those elements traditionally classified as *jāhiliyyah*.

The primary objective of these efforts is to challenge *ḥākimiyyah* and to humanize sacred texts by interpreting them non-literally, confining them to the realm of theoretical worship. These endeavors oppose Islamic centralism yet simultaneously preserve it. According to this approach, Islam is capable of accommodating any development and providing whatever the era requires, with the only condition being a continual re-reading in new ways.

However, these modernists have not offered a clear justification for selecting Islam specifically as the exclusive framework for exegesis, nor for the effort to forcibly extract modernity from within it. If modernity already exists as an independent phenomenon, why must it be Islamized? This insistence reveals a persistent form of Islamic centralism: the conviction that no value—however modern or universal—can be validated unless it is rooted in, or reclaimed by, the Islamic tradition.

\* The centrality of Islamic thought is clearly reflected in Islam's position on the issue of human rights. Accordingly, this matter will be given particular attention in the following discussion.

After World War II, most member states of the United Nations agreed to issue the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set forth general principles acceptable to most peoples. This was followed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). In their attempt to prove that Islam preceded the West in adopting human rights, Islamists often cite Qur'ānic verses and aḥādīth that emphasize human dignity and equality—while omitting the fact that such equality does not extend to unbelievers. Consequently, they avoid acknowledging equality among humans regardless of religion. Some even seek direct engagement with the Declaration of Human Rights to demonstrate Islam's humanity.

It goes without saying that “human rights” are not inscribed in the human genome; their content evolves with changing human conditions. In all cases, they represent principles agreed upon by a segment of humanity as a kind of human constitution. Yet the very notion of establishing a constitution based on human interests contradicts the concept of divine sovereignty previously discussed. This dissonance explains why Islamist thinkers and their states emphasize the discourse of “human rights in Islam” and persistently seek to demonstrate Islam’s recognition of such rights. If this were self-evident, why would hundreds of books, pamphlets, and studies be required? Would it not suffice for scholars and jurists simply to declare their acceptance of the Universal Declaration?

Throughout Islamic history, apostates and heterodox thinkers have faced trials, the confiscation of their writings, and at times violent reprisals. In the modern era, notable examples include the assassination of Farag Foda in Egypt, following a fatwā by the “Al-Azhar Scholars Front” and other clerics, declaring him an unbeliever, which extremists cited as justification for his killing. Similarly, in Sudan, the reformist thinker Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭāhā—then 80 years old—was executed after being convicted of apostasy. Such cases continually raise questions about Islam’s stance on human rights. If Islam truly preceded the West in recognizing freedom, fraternity, and equality, why does the issue remain contested? Why do doubts persist, why must police protect Islam in Muslim countries, and why do jurists and scholars incite states against secularists and the irreligious? Unless, of course, the concept of human rights itself differs between Islam and other traditions. Indeed, it does.

The concept of *ḥākimiyyah* is strongly emphasized in discussions of human rights, derived directly from the idea of humans as God’s vicegerents on earth. This is evident in efforts to prove the existence of human rights in Islam or in Sharī’ah. The so-called *Universal*

*Islamic Declaration of Human Rights* was issued in 1981, explicitly stating that it is derived from Sharī'ah law. Yet while the purpose of human rights is to establish a global constitution among people, Islamists insist on grounding them in Sharī'ah. If this is the case, they should have openly declared their rejection of the Universal Declaration, rather than claiming Islam's precedence in this field and attempting to blur the issue. The very comparison between the *Universal Declaration* and the *Universal Islamic Declaration* immediately raises the question of Islamic centralism. Whereas secular states endeavored to articulate universal and humanitarian principles of human rights, grounded in consensus among humanity at large, Islamic states issued a declaration framed specifically in Islamic terms rather than humanitarian ones. This approach conveys the impression of substituting the world with Islam, or of equating Islam itself with the world.

Indeed, there are multiple Islamic proposals on the issue. The simplest and most direct of these is the claim that Islam recognized human rights fourteen centuries before the Universal Declaration, and that human rights in Islam are much more comprehensive than those established by the United Nations. It is often suggested that Islam has approved the same principles as the United Nations, or even more. According to Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, for example, the Islamic tradition anticipated modern human rights by centuries. He suggests that the faith's core philosophy prioritizes the dignity of all individuals, regardless of their race, religion, or region, based on the inherent value of their humanity.<sup>(593)</sup> He further points out that Muslims were the ones who transmitted the concept of human rights to the West, a fact that, in his view, cannot be denied by any impartial researcher. Moreover, he adds that, within the Islamic perspective, the defense of human rights is considered a religious obligation, for which a Muslim is held accountable if he neglects

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<sup>(593)</sup> Quoted from Maṣṣūr al-Jamrī, *Establishing the Foundations of the Islamic Discourse*.

it.<sup>(594)</sup> Such claims continue to be echoed, yet they collapse when compared with Islamic jurisprudence concerning the People of the Book and other non-believers, as well as with the principles of the United Nations Declaration and human rights organizations.

Some Islamic writers acknowledge fundamental differences between human rights in Islam and in the West, while still insisting on the immeasurable superiority of the former. In this view, multiple human rights systems exist. The defining feature of the Islamic system is that humans themselves play no role in determining their rights; rather, a transcendent authority beyond space and time defines and binds them. As Muḥammad 'Imāra and his contemporaries argue, these are not merely rights but duties, necessities without which religion cannot exist. He even states that bodily health in Islam takes precedence over religious health, permitting humanitarian necessities to override religious prohibitions.<sup>(595)</sup> Similarly, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī characterizes these rights as obligatory and binding, primarily because they derive their authority from a divine source.<sup>(596)</sup> This implies that such rights are tasks carried out to fulfill humanity's role as God's vicegerent on earth, requiring one to devote himself to worshiping God, submitting to His will, and maintaining absolute obedience to Him, which is piety. Abū al-A'lā al-Maudūdī echoed this, describing human rights as an essential part of the Islamic faith, which every Muslim must accept and commit to.<sup>(597)</sup>

Thus, human rights are treated primarily as obligations. A person has no rights except within the framework of fulfilling his mission on earth—worship, submission to God, and the practical

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<sup>(594)</sup> Friday sermon on November 18, 2005, titled *Arabs are responsible for the loss of their rights*.

<sup>(595)</sup> *Humanity and Human Rights*, p. 15.

<sup>(596)</sup> Maṣṣūr al-Jamrī, *Op. cit.*

<sup>(597)</sup> *Human Rights in Islam*.

implementation of Islam. Among Islamists, the very definition of “right” carries this meaning. Rights exist only as determined by Sharī'ah, a concept largely absent among classical jurists but emphasized by contemporary scholars.

Muṣṭafā Malaṣ, the Lebanese researcher, summarized several of these definitions: <sup>(598)</sup>

\* Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī: A ruling established by Islamic law.

\* 'Alī al-Khafif: A legally entitled interest.

\* Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā: A fixed interest for the individual or society, determined by the wise Lawgiver (meaning the Lord).

\* Fathī al-Dārinī: A specialization in which Sharī'ah grants authority or imposes obligations to achieve a benefit or fulfill a need.

\* Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā: A specialization by which Sharī'ah establishes authority or assignment.

It is clear from these definitions that rights are inseparable from Sharī'ah. Humans do not determine their own rights; there is no concept of natural rights or human authority in this framework. The idea of *ḥākimiyyah* permeates these definitions, with sovereignty belonging solely to God. <sup>(599)</sup> Consequently, the only “right” for a human being is submission to the divine will, which transforms rights into obligations. This stands in stark contrast to non-Islamic definitions, in which rights are understood to originate from human institutions, even if they are considered to be derived from nature itself. From the Islamist perspective, such notions represent explicit *al-jāhiliyyah*—the antithesis of *al-ḥākimiyyah*.

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<sup>(598)</sup> *Human Rights and the Role of the State.*

<sup>(599)</sup> Ala' al-dīn Za'tarī, *Islam and Human Rights* – Lecture at the Iranian Cultural Center in Damascus, October 22, 2004.



One of the established principles in Islamic thought is that submission to its rules is not only an implementation of the divine will, but also a source of human happiness and benefit in both this world and the hereafter. A legal maxim states that behind every ruling lies an interest, a principle derived from sacred verses such as: **God desires ease and does not desire hardship for you** (Sūrah 2:185); **God does not intend to burden you, but He intends to purify you and complete His blessing upon you** (Sūrah 5:6); and **For you, O people of reason, there is life in retribution** (Sūrah 2:179).

Although human happiness and welfare are claimed to be among Islam's goals, individuals are not permitted to determine for themselves what constitutes happiness or interest. Instead, they are expected to feel content simply by practicing Islam. If they do not, it is interpreted as a disease of the heart, deserving of misery. <sup>(600)</sup>

Islamists emphasize Islam's superiority over modern civilization in the field of human rights, yet their arguments rarely address the substantive content of these rights. Instead, they stress their divine source. From this perspective, every human being possesses inherent values, and the historical conflict between prophethood and tyranny is framed as a struggle over the source of values—rejecting human sovereignty and affirming monotheism. <sup>(601)</sup> In practice, however, Islam does not grant more freedoms or equality than those specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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<sup>(600)</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Sa'dī, discusses the means for attaining happiness as he sees them from an Islamic perspective in his book *Means of Attaining Happiness in Life*. He argues that happiness is divided into two parts: temporary worldly happiness, limited to a short and variable lifespan, and permanent happiness in the afterlife, uninterrupted and without limits. Both are inseparable and interconnected—the happiness of this world is linked to that of the hereafter, and complete happiness in both realms depends on God's pleasure toward pious believers. In this conception, happiness is treated as an objective state rather than merely a subjective feeling.

<sup>(601)</sup> Aḥmad al-Raysūnī - Muḥammad al-Zuhail - Muḥammad ibn Shabīr, *Human Rights are the Axis of the Objectives of Sharī'ah*.

Hence, theorists often highlight Islam's superiority based on its divine origin rather than its content.

Attempts to demonstrate the superiority of Islamic content fail to convince, which is why Islamists focus on the eternal and divine source of rights while criticizing the "Western" conception, often pointing to crimes committed by Western states. This conflation of principles with history overlooks the fact that rights were established precisely to regulate conflicts between states and individuals and to limit authoritarianism. Some Islamists argue that Western theorization of human rights threatens civilization, since rights determined by human nature can be undermined by force, disadvantaging the weak.<sup>(602)</sup> By contrast, rights conceived as a divine gift are received with contentment and regarded as fixed, inherently just, grounded in equality, free from discrimination, and immune to material coercion.<sup>(603)</sup>

It is argued that conceptualizing rights as divine ensures their neutrality and fairness, since they are legislated by a perfect and just God. Thus, the right to resist tyranny and injustice becomes inalienable, grounded in the inadmissibility of servitude to anyone other than God.<sup>(604)</sup> Yet this claim persists despite centuries of violations of human rights in Islamic history. Such contradictions raise broader questions about the existence of God and revelation—questions contested by much of humanity—rather than fostering a practical dialogue on rights that could unite all people.

In this way, the divine source of rights is conceived as their guarantor, predicated upon the implicit assumption that God directly manages the affairs of society, and that such a source precludes arbitrariness in the exercise of power or deviation from

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<sup>(602)</sup> Al-Maudūdī, Op. cit.

<sup>(603)</sup> Aḥmad al-Raysūnī et al., Op. cit.

<sup>(604)</sup> Muḥammad Aḥmad Muftī - Samī Ṣāliḥ al-Wakīl, *Human Rights in the Islamic Perspective*.

Sharī'ah under the pretext of serving human interests. Nevertheless, it is evident that texts, laws, and decrees—even when divinely derived—ultimately require material force for their enforcement. Furthermore, this reasoning extends to the claim that endowing rights with divine authority and immutable content constitutes a self-sufficient guarantee for the realization of happiness for all humankind, both Muslims and non-believers. <sup>(605)</sup>

In reality, Islamic culture does not encompass many of the freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of 1948. Islamists typically rely on general statements such as: **There is no compulsion in religion**, or: **Whoever wills let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve**. They also cite isolated historical precedents, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's punishment of the son of 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, or the legal dispute between 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib and a Jewish citizen. Yet these examples overlook the numerous counter-cases that reveal a far more complex historical reality.

Although Islam is often described as having preceded the world in affirming principles of freedom and equality, historical realities reveal practices that stand in tension with these ideals—such as the execution of apostates and heretics, the enslavement of war captives, the seizure of women in battle, and even the burning of the *ka'bah* (Islam's central house of worship) at the hands of the Umayyads themselves. Contemporary critics argue that genuine commitment to freedom and equality would require jurists and thinkers to recognize the human right to choose and change one's religion, to express opinions on sacred texts, and to establish equality between Muslims and non-believers in matters such as blood money, retaliation, and eligibility for public office. Such proposals also extend to abolishing the designation of an official state religion, permitting unrestricted interfaith marriages,

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<sup>(605)</sup> Refer, for example, to Munīr Ḥāmīd al-Bayātī's work *Human Rights between Sharī'ah and Civil Law*.

removing penalties for public non-fasting during Ramaḍān, and granting non-believers equal freedom to build places of worship. The central question remains whether Islamic principles can be interpreted in ways that fully equate Muslims and non-believers in rights and responsibilities, given that non-believers constitute the majority of humanity.

The answer remains elusive, due to the profound and structural collision between these rights-based claims and the framework of Islamic law as consolidated within the collective consciousness. These matters do not constitute mere jurisprudential minutiae; rather, they impinge upon legislative foundations acknowledged by both specialists and laypersons, and they represent points of convergence between the perspectives of moderate and radical currents alike. The core difficulty lies in the fact that accepting such absolute equality entails a dismantling of the doctrine of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* and a transgression of the theological boundaries that confer upon Muslims a distinctive legal and social status. From the standpoint of traditional jurisprudential reasoning, this is perceived as a departure from the imperatives of the sacred text and as a forfeiture of the particularity of religious identity.

To ensure an objective analysis and avoid the appearance of bias, one need only examine how traditional Islamic thought has addressed the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

The first attempts to codify Islamic principles for human rights appeared through the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1952, in the form of a draft Islamic constitution. Then al-Azhar issued a draft Islamic constitution in 1978. In 1979, the *Muslim World League* project was released. After that, Khomeini's government issued an Islamic constitution in Iran. Among the important milestones were the *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights*, issued by the European Islamic Council in London in 1981, followed by a second declaration in 1982, and a draft

Islamic constitution in 1983. Then the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam* in August 1990 was issued by the Council of Foreign Ministers of Muslim Countries, within the framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The prevailing stance of Islam on human rights is addressed here, not to criticize it wholesale, but to highlight its centralist tendency, which becomes especially evident in this domain.

The highest point reached by Islamists in their engagement with human rights is expressed in the *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights* and later in the *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam*. Several observations are provided below.

\* According to the title of the Universal Islamic Declaration, one would expect it to include principles addressing the rights of all human beings. However, the declaration opens with the statement: This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and instruction to those who fear God.

In effect, the vast majority of people are excluded—those regarded as unbelievers in the Islamic conception—who are thereby denied these declared rights. *The Cairo Declaration*, which represents the finalized version of the first, begins with an even more centralist premise, asserting that what it calls the Islamic community is the best community God has created.

\* In the introduction to the Cairo Declaration, it is stated: Believing that fundamental rights and public freedoms in Islam are part of the religion of Muslims, no one can disable them—completely or partially—violate them, or ignore them. They are divine mandatory provisions revealed by Allah in His books, conveyed by the seal of His messengers, and affirmed by the heavenly messages. Caring for them is considered an act of worship, while neglecting or turning away from them is deemed a sin. Each individual bears personal responsibility for them, while the community carries collective responsibility.

**\* Article one states:** *“The correct doctrine is the guarantee for the growth of this dignity on the path to human integration.”* According to the authors of the declaration, the “correct doctrine” refers exclusively to Islam. All creation is described as God’s children, with the most beloved being those most beneficial to others, and none having superiority except through piety and good deeds. The insistence that human distinction rests on “piety and good deeds” implies that Muslims are regarded as the best. In Islamic thought, good deeds mean acting in accordance with Islamic law, while piety signifies obedience to God, implementing His instructions as prescribed in Islam.

**\* In Article 2:** *“Preserving the continuation of human life as long as God wills is a legal duty.”* Once again, the declaration is directed entirely to Muslims, as the expression “legal” here refers to religious law.

**\* In Article 2:** *“Life is a gift from God and is guaranteed to every human being. Individuals, societies and countries must protect this right from any attack. It is not permissible to take a life without a legitimate requirement.”*

**\* In Article 7:** *“Parents and those who govern them have the right to choose the type of education they want for their children, while their interests and future must be taken into account in light of moral values and Sharī’ah rulings.”*

**\* In Article 9:** *“Every human being has the right to the various institutions of education and guidance, including the family, the school, the media, and others, to work on educating the human being religiously and worldly in an integrated, balanced education that develops his personality and strengthens his faith in God and his respect for rights and duties and their protection.”*

**\* In Article 10:** *“Islam is the religion of nature.”*

It should be noted that this constitutes a declaration of human rights intended for both non-Muslims and Muslims alike.

**\* Article 11:** *“Parents have rights over their children, and relatives have rights over their relatives in accordance with the provisions of Sharī’ah.”*



**\* Article 12:** *“Every human being has the right, within the framework of Sharī’ah, to freedom of movement and to choose his place of residence inside or outside his country. If he is persecuted, he has the right to seek refuge in another country, and the country in which he has taken refuge must provide him with protection until he reaches safety, unless the reason for asylum is the commission of a crime in the eyes of Sharī’ah.”*

**\* Article 16:** *“Every person has the right to benefit from the fruits of his scientific, literary, artistic, or technical production. He has the right to protect his moral and financial interests, provided that this production does not conflict with the provisions of Sharī’ah.”*

**\* In Article 19:** *“There is no crime or punishment except in accordance with the provisions of Sharī’ah.”*

**\* Article 22:** *“Every person has the right to freely express his opinion in a way that does not conflict with Sharī’ah principles – Every human being has the right to call to goodness, enjoin good and forbid evil in accordance with the controls of Islamic Sharī’ah.”*

**\* Article 24:** *“All rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the provisions of Islamic Sharī’ah.”*

**\* Article 25:** *“Islamic Sharī’ah is the sole reference for interpreting or clarifying any article of this document.”*

It is evident from the above that the human rights set forth in the declaration are essentially rights to become a Muslim, nothing more, nothing less. All rights are tied to Islamic law, as though all people were Muslims or accepted Islam as the Truth. Where, then, are the rights of non-Muslims in this so-called Universal Declaration? And where are human rights in general? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulated principles that the Islamic Declaration was unable to approximate:

**\* Article 5:** *“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”*

This stands in direct contradiction to the provisions of Islam regarding flogging, stoning, amputation of hands and feet, and

crucifixion; punishments that, according to contemporary human standards, constitute cruel, torturous, and degrading treatment.

\* **Article 16:** *“Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality, or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage, and at its dissolution.”*

\* **Article 18:** *“Everyone has the right to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.”*

\* **Article 19:** *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*<sup>o</sup> This is what was approved by the Islamic Declaration, but *“in accordance with the controls of Islamic Sharī'ah,”* and *“in a way that does not conflict with Sharī'ah principles.”* That is, he has no right to criticize Islam or advocates ideas that contradicts it.

<sup>o</sup> This is translated from the Arabic copy whereas the English copy used the term Law instead of Sharī'ah.

The Islamic Declaration stipulates provisions not found in the Universal Declaration, many of which concern Muslims alone and cannot be considered human rights in a general sense. These include the rights of God over man, the right to enjoin good and forbid evil, the right to call people to God, as well as other “rights” derived from Islamic law, such as rights for the neighbor, the fetus, the body, and even the dead.

The two declarations differ fundamentally in their logic and reference. Yet the issue here is addressed within the limits of the topic: An Islamic Perspective on the Other.

The Cairo Declaration is presented to the general public, as its introduction states: This is a declaration for mankind, a guidance and instruction to those who fear God. In reality, it offers a

program of “guidance” rather than a framework of human rights. The essence of the proclamation is to impose Islam as a way of life upon the world.

If one imagines representatives of Islamic governments and the authors of the *Universal Islamic Declaration* and the *Cairo Declaration* meeting with representatives of other peoples to discuss it, then—according to its own terms—the dialogue would amount to an Islamic call directed by Muslims to non-Muslims, not a genuine dialogue about human rights. More precisely, the Islamic Declaration insists on applying Sharī'ah law universally. This is because human rights in Islam, as presented by most of its scholars, are framed as religious obligations, including restrictions on the freedoms of unbelievers, which have already been discussed in detail.

Within the framework of Sharī'ah, freedom is defined in a manner distinct from modern secular conceptions. It encompasses, among other elements, the legal sanction against insulting or employing polemical rhetoric against the Prophet or Islam, as well as the regulated status of non-believers, who receive protection under Muslim rule in exchange for the payment of jizyah. There are also provisions allowing for periods of security, after which Islamic conquest to make the word of God supreme becomes obligatory. In addition, the declaration imposes multiple restrictions on the marriage of unbelievers to Muslims, among other similar regulations.

Despite all this, most Islamists continue to insist that Islam preceded modern civilization in establishing the principles of human rights.

One significant book—by virtue of its author’s position within the largest Islamic institution in the world—is “Letters to the

Western Intellect: Islam and Human Rights,”<sup>(606)</sup> which compares the Universal Declaration with the principles of Islam, disregards the substantial differences, and asserts the primacy of Islam:

In his commentary on the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the author states: This, in its entirety, is nothing but a belated repetition of what Islam has long upheld in honoring mankind, in accordance with the Almighty’s saying: **We have honored the children of Adam.** Islam goes beyond the universal declaration by elevating man’s status above other creatures, appointing him as a vicegerent on earth, as stated in the Almighty’s saying: **When your Lord said to the angels, indeed, I will create a vicegerent on earth.**

Despite this transcendental honor, the author overlooks the historical reality that, within the framework of Islamic law, severe procedures and punishments have been sanctioned. These include practices such as flogging, stoning, crucifixion, amputation of limbs, exile, and the coercion of apostates and others to repent. Such measures raise questions about the extent to which the notion of honoring humanity in Islam aligns with contemporary understandings of human dignity and rights. Governments punish those who abandon prayer or consume alcohol, among other offenses—punishments that have been surpassed by modern civilization. One may question: Does this honor extend to unbelievers, who are considered part of Satan’s party? Or does Islam curse and threaten them with torment in this world and the hereafter?

The issue of Islam’s honoring of humans appears to hold great importance for Islamists, who find in it useful material for presenting their culture in a humane light. They often emphasize

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<sup>(606)</sup> Written by 'Abd al-Ṣabūr Marzūq, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Cairo, and member of the Founding Council of the Muslim World League, Makkah.

this honor, portraying it as an unprecedented achievement in human history. A prominent thinker such as Fahmī Huwaidī asserted that, in Islam, the human being is regarded as a sacred creature: That being that God honored and breathed His Spirit into, the angels prostrated to Him, and the universe was subjugated for His sake. But it remains a relative holiness and depends on a condition: faith in God and good words and deeds. <sup>(607)</sup>

Islamists ignore the fact that since their evolution, humans have behaved as though the universe belongs to them, granting themselves the right to manage it as they wish. Indeed, all living creatures act in the same way, with or without Qur'ānic verses.

#### Article 2 of the Universal Declaration:

*This article emphasizes that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in the Declaration without any discrimination based on factors such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, political, jurisdictional, or international status of the country or territory to which they belong, whether it is independent, under trusteeship, non-self-governing, or subject to any other limitation of sovereignty.”*

#### What Islam brought 14 centuries ago:

The author argues that Islam introduced the principle of equality long before the Universal Declaration, by affirming equality among all people based on their common origin in creation. Yet notably, he omits the word religion. After elaborating on freedom in Islam, he states: *“In order for Islam to guarantee man his right to freedom and to have permanence and stability, it has liberated him from the two fears that cancel and eliminate freedom: fear for life and fear for livelihood. Islam has placed them in the hands of God, Blessed and Most High.”*

Thus, Islam is presented as guaranteeing freedom through a transcendent safeguard, grounded in divine authority rather than human institutions.

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<sup>(607)</sup> *The Qur'ān and Power: Contemporary Islamic Issues*, Chapter One.

**Article Sixteen of the Universal Declaration states:** Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights during marriage and at its dissolution.

**What Islam brought about 14 centuries ago:**

*“Marriage in Islam is not just a right, it is an obligation commanded by Islam.”*

Again, the issue of religion is neglected, as if unmentioned. The Islamic Declaration avoids recognizing the freedom to marry regardless of gender or creed, since this contradicts Sharī'ah law. While the author could have accepted the principle on the basis that Muslims retain the right to marry according to Sharī'ah, he instead—following a centrist tendency—denies the same right to non-Muslims, effectively compelling them to marry under Islamic law.

He explicitly rejects the human right to change religion, as affirmed in the Universal Declaration: *“We do not accept the principle of changing religion if its holder declares it openly because it will be a temptation (fitnah) that harms the Muslim community.”* This is justified by claiming that *“religion is a covenant and agreement with God that a person does not make based on their personal desires,”* *“and the covenant with God does not allow for change or alteration.”* This stands in stark contrast to the repeated assertion that Islam grants freedom of belief. In reality, freedom of belief is denied because it contradicts the principle of executing or coercing apostates to repent, as well as the 'Umarī Conditions of the dhimmah contract—often celebrated by Islamists as a framework of unprecedented justice. <sup>(608)</sup>

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<sup>(608)</sup> Marwān Ibrāhīm al-Qaisī argues that Islam establishes a system of reciprocal rights between Muslims and non-believers. He suggests that while Muslims hold certain superiorities, non-believers are granted unique privileges—most notably the freedom to change their religion, a right strictly denied to Muslims. *Compendium of Human Rights in Islam*, Vol. One, p. 40. However, the asymmetry in this logic is evident; such rules appear designed to protect the Islamic faith from external competition and prevent its contraction, rather than to uphold a universal principle of religious liberty. This framework creates a



If the notion of fitnah is admitted, it becomes evident that Islam seeks to attract non-believers while simultaneously prohibiting the proselytization of Muslims, thereby undermining the claim of equality. Extremists, however, display no hesitation: they maintain that God did not grant humanity the right to unbelief, but rather took a covenant from them while they were still in the loins of their forefathers. Thus, even the Qur'anic statement that **there is no compulsion in religion** cannot be interpreted as conferring a right to unbelief.

If the covenant is truly with Allah, why should earthly authority intervene to enforce its continuation? Would it not be more reasonable to leave the matter between the individual and God? Why, then, must belief and thought depend on the protection of state power?

Article 21 states: *“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”*

#### What Islam brought about 14 centuries ago:

In principle, Islam does not reject the recognition of this right, provided that humans fulfill their responsibility of cultivating the earth without corrupting it before God. As God’s vicegerents on earth, entrusted with empowering His word, they are granted the right to participate in the administration of their country in return for these responsibilities. Yet Islam emphasizes not the right itself, but rather the necessity of treating it as a duty that must be observed and extended to all Muslims everywhere. The Prophet is cited as saying: **Whoever does not care about the affairs of Muslims is not one of them.**

Thus, the scope of this “right” expands to encompass all Muslims, not merely those native to or residing in a particular country. Its

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one-way gate that facilitates entry into Islamic doctrine while penalizing exit, revealing a strategic structural bias rather than true legal reciprocity.

status is elevated from a right to a duty, which is presented as giving the Islamic conception of humanity depth, breadth, and a collective sense of nationhood. According to the author, this vision surpasses article 21 of the Universal Declaration, which he claims lacks such meaning.

#### **Critical perspective:**

According to this interpretation, the precise meaning of humanity for Muslims is understood as participation in governance not only within their own country but across Islamic states. The Universal Declaration, however, emphasizes inclusivity for all people, regardless of religion. This raises the question of how non-believers are to be included in political participation under the Islamic framework. If humanitarian values are indeed deeply rooted in Islam, why does the discourse not extend toward envisioning a global government freely chosen by all people, as proposed in certain ideological frameworks such as anarchism? Such a model could arguably achieve a more comprehensive and egalitarian conception of humanity.

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Under the title: The experience of brotherhood in Islam, the writer states: *“In this aspect, Islam has a unique historical experience, which no experience in the history of mankind has preceded or will ever be followed by. It is the experience of brotherhood.”* Then he recounts the history of brotherhood between the Migrants and the *Anṣār* (the Helpers) in Madīnah after the migration of Muḥammad and his companions. As suggested by the title, the writer refers to the slogan of fraternity raised by the French Revolution, yet he ignores the essential difference. The French Revolution, along with the principles of human rights, called for brotherhood among all human beings regardless of color, gender, or creed. By contrast, Islam calls for brotherhood exclusively among Muslims. No scholar or influential

jurist ever envisioned that such brotherhood could extend to include both Muslims and non-Muslims.

\* The repetitive discourse on what Islamists present as a source of pride—that human rights in Islam are obligations rather than rights—ultimately leads back to the same traditional Islamic goal: imposing, as a way of life, obligations upon all human beings, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This effectively denies the very idea of human rights. The focus shifts from rights agreed upon by humans to compulsory adherence to Islamic law. This necessarily entails denying people the right to accept or reject the Sharī'ah, as is evident in the title and statements of the so-called “Islamic Declaration.” Attempts by Islamists to present their ideas in democratic or humanitarian terms do not alter this underlying objective.

\* Even the right to life is framed within the Sharī'ah. According to the Cairo Declaration: *In particular, no one shall be exposed to injury or death, except under the authority of Sharī'ah.*<sup>(609)</sup> Islamists usually provide extensive talk when talking about the right to life in Islam, portraying the matter as if Islam created this right out of nowhere. Al-Maudūdī asserts, for example, that the right to life is granted to humanity only through Islam.<sup>(609)</sup> Yet this claim overlooks the fact that, within Islamic law, the protection of life afforded to Muslims is greater than that extended to non-believers. The execution of apostates, and the sanctioning of violence against individuals who ridicule Islam or the Prophet—on the grounds that they are unbelievers or heretics—reveal the unequal application of this right. In practice, such acts are treated as “crimes of thought.”<sup>(610)</sup>

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<sup>(609)</sup> *Human Rights in Islam.*

<sup>(610)</sup> An Islamist writer attempts to demonstrate the acknowledgment of the right to life in Islam by citing two Aḥādīth: *If the people of heaven and the people of earth shared in shedding the blood of a believer, God would throw them into Hell.* (Narrated by al-Tirmidhī). *The disappearance of this world is of less consequence to God than the killing of a Muslim.* (*Sunan al-Tirmidhī*). The writer fails to notice that these narrations refer

In addition, the blood of the dhimmīs is considered forfeit if they exercise rights implicitly recognized for them by the Universal Declaration, such as violating the 'Umarī Conditions or other restrictions. Likewise, the permissibility of killing nonbelieving prisoners of war further demonstrates the disparity. Islamists also overlook the fact that Islam retains the death penalty, whereas most civilized nations have abolished it and replaced it with long-term or life imprisonment—punishments that, while severe, are less cruel and ultimately preserve life.

<sup>o</sup> In the original Arabic text it is written Sharī'ah, but in the English copy it is written Law.

In fact, the Islamic Declaration in its two editions (1981 and 1990) does not go beyond traditional Islamic jurisprudence, except in its use of contemporary language and the promotion of slogans that contradict their own content. It links every perceived human right to Islamic law without specifying which rights this law actually allows. Islamic legislation has not evolved beyond what classical fiqh has provided for centuries, as previously reviewed in detail concerning Islam's relationship with the Other. Furthermore, the dictates of Islamic law are not monolithic. Islamic jurists and intellectuals differ in their exegesis of the sacred text, and thus in the formulation of Sharī'ah law, which is presented in dozens, or perhaps hundreds, of different interpretations.

