

THE REPUBLICAN BROTHERS

Towards

THE

SECOND

MESSAGE OF

ISLAM

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**The Second Message
of Islam**

First Edition

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DEDICATION

To All Humanity on the advent of Man,

Whose Religion is Humanism

Introduction

It is obvious that there is an increasing interest on the part of non-Muslims in Islam and in Islam's role in the modern world. Muslims also are rethinking their relationship to their religion in hope of bringing forth fundamental, socio-economic reform.

Unfortunately, however, much of the non-Muslim interest in Islam is wrongly motivated, while many Muslim expectations are misconceived. For the non-Muslim, Islam is simply the faith of the few hundred million Muslims, some of whom are living in the oil-rich, strategically located Middle Eastern region. This is indeed a poor and questionable basis for interest in Islam since it implies and perpetuates subordination, exploitation and manipulation of Muslims and their land by the rich and developed nations of the world. In this view Islam is allocated importance primarily in terms of the interests of the materially advanced and rich nations of the world.

Again, Islam should not be studied and appreciated merely as an interesting phenomenon, or as a vague and bizarre ideology espoused by militant, reactionary, and irrational revolutions, whether the one experienced in Iran, or as manifested in such fanatical, terroristic, organisations as represented by the Muslim Brothers. Neither of these movements is truly representative of Islam. They are in fact, distorted and confused expressions of the desire for socio-economic reform by means of an Islamic revival – a legitimate desire felt by the vast masses of Muslims all over the world. But these fanatical, terroristic, movements tend to abuse religious principles and to exploit religious feelings in order to serve the selfish and short-sighted political ambitions of their leaders.

A correct perspective for the understanding of Islam today must instead be sought in the capacity of Islam to provide practical and rational answers to pressing modern socio-economic and political problems. Islam must be introduced and discussed, not simply as a faith or an historical body of jurisprudence, but as a modern and living ideology capable of convincing Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It must also be available for immediate and effective implementation in the technologically developed and politically conscious, but thoroughly unstable world of today. Islam is a means for achieving peace within the individual, and peace between individuals and nations.

Such a conception of Islam, however, is not available in the present body of traditional Islamic jurisprudence. In fact, some aspects of traditional Sharia Islamia (Islamic Law), are clearly inconsistent with modern constitutional government, and hence are incapable of meeting the criteria set forth above. Such principles, as traditionally set forth, were originally designed for transitional application under socio-economic conditions totally different from those prevailing today.

Introducing Islam as a modern ideology, capable of emancipating humankind from all fear, and establishing genuine and lasting peace within the individual and throughout his or her social and natural environment, requires the evolution of Sharia Islamia. This involves an authoritative legislative process wherein new rules and principles are developed from original sources, namely the Quran, and from the example of the Prophet Mohamed, (Salla Allahu allehi wa salam). Such an evolution of Sharia is not a secular process, but a religious act performed by a person who has the spiritual authority to accomplish it.

A proper appreciation of Islam today necessitates that we disassociate it from the extremist and terroristic tendencies manifested by some Muslims. In order to explain what we believe to be Islam, we must also expose and denounce the alien and illegitimate manifestations parading in its name.

The State of Muslims Today

Anyone addressing himself to the question of fundamental reform through Islam must begin by reviewing current conceptions of Islam and the theory and practice of contemporary Islamic movements and organisations. Such a review is essential in preparing the reader to understand the exposition of the Republican Brothers. (also called The New Islamic Mission)

The most obvious fact about Islam today is its absence from the public and private lives of Muslims. Individual Muslims, for the most part, pay lip service to the teachings of Islam while practicing almost none of these teachings in their daily lives. Nor does Islam have any effect on their socio-political systems. Thus, whatever conception of Islam might be inferred from the present state of Muslims is misleading and erroneous.

More specifically, we need to disassociate Islam from regimes and movements that claim to be Islamic, such as those in Saudi Arabia and Iran, and such groups as the Muslim Brothers. All of them contravene the basic principles of the Sharia Islamia which they purport to apply.

