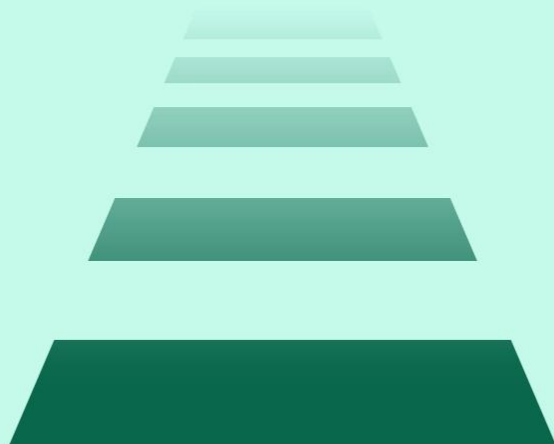


Mahmoud Muhammad Taha

# ISLAM



Third Edition - May 1977

Mahmoud Muhammad Taha

Presents

# **ISLAM**

Third Edition

May 1977 AD / Jumada al-Awwal 1397 AH

# Dedication

To Humanity

## Preface to the Second Edition

This book was first published in March 1960, during a time when our people were under the burden of "military rule." May God spare them from ever recalling it with any fondness, and may He remove from all nations still afflicted by similar regimes the dark cloud of their tyranny and ignorance.

The book was released shortly after the incident of expelling three Republican students<sup>1</sup> from the Islamic Institute and the severe distortion of Republican Ideology that accompanied their expulsion. We attempted to correct this distortion but were denied opportunities to publish or deliver lectures in clubs and educational institutions.

The first edition of this book was highly condensed and compact - compressed to its utmost limits. Nevertheless, it remains the "mother book" of the Republican Party. It contains everything we want to say about Islam, leaving nothing new to add except further elaboration and expansion of what has been presented concisely.

Now that the first edition has been out of print for quite some time, we present this second edition without making any changes, except for adding subheadings to assist the reader. These headings serve as a guide, making it easier to follow the intricate meanings without fatigue or boredom.

---

<sup>1</sup> Members of The New Islamic Mission

May God alone grant that this book heralds the return of Islam and serves as a pillar for its revival. He is indeed All-Hearing and All-Responsive.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

"Today I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as your religion."

- The Almighty has spoken the truth

## **Preface to the First Edition**

### **Come to a Common Word**

The chaos we witness in the world today stems from many reasons, all of which trace back to a single fundamental cause: the gap between the advancement of experimental science and the backwardness of human morality.

Modern experimental science has reduced the diverse manifestations of matter that fill the universe to a single origin. Unless human morality rises to the same level and also converges into a single origin, the harmony between the natural environment and human life will remain incomplete. Otherwise, the present disorder will continue to threaten human existence on this planet, initially with weakness and inadequacy, and ultimately with extinction and obliteration.

### **Material Science**

To understand experimental science, listen to the words of the distinguished Arab scientist, Dr. Ahmed Zaki, in his book *With God in the Sky*, contained in the chapter entitled *If the Universe Were to Unravel*:

"Let us return to the universe. Herein listed are the elements of the Earth and its compounds, which constitute everything found within it. Its Creator built it from these three building blocks: electrons, protons, and neutrons.

We discussed the planets and said that their elements are the same as those of the Earth.

We discussed the stars and said that their elements are the same as those of the Earth - whether they are stars in our galaxy, the Milky Way, or stars in galaxies so distant that light traveling towards them would take hundreds of millions of years to reach [the earth].

Thus, the entire universe consists of elements among these ninety [elements].

Thus, the entire universe is made up of those three building blocks.

If we were to command the Earth to unravel: command the bodies of humans, animals, plants, and rocks on this Earth; the rocks of other planets; and every gas of the sun and every gas of all the stars, whether near or far - in summary, if we commanded everything in existence to dissolve - it would result in three enormous heaps of: electrons, protons, and neutrons. Is there any meaning of unity more profound than this? And we say three building blocks, but are they really three? At the same time that matter is reduced to three building blocks, scientists are reducing all "forces" to a single origin: light, heat, X-rays, radio waves, gamma rays, and every type of radiation. All of these are merely different manifestations of a single force, which is electromagnetic force. They all travel at the same speed, differing only in their wavelengths.

Matter is these three building blocks, and the forces are interconnected waves.

Then Einstein comes along with his Special Theory of Relativity and equates matter with forces.

He states that matter and forces are one and the same. Experiments validated his claim, and a final experiment confirmed it in a resounding manner: the splitting of the atom in the uranium bomb.

Matter and forces are, therefore, one and the same.

What remains of the entities in this universe?

What remains are gravity - the bond that unites the entire universe - space, and time. Einstein attempts to unify them and bind them together.

In his General Theory of Relativity, he combines space and time, making them a continuous, inseparable entity. In his new theory, the Unified Field Theory, Einstein seeks to prove that electromagnetic forces - manifested in light, heat, and all forms of radiation - are the same as gravitational forces.

And when I say “the same,” I do not mean “identical,” but rather that in the depths of natural reality, they are interconnected. Einstein said: *‘The theoretical spirit of the world cannot tolerate the existence of two forms of forces that do not converge in the unified existence: one form for gravitational forces and another for electromagnetic forces.’*

Thus, complexity dissolves, intricacy simplifies, and the truths concealed behind various phenomena begin to resemble and align, all converging into one stream - the grand unity that pervades the entire universe. But has humanity fully grasped this?

Humanity still wonders: What lies beyond all this?