Take, for example, the issue of cutting off the hand of a thief, which is one of the legal rulings clearly stated in the Qur'ān. Jurists differ on the definition of theft, the threshold at which the punishment applies, and the definition of the “hand” itself (whether it ends at the fingers, the wrist, the elbow, or the armpit). They also disagree on the meaning of “cutting off”: is it wounding or amputation? They differ on the minimum value stolen to apply the

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specifically to the life of a Muslim rather than of a human being in general. (See: *Human Rights between Islam and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Prepared by Muḥammad Selīm Ḥasan, May 1, 2005).

penalty (three, five, ten dirhams, a quarter of a dinar, or a full dinar), as well as the sequence of the punishment—whether it is the right or the left hand—and what must be done in cases of repeated theft. Should the other hand or a leg be amputated for a third or fourth offense? There is almost no issue in Sharī'ah law that does not feature this degree of disagreement.

It is certain that if Islamists were to present an Islamic social project from their point of view, deriving it from Sharī'ah, hundreds of different programs would emerge, some of which would contradict one another. What is actually happening now is that the various Islamic currents are exchanging accusations of misunderstanding Sharī'ah law, intellectual weakness, and sometimes blasphemy. This indicates that the persistent reference to Sharī'ah often serves as a way to avoid direct confrontation and to evade taking a clear stance on human rights.

There is no doubt that Islam recognizes equal rights for Muslims, notwithstanding the discrimination between men and women. However, it does not establish for the non-believer rights equal to those of the Muslim, whether in choosing or re-choosing faith, participating in government, or expressing opinions—especially in matters of creed. It does not equate Muslims with non-Muslims in *qiṣāṣ* (legal retaliation), court testimony, or marriage, as previously reviewed.

Most contemporary Islamists seek to construct an intellectual framework that stands in opposition to modernity. Rather than making genuine efforts to foster a more open and humane outlook, they often resort to populist rhetoric and selective use of Qur'ānic verses to deflect accusations of intolerance, instead of articulating positions that genuinely reflect sympathy for humanity. Therefore, Muslim intellectuals are largely absent from global humanitarian movements, offering instead what they view as the magic solution to all the world's problems: Islam. They call on others to convert instead of sharing universal human concerns. Whenever someone

seeks to beautify their ideas, they claim that the actions or statements of other Islamists who reject equality are not part of Islam, resorting to sacred texts without actually declaring a sincere belief in equality. There is no doubt that there are very limited exceptions, consisting of only a few individuals.

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## Chapter Eleven

### DOUBLE STANDARDS

*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*

Gospel of Matthew

Because Islam is the absolute standard of values and thought, as its source is divine, calls for it almost always begin by trying to prove the divine source of the sacred texts. Those who believe in this must accept the entire content of the text, even if it contradicts their own thinking; independent reasoning ceases to exist in the presence of the sacred text.

Muḥammad's mission began with the call to affirm the oneness of God and his own role as messenger, prior to the revelation of more than a few Qur'ānic verses. What was required first was acknowledgment of divine unity, the prophethood of Muḥammad, and the principle that sovereignty belongs to God alone—excluding



humanity's claim to legislate or determine its own conduct. Only thereafter came the substantive content of Islamic advocacy, including legislation and rulings. Thus, the dispute between Muslims and non-believers in Muḥammad's time did not concern the existence of God, but rather his prophethood, and consequently the authority of his message: was it a divine reference demanding obedience, or a human construct of his own making? The conflict therefore crystallized around *al-ḥākimiyya* versus *al-jāhiliyya*.

Since Muḥammad, the Islamic advocacy has followed the same pattern. The starting point for a person is to be convinced that the Muḥammadan message is divine, and that people must act upon it, then they look at the content itself, which cannot be challenged after believing in its divine source. To prove the truth of this source, it is sufficient to receive a few verses indicating linguistic miracles, and in the current era, scientific miracles are added. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the morals of the Prophet. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the morals of the Prophet, who cannot lie because he was known for his honesty and trustworthiness among his people. Sayyid Quṭb emphasizes that the Islamic approach to advocacy is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical method intended to regulate human life. He characterizes this approach by its serious realism and its continuous, dynamic movement. In addition to these qualities, he identifies a fourth defining feature: the presence of a clear legal framework that governs the relationship between the Muslim community and other societies <sup>(611)</sup>

This framework culminates in a distinctive method of evaluating others: the non-Muslim is deemed inferior, even if he upholds noble principles, while Islam is regarded as superior, even when its principles may appear unpalatable to many. Identical behaviors or principles are judged differently depending on their source and

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<sup>(611)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, surah 8.

ultimate aim—divine versus mundane, God’s sovereignty versus al-jāhiliyya. This produces a double standard in assessing historical events and diverse societies.

This double standard is exemplified in a number of ways:

**First. Regarding Belief:**

People differ but all are equal in the act of believing, either in the validity of their point of view, or at least in its legitimacy. Some view others as simply having a different vision. However, most Islamists consider those with other ideas to be of a lower rank, stupid, deviant, and ignorant. The Islamic view of opponents is characterized by fanaticism; the Other is an unbeliever, therefore, not just a dissenter, but an enemy. Rather, he is viewed as evil even if he does what is good for others, because he does not fear God, but denies Him: **when it is said to them, do not make trouble on earth, they say, we are only reformers. In fact, they are who make mischief, but they are not aware** (Sūrah 2:11-12). In classical Islamic jurisprudence, unbelief is not viewed as something legitimate or a right. It is an aggression against God and a betrayal of the covenant taken from humans while they were in the loins of their fathers. Therefore, God threatened them with eternal torment and called for fighting against them to impose Islamic law, without directly forcing anyone to believe, while maintaining the multiple forms of discrimination mentioned previously.

Islam, as mentioned before, considers preceding divine religions as its earlier versions, and not simply different religions. Because they are distinct, Islam deems that they were originally similar to it but that their followers distorted their content. Some preachers have been making strenuous efforts to prove that this distortion has occurred (Aḥmad Deedāt, for example). The double standard is clearly evident here: The word of God has been distorted before, but in the latest version; the Qur’ān, it is preserved forever.

Although it has not been proven with physical evidence that any other heavenly book was distorted, Muslims are confident that this occurred. Conversely, although the process of collecting the Qur'ān was marred by controversies, disagreements, the burning of different copies to standardize the text, and differences in readings, contemporary Sunnis at least do not doubt that the Qur'ān remains undistorted. There appears to be no consistent rationale for why God would allow His earlier revelations to be distorted, while preserving the Qur'ān from alteration. Islamists rely primarily on Qur'ānic verses themselves to assert this claim, such as those referring to distortions of the Torah and Gospel, and the divine pledge to safeguard the Qur'ān: **Surely We revealed the message, and We will surely preserve it** (Sūrah 15:9). This reliance, however, amounts to circular reasoning. Rarely have scholars resorted to proving the lack of distortion through the analysis of facts. Exegetes differ; some of them, such as al-Nasafī, consider that what is meant by distortion is interpretation in the sense of something other than what is intended, that is, distorting the meaning. Others, such as al-Ṭabarī, believe that what is intended is the distortion of the statements, while others, such as Ibn Kathīr, consider that it includes both.

\* In certain Islamic contexts, criticism of religious doctrines is often perceived as offensive to the faith, God, and the Prophet. Within some Islamic states, individuals who publicly criticize Islam may face legal or social sanctions, while non-believers are sometimes restricted from openly expressing their beliefs, as such expressions can be interpreted as implicit criticism of Islam. Conversely, Muslims are occasionally encouraged to critique other belief systems while promoting Islam. Reactions to articles or books that critique Islam can be strong, whereas polemical discourse directed at other religions is more freely expressed. This dynamic is reflected in publications and sermons in some Muslim countries. For instance, reports have noted that Friday sermons in certain

Egyptian neighborhoods with significant Christian populations have included derogatory references to Christians, sometimes framed in supplications. Similarly, polemical rhetoric has occasionally employed offensive expressions toward Jews, such as “descendants of apes and pigs,” which are considered derogatory in broader cultural norms. Simultaneously, Islamic teachings caution against insulting the deities of non-believers (Sūrah 99:108), not primarily out of concern for human rights, but to prevent reciprocal insults against the God of Islam.

The sacred text contains references and examples that disparage the beliefs of opponents and portray them in a humiliating manner: Tell them the story of the man to whom We sent Our signs, but he passed them by, so Satan followed him up, and he went astray \* And if We had willed, We would have lifted him up with it (God’s signs), but he settled down to the ground and followed his whims such as a dog. If you hold him, it will gasp, or leave him it gasps too, like the people who denied Our signs (Sūrah 7:175 -176); The disbelievers are like the one who shouts to that which hears nothing but a call and a cry. Deaf, dumb and blind, they understand nothing. (Sūrah 2:171); They have hearts, with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle, nay, they are more astray. It is they who are heedless (Sūrah 7:179); have you seen the one who takes his own desires as his god? Will you be like him? \* Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are nothing but like cattle. Nay, they are further astray from their path (Sūrah 25:43-44); Those who were entrusted with the Torah but then failed to uphold it are like a donkey carrying books (Sūrah 62:5); The curse of God is upon the disbelievers (Sūrah 2:89); Indeed, God has cursed the disbelievers (Sūrah 33:64); Those are the ones whose hearts, ears, and eyes Allah has sealed, and they do not pay attention. (Sūrah 16:108).

Moreover, the Qur'ān adds that some unbelievers were turned by God into apes and pigs: **Shall I inform you of those whose reward with Allah is worse than that? They are those whom Allah has cursed and on whom His wrath has fallen and of whom He has made apes and swine (Sūrah 5:60) ; you have already known those of you who transgressed on the Sabbath, so We said to them, be apes, despised (Sūrah 2:65).**

Since the inception of Islam, it has strongly criticized and despised other beliefs, despite occasionally showing respect for some of them. **Those who believe, those who were guided, the Christians, and the Sabians -whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does righteousness- will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear upon them, nor will they grieve (Sūrah 2:62).** However, a closer examination of the verse and its interpretation reveals that respect here is conditional on Islam. The God referred to in the verse is understood within Islamic exegesis as the Lord of Muḥammad, rather than the Christian or Jewish conception of God. Good deeds are defined as those consistent with God's undistorted teachings, as understood within Islam. Their respect is conditional on their adherence to Islam, either by believing in its doctrines as Islam envisions them without distortion, or by embracing its doctrine after its emergence. Most major classical and modern exegetes interpret the verse in this manner. (612)

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(612) For example, al-Ṭabarī, in his commentary on the verse, states: *“As for the faith of the Jews, Christians, and Sabians, it entails believing in Muḥammad and the message he brought. So whoever among them believes in Muḥammad, what he has brought, and the Last Day, and does good deeds, and does not change or alter them, until he dies in this way, he has the reward of his deeds and his reward with his Lord.”* Ibn Kathir's explanation conveys a similar meaning as well: Whoever among them does not follow Muḥammad among them and abandons the path he was on -referring to the Sunnah of Jesus and the Gospel- is doomed. Al-Bayḍāwī interprets the verse as referring to those who adhered to their religion before its abrogation, sincerely believing in its origins and end, and acting in accordance with its law. It is also interpreted as referring to those among the unbelievers who sincerely embrace Islam and enter into it wholeheartedly. Sayyid Quṭb explains, in his

A minority of scholars have adopted more lenient interpretations, rejecting the classification of Jews and Christians as unbelievers. Among them are Muḥammad Sa'īd al-'Ashmāwī, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (who recently adopted a more moderate stance), and Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, who is distinctive in this regard. These figures face strong criticism and attacks from radical Islamist circles.

From the earliest stages of the Islamic mission, sources indicate that Muḥammad challenged the legitimacy of the Quraysh deities and criticized the unbelievers for irrationality and folly. The Qur'ān itself describes idolaters as impure: **Believers, know that the idolaters are certainly impure** (Sūrah 9:28). In exegetical interpretations, this impurity is often understood metaphorically, referring to their unbelief or to practices inconsistent with Islamic norms. Some commentators also suggest that it may allude to ritual practices such as non-Islamic forms of washing, or to dietary habits involving food and drink prohibited in Islam. <sup>(613)</sup>

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interpretation, that “the believers” are the Muslims, while “those who were guided” are interpreted either as those returning to God or as the descendants of Judah. He identifies the Christians as followers of Jesus and suggests that the Sabians were most likely a sect of Arab polytheists who rejected idolatry and sought monotheism, aligning themselves with the primordial Ḥanīfiyyah; the religion of Ibrāhīm. Their contemporaries accused them of abandoning ancestral traditions, just as later polytheists accused Muslims of turning away from the faith of their forefathers. For this reason, they were called Sabians. This interpretation is considered more plausible than the claim, found in some commentaries, that they worshipped the stars. The verse itself declares that whoever believes in God and the Last Day and performs righteous deeds will receive their reward from the Lord, with neither fear nor grief upon them. What ultimately matters is the truth of faith, not race or nationality. Importantly, this understanding applies to the period before the advent of the Islamic mission.

<sup>(613)</sup> According to Sayyid Quṭb, who possesses a broader perspective, “*The surah highlights the inherent impurity of the idolaters, portraying it as their fundamental characteristic. This indicates that they are entirely and utterly impure. This assertion evokes the notion that we ought to strive for purification whenever we engage with them, despite their impurity being abstract. Their physical forms are not genuinely impure. The Qur'ān, in its distinctive manner, frequently employs magnification, transforming abstract concepts into tangible forms and entities.*” *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 9.



Following the victory of Islam, Muḥammad ordered the destruction and burning of the Arab idols in the *Ka'bah* and across the Arabian Peninsula, and many of their custodians were killed. Among them was Dibliyah ibn Ḥarmī al-Shaybānī, the last custodian of *al-'Uzzā*, who was killed by Khālid ibn al-Walīd despite not attacking anyone. Likewise, Muslims killed a hundred of the servants of *Dhu al-Khalaṣa*.<sup>(614)</sup> Names of Muslims that referred to Arab deities were also changed. Jawād 'Alī, citing orientalist sources, notes that after their victory, Muslims altered pre-Islamic poetry, avoiding references to Arab gods and sometimes replacing the names of deities with “God.” They neglected poetry that glorified idols and paganism, refraining from transmitting it, which led to its disappearance.<sup>(615)</sup>

A primary concern for Muslims during the early Islamic era was the removal of all traces of pre-Islamic religions. In modern times, many Muslim writers to also resort to disparaging non-Muslims and questioning their morals, particularly those of women. This discourse often involves harsh language and insults, which can be

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According to al-Qurṭubī in his interpretation *“The scholars have differing opinions regarding the interpretation of labeling a polytheist as impure. Qatada, Muammar ibn Rashid, and others state, 'This is because he is junub [in a state of ritual impurity]; thus, washing him from impurity does not constitute ablution.' Ibn 'Abbās and others argued: 'Rather, the essence of polytheism is that which is impure.' Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī remarked: 'Anyone who shakes hands with a polytheist is required to perform ablution.' The prevailing doctrine asserts that ablution is mandatory for an unbeliever upon converting to Islam. However, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam contends that it is not obligatory since Islam nullifies prior actions. Abū Thawr and Aḥmad maintained that ablution is indeed required for him. Al-Shāfi'ī dismissed this notion, suggesting that it is preferable to take a bath, a view also supported by Ibn al-Qasim. Mālik expressed uncertainty regarding the washing process.”*

Al-Nasafī elucidates this by stating in his interpretation: *“Due to their polytheism, which parallels impurity, and their failure to purify themselves, wash, or avoid impurities, it is inherently linked to them.”*

<sup>(614)</sup> *A Comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Chapter 69. Dhū al-Khalaṣa was a prominent pre-Islamic idol and temple in Southern Arabia often referred to as the “Southern *Ka'bah*” or “Yemenī *Ka'bah*,” Worshipped by some Arab tribes.

<sup>(615)</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 61, religions of Arabs.

understood as a psychological tool to pressure others into submission. While this phenomenon is not exclusive to Islamic discourse, the focus here is specifically on analyzing the latter.

It is unnecessary to provide specific contemporary examples here; a brief survey of the internet or daily news reveals countless instances of defamation. Such insults frequently originate from marginalized or radicalized elements, as well as Islamist actors targeting their critics—even those who maintain a polite discourse.<sup>(616)</sup> While other factions certainly engage in similar behavior, the primary focus of this study remains limited to the Islamic context.

The double standards become evident in the fact that Islamists enjoy the right to preach Islam and criticize other faiths in various countries, including Israel, while simultaneously demanding broader rights in those same contexts. In contrast, laws and customs in most Muslim countries prohibit adherents of other religions from proselytizing or publicly expressing their beliefs. Islamists often confront such attempts harshly, inciting authorities against them. Muslims affiliated with sects other than the mainstream in their societies are often restricted from publicly expressing their beliefs and, in many cases, face arrest on charges of disseminating so-called “destructive” ideas. In Egypt, for instance, Shi'ites—as well as groups such as Satanists, Bahā'īs, and Qur'ānists—have been subjected to arrest and humiliation. While other cultures are often characterized as intrusive, imported, and destructive, it is overlooked that, from the perspective of other peoples, Islam itself may be perceived in precisely those terms—intrusive, imported, and destructive to their cultural frameworks—

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<sup>(616)</sup> The Author was surprised by Gamāl al-Bannā, who seemed to be delicate, sharply criticizing Ṭāhā Ḥusayn in his book *Towards a New Islamic Jurisprudence*. He described some of his words as: “*suspicious paragraphs that brought shame on their author*,” p. 150, and implicitly accused Naṣr Abū Zayd of promoting quackery, p. 153.

if one adopts the very expressions employed by Islamists and their adherents.

Muslim peoples often reject any right for others to proselytize in Muslim countries. Writers, who criticize Islam, or specific fatāwā and rulings considered part of the religion, frequently face severe opposition. Even if the person in question is Muslim, he may be declared an unbeliever, rendering him liable to capital punishment. Furthermore, Islamists may express hostility toward proselytizing activity in the Abode of Unbelief. As an example, the Islamic magazine *al-Bayān* justified this contradiction in the Islamist position -between enjoying of the right to proselytize globally, and their refusal to allow the same right to others- by stating that the West grants this right to Muslims in accordance with its own intellectual framework, specifically liberal principles. Conversely, Islamists remain consistent with the principles of Sharī'ah when they prevent proselytization in Muslim countries.<sup>(617)</sup> This justification is sufficient to highlight the perceived double standard: Islamic culture allows its adherents freedoms it deprives others of. Thus, the double standard relates to the principle itself and not merely to individuals.

**\* The Attitude Toward Apostates:**

The literal meaning of apostasy is a return to a previous state. In an Islamic context, the term refers to someone who leaves the faith. This choice of words clearly carries the meaning of a retreat to a previous stage. Even if a person was born a Muslim and leaves Islam, he is still termed an apostate, meaning he is deemed to have regressed to a position considered lower in rank and value. The word thus functions to belittle other faiths, positioning them as morally prior to Islam, even if they are chronologically subsequent to it. By using this terminology, a distinction -or a double standard- is made between the apostate from Islam and the convert from

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<sup>(617)</sup> *The Position on the Other Opinion – An Islamic Legal Perspective.*

other beliefs to Islam. In this framework, the apostate is positioned in direct contrast to the guided believer.

Moreover, even the notion of right is marked by inequality: for non-believers, conversion to Islam is framed not merely as a right but as a duty, whereas Muslims are denied the legal or social right to adopt another doctrine. The central concern here is the disparity in the right itself—namely, the individual's right to change his religion. In comparison, secularists and democrats generally adopt a single position that affirms the freedom of individuals to change their beliefs. This contrast highlights a fundamental divergence between the Islamic perspective and secular democratic thought regarding religious freedom.

Moreover, discrimination is evident in the treatment of those killed in wars between Muslims and unbelievers. Muslims killed in battle are referred to as martyrs, a term that conveys honor and reverence, whereas non-Muslims are typically described merely as “killed” or “perished.” In Islam, a martyr is considered to be alive and not dead: **Do not think that those who were killed in the cause of God are dead, but rather they are alive and provided with their Lord** (Sūrah 3:169). This distinction serves to diminish the significance of non-Muslim deaths while elevating the status of Muslim deaths, even though the circumstances of both may be the same, such as defending honor, dignity, homeland, and principles. This distinction rests on the belief that Muslims wage battle for the sake of God, whereas others do not—even if they themselves claim to fight for a divine cause. Originally, this differentiation was intended to inspire combatants and to promote jihād, and it persists due to its foundational role in religious texts.

## Second. Regarding History

1. Islamist discourse, both historical and contemporary, asserts that no era has been truly ideal except under the sovereignty of an

Islamic state. Under the weight of criticism, they have come to restrict this “ideal” period to the era of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs—roughly 42 years, including the reign of Muḥammad and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. Some narrow it further to the eras of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and the Prophet himself. From the Sunni perspective, this period is distinguished by rulers chosen through *shūrā* (consultation) and their commitment to implementing Islamic law in practice. Justice, therefore, is applied according to the Islamic conception. Afterward, the Umayyad dynasty is viewed as a hereditary monarchy, with rulers exploiting scholars for political ends and prioritizing worldly interests. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī discusses this contrast extensively, portraying the Rāshidūn era (including 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz) as Islam’s true golden age, while later periods represent decline. Islamic culture generally adopts this view, and Islamists continue to echo these arguments when comparing Islamic history with that of other peoples, particularly the West.

2. Restricting Islamic history to only forty-two years is clearly arbitrary, and most Islamists do not adhere to it. Many instead take pride in later eras, including the Ottoman period, and even celebrate the achievements of Muslim scientists who were, at times, accused of unbelief. Thus, the definition of Islamic history shifts according to circumstance; sometimes it is framed as “Islamic culture,” at other times as the history of *al-ḥākimiyyah*. This selective approach extends to how Islamists filter history: aspects resembling the histories of non-Muslim nations are deemed deviations, or “misinterpretations” if linked to the Companions. Deviations are explained either as Muslims abandoning their faith or as conspiracies by unbelievers infiltrating the community, such as the alleged figure of 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba'. Even the short-lived “true Islamic era” is said to have been marred by mistakes, attributed to infiltration or excessive good intentions, as in interpretations of the corruption under 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and

Mu'āwiya ibn Abū Sufyān. Selectivity persists when attempts are made to prove the greatness of Islamic history by citing isolated examples, often tied to rulers rather than sacred texts, while ignoring contradictory evidence.

3. Islam triumphed over Arab unbelievers and expanded its state. As historians often note, history is written by the victors. Consequently, Muslim accounts of Islam's rise and its defeated enemies dominate, while testimonies from the vanquished remain scattered and rare.<sup>(618)</sup> Orientalists, too, rely primarily on Islamic sources. Islamic historiography often portrays the Islamic state as embodying noble values and ideals, contrasting sharply with depictions of the West, which Islamists present in a negative light. Victors also depicted pre-Islamic Arabs as savages, helpless, and uncivilized, aiming both to erase the *jāhiliyyah* era and to highlight the miraculous nature of Islam's emergence. Yet this portrayal is difficult to reconcile with the eloquence and poetry of pre-Islamic Arabs. Victors sought to obliterate Arab heritage, including dialects other than that of Quraysh, dismissing them as inferior. The Qur'ānic dialect was elevated as the standard of "true Arabic," while alternatives were marginalized.

Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfi'ī notes that these dialects were treated as degenerate forms, mentioned only as evidence of Quraysh's linguistic superiority: They were cited only as evidence of the original eloquence of Arabic, its freedom from discrepancy and irregularities, and as supplementary proof of what scholars had already collected from the foundations of the language. In this way, the dialects served to elaborate linguistic detail, rather than provide historical documentation.<sup>(619)</sup>

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<sup>(618)</sup> Some of this is found Patricia Crone & Michael Cook, *Hagarism - The Making of the Islamic World*.

<sup>(619)</sup> *History of Arabic Literature*, Vol. One, p. 92.



In reality, Arabs of that era were not advanced peoples, but neither were they mere savages. States and governments existed, such as Kinda, al-Ḥīra, the Ghassanids, and Yemeni kingdoms. Even Makkah had a quasi-democratic form of governance. Far from being only murderers and thieves, Makkans ran a central commercial hub and practiced cohesive social organization. They displayed notable religious tolerance and cultural openness. While they lacked philosophers, they had wise men who expressed ideas through poetry. Elements of Islam can be traced to earlier Arab religions and practices. The Islamic state was built by the Arabs themselves, not angels, and while it demolished aspects of the past, it also preserved much of it. Attempts to portray Islam as transforming Arabs into angels exaggerate its role and obscure the continuity with pre-Islamic traditions.

Islam retains many pre-Islamic practices, such as Ḥajj rituals, polygamy (albeit regulated), and the sanctification of the *Ka'bah* and the Black Stone. Islamists, however, insist these were originally part of Ibrāhīm's religion, preserved by pagan Arabs despite their deviation from monotheism. They argue Islam did not borrow from pre-Islamic life but merely restored Ibrāhīmīc practices. Yet history provides no evidence of a Prophet named Ibrāhīm or of his alleged rituals. What is known is that pagan Arabs had customs that Islam preserved. Islamists deny this borrowing, insisting instead that unbelievers appropriated rituals from primordial Islam (Ur-Islam).

4. Whereas many in the West criticize European history and condemn the atrocities committed by their ancestors, such self-criticism is far less common in the Arab and Islamic world.<sup>(620)</sup> Islamic history is often restricted to the forty-two years after the

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<sup>(620)</sup> Such as Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr's criticism of the Islamic conquests. For example: *The Overlooked Dimensions of 'Umar's Biography*.

**Prophet's migration, a framing that serves to sidestep recognition of parallels between Islamic and Western historical experiences**

**5. Islamic thought employs two criteria to evaluate both Islamic history and that of other peoples, asserting that the former operates based on noble goals and virtuous values, detached from worldly interests, whereas the latter is driven by material interests and temporary gains. This is occasionally exacerbated by what is termed a blind hatred of Islam. Consequently, Islamists apply a double standard to history. Just as individuals are categorized as Muslims or unbelievers, the evolution of human history and societal “laws” is divided into two systems, one for Muslims and another for unbelievers, undermining the unity of human history and the human mind. It is striking that classical Islamic thought was often more explicit than contemporary Islamist discourse. Early Muslim historians presented facts with a degree of neutrality and sometimes interpreted Islamic history using a “worldly” approach—that is, realistically. However, contemporary Islamists present the history of the early Islamic polity as if the society were utopian, which is contrary to numerous accounts in the writings of classical authors:**

**\* Like any country, the forty-two-year Islamic State witnessed a number of internal wars, including the wars of Muḥammad and the wars of apostasy in which, according to Muslim historians, extremely cruel acts were committed.<sup>(621)</sup> Then came the major Islamic conquests that were accompanied by acts of severe**

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<sup>(621)</sup> Among the things that Abū Bakr recommended to Khālīd ibn al-Walīd regarding the wars of apostasy, according to al-Ṭabarī: *“When you camp, give the call to prayer and wait. If the people do the same, then desist from them. If they do not, then nothing but the raid. Kill them by any means necessary, including burning. If they convert to Islam, ask if they acknowledge zakāt; if they do, accept it from them. If they refuse, then only the raid and no further negotiation.”* It is also attributed to Abū Bakr that he made a covenant with his armies that if you invade a house of the people and you hear in it a call to prayer, then withhold from its inhabitants until you ask them what they are displeased with. If you do not hear a call to prayer, then launch a raid, kill and burn. *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 273.

violence across the Middle East. Moreover, what is known as “The Great *Fitnah*” (The Great Upheaval), occurred at the end of the rule of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, who ruled for 12 years, due to generalized corruption, as most Muslim history writers acknowledge.

Ibn al-Athīr reported regarding Khālīd ibn al-Walīd during the Wars of Apostasy that he did not accept reconciliation from any of the tribes of Asad, Ghaṭafān, Ṭayy, Sulaym, or 'Āmir unless they handed over those who had burned, mutilated, and assaulted Islam when they apostatized. They brought them to him, and he punished them by burning, stoning, throwing them from mountains, and casting them headfirst into wells. He then sent word to Abū Bakr informing him of what he had done, along with Qurra ibn Hubayra and a number of prisoners bound in chains.<sup>(622)</sup> Moreover, Abū Bakr's army also killed many prisoners, and captured civilians, including women and children, even though some of them were Muslims. For example, the *Banū Jazīma* were killed by Khālīd ibn al-Walīd's army while they were captives.<sup>(623)</sup> He also killed the Banū Jerboa and Mālīk ibn Nuwairah's people, taking his family captive until Abū Bakr released them and handed them over to Mutammam ibn Nuwairah (Mālīk's brother) with blood money.<sup>(624)</sup>

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<sup>(622)</sup> *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* [The Perfect History], file 29 of 309.

Al-Dhahabī relates, on the authority of Ibn Lahī'ah, the following narration: “*Khālīd—known as one of the Swords of Allah—advanced until he reached al-Bazakhah. The tribe of Tayy sent him word: ‘If you wish to come to us, we shall hear and obey; or, if you prefer, we shall march to you.’ Khālīd replied: ‘I am coming to you.’ He remained at al-Bazakhah, where opposing forces from Banū Asad and Ghatafan had gathered. A fierce battle ensued, resulting in heavy casualties among the enemy and the capture of many others. Khālīd then ordered trenches to be dug, ignited fires within them, and cast the captives into the flames. Following this, he proceeded to the territory of Tayy, where Banū 'Amir, Ghatafan, and others embraced Islam and submitted to its truth, which Khālīd accepted.*” *Tarikh al-Islam wa-Wafayat al-Mashahir wa-al-A'lam* [Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures, No. 2, p. 20.

<sup>(623)</sup> *The Ḥalabī Biography of Prophet Muḥammad*, Vol. Three, p. 277.

<sup>(624)</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Ibid*.

During the caliphate of Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, many women remained in captivity. However, when 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb assumed leadership, he released them, declaring that it was disgraceful for Arabs to enslave one another, particularly since God Almighty had expanded their dominion and granted them victory over the non-Arabs. Arab captives were thus freed, with the exception of a woman who had borne a child to her master. A ransom was established for each individual—six or seven camels—except in the case of the Ḥanīfah and Kinda tribes, toward whom 'Umar adopted a more lenient position due to the killing of their men. Proactive and systematic efforts were undertaken across all regions to locate and secure the liberation of their women. <sup>(625)</sup>

The Battle of *al-Jamal* then took place between 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, and an alliance of 'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr, Talḥa, and al-Zubair, figures traditionally regarded as promised Paradise. The confrontation ended with the defeat of this alliance. Classical Islamic sources estimate the casualties in the thousands. Ibn Kathīr records a figure of ten thousand deaths, <sup>(626)</sup> in addition to countless wounded, while other sources raise the number to thirty thousand. <sup>(627)</sup> Among what Ibn Kathīr mentioned regarding this battle is that no other encounter was ever reported in which more hands and feet were cut off than in this one. <sup>(628)</sup>

This was followed by the Battle of Ṣiffīn, fought between 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib and the Umayyads. According to Islamic historical accounts, seventy thousand Muslims were killed in this conflict. <sup>(629)</sup> In its aftermath, Islam fractured into Sunnis, Shi'ites, Khārijites,

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<sup>(625)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(626)</sup> *The Beginning and the End*, Vol. Seven, p. 275.

<sup>(627)</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures*, Vol. Two, p. 270.

<sup>(628)</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Op. cit.*, Vol. Seven, p. 270.

<sup>(629)</sup> Ibid., Vol. Seven, p. 304.

and other sectarian groups engaged in internecine warfare. Numerous bloody confrontations subsequently erupted between the state and the Khārijites.

This stands in contrast to practices marked by deception and falsehood among Muslims in the context of competition for power, a pursuit of a distinctly worldly nature. For instance, the confrontation between al-Ḥusayn and Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiyah was nothing other than a struggle for authority on the part of both sides. Yet this confrontation, which is regarded as sacred by the Shi'ites and, to some extent, by the Sunnis, is recounted in detail across dozens of traditional historical sources. It raises the question of whether these bloody wars can truly be characterized as battles for allegedly higher principles, when civil wars elsewhere in the world are generally understood to be driven by worldly concerns.