To take a few broad examples, there is indeed no such thing as a hereditary monarchy in Islam although this practice is followed in Saudi Arabia. The so-called Islamic revolution in Iran also contravenes fundamental rules of Sharia Islamia by denying rules of natural justice and fair trial in their persecution of supporters of the Shah's regime. It also

contravenes Sharia through the indiscriminate killing of political opponents and the denial of the civil and political rights of religious and ethnic minorities. The list is endless. The fundamental Shi'aa principle concerning the absolute divine powers of the Imams and their representatives is the most flagrant contradiction of Sharia. As for the Muslim Brothers, their practice of political terrorism and cowardly assassination of political rivals negates everything Islam stands for.

In our view, these regimes and movements are doomed to failure even if they genuinely and consistently observe all the principles of traditional Sharia. But we still find their failure to comply with those principles extremely significant. They must be exposed and confronted with their fraud and the absurdity of their position in order to convince them of the need for the evolution of Sharia.

***Jihad* is a Transitional Measure**

At the core of all the distorted and confused theories, and the chaotic, irresponsible, practices of the so-called Islamic fundamentalists, is their failure to appreciate that some principles of traditional Sharia were designed merely to serve a transitional purpose. Having served their purpose, they must be repealed and replaced by more appropriate and permanent principles. Any attempts to delay or frustrate that process, by insisting upon the implementation of outdated and unsuitable principles are futile and counter-productive. We can illustrate this with reference to the principle of compulsory conversion to Islam which has been associated with the concept of Jihad.

It is an historical fact that Islam used compulsion in spreading to many parts of the world. However, Islam primarily took root and gained permanence not through compulsion but through persuasion and its ability to provide a practical and satisfying religion. But the concept of Jihad, and the principle of compulsory conversion derived from it are no longer suitable for modern conditions. As such, they must be repealed. The current insistence on the part of Muslim fundamentalists that the same outmoded concept is to be employed today is not only extremely dangerous but is contrary to Islam.

The concept of compulsory, even violent, conversion is the motivating force behind many fundamentalist movements. In Sudan, for example, there have been numerous examples of sectarian religious violence. The Ansar followers of El Mahdi, currently led by Saddig El Mahdi, and the Muslim Brothers, are active proponents of this tradition. They have consistently abused the political process and have attempted to terrorise their political rivals in pursuit of their goals. The violent insurgency of 1970 in Omdurman and Abba and the aborted foreign-backed invasion of 1976, are only recent examples. There is also the bloody, terroristic, history of the Muslim Brothers at the University of Khartoum which was also manifested in the tragic events of March 1980 on its campus. Other incidents of fanatical religious violence in Sudan include the Amstry incident of 1977, where a small group of religious fanatics attacked an isolated police station near the country's western border, and brutally murdered its occupants in an attempt to initiate an armed religious revolt. Similar incidents can break out at any time in Sudan because such feelings and attitudes are cultivated by the Muslim Brothers and other fanatical religious groups.

If one crosses the border into Egypt, one finds similar movements and incidents. There was the Takfeer and Hijra group that kidnapped and murdered a government minister, Sheikh Al Zahabi, in 1978. The Muslim Brothers are also extremely active in exacerbating sectarian tension and violence between Egyptian Muslims and Coptic Christians as witnessed by events in Al Daawa. (The Muslim Brothers Magazine, June 1980, pages 22-23).

Syria is also suffering from the terroristic activities of the Muslim Brothers who seem to believe that the end justifies any cowardly and unIslamic means. The massacre at the Army Cadets Academy and numerous assassinations of school teachers and others who fail to comply with their commands provide typical examples of their behaviour. (News Bulletin Al Natheer, March 1980, pages 6, 8 and 9).

In addition to these examples from Sudan, Egypt and Syria, similar instances can be found in almost every Muslim country. All of these acts of terrorism have been perpetrated in the name of Islam in violation of its most sacred tenets. All such acts are the result of a distorted and confused understanding of the basic principles of Islam and lack even the good faith which could otherwise merit a degree of sympathy for the culprits. Since all of these activities contravene fundamental principles of traditional Sharia Islamia itself, they must be categorically denounced and condemned by every Muslim. Such anarchic, futile, brutalities not only fail, inasmuch as compulsion and terrorism can never achieve lasting constructive socio-political change, but they are also counterproductive and damaging to the cause of religious revival. They may, however, have a positive aspect in that they do reflect the desperate need for fundamental, social-political, change throughout the Islamic world. They

also attract attention and generate discussion concerning Islam. This may eventually provide the opportunity for the emergence of a valid, modern Islamic ideology.