Even if humans find answers to some of the “how” questions, they continue to ask “why.” And they do so with intellectual apprehension and religious reverence. Einstein said: *‘The most profound and beautiful*

*emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the core of all true science. Anyone who cannot feel this wonder is as good as dead. It is a mystery that we cannot penetrate, an obscurity whose light we cannot illuminate. Yet, we sense that behind it lies something of utmost wisdom and supreme beauty - a wisdom and beauty that our limited minds can only comprehend in their rudimentary forms. This awareness of wisdom and this perception of beauty, in all its majesty, constitutes the essence of worship.'*

Einstein, the greatest scientist of our age, someone who had every reason to reject belief if science indeed called for disbelief, and who had every reason to overlook mentioning God - much like many Western scientists and their imitators in the East [have done] - said: *'The religious feeling of the scientist investigating the universe is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research.'*

And he added: *'My religion is the humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God.'*

Thus concludes the words of the esteemed scientist, Dr. Ahmed Zaki.

## **Physics as a Path to Metaphysics**

From the preceding discussion, you can observe how experimental science reduces diverse phenomena to a single origin and how it compelled one of our greatest contemporary scientists, Einstein, to articulate that immortal statement we quoted at the conclusion of Dr. Ahmed Zaki's excerpt. Experimental science does not merely reveal the unity of the tangible world but goes further, showing us that the physical

world, if thoroughly examined, leads us to the threshold of a non-physical, intangible realm. At this threshold, we stand in awe and reverence, seeking means beyond material experimental science to guide us through the mysteries of the sacred valley that lies beyond the material world.

Re-read Einstein's immortal words, which experimental science itself inspired! Pay special attention to his statement: "It is my deep emotional conviction of the presence of a superior, reasoning power that reveals itself in the incomprehensible universe."

The material world is akin to a shadow of the spiritual world - or, more precisely, matter is spirit in a state of vibration perceivable by our senses, and spirit is matter in a state of vibration imperceptible to our senses. The difference between the material world and the spiritual world, therefore, lies in degree, not in kind. This insight opens the door to unity - the unity of all worlds.

When material experimental science culminates in reducing all the phenomena of the physical universe to a single essence, *energy*, spiritual experimental science emerges, more captivatingly, to guide us through the paths of the sacred valley that lies beyond matter. Through continuous research and inquiry in spiritual experimental science, we might investigate whether human moral phenomena can also be traced back to a single origin, just as material phenomena were traced back to energy. Such an achievement would establish harmony and alignment between human behavior and the material environment, thereby resolving present anxieties and ushering in peace on Earth.

## **Religion and Science Are Twins**

Spiritual experimental science is not new; it is as ancient as material science. Indeed, they are twins born at the same time and grow-up

together. From the earliest days, humans faced the overwhelming forces of the material universe with a mixture of fear and reverence.

As for the forces that instilled in him a slight fear and which he was able to confront, they led him to material experimental science. But the forces that overwhelmed him with awe and consumed him with their majesty - he sought to draw near to them, flattered them, and through that, they led him to spiritual experimental science. Today, we refer to these two twins as *science* and *religion*.

While science has made extraordinary leaps forward in modern times, religion has lagged behind, resulting in an imbalance that has manifested in the anxiety and turmoil described earlier. Restoring this balance requires religion to take an equally bold leap. Religion must bring the principles of human morality back to their original foundation, just as material science has traced the manifestations of the physical universe back to their original essence.

## **An Atomic Understanding of Religion for the Atomic Age**

Indeed, spiritual experimental science - *religion* - is not new, but it will return anew. The atomic age demands an atomic understanding of religion - a precise understanding that penetrates to the core of religion, unveiling its nucleus and unleashing its energy in a way that resounds louder than the detonation of physical atomic nuclei.

Religion has accompanied humanity's infancy through the depths of history with patience and compassion. It accommodated humanity's illusions and falsehoods, gently transitioning it from one coarse illusion to a more subtle one, and from one crude falsehood to a more refined one, step by step, until humanity outgrew its infancy.

Today, humanity stands in the tumultuous stage of adolescence, looking forward to adulthood and maturity. Religion now has a new role: to guide humanity through this anxious, uncertain, and turbulent phase of adolescence to usher it into the era of adulthood and completeness.

Since the difference between a child and an adult is vast, where the adult assumes responsibility for their actions while the child seeks protection from them, religion must now cease to rely on obscurities or demand blind submission as it did during the infancy of human intellect. Instead, religion must offer a comprehensive framework for life - one that speaks to the intellect, respects it, and seeks to convince it of the value of practicing this framework in the daily intricacies of life.

## **Human Will as the Substance of Religion**

The substance of spiritual experimental science - *religion* - is also energy, but in this case, it is *human will*. Is this will *free* or *determined* like material energy?

Traditionally, when discussing religion, we speak of monotheistic faiths versus polytheistic idolatries. The truth is that throughout all ages, humanity has worshipped nothing other than its own will. This explains why idols have always been sculpted in human form.

Even today, in the highest form of monotheism - Islam - the most devout often unknowingly worship another god besides Allah: their own human will. They remain unaware of this reality, believing they are acting righteously, while often mocking followers of other religions. If they became aware of their condition, they would focus on addressing their own deficiencies rather than deriding others.

The eminent natural scientist, Einstein, stood perplexed at the threshold of the dilemma of determinism and free will. As Dr. Ahmed Zaki recounts, Einstein remarked:

"My religion is a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit that reveals itself in the slight details we can perceive with our frail and feeble minds. It is my deep emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power that reveals itself in the incomprehensible universe. This conviction constitutes my concept of God."

Through our spiritual experimental science, we begin where this distinguished scientist ended with his material experimental science.

It is evident that Einstein affirmed determinism when he said: "It is my deep emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power that reveals itself in the incomprehensible universe." Yet, he also silently questioned: What is this superior reasoning power? and What is the extent of its dominion?