Most Sunnis, however, refrain from addressing these civil wars in a realistic or worldly manner, unlike the way conflicts in Western history are often analyzed. They prohibit criticism of the Companions, including those who participated in the aforementioned battles. The prevailing view is that the opposing parties at al-Jamal and Ṣiffīn acted out of misunderstanding: whoever interpreted the situation correctly would receive two rewards, while whoever erred would still receive one reward, in accordance with the well-known prophetic tradition.

Acts such as murder, deception during civil strife, the instrumentalization of religion, and other grave transgressions were condemned primarily by the Shi'ites and the Mu'tazilites, and by only a small minority of Sunnis. The Sunni justification is largely formalistic, relying on Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions that praise the Companions collectively, describe them as the best of humankind, and promise Paradise to some of them even prior to the questioning on the Day of Judgment; a belief held by most Muslims. On this basis, their actions, or the actions of some among them, are consistently interpreted as well-intentioned ijtihād.

This reasoning is reinforced by precedent. For instance, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq declined to impose any punishment on Khālīd ibn al-Walīd after he killed numerous Muslims during the wars of apostasy, among them Mālīk ibn Nuwayrah,<sup>(630)</sup> who had declared Islam. Khālīd notoriously used Mālīk's severed head as a cooking stone  and then married his widow,<sup>(631)</sup> an act he justified as a misinterpretation of circumstances.<sup>(632)</sup> Earlier, the Prophet Muḥammad himself had not punished Khālīd when he killed a large number of Muslims from Banū Jazīma, allegedly in personal retaliation. Instead, the Prophet acknowledged the sin, offered blood money to the families of the slain, but did not remove Khālīd from command.

Given Khālīd's reputation as a brilliant military commander whose victories were crucial to the Muslim community, his dismissal was considered untenable. Consequently, certain jurists interpret the decision not to punish him as an example of *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (the unrestricted public interest).<sup>(633)</sup>

It is noteworthy that certain Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions concerning Muslims fighting one another are effectively disregarded in these contexts. Among them is verse 9 in Sūrah 49: **And if two groups of the believers fight, then make peace between them. But if one of them transgresses against the other, then fight against the one that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. And if it returns, then make peace between them with justice**

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<sup>(630)</sup> *The Sweet-Scented Garden*, Vol. Four.

<sup>(631)</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Islamic History*, Account of Apostasy, the Killing of Mālīk ibn Nuwayrah, 2, p. 24.

<sup>(632)</sup> According to al-Dhahabī, Abū Bakr remarked on Khālīd's conduct during this incident to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who insisted on his punishment: "*Khālīd is not obligated to follow your orders, yet he provided his reasoning and erred.*" *Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures*, No. 2, p. 24.

<sup>(633)</sup> Muḥammad Taqyy Ḥakīm, *General Principles of Comparative Islamic Jurisprudence*, Chapter: *Al-Maṣlaḥah al-Mursalah* [the unrestricted public interest], p. 389.



and act equitably; and the well-known ḥadīth: **If two Muslims meet with their swords, both the killer and the killed will be in Hell** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -31). This was deemed inapplicable to the Companions engaged in civil wars, thereby granting them immunity from criticism. As a result, the Companions are perceived as entitled to commit any sin, with all their actions, including the widespread corruption during the reign of 'Uthmān and the establishment of the Umayyad state by force, explained on the assumption of good intention, irrespective of their social or historical consequences. <sup>(634)</sup>

Bloodshed, atrocities, betrayal, treachery, and struggles for power and wealth are thus interpreted according to one principle when occurring within the sacred sphere of the Companions, and by another principle when occurring outside it, particularly among non-Muslim communities.

After the forty-two years of the early Islamic polity, similar dynamics unfolded on a larger scale during the 'Abbāsīd era. The crimes of the 'Abbāsīds surpassed those of their Umayyad predecessors. Their rule began with brutal massacres against the Umayyads in the Levant and other regions, followed by the suppression of revolts, moral decline, plundering of resources, wastefulness, extravagance, and the hoarding of wealth. One of the most striking examples, according to Islamic sources, is that the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd left behind vast amounts of jewels, furnishings, and property—excluding houses and farms—valued at approximately one hundred million and thirty-five thousand dinars. <sup>(635)</sup>

The assassination of four of the five “Rightly Guided Caliphs,” three of them at the hands of Muslims—'Uthmān, 'Alī, and 'Umar

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<sup>(634)</sup> The sources on this matter are exhaustive, and there is no dissenting opinion within traditional Islamic thought.

<sup>(635)</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *The Beginning and the End*, cited Ibn al-Jawzī, Vol. Ten, p. 240.

ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz—further undermines the claim of an idealized polity. One of these assassinations occurred during a popular uprising. Likewise, half of the ten Companions promised Paradise were killed; four of them by Muslims ('Uthmān, 'Alī, Ṭalḥa, and al-Zubayr), yet such events rarely receive sufficient attention from Islamist narratives. Instead, they are often explained through conspiracy theories against Islam, despite the fact that the perpetrators in the cases of 'Uthmān, 'Alī, and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz were Muslims themselves.

The frequency of caliphal assassinations directly challenges the notion of the exemplary character of the “Rightly Guided State.” A common Islamist response to critics of Islamic history is to accuse them of presenting partial accounts while neglecting the broader context. In reality, however, Islamists themselves often rely on selective, isolated examples drawn from the wider historical record; these examples are so scarce that Muslim schoolchildren frequently memorize them as fragments detached from the general narrative.

Among the principal drivers of civil wars in the Abode of Islam were authoritarian rule, stark class disparities, the persecution of political opponents, the marginalization of non-Arabs—particularly during the Umayyad era—and the oppression of subject populations in the provinces.

Inquisitions and similar judicial mechanisms were established across various periods, beginning in the late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd caliphates. Rulers such as al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, al-Rashīd, al-Ma'mūn, and al-Mu'taṣīm mobilized soldiers to combat perceived heretics, execute them, and burn their writings. This era also witnessed the ascendancy of Mu'tazilite thought, a rationalist school within Islam. The Mu'tazilites themselves persecuted and even executed those who rejected the doctrine of the “created Qur'ān.” Later, they too became victims of persecution, with some killed for maintaining this very belief. These events are extensively

documented in Islamic heritage sources, with no alternative accounts offering a substantially different portrayal.

Islamic thought has generally struggled to confront these episodes with candor or to acknowledge their worldly significance. The intentions of historians are frequently questioned by certain writers. A notable example is Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, an “enlightened Islamist,” who denies the massacre of the Jewish tribe of Banū Qurayza, claiming instead that they were deported like the other two Jewish tribes.<sup>(636)</sup> This assertion, however, lacks support from both Islamic and non-Islamic sources and rests solely on his own textual reading. His interpretation is illogical, for an event of such magnitude—whether deportation or liquidation—would not have been easily forgotten by transmitters of historical memory. Similarly, Muḥammad Sa’īd al-’Ashmāwī, another enlightened Islamist thinker, rejects reports of the assassinations of non-believer opponents during the Prophet’s lifetime, deeming such acts incompatible with prophethood. Yet these incidents are recorded by numerous Muslim historians, whose sincerity toward Islam was not in doubt.

It is telling that Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Dhahabī himself expressed bitterness and disappointment when reviewing the narratives of the Rāshidūn era—long regarded as the golden age of Islam—in sources such as al-Ṭabarī’s *History of Messengers and Kings*. He observed a pronounced dissonance between the idealized image of the Companions, characterized by sound belief, upright conduct, and noble character, and the historical realities conveyed by transmitters and informants.<sup>(637)</sup> This divergence between the normative ideal and the narrative representation raises a methodological problem concerning the reliability of historical reports, revealing a dissonance between collective idealized memory

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<sup>(636)</sup> *The Overlooked Dimensions of ‘Umar’s Biography*.

<sup>(637)</sup> *Maḥmūd ‘Adālat al-Ṣaḥābah* [The Concept of the Companions’ Integrity].

and the narratives recorded by storytellers and chroniclers. Unable to rely on empirical evidence to judge individuals, al-Dhahabī deferred to the sacred text, which affirms the justice and moral integrity of the Companions, though it offers no further historical corroboration. In doing so, he sought to infer realities from principles.

Like any polity founded on new principles and values, the early Islamic state initially exhibited simplicity, particularly in the relationship between rulers and the ruled. Islamists often highlight this stage to underscore differences between the Islamic state and other polities, citing episodes such as the flogging of the son of 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and the appearance of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib before a judge alongside a Jewish litigant. Yet, as institutions solidified and group interests crystallized, social divisions and violent conflicts emerged.

One of the most consequential events was the revolt at the end of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān's reign, when he refused to relinquish authority, justifying his position by asserting that his office was not a human arrangement that could be abandoned, but rather a divine mandate that could not be revoked by personal will or external pressure. He expressed this conviction through the metaphor of governance as a garment bestowed upon him by God, thereby affirming that this responsibility would endure as long as its source remained divine. <sup>(638)</sup>

Islamic historical sources reveal significant wealth disparities during the Rāshidūn period, particularly among the close Companions. The caliphs distributed gifts of varying magnitude,

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<sup>(638)</sup> Muḥammad Ridha, *'Uthmān ibn 'Affān*.

To justify their position, Sunni scholars cite a prophetic tradition recorded in *Sunan Ibn Mājah* -112:... on the authority of 'Ā'ishah, who said: **The Messenger of God said: 'O 'Uthmān, if God appoints you to govern one day, and the hypocrites want you to take off the shirt that God has clothed you with, then do not take it off.'** He said that three times. **Al-Nu'man said to 'Ā'ishah: What prevented you from informing people about this? She said: I forgot about it.**

beginning with 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who departed from Abū Bakr's precedent. As a result, considerable fortunes accumulated, especially during the reign of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, al-Dhahabī, and Ibn Sa'd (Muḥammad ibn Sa'd ibn Manī' al-Hāshimī al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī) reported that 'Uthmān left behind immense wealth, including thirty million five hundred thousand dirhams and one hundred thousand dinars, which were subsequently plundered, as well as numerous horses and camels—among them one thousand camels in al-Rabādha—and landed endowments in Baradis, Khaybar, and Wādī al-Qurā valued at two hundred thousand dinars.<sup>(639)</sup>

Ibn Sa'd recorded that after settling his debts, the heirs of al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām inherited thirty-five million two hundred thousand dirhams.<sup>(640)</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī noted that his estate amounted to fifty thousand dinars, along with one thousand horses and one thousand male and female slaves.<sup>(641)</sup> Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubayd Allāh al-Taymī reportedly earned a daily income of one thousand dinars or more from Iraq, with additional revenues from al-Sharāh. He constructed a brick house in Madīnah and a prominent residence in Kūfa.<sup>(642)</sup>

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf left behind one thousand camels, three thousand sheep, and one hundred horses. He cultivated land with twenty camels in al-Jarf, and his estate included gold so abundant that it was cut with axes.<sup>(643)</sup> At his death, he bequeathed one

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<sup>(639)</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar* [Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems], No. 2, pp. 332-333, al-Dhahabī, *Islamic History and Biographies of Eminent Figures*, No. 2, and 262 - Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubrā* [the Major Strata], file 31 of 118.

<sup>(640)</sup> *The Major Strata*, file 32.

<sup>(641)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(642)</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, Op. cit

<sup>(643)</sup> Ibn Sa'd, Op.cit., file 33 of 118.

thousand horses and fifty thousand dinars in charity. <sup>(644)</sup> It is reported that he wept bitterly at that moment when asked about the reason for his sorrow. He replied that Mus'ab ibn 'Umair, who was better than him, had died during the lifetime of the Prophet without having even a shroud in which to be buried. Likewise, Ḥamza ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib —whom he regarded as superior to himself — was not afforded a shroud. He then added that he feared being among those whose blessings were hastened to them in this worldly life, and that he might be separated from the Companions of the Prophet because of his abundant wealth. <sup>(645)</sup>

As for 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, at his death he left behind seventy *bahars* of dinars (a *bahar* being the capacity of a bull's hide) equivalent to an *ardabb* in Egyptian measure, <sup>(646)</sup> and he had possessed no wealth before being appointed over Egypt. Al-Mas'ūdī recorded that the inheritance was immense: he left approximately three hundred and twenty-five thousand dinars in gold coin, and one thousand dirhams in silver coin, in addition to revenues amounting to two hundred thousand dinars in Egypt, and his estate there known as al-Waḥṭ, valued at ten million dirhams. <sup>(647)</sup> Al-Dhahabī likewise noted that he left vast quantities of gold. <sup>(648)</sup> 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb is reported to have accused him of exploiting public office for personal enrichment, and consequently confiscated half of his property for the benefit of the treasury. According to tradition, 'Umar charged his officials with corruption and admonished them by declaring that they had appropriated wealth unlawfully,

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<sup>(644)</sup> Khair al-Dīn al-Zirakī, *al-A'lām* [The Eminent Figures], No. 3, p. 321.

<sup>(645)</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Al-Isti'ab fī Tamyiz al-Ashab* [The Comprehensive Collection in Distinguishing the Companions], file 31 of 73.

<sup>(646)</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments*, 2, p. 94.

<sup>(647)</sup> *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, No. 3, p. 23.

<sup>(648)</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lam An-Nubala'* [Biographies of Eminent Figures], Vol. One, p. 58.



consumed what was forbidden, and even transmitted such illicit gains to their heirs.<sup>(649)</sup>

Furthermore, it is recorded that Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubayd Allāh sold land for seven hundred thousand dinars, earned about four hundred thousand dinars in Iraq, and ten thousand dinars in al-Sharāh. He also used to send ten thousand dinars to 'Ā'isha every year. Moreover, it was said that his daily produce *amounted to one thousand wasqs and two daniqs*.<sup>(650)</sup> Upon his death, he left behind two million two hundred thousand dirhams and two hundred thousand dinars. His assets and properties were valued at thirty million dirhams, and he left one hundred ox hides, each containing three quintals of gold.<sup>(651)</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdī mentioned, quoting Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, that when Zayd ibn Thābit died, he left behind quantities of gold and silver, reportedly broken into pieces with axes, in addition to money and property worth one hundred thousand dinars.<sup>(652)</sup> 'Umar used to appoint him as his vicegerent in charge of Madīnah whenever he traveled, and he rarely returned without giving him a palm orchard.<sup>(653)</sup>

Ya'lā ibn Umayyah (also known as Ibn Munyah) left behind five hundred thousand dinars, in addition to outstanding debts owed by others, real estate, and other assets worth three hundred thousand dinars.<sup>(654)</sup>

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<sup>(649)</sup> In *The Conquest of Egypt and Its History*, Ibn Abd A-Ḥakam mentions the practice of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb sharing the wealth of his governors.

<sup>(650)</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Op.cit*, pp. 32-33. According to *Tongue of the Arabs* and other dictionaries, one thousand waf = one thousand dirhams. The *danik* is a measure of weights equal to one-sixth of a dirham,

<sup>(651)</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Op. cit.*, file 35 of 118.

<sup>(652)</sup> *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, No. 2, p.333.

<sup>(653)</sup> Khair al-Dīn al-Ziraklī, *The Eminent Figures*, No. 3, p. 57.

<sup>(654)</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *Op. cit.*

Sa'd ibn Abū Waqqās built his house with agate, thickened its walls, expanded its space, and adorned the rooftops with balconies.  
(655)

These narratives reveal the magnitude of the wealth accumulated by the Companions. They reflect the nature of the economic and social structures of that era, while raising questions about the relationship between power and wealth, as well as how it was employed within political and religious contexts.

In the end, the Umayyads had seized the positions and sources of wealth that had sparked the revolution. This prompted the selection of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, a pure and strict ideologue, to confront them. Despite his military victory at the beginning, he was ultimately defeated politically.

In the eras following the Rāshidūn, the distribution of wealth continued to be highly unequal. Islamic sources discuss the luxury of the rulers and the wealthy classes, the poverty of the common people, especially non-Arabs, and severe corruption in the court and the state apparatus. This corruption was both blatant and pervasive, requiring no further explanation.

- Islamic thought consistently condemns European colonialism, portraying it as a project of domination and exploitation. Simultaneously, it tends to regard the early Islamic conquests with reverence, often framing them as acts of civilizational expansion rather than imperial subjugation. Some scholars even employ the term “Islamic colonialism” to describe this phenomenon. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadawī, for instance, acknowledges that Islam may be considered “colonial in nature” if the terminology is deemed appropriate. Yet, he emphasizes that this form of colonialism diverges fundamentally from its European counterpart: it was not animated by ambitions of conquest, domination, or economic

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(655) Ibid.

nationalism. The early Muslim fighters, he argues, were not driven by material gain or the pursuit of luxury at the expense of others. Their sole motivation lay in establishing a universal framework aimed at the spiritual elevation and moral betterment of humanity.<sup>(656)</sup> Likewise, Ḥasan al-Bannā, who maintained that Islamic colonialism bore no similarity to any other colonialism in history -neither in its purpose, nor in its methods and management, nor in its results, and benefits- argued that Muslims conquered land only to raise the “word of Truth” in it. He described it as the “Colonization of Professorship and Reform.”<sup>(657)</sup>

This particular issue requires attention, due to its great importance in contemporary Islamic thought:

\* Such claims are characteristic of colonialist discourse across contexts. European colonialism claimed that it only entered other countries to spread civilization or Christian morals, just as Americans claim they want to spread democracy. Similarly, the Crusades, which arouse intense hatred among Islamists, were likewise carried out under religious slogans. This reveals a striking similarity between these two colonial modes. If one accepts that the Crusades were religious wars, then they may be understood as the Christian equivalent of jihād, while jihād itself represents an Islamic, “holy crusade.” Yet Islamist discourse condemns the Crusades, attributing to them every reprehensible quality. Simultaneously, it often overlooks the realities of jihād- such as captivity, plunder, the destruction of places of worship, killing, and even acts of genocide, as documented in Islamic historical sources.

\* Islamic campaigns were not always carried out under purely religious slogans. Since the time of Muḥammad, the Prophet had promised his companions the treasures of Khusraw and Caesar. He

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<sup>(656)</sup> *What Did the World Lose with the Decline of Muslims*, Vol. Three, the Islamic era, Chapter One, the era of Islamic leadership.

<sup>(657)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Our Invitation.

called on the Quraysh to follow him, promising them the collection of jizyah from the non-Arabs (*al-'Ajam*), as reported from his words to his uncle Abū Ṭālib: **I only want them to agree on one word by which the Arabs will submit to them and the 'Ajam will pay them jizyah** (*Musnad Aḥmad* -3417). He also promised his companions the occupation of lands: **God folded the earth for me, so I saw its easts and its wests. My community will rule over what was folded for me** (*Al-Albani's Authentic Aḥadīth* -2). In addition, expeditions included the promise of sexual spoils: **Conquer Tabuk and you will take the daughters of yellow and the women of the Romans as spoils**. This saying is attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, where it is reported that al-Jadd ibn Qays sought exemption from participation, claiming that he did not wish to be tempted by women.<sup>(658)</sup> This was, in effect, a request not to participate in the expedition.

Early Islamic historiography often frames the expansion into the Levant and Persia as the fulfillment of prophetic promises rather than mere territorial ambition. When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb resolved to advance into the Levant, he is said to have addressed the community in the mosque, reminding them that their presence in the Ḥijāz was not intended as a permanent settlement. He recalled the Prophet's promise of the conquest of the lands of Khusraw and Caesar, urging them to march onward into Persia. This statement situates the military campaigns within a theological narrative of destiny and divine sanction, rather than within the logic of imperial expansion.<sup>(659)</sup>

Similarly, accounts attributed to 'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr after the conquest of Khaybar highlight the material realities of these events.

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<sup>(658)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Suyūfī and al-Tha'alabī mentioned this prophetic tradition in the context of interpreting Sūrah 9:49: **Among them are those who say, give me exemption and do not tempt me. Indeed, in the test they have fallen, and indeed, Hell surrounds the unbelievers.**

<sup>(659)</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *Op. cit.*, p. 293, cited al-Waqdī.

It is reported that she remarked that they could now satisfy themselves with dates,<sup>(660)</sup> underscoring how the immediate benefits of conquest were perceived in terms of sustenance and daily life. Such remarks reveal the link between the grand narratives of religious mission and the practical realities that captured the attention of contemporaries.

Objective researchers often highlight the close connection between Islamic military expansions and the significant revenues that flowed into the state, particularly through *kharāj* extracted from conquered territories. Within widely held views in Islamic thought, conquest is frequently regarded as a legitimate and even honorable source of wealth. Historical accounts also note that the captivity of women and children was sometimes treated strictly as property, without being framed in terms of lofty moral or religious ideals. Peace treaties with certain conquered regions occasionally included conditions such as the provision of hostages or slaves in lieu of *jizyah*, as reported in the case of Nubia. Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī records that the Nubians agreed to supply 365 slaves annually in exchange for food of equivalent value,<sup>(661)</sup> while al-Layth ibn Sa'd describes this arrangement as a reconciliation to avoid mutual conflict. Similarly, the caliph al-Mahdī is reported to have formalized obligations involving the delivery of slaves and exotic animals in return for provisions.<sup>(662)</sup> Other regions, such as Cyrenaica, were compelled to pay *jizyah* either in money or by selling their children.<sup>(663)</sup> In the East—including Persia, India, and

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<sup>(660)</sup> Ṣafyy al-Raḥmān Mubarakfurī, *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm* [The Sealed Nectar], file 34 of 42.

<sup>(661)</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *The Golden Meadows*, No. 1, p. 441.

<sup>(662)</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *The Book of the Conquests of Lands*, file 15 of 29.

<sup>(663)</sup> Al-Balādhurī stated: "...on the authority...: 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ reconciled the people of Antablus and its city of Cyrenaica, which is between Egypt and Africa, after he besieged and fought them for *jizyah*, provided that they sell any of their children as a *jizyah*.' *The Book of the Conquests of Lands*, file 14 of 29

other Asian territories—sources describe large-scale killings and captivity,<sup>(664)</sup> often justified as responses to their stubborn resistance against Muslim forces. Historical accounts also suggest that Arab tribes, accustomed to raiding and plundering prior to Islam, continued similar practices under the banner of religious conquest. Consequently, spoils and captives were not only regarded as legitimate wealth but are often framed within widely held views in Islamic thought as the most honorable source of revenue.

Historical records indicate that during the period of the Rāshidūn Caliphs, a significant number of Arab Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula received '*atā*' (stipends) funded by state revenues, which were sourced from *jizyah* and *kharāj*, as well as from the proceeds of captives taken during conquests.

Indeed, scholars observe that the Arab tribal customs of raiding, plundering, and capturing individuals—prevalent prior to the advent of Islam—were, in certain instances, perpetuated within the context of religious expansion, with the revenues from conquests viewed as legitimate wealth gathered “for the sake of God.”

Furthermore, sources suggest that military campaigns against non-Arab populations were often presented as being religiously justified, although they frequently mirrored earlier tribal practices of looting and captivity. The involvement of non-believers in some of these military endeavors, driven solely by the desire for spoils, adds complexity to the understanding of the purely religious motivations behind these conquests.

The migration of hundreds of thousands of Bedouins—whom the Qur'ān itself describes as the **most tenacious in disbelief and hypocrisy** (Sūrah 9:97)—and their settlement in conquered lands cannot be understood as driven by moral goals.

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<sup>(664)</sup> This detail is recounted by al-Balādhurī, *ibid*.



Reviewing the correspondence between 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ regarding their dispute over Egypt's taxation reveals that maximizing the yield from conquered lands was the shared objective; the contention lay primarily in determining the most sustainable level of extraction. While the caliph demanded the highest possible revenue, Ibn al-'Āṣ sought to extract wealth within limits that preserved the population's livelihood and labor power, thereby securing future tax income.<sup>(665)</sup> 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb eventually adopted this pragmatic principle in Iraq and the Levant—seemingly internalizing Ibn al-'Āṣ's rationale—recommending that the land not be overburdened. According to the traditions attributed to him, he recommended that jizyah be imposed only in proportions the population could afford,

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<sup>(665)</sup> The correspondence is preserved in several sources, including al-Maqrīzī (Op. cit., vol. 1, Chapter on the Muslim conquest of Egypt and its taxation in relation to the Copts) and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *The Conquest of Egypt and Its History*. These accounts record 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's reproach of 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ for delaying the collection of the kharāj. In brief, 'Umar wrote:

*"I am astonished by the numerous letters I have sent to you regarding your slowness in collecting the kharāj. You know that I will not be satisfied with you except with the truth. I did not appoint you over Egypt to make it booty for yourself or your people, but to ensure the proper collection of the tax and good conduct. If this letter reaches you, then collect the tax, for it is the booty of the Muslims. And know that I have people here who are suffering".*

'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ replied:

*"A letter from the Commander of the Faithful reached me, blaming me for delaying the tax and claiming that I am deviating from the truth. By God, I do not wish to stray from the path. What you may not know is that the people of the land asked me to wait until their harvest ripened, so I considered the welfare of the Muslims. Showing kindness to them is better than forcing them to sell what they need".*

According to al-Layth ibn Sa'd, 'Amr collected twelve million dinars, whereas al-Muqawqis had collected twenty million dinars annually before him. Later, 'Umar wrote again to him on this matter. When 'Uthmān appointed 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd ibn Sarḥ as governor of Egypt, he collected fourteen million dinars. 'Uthmān then remarked to 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ after removing him: *"O father of 'Abd Allāh, the revenue has increased beyond its former value."* To which 'Amr replied: *"You have harmed her son, if the faction did not perish."*

emphasizing the fulfillment of the dhimmahh covenant, prohibiting overcharging, and fighting alongside them.<sup>(666)</sup>

However, other caliphs insisted on squeezing the dhimmīs to the point of exhaustion. Usāmah ibn Zayd, who served as the tax governor of Egypt, petitioned the caliph Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik to ease the fiscal burden on the population. He explained that the people had become exhausted and distressed, and urged the caliph to show them kindness by reducing their tax obligations so that they might rebuild their country and improve their livelihoods, assuring him that such relief would yield returns in the following year. The caliph, however, rejected this appeal, famously responding: *“May your mother be bereaved of you, milk the fluid, and if it is cut off, milk blood and skin.”*<sup>(667)</sup> This brutal metaphor stands as a stark refusal to alleviate suffering, prioritizing immediate extraction over human survival.

Likewise, the process of collecting jizyah, kharāj, and other taxes was not characterized by integrity or commitment to the original dhimmah contract. Taxes such as kharāj were not part of the dhimmah contract, and jizyah was at times increased beyond its stipulated amount, in clear violation of the covenant. Mu'āwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān pursued this policy toward Egypt, as al-Maqrīzī reports. He instructed Wardān, the official responsible for collecting the land tax, to impose an additional *qīrāṭ* on every Copt. Wardān objected to this measure, arguing that the agreements concluded with them stipulated that no further increases should be levied. As a result, he was dismissed from his position. Some sources, however, indicate that his removal was connected to other circumstances beyond this particular incident.<sup>(668)</sup>

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<sup>(666)</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Al-kharāj*, p. 21, p. 27.

<sup>(667)</sup> Al-Jahshiyārī, *The Book of Viziers and Scribes*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>(668)</sup> *Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments*, No. 1, p. 149.

The Umayyads also imposed the jizyah on those who converted to Islam, until 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz abolished it. It is mentioned that the governor of Khorasān during his reign, al-Jarrah ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥakamī had imposed jizyah on the unbelievers who converted to Islam, telling them: You converted to Islam only to escape from it. Consequently, they abstained from Islam and remained steadfast in their religion and paid the jizyah. For this reason, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz dismissed him. <sup>(669)</sup> Moreover, it was sometimes imposed on the dead. <sup>(670)</sup> It is evident that these decisions cannot be explained morally. In fact, in many cases, killings were carried out by governors, including 'Amr ibn al-'As, to seize gold and other money; incidents that are mentioned in great abundance in Islamic sources. As an example, al-Maqrīzī mentions, quoting Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, that upon the conquest of Egypt, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ stipulated that any individual found concealing treasures would face capital punishment. This act was carried out against a person named Peter, so the Copts kept it in mind and produced their treasures. <sup>(671)</sup> This raises the critical question: what justified the confiscation of such treasures.

\* Islamist perspectives on the nature of historical expansion vary: while the traditional view acknowledges its offensive character consistent with the prevailing concept of conquest at the time, some contemporary preachers tend to cast all military movements in a defensive light — an interpretation that lacks support in classical juridical thought.

Classical sources describe conquest as a central value, nor did the political mind during the Prophetic era or the Caliphate find any objection to expansion and the imposition of fiscal systems such as

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<sup>(669)</sup> *The Beginning and the End*, Vol. Nine, p. 213.

<sup>(670)</sup> Refer to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 22.

<sup>(671)</sup> *Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments*, No. 1, p. 144.

jizyah and kharāj. From a neutral perspective, expanding an empire from Spain to China can hardly be called self-defense; the historical record—starting with the Battle of Badr—shows clear proactive initiatives. History books detail armies advancing toward peaceful cities in Libya, North Africa, and India that had never attacked the Caliphate. The people of Egypt and the Levant were not invaders; they were subjects of empires simply replaced by new rulers who offered no local autonomy. This double standard—justifying one’s own expansion while condemning the expansions of others—highlights a self-centered worldview that labels its own conquests as justice and the actions of others as aggression.

Many Muslim historians recorded numerous incidents of mass killings and enslavement inflicted upon the inhabitants of the conquered lands, often as a consequence of their attempts at self-defense, and at times without any operational justification. Examples include:

\* Ibn 'Amer went to Istakhr in the year 29 AH. <sup>(672)</sup> He fought its people and defeated them, killing about one hundred thousand. <sup>(673)</sup> Istakhr was conquered at least three times after 23 AH, and on each occasion its inhabitants were killed or taken captive as they attempted to defend themselves.

\* Sa'īd ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān headed to Samarkand in 56 AH on the orders of the caliph Mu'āwiyah. The Turkish people of Sogd came out to him; he fought, defeated, and besieged them in their city. They reconciled with him and gave him fifty boys from the sons of their great leaders as a pledge to be in his custody. However, he stayed in Termez and did not fulfill the agreement, bringing the pledged boys with him to Madīnah. <sup>(674)</sup>

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<sup>(672)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. Two, p. 604.

<sup>(673)</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *The Book of the Conquests of Lands*, file 25 of 29.

<sup>(674)</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Op. cit*, Vol. Three, p. 250.

\* Muḥammad ibn al-Qasim conquered Brahmanabadh in India, and killed eight thousand, though some accounts claim that the number reached twenty-six thousand. <sup>(675)</sup>

\* In 121 AH, Marwān ibn Muḥammad conquered the land of *Ṣāḥib al-Sarīr*, or the throne-holder (Dagestan), occupied its castles and devastated its land. The ruler of Sarīr submitted to him paying a yearly jizyah of a thousand heads and giving a pledge for that. <sup>(676)</sup>

\* Yazīd al-Muhallab (al-Ruwayān) went to Gorgan, where the people had revolted and killed their governor. He entered the city while its inhabitants were unaware, killed many of them, took their offspring, and crucified the dead on the right and left sides of the road. <sup>(677)</sup>

\* In the year 223 AH, caliph al-Mu'taṣim went to 'Amorium, where he killed thirty thousand people, captured many others, and burned them with fire. <sup>(678)</sup>

\* King Maḥmūd ibn Sabuktakin conquered parts of India and destroyed the idol of Somnath in Sha'bān of the year 416 AH. His armies set fire to the idol and killed fifty thousand people. <sup>(679)</sup>

\* Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr conquered Awraba (an Amazigh tribe in Morocco) in 84 AH, and captivated fifty thousand. According to what was mentioned by 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad al-'Ukrī al-Dimashqī. <sup>(680)</sup>

\* One example of the severity of these invasions is found in the account of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam. According to his narration, when

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<sup>(675)</sup> Al-Balādhurī, Op. cit., file 27 of 29.