A Critique of Islamic Fundamentalists

All fanatical religious movements share the same confused and distorted understanding of Islamic principles and tend to apply them out of context and without proper safeguards. Their confused understanding of Jihad, for example, leads them into applying it out of context and without its traditional, well-established safeguards. Thus, they utilize Jihad to justify their terroristic, clandestine, activities within an established political order, and against other Muslims. Jihad, however, can only be invoked against non-Muslim in open and fair battle with prior warning. Secret assassination and sabotage can never be justified in terms of Jihad. But Jihad itself, in the sense of compulsory conversion of others to Islam has been repealed and is no longer operative. The only legitimate means of conversion that is now available is peaceful conversion.

Lack of insight concerning their own condition is a common feature of all fanatical, Islamic, movements and is reflected in claims of moral superiority and natural guardianship over others who happen to disagree with them. They believe that they alone know what is good for everybody and propose, if necessary, to force others into conformity.

Such conceit and arrogance is cultivated as a result of the total absence of moral education and self-criticism among the leadership of these movements. They somehow succeed in convincing themselves of their natural infallibility and inherent moral superiority. They believe that

everything wrong in the world is the fault of evil men who must be told what to do. Anyone who fails to comply with their commands is to be killed for the good of mankind.

It is therefore obvious that in dealing with these movements and organisations we are not dealing with rational human beings. Rather, it is a psychotic condition which must be addressed. As such, it can be extremely dangerous and destructive if not handled properly. The only proper response must be an absolute insistence upon the rule of law and the maintenance of all the rights and liberties of men and women, regardless of race, sex, religion or creed. These fanatical movements must also be exposed and confronted with enlightened Islamic thought.

To finish this critique on a hopeful and constructive note, we observe that these fanatical, reactionary, movements are not representative of Islam at all. Although Islam today lies dormant in the Quran, it is possible to evolve new rules of Sharia to meet present needs. (See Republican Brothers brochures Introduction to the Second Message of Islam and The Religion of Man.)

It may be legitimate to enquire, at this stage, why Islam at all? Why bother to evolve traditional Sharia, a proposition which is so vigorously opposed by Muslims themselves? Why should we seek an Islamic ideology rather than embrace the readily available secular ideologies?

The answer to this logical line of intellectual questioning, is simply that none of these secular ideologies are capable of providing the right formula for the satisfaction of our material, moral, and spiritual needs. Each of them purports to satisfy one at the expense of the others. Moreover, as we

shall see in the following critique, they fail even in achieving their purported objectives.

The Available Human Alternatives

The available human ideologies may be classified under two main headings: the capitalist, liberal democracies on the one hand and the Marxist, totalitarian regimes on the other. In terms of historical development, the liberal democracies of today have evolved in the context of a capitalistic economy. Capitalism, as an advanced economic order, has achieved a degree of improvement in the material conditions of man. But it remains bedevilled by its glaring inequalities and unfairness in the distribution of wealth and power, notwithstanding claims of democracy and liberty for the individual. Economic need humiliates and degrades; inequality breeds bitterness and hatred.

Marxism, consequently, emerged with its unrelenting drive for economic equality and its overwhelming appeal to the deprived and frustrated masses. But as a reaction to the liberal individualistic tradition, it went to the other extreme, and created an oppressive totalitarian state. Thus, in purporting to achieve economic equality, Marxism defeats the purpose of that equality, namely, the dignity and liberty of the individual.

This contrast sums up the whole history of human philosophy. The dilemma has always been how to achieve the right balance between the apparently conflicting interests of the individual, with those of society. Mankind has never been able to achieve that balance. In earlier societies the interest of the individual was sacrificed for that of society. More recently, the liberal tradition has favoured the individual and his liberty. But

it was an empty and meaningless victory. Humans became free theoretically but they were economically and emotionally constrained. Marxism came to restore the advantage to society but at the same time it established the totalitarian state where humans lost their individuality and personal liberty in exchange for economic equality. Even that actuality turned out to be equality in poverty and hardship inasmuch as Marxism destroyed the capitalistic incentive for high productivity without providing an adequate alternative.