We believe that answering these two questions will also resolve the issue of determinism and free will. By doing so, we can trace human moral phenomena back to a single origin, just as material phenomena have been previously traced back to their singular origin.

We have stated that material experimental science and spiritual experimental science are twins, born on the same day, advancing through life together - sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord, but always in collaboration.

The substance of material experimental science is the material universe, although human will occasionally intervenes within it. Its tools are mathematical equations and laboratory experiments. The substance of

spiritual experimental science encompasses both the material universe and human will, using the Qur'an as its guide and worship practices - both in solitude and in public - as its tools.

Thus, the religion I referred to at the beginning of this discussion is *Islam*.

I must acknowledge that I started with faith, being born to Muslim parents. However, my faith was not blind or fanatical, nor did it skew the outcomes of my experiences. With God's guidance, I was able to walk with open eyes toward conclusions that solidified my initial faith and transformed it into certainty.

## **Methods of Spiritual Experimental Science**

A brief word must be said about the methods of religious experimentation. Foremost among them is the Qur'an. People commonly say that the Qur'an is the word of God, but what does that mean? God is unlike us, and His speech is not like ours - produced by sounds from throats that strike the ears. God's speech is creation itself.

The sun rises, sending light and heat. Heat evaporates water, stirs the winds, moves the air, and carries the water vapor in dense clouds to distant lands. Rain then falls, quenching the earth and reviving it after its death, causing plants to sprout and life to thrive in all its diverse forms and shapes.

This is a brief, incomplete, and fragmented depiction of God's speech. The Qur'an is an expression of this speech - or, more accurately, this knowledge - rendered into the molds of Arabic expression.

Many great scholars mistakenly think that the Qur'an is the Arabic language itself, which is a grave error. This misconception has led them to seek the meanings of the Qur'an within the confines of the Arabic

language, causing them to become entangled in the words, all the while believing they are grasping the essence.

Language, by its nature, originated to meet daily needs in physical life. No matter how much it evolves, it remains wholly inadequate to encompass the meaning of God's speech. At its best, language serves as a symbol or indication of divine realities.

The Qur'an itself removes any long-lasting doubts on this matter, declaring: "Alif Lam Meem. That is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah."

Here, the reference of "That" in "That is the Book" points to "Alif Lam Meem" as a symbol.

The second method of spiritual experimentation is achieving the reality of "La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasul Allah" (*There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*).

This begins with trusting and fully believing in Muhammad, followed by meticulously emulating him in his acts of worship and, as much as possible, in his customary practices. This imitation includes everything authentically reported about him - whether from after his prophethood or before it, during his spiritual retreat in the cave of Hira.

I will not elaborate further here, as brevity suffices for now. However, I may revisit this topic in greater depth in another context.

As previously mentioned, the substance of spiritual experimental science consists of the material universe and human will. However, the focus on the material universe is of secondary importance - merely a means - while the primary concern is human will as the ultimate purpose.

This is why the Qur'an states: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"

In religious science, human will is seen as a microcosm of the material universe, encompassing both its visible and unseen aspects.

The more accurate our understanding of the material universe becomes, the more this understanding gives rise to an equally accurate comprehension of our will - or, in other words, our individual identity.

Thus, the Qur'an commands: "Say, 'Observe what is in the heavens and the earth.'"

This directive is given in the same tone as the command: "And establish prayer."

Both are essential pathways for cultivating a deeper understanding of our reality and purpose.

## **What is Human Will?**

The subject of spiritual experimental science is human will. But what is this human will?

Let us postpone a comprehensive answer to this question for the moment and address briefly Einstein's profound inquiry: *What is this superior reasoning power, and what is the extent of its dominion?*

Regarding the first question, the Qur'an informs us that this power is the very essence of God: "Do they not see what things God has created? Their

shadows incline to the right and to the left, prostrating to God while they are humble.” (16: 48)

As for the second question, the Qur’an answers: “Indeed, I have placed my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but that He holds it by its forelock. Indeed, my Lord is on a straight path.” (11: 56)

Thus, God’s dominion over all creation is absolute and comprehensive. Nothing escapes His control - neither the smallest nor the greatest of creatures, in their movements or in their stillness.

### **The Will to Live is Below the Will to Be Free**

However, God directs inanimate objects, gases, and liquids through a direct and compelling command. Then He created life in the realms of plants and animals and guided them through the “Will to Live.” This will operates under the impulse to survive and sustain existence. Its guiding law is to seek pleasure and avoid pain.

At this stage, God’s direction of creation takes place indirectly, through the veil of the “Will to live,” which appears to possess what is termed *spontaneous motion*, since the motives and forces of its movement are inherently embedded within it.

When God elevated life to the level of humanity, He introduced a new element alongside the “will to live”: the “will to be free.” This will is superior to the “Will to live,” differing in degree, not in kind.

God then directed humanity using both the “will to live” and the “will to be free,” making His guidance more subtle and indirect. His intervention in human affairs is so delicate and precise that it leads us to the Great Illusion - the belief that we possess an independent free will, capable of choosing or refraining from action.

Consider this verse, a profound testament to the gentle intervention of God's Eternal Will in shaping our created, temporal will:

"[Remember] when God showed them to you in your dream as few; and if He had shown them to you as many, you [believers] would have faltered and would have disputed in the matter, but God saved [you]. Indeed, He is Knowing of that which is within the hearts. And [remember] when He showed them to you, when you met, as few in your eyes and made you appear as few in their eyes so that God might accomplish a matter already destined. And to God are [all] matters returned." (8: 43-44)

Observe the subtlety and precision of God's Eternal Divine Will as it intervenes in the guidance of our created human will. His intervention is gentle, yet it decisively shapes the course of events, all while allowing us the illusion of autonomous choice.