<sup>(676)</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Op. cit., Vol. Nine, p. 358.

<sup>(677)</sup> Al-Balādhurī, Op. cit., file 22 of 29.

<sup>(678)</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad al-'Akrī al-Dimashqī, *Shadharārt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār men Dhahab* [Fragments of Gold in Noble Reports], Vol. Three, p. 104.

<sup>(679)</sup> Ibid., Vol. Five, p. 90.

<sup>(680)</sup> Ibid., Vol. One, p. 342.

the Muslims landed on an island that was later called Umm Ḥakīm, they captured those who were there and then took a man from among them, slaughtered him, dismembered him, and cooked him. The rest of his companions looked on, believing that the Muslims had eaten him, though the soldiers actually threw the remains aside and ate animal meat instead. This was a narrative likely intended to instill fear rather than to describe a normative practice. Afterward, the soldiers released the captives to spread the news in Andalusia that Muslims ate human flesh, thereby terrorizing the population. (681)

\* In Persia and Khorasān, the number of captives reached forty thousand in just a year and a half. (682)

These are just a few examples of the numerous acts of genocide, the enslavement of women, and the plundering of wealth, that are documented in history books written by proud Muslims, whereas their descendants are now complaining about war crimes like these.

Muslims understand from the sacred text what provides a religious justification for the invasion and colonization of other people's territories:

God has promised that He will grant those among you who believe and perform righteous deeds the inheritance of power on earth, just as He granted it to those before them (Sūrah 24:55). Many exegetes argue that what is meant is the entire earth, or -as al-Ṭabarī states- the territories of the non-believers, whether Arab or 'Ajam, to be placed under Muslim authority, with Muslims assuming sovereignty and governance over them. (683)

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(681) *The Conquest of Egypt and Its History*, Mentioning the Conquest of Andalusia.

(682) *Book of Lessons and Record of Beginnings and Events*, No. 2, p. 500.

(683) *The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 24.

Al-Qurṭubī in his exegesis explains that the verse promising believers who perform righteous deeds entails two possible interpretations: first, the land of Makkah, as the



We have written in the Psalms after the holy book, (most likely the Torah) that the earth is inherited by My righteous servants (Sūrah 21:105). Most exegetes argue that what is meant is Muslims. As for the earth, some say that it is the land of Paradise, and others say that it is the entire earth; the land of Muslims and unbelievers alike.

The concept of the Mahdī comes to complete the legitimacy of the Islamic conquest of the world. Most Muslims -their elite and ordinary alike- with the exception of a small number of rationalists (such as Ibn Khaldūn, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and Rashīd Riḍā), believe that the world will witness the emergence of a Muslim leader from the Prophet's household, who will erase injustice and fill the earth with justice, and that the entire earth will then be

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Emigrants had prayed for it and were promised it just as the Israelites were; second, the Arab and Persian lands (*Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*).

Ibn Kathīr in his exegesis interprets this as a divine promise to the Prophet that his followers will become leaders and rulers, through whom the land would be reformed and people would submit to them (*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*).

Sayyid Quṭb offers a broader interpretation, emphasizing that the promise is not confined to political authority but extends to the establishment of a just and moral order. He explains that it does not simply mean holding power and forming a government; rather, it encompasses these responsibilities with the condition that they are used to promote a sound human life and to implement the way of life God has chosen for mankind. Only through such implementation can humanity achieve the level of perfection befitting the species honored by God. The trust given to man on earth is the ability to build and promote goodness, not to corrupt or destroy. It requires ensuring justice and happiness for all, not injustice or suppression. It leads to the elevation of humanity and human life, preventing them from sinking to the level of animals. This is the kind of power and trust that God has promised to believers who perform good deeds. He promises to grant them authority on earth, just as He granted it to earlier communities of believers, so that they might put into practice the constitution He chose for mankind, establish justice, and enable humanity to attain sublimity. Those who spread corruption and injustice and pursue carnal desires are not in the position of trustees; they are subjected to a test or serve as a means to test others. All of this is done to fulfill God's purpose. (*In the Shade of the Qur'ān*).

With this interpretation, Sayyid Quṭb highlights the ethical and functional dimension of vicegerency, viewing it as a reformatory responsibility and a civilizational trust rather than mere authority or domination.

under his control. Then Jesus comes to complete the matter with the final and absolute victory of Islam. <sup>(684)</sup>

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's comment on the Arab conquest of Persia reflects a triumphalist outlook. He emphasized that the Magian kingdom had been dismantled and dispersed to the extent that no part of their territory remained capable of threatening Muslims. He further underscored that God had transferred to the Muslim community the land, dwellings, wealth, and even the progeny of the Persians, framing this inheritance as a divine test of how Muslims would conduct themselves. <sup>(685)</sup>

\* The aim here is not to condemn Islamic military expansions, but rather to clarify that the Islamic state—whether during the era of the Rāshidūn or later—functioned in many respects like other states, pursuing its material interests through the means available at the time. Islamic thought, however, tends to employ a distinct terminology in this regard. It designates Islamic expansion as *fath* (literally “opening”), while labeling other forms of colonialism as invasion or conquest. This distinction rests on the claim that the objectives of Islamic expansion are divine, whereas the objectives of non-Islamic colonialism are material gain or the elimination of Islam.

In this context, a distinction is drawn, for instance, between the liberation of Spain from Arab-Islamic settler colonialism and the liberation of Palestine from the Crusaders. A simple illustration is the contrasting portrayals of two figures: Sulaymān al-Ḥalabī, the killer of General Kléber, who is celebrated as a hero, and Abū Lu'lu'a, the assassin of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who is vilified with the harshest epithets—even though both men killed what could be regarded as foreign colonizers of their respective lands.

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<sup>(684)</sup> Thāmir Hāshim Ḥabīb al-'Amīdī, *The Concept of the Mahdī in Islamic Thought*.

<sup>(685)</sup> *The Book of Lessons and Record of Beginnings and Events*, No. 2, p. 564.

**\* If Islamic colonialism established civilizations in colonized countries, Western colonialism, despite the crimes committed against humanity, likewise provided significant progress and civilization to its colonies. Notably, it established the greatest civilization in history in America after the brutal extermination of most of its indigenous population.**

**\* As for accusing Western colonialism of imposing its culture and erasing the identity of the colonized peoples, Islam provides a stark parallel. Entire peoples were Arabized; their cultures were erased, and even belittled and despised in favor of Islamic culture.**

In this context, al-Maqrīzī presents features of the prevailing views among the early conquerors and some of their successors regarding the nature of the peoples inhabiting the newly subdued lands. These views clearly reflect a hierarchical and derogatory perspective. Egyptians, in particular, were depicted as lacking moral jealousy and as being absorbed in desires and pleasures, and marked by recklessness and indifference. One report attributes to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb a consultation with Ka'b al-Aḥbār<sup>(686)</sup> about the character of different regions and their inhabitants, in which the Levant was associated with reason and temptation, Egypt with fertility and humiliation, and the desert with misery and health. Another tradition elaborates that when God created humankind, He endowed them with ten moral qualities—faith, modesty, courage, temptation, arrogance, hypocrisy, wealth, poverty, humiliation, and misery—and distributed them across lands: Yemen received faith and modesty, Syria received courage and temptation, Iraq received arrogance and hypocrisy, while Egypt was linked to wealth and humiliation. Additional reports reinforce

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<sup>(686)</sup> Ka'b ibn Mani' was one of the senior Jewish rabbis who came from Yemen and converted to Islam during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He lived in Madīnah before leaving for the Levant during the time of Caliph 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. In the Levant, he became an advisor to Mu'āwiyah. Ka'b ibn Mani' passed away in Homs in the year 34 AH.

this image: Ibn 'Abbās is cited as saying that nine-tenths of cunning resided among the Copts; other sayings claimed that generosity was absent among the Romans, loyalty among the Turks, courage among the Copts, and longevity among the Zanj. Ibn al-'Arabī described Egyptians as inclined to submit to whoever holds power, displaying remarkable astuteness in their youth and notable dignity in their old age. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr is reported to have linked Egypt to the offspring of Satan, while Ka'b al-Aḥbār characterized its land as impure like a menstruating woman, purified only annually by the Nile. Finally, Mu'āwiya ibn Abū Sufyān is said to have divided Egyptians into three categories: Arabs, whom he considered the true “people;” the mawālī, whom he described as resembling people; and the Copts, whom he excluded entirely from this designation.<sup>(687)</sup>

\* The stance of classical Islamic thought toward the *Shu'ubiyya*—often described as a populist movement hostile to Arab hegemony—is well-documented for its intense antagonism. The response is characterized by the deprecation of non-Arab cultures and the equation of anti-Arab sentiment with apostasy and heresy. Furthermore, certain Islamic traditions emphasize the veneration of the Arab identity, both in language and lineage. Consequently, the Arab-Islamic reaction is inherently asymmetrical, marked by racial bias and accusations of unbelief. This raises a critical question: is this framework not strikingly similar to the ideological constructs of Western colonialism and Eurocentrism?

### Third. Regarding contemporary reality:

\* Islamists criticize modern civilization, referring to it as mundane or *jāhiliyyah*. Their critique is also echoed by many Western thinkers, though articulated within a distinct philosophical framework. However, Islamists stand out by attributing the same

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<sup>(687)</sup> *Admonitions and Reflections on the Topography and Monuments*, Vol. One, Mentioning the Morals, Natures and Temperaments of the People of Egypt.

issues they criticize in the West, which also exist in Muslim countries, to Western cultural penetration. They view the Islamic East as morally and ethically superior. Any deviations are attributed either to foreign cultural intrusion, global conspiracies against Islam, or the deviation of rulers and Muslims from their faith. The comparison here is not between two realities but between a reality (the West) and the idealized text of Islam. This perspective overlooks the fact that liberal thought, socialism, and humanism originated in the West. Islamists often highlight the pagan roots of Western civilization, tracing them back to Greek and Roman paganism, and characterize its materialism as focusing on pleasure and desires. However, they tend to overlook that Islam emerged within a society characterized by pre-Islamic pagan practices- one that worshipped stones and maintained similar rituals. Additionally, various Arab and Muslim countries have a pagan heritage that has influenced Islam, including practices such as the veneration of deceased figures and the reverence of so-called Righteous Saints of God. <sup>(688)</sup>

Modern civilization has long been accused of moral bankruptcy, often without substantiating evidence, and typically in contrast to the achievements of Islamic civilization, which itself declined centuries ago. Such comparisons juxtapose the present with the past while disregarding the contributions of modern civilization to human values. These include the struggles of European peoples against tyranny, corruption, and oppressive regimes, as well as the revolutions and sacrifices that culminated in the establishment of value systems. Although not without shortcomings, these systems nonetheless recognized a range of rights and fostered certain forms of equality as well as personal and public freedoms—developments that have been, to a large extent, absent in the historical experience

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<sup>(688)</sup> In traditional Islamic thought, a *walī* (saint) is portrayed as an individual distinguished by divine grace and holiness. They are viewed as divinely chosen and endowed with extraordinary charismata, such as the ability to perform miracles (*karamāt*).

of the Islamic East. Islamist discourse frequently portrays Western society as immersed in sensual pleasures, deemed decadent, while overlooking its engagement with literature, music, fine arts, and diverse hobbies, not to mention its enjoyment of modern sciences, discoveries of the universe, ancient monuments, the history of other peoples. This framing neglects the broader cultural and intellectual dimensions of modern life. The critique of decadence thus reflects a narrow interpretive lens, reducing complex cultural practices to mere physicality. More significantly, such arguments reveal a tendency to evaluate external value systems exclusively through the prism of Islamic norms, positioning them as the ultimate benchmark for judgment.

\* Islamists often express significant criticism regarding Western racism, the patronizing perspective of Westerners towards other cultures, and the overarching concept of Eurocentrism. However, they often overlook similar attitudes exhibited within Arab-Islamic traditions. Intense hostility toward the West as a whole—despite the existence of non-central and non-racist currents—became especially prominent during the European occupation. This hostility deepened further with the rise of Nasserism and Arab nationalism, and remains clearly visible. As for the oppression of minority groups within the Muslim world, examples frequently cited include the Kurds under Arab Muslim rule, the inhabitants of South Sudan, the Berbers of North Africa, and the Bidoon, or stateless populations. In addition, explicit racial discrimination in the Gulf countries—most notably in Saudi Arabia—against other Arabs, foreigners in general, and non-Muslims has been widely reported. These issues are not obscure; they are regularly covered in the daily press and are known to hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Arab-Islamic culture continues to emphasize the authenticity of the Arabs, their perceived innate greatness, and their distinctive qualities, echoing the discourse of al-Jāhīz and Ibn



**Taymiyyah. They spoke in terms that reflect explicit ethnocentrism, linking Islam to Arabism and to superiority over the Other.**

**The mainstream in Islamic thought does not believe that there are strong humanitarian tendencies in the West. In reality, many people there are sympathetic to Arabs and Muslims, and the population is not a single bloc that is completely hostile, unless one assumes a collective agreement within the framework of an imagined conspiracy against Muslims.**

**\* Islamist discourse frequently emphasizes instances of Muslim persecution worldwide, such as in Chechnya, Bosnia, China, the Philippines, and India. Simultaneously, these voices often remain indifferent toward the persecution of non-Muslims in regions like Sudan, or of Christians in Egypt and Nigeria, often tending to deny such occurrences. Moreover, the so-called Islamic relief organizations primarily direct their aid toward afflicted Muslims, whereas international organizations established by non-Muslims, such as the International Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, provide assistance universally—to both non-Muslims and Muslims. The Islamic voice was particularly loud in response to the plight of Bosnian Muslims. By contrast, it remained largely silent regarding the massacres in Africa that occurred around the same period, in which vast numbers of people were killed. A plausible explanation is simply that those victims were regarded as non-believers, and that Bosnia's location in Europe—the land of the historical enemy—heightened the sense of urgency. It was observed that Muslim peoples made huge donations to finance the wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya, but donations were minimal in response to the East Asian tsunami. Under international pressure and embarrassment, the ruling families in the Gulf donated money in an attempt to improve public perception, but the attempt was a failure. A Saudi source announced at the time, justifying the donation to Muslim public opinion by stating that many of those affected were Muslims. Remarkably, one of the leading preachers,**

Zaghloul al-Naggar, repeatedly declared that the disaster was a manifestation of divine punishment for the ungodly and disobedient in East Asia. <sup>(689)</sup>

\* While Islamists criticize Western hegemony and some demand that the West apologize for its colonization of Arab and Islamic lands, no prominent voice has emerged within the Islamic world condemning the legacy of early Islamic colonialism or the grave acts of plunder it entailed. Islamist discourse continues to defend the Islamic conquests, seeking recognition of these conquests as significant achievements in human history. Moreover, there are many contemporary Islamic movements, and large segments of Muslim society express nostalgia for the era when Islam held global political dominance. Some even aspire to restore Andalusia. For instance, Ḥasan al-Bannā articulated an expansionist vision that sought the restoration of territories once under Islamic rule. He emphasized the aspiration for regions such as al-Andalus, Sicily, the Balkans, southern Italy, and the islands of the Mediterranean to return to Islam after having reverted to unbelief. In his formulation, these lands are considered Islamic by virtue of their historical association with Muslim presence, and thus they ought to be reclaimed. He further extended this vision to maritime domains, insisting that both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea should once again be regarded as Islamic seas, as they had been in earlier centuries. <sup>(690)</sup>

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<sup>(689)</sup> Including in a TV interview on *al-'Arabiya* channel, program: *Edha'at* [Illuminations], on: Wednesday 10/12/2005.

<sup>(690)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, An Invitation to the Youth.*

A friend of the author of this book attended a seminar held in Cairo in March 2005 at the Spanish Cultural Center on the relationship between the Arab world and Spain. It was reported that the educated Egyptian-Muslim audience arrogantly refused to acknowledge that the Arab conquest of Spain was a form of colonialism and that Spain's liberation constituted decolonization.

N.B.:

This call reflects the broader vision of reclaiming lands that once fell under Islamic rule, a mission portrayed as both a religious and civilizational duty.

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## Chapter Twelve

# RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN ISLAMIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE

*O people, we have become your leaders and your protectors, governing you by the right of Allah who has given us the authority. I am Allah's vicegerent in His land and the guardian of His wealth*

Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr

### Prelude:

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The *muezzin* in Islam is the official who proclaims the call to prayer.

*Takbīr* means to say: “God is the Greatest.”

*Tahīl* literally means declaring the phrase “There is no god but God.”

Double standards inevitably produce inconsistency. When a position is taken to extremes, one may be tempted to resort to the selective presentation of facts—unconsciously, if good intentions are assumed, or consciously and insistently when that position is subjected to strong criticism yet remains firmly defended. Since Islam is regarded as a religious faith, it is exceedingly difficult for its adherents to transcend it or to accept criticism, given its derivation from a divine source. Consequently, some Islamist movements have been critiqued for employing rhetorical strategies that scholars describe as demagogic, occasionally involving selective or strategic reinterpretations of doctrine. The focus here is to expose this demagoguery, particularly in relation to Islam’s interactions with non-Muslims.

Muslim thinkers did not rely heavily on these rhetorical strategies when the Islamic state was strong. Contemporary fundamentalists and extremists likewise often avoid them, sustained by a perception of power. By contrast, seasoned and thus more moderate preachers and thinkers employ them regularly as a means of guiding their communities and averting hostility or persecution, particularly in times of vulnerability. Yet, in moments of euphoria or perceived strength, they occasionally issue direct and unambiguous statements. The same pattern is observed among official Islamists within semi-secular governments, such as al-Azhar, which deploys such rhetoric.

What some scholars term “Islamic demagoguery” can be analyzed as a rhetorical mode that frames Islamic thought in conciliatory language, particularly in relation to non-Muslim audiences, especially concerning the relationship with unbelieving powers. In fact, the discourse of moderates shares the same foundations as that of extremists. The difference lies primarily in form and detail- a topic that Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd researched in depth and paid the price for. Both parties believe in the principle of *ḥākimiyyah*, even though it was clearly introduced in the modern

era. Islamic jurisprudence, as presented by well-known Imāms, is based on classical commentaries of the Qur'ān with only limited modification. Classical jurisprudence generally endorses the execution of apostates and expansion into other territories when conditions permit. Such interpretations have been argued to contribute to tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Consequently, in contemporary contexts of self-defense or political negotiation, many voices adopt rhetorical strategies that scholars identify as demagogic, seeking to justify Islam to external audiences while maintaining doctrinal commitments.

Islamists base this logic on foundations found in the sacred text itself and in practical Sunnah, including:

1. The principle of *Taqiyyah* (dissimulation or permissible concealment):

It is deeply ingrained in Islamic culture, whether among Shi'ites or Sunnis. Among Sunnis, it is permissible in cases of necessity or duress. The conditions for *Taqiyyah* are looser among Shi'ites and are considered an assignment or even an obligation, according to the Imāmīs as: there is no religion for someone who does not practice *Taqiyyah*.<sup>(691)</sup>

The Qur'ān itself provides a textual basis for the concept of *taqiyyah*. In Sūrah 3:28, it states: **Let not the believers take unbelievers for their allies in preference to the believers. He who does this has cut himself off from God, unless it be that you protect yourselves against them in this way.** Likewise, in Sūrah 16:106, the Qur'ān declares: **As for anyone who denies God after having accepted the faith — and this certainly does not apply to one who**

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<sup>(691)</sup> Thiqat al-Islam Muḥammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfī* [The Sufficient, A Foundational Prophetic Tradition Collection of the Imāmī Shi'ites,] Vol. Two Chapter on *Taqiyyah*.

does it under duress; while his heart remains true to his faith, but applies to him who willingly opens his heart to disbelief — upon all such falls God's wrath, and theirs will be a tremendous suffering.

*Taqiyyah*, in the Islamic sense, is simply the practice of avoiding showing one's beliefs to others, displaying affection toward unbelievers, or even expressing unbelief, as per the last verse. Muslims protect themselves from punishment by concealing their true beliefs if they fear harm from unbelievers. Jurists have established conditions for practicing *Taqiyyah* and differ on the level of harm and duress that permits a Muslim to engage in it, but they agree on the fundamental principle.

The general principle is widely accepted. In his commentary on Qur'ān 3:28, al-Rāzī presents a detailed discussion of the principle of *taqiyyah*. He explains that this practice is permissible in situations where a Muslim lives among non-believers and fears for his life or property. In such circumstances, outward expressions of hostility should be avoided, and it is even allowed to use language that might suggest friendship or loyalty, provided that the inner conviction remains opposed to unbelief. Al-Rāzī stresses that the effects of *taqiyya* are confined to outward behavior and do not extend to the inner state of the heart. His treatment of the subject is notable for its frankness and clarity, reflecting his broader interpretive style. <sup>(692)</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah, recognized as the Shaykh al-Islam, adopts a particularly strict position on the issue of residing in non-Muslim lands. He maintains that if a Muslim were to remain among non-believers for purposes such as medical treatment, education, or trade, this presence must be accompanied by an inner sense of enmity toward them. His student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, echoes this uncompromising stance in a commentary on verse 3:28, emphasizing that *taqiyya* does not imply loyalty. For him, the

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<sup>(692)</sup> Almost all exegetes agreed on the same meaning of verse 28 of Sūrah 3 mentioned above. See the interpretations of al-Zamakhsharī, al-Khazen, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Nasāfī.



prohibition against alliances with non-believers necessarily entails hostility, disavowal, and the declaration of opposition in all circumstances, with *taqiyya* permitted only when fear of harm is present. <sup>(693)</sup> Ibn Kathīr elaborates further, explaining that those who fear harm in certain contexts are allowed to outwardly display conformity while maintaining their true convictions internally. Other reports reinforce this understanding: al-Bukhārī transmits a tradition from Abū al-Dardā' describing outward friendliness masking inner hostility, while al-Thawrī and al-'Awfī both cite Ibn 'Abbās's view that *taqiyya* is expressed through words rather than actions. <sup>(694)</sup>

Sayyid Quṭb argues that *taqiyyah* is sanctioned only under circumstances of fear that may arise in specific times and places, and that it is confined to verbal expression rather than inner conviction or practical conduct. He draws upon the statement of Ibn 'Abbās, who clarified that *taqiyyah* pertains to speech alone, not to deeds. On this basis, Quṭb maintains that it is impermissible for a believer to cultivate bonds of affection with a disbeliever under the pretext of *taqiyyah*. In this context, the disbeliever is defined as one who categorically rejects the authority of God's Book in regulating life, a meaning implied in the passage and made explicit elsewhere in the Sūrah. Likewise, it is not permissible for a believer to assist a disbeliever through practical cooperation in the name of *taqiyyah*, since such conduct amounts to deception that cannot be justified before God. <sup>(695)</sup> However, most jurists agree that coercion in actions or words is the same. *Taqiyyah* also occurs through actions, and is not limited to words, such as being forced to abandon prayer, eat forbidden foods and drinks, break the fast in Ramaḍān, commit fornication, take false oaths, or give false testimony.

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<sup>(693)</sup> *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id* [Marvels of Benefits], No. 3, p. 69.

<sup>(694)</sup> *Commentary on the Glorious Qur'ān*, Sūrah 3.

<sup>(695)</sup> *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Sūrah 3.

It is clear that implementing the principle of *Taqiyyah* provides Islamic preachers with significant flexibility to emphasize or downplay ideas depending on circumstances and to present ideas in forms that suit the balance of power under which they operate. Although Sunni preachers often deny or restrict the scope of *Taqiyyah*, their shifting discourse—statements announced and later denied—indicates the deep presence of this principle.

Furthermore, the practical traditions of certain Companions regarding the principle of *taqiyyah* included issuing fatāwā that diverged from established rulings—a practice reflecting the strategic concealment of true convictions to address transient circumstances. An illustrative case is found in a fatwā attributed to Ibn 'Abbās. When asked whether someone who intentionally kills a believer could repent, he responded that such a person's fate is Hell. After the questioner departed, his companions reminded him that he had previously affirmed the possibility of repentance for a killer. Ibn 'Abbās explained that his response was tailored to the situation, as he suspected the man was motivated by anger and contemplating the murder of a believer.<sup>(696)</sup> In this way, the fatwā demonstrates the contextual nature of his rulings, reflecting both the gravity of intentional killing and the pragmatic concern of deterring potential violence.

## 2. Exceptions to more specific rulings:

There are other general principles, supported by sacred texts that allow these exceptions. Among them: the maxim that necessities permit the prohibited and the recourse to *al-maṣlaḥah al-mursalah* (unrestricted public interest) in jurisprudential legislation when deemed necessary. Some scholars historically argue that interests can inform the application of textual statements, citing examples

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<sup>(696)</sup> 'Ala' Eddin Za'tarī, *The Unrestricted Public Interest and the Rules for its Use*.

such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's suspension of certain punishments. These actions were taken either for the public interest—such as suspending the penalty for theft during the year of famine (18 AH)—or for a lack of necessity, such as canceling the share of those whose hearts have been reconciled. There is also the principle that **actions are judged by intentions**. Based on these concepts, some jurisprudential schools occasionally evaluate the rule that independent reasoning ceases to exist in the presence of a definitive text.

### 3. Abrogation:

There is a widespread belief, prevalent in both classical and contemporary Islam, that some verses of the Qur'ān are abrogated, depending on the circumstances; just as certain prophetic traditions are considered abrogated. There is even a less widespread belief that the aḥādīth abrogate certain verses of the Qur'ān as well. Abū Ḥanīfah accepts this principle, whereas it is rejected by the Shāfi'ī school.<sup>(697)</sup> It is noteworthy that all the verses

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<sup>(697)</sup> Ibn al-Bazī, *The Abrogator and Abrogated Verses of the Noble Qur'ān*.

He states: If the Ḥanafī argues that the Qur'anic injunction—a **bequest for their wives and a bequest for parents and near relatives according to what is fair**—was abrogated by the Prophet's statement, **There is no bequest for an heir**, and that the verse **Forbidden to you are carrion and blood**, was abrogated in its generality by the Prophet's declaration, **Two kinds of carrion and two kinds of blood have been permitted to us: fish and locusts, and the liver and spleen**, and that the verse **Confine them to the houses** was abrogated by his ruling, **The previously married when guilty of fornication is punished with one hundred lashes and stoning, while the unmarried is punished with one hundred lashes and one year of exile**, al-Shāfi'ī, may God have mercy on him, responded as follows: regarding the first, that the bequest for heirs was abrogated by the Qur'anic verse **God instructs you concerning your children**; regarding the second, that the general prohibition of carrion and blood was restricted by God Himself, not by the Messenger, since the Prophet said **permitted to us** rather than “permitted to you.” though this response is open to critique; and regarding the third, that the command to confine them in houses was abrogated by the verse **The woman and the man guilty of fornication—flog each one of them with a hundred stripes.**”

that call on Muslims to make peace or be friendly with non-believers are abrogated, according to the majority of scholars recognizing abrogation, by verses calling for fighting them and forcing them to pay jizyah while they are submissive, and killing those who refuse. Sūrah 9 abrogates -as most exegetes and jurists believe- what came before it, and the sword verse has abrogated the verses of reconciliation. Those who refuse the concept of abrogation believe that the verses graduated in their rulings or have become more comprehensive; this view does not deny, but rather confirms, the adoption of verses on fighting or reconciliation depending on the circumstances. In the practical Sunnah, Muḥammad was sometimes very flexible. He accepted compromises and sometimes made concessions, as seen in the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah.

#### **4. The notions of concealment and the idea of secrecy :**

These are deeply rooted in Islamic culture. Authentic prophetic traditions state: **All of my community will be forgiven except those who commit sins openly. And among the acts of sin openly is when a man does something at night, then in the morning he says: I did such and such last night, while his Lord concealed him at night** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -5930 and *Muslim* – 7434); **Whoever conceals a Muslim will be concealed by God on the Day of Resurrection** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* -2399); **Whoever conceals his Muslim brother, God will conceal him in this world and the hereafter** (*Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* - 533). The jurists agree that if one witnesses an act that warrants the imposition of a prescribed punishment, it is preferable not to testify to it, because concealing such acts is more virtuous and yields a greater reward. The meaning implied here is the public disclosure of sins versus concealing them.<sup>(698)</sup> According to commentaries on

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<sup>(698)</sup> According to al-'Asqalānī in *Fath al-Bārī*, Book of Manners, Chapter on The Believer Concealing Himself.”

the ḥadīth, “public disclosure” refers to exaggeration in speech, speaking of sins without necessity, and boasting about them.

It is clear that the idea of concealing oneself and other Muslims contradicts the idea of confession in Christianity, which seeks to purify the self from sins. The boundaries between ostentation, bragging and mere confession are not defined. This makes the idea of concealment an excuse for covering up and maneuvering. This idea is exemplified by the proverb: When you are afflicted [with sins], cover yourself, which is a widespread saying among Arabs, ancient and modern. Additionally, a prophetic tradition calls for concealment: **Seek help in fulfilling your needs through concealment, for everyone who has a favor is envied.** <sup>(699)</sup>

All of this provides the opportunity to deal with reality in a practical and pragmatic spirit if circumstances change, and if it seems that literal adherence to principles harms Islamic advocacy or its representatives. If the sacred text itself shows this flexibility, and gives the opportunity to resort to prohibitions in case of necessity, it is expected to see similar flexibility from Islamic thought, which at times hides its goals or true intentions. This is what moderate Islamists and Islamic institutions in semi-secular governments do. This partly explains some of the differences among moderates, extremists, and even the enlightened, Islamists in their various positions on issues such as democracy, the relationship between Muslims and unbelievers, the position on violence, human rights, and other issues.

Mobilization and defensive strategies regarding Islam’s relationship with the Other are embodied in three main axes:

**Challenging the Centrality of Islamic Thought;**

**The Conceptualization of Islam as Human Thought;**

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<sup>(699)</sup> Muḥammad Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī, *The Series of Authentic Aḥādīth*, No. 1453.

## **The Idealization of Islamic History and Reality vs. the Distortion of Others.**

**\* \* \* \* \***

### **First. Challenging the Centrality of Islamic Thought:**

#### **\* The question of acceptance of others:**

Some contemporary preachers claim that Islam recognizes the “Other,” while the Other refuses to recognize Islam. Examples include: Muḥammad 'Imāra, who withdrew from the Islamic-Christian dialogue under this very pretext, arguing—repeatedly, including in a television interview—that dialogue is impossible between two parties, when one recognizes the Other while the latter refuses to grant the former the same recognition. The details of his argument, as he explained, are that Islam recognizes other prophets and their religions, whereas Christians and Jews refuse to recognize the Prophet Muḥammad and Islam. 'Abd al-Wāḥid Belkeziz, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, spoke at the Joint Forum of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union on Civilization, Harmony and Political Accord, in Istanbul in February 2002. The description of Islam in this context emphasizes its role as a religion of acquaintance and reconciliation, fostering bonds of harmony among peoples. Reference is made to the Qur'ānic verse that highlights human diversity—created from a male and a female, and divided into peoples and tribes—so that they may come to know one another. Islam is portrayed as recognizing the legitimacy of the preceding heavenly religions, with Christianity identified as the closest to it. As the final revealed religion, Islam is presented as having incorporated the virtues and advantages of its predecessors, thereby positioning itself as the culmination of divine guidance.

**The fallacy in these speeches is quite clear:**



1. According to Islam in general, the Other refers not only to Christians and Jews but to all non-believers. Islamic thought does not extend recognition to all non-believers. Does the speaker exclude them as unbelievers? Moreover, if the reference to the Other includes Christians and Jews, does Islamic thought truly recognize them or consider them among the unbelievers who distorted their books and worship others besides God through their clerics?