It is true that in response to the Marxist challenge, liberal democracies have modified their economic policies in order to dissipate the anger and frustration of the working classes. That was done primarily through concessions to the trade union movement. It is also true that Marxist totalitarian regimes have yielded under the pressure of world opinion, and in response to their own economic interests, by granting a few minor concessions to their subjects in terms of human rights. But both ideologies retain their essential character and inherent contradictions. Hence, they remain mutually irreconcilable. Each remains unable to resolve the fundamental problems facing mankind.

This means that the ideological conflict continues. Peaceful co-existence and so-called (*détente*) are merely tension-reducing devices unable to resolve the underlying causes of conflict. It must be realised, however, that if the terms of this conflict remain in their present relative position, Marxism will prevail because it is the more theoretical, ruthless and unrelenting. There is no way out of this awful prospect except by having an immediate armed confrontation, which will be the end of all civilization, or finding a third alternative ideology. The capitalist liberal democracies of the world, despite their shortcomings, may be able to maintain the balance and

negate the Marxist threat long enough to allow us to find such an alternative.

Islam an Alternative

In view of the consistent failure of human ideology to find the proper balance between the interests of the individual and those of society, we propose an alternative ideology, namely, Islam. But this is not the traditional, partisan, dogmatic call to Islam as a religion opposed to other religions. It is not even a call to religion as opposed to secular thinking. Our conception of Islam embraces other religions and secular socio-political theories, in that it accepts and provides for the realisation of the essence of the entire body of religious and human thinking.

This unifying quality may be called the Islamic trinity joining both ends of a spectrum into one medium stream that contains the essence of both extremes. This process operates between Judaism and Christianity, as well as between liberal democracy and Marxism.

Judaism, at one end, teaches us to take an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. Christianity, at the other end, advocates lofty, idealistic, notions about loving one's neighbour and tolerating hurt and injury. Islam is the bridge between the two extreme positions, in that it provides for a legal order, as in Judaism, while at the same time it sets forth the techniques necessary to achieve the lofty ideals of Christianity. This is possible through the integration of legal obligation and moral education which will be explained.

Concerning liberal democracy and Marxism, the former defeats its purpose by maintaining a capitalist economy, while the latter defeats its

purpose by establishing a totalitarian, undemocratic political order. Islam partakes of the two providing for a socialist and democratic political order by employing the force of personal morality within a framework of legal obligation. Both socialism and democracy are private behavioural patterns as well as legal limitations. Neither of the two facets is capable of maintaining a socialist democratic system, but the two combined can accomplish it. Those who abide by the moral precepts would find support and encouragement in the legal order, while those who lack the moral commitment would be bound by the legal obligations. The process of integration starts at the very base of the socio-economic order, and continues on to infinity in the subtleties of human behaviour and social relationships.

A Logical Proposition

Islam is thus recommended, not because it happens to be our faith, but because it is in fact the most scientific and effective methodology for achieving the object of all human endeavour, namely, absolute individual freedom. This freedom is freedom from fear in whatever shape or form, be it fear of economic need, loss of liberty or fear from disease, death and the unknown. Here is a method that may be adopted by everybody in order to defeat fear while attaining freedom.

This method consists of two phases or stages, firstly, internal moral discipline which is reflected and exercised in one's dealings with others in everyday life. That, in turn, is reflected in further and deeper moral discipline which is treated and developed in dealings with others.

Secondly, it involves the establishment of a legal order setting forth obligations as minimum standards of behaviour required for an orderly, civilised human society. Everybody is free to do, or refrain from doing, as he or she wishes so long as that freedom does not interfere with the rights and freedoms of others.

Worship practices of Muslims, Christian and Jews, or the lack of any worship practice or even the lack of faith in the very existence of Allah, or God, is the business of the particular individual and not the concern of anyone else. What is the concern of other people, however, is that such an individual abides by the law of the land and respects the rights and liberties of others.

We believe that all of existence is contained within the individual human being. The entire material world is nothing but manifestations of the absolute truth held within every single one of us. The human being is the end behind all means and the means to all ends, even if he or she is a lunatic or an imbecile. This absolute truth held within each individual human being must be revealed to them, that is to say, each person must become truly and fully aware of it, and seek to live up to its standards until he or she becomes its personification.