## **Human Will is the Will to Be Free**

The Prophet sees his enemies as few in a dream, which strengthens his resolve to fight them. Had he seen them as many, he might not have fought. Then, during the confrontation, the believers perceive the disbelievers as few, bolstering their courage to engage, while the disbelievers also see the believers as few, which encourages them to proceed with the battle.

It is God who causes the Prophet to see his enemies as few in his dream, and it is God who causes each side to perceive their opponents as few. All of this happens so that God's decree may be fulfilled - all without disturbing human will or making it feel any external interference in its affairs.

Thus, human will is "the will to be free." It is through this will that humans are distinguished from animals. It is the same will through which Adam

disobeyed his Lord when he was forbidden to eat from the tree: “So they both ate of it, and their shame became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves leaves from Paradise. And Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred.” (20: 121)

God warned His Messenger not to use this deceptive will in a way that would lead him astray, as it did his father, Adam: “So exalted is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth; and, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur’an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, ‘My Lord, increase me in knowledge.’ And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination.” (20: 114-115)

The verse begins with “So exalted is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth” to remind us that God alone possesses perfect will and that human will must submit to and align with His will, willingly and contentedly. It cautions against hastening any matter before its proper time, for as the Prophet said: “God does not hasten the way any of you hastens.”

Human will, or “the will to be free,” is a spark from the Great God Himself. This is referenced in the verse: “[And mention] when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a human being from clay. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down to him in prostration.’” (38: 71-72)

The phrase “proportioned him” refers to the “will to live”, while “breathed into him of My spirit” refers to the “will to be free”.

## **Qur'anic Meanings as Symbolic Representations**

It is essential to recall that the Qur'an is God's speech in the sense that it is a verbal representation of God's act of creating existence in time and space. The verses cited above beautifully illustrate this concept.

The reference to "clay" signifies creation in the stages of inanimate matter - solids, liquids, and gases - directly governed by God's command.

The phrase "proportioned him" signifies creation in the stages of plants and animals, which, as mentioned, are guided by the "will to live" in a semi-direct manner. The phrase "breathed into him of My spirit" signifies the creation of humans, guided by the "will to be free", in an indirect manner.

These concepts are further clarified in the following verses: "He who perfected everything which He created and began the creation of man from clay. Then He made his progeny from an insignificant fluid. Then He proportioned him and breathed into him of His spirit and made for you hearing, vision, and hearts; little are you grateful." (32: 7-9)

This process of creation and existence spans immense epochs of time and space, representing a continuous evolution, one stage leading seamlessly into the next.

In the stages of plants and animals, governed by the will to live, God's direction involves a semi-direct process of struggle - among living beings themselves and between these beings and their natural environment.

**What Does the Will to Be Free Seek?**

The will to be free seeks absolute freedom from all constraints. However, freedom comes with a price: the free being must bear the consequences

of their actions. Without this accountability, freedom would devolve into chaos.

At its most basic level, absolute freedom involves the ability to think as one wishes, to say what one thinks, and to do as one says, provided that one's freedom does not interfere with the freedom of others.

Before human beings appeared on the stage of life, existence was governed solely by the "will to live", whose [governing] law was pleasure - by any means. But with the advent of humans and the operation of the "will to be free", society emerged, along with values that led individuals to sacrifice immediate pleasures for anticipated ones or even to forgo physical pleasures for spiritual ones.

In other words, the legislation of permissible (*halal*) and prohibited (*haram*) - or, more precisely, the custom that forbids certain things and permits others - has come into play in pursuit of a specific goal.

## **The Emergence of Society, Law, and Islam**

In brief, the story begins with the human individual confronting the overwhelming and violent forces of nature. Faced with these challenges, early humans realized the necessity of employing strategies to preserve their lives. They built shelters in trees, mountain tops, and other fortified locations. They fashioned tools from wood and stone, stored food, and eventually arrived at the greatest invention of all - society.

For society to be viable, custom - which is the first law - came into existence. Perhaps the first custom to emerge was the one that regulated sexual relations, prohibiting unions between close relatives such as siblings, parents and children, and others. This custom helped mitigate the jealousy that often tore apart human families when sons reached

adulthood. With this regulation, it became possible for fathers, adult sons, sons-in-law, and married sons to live together peacefully, either in the same home or in neighboring ones, each secure about their relationships.

It is likely that the custom governing respect for personal property arose alongside this regulation, as early societies saw little distinction between ownership of tools, caves, or spouses.

In small communities, harmonious coexistence was essential for collective hunting, defense, and survival against life's challenges. Thus, these two customs - regulating relationships and property rights - became necessary to maintain social cohesion.

This does not mean societies developed uniformly everywhere. However, it is certain that wherever human society arose, it was built around a set of customs and traditions governing interpersonal relations. These customs marked the beginning of the struggle between the "will to live" and the "will to be free".

The individual willingly or unwillingly conceded part of their freedom to society in exchange for protection and assistance. This surrender of freedom was governed by customs and social norms, which required individuals to control their impulses and refrain from actions forbidden by the rules of their community.

The more individuals triumphed over their primal instincts, the stronger their will became. Their pleasure shifted from immediate sensory gratification to pleasures sanctioned by societal norms, or even to intangible or deferred pleasures, such as societal approval, praise, divine reward in this life, or the next.

Early humans were crude and animalistic, requiring severe measures to discipline them. Accordingly, the first social customs were harsh and violent, even to the extent of sacrificing individuals on the altars of communal deities to appease their anger or win their favor.

This intense social discipline forced individuals to control their desires and suppress many impulses disapproved of by their customs or deities. While these early customs strengthened individual willpower and self-control, they also protected societal rights fostering unity and solidarity.