2. The concept of recognizing the Other is undefined here. If recognition means acknowledging that the other's principle is the Truth, then there will be no other. As for recognizing that a differing principle is a justified perspective, this is absolutely rejected by Islam. In the Muslim view, Islam is the true religion, and everything else is false and misleading. As for acquaintance between peoples, it is an issue that has absolutely nothing to do with accepting difference, as the one who differs from Islam is simply an unbeliever. Islamic discourse has not changed throughout history regarding this point, and alternative opinions in this regard do not enjoy any influence among Muslims, either ordinary or elite.

3. Traditional Islam does not recognize religions as they actually exist -in the sense suggested by Muḥammad 'Imāra and 'Abd al-Wāḥid Belqeziz- but rather only the versions that it considers authentic. As for the faiths practiced today, they are viewed as distorted and are thus denied recognition. For instance, Islam does not acknowledge the divinity of Jesus. Moreover, it neither recognizes nor tolerates non-heavenly religions, nor certain faiths considered offshoots, such as al-Aḥmadiyyah and al-Bahā'iyyah. This inevitably leads to questioning the validity of recognizing the Other within such a framework.

4. The Other -the unbeliever in general- in democratic countries, accepts that a person can be a Muslim, based on freedom of belief, and the separation of religion from the state and public affairs. Liberal discourse generally accepts this, whereas Islamic

**jurisprudence traditionally insists on applying its law, even to non-believers, except in matters of personal status. Indeed, mainstream Islamic thought considers Islam to be both a religion and a state.**

**5. Islamic jurisprudence accepts the existence of non-Muslims in Islamic societies, but on the basis that they are unbelievers and potential enemies of Islam, rather than merely adherents of different religions.**

**6. Mainstream Islamic jurisprudence, with only a few marginal exceptions, has historically rejected the legitimacy of apostasy and prescribed execution for the apostate, typically after questioning and urging repentance.**

**This claim presents Islam as a liberal and humanistic ideology; it even portrays it as being rejected by others who are, in fact, being asked to treat it as the Absolute Truth. Essentially, they are being asked to embrace Islam itself. This raises a fundamental question regarding the nature of recognizing the Other. While a secularist or a non-believer accepts the Muslim Other as a person with a right to their beliefs, recognizing the Other does not necessarily mean acknowledging their faith as the Truth. This stands in stark contrast to Muḥammad 'Imāra's position, where he demands recognition for Islam from the very people he brands as infidels. As for the Christian or Jewish Other, it is inconceivable for them to recognize another faith except in the procedural or formal sense mentioned above.**

**One can discern a model of rhetorical discourse in the writings of an author <sup>(700)</sup> who seeks to present Islam in a conciliatory manner, ostensibly aligned with contemporary notions of pluralism. He grounded his argument in the idea that cultural diversity is an immutable law of the universe, and that life itself is founded upon plurality. To him, the diversity of languages and colors reflects the**

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<sup>(700)</sup> Muḥammad ibn Qasim Nasser Buhijam, *Dialogue of Civilizations*.

multiplicity of nations and races—leading, by necessity, to a multiplicity of laws and religions. He contends that since civilization arises from a religious idea, accepting a plurality of faiths entails accepting a plurality of civilizations. The author frames this diversity as a “divine sign,” arguing that any attempt to abolish it threatens human existence. Consequently, he presents the preservation of cultural identity as a religious and ethical obligation, rooted in the principle of no compulsion in religion. He further stresses the equality of races and the shared enrichment of humanity’s collective legacy, concluding that Islam is a religion of dialogue and recognition.

However, the author then urges the West to abandon its quest for global domination while calling on Muslims to engage in dialogue without relinquishing their religious constants. In doing so, he relies on verses of conciliation while disregarding the verse of the sword and related texts of conquest—an omission that betrays an implicit sense of weakness and a fear of Western dominance. His claim that Islam recognizes other cultures is riddled with contradictions: he ignores the existence of non-religious civilizations and attributes all religions to a single divine source, overlooking those that do not view themselves as such. Ultimately, his discourse is a performance directed at a West he assumes to be exclusively Christian, ignoring its secular reality. His demand for respect is not reciprocal; he does not call for the respect of other cultures, but only that the West respect Islam. This reveals a conditional recognition based on an imagined West, rendering his discourse a form of evasion rather than a genuine recognition of the Other.

Supporters of the doctrine of *ḥākimiyya* act on the basis that dialogue with non-Muslims should not aim at benefiting from their ideas or engaging with them, but rather be confined to inviting them to embrace Islam as the absolute Truth. Accordingly, they reject the principle of genuine cultural interaction or dialogue, except insofar as it serves the purpose of *da'wah* (inviting non-

believers to Islam). This raises the question: how can the “religion of God” interact with what is considered the thought of *al-jāhiliyyah*? Dialogue, by definition, implies equality between participants, accepting the Other as having a legitimate perspective. This is rejected in Islamic discourse, which regards such equality as a concession undermining the sanctity and superiority of Islam.

Hence, Islamic thought often implies an open invitation to a clash of civilizations, anticipating that Islam will ultimately triumph over others. Both sacred and non-sacred Islamic texts frequently express rejection and contempt for the ideas of non-believers, as acknowledged explicitly by many outspoken Islamists.<sup>(701)</sup> Even some moderates highlight this indirectly. Fahmī Huwaidī, for example, criticized what he described as “*the failure to immunize young people with a rational religious culture,*”<sup>(702)</sup> arguing that this weakens their resistance to Western behavior and leads to emulation of the Western lifestyle. The term “immunization” is often used in this context, as if other cultures were microbes or diseases.

The Qur'ān itself addresses dialogue: **And do not argue with the People of the Book except in the best manner possible, except those who are unjust among them** (Sūrah 29:46). Here, **those who are unjust** are interpreted as those persisting in unbelief.<sup>(703)</sup> Similarly, Sūrah 16:125: **Invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and argue with them in a way that is best,** is understood by most exegetes as conditional upon the hope of

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<sup>(701)</sup> *Ḥizb at-Taḥrīr al-Islamī* presented a long article titled *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilizations*, which dealt with this issue in detail, rejecting the idea of recognizing the Other at all, based on numerous verses of the Qur'ān.

<sup>(702)</sup> *Satanists are Victims or Criminals?* Radio Islam, 06/07/2001.

<sup>(703)</sup> According to al-Qurṭubī in his exegesis, in brief: Do not argue with those of the faithful People of the Book who believe in Muḥammad, except in what is best, that is, in agreement with what they told you of the news of their predecessors and other things. As for **except those who are unjust**, those of them who remain in unbelief, such as Qurayṣah, al-Nadir, and others. The verse on this is decisive, and it was said: It is abrogated by the verse on fighting.

conversion.<sup>(704)</sup> One prominent exegete argued that the verse concerns monotheism and prophethood rather than subsidiary issues;<sup>(705)</sup> meaning dialogue should serve as an invitation to embrace Islam in its entirety, rather than focusing on partial or secondary aspects.

Moderate or less outspoken Islamists may not openly repudiate the principle of accepting others. Nevertheless, in practice, rejection often surfaces during actual dialogue. While terminology may be acknowledged, the underlying substance is frequently denied.

The discourse within contemporary Islamist institutions occasionally exhibits significant internal inconsistencies, particularly regarding the theological and legal treatment of apostasy. A notable instance occurred when the Committee for Doctrine and Philosophy at Al-Azhar's Islamic Research Academy proposed a bifurcated classification of apostates: those deemed "harmless" and those deemed "harmful." For the former, the committee recommended a policy of lifelong repentance rather than traditional punitive measures. Crucially, the committee's deliberations explicitly acknowledged that these recommendations were influenced by geopolitical pressures and the global discourse

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<sup>(704)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī interprets the verse as follows: This verse was revealed in Makkah during the period when peace with the Quraysh was commanded. It enjoined the Muslims to call to the religion of God and His Law with kindness and gentleness, avoiding harshness and violence. This remains the duty of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. Regarding the disobedient monotheists, this ruling is decisive, but with respect to the unbelievers, it has been abrogated by the command to fight. It has also been said that if there is hope that an unbeliever will embrace the faith without combat, then the command of gentleness remains decisive. And God knows best.

<sup>(705)</sup> In his exegesis, al-Fakhr al-Rāzī states: *"There is no doubt that what is meant by his saying is wisdom, that is, by argument and proof. So the call with argument and proof to God Almighty was commanded to do. His saying: And argue with them in a way that is best is not intended to argue in the branches of Sharī'ah law, because whoever denies his prophethood there is no point in discussing with him the interpretations of Islamic law, and whoever accepts his prophethood does not contradict him, so we know that this debate was about monotheism and prophethood."*

surrounding Islam, specifically aimed at countering international accusations of incitement to violence and hostility toward civil liberties. This pragmatic shift was further underscored by committee member 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Bayoumī, who noted that the decision was a strategic response to external “distortion movements” rather than a purely theological evolution. However, the internal coherence of this stance was ultimately undermined by institutional contradictions, as the Director-General of the Academy, Muṣṭafā Wahdān, subsequently denied that such a recommendation had been officially issued. <sup>(706)</sup>

It must be noted that mainstream Islamic thought generally does not accept criticism—often described by Islamists as insults—particularly of sacred texts and the Prophet. However, how can dialogue with others be established without accepting criticism? Dialogue with different groups, especially the secular and irreligious, requires recourse to demonstrative thinking, which is incompatible with the epistemological foundations of widely held Islamic perspectives. The historical suppression of the Mu'tazilites and rationalist thinkers -who prioritized reason over text- by mainstream scholars who prioritized text over reason, raises questions about how dialogue can occur between two different epistemological systems, where one relies on the unseen and revelation as the basis of knowledge.

**\* The Principle of No Compulsion in Religion:**

-Islamists often emphasize Islam's recognition of freedom of belief, citing verses from the Qur'ān such as: **There is no compulsion in religion, you have your religion and I have mine**, and from other texts. Is this claim historically and legally accurate?

This concept requires shedding light on the following:

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<sup>(706)</sup> The statements were quoted from Sayyed al-Qimnī, *Thank you Ibn Lāden*, pp. 199-200.



Sacred texts contain verses and aḥādīth that appear to support this position; nevertheless, Islamic jurisprudence has historically offered divergent interpretations. For example:

Traditional rules of conquest place targeted peoples—other than the Arab polytheists—before three options: embracing Islam, paying the jizyah, or facing military confrontation. In cases where they refuse conversion and are either unable or unwilling to pay the jizyah, these communities find themselves compelled to armed resistance. If the military balance tilts in favor of the Muslims, the only alternatives left are to fight to the end or declare Islam in order to avoid annihilation. From an analytical perspective, this framework represents a form of structural pressure that may conflict with the Qur'anic principle of: **no compulsion in religion**. The mobilization of armies to impose the supremacy of the religious system and render it the highest places individuals and groups in circumstances that force them to adopt the faith under military and political duress. Moreover, the imposition of the jizyah, kharāj, and other fiscal measures on non-Muslims constitutes a material pressure that could drive them to embrace Islam without genuine conviction. This is compounded by the various constraints stipulated in the Pact of 'Umar and other discriminatory practices previously reviewed. Many jurists also reject the three aforementioned options being presented to unbelievers who are not People of the Book, as mentioned previously. That is, they have the choice only between Islam and military confrontation. Most jurists agree that this applies specifically to Arab polytheists. This raises a logical inconsistency regarding the compatibility of such practices with the principle of non-compulsion.

- In fact, exegetes do not interpret verse 256 in Sūrah 2: **There is no compulsion in religion** according to its apparent meaning, and they differ on its application, as will be seen. Moreover, many of them believe that it was abrogated by the verse on fighting, and others believe that it was not abrogated, but is applied to the People

of the Book only. Most of them agree in both cases that Islam was forcibly imposed on Arab polytheists, and certainly there are and always appear Arab polytheists. This meaning is evident in the ḥadīth: **I have been commanded to fight the people until they say that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, establish prayer, and pay *zakāt*. If they do that, then their blood and wealth are safe from me except for the right of Islam** (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*– 25, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*– 93, and other sources). Most scholars argue that the “people” in this ḥadīth refers specifically to polytheists, not the People of the Book. <sup>(707)</sup> It has been said that Abū Bakr based his decision on this prophetic tradition to fight against those who refused to pay *zakāt* after the death of Muḥammad. <sup>(708)</sup>

The exegetes offer multiple interpretations of the verse: **There is no compulsion in religion**. Al-Shawkānī records six principal views. The first opinion holds that the verse is abrogated by the verses of fighting (**O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites; O you who believe, fight those disbelievers who are near to you and let them find harshness in you; You will be called to fight a people of great might; you will fight them or they will**

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<sup>(707)</sup> Badr al-Dīn al-'Ainī, *'Umdat al-Qārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* [The Mainstay of the Reader], various passages, including: Vol. Four, p. 125, Vol. Eight, p. 245. And Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī: Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Faith, Chapter: If they Repent and Establish Prayer and Perform Zakat then Let them Go their Way.

<sup>(708)</sup> According to a well-known account, when the death of the Prophet became known in various districts, many groups of Arabs turned away from Islam and refused to pay the *zakāt*. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq rose up to fight them. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and others advised him to refrain from fighting. Abū Bakr said: By God, if they withhold from me even a headband or a goat kid that they used to give to the Messenger of God, I will fight them for withholding it. 'Umar said: How can you fight people when the Messenger of God said: I have been commanded to fight the people until they say there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger. By God, whoever declares it, his wealth and blood are protected from me, except by its right, and his judgment rests with God. Then Abū Bakr said: By God, I will fight whoever separates prayer and *zakāt*, for *zakāt* is the right due on wealth. He added: Except by its right. Then 'Umar said: By God, it was only when I saw that God had opened Abū Bakr's heart to fight that I knew he was right. (Al-Dhahabī, *Islamic History and Biographies of the Deceased Eminent Figures*, No. 2, p. 20).

**submit**). According to this view, the Prophet did not accept from the Arabs anything other than Islam or combat. The second opinion maintains that the verse is not abrogated, but rather applies specifically to the People of the Book, who are not compelled to embrace Islam if they pay the jizyah. In contrast, idolaters are compelled either to accept Islam or face the sword. This was the view of al-Sha'bī, al-Ḥasan, Qatāda, and al-Ḍaḥḥāk. A third opinion restricts the verse to the Anṣār, considering it revealed in their context. The fourth interpretation explains it as a prohibition against labeling those who embraced Islam under the threat of the sword as coerced, since there is no compulsion in religion in that sense. The fifth opinion relates it to captives from the People of the Book, who were not forced to convert. Ibn Kathīr adds a sixth perspective: the verse affirms the clarity of Islam's proofs, making compulsion unnecessary. Whoever God guides will enter Islam willingly, while those whose hearts are sealed will not benefit from coerced conversion. Finally, al-Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf* presents what may be considered a seventh view: faith is not ordained by God through compulsion or coercion, but through empowerment and choice. He cites the verse: **And had your Lord willed, all who are on earth would have believed together. Would you then compel people until they become believers**, to indicate that God could have forced belief but chose instead to establish it on the basis of free will. <sup>(709)</sup> What is intended to be clarified here is not the

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<sup>(709)</sup> *Faṭḥ al-Qadīr* [The Omnipotent's Grant of Victory], Sūrah 2, 256.

Several trustworthy exegetes offer interpretations of this verse, including the following:

Al-Qurṭubī echos the interpretation given by al-Shawkānī.

Ibn Kathīr notes that some scholars hold the verse to be abrogated by verses on fighting, requiring all nations to be called to Islam, and if they refuse to convert, submit, or pay jizyah, they are to be fought until killed. He explains that this constitutes a form of coercion. He cites the prophetic tradition: **Your Lord is amazed at people who are led to Paradise in chains**, referring to captives brought to Muslim lands who later convert. This refers to captives who are brought to the domain of Islam in chains, bonds, restrictions, and fetters, but who subsequently convert to Islam and perform good deeds, thereby

interpretation or the meaning, but rather that the opinions of reliable exegetes include the acknowledgment that Islam compels a certain category of non-Muslims to embrace Islam in verses, ḥadīths, and practical traditions. This is something some contemporary preachers avoid when speaking of Islamic tolerance, even as they affirm the rulings concerning the apostate and the heretic and call for their application.

- Many jurists held that apostate women and children should be compelled to convert to Islam. This issue has been addressed previously. Preventing a Muslim from changing religion, threatening death, or pressuring them to retract their views can be considered coercion to remain Muslim. Many classical jurists were bolder and more frank than their contemporary counterparts, and many of them openly admitted that Islam compels pagan Arabs and apostates to convert to Islam, as mentioned above.<sup>(710)</sup>

- The Islamic world functions in many respects like a popular inquisition. Jurists, scholars, the Islamic press, and public opinion itself are all on the lookout for anyone who announces a conversion

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becoming among the people of Paradise. Regarding the prophetic tradition narrated by Imām Aḥmad: Yaḥyā told us... that the Messenger of God said to a man: **Convert to Islam. He said: I find myself unwilling. He said: Even if you are unwilling,** the Prophet did not force him to embrace Islam, but rather called him to it. When the man told him that his soul was not willing to accept it, the Prophet he said to him: **Be a Muslim, even if you are averse to it, for God is He who will grant you good faith and sincerity.**" *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* [Commentary on the Glorious Qur'ān].

Al-Ṭabarī reports that some believe the verse was abrogated, having been revealed before fighting was imposed. Zayd ibn Aslam states that the Prophet spent ten years in Makkah without compelling anyone to embrace Islam, but later sought divine permission to fight the polytheists, which was granted. Al-Ṭabarī concludes that the most accurate view is that the verse concerns specific groups: the People of the Book, the Magians, and others who adhere to their religions and pay jizyah. Thus it was not abrogated. *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* [The Compendium of Qur'ānic Rulings].

<sup>(710)</sup> Ibn Ḥazm states: *"The pagan Arabs are to be compelled to embrace Islam, just as the apostate is compelled to return to it,"* *Al-Muḥallā bi al-Āthār* [The Ornamented with Traditions], No. 958.

from Islam, criticizes the holy texts, or challenges one of the companions. They put such individuals under intense pressure, even to the point of death threats or death itself. In the current reality, weapons are not raised, as a widespread phenomenon, against intellectuals, except by Islamists.<sup>(711)</sup> Whether moderate organizations label these actors reckless or claim they do not understand true Islam, they nevertheless provide them the necessary fatāwā to carry out killing, by shedding the blood of unbelievers, and then disavow the resulting threats and violence. Rather, they often provide the necessary justifications for acts of violence, holding the unbelievers responsible for provoking the jihādī youth. There are also official inquisition courts that try apostates. The requirement of repentance for apostates raises the question: is this not a form of inquisition?

In many Arab and Muslim countries, the state plays a central role in safeguarding Islam through legal frameworks that criminalize apostasy, heresy, and criticism of religion, the Prophet, or sacred texts. Individuals born to Muslim families are automatically registered as Muslims in official documents, and social expectations reinforce this identity within family and community structures. This raises questions about the extent of genuine freedom of choice in matters of belief. While the Qur'ānic principle of “no compulsion in religion” is often cited, the prevailing legal and social practices suggest a model in which religious identity is imposed from birth and protected by coercive measures. Such a model contrasts sharply with broader philosophical notions of religious freedom, which emphasize voluntary adherence and the possibility of change.

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<sup>(711)</sup> Sometimes oppressive regimes resort to killing intellectuals under the banner of Islam, as in the case of the Iranian regime, or under the banner of Arab nationalism, as with the Syrian Ba'th and the Gaddāfi regimes. Among Islamist movements, however, the situation differs: they frame the same practice as a matter of Islamic law and implement it as a recurring practice.

Secularists note that the claim that Islam allows religious freedom contradicts the use of state power as a protective mechanism, which imposes religious identity on those born to Muslim fathers or mothers, and forcefully protects it from apostates, heretics, renegades, and various proponents of what are viewed as destructive ideas.

Islamist thinkers, such as Sayyid Quṭb in *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, emphasize the Qur'ānic principle of **no compulsion in religion** and present it as evidence of Islam's recognition of religious freedom. In doing so, Quṭb contrasts Islam with Christianity, which he describes as having been imposed by the Roman state. This comparison, frequently employed in Islamist discourse, juxtaposes textual claims with historical practices. While Christianity as a religious tradition does not advocate coercion in matters of faith, its political history under Roman authority included episodes of forced imposition. The Islamist narrative highlights this distinction to underscore Islam's alleged superiority in safeguarding religious freedom. However, such comparisons often overlook the complexities of both traditions, including the historical development of doctrines on apostasy and coercion within Islam, and the broader cultural and theological contexts of Christianity

Among the moderates, al-Qaraḍāwī resorts to similar rhetorical discourse.<sup>(712)</sup> He speaks of freedom in Islam and emphasizes freedom of belief, yet in the same work he insists on executing apostates and critics of Islam. Like Sayyid Quṭb, al-Qaraḍāwī accuses secular governments of apostasy, referring to it as the apostasy of the Sultan. Reference was made above to his call to apply the ruling of apostasy to secularists.

In fact, coercion to convert to Islam is not merely an abstract intellectual position but a practical reality within Islamic thought.

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<sup>(712)</sup> *Characteristics of the Islamic Society we aspire to.*



If Islam is presented as the path to heaven and happiness, why impose it on those who reject such promises? This intellectual centralism reflects a strong tendency to control, oppress, and marginalize others. In practice, the three options—Islam, jizyah, or the sword—often amounted to financial extraction through *zakāt*, jizyah, or *kharāj*, while refusal led to armed conflict. This process functioned as a colonial system cloaked in sacred slogans about heaven, hell, and martyrdom.

Imposing Islam as a doctrine or system means submission to a totalizing state, a reality evident in both classical and modern Islamic history. The insistence on executing apostates cannot be separated from broader forms of coercion, which are reinforced by powerful religious institutions in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan, and supported by state authorities. To maintain legitimacy, these institutions suppress opposing tendencies and resist democratic transformation until their power collapses. Beyond institutional interests, apostates and unbelievers are often portrayed as representatives of modernity and Western hegemony, which explains the accusations that contemporary “heretics” are agents of the West or part of a conspiracy against Islam.

### Second. The Conceptualization of Islam as Human Thought:

Islamists, including even the more radical among them, often attempt to portray Islam as a system grounded in humanitarian principles and ideal values. Yet, apart from a handful of reformers, they largely reject broader humanistic currents. To sustain this image, they employ several strategies:

#### \* Recourse to value judgments:

Islamists frequently emphasize that Islam calls for justice, citing Qur'ānic verses and aḥādīth to support this claim. However, such assertions are rhetorical rather than distinctive, since no legal or doctrinal system openly advocates injustice. They also highlight

selective episodes from Islamic history while disregarding counterexamples,<sup>(713)</sup> and they overlook the fact that similar examples can be found in other regimes, including authoritarian ones. Their notion of justice is presented as absolute; in reality, however, it is relative, varying across cultures and even individuals. From a traditional Islamic perspective, practices such as executing apostates, violating the women of enemy combatants, or selling their children as slaves are considered just, despite being abhorrent to modern sensibilities. While contemporary Islamists may not actively endorse these measures and often adhere to international conventions prohibiting such acts, they frequently engage in historical apologetics, justifying and even expressing pride in these elements of Islamic history.

Even moderate figures such as al-Qaraḍāwī defend certain practices by arguing that others engage in similar behavior. This raises a deeper question: does Islamic law fundamentally reject such practices, or does it permit them? Can *al-ḥākimiyyah* imitate *al-Jāhiliyyah*? In fact, Islam incorporates many pre-existing rules of warfare and customs from the *Jāhiliyyah* period—an aspect that al-Qaraḍāwī does not address in depth.

Another value judgment is the invocation of compassion as an absolute principle. Yet compassion, too, is relative. Islam calls for

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<sup>(713)</sup> Among these examples is Khālīd ibn al-Walīd's killing of Mālīk ibn Nuwairah and his subsequent marriage to Mālīk's wife. Despite 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's insistence on accountability, Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq refused to impose a punishment, justifying his decision by saying: *"I will not sheathe a sword that God has drawn against the polytheists, nor will I remove a governor appointed by the Messenger of God."* Source: Abū al-Qāsim al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf* [The Sweet-Scented Garden]. Abū Bakr later admitted that he had made an error in judgment regarding Mālīk, according to al-Ṭabarī, *History of Messengers and Kings*, Vol. 2, p. 273. Another example is 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's killing of the non-Muslims Jufaina, al-Ḥurmuzan, and the daughter of Abū Lu'lu'a following the assassination of his father, as he believed they were involved in the plot. Despite calls for justice, the new Caliph 'Uthmān refused, citing 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ's reasoning: *"It is not reasonable that 'Umar is killed yesterday and his son be killed today."*

(Muḥammad Reḍa, *'Uthmān ibn 'Affān*, Chapter Two).

mercy among Muslims, but also commands harshness toward unbelievers: Prophet, strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and press hard on them (Sūrah 9:73); Muḥammad is the Messenger of God. Those with him are stern against the disbelievers, yet compassionate amongst themselves (Sūrah 48:29). Historically, this harshness manifested frequently in practice. What compassion lies in enslaving the women and children of defeated peoples and selling them in markets? Colonial enterprises have rarely, if ever, been merciful, and Islamic expansion was no exception.

**\* Adoption of universal slogans:**

Islamists present their thought as embracing noble human principles such as freedom, fraternity, and equality, even claiming to have preceded the French Revolution in articulating these ideals. <sup>(714)</sup> Yet, the meanings they attach to these concepts diverge sharply from contemporary global interpretations. The question remains: does this framework truly endorse equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, or uphold absolute freedom of thought, expression, and bodily autonomy? When pressed on practical details, proponents often retreat into the claim that Islam offers superior or more comprehensive versions of these principles—rhetoric that often functions primarily as a value judgment lacking substantive, procedural content.

Strikingly, while public discourse may emphasize the struggle for freedom, the underlying literature is frequently preoccupied with the subordination of the Other and the imposition of a singular system upon humanity under the guise of divine justice. In reality, this worldview stands in fundamental opposition to the core tenets of liberalism. Rather than fostering tolerance across differences, it invites a voluntary surrender to a totalizing system—an approach

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<sup>(714)</sup> As Gamāl al-Bannā argues in his book *Revolutionizing Qur'ānic Interpretation*, Chapter Two.

that, from a political science perspective, shares structural characteristics with twentieth-century totalitarian models.

Claims of Islam's universality frequently rest on phrases such as **O people**, or **O children of Adam**. Yet these calls are ultimately invitations to Islam, not to mutual love or cooperation across religions. If Islamists truly believe in equality, they should extend it fully to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Such a step would indeed be welcomed.

Advocates of political Islam promote their theses as the supreme and most exemplary model, relying largely on rhetorical formulations that often lack concrete substance. What, then, is the actual content of these proclaimed goals, and where lies their alleged grandeur? For years, propaganda revolved around the slogan "Islam is the solution," a phrase employed to stir collective emotions without offering practical visions for an alternative society.

When the Muslim Brotherhood's party in Egypt was confronted with the necessity of presenting a realistic political program, their project reaffirmed the nature of a totalizing system grounded in pre-modern references, cloaked in notions of identity and civilizational particularity. The program (available online via the link below) rested on identity-based constants that precede modern political concepts, such as "preserving the self and civilizational identity," linking "national security" to the Islamic dimension, and reducing the Palestinian question to its religious frame. Even in the sphere of education, the vision focused on "deepening identity" and reforming Azhar curricula to supply the Islamic world with preachers, rather than emphasizing epistemic plurality. As for the economic vision, it derives its legitimacy from a framework that conceives economic activity as an act of worship in its broad sense, aiming to produce "good things" within a "restricted freedom." These are sermonic notions that lack the technical instruments

required to manage modern state economies, and they clearly signal intent to fuse public affairs into a narrow religious mold.

**\* Consultation and Democracy in Islamic Thought:**

The concept of *al-shūrā* is frequently presented in modern Islamic discourse as a foundational principle of governance, often compared to democratic ideals. Yet scholars note that consultation was not unique to Islam; pre-Islamic Makkan society also practiced forms of collective decision-making. Within Islamic thought, *al-ḥākimiyyah* is understood to belong to God, with legislation derived from the Qur'ān and Sunnah rather than popular will. By contrast, most contemporary Islamic advocates have only recently endorsed democracy, typically within the framework of ballot-box procedures, and often with the expectation of securing majority votes. Their support is generally tied to the requirement that Islamic Sharī'ah serve as the sole source of legislation, not merely one option among others.

Moderate proponents of advisory *shūrā*, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, maintain that consultation is not applicable when a clear scriptural text exists. Matters not explicitly addressed in the Qur'ān or Sunnah may be subject to consultation, since no *ijtihād* is permitted in the presence of a definitive text. Historical accounts suggest that Prophet Muḥammad's consultation was often limited to technical and tactical matters, while major principles were settled as divine revelation that could not be revised, as in the case of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, where objections raised by some of the Companions were rejected on the grounds that the decision was of divine origin.<sup>(715)</sup>

In practice, the early Islamic polity did not adopt mechanisms of popular election; leadership was established through *bay'a* (pledge of allegiance). During the Rāshidūn era, refusal to pledge allegiance

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<sup>(715)</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Fiqh al-Sīrah* [An Analytical Study of the Prophetic Biography], Chapter: The 'Umrah of al-Ḥudaybiyyah and entering Makkah.

was sometimes treated as apostasy, with notable exceptions such as the Hashemites. These dynamics underscore the distinction between consultation in Islamic governance and the principles of modern democracy, which rest on the sovereignty of the people.

Although jurists and theologians produced an immense corpus of works on faith, religious rulings, aḥādīth and their commentaries, as well as Qur'ānic exegesis, their contributions to political thought are comparatively meager. The most significant work is al-Māwardī's *The Ordinances of Government*. None of these scholars address the idea of a contract between the state and the people, nor any other democratic concept. The conditions for the Imāmate were historically limited to piety and justice. By comparison, the ancient Greeks explicitly articulated the concepts of citizenship and democracy, and although their systems were incomplete, they nonetheless established early democratic practices. This underscores that excessive glorification of traditional *shūrā* obstructs recognition of the profound distinction between a ruler's consultation with his inner circle and the people's exercise of self-governance.

Achieving democracy in a society that includes both Muslims and non-Muslims necessarily entails equality between them. This requires secularizing the state and society as a whole, thereby eliminating the application of Sharī'ah law and canceling the notion of *ḥākimiyyah*, reducing Islam to a religion rather than a political system. Whether Islamists could accept such an outcome remains highly doubtful.

**\* Islam and the Notion of Peace:**

Apologists frequently claim that the word "Islam" derives from *salām* (peace).<sup>(716)</sup> However, from a strictly linguistic and historical

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<sup>(716)</sup> This argument was used in many Islamic writings, including: Ḥasan al-Bannā, *The Epistles*, The epistle of jihād, and Muṣṭafā al-Siba'ī, *Peace and War in Islam: A Systematic Study*.



perspective, this is a misinterpretation. While both words share the same root (S-L-M), Islam etymologically signifies submission or surrender to the will of God. While the Qur'ān calls for peace in certain verses, and the Islamic greeting is “Peace be upon you,” the broader context complicates the claim that peace is Islam’s highest value. Rather, peace is one dimension of Islam’s vision, subordinated to the overarching principle of submission to divine authority. This insistence on peace as the primary essence of Islam creates a fundamental discrepancy with the concept of jihād and the historical valorization of conquest. Most cultures embrace peace in principle, and even invaders often invite their enemies to peace, but always under specific conditions.

In the Qur'ānic discourse, jihād is not presented as an absolute negation of peace, but as a mechanism for defending the community, establishing justice, and sometimes expanding the realm of Islam. The discrepancy lies in the conditionality of peace: it is offered when submission to divine authority is secured. Thus, while peace is valued, it is not unconditional; it is framed within the larger paradigm of obedience to God and the legitimacy of the Islamic order. This duality—peace as an aspiration, conquest as a valorized act—reflects the historical reality of many civilizations, but in Islam it is explicitly tied to the centrality of divine sovereignty.