The Technique Recommended

According to Islam, absolute truth is revealed to each individual through a process of recall and remembrance of the state of excellence which man had attained before the fall. Human development, as seen through physical science, is generally known as evolution. Knowledge of this previous state of excellence and the process of recall is the field of

metaphysical science. We may also call it moral education, which involves the process of interaction between inner and outer practices and processes. Here is a brief, simplified outline of the process of moral education.

The revelation of the “absolute truth”, in other words, the recall of the pre-existing state of excellence, starts with very simple devices to activate and develop the intellect, and promote the power of independent, unbiased, rational reasoning. The source of all evil and distortion is fear – fear of need, disease, fear of other human beings, death and the unknown that follows. The process of recall, therefore, attacks fear in all its forms and shades. On the intellectual level it provides a rational, consistent explanation of the universe and its relationships, while on the material level it establishes a socialist, democratic system that helps the self to appreciate and fulfil one’s relationship to the universe. Intellectual understanding is only one step in the right direction. There remains the concrete realisation of that understanding and knowledge in terms of actual behavior. One starts with the theoretical knowledge that one need not fear anything except Allah. Then one must proceed to realise this theoretical knowledge by actually being unafraid of anything but Allah. Finally, he or she will come to realise that Allah is to be loved and trusted rather than feared, that is when one is said to be free from fear. Thus, we are not only concerned with teaching the mind, but also with teaching the self, in other words, the body, not to be afraid.

Now, what is it that we fear, and why? We fear pain, we fear the loss of pleasure, and above all we fear death and the unknown that lies beyond. Let us then deal with these sources of fear in a rational intelligent manner.

Pain and loss of pleasure are caused by the absence of things upon which we depend and enjoy. If we reduce our dependencies we consequently reduce our sources of pain and the causes of the loss of pleasure. To that extent we become free from that type of fear. Yet, no matter how much we reduce our dependencies, we shall remain dependent upon a few basic essentials. With respect to these, freedom from fear comes partially from a proper and effective organisation of apparent causes and effects, but ultimately from the knowledge that the ultimate provider is Allah the Infinitely Able and Generous Creator.

To attain and perfect that knowledge, we need to heighten our awareness and clarify our vision through intelligent and purposeful worship practices. We must also learn to break the grip of habit on our thinking and behaviour. We must think and rationalise whatever we do, or refrain from doing, to the most minute details. This would imply that we must not do in private what we are not prepared to do and defend in public.

The behaviour of the other is yet another source of fear. We are afraid that they may hurt us. But we are the other; each of us is an other in the eyes of the next person. So others will refrain from hurting us if and when we refrain from hurting them. But that is not achieved simply by wishing it. It can only be achieved after a long process of moral education and self-discipline. It requires sharpness of the intellect to appreciate all shades and degrees by which others can be hurt; indeed it requires the strengthening of one's will power to abstain from hurting others. These are just a few examples of the Republican Brothers' thinking on the question.

Conclusion

The ultimate test is our relationship with death and the unknown. Philosophies and ideologies may debate and argue about their capabilities and compete for popular acceptance on questions of material existence, but how do they stand in relation to death and the life beyond?

We believe that we have the technique for attaining absolute individual freedom in this life. In fact, we view both lives as a continuous process. We provide a social, democratic, legal order that allows the individual to concentrate on his or her personal apprehensions and conflicts and resolve them through the process of moral education outlined above. Each individual continues the same processes in the next life.

In this inner activity of moral education, including interaction with others, we recommend the path of the Prophet Mohammed, (Salla Allahu allehi wa salam) as the safest and most direct route. As it has already been stated, there is no compulsion to follow this or any other technique or religion. We only express a genuine and honest opinion, developed from our own personal experience.

Finally, it must be observed that ours is not a conciliatory ideology or religion, although it does have the quality of reconciliation, a beautiful quality indeed. This, however, is an authoritative direct message. It comes from a person who knows what he is doing and how to do it, Ustadh Mahmoud Mohamed Taha.

Ustadh Mahmoud Mohamed Taha teaches that one should not be concerned with the salvation of others except insofar as it is part of one's own salvation. Once one is concerned with one's own salvation, he or she

should seek and identify the truth, and stand by it, regardless of what others do. Allah will give victory to the truth; our duty is to uphold it within ourselves.