As society progressed, the burdensome restrictions imposed on individual freedoms gradually lessened. This evolution can be seen in later stages within Judaism and Islam, which we will discuss shortly.

From the very beginning of these customs, Islam began to emerge. At this [early] stage, humans began to realize - albeit unconsciously - that their will was not entirely free.

I will not trace Islam's development from these early stages but instead leap directly to its three most recent manifestations: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. I will explore these stages briefly, as this space does not allow for an extensive elaboration.

However, before discussing these stages, it is essential to state that Islam, as a religion, is a single, grand idea encompassing both the beginning and the end. It began with the struggle between the "will to live" and the "will to be free", which I define as the emergence of customs. This idea continues its journey and will reach its culmination on this planet when individuals achieve peace with themselves by surrendering their created will to the eternal Will of God.

To understand Islam as a single, encompassing idea, consider its reflection in the life of an individual. It is well established that the life of an individual mirrors, in a condensed form, the life of the species.

In an individual's life, Islam begins with verbal acknowledgment and physical actions, progressing to conscious submission and contented surrender to the Will and Wisdom of God.

And the first stages of its ascension, after Islam, are faith (*iman*), followed by excellence (*ihsan*) in its three levels, and then Islam once again.

Consider these verses: "The Bedouins say, 'We have believed.' Say, 'You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts.'" (49: 14)

Here, Islam represents the beginning, a stage below faith.

Then consider: "O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]." (3: 102)

Here, Islam represents the ultimate destination.

The believers were called to this ultimate submission, but they could not achieve it. Thus, God lightened the burden upon them: "So fear Allah as much as you are able and listen and obey." (64: 16)

This replaced the command to fear Allah as He deserves with what they could bear and substituted full submission - surrendering their created will to God's Eternal Will - with listening and obedience to the Prophet.

While this is a noble rank, it falls short of the Islam God refers to in: "And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." (3: 85)

True Islam, then, is the culmination of human submission to God's eternal Will, achieved through conscious surrender and contentment.

## **Islam Between Judaism and Christianity**

This grand Islamic idea finds Judaism at its beginning, Christianity at its end, and Islam as a balance between the two. Jesus Christ said to his disciples: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

He then taught them: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek as well."

In this teaching, Christ presents us with the two ends of the spectrum. "*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*" is closer to the nature of an undeveloped human soul, while "*do not resist an evil person*" represents the pinnacle of tolerance, fitting for a soul that has been refined through self-discipline and moral growth.

Islam, as God Almighty informs us, is a middle ground between Judaism and Christianity: "And thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people." (2: 143)

The Qur'an embodies this balance by integrating the characteristics of both Judaism and Christianity. Consider the verse: "And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers." (26: 40)

Compare this with Christ's earlier teaching. The phrase "the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it" parallels the Torah's teaching of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" that Christ quoted.

At the same time, the Qur'an's statement "but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is [due] from Allah" surpasses the tolerance implied by Christ's statement "do not resist an evil person."

However, Christ also spoke at a level that matches the Qur'an's elevated ideal of forgiveness and reconciliation. In another teaching, he said: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you."

This comparison highlights the comprehensive and balanced approach of Islam, which integrates justice and forgiveness while accommodating human nature at different stages of moral and spiritual growth. It combines the rigor of Judaism and the grace of Christianity, creating a path that serves as a middle ground between the two.

## **Islam as Two Messages**

Islam, being a middle ground between two extremes and encompassing the characteristics of both, inherently consists of two aspects: one closer to the beginning and another closer to the end. This duality becomes evident when examining the verse mentioned earlier and its counterparts in the Qur'an.

This phenomenon holds profound implications: Islam, as presented in the Qur'an, is not a single message but two messages. The first message aligns with the beginning, closer to the characteristics of Judaism. The second message aligns with the end, closer to the characteristics of Christianity.

The Prophet Muhammad conveyed both messages through the Qur'an and his way of life among the people. However, he elaborated on the first message in his legislation, while the second message was left largely

summarized - except where the legislation overlaps, particularly in acts of worship, which serves both messages.

The first message begins and ends with the declaration: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." It is akin to a still photograph, capturing a fixed and stable state with minimal evolution.

The second message begins with: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." But it ends with the abstract declaration: "There is no god but Allah." This progression reflects a continuous evolution, akin to a moving film, transitioning from beginning to end.

The abstraction of the testimony ("There is no god but Allah") signifies a deeper understanding of God's position in relation to Muhammad's. It represents the completion of monotheism (*tawheed*). God says to His Prophet: (And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.) (16:44)

A careful examination of this verse reveals how Islam comprises two messages: the beginning of the verse, "And We revealed to you the message," refers to both messages - the first and the second. The middle of the verse, "that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them," highlights the elaboration of the first message, which, as mentioned, is closer to the beginning. The end of the verse, "that they might give thought," points to the aspiration of rising from the first message to the level of the second message. This elevation is achieved through perfecting the worship practices ordained by God for the Muslims - or, more precisely, for the believers (*mu'minin*).

## **The Nation of the First Message is that of the Believers**

When the Qur'an refers to Muslims in the Mosaic stage as "Jews" and Muslims in the Christian stage as "Christians," it also refers to "Muslims" in the stage of Muhammad's first message as "Believers" or "Those who have believed."

Listen to His words: "Say, O People of the Scripture, you are [standing] on nothing until you uphold the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord. And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. So do not grieve over the disbelieving people. Indeed, those who have believed [in Muhammad], those who were Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve." (5: 68-69)

And again: "Indeed, those who have believed [in Muhammad], those who were Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve." (2: 62)

The difference between the stages of Islam - Judaism, Christianity, and Muhammad's two messages - is a matter of degree, reflecting progression from a harsh, crude, and rigid beginning to a refined, intelligent, and gentle end.