Certain dominant interpretations within Islamic jurisprudence posit that the world ought to be governed by Islamic law as an all-encompassing system; within this framework, military expansion is at times construed as legitimate. The juridical compendia, moreover, do not restrict themselves to martial concerns but extend to regulating the minutiae of everyday interaction—for instance, prohibiting the initiation of greetings to non-Muslims and limiting responses to prescribed formulas. While peace is emphasized among Muslims, those who fight or rebel against the Islamic

community are condemned. Peace with non-believers is permitted only under conditions of vulnerability or in specific circumstances.

While classical Muslim thinkers historically faced no apparent difficulty in addressing such tensions, contemporary Islamists often find themselves caught in the contradiction of presenting Islam as a religion of peace while simultaneously justifying coercive practices.

**\* Tolerance, Love, and Equality:**

Contemporary Islamic discourse sometimes emphasizes values such as tolerance, love, and equality, portraying Islam as a religion of compassion. However, classical juristic writings often present a different perspective. Many jurists argue that Islam does not mandate tolerance toward unbelievers, particularly those who criticize Islam or promote alternative beliefs. Within prevailing juristic perspectives, violations of the dhimmah covenant, acts of apostasy, or direct criticism of the religion are generally regarded as unforgivable. Unbelievers are traditionally described as having three options: conversion to Islam, payment of jizyah, or military confrontation. Pardoning insults directed at individual Muslims, rather than the religion itself, is generally considered optional. In this framework, tolerance and forgiveness are not universally mandated. In reality, a broadly open culture of love and tolerance exists neither in Islam nor in other traditions. Even within Christianity, tolerance did not become an integral part of popular consciousness or of the prevailing political thought.

Historical sources also note that Christian notions of tolerance did not significantly influence social practice.

Preachers frequently claim that permitting a Muslim man to marry women of the Book represents a profound act of tolerance,<sup>(717)</sup> highlighting this as evidence of Islam's unique

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<sup>(717)</sup> According to al-Qaraḍāwī: “This is, in fact, a great example of Islamic tolerance, as it allows a Muslim to have a life partner, a housewife, and the mother of his children who is a non-Muslim, and for his children’s maternal uncles and aunts to be non-Muslims.” *Islam*

openness. Yet such claims are misleading. Simply refraining from exterminating other peoples is presented as Islamic tolerance, as though humanity had previously known nothing but genocide. Did Buddha, Jesus, or Aristotle call for the annihilation of others? Did the Persians or Romans eradicate the populations they ruled? If marriage with women of the Book is considered tolerance, did the Quraysh prohibit interfaith marriages? On the contrary, pre-Islamic Arab society permitted a wider variety of marital arrangements, many of which Islam later prohibited without introducing new forms. <sup>(718)</sup> Civil marriage, regardless of religion, is arguably more tolerant—yet Islam categorically rejects it.

Equality, likewise, is invoked as a noble slogan but is applied in ways that contradict its meaning. The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims has historically been defined by the status of dhimmīs, who live under Muslim protection but are denied equal rights. They cannot hold senior positions, openly practice their rituals, or preach their beliefs. Moderate Islamists often echo the slogan “They have what we have and they owe what we owe,” yet their writings reveal contradictions. This is evident, for example, in the epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā, who explicitly addresses the status of non-Muslims in the Islamic state envisioned by the Brotherhood, and in al-Qaraḍāwī’s booklet *Non-Muslims in Islamic Society*. Both historical and contemporary Brotherhood thinkers employ the slogan while simultaneously undermining it. Such inconsistency amounts to deception, though not the kind practiced by extremists. <sup>(719)</sup>

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*and Secularism Face to Face*, Chapter Two, Defining the Concepts and Constitution of the Relationship with Non-believers.

<sup>(718)</sup> The reader can refer to 'Abd al-Salām al-Tirmanīnī, *Marriage in Arab Society - Customs and Meanings*, and Jawād 'Alī, *A Comprehensive History of the Arabs before Islam*, Vol. Two, Chapter 57.

<sup>(719)</sup> The prominent Islamist Safar al-Ḥawālī responded sharply to claims that Islam regards Muslims and unbelievers as equal, categorically rejecting this notion as contrary to

In a more decisive formulation, Gamāl al-Bannā argues that Islam aligns with secularism in rejecting a theocratic state, viewing governance instead as a political contract. He further claims that Islam anticipated the social contract theory developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau by several centuries, presenting this as evidence of the pioneering nature of Islamic political thought in this domain.<sup>(720)</sup> Yet, al-Bannā ignores the subordinate role assigned to non-Muslims in this alleged contract, as well as the exclusion of women from guardianship and political participation. In the era of the Rāshidūn, women had no political role, nor did 'Ajam slaves and captives enjoy citizenship. To describe this as a utopia is misleading.<sup>(721)</sup>

**\* Pluralism in Islamic thought:**

The Founding Statement of the International Union of Muslim Scholars proclaims that Islam was the first to call for cultural pluralism,<sup>(722)</sup> an achievement that Western societies consider modern. Islamists demand that Western countries guarantee Muslims the right to freely practice their religion, prevent discrimination, and accommodate Islamic cultural specificity within pluralism. Yet they ignore Islam's explicit rejection of unbelief, its

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the established consensus within the Islamic community. This position is drawn from his work *Sharī'ah Perspectives on Deviant Thought* (Vol. Six), which offers an analytical critique of Fahmī Huwaydī's ideas. Al-Ḥawālī states: "*There are numerous verses that demonstrate God's disdain and humiliation of unbelievers, refusing to honor them either in this life or the hereafter. These verses clearly distinguish between Muslims and non-believers, or between believers and wrongdoers, condemning those who equate them. Huwaydī chose not to address these verses, as they contradict his assertion of equality between Muslims and non-believers, and instead he avoided them altogether.*"

<sup>(720)</sup> *Our Position on Secularism, Nationalism, and Socialism*, Chapter One, sixth, the Principle of Original Innocence, and a chapter titled: Finally Islam is a Religion and a Nation, not a Religion and a State.

<sup>(721)</sup> *Towards a New Islamic Jurisprudence*, Vol. Two, pp. 176-177.

<sup>(722)</sup> Issued in London on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Jumada al-Oula (the fifth month of the 12-month lunar Islamic calendar), 1425 AH, 7/11/2004 AD.

condemnation of other religions as false, and its historical practices such as the 'Umari Conditions, rulings on apostasy, and the valorization of conquest to impose Islamic systems.

Historically, Islamic scholarship on other religions focused on exposing alleged distortions rather than exploring differences, similarities, or historical contexts. Writings on Judaism and Christianity, with few exceptions, aim to demonstrate their human origins in contrast to Islam's divine source. The Prophet of Islam did not adopt pluralism at the outset of his mission, as indicated by the early confrontation with the Quraysh. Sūrah 109 states: **Say: O Disbelievers! \* I do not worship what you worship, \* nor do you worship what I worship. \* I will never worship what you worship, \* Nor will you ever worship what I worship. \* You have your own religion and I have mine.** This passage, according to various interpretations, responds to Makkan proposals for mutual worship. Muḥammad rejected compromise, insisting on exclusive devotion to one God.<sup>(723)</sup> The Sūrah does not endorse pluralism; it acknowledges difference while condemning those addressed.

Many moderate thinkers attempt to circumvent the issue by redefining pluralism in ways that differ from its conventional meaning. Some argue that Islam acknowledges diversity in the universe—differences in languages, nations, and species—although such diversity exists independently of religious approval. Others claim that Islam accepts intellectual diversity, pointing to the

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<sup>(723)</sup> Al-Qurṭubī and many others, including Ibn Ishāq, Ibn 'Abbās, and Sayyid Quṭb, interpret it as follows: Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra, al-'Āṣ ibn Wa'el, al-Aswād ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, and Umayyah ibn Khalaf, met Muḥammad and said: *“O Muḥammad, come, let us worship what you worship, and you worship what we worship, and let us share in all our affairs. If what you have brought is better than what we have, then we would have participated in it with you and taken our share. If what is in our hands is better than what you have, then you would have participated in our matter and taken your share of it.”* Ibn Kathīr and others interpret this as a disassociation from the deeds of the polytheists, noting that it commands sincerity in one's faith; thus, it applies to every non-believer on earth, though those directly addressed by this message are the non-believers of Quraysh.

presence of multiple schools of fiqh and perspectives within the tradition. Certain scholars, such as al-Qaraḍāwī, cite the presence of dhimmīs in Muslim lands as evidence of tolerance. However, prevailing juristic interpretations often regard their beliefs as illegitimate, characterizing them as misguided and subordinated under Muslim protection. The diversity Islam permits is often limited to practical interactions, such as commerce, treaties, and dealings with non-Muslims. This stands in contrast to the pluralism advocated in democratic societies, which entails recognizing alternative viewpoints as legitimate rather than branding them false or condemning them as unbelief. Moderate Islam, despite its diplomatic tone, faces a dilemma: it cannot openly reject pluralism for fear of powerful non-Muslim audiences, nor can it embrace it in its genuine sense. Its doctrines are presented as divine absolutes, rendering all other perspectives false. Islamists cannot treat their sacred texts as provisional viewpoints or products of social reality; they only reinterpret them. This rigidity is evident in the insistence on punishing apostasy, framed not in terms of individual rights but as a rebellion against God and a violation of the divine covenant.

Some reformists—such as Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Gamāl al-Bannā, and Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr—attempt to overcome this impasse. Yet their efforts remain incomplete and fail to influence either the elite or the masses. <sup>(724)</sup>

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<sup>(724)</sup> Gamāl al-Bannā published a book called *Pluralism in an Islamic Context*, making a lot of effort to prove that Islamic thought accepts pluralism in the universe and society in the way addressed above (He accepts a person's right to change his religion). Ultimately, he states: “*As long as the root of pluralism -which is freedom- is accepted in Islam, pluralism and its requirements do not differ in Islamic society from those in other societies, except in extent and degree, not in type or quality. Belief in Islamic values prevents the recklessness and extravagance that characterize the requirements of pluralism in some modern European groups. The Islamic community, although part of the human community subject to general laws, is a distinct community with its own characteristics that complement its general nature. However, it is not exempt from those general rules.*”



**\* Despite the sacralization of traditional Islamic thought, Islamists generally separate theory from practice. A similar tendency can be observed among Arab nationalists and socialists. First, the theory is regarded as sound, but its application is said to have been marred by errors and deviations, particularly since the Umayyad era. Second, this separation is reinforced by the distinction drawn between Islam and Muslims. According to a widespread opinion in the Islamic world, there are Muslims without Islam—or without complete Islam—while authentic Islam resides in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Third, this separation becomes decisive when Islamists from different factions exchange accusations of misunderstanding the true religion, and at times even accusations of unbelief.**

**In this perspective, Islam in its authentic form is regarded as self-evident and transparent, yet rival groups are perceived as failing to comprehend or implement it correctly. This conception of an ideal, humane Islam is often likened to the Kantian “thing-in-itself,” a hidden essence or jewel overlooked by other Muslims. Each sect—whether *Sunnī*, *Shī'ī*, *Khārijite*, *Mu'tazilite*, *Ash'arī*, *Murji'ite*, jihādīst, *Wahhābī*, or their opponents—tends to view the Others as having missed this truth. The metaphorical jewel is assumed to exist, but remains unseen, and is believed to have been realized only in lived reality during the era of one or more of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, a period long past. Certain Islamic preachers, including reformist figures such as Gamāl al-Bannā and Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr, seek to demonstrate this conception through their writings and advocacy:**

### **Third. The Idealization of Islamic History and Reality vs. the Distortion of Others:**

**Modern Islamic preachers, more than those of earlier times, often try to portray Islamic history in an idealized way. But since history**

is preserved in a vast body of written records, these attempts often involve exaggeration, hiding uncomfortable details, cherry-picking sources, making strained comparisons, or even using sacred texts to deny or confirm well-established events. Contemporary Islamists tend to accuse critics of Islamic history of slander, fabrication, or eclecticism, while rarely offering alternative narratives or refuting the sources themselves—sources that typically originate from principal heritage works and canonical collections of prophetic traditions, such as those of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Not everything recorded in Islamic historical sources can be regarded as fully accurate. In fact, the field suffers from a lack of reliable documentation, although these sources are often treated as singularly authoritative. What matters in this area of study is not only factual accuracy but also the extent to which Muslims acknowledge and integrate these accounts into Islamic cultural memory.

An illustrative case is Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr's study of the rule of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, in which he highlighted reports of persecution by Arab-Muslim conquerors against subjugated populations, including acts of plunder, enslavement, and the enrichment of the Prophet's Companions under the caliph's supervision. In response, one writer <sup>(725)</sup> does not deny or justify these accounts directly but instead cites prophetic aḥādīth emphasizing 'Umar's piety and status in Islam. The conclusion is that those historical events—though severe when judged by contemporary standards—are regarded within traditional thought as just and legitimate, provided they occurred under the authority of a Companion of recognized stature.

The following examples reinforce this pattern of idealization:

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<sup>(725)</sup> Aḥmad Maḥdī's response to Dr. Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr in his article: *The Overlooked Dimensions of 'Umar's Biography* is noteworthy. This writer may not be an influential Islamist, but he represents a clear model of the Islamist mentality in his article.

Some moderate voices claim that Islamic conquests were always defensive responses to aggression by unbelievers,<sup>(726)</sup> despite the extensive historical record documenting the expansion of Muslim rule from China to Spain and the Prophet's instructions to advance into non-Muslim territories.

A small number of reformist thinkers, opposed to centralist narratives, have rejected apologetic interpretations and instead condemned the conquests, criticizing the Rāshidūn caliphs for contradicting what they view as the essence of Islam. This position is exemplified by Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr,<sup>(727)</sup> whose reformist stance subjected him to severe persecution and threats from Islamists—including officials—as well as from the state itself.

- Islamist writers frequently portray Islamic civilization as uniquely pioneering in several domains, including the establishment of the first treasury, the introduction of guild-like structures, and the promotion of *shūrā* (consultation) in governance.<sup>(728)</sup> For example, Gamāl al-Bannā argued that unions existed in Islamic society long before Europe<sup>(729)</sup> and that the organization of the *dīwān* (a government council) under 'Umar represented a model surpassing even the modern welfare state.<sup>(730)</sup> However, comparative historical evidence indicates that financial systems, guilds, and consultative practices were already present in many

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<sup>(726)</sup> For example, 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, *War Ethics in Islam*, and Magdy Aḥmad Ḥusayn's article *Dialogue of Civilizations between Truth and Deception* also sheds light on this topic.

<sup>(727)</sup> His works are published on the website: *Ahl al-Qur'ān* [The People of the Qur'ān ].

<sup>(728)</sup> “*The Islamic civilization is considered the pioneer in the field of organizing the economic funds and financial resources of the Islamic community. Humanity knew the first ministry of finance on the same pattern that prevails now in the finest civilized countries, and this pioneering ministry was the Islamic treasury.*” *Highlights of Islamic Civilization: The Economic System in Islam*. The writer's name is not mentioned.

<sup>(729)</sup> *Strengthening the Work Ethic in Islamic Society*, Introduction.

<sup>(730)</sup> *Islam is a Religion and a Nation not a Religion and a State*, Chapter One.

societies prior to Islam.<sup>(731)</sup> Similarly, claims that the Islamic tradition of documenting and verifying prophetic aḥādīth is unparalleled in human history<sup>(732)</sup> require careful scrutiny. Documentation in Islam—whether concerning prophetic tradition, historical accounts, or the compilation of the Qur'ān—was largely based on oral transmission, with written records produced years after the Prophet's death. These records were subject to disputes over authenticity, classification, and interpretation, including disagreements about abrogation, the order of verses, and canonical readings.<sup>(733)</sup> Confidence in the Qur'ān's preservation has often rested on theological justification, such as the verse in Sūrah 15:9: **Surely We revealed the message, and We will surely preserve it,** rather than on demonstrably rigorous documentation practices.<sup>(734)</sup>

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<sup>(731)</sup> Al-Balādhurī mentioned: “When 'Umar consulted the Muslims about establishing the Diwan (administrative apparatus), 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib said to him, ‘You should divide the money that you collect every year and not keep anything from it.’ 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān said, ‘I see a lot of money being distributed among the people, and if they do not count it to determine who received it and who did not, I am afraid the matter will become confused.’ al-Walīd ibn Hishām ibn al-Mughirah said to him, ‘O Commander of the Faithful, I have been to the Levant and observed that its kings kept records and recruited soldiers.’ So, he kept records and recruited soldiers.” Source: *Conquests of the Lands*, file 28 of 29.

<sup>(732)</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Prophetic Sunnah between the Scholars of Fiqh and the Scholars of Ḥadīth*.

<sup>(733)</sup> Refer to al-Sayyid 'Alī al-Shahrastānī, *Controversies over Recording Prophetic Traditions in the Prophet's Time*.

<sup>(734)</sup> Western sources in the field of compiling the Qur'ān are numerous, but the reader referred to some Islamic sources:

Ibn Abū Dāwūd Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh al-Sijistānī, *al-Maṣāḥif* [Copies of the Holy Qur'ān].

'Awaḍ Aḥmad al-Nashīrī al-Shehrī, *The 'Uthmānī Codex of the Qur'ān*.

Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī al-Saghir, *The History of the Qur'ān*.

Muḥammad Shar'i Abū Zeid, *Jam'al-Qur'ān fī Marāḥilīhī al-Tārīkhiyya: Min al-'Aṣr al-Nabawī ilā al-'Aṣr al-Ḥadīth* [The Compilation of the Qur'ān: Its Historical Stages from the Prophetic Era to the Modern Age].

'Abd al-Qayyum 'Abd al-Ghafour al-Sindī, *Compilation of the Qur'ān in the Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs*.

Moreover, broadly speaking, Islamic history was not systematically documented but transmitted orally, leading to multiple versions of single events. The compilation of the Qur'ān itself involved reliance on scattered documents and oral recitations, and subsequent debates persisted over its textual arrangement and interpretation. <sup>(735)</sup> Thus, while Islamic civilization made notable contributions, the portrayal of its institutions as uniquely pioneering or unmatched is best understood as part of a rhetorical strategy rather than as a reflection of uncontested historical fact.

Moreover, paradoxically, the emerging Islamic system introduced restrictive regulations and appeared to reject the religious pluralism that had prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula. This, in part, explains the early clash with Quraysh, as the new discourse was based on disparaging the beliefs of others and calling for the renunciation of their gods, which in practice brought an end to the existing pluralistic condition.

As for the idea of a social contract in Islam, it does not withstand comparison with the alliances and covenants established by the Arab tribes and the system of governance in Makkah before Islam. Regarding guilds, they arose in societies that included classes of artisans and merchants prior to Islam, and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs witnessed no initiative to establish them. Likewise, the principle of *shūrā* cannot be compared to Athenian democracy or to the communal systems known in other societies.

- One of the topics most vigorously discussed in Islamic thought is the relationship between men and women. Islamists talk about what Islam offers to women compared to other civilizations, including modern Western civilization. Apologists often frame the status of

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Murtaḍā al-'Askarī, *The Holy Qur'ān in the exegeses of the Two Schools*.

<sup>(735)</sup> *The Seven Letters in Qur'ānic Readings*: there is no consensus about the meaning, but most likely they are verbal diversity and linguistic multiplicity in the characteristics with which the Qur'ān was revealed.

women in Islam as one of functional equality, arguing that Islamic law provides unique protections and honors that Western systems lack. To validate this claim, Islamist discourse frequently deploys testimonials from Western women who profess a preference for Islamic social structures over the perceived failures of Western feminism. This rhetorical strategy serves to marginalize the counter-narratives of Muslim and Arab women who actively seek the legal and individual liberties of the West, thereby creating a curated image of gender justice that prioritizes communal “honor” over individual autonomy. Thus, women’s movements in Arab and Muslim countries are categorically dismissed, while Islamists content themselves with accusing advocates of women’s liberation of unbelief—or at the very least condemning them—and at times charging them with collaboration with the West or participation in alleged Crusader or Jewish conspiracies against Islam.

- Other civilizations are often accused of having plundered vulnerable peoples, occupied foreign lands, and carried out massacres, whereas Islam is portrayed as having achieved precisely the opposite. Rashīd Riḍā argued that the Arab conquests were marked by justice and mercy. He went so far as to assert that history has never known a conqueror more just or more merciful than the Arabs, whom he also regarded as the most equitable rulers among nations.<sup>(736)</sup> Within the same framework, Ḥasan al-Bannā argued that what he described as “Islamic colonialism” did not produce a clear dichotomy between victor and defeated. He further suggested that, in his view, the populations of conquered regions did not perceive themselves as exploited or deprived of their resources, and that a form of equality was established between the conquerors and the local inhabitants.<sup>(737)</sup> Gamāl al-Bannā argued—contrary to many historical accounts—that what he termed

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<sup>(736)</sup> *Exegesis of the Wise Qur’ān* [Interpretation of al-Manār], Vol. Nine, p. 649.

<sup>(737)</sup> *The Epistles of Ḥasan al-Bannā*, Our Invitation.



“Islamic peace” represents the most merciful form of peace known to humanity. He maintained that this model of peace did not grant the conqueror rights over land or property, nor did it permit armies to plunder, loot, burn crops, or demolish houses. According to his description, soldiers were required to purchase their needs and pay for them, while also ensuring the protection of freedom of belief for all people. This characterization reflects al-Bannā’s broader attempt to present Islam as embodying a unique ethical framework in matters of war and peace, though scholars debate the extent to which such claims align with historical practice and recorded evidence.<sup>(738)</sup>

This line of reasoning overlooks the incorporation of lands into the Abode of Islam, the confiscation of territories not distributed to soldiers (which were subsequently subject to Kharāj),<sup>(739)</sup> and numerous incidents of burning property, looting places of worship, and seizing wealth, as well as the so-called 'Umari Conditions. For the sake of comparison, modern massacres such as the two World Wars, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the victims of Soviet land collectivization, and the Inquisition are often cited. If similar—or even more horrific—examples from Islamic history are raised, the standard rebuttal is that such acts were contrary to authentic Islam and were the work of deviant caliphs.<sup>(740)</sup> This

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<sup>(738)</sup> *Islam is a Religion and a Nation, not a Religion and a State*, Vol. One, Chapter Two, Third: the Revelation Ended and History Began.

<sup>(739)</sup> Most of the leading jurists affirm that kharāj land may neither be sold nor purchased, among them Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal. Meanwhile, some —according to Ibn Qudāmah in *al-Mughnī*— hold that it may be purchased but not sold (al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Zakāh*). Others, however, maintain that it may be sold, inherited, and granted as a gift, such as the Ḥanafīs and some Shāfi‘īs; this view was also preferred by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim (Dubayān b. Muḥammad al-Dubayān, *al-Mu‘āmalāt al-Māliyya Aṣālah wa-Mu‘āṣarah*).

<sup>(740)</sup> In a televised interview on “Al Jazeera,” the Christian interlocutor presented historical evidence suggesting the establishment of inquisition courts and the Islamization of Levantine Christians through coercion and other forms of religious persecution. Fahmī

evasion of historical facts is achieved by invoking sacred (or sometimes non-sacred) texts to substitute for actual events. For instance, it is reported that when Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq dispatched his army under the command of Usāma ibn Zayd, he instructed him with a set of guidelines regulating the conduct of soldiers in war. He emphasized the prohibition of treachery or betrayal, the avoidance of killing children, the elderly, or women, and forbade cutting down fruit-bearing trees or slaughtering animals except for the purpose of food. He also advised leaving monks undisturbed in their monasteries and refraining from harming them, while simultaneously urging the use of the sword against other groups whose members were described as having shaved the middle of their heads while leaving the surrounding hair. <sup>(741)</sup>

Such claims are often advanced as evidence of the supposed purity of Islamic warfare. Yet historical accounts indicate that this was not consistently the case, even during the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime, as previously discussed. For example, Abū Bakr sanctioned the violent suppression of opponents during the *Ridda* wars. This illustrates a recurring rhetorical pattern: positive outcomes are attributed to Islam itself, whereas negative episodes are ascribed either to its enemies or to the deviations of its followers. As for Islam itself, its definition shifts depending on circumstances: sometimes it is associated with the sacred text, at other times with the profane; sometimes with the achievements of the caliphate, including those accomplished by individuals later accused of heresy or punished for blasphemy.

Much has been written about what Islamists describe as the bankruptcy of Western civilization. The evidence often cited

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Huwaitī responded by insisting that the discussion should focus on religious texts rather than historical events, despite the fact that the dialogue's stated topic concerned actual history rather than scriptural interpretation.

<sup>(741)</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *The Perfect History*, file 28 of 309.

includes suicide rates, various forms of crime, illicit sexual relations, and their social harms. Yet, there is seldom any attempt to provide a statistical comparison with the conditions of Islamic societies, whether past or present. <sup>(742)</sup> In discussing the spread of AIDS in both Western countries and Africa, certain Islamic writers attribute the epidemic to sexual freedom in those societies. They further argue that the presence of Islamic values in Muslim-majority countries offers protection against the disease. However, these claims are presented without supporting statistical evidence. <sup>(743)</sup>

The online magazine al-Bayān <sup>(744)</sup> issued a critique of Western civilization, asserting that ideas once regarded as profoundly corrupt—even beyond what animals might accept—have been transformed into social realities and codified into law. The article points to the legalization of same-sex marriage and even alleges the existence of incestuous unions, such as a man marrying his

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<sup>(742)</sup> In a television interview on an Egyptian channel in July 2005, the scholar Muḥammad 'Imāra critiqued the perceived failings of Western civilization, echoing common Islamist tropes. Among his claims was that annual suicide rates in Scandinavian countries exceed those in Somalia. Such a comparison is highly problematic, given that Somalia is among the nations where reliable statistical data is virtually non-existent. At the time of this book's publication, the most recent data (The Lancet, April 2004, Vol. 363, No. 9415) indicated that the world's highest suicide rates were actually in southern India—far surpassing any other region, particularly among young women. Paradoxically, official statistics for Egypt in 1987 estimated the number of female suicides at zero. However, rural physicians are well aware that suicide attempts are a daily occurrence, often involving the ingestion of agricultural pesticides or self-immolation with kerosene. Official records appear to systematically overlook these tragedies as if they were a matter of national disgrace.

<sup>(743)</sup> In many sermons by preachers and writings by scholars and jurists, there is a call for discipline in sexual life and family cohesion among Muslims. It seems that they are trying to deceive themselves. People in the Islamic world are aware of the prevalence of illicit sexual relations and homosexuality, especially in the Gulf region where Islamic law is strongly enforced. Families are quickly disintegrating, and numerous crimes are being committed. However, these countries do not publish facts and statistics like the West.

<sup>(744)</sup> Wednesday issue, Safar 26, 1426 AH - April 6, 2005 AD.

daughter.<sup>(745)</sup> In this framing, Western societies are depicted as normalizing practices that stand in stark contrast to Islamic moral and cultural values.

However, this claim misrepresents the facts. No Western legal system permits a man to marry his daughter, and allegations of legalized incest are unfounded. Moreover, incestuous sexual relations, while universally condemned, occur across cultures and societies worldwide. Thus, the critique reflects a rhetorical exaggeration rather than an accurate description of Western legal norms. Incidents of incest occur in all countries, including Islamic ones. Despite the censorship and strict surveillance, several researchers have been able to uncover homosexual relations, extramarital affairs, and incestuous practices in some Gulf countries. Research clearly indicates that these are significant phenomena in these societies.<sup>(746)</sup>

Racism is also subjected to criticism in the same way. It is undeniable that European thought presented hateful, racist ideas and calls that deserve condemnation, and racism was evident in countries such as Nazi Germany, the United States, and South Africa. Yet, Arab racism must not be overlooked. According to one study, it is organically linked to Islam,<sup>(747)</sup> and it continues to exist in the Gulf countries, while the vast majority of Islamists remain indifferent to it. It would have been more meaningful for them to fight for equality in their own societies before attacking the racism of others. Is it sufficient merely to recite scriptures that command equality? Al-Sha'rawī never criticized racism in Saudi Arabia, the country where he worked, and al-Qaraḍāwī did not address racism in Qatar. Likewise, Muḥammad Quṭb remained silent about racism

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<sup>(745)</sup> *The Position on the Other Opinion – An Islamic Legal Perspective.*

<sup>(746)</sup> Haitham Manna', *Torture in the Arab World in the Twentieth Century*, Chapter titled: Violence Directed Against Women and the Youngs in Gulf Society.

<sup>(747)</sup> Refer to the author's research: *The Origins of Racial Attitudes in Arab Thought.*

in Saudi Arabia, the country where he lived, while criticizing the American method of liberating slaves. <sup>(748)</sup> Moreover, Islamists often overlook the fact that it was the “unbelieving” West and the modernist movements aligned with Western culture—those same movements they denounce—that pressured and ultimately forced backward countries, Islamic and otherwise, to abolish official slavery. King Saud, for instance, abolished slavery in Saudi Arabia in 1962.

Much has also been written about the status of the dhimmīs, particularly the issue of jizyah in Islamic history, where false claims and deliberate distortions abound. Examples include citing the small amount of the head tax while ignoring the kharāj (land tax), and claiming that it was imposed only on warriors hostile to the Islamic state. Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī argued that jizyah was not imposed on non-believer citizens who did not fight the Islamic state, citing the precedent of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's treatment of the Christians of Taghlib. He presented this case as evidence that Islamic governance could exempt certain groups under specific conditions, framing jizyah as a flexible policy instrument rather than a rigid imposition. He also denied the imposition of jizyah throughout Islamic history on any non-believers born after the Islamic conquest who did not engage in fighting. <sup>(749)</sup> However, historical sources report that the Christians of Taghlib agreed to pay double the amount levied on Muslims in exchange for replacing

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<sup>(748)</sup> Muḥammad Quṭb reissued his book *Misconceptions about Islam* with a new introduction in which he pledged not to adopt a defensive stance toward criticisms from unbelievers. Among his assertions is the following: “*The world in which racial fanaticism reaches its brutal form in America and South Africa in the twentieth century still needs the revelation of Islam. Thirteen centuries ago, Islam established equality not in a world of ideals and dreams, but in the reality of life, between the black, the white, and the red; none holds superiority over another except by piety*”. Yet this unavoidably raises the question: why did he not mention the hideous, totalitarian, and racist regime under which he himself lived?

<sup>(749)</sup> *Peace and War in Islam: A Systematic Study*, a chapter titled About Jjizyah.

the term *jizyah*, which they found offensive, with the word “charity.”

It is reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb consented to an arrangement that effectively doubled the tax by altering its designation, and he was quoted as saying: “*These fools accepted the meaning and refused the name.*”<sup>(750)</sup> This statement, if authentic, raises questions about the nature of justice and consistency in early Islamic fiscal policy. The episode illustrates how taxation could be reframed rhetorically without changing its substantive impact, and invites scrutiny of the extent to which such measures aligned with the broader portrayal of 'Umar as a just ruler in Islamic tradition. Moreover, it is frequently asserted that non-believers lived in Islamic societies with dignity, that their rights were not infringed upon, and that neither rulers nor subjects violated their humanity, encapsulated in the phrase: “They have what Muslims have and they owe what they owe.” However, references to the 'Umari Conditions are often omitted, as is the recurring suppression of dhimmī revolts with considerable severity.

This line of argument demonstrates how certain historical interpretations are based on a selective presentation of facts, leading to conclusions that do not reflect the full picture.

Islamist writers commonly portray the status of the dhimmīs in the Islamic state as one of full equality and exceptional generosity, while overlooking the realities of conquest and the appropriation of their resources. An illustrative example is a book published by the Egyptian General Book Organization, authored by Nariman Abd al-Karim Aḥmad, which adopts this perspective by framing it as tolerance and justice. Notably, the work does not conceal the realities of discrimination, taxation, and other forms of oppression. Furthermore, the author interprets these measures as a Muslim

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<sup>(750)</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Legal Rulings Concerning People under the Covenant*, p. 27.



response to perceived tyranny,<sup>(751)</sup> namely resistance to the restrictive 'Umari Conditions. In this narrative, the rulers of the conquered territories are depicted as tyrannical and covenant-breakers, whereas the conquering powers are paradoxically characterized as tolerant and generous.