This progression is mirrored in the laws revealed between the beginning and the end. It is beyond doubt that legislation - whether related to customs or acts of worship - is an educational methodology that elevates societies and individuals from coarseness and rigidity to gentleness and humanity.

And the more people were hard-hearted and dull in perception, the more they were subjected to strict legislation and burdened with restraints and obligations. Had they fully observed what was required of them, they would not have been burdened in their affairs as Allah Almighty says: "What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing." (4: 147)

However, the need for discipline is what necessitated prohibitions and stringent commands, which were tailored to the needs of the people.

When Islam was in its Judaic stage, and when people were harsh and coarse, Allah said of them: "So for wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them [certain] good foods which had been lawful to them, also for their averting from the way of Allah many [people], and for their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly. And We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful punishment." (4: 160-161)

And He said of them: "And when Moses said unto his people: 'O my people! You have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf [for worship]. So turn in penitence to your Creator, and kill yourselves. That is best for you with your Creator.' Then He accepted your repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of Repentance, the Merciful." (2: 54)

## **People are Relieved as They Grow in Understanding**

When Islam reached the stage of Muhammad's first message, Allah said: "Say, 'I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or spilled blood or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that which is slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever

is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit] - then indeed, your Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (6: 145)

And He said: “O you who have believed, do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful.” (4: 29)

Thus, the prohibitions for Muhammad’s nation were reduced to four, all of which are inherently impure. Moreover, even these four were permitted in cases of necessity, provided one does not transgress or exceed the limits. Meanwhile, the Jews were burdened with strict prohibitions, even concerning good things.

Allah told Muhammad’s nation: “And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful.” (4: 29)

Yet He said to the Jews: “So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves.” (2: 54)

In this context, the command clearly refers to physical killing.

## **Physical Prohibition as a Metaphor for Purifying Behavior**

This progression - from strictness and constraint at the foundational level to leniency and expansiveness at the peak - reaches its culmination when Islam brings people to the stage of Muhammad’s second message, the pinnacle of Islam and nearly its ultimate destination. At this stage, prohibitions shift from tangible, physical matters to moral and behavioral aspects.

The Qur'an says: "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess. Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?' Say, 'They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.' Thus do We detail the verses for a people who know. Say, 'My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know.'" (7: 31-33)

And also: "And leave what is apparent of sin and what is concealed thereof. Indeed, those who earn [blame for] sin will be recompensed for that which they used to commit." (6: 120)

Thus, what is ultimately prohibited is the defect of behavior and the deficiency of character. Tangible prohibitions are merely tools to achieve the prohibition of these moral failings. This approach is in line with the wise principles of education and teaching illustrated in the verse: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (41: 53)

It has been stated earlier that Muhammad's second message leans more toward the end of the spectrum, closer to Christianity. The many verses that emphasize moral failings - examples of which are provided here - are more aligned with Muhammad's second message than with his first. They remind us of Christ's teachings.

In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Christ said: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But

I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

And he also said to his disciples: “Listen and understand: What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

This indicates that physical impurities, such as urination and defecation, do not defile a person. Rather, what defiles a person are the errors of the tongue, as the Qur’an says: “...and that you say about Allah that which you do not know.” (7: 33)

And elsewhere: “...while you were propagating it with your tongues and saying with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, thinking it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous.” (24: 15)

When prohibition withdraws from coarse, physical forms to finer, moral aspects of behavior and character, this withdrawal continues until it reaches the innermost thoughts and the whispers of sin within the heart. As the Qur’an says: “And leave what is apparent of sin and what is concealed thereof.” (6: 120)

Although abandoning apparent sin serves as a means to the ultimate goal of abandoning concealed sin, Muhammad’s first message overlooked the prohibition of concealed sin, as the time was not yet ripe for it.

The Prophet said in a noble hadith: “Indeed, Allah has pardoned my nation for what they think about in their hearts, as long as they do not speak of it or act upon it.” Or as he said.

## Every Meaning Has a Pyramid Form

There is no doubt that every meaning has a tangible structure, or in other words, meanings have a pyramid shape with a base and a peak. The more refined the meaning, the more refined the tangible structure, or one might say, the more refined the base of the hierarchy becomes. Similarly, for every inner state (*sarirah*), there is an outward expression (*sirah*), and as the inner state becomes purer, the outward behavior becomes more upright. Sin begins first in the inner state - one might say in thought - and then manifests in the outward behavior, or the tangible actions among people.

## The Qur'an's Unique Method of Education

The Qur'an employs a unique, reverse method to cleanse people of sin. It starts from the outside and works inward: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth." (41: 53)

This method is of the utmost precision and wisdom and leads those who master it to the correct, direct method, which begins from the inside and works outward. This subtle shift is hinted at in the previous verse: "But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (41: 53)

As the inner state becomes purer, the outward behavior becomes more upright, the circle of prohibitions narrows, and the scope of permissible actions broadens, as emphasized in the verse: "What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing." (4: 147)

If the journey continues until the ultimate goal of complete purity of the inner state and total uprightness of behavior, then all tangible things return to their original state of permissibility. This is illustrated in the verse: “There is no blame upon those who have believed and done righteous deeds for what they have consumed when they feared Allah and believed and did righteous deeds, then feared Allah and believed, and then feared Allah and did good. And Allah loves the doers of good.” (5: 93)

This level of perfection is what Muhammad’s second message leads to, a level unattainable by his first message.