- Moderate Islamist movements have often faced criticism regarding their stance on violence. Observers note that while acts of violence have occasionally been committed by individuals associated with these groups against dissenters or those labeled as unbelievers, official statements frequently deny responsibility, attributing such actions to unruly youths, external groups, or government fabrication. Simultaneously, fatāwā issued by some scholars—including those considered moderate—have at times declared secularists to be unbelievers or apostates, thereby providing theological justification for violence. Yet, when such acts occur, leaders often disavow the perpetrators in public discourse. For example, Ḥasan al-Bannā characterized the members of his organization who assassinated Egyptian Prime Minister Nuqrāshī in 1949 as neither brothers nor Muslims. This discordance between rhetoric and practice highlights the complexity of Islamist discourse on violence and legitimacy.

Many Islamic analysts and sympathizers of political Islam accuse the West, Jews, or the Mossad of orchestrating acts of violence and falsely attributing them to Islamists. These accusations persist despite Islamic organizations openly declaring their violent intentions, publishing books and pamphlets announcing war against Crusaderism and world Zionism, issuing threats, establishing training camps, and carrying out suicide operations.<sup>(752)</sup>

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<sup>(751)</sup> *The Treatment of Non-believers under Islamic Governance*, p. 64.

<sup>(752)</sup> For example, on August 27, 2005, Galāl Amīn wrote an article titled: *Sixteen Reasons to Question the Theories of Terrorism*. He said this, albeit indirectly.

Some thinkers also deny well-documented facts in Islamic history, as recorded in numerous heritage sources, in an effort to present Islam in a more idealized light. Examples include the denial of the assassination of Muḥammad's opponents (as argued by Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr),<sup>(753)</sup> the denial of the execution of the prisoners of Banū Qurayṣa (as claimed by Aḥmad Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr<sup>(754)</sup>), and the denial of Muḥammad's admiration for the wife of his adopted son Zayd ibn Ḥāritha (as suggested by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Heikal).<sup>(755)</sup> These denials are made without demonstrating that Muslim historians, narrators of prophetic traditions, or Qur'anic exegetes erred in reporting such events. In fact, this approach implicitly conveys a condemnation of those actions.

This propaganda, which involves explicit distortions—whether in providing proofs of doctrinal validity or in presenting an idealized version of Islamic history—reflects, on the one hand, a profound confidence that Islam represents absolute truth in contrast to the perceived error and unbelief of others. On the other hand, it reveals an inability to substantiate such claims through empirical and rational evidence, and consequently a lack of confidence in the capacity to persuade others. A paranoia-like state is evident here: the Islamic camp assumes complete righteousness and regards its creed as the greatest, yet interprets the rejection of others as stemming from hostility, unbelief, and misguidance. This perception leads to attempts at suppression and coercion, denying all truth to others while attributing every truth to Islam. It is therefore understandable why certain thinkers and advocates may resort to distortion when they feel ashamed of their ideas or the history of their advocacy, making it difficult for them to articulate

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<sup>(753)</sup> *Did the Prophet Muḥammad, assassinate Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf and Sallām ibn Abū al-Ḥuqayq?*

<sup>(754)</sup> *The Overlooked Dimensions of 'Umar's Biography.*

<sup>(755)</sup> *The Life of Muḥammad, Chapter Seventeen.*

these openly, except occasionally, and often incidentally, in moments of euphoria.

Critical analyses of the political practices of certain Islamist movements point to a reliance on propaganda strategies based on factual distortion and the dissemination of inaccurate information to defame opponents and diminish their popularity. These practices include making pledges and forming political alliances that are subsequently not honored, leading to a loss of trust among various actors on the political scene. Especially in Egypt, such policies have solidified a negative perception among broad sectors of the public toward the Muslim Brotherhood. The group has come to be viewed as an entity that utilizes deception and manipulation as a means to achieve political goals, resulting in its decline and its portrayal as a factor threatening social stability.

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## Chapter Thirteen

### CONSPIRACY THEORY AND ISLAMIST PARANOIA (756)

*After the folly of the old man, there is no wisdom*

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(756) As mentioned before, the term “paranoia” is used herein in its conventional, rather than medical sense.

**\* A conspiracy theory may be defined as the attribution of an event, or a series of events, to the covert actions of another party. According to this perspective, such actions are always carried out in secrecy and diverge from both the official declarations of the accused party and the established facts. Historical conspiracies are often conceived as unfolding over the long term, within a broad strategic horizon, and typically involve assigning responsibility for events to a hostile external actor.**

**The more a researcher presents findings that deviate from publicly announced narratives, the more persuasive they appear to adherents of conspiracy theories. This approach tends to exaggerate the hypothetical power of the conspirator and the supposed influence of hidden capabilities. The theory implicitly assumes that the adversary does not commit errors. Moreover, conspiracy theorists are unable to substantiate their claims with verifiable evidence, relying instead on illusions and speculative assumptions rather than on the analysis of demonstrable facts.**

**Such discourse often imagines enemies for whom no empirical evidence exists. The construction of external adversaries is frequently undertaken by groups or societies that lack cohesion or suffer from internal deficiencies, which they seek to obscure by projecting their conflicts outward.**

**\* It is evident that contemporary Islamist discourse, particularly among influential figures and movements, frequently embraces conspiracy theory as a central explanatory framework. The prevailing perception is that Muslims have been subjected to a continuous global conspiracy throughout history, orchestrated by**

external powers. This outlook is consistently reflected in the writings of both moderate and radical Islamists, who portray their opponents as hostile forces united against Islam despite their internal differences. Yūsuf al-Qaraḏāwī, for example, argues that Islamic preachers have, for decades, been subjected to recurring accusations from their opponents, including charges of backwardness and fanaticism, and extending to allegations of terrorism and even collaboration. He maintains that these accusations occur within a broader context of hostility from various parties, both in the East and the West, and across diverse political currents. <sup>(757)</sup> He further points to what he regards as a continuous assault on the Islamic world, targeting its homelands and sacred sites, carried out both openly and covertly by non-Muslim forces such as Judaism, Christianity, Communism, and Paganism. Al-Qaraḏāwī contends that, despite their internal differences, these forces converge in opposing Islam whenever it manifests as a call, a movement, or a state. He adds that Islamic causes do not receive genuine practical support from the major powers, unlike other causes that find material and moral backing, citing a Qur'anic verse affirming that **The disbelievers are protectors one of another.** <sup>(758)</sup>

This deep belief in conspiracy theories is reinforced by a binary division of humanity into two categories: virtuous Muslims and evil unbelievers. The very notion of conspiracy implies malice, since no one imagines a conspiracy for goodness. Thus, those accused of conspiring are automatically regarded as destructive and spiteful. The conspiratorial interpretation of events portrays others as villains and aggressors, while Muslims are consistently depicted as virtuous, peaceful, and perpetually victimized.

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<sup>(757)</sup> *The Islamic Awakening between Denial and Extremism*, Introduction.

<sup>(758)</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter Two.

This dynamic resembles the practices of totalitarian governments, which describe opposition as a conspiracy against them rather than examining the social causes of dissent and rebellion. Arab governments, for instance, routinely interpret opposition as the work of infiltrators, agents, or mercenaries among the masses, who are treated as a herd devoid of interests or awareness. Such propaganda absolves ruling regimes of responsibility while delegitimizing their opponents.

Furthermore, the promotion of conspiracy theories serves to incite segments of the Muslim public against non-believers, mobilize them under the authority of Islamic leaders, and encourage both effort and sacrifice. More significantly, this discourse neglects critical dimensions of Islamic thought and institutional frameworks that fail to address the needs of marginalized and disillusioned groups.

As noted above, Islamist thinkers often explain the defeat and decline of Islamic polities as the result of Muslims abandoning authentic religious principles and allowing *jāhiliyyah* elements to infiltrate rulers and society, especially after the Umayyads came to power. Yet the mechanisms by which this occurred remain contested. Explanations are frequently ambiguous, or framed in terms of alleged Jewish and Western conspiracies against Muslims, while the role of Muslims themselves is often overlooked. Rarely are the internal factors that prompted Muslims to depart from pure Islamic principles and to succumb to such alleged conspiracies systematically examined. A notable conception among some Sunni writers is the attribution of early sectarian divisions—including the emergence of Shi'ism, the strife surrounding the assassination of 'Uthmān, and subsequent civil wars—to the activities of a shadowy figure, 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba', who is historically portrayed as Jewish. A critical reading of this conception raises questions regarding the coherence of the political and social structures in the early stages of state formation. Despite the doctrinal strength and



political momentum during the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, some theorists and laypersons adopt the assumption that a single individual, or a small group of individuals, was able to provoke sharp divisions and armed conflicts among the various population groups and the Companions. If these accounts are accepted as accurate, they pose a problem concerning the fragility of the institutional and social system at that time, thereby weakening the argument for absolute cohesion in that period.

\* There is no doubt that not everything in the world is publicly declared; rather, there are secret decisions and plans, along with intelligence services, covert actions, and conspiracies carried out by such agencies. Yet all of this occurs within the framework of ordinary international conflict, as old as states themselves. Most importantly, all states and human groups behave in this way.

However, these realities should not be confused with conspiracy theories. Despite the existence of secret actions, intelligence apparatuses, and hidden plans, one can still analyze and understand events without interpreting everything as part of a conspiracy against oneself. Indeed, continuous plans and conspiracies are carried out by states against one another. There is no evidence that the entire world—or any part of it—has devoted itself to conspiring against Islam and Muslims, nor is there any justification for assuming such a conspiracy exists.

The writings of Islamist thinkers and activists frequently reflect perceptions of global conspiracies, particularly those allegedly orchestrated by Western powers and non-believers against Islam and Muslims. One of the most striking claims found in contemporary Islamist writings is the assertion by numerous Arab Muslim authors that the September 11 attacks were not carried out by jihādists, but rather orchestrated by external intelligence agencies such as the Mossad or the CIA. This perspective persists despite the existence of extensive self-attributed statements and publications by al-Qa'ida, an armed organization that had

previously declared war against Judaism and Crusaderism and openly acknowledged responsibility for the operation, which some of its members even refer to as the September 11 Raid. Although these admissions and prior declarations are publicly available, a significant number of Muslims—including both elites and ordinary individuals—continue to interpret the events as part of a Western Zionist conspiracy.

Among the supposed major conspiracies are those that some claim involve a plot to overthrow the Ottoman Caliphate,<sup>(759)</sup> a conspiracy to create a nationalist movement in the Islamic world to dismantle Islam, and a conspiracy to carry out the Nasserite coup in Egypt to suppress the growing Islamic movement. Some even believe that Muḥammad 'Alī was used by the West in a conspiracy to eliminate Islam.<sup>(760)</sup>

One writer summarized what he considered to be evidence of a comprehensive Western conspiracy against Islam in a booklet titled: *Western Leaders Say: Destroy Islam, Annihilate its Adherents*.<sup>(761)</sup> The booklet is filled with statements attributed to Western leaders, many of which are taken out of context, misinterpreted, or copied directly from Islamic sources. While some of these statements are genuine, they represent only individual

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<sup>(759)</sup> 'Abd al-Qadīm Zallūm, (1924–2003) — a Palestinian scholar trained at al-Azhar University who became one of the founders of Ḥizb ut-Taḥrīr (the Islamic Liberation Party), wrote a book titled *The Fall of the Caliphate*, in which he portrayed the matter as a mere Western conspiracy that began as early as the beginning of the Wahhābi movement and did not acknowledge any role for objective historical changes, conflicts of interest, and the decline and historical overtaking of the caliphate itself. Instead, he is content with the conspiracy theory. No doubt more rational Islamists are trying to uncover a special role for Muslims themselves in the fall of the Ottomans.

<sup>(760)</sup> Abū 'Ubadah al-Anṣārī, *The Concept of Divine Sovereignty in the Thought of Martyr 'Abd Allāh 'Azzām*. He stated: “Then Napoleon entered Egypt, and they assigned Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha -as an agent of the West- to overthrow this religion and distort it in the hearts of Muslims, slowly leading people to become unbelievers. He had a French advisor named Dr. Lobb.”

<sup>(761)</sup> Galāl al-'Alim.

leaders or writers and cannot be taken as the voice of the West as a whole. Often, these were just rhetorical remarks meant to excite people, not actual policy statements. The author wanted to show that the West has tried to wipe out Muslims throughout history. He did not notice that the West can easily marginalize all Muslims if it decides to do so, even by simply boycotting them at all levels, with the exception of the Gulf coast, which it can occupy within hours. However, the West pays little attention to the issue of religions, except in the context of what achieves its stability and economic interests. Even dominant powers in the West could easily convert to Islam if they saw their interest in doing so, just as the Roman Emperor announced in the past that Rome had converted to Christianity. Moreover, the West should not be seen as a single bloc conspiring against Islam. Islamists should remember that there were voices in the West who exposed the infamous Sykes-Picot Treaty, and others who allied with Third World nations- including Muslim countries- in their struggle against Western powers themselves.

Among the theses highlighted for their novelty is the view expressed by Muḥammad Quṭb: the West, which once waged the Crusades, has abandoned religion yet remained committed to the wars' original objective—namely, the elimination of Islam.<sup>(762)</sup> Furthermore, as Adel Ḥusayn observed, Western hostility toward Islam was accompanied by an internal process of consolidation, aimed at strengthening its capacities in preparation for external domination. In this discourse, the author projects onto the West the notion that conquest itself holds intrinsic value for Western societies, comparable to its significance within the Islamic tradition.

\* Regarding Jews, they had a special status from the beginning. Islamic hostility toward them emerged early, perhaps due to the refusal of the Madīnah tribes to convert en masse as hoped by

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<sup>(762)</sup> *Our Contemporary Reality.*

Muḥammad, and the hostility of the leaders of those tribes toward him out of fear for their privileged status, rather than an alleged historical conspiracy against the expected Prophet mentioned in the Torah. The word Jew has become a slur among Muslims and Arabs in general. The Qur'ān and Aḥādīth are full of statements that curse the Jews and show their extreme hostility toward Islam. Some aḥādīth even predict that the Muslims will annihilate them one day, even in alliance with stones. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* –2859 mentions: **The Hour will not come until Muslims fight the Jews and Muslims kill them, until the Jew hides behind a stone and a tree. The stone or tree says, “O Muslim, O 'Abd Allāh, this is a Jew behind me, so come and kill him.” Except for the gharqad, for it is one of the Jews’ trees.** Later, Muslims’ hostile view of the Jews varied from time to time, according to the circumstances of the era. However, contemporary Islamists assume that the Jews have been constantly conspiring against them, as indicated.

The Jewish conspiracy holds a significant place in classical and contemporary Islamic thought. Some contemporary Islamic thinkers claim that Jews collectively form a global secret organization conspiring against the world, with particular focus on Muslim societies. They are accused of manipulating states, instigating unrest and revolutions, and promoting atheistic or destructive ideologies. One of the common conspiracies attributed to them is the promotion of the theory of evolution. It is worth noting that many Islamists mistakenly claim that Darwin, the founder of the theory of evolution, was Jewish, while, indeed, he was Christian. They also misinterpret Freud’s psychoanalytic theory as being limited to sexuality, and criticize Marx’s theories, despite his deeper criticism of Judaism compared to Islamic criticism. Additionally, a majority of Muslims believe that The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were authored by Jewish leaders, despite most never having read the text. Proponents attribute its publication to a Russian scholar who allegedly obtained it from a

Tsarist official, who in turn supposedly received it from an anonymous French woman who claimed to have acquired it from an unidentified Jewish figure. Supporters of this theory often overlook the fact that the text was originally written in Russian—a language unlikely to have been used for internal communication among the alleged conspirators. Furthermore, the content of the Protocols is characterized by extreme simplicity and internal logical inconsistencies. <sup>(763)</sup>

Moreover, the myth of Freemasonry also holds a prominent place in Islamic beliefs. It is believed that a global Masonic organization collaborates with Jewish conspiracies and orchestrates significant events such as the French Revolution, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Paris Commune in 1870, both World Wars, and other events. <sup>(764)</sup> Islamists overlook the fact that early Masonic organizations had limited Jewish membership and, in some countries, Jews were even forbidden from joining for a period of time; furthermore, their origins were not Jewish in any respect. <sup>(765)</sup> The insistence on the alleged Jewish conspiracy only serves to strengthen the conspiracy theory itself. This notion is not exclusive to Jews but is accessible to all people. Jews are not the most dominant force economically, scientifically, or politically in the

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<sup>(763)</sup> The author first read this work at the age of fifteen and remained entirely unconvinced, concluding with youthful intuition that the Russian police were its true architects.

<sup>(764)</sup> 'Abd Allāh 'Azzām, *Merchants of War*. This book serves as a quintessential illustration of conspiracy theories within the Islamic mindset, replete with myths and fantasies that have no foundation in reality.

Ṣāliḥ Ḥusayn Sulaymān al-Raqab, Associate Professor in the Department of Doctrine at the Islamic University of Gaza, Palestine, also published a booklet titled *Freemasonry*. The work advances claims of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy, but it is filled with myths and unfounded assertions, lacking any supporting evidence.

<sup>(765)</sup> This is analyzed in detail by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī in the *Encyclopedia of Judaism and Zionism*. He adopts this opinion despite being an Islamic writer and academic who cannot be considered an agent of Jews in any way.

world, and the Jewish state is relatively small, primarily serving as an American base. The global Jewish population is approximately 15 million, yet many Muslims, and others, falsely believe that Jews control the world's economy, media, possess most gold, banks, and international institutions, thus promoting baseless myths.<sup>(766)</sup>

\* A fundamental oversight in contemporary Islamic thought is the failure to recognize that while any group can easily devise plans or conspiracies, their effectiveness depends on the predisposition of the targeted party to succumb to them. For such plans to succeed there must be both a readiness to respond and sufficient power within the conspiring group to implement their objectives. While Muslims may formulate their own strategies or plots, the question remains: can they achieve their desired outcomes? Furthermore, this conspiratorial view overlooks the lack of a monolithic identity; there is no single, homogeneous bloc that can be defined simply as “Muslims,” “Jews,” or “Westerners.”

\* Some scholars argue that elements of Islamic scripture and exegesis contribute to a worldview that frames relations between Muslims and non-believers in terms of enduring conflict. Qur'ānic verses such as Sūrah 4:101 (**The disbelievers are your manifest enemies** and Sūrah 2:120 (**Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their religion**) are often cited in this context. Furthermore, numerous exegetical interpretations of the Qur'ān suggest that Muslims are not expected to be fully reconciled with others unless they adopt Islam, whether as a faith or as a way of life. Early Islamic thought distinguished between believers and unbelievers, with conflict portrayed as inevitable until one side prevails. Verses such as Sūrah 8:39 (**Fight them until there is no more discord, and religion becomes exclusively for God**) are

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<sup>(766)</sup> It is instructive to refer to 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī's work *The Invisible Hand: A Study of Subversive and Secret Jewish Movements*. Despite his Islamist orientation, al-Messīrī offers a rigorous critique of the alleged Jewish conspiracy theories.



interpreted by most exegetes as mandating struggle until Islam attains predominance. In addition, certain prophetic traditions predict the eventual triumph of Islam through eschatological figures such as the Mahdī and the return of Jesus, who is described as rejecting jizyah and calling for conversion to Islam. These interpretations are used to support the view that Islam envisions a final universal victory, though contemporary scholarship debates the extent to which such readings reflect historical context, theological doctrine, or later polemical developments.

Islamic teachings urge caution in dealing with non-believers, discouraging loyalty to them over fellow Muslims and, consequently, restricting their eligibility for high positions within the Islamic state. Jurists often interpret these directives based on the assumption of potential harm or conspiracies against the Muslim community. Within Islamic jurisprudence, apostasy is generally regarded as a source of sedition and a threat to both the state and the religion, leading jurists to classify apostates as conspirators—a rationale underpinning their exclusion.

\* Despite the deep roots of conspiracy theories in Islamic thought, they have been reproduced as a modern obsession, fueled by the declining global status of Islam and the hegemony of modernity. This leads to a pervasive discourse regarding the “Western threat” to Arab-Islamic identity—a phenomenon not limited to Islamists, as it is also propagated by nationalist and leftist ideologies.

Driven by a sense of vulnerability, Islamists express existential fear for their identity. Yet, if this identity is truly at risk due to its internal weakness in the face of modern civilization, why is this interpreted as a conspiracy? The objectives of geopolitical, ideological, and corporate conflicts are generally overt and declared; they are not merely clandestine plots. Even intelligence operations are rarely absolute or permanent secrets; they are subject to counter-measures and professional analysis. Moreover,

such activities are reciprocal rather than unilateral. Thus, secrecy alone cannot account for the disparity between victory and defeat.

Nevertheless, proponents of identity-defense argue that the successive setbacks of the Arab-Islamic world result from malicious, secret plots aimed primarily at undermining Islam and Arabism. In this view, animosity toward these identities is the primary driver, rather than the pursuit of conventional national interests. Islam is thus perceived as the *axis mundi*—the focal point of the world— similar to the centrality attributed to Arabism during the height of the nationalist movement.

The current state of trepidation among Muslims mirrors the fragility of the early Islamic era when the nascent community was surrounded by formidable powers. However, vulnerability does not necessitate a conspiratorial worldview. While Muslims regard Islam as the center of the world, conspiracy theories often reflect a deep-seated inferiority complex. The Other is cast as an antagonist whose sole purpose is the destruction of Islam. Unlike the early expansionist period where Islam possessed the agency to subdue its rivals, its modern decline has resurrected a sense of inferiority that was once overcome. Convinced of its possession of absolute Truth, the Islamic world tends to externalize the causes of its civilizational collapse rather than examining internal factors. The preoccupation of jurists and the public with global conspiracies reflects an inability to scientifically or economically explain their deteriorating conditions. Ultimately, a logical diagnosis would expose the internal mechanisms of collapse—including a stagnant and fossilized culture—forcing a confrontation with the most difficult option: self-transformation.

\* The conspiracy theory extends to fear of everything foreign and non-believing. Even democracy, if it comes under external pressure, becomes doubtful, rejected, or at least feared. As for dialogue with unbelievers, such as the Islamic-Christian dialogue, it is conducted

with extreme caution, and the Muslim party often believes that the other party seeks to erase its identity rather than interact with it.

Most Islamists, with few exceptions, cannot acknowledge that the decline of the Islamic world is mainly the result of internal factors, as much as anything else. Instead of admitting internal weakness, they tend to blame others. Conspiracy theories are an integral part of a helpless mentality, resorting to a scapegoat to justify long-term defeats and failures because the community lacks the tools for advancement. This is the current state of the Islamic world after human thought has evolved significantly. However, it continues to use many of the elements of the same discourse, albeit in new forms and in a new context. Because the community succeeded in the past in achieving great victories with the same ideas that were appropriate for that era, contemporary Islamists imagine that the same way of thinking is suitable for achieving the same victories today. However, with the continued defeats, the helpless and stagnant mentality is unable to understand that its ideas are now obsolete. For this reason, it finds itself driven to blame the external conspirator.

This leads to a completely legitimate question: Why do conspiracy theories within Islamic contexts often fail to gain traction, whereas those emerging in non-Islamic contexts appear to achieve greater influence or success? or even why can Islamists not conspire with the same efficiency? It is noted that, within mainstream Islamic perspectives, conspiring against the enemy has been considered permissible, in line with the maxim that “war is deception.”

\* If the Other is unbelieving and evil, and characterized by all bad qualities, then reality reveals that there are aspects of modern civilization that even the average Muslim admires. There are many phenomena in the non-Muslim world characterized by humanity and nobility, in the common meanings of these terms, which are largely lacking in the Islamic world. These include human rights

organizations, humanitarian relief agencies, international charities, and protests by Westerners who sympathize with other people. For example, there have been instances where some British, French, American, and even Israeli soldiers refused to fire upon civilians, and many were subsequently imprisoned for acting on humanitarian motives. In contrast, historical records rarely mention Muslim soldiers refusing to kill unbelievers or take women captive, for a humanitarian motive other than just the limited and failed attempt during the era of the Prophet in the battle of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq as aforementioned. The West also has intellectual and political currents that are hostile to colonialism and Zionism, and call for egalitarian humanitarian principles. Based on conspiracy theory, most Islamists, and even most Muslims in general, believe that this is nothing but a division of roles to deceive Muslims. Such talk is common when dealing with political disputes in Israel as it is the closest enemy; the left and the right are seen as one, but they agree to play the charade of division, which is a very naive perception. Is there not a single person in Israel whose conscience awakens to reveal this alleged charade? Thus, conspiracy theory is often used to dismiss what is noble in the West, reducing it to nothing more than a supposed Western plot against Islam.

\* The conspiracy theory in the Islamic mind ends up blaming the unbelievers for the failure and decline of the Islamic world. This accusation fuels a sense of hostility toward this perceived evil and powerful enemy, leading the theory to advocate for Islam to fight relentlessly and mercilessly against this enemy. The more the imagined conspiracies increase, the more the hostility grows, and religious figures and thinkers charge Muslims in general with hatred toward unbelievers, resentment toward them, and a desire for revenge.

\* Conspiracy theories have caused Islamic thought to retreat into an intellectual ghetto. The gate of ijtihād, once thought closed, has been recently revisited, yet it does not allow surpassing the sacred

text, consensus, or the established *ijtihād* concerning sacred pronouncements; therefore, interaction with other doctrines is restricted. The conspiracy theory warns of the contamination of Islamic identity, suggesting that thought should remain pure and free from any influence by unbelievers. Any thesis from outside Islam is viewed with suspicion, assumed to have evil intentions that target Islamic identity. Dialogue with others is often hostile, marked by violent language and attempts to belittle differing ideas,

Contemporary Islamists often perceive writings that present Islamic history from major Islamic sources as poison directed at Islam, even though they are internal “poisons,” mentioned and explained by trustworthy Muslims. They tend to avoid confrontations by responding to factual information with vague general statements and criticizing opposing views with counterfactual examples. This evasion perpetuates the inability of Islamic thought to engage in a true dialogue, leading to a sense of fear and withdrawal. For many Muslims, any error or inaccuracy in the sacred texts implies the immediate collapse of their entire faith.

Islamists also resist the humanitarian basis of dialogue. Rather, their belief is the absolute standard, and there is nothing human outside it. In most discussions and responses, they claim that Islam is entirely self-sufficient, containing all human values and principles, and therefore requires nothing from outside. In the minds of its adherents, it is full, does not need the thought of *al-jāhiliyyah*, and consequently does not interact with it. When any slogans are put forward aiming to achieve human cooperation or for people to obtain greater rights, the Islamist responds with the statements that guarantee all of this without declaring that he agrees with what is actually being proposed. For example, the response to democratic slogans is usually that Islam has the principle of *al-shūrā*, which allegedly guarantees the highest levels of democracy. But they do not announce their acceptance of

democracy, even based on this principle—which they consider great—except to the extent, to democracy, except to the extent that Sharī'ah is the source of all principles and legislation. They declare that they are the most democratic, and then quickly retreat back into their ideological shell. The isolation continues, represented by intense attempts to Islamize various sciences and knowledge, and to make Islam the supreme reference for all forms of cognitive and social powers. There is an Islamic method of thinking, Islamic law, and an Islamic system for the army and war, and even the social sciences must be Islamized. An Islamic economy, for example, has been invented without a clear or consistent definition being established. Moreover, there is also Islamic medicine with international conferences.<sup>(767)</sup> In addition, Islamists created what is called the “International Islamic Labor Union,” instead of a joint struggle with the workers of the world. The definition of the worker himself in that union differs from that in the labor movements of the unbelievers, in that it includes employers, and the goals of the struggle also differ, in that it seeks the mysterious goals of Islam, which are not well defined.<sup>(768)</sup>

The growing fear of the loss of identity leads many Islamists to avoid engaging with modern intellectual systems. Most even refrain from using the terminology, research methods, and political, economic, and historical concepts of modernity. Sayyid Quṭb explicitly denounces all attempts to integrate or reconcile what he calls the Islamic conception with Western thought. On this basis, he rejects traditional Islamic philosophy and theology, preferring the style of the Salaf. Instead, he calls for presenting Islam through an Islamic framework, without resorting to philosophical templates.<sup>(769)</sup> However, a few do employ modern methods, such as

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<sup>(767)</sup> An idea about the topic can be taken from a small article titled *Islamic Medicine*, written by Sāmī Aḥmad al-Mawsilī, published on the Internet.

<sup>(768)</sup> Refer to Gamāl al-Bannā; *The Trade Union Movement as a Social Movement*.

<sup>(769)</sup> *Characteristics of the Islamic Conception and Its Constituents*.



Sayyid Quṭb in *Social Justice in Islam*, Muṣṭafā al-Siba'ī in *The Socialism of Islam*, and 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Messīrī throughout his writings. Al-Maudūdī also emphasizes this point and urges his followers to study modern culture carefully. Such methods are also also deliberately used by thinkers trying to develop Islamic thought in a more open direction. Several attempts have been made to write Islamic history and the prophetic biography as worldly events. That is, they employ methodologies that exclude the supernatural and miracles, including the books *The Life of Muḥammad* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Heikal, the book of *Al-Fitna al-Kubrā* [The Great upheaval], by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, the book of Aḥmad 'Abbās Ṣāliḥ, *The Right and the Left in Islam*, and the writings of Orientalists, such as the book *Muḥammad* by Maxime Rodinson. Among the influential Islamists, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī in his book *Fiqh al-Sira*, (Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography) makes a great effort to rationalize the prophetic biography, despite not clearly denying supernatural events. In contrast, most of his comrades reject this approach as Western thinking, or influenced by Western approaches, or even, sometimes, as part of the alleged Western conspiracy against Islam. They often write Islamic history as if it unfolds according to special rules, or as if its events occur in unusual and miraculous ways under direct—or nearly direct—guidance from heaven. They emphasize that the so-called laws of history do not apply to this narrative, portraying the early Muslims as motivated by forces beyond ordinary human tendencies, almost as if they were a distinct type of human being. In this view, the events of Islam do not conform to logic and cannot be explained by reason, as secular schools of history attempt to do. Since its source is revelation, the motives and goals of Muslims are unseen. For this reason, Islamists highlight miracles in Islamic history, especially in the prophetic biography. A notable example is Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī's *Fiqh al-Sīrah* [An Analytical Study of the Prophetic Biography], which differs significantly from Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's work, despite al-Būṭī citing it as a major source.