## **The Nation of the Second Message: The Muslims**

The discussion of Muhammad’s two messages has been extensive. It was stated that he delivered both [messages] in the sense that he delivered the Qur’an and lived his life, but he elaborated the first message in detail while summarizing the second. This is highlighted in the verse: “And We have sent down to you the Reminder so that you may clarify to the people what has been revealed to them, and so that they may reflect” (16: 44)

And we have said that both messages are contained and conveyed in "And We have sent down to you the Reminder", but the first message was commanded to be explained in detail in "so that you may clarify to the people what has been revealed to them."

For example, part of what was “sent down” (more relevant to the second message) is the verse: “They ask you what they should spend. Say, ‘The excess [that beyond your immediate needs].’” (2: 219)

This forms the basis for the encouragement of charity in the first message.

Part of what was “revealed” (more relevant to the first message) is the verse: “Take, [O Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you

purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” (9: 103)

This forms the basis for the institution of *zakat* (charity) in the first message.

Another example of what was “sent down” (more relevant to the second message) is: “O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him].” (3: 102)

This reflects the rank of *Muslims*. When they [the Believers] were unable to attain this level, the following was “revealed” to them: “So fear Allah as much as you are able and listen and obey and spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for yourselves. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is they who will be successful.” (64: 16)

This pertains to the first message and reflects the rank of *Believers*, as previously mentioned.

There are many verses that could be cited. For instance, part of what was “sent down” is: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong.” (2: 256)

And the part that was “revealed” was: “Then kill the polytheists wherever you find them.” (9: 5)

I wish to remind the reader always to note the distinction between the words “sent down” (*unzila*) and “revealed” (*nuzzila*), as frequently used here, derived from the verse: “And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.” (16: 44)

## **The Prelude to the Second Message**

When you read the verse: “And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord before the punishment comes upon you suddenly while you are unaware,” (39: 55)

you recognize that it is a precise and profound command. However, you should also understand that God’s wisdom has deferred its full application to ease the burden on the Believers until the day comes when the second message is fully clarified, and the stage is set for the Believers to achieve Islam by fearing God “as He should be feared” and by following the best of what has been revealed to them from God.

You might ask, “What do you mean by setting the stage?” I mean establishing a righteous society and a just system of governance that facilitates the individual’s striving to follow the best of what has been revealed.

It has been mentioned many times that Muhammad’s second message leans more toward the end of the spectrum, closer to Christianity. Indeed, the theoretical similarity between Christ’s teachings and the teachings of the Qur’an in the second message is significant. However, the practical difference is even greater.

When Christ delivered his sublime teachings, he did not establish a social or governmental system that would make it easier for individuals to implement those teachings. Islam, on the other hand, even in its first message, established a social and governmental system that included solidarity and leniency, enabling individuals to practically aspire to fulfill some of the lofty teachings of the Qur’an.

Now, as we enter a new era, we seek for individuals in our society to fulfill all the Qur'an's teachings. Therefore, we strive to establish a social and governmental system that is more advanced than what was achieved during the time of the first message.

This is what I mean by *setting the stage*, as mentioned earlier.

# The Second Message

## Economic Equality

The time has come to elaborate on the second message by advancing the legislation of the first message to better realize the [ultimate] religious goal. This development is based on two pillars: the needs of the current society and the spirit of Islam as lived by the Prophet.

The spirit of Islam, as embodied by the Prophet, is absolute individual freedom. The need of the present society is comprehensive social justice. Comprehensive social justice can only be achieved through three equalities: economic equality, political equality, and social equality.

Economic equality entails establishing both a maximum and a minimum income level for individuals. The minimum income must be guaranteed for all citizens, including children, the elderly, and those unable to produce, ensuring a standard of living that preserves human dignity. The difference between the minimum and maximum income should not exceed sevenfold, preventing the emergence of class disparities that would make interclass marriage unthinkable.

Economic equality is realized through socialism, which involves increasing production using machinery, improving administrative and technical expertise, and ensuring the fair distribution of this production based on the principles mentioned. Socialism cannot exist without limiting private ownership to prevent it from extending to the means of production.

Individuals may own homes, the gardens surrounding them, furnishings, vehicles, and similar personal properties, but not land, factories, or other means of production. Even within these narrow limits, ownership is a form of usufruct (*irtifaq*), and not absolute ownership.

This transition in legislation stems from the verse of lesser zakat:

“Take, [O Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah’s blessings] upon them.” (9: 103)

to the verse of greater zakat: “They ask you what they should spend. Say, ‘The excess [that beyond your needs].’” (2: 219)

“Excess” refers to all that surpasses one’s immediate needs, without hoarding or accumulation. This is what the Prophet practiced, representing the spirit of Islam.

It must be understood that individual ownership is limited as [previously] defined, making ownership communal rather than state-controlled. This prevents the rise of a centralized, overbearing government with extensive, and invasive administration that undermines political equality in the name of economic equality.

Communal ownership is managed through cooperative systems, where people serve themselves without relying on the state, except for vocational and administrative training, technical advice, and general oversight to coordinate cooperation across different regions. Any task people can manage without state intervention should be left to them. Economic equality is followed by equality with respect to all opportunities and rights.

## **Political and Social Equality**

Political equality means that every citizen, male or female, above the age of twenty, for example, has the equal right to choose those who manage their local and central government and oversee their means of production.

Once economic equality and political equality are achieved, social equality naturally follows as a result of these foundations. There may remain minor issues that will depend on the public opinion of the society. However, the principles established by economic and political equality will eventually influence public opinion to evolve over time, whether slowly or quickly. This evolution will surely come.

It will be the duty of the state to guide and stimulate development through education and cultural enrichment so that public opinion may attain a level of freedom and tolerance that prevents it from rejecting diverse patterns of behavior - so long as these patterns aspire to refinement and excellence.