Al-Būṭī firmly rejects any attempt to subject the Prophet’s biography to rational analysis or realistic interpretation, insisting instead on a metaphysical and miraculous framework. Paradoxically, he describes this approach as a “scientific method.” Muḥammad Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Albānī responds sharply to al-Būṭī, not by criticizing his metaphysical outlook or reliance on superstition, but by focusing on his use of weak aḥādīth and unreliable narrations. <sup>(770)</sup>

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Most Islamist writings on other ideologies are marked by ignorance or by a lack of interest in understanding them as their proponents present them. The purpose, often unconscious, is to belittle and portray them as negatively as possible. A common example is their criticism of Marxism, which is usually reduced to a nihilistic ideology said to promote absolute sexual freedom, moral corruption, and the interpretation of all phenomena in purely economic terms. Marxism is also frequently depicted as a product of Jews or as ideas whispered to Marx as part of a conspiracy to corrupt the world. Moreover, Islamists openly call for rejecting values, social sciences, and modern forms of social organization, while simultaneously accepting the products of physical sciences and technology from the West. This stands in contrast to efforts to give Islamic heritage concepts a modern character, which contributes to weakening Islamic centralism. Many contemporary thinkers remain satisfied with the traditional Islamic cognitive system and avoid linking Islam with modernity, fearing for its “purity.” This trend began with *al-Wahhābīyah* (Wahhabism) in the 18th century and remains prevalent today. These figures seek to

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<sup>(770)</sup> *In Defense of the Sunnah and Sīrah: A Critique of Dr. al-Būṭī’s Methodology in “The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography.”*

**“purify” Islam of any perceived “impurities” and to construct a distinct Islamic modernity independent of contemporary culture.**

**The intellectual ghetto takes shape in the form of a social ghetto in countries of unbelievers, created by Muslims who strongly adhere to their identity. Many of them become more extreme out of fear of integrating into societies of unbelievers and thus falling into sin. An increasing number of Muslims adopt specific dress codes for men and women, grow beards and mustaches in particular styles, sit on the ground, and raise cries of protest against critics of the veil. This is one of the mechanisms used to create an Islamic ghetto, even within modern Islamic societies to varying degrees.**

**\* In the formative period of Islam, conspiracy narratives were mobilized by certain groups to encourage new adherents to pursue expansion and to confront non-believers. These narratives were not employed, either in sacred texts or in other sources, to explain the rare defeats of Muslims or the limited cases of failure at that time. Instead, such setbacks were interpreted as resulting from disobedience to the Prophet (as in the case of Uḥud) or from inaction (as in the Battle of Ḥunayn). In contrast, in contemporary Islamist discourse, conspiracy theories have increasingly become a convenient explanation for recurrent failures.**

**\* Islamist Paranoia:**

**Paranoid personality structures are typically characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance or grandeur, accompanied by a persistent perception of persecution by others. Alleged persecution is often rationalized through this grandiosity, which is believed to provoke hostility from external actors. At the core of this complex lies a deep, unconscious, and often unjustified sense of inferiority. When such feelings intensify to unrealistic proportions, they may reach a pathological state, threatening to detach the**

individual from the surrounding world or to transform into hostility toward it.

From this perspective, contemporary Islamic discourse can be interpreted as exhibiting features of such paranoia. The sense of grandeur is consistently emphasized, while the perception of persecution is reinforced through the recurrent belief in ongoing conspiracies orchestrated by external forces. This dual dynamic—grandiosity coupled with persecution—serves as a central explanatory framework in much of the rhetoric, shaping both self-image and attitudes toward the outside world.

This creates a feeling of superiority over unbelievers and a simultaneous fear of them. They are portrayed as malicious, conspiratorial, and inherently evil. This explains the Islamists' aversion to cooperation and constructive dialogue. Instead, they attack and accuse others of bad faith, thus justifying aggression. These groups present themselves as oppressed everywhere and exaggerate the acts of oppression directed at them, despite their partial alliance with semi-Islamic governments in the Arab world and elsewhere, their participation in power at times, their enjoyment of the right to propaganda, and their possession of extensive media tools, such as hundreds of thousands of mosques, prayer rooms, schools, internet sites, newspapers, and publishing houses. Additionally, they receive significant governmental support in confronting the Left, and have penetrated the state apparatuses in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>(771)</sup> In fact, the growth of their influence and the expansion

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<sup>(771)</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī said in the Friday sermon delivered on November 18, 2005, at the 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb Mosque in the Qatari capital: *“One of the clearest manifestations of the loss of Arab human rights is the military trials of civilians, imprisoning innocent people without charges and even prohibiting the formation of parties on a religious basis under the pretext that there should not be a party on a religious basis. What is worse is that it is permitted to form a party on an atheistic basis.”*

One must ask: where is this party operating on an atheistic basis, in a region where individuals accused of apostasy are routinely tried and imprisoned? Furthermore, does the

of their organizations cannot be separated from forms of governmental support or the authorities' implicit encouragement of their activities, which ultimately serve the interests of the parasitic ruling powers throughout the Arab countries.

Although Islamist movements display significant internal divisions, many observers note a recurring tendency toward paranoia. These divisions are sometimes interpreted as strategic—amounting to a division of roles between self-styled moderates and more radical elements. Critics argue that certain strands of Islamic thought foster exclusivism and hostility toward outsiders, regardless of differences in rhetoric or tactical approach. This dynamic helps explain why extremist groups may invoke fatāwā issued by more mainstream scholars to justify violence against non-believers. A striking example is the assassination of Farag Foda in Egypt, which was linked to a fatwā from scholars of al-Azhar, an institution often regarded as moderate. The feeling of persecution among Islamists is commonly articulated as a response to what they perceive as widespread fear and hostility toward Islam.

From time to time, Islamist discourse reveals a profound sense of inferiority, sometimes manifesting as what may be described as an inferiority complex. This is often expressed through a process of self-flagellation, whereby responsibility for failure is shifted inward. Unlike ordinary self-criticism, which is constructive and rational, this form of self-reproach involves accusations of betrayal, deliberate negligence, incompetence, corruption, and decadence. Failure is interpreted not simply as the result of error, but as a form of conspiring against oneself for the benefit of others. Such attitudes foster feelings of deserving misfortune and lead to self-denigration rather than corrective reflection. This tendency is observed among certain Islamist thinkers and activists, particularly

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Muslim Brotherhood not operate openly in its Egyptian homeland? Is this not a patent falsehood?

**during periods of despair, when external accusations are replaced by internal condemnation.**

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## Chapter Fourteen

# THE GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC CENTRALISM

*The more fragile an idea becomes, the more extreme its defenders grow in protecting it*

Nabīl Fayyādh

The sacred text from the beginning exhibits a strong and clear central tendency, evident from the context of its analysis herein. It emerged in extreme opposition to Qurashī paganism and tribal fanaticism, advocating strongly for monotheism and rejecting any compromise. That text also emphasizes the unity of prophethood, requiring the testimony of “Muḥammad is the Messenger of God” in addition to “there is no god but God” for a person’s Islam. Consequently, it dismisses all claims of prophethood and those presenting poetry resembling Qur’ānic verses. Furthermore, it initiates a fierce intellectual and later armed conflict against unbelievers.

This strong centralism is linked to a strong tendency toward Arab unity in facing the constant hunger, from which they had long suffered, and in facing the surrounding communities, who had long despised them and used them for their advantage. With social disintegration, tribal fragmentation, conflicts, and vendettas between different clans functioning as well-established customs and traditions, it was difficult for the Arabs to agree on a formula for unity or even cooperation without being centered on an inspiring and absolutely trustworthy leadership. Statements calling to annihilate the unbelievers were used to unite tribes, whether in the era of Muḥammad or immediately after his death in the Arab civil

wars, and were then used as ideological justifications for invading and subjugating other peoples. In this way, a large and rich Arab-Islamic empire was created.

As Arabs came into contact with other civilizations and new interests emerged, Islamic centralism gradually relaxed. Several periods witnessed a degree of tolerance toward non-believers, particularly during the 'Abbāsid era. Contributing factors included the influence of non-Arabs within government, the stability of the state and its borders, and the relative acquiescence of the dhimmīs. By contrast, other periods were marked by varying levels of extremism, at times reaching the establishment of inquisition courts and the widespread persecution of non-believers, especially during moments when the state faced external threats.

In the modern era, some Muslim countries have witnessed significant cultural changes toward adopting modernity and partial secularism. However, secular trends have not succeeded in achieving complete and rewarding modernization for all classes, for reasons unrelated to their secularism. Even their reluctance to embrace complete secularization may have contributed to their failure. It benefited the wealthy classes, as well as the most parasitic elements and those closely collaborating with European colonialism. Modernization was also tied to the colonization of these countries and the oppression of their people by the West. While military colonialism eventually receded, various forms of exploitation and oppression persisted, prompting the peoples of these countries to revert to their traditional cultures, drawing from their heritage what they perceived as solutions to their growing crises. Modernization brought about profound shifts in values but yielded limited benefits for the lower classes. Many became marginalized, lost their traditional norms, and gained little, while colonial structures continued to suppress and control their resources.

The decision by Atatürk to abolish the Caliphate did not bring any benefits to Muslim peoples. Instead, it appeared to remove the remnants of Ottoman protection, fueling reactions such as the emergence and growth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Conversely, the Great Arab Revolt led by Sharīf Ḥusayn (1916), who allied with the British, largely failed, except for his sons' control of Iraq and Jordan. The Sykes-Picot Treaty was exposed by the Bolsheviks, and Israel was established in the Middle East. The ultimate blow came with the failure of Arab nationalism and socialism in the 1967 war, marking the decline of certain secular trends in the Arab and Islamic world and the resurgence of political Islam.

Islamic centralism has re-emerged alongside the rise of political Islam, drawing upon heritage to serve its own vision. The condition of Arab Muslims in the modern era can, in several respects, be likened to that of pre-Islamic Arabs of the Peninsula. They find themselves under Western domination, which openly disdains them, seizes their wealth, occupies their lands, and has established, by their reckoning, an expansionist unbelieving entity in their midst. Fragmentation and conflict among their states and ruling tribes further exacerbate their plight. Nationalist, socialist, and semi-liberal movements failed to unify them, paving the way for the resurgence of religious heritage infused with strong hostility toward the “other,” including those loyal to modern culture, perceived as a product of unbelieving Western colonialism.

The role of Wahhabism, financed by oil revenues, is particularly significant. The wealthy Saudi family employed this ideology, rooted in the jurisprudence of Ibn Ḥanbal, to consolidate its authority in the region, in line with the local culture of the Arabian Peninsula. It has financed, supported, and protected radical Islamic institutions and groups—even in the West—thus contributing to the revival of Islamic fanaticism.

Islamic societies have historically experienced continuous class and ethnic conflicts. Yet, the emphasis here lies on the ideological framework, cultural template, values, and ideals that gain theoretical acceptance regardless of their practical application.

Contemporary Islamic discourse has evolved considerably since the Middle Ages. Few now advocate the literal application of the 'Umari Conditions, and even fewer insist on practices such as the captivity and sexual exploitation of female war captives. Instead, there has been a discernible shift toward democratic principles and the adoption of the vocabulary of modern social sciences, though these transformations remain partial and contested.

The General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the most influential Islamic organizations worldwide, called in 1990 for the imposition of jizyah on the People of the Book, but later withdrew the statement after intense criticism. Moreover, the notion of jihād has remained coherent, though its priorities have been restructured. In Palestine, some Islamists invoked the 'Umari Conditions to oppose the sale of Christian property to Jews. In Algeria during the 1990s, in Afghanistan amid the civil war, and later during the conflict between the American-backed coalition and the Ṭāliban, instances of captivity and sexual exploitation of women deemed unbelievers were reported. In Iraq, in May 2005, Muqtadā al-Ṣadr's follower, 'Abd al-Sattār al-Bahadlī, declared in a Friday sermon that any Iraqī who captured a British female soldier would receive a financial reward, adding that she would be treated as a slave. Meanwhile, calls for democracy do not exclude demands to Islamize the constitution.

Semi-secular states across much of the Islamic world have committed numerous violations of classical Islamic jurisprudence, particularly since European colonization and its aftermath. These actions include abolishing jizyah on non-Muslims, enforcing equal retribution, conscripting them into the army, and granting additional privileges. Such measures were often imposed against the

will of the clergy and ordinary Muslims, enforced through state power. Similar transgressions of Shari'ah were occasionally seen even during the era of the caliphs. Yet, the intellectual foundations of Islam have not fundamentally changed, nor has the colonial legacy of Islam been critically examined. Muslim elites and ordinary believers continue to lament the loss of Andalusia and the decline of Islamic rule through force. The Rightly Guided Caliphs remain ideals for both elites and the masses, despite their governments' expansionist policies and the forcible extraction of jizyah and kharāj from conquered peoples.

The Islamists have not made a decisive intellectual break with classical fiqh, which still shapes thought today, nor have they abandoned the aḥādīth that incite violence. Those who transgressed certain traditional rulings justified their actions pragmatically rather than rejecting them outright. Attempts at enlightenment are limited to reinterpreting existing *fiqh*, leaving the traditional heritage easily accessible for retrieval when needed—a phenomenon that has become increasingly evident.

Contemporary Islam, in its diverse schools, has evolved in response to modern circumstances such as Western domination, Eurocentrism, and the challenges of partial modernization. Yet this evolution is not entirely novel. Islamists have consistently relied on heritage, which was never fully abandoned, even during the most prosperous semi-secular periods. It was only temporarily set aside under state authority or due to pressure from secular elites influenced by modernity and the European presence.

This revival of heritage is not a new reading but rather a reactivation of long-standing elements. It represents a call to Islam's original centralism, a principle upon which neither classical nor modern schools fundamentally disagree. However, these elements are now employed within a new intellectual framework. Conquest, captivity, and plunder are no longer the highest objectives of Muslims. Instead, pressing concerns include justice,

resistance to corrupt rulers, national liberation, and solidarity among Muslim peoples against Western supremacy. Most jurists today pay little attention to rulings on slavery and female slaves, focusing instead on issues such as Muslim conduct in non-Muslim countries, adherence to secular laws, engagement with modern science, terrorism, and models of Islamic governance.

Nevertheless, the policies of organizations such as al-Qā'idah, the Ṭālibān, and Dā'ish—which adhere to traditional jurisprudence in all its components—cannot be overlooked.

Given the changed global circumstances, Islamic centralism manifests differently than in the past. It differs both from the era of Islamic dominance and from the current conditions of Western hegemony. Consequently, contemporary society exhibits pronounced conspiracy theories and heightened religious fervor, in contrast to the formative and prosperous periods of Islam. Many classical jurists were more open and objective than their contemporary counterparts, and pluralism within Islam was greater during times of prosperity and supremacy. The depth of the wounds inflicted on Islam and the sense of helplessness before modernity have generated today's acute paranoia, which contrasts sharply with the confidence and power that characterized Islam's age of supremacy.

Islamic thought is essentially identity-based; it differs from liberal thought, which places the individual as the ultimate end, from fascism, which elevates the nation (in the Western sense) above all, and from socialism as practiced, which prioritizes society over individuals. Islam positions itself as both reference and goal; ideology is placed above everything else. Yet, since ideology encompasses considerations of public interest and pragmatic principles such as “necessities permit prohibitions,” the state—or the state of Sharī'ah—becomes the true totality for the vast majority of Islamic schools, both classical and modern.



While individuals may also apply pragmatic principles, the overriding concern is that public interests outweigh personal ones, and the necessities of society outweigh those of individuals.<sup>(772)</sup> In Islamic thought, duty supersedes rights, and the supreme duty of the state is to protect itself as the foremost representative of the creed. Likewise, the most important duties of individuals are those owed to the state, the central force in society and the guardian of Islam—unless it disregards the principle of *al-ḥākimiyyah*.

Additional points reinforce this idea: Islamic thought entails applying Sharī'ah even to non-Muslims, while allowing dhimmīs to practice their own laws in personal matters so long as they do not affect Muslims; it requires that a Muslim remain within the faith; and it theoretically calls for the conquest of non-Muslim lands to liberate them from *Jāhili* systems. The essential priority is the implementation of the system itself, which takes precedence over the dissemination of ideology. This system is defined first and foremost by the authority of the state.

With regard to contemporary Islam, where no global Islamic state exists but only regional or national states in the conventional sense, the supreme objective of Islamists is for these states to implement Islamic law as an alternative to modern Western systems. Extended to its logical conclusion, this renders the contemporary Islamic movement essentially a national movement—less coherent than secular nationalist movements, yet more vehement in its anger and resentment toward the West. For this movement, the nation-state remains the universal framework, provided that it enforces Islamic law, according to the perspective of one group or another.

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<sup>(772)</sup> This idea is repeatedly discussed in various Islamic sources, including Ibn Taymiyyah's statements in *The Collection of Fatāwā* in earlier times, and more recently by Muḥammad 'Imārah in his book *Humanity and Human Rights*.

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## Chapter Fifteen

### CONCLUSIONS

*By neglecting what is minor until it grows, overlooking what is simple until it becomes difficult, and ignoring what is hidden until it emerges, we ultimately arrive at the situation in which we now find ourselves—one that continues to worsen*

Bāssil, a servant of Caliph Marwān Ibn Muḥammad

1. Traditional Islamic thought presents itself as the absolute Truth, encompassing all matters and offering answers to every question. The Other is defined as an unbeliever, inherently inferior to Islam. It is portrayed as myth, pretense, falsehood, forgery, and delusion; a denial of Truth, an illusion, and a misrepresentation. Consequently, the identity of individuals and groups is determined solely by the standard of Islam: one is either a Muslim or an unbeliever, a categorization that extends to societies in the view of strict Islamic schools.

In practice, traditional Islam expands into the concept of *al-ḥākimiyyah*, understood as joining the Party of God against the Party of Satan. Even those who reject the term *al-ḥākimiyyah* employ equivalent notions, such as “Godliness” or the “application of Sharī’ah law.” Unbelief, in practice, is broadened into *al-*

*jāhiliyyah*, denoting reliance on non-divine references—ranging from outright denial of God’s existence to the use of non-divine sources for legislation, values, and intellectual frameworks. The two parties stand in opposition as enemies. Islam must therefore confront its adversary and ultimately achieve peace in one of three ways: conversion of unbelievers to Islam, their submission through payment of *jizyah*, or their elimination.

Since Islam is regarded as the final Truth from God, its ultimate victory is divinely guaranteed as the destiny of humanity.

This framework perpetuates religious wars, the clash of civilizations lamented by Islamists today, and the division of humanity into good and evil on a religious basis. Muslims are considered the “good,” proclaiming themselves the best community ever raised for humankind, entrusted with a historical mission to establish *al-ḥākimiyyah* across the earth. In contrast, Islam rejects class struggle, ethnic divisions, and national conflicts. These conceptual vocabularies constitute the core of Islam in both classical and modern times, though the framework of their application varies across eras, shaped by shifting realities, balances of power, evolving goals, and social transformations in Islamic societies and beyond.

2. Islamic centralism is, at its core, cultural centralism. Its Arab dimension grants Arabs a cultural advantage, positioning them as the most capable of carrying and transmitting the historical mission of the Islamic community. This distinction between Islamic cultural centralism and Eurocentric racism helps explain why Islam does not advocate genocide against other peoples—except Arab polytheists who persisted in their beliefs—and why Arab-Islamic colonialism generally refrained from genocidal practices, unlike European colonialism in certain regions. Arab colonialism was comparatively less brutal: conquered peoples could adopt Islam and the Arabic language to achieve near equality with the conquerors, facilitated by their relatively weak resistance. The

barrier between colonizer and colonized was thus partially bridgeable, often by simply pronouncing the two testimonies of faith.

Although sacred texts and juristic rulings could have justified the extermination of polytheists, such a task proved militarily impractical. Additional factors included the economic benefits derived from the labor of non-Muslim populations, the absence of surplus Arab populations to replace indigenous peoples, and limited agricultural expertise.

Consequently, Muḥammad permitted the Jews of Khaybar to remain on their land, cultivating it in exchange for half its yield as *kharāj*. Similar arrangements were extended to millions in later conquered territories, with the exception of the Umayyads. Arab conquerors granted a semblance of Islamic citizenship to the conquered and even *dhimīs* enjoyed significant rights and privileges. These communities became fertile ground for the spread of Islam, with many converting upon declaring the testimonies of faith. This widespread conversion strengthened the foundations of the Islamic state by securing loyalty from diverse populations and fostering bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims. By contrast, Ottoman conquerors were harsher, influenced by their distinct military traditions and the stronger resistance of certain subjugated peoples. Even so, slaves in Islamic societies enjoyed rights unknown in other civilizations. This reflects Islam's prioritization of belief and piety as the ultimate criterion of human worth, superseding nationalism and class.

Islam's remarkable victories over the world's greatest cultures at its rise can be attributed to this cultural-religious centralism. Its criterion for human preference was simple: conversion and ideological loyalty. It required only the declaration of faith and basic observance of worship, without probing inner belief. Thus, individuals who did not truly believe could nonetheless join Islam by professing allegiance, ensuring safety and potential benefits.

This dynamic explains Islam's rapid success in winning the loyalty of populations in Roman colonies, who had suffered racism, oppression, and exclusion from Roman citizenship. Islam offered theoretical equality among Muslim men, an unprecedented prospect for these populations, and a powerful incentive to embrace Islam.

Islamic thought has often emphasized a distinction between Muslims and non-believers, with traditional jurisprudence framing believers as members of the "Party of God" and granting them superior rights. Despite rhetorical appeals to love and equality, many classical interpretations maintain this division. While Islam does not explicitly call for the extermination of unbelievers, classical interpretations generally do not equate them with Muslims in terms of legal or social status. Humanism, by contrast, is defined as the principle of treating all human beings equally regardless of creed, ethnicity, or class.

Ḥasan al-Bannā, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, seeks to present Islam as humane in his work *Peace in Islam*. His articulation of "human brotherhood," however, was framed within Islamic categories: unity of origin and lineage (all people descend from Adam, with virtue determined by piety), unity of religion (Islam as the culmination of successive revelations), and unity of rituals (shared *qibla*, Arabic language in worship, and preference for humans over other creatures). In essence, al-Bannā's vision of humanity was dependent on universal adherence to Islam.<sup>(773)</sup> Contemporary Islamist movements largely reproduce this framework, with the exception of certain reformist voices advocating secularization. Notably, some Islamic websites explicitly reject humanism, labeling it as unbelief, associating it with the rise of fascism, and categorically denying its compatibility with Islam.

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<sup>(773)</sup> The *Qibla* refers to the direction of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, which Muslims follow in various religious contexts, most notably during prayer.

<sup>(774)</sup> This trajectory was further illustrated in cases where Islamist parties had attained power through free elections. In Algeria, for instance, leaders of the Islamic Salvation Front reportedly declared that those elections would be the last in the country, suggesting an intention to suspend democratic processes. A comparable scenario unfolded in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood, after having attained political authority, was perceived by critics as acting as though its rule would be permanent.

3. Islamic centralism is a defining feature of traditional Islam, whether in the exegesis of sacred texts, among fundamentalists, or within reformist circles. As previously noted, Islam is consistently presented by its adherents as an advocacy that rejects all other doctrines in favor of divine sovereignty, regarding it as the final Truth- the absolute standard- and its community as the best of humankind. During periods of power and dominance, scholars were more confident and willing to confront opposing ideas, employing the tools of Greek philosophy without hesitation, and producing an extensive body of jurisprudential rules. In contrast, during times of decline, the gate of *ijtihād* was closed, and the centralist tendency continued to intensify, leading the Islamic world into a state resembling pathological paranoia, fear of unbelievers,

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<sup>(774)</sup> An article titled *Humanism*, prepared by the International Symposium for Islamic Youth, states:

*“Humanism is a philosophical, literary, materialistic, and irreligious doctrine that emphasizes human individuality over religion and promotes a worldly, materialistic outlook. It is one of the foundations of Comte’s positivist philosophy, Bentham’s utilitarian philosophy, and Bertrand Russell’s atheistic writings. This demonstrates the failure of the doctrine on the intellectual level. On the practical level, which directly affects individual behavior, its failure is evident in the false sense of security it grants humanity—security that has never been realized. It neglects the fact that salvation can only be achieved through the final religion. Muslims should be attentive when engaging with the products of this doctrine, since Islam honors humanity and all of its teachings are humane: We have honored the children of Adam—yet those who choose unbelief are deprived of this honor, and they are described as the worst of creation.”*



and a sense of inferiority. It confined itself within an intellectual ghetto, from which attempts at escape largely failed.

A moderate and less centralized trend, initiated by al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh, prevailed for a considerable time at the onset of modernization in the Islamic world. This movement sought partial adaptation to modernization but did not dismantle the theoretical foundations of traditional Islamic thought, nor did it establish an epistemological break with Salafism. With the collapse of modernization efforts in the Arab and Islamic world and the rise of Eurocentrism, this moderate trend steadily receded. Obsessions with Western and Jewish conspiracies began to preoccupy both elites and ordinary Muslims. Calls for violence and terrorism against unbelievers grew, reflecting a profound sense of weakness and despair cloaked in the illusion of power, sustained by confidence in Islam's ultimate victory.

The dominance of fanatical Islamic discourse since the final defeat of Arab nationalism in the 1960s represents both a return to early Islam and the failure of more tolerant approaches. Yet, this resurgence unfolds in a new context: one of defending a humiliated and oppressed self against the powerful heirs of modern civilization, who were accused of unbelief and disparaged within the same process of self-defense.

4. Islamic centralism has historically led Muslims to justify Islamic colonialism, both in the past and in the present, as religious minorities continue to face persecution in many Muslim countries. Looking ahead, this centralist tendency may also foster the use of double standards. As previously discussed, it can drive alliances with forces that ultimately undermine the genuine interests of Muslim peoples, while simultaneously resisting modernization and democratization.

5. Official Islam and moderate movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, often raise the slogan of reopening the door to *ijtihād*.

Yet, their efforts remain largely confined to rearranging the priorities of Islamic activism and employing *taqiyyah* (dissimulation or permissible concealment) to present their ideas in a more humane image, without achieving substantial success. These movements also make certain concessions—primarily rhetorical, though occasionally practical—in order to avoid annihilation in the ongoing confrontation with the West. Pragmatism likewise shapes their political strategies, including calls to respect the laws of Western countries (as advocated by figures such as Sayyid Ṭaṇṭawī and al-Qaraḍāwī) and acceptance of parliamentary and party systems (as endorsed by Ḥasan al-Bannā and his followers).

Nevertheless, this strand of Islam does not transcend the central concept of *al-ḥākimiyyah*, which remains the cornerstone of political Islam. Nor does it move beyond the traditional hierarchy of legislative sources, thereby freezing any attempt at radical reform. The execution of Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ṭāhā in Sudan, the public inquisition and conviction of Naṣr Abū Zayd in Egypt, the assassination of Farag Foda, and similar incidents were carried out with the support of many jurists, scholars, and even ordinary Muslims.

It is noteworthy that moderate movements do not consistently oppose extremist currents—what Farag Foda termed “revolutionary Islam.” While they occasionally denounce such movements in official statements as harmful to Islam, they rarely condemn them outright. Indeed, many moderates provide justifications for extremist violence. Sayyid Quṭb, for instance, continues to be revered as a martyr by nearly all Islamists, with moderates refraining from disavowing him. At most, they accuse extremists of failing to grasp the requirements of good faith or the conditions of Islamic activism in the present era.

Conversely, revolutionary Islamists often attack moderates—sometimes violently—accusing them of practicing *taqiyyah*, diluting the priorities of the Islamic struggle, or developing Islamic thought

in overly flexible directions. Moderates are frequently charged with pandering to authorities and the West in pursuit of worldly gains at the expense of principle. Examples include Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who calls for purifying aḥādīth and promoting some degree of gender equality;<sup>(775)</sup> al-Qaraḍāwī, who permits certain forms of singing, dancing, and even Muslim employment in establishments serving alcohol under necessity;<sup>(776)</sup> al-Azhar, which sanctions bank interest and faced heavy criticism; and Jamal al-Bannā, who seeks to reform the principles of *fiqh*.

6. In opposition to Islamic centralism, various efforts emerge to dismantle this framework and to partially or fully rationalize Islam. Historical examples include the endeavor of Abū Ḥayyan al-Tawḥīdī, who confessed his failure and recommended burning his books after his death out of despair with the Muslim community, and Ibn Rushd, from whom the West benefited while the Muslim masses reviled him and burned his books in 1195 at the sultan's behest to appease the people and the religious scholars, according to some accounts.

In more recent times, similar efforts have appeared under different banners: the “humanization of the text” (Arkoun); the call to return to the Islam of Makkah as the original foundation of the faith (Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ṭāhā); contextualizing the text historically and emphasizing the purpose of punishments rather than the punishments themselves (Naṣr Abū Zayd); rearranging the sources of legislation by placing *ijtihād* at the forefront to rationalize Islam (Ḥasan Ḥanafī); and redefining Islam as a religion and a nation rather than a religion and a state (Gamal al-Bannā).

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<sup>(775)</sup> *The Prophetic Sunnah between the Scholars of Fiqh and the Scholars of Ḥadīth*.

<sup>(776)</sup> Al-Qaraḍāwī faced harsh insults from the Wahhābīs and others, who implicitly accused him of unbelief. One of the famous books in response to him is *Iskat al-Kalb al-'Awī* [Silencing the Howling Dog, Yūsuf ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qaraḍāwī], by Shaykh Muqbil ibn Ḥādī al-Wadā'i, the Shaykh of the Wahhābin Yemen.

These diverse initiatives represent partial attempts to transcend Islamic centralism. Yet, they fail to generate a popular movement or resonate with ordinary Muslims, largely because they employ complex language accessible only to academics and intellectual elites. An exception is the effort of Aḥmad Sobḥī Maṣṣūr, who makes a serious and distinctive attempt to articulate a democratic, secular, and progressive vision of Islam.<sup>(777)</sup>

It is evident that Islamic discourse is undergoing a profound crisis. The traditional texts no longer adequately address the needs of modern societies, and Islamic centralism—like other forms of centralism—has become increasingly incompatible with the accelerating processes of globalization. In an effort to adapt, some of Islam’s most progressive thinkers undertake extensive endeavors to move beyond the textual tradition while simultaneously retaining it. Their approach involves desacralizing the “religion of Truth,” yet continuing to regard it as such, and transforming what is absolute into relative while still preserving its absoluteness. In essence, their aim is to neutralize or regulate the absolute.

In fact, these bold attempts have yet to achieve a significant shift in the face of traditional Islamic thought, which rests upon a more cohesive intellectual framework and enjoys both broad popular resonance and substantial institutional support. Such an imbalance suggests that overcoming this stagnation requires a more radical and profound critique of foundational premises. Among the factors contributing to the challenges faced by modernists are the strained attempts to impose absolute flexibility on the text, seeking to update it beyond its linguistic or historical capacity. A case in point is Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd’s attempt to reconcile evolutionary theory with the Qur’ānic text<sup>(778)</sup>—an interpretative approach easily contested by specialists and laypeople alike.

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<sup>(777)</sup> The author analyzes Ṣubḥī Maṣṣūr’s thought in a study titled *Views of Qur'anists*.

<sup>(778)</sup> *The Qur’ān: Toward a Contemporary Understanding*.

7. For Islamic thought to become capable of openness and acceptance of the Other, it is essential to subject the textual corpus to historical interpretation. Furthermore, juridical reasoning must abandon its claim of monopolizing absolute truth or presupposing that religious conscience is a universal innate instinct. This entails opening new horizons of *ijtihād* and epistemic critique to encompass the textual foundations themselves, thereby preparing the ground for the acceptance of external and critical readings by non-Muslims, and acknowledging their right to articulate their visions and perspectives.

Such a radical transformation necessarily requires refraining from classifying dissenters within the category of unbelief, and ending the binary division of humanity based on doctrinal affiliation.

8. At this point, the discussion returns to the question introduced at the outset of this book by the majority of Muslims: Why do they hate us?

The perception that non-Muslims are inherently hostile toward Islam arises from the centralist framework itself, which defines unbelief as *al-jāhiliyyah* and positions Muslims and non-Muslims as adversaries. This doctrinal stance, rather than empirical reality, explains the persistence of the claim that the Other is antagonistic.

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In conclusion, transcending the impasse of Islamic centrality is not a mere intellectual luxury, but rather an existential necessity imposed by the age. While traditional discourse will, as usual, tend to dismiss such critique as pessimistic or exaggerated, the genuine response lies not in polemics, but in demonstrating the capacity for openness: through an unequivocal affirmation of human equality,

the dismantling of the structures of excommunication, and the recognition of the legitimacy of ideological and non-religious pluralism as authentic human choices.

Today, the responsibility rests upon critical reason to unveil what remains concealed within this heritage, just as Western thinkers deconstructed their own Eurocentrism and subjected it to rigorous critique. Liberating humanity from the constraints of religious centrality, and establishing the values of global citizenship and individual rights—including the right to believe or to renounce belief—is the sole path to ending the state of conflict with the world, and to moving from the prison of the “saved sect” into the vast horizon of universal humanity.

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