## **Worship in the Second Message is More Essential Than in the First**

The state, by fostering vocational, technical, religious education, and public cultural awareness and freedoms, provides substantial assistance to individuals. However, there is a threshold where individuals must begin to exercise their own effort through self-discipline.

Islam provides the worship practices modeled by the Prophet, which form the most complete system of worship humanity has ever known. In the second message, these practices are even more essential than in the first message because contemporary human intellect is more oriented toward freedom than at any time in the past.

The path to true freedom lies solely in emulating the Prophet in his system of worship. The difference between the two approaches - worship in the first message and worship in the second - is that mature, rational individuals in the second message are not coerced or forced into worship. Instead, they are guided through example and persuasion: "There is no

compulsion in religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong.”  
(2: 256)

The reason for this is that in the second message, everything - including society, Islam, and the Qur'an, and above all, acts of worship - serves as a means to produce the truly free individual, one who is free in the absolute sense.

If we were to coerce an individual into worship, forcing them through compulsion, we would undermine the very purpose of worship, by causing the means to defeat the ultimate goal. If this were to happen it would, naturally, become a retrogressive and flawed approach.

## **The Progression Between the Two Messages**

Every individual [Muslim] begins with Islam, which is merely verbal testimony and physical acts of worship in imitation of the Prophet. Through the affirmation of actions, faith (*iman*) takes root in the heart, and the person becomes a believer. Faith then grows further, leading the individual into the initial stage of *ihsan* (excellence). From there, they progress through the various stages of *ihsan*.

The Prophet was asked about *ihsan* and said: “Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you do not see Him, then He sees you.” This statement describes three stages.

The first stage, closest to faith, is for the seeker to believe that Allah sees them, which the Prophet expressed as “then He sees you.”

The second stage follows when belief in the first stage strengthens. This is when the seeker begins to attain certainty that they see Allah, expressed by the Prophet as “as if you see Him.”

The final stage is when the seeker truly sees Allah, as hinted at by the Prophet's statement, "if you do not see Him."

For this reason, some knowers have said: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; once you do not [exist], then you see Him." This indicates that a person is veiled from Allah by the illusions of their own self. When they transcend these illusions, they see Allah.

Seeing Allah is the pinnacle of *ihsan* and the highest stage of Islam. It is referenced in the verse: "And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good." (29: 69)

It is also referenced in: "There is no blame upon those who believe and do righteous deeds for what they have consumed when they feared Allah and believed and did righteous deeds, then feared Allah and believed, and then feared Allah and excelled. And Allah loves the doers of good." (5: 93)

When the seeker reaches this stage of *ihsan*, they become a Muslim in the sense intended by the verse: "And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend." (4: 125)

It is also echoed in: "And whoever submits his face to Allah while being a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handle." (31: 22)

All creatures are inherently submitted to Allah, but since they lack *ihsan*, they are unaware of this submission. The Qur'an speaks of the submission of all creation: "And to Allah prostrates whoever is within the heavens and the earth, willingly or by compulsion, and their shadows [as well] in the mornings and the afternoons." (13: 15)

It also says: "Indeed, I have relied upon Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but that He holds it by its forelock. Indeed, my Lord is on a straight path." (11: 56)

And: "And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting." (17: 44)

## **Islam is Knowledge and Action in Accordance with Knowledge: Otherwise, It is Nothing**

In Islam, knowledge inherently implies action, and any knowledge that does not lead to action is incomplete. Therefore, the rank of *ihsan* (excellence) requires joyful surrender to the Guiding Will of Allah.

In practical, daily life, this means that a person performs their immediate duty with utmost precision and excellence. If the outcome aligns with their desires, they praise Allah. If the outcome differs from their desires, they [still] align their will with Allah's Will, praise Him, and accept His Will, trusting in Him and prioritizing Him.

If they cannot achieve contentment, there is still great benefit in patience. In the absence of patience lies resentment, and every resentful person is tormented.

In this regard, there is a profound *hadith qudsi* (sacred saying): "O David! You desire, and I desire, but nothing happens except what I desire. If you surrender to what I desire, I will suffice you in what you desire. But if you do not surrender to what I desire, I will exhaust you in what you desire, and then nothing will occur except what I desire." Patience with Allah's Will is a level of *ihsan* at its beginning. Contentment with Allah's Will, however, is a higher rank of *ihsan*."

Allah said to His noble Prophet: “So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during periods of the night exalt [Him] and at the end of the day, so that you may be satisfied.” (20: 130)

Here, Allah commands His Prophet to be patient with the Divine Will when it does not align with his wishes. He guides him to gratitude and instructs him to seek help in patience and gratitude through prayer. Finally, Allah promises contentment: “that you may be satisfied.”

Whoever gains Allah’s Satisfaction is enveloped in His Grace, showered with blessings, and immersed in the present moment - neither preoccupied with the future through wishful thinking nor burdened by the past with regret. Such a person is truly free, possessing absolute freedom.

## **Reconciling the Needs of the Individual and the Community**

When discussing the emergence of human society, we noted that the earliest customs served both the individual and the community. They strengthened the individual’s will and self-control while safeguarding the community’s rights and enabling its cohesion and solidarity.

Thus, early society, within its simple boundaries, achieved a balance between the needs of the individual and the community.

From that day to this, no past or present social philosophy has achieved a lasting balance between these two needs. However, Islam, even at the highest levels of societal complexity, provides a precise and refined model of this balance.

We previously mentioned that the human individual's ultimate need is absolute individual freedom. We now affirm that the community's ultimate need is to become a suitable means for achieving the truly free individual. The community is a means for this individual, and anything that can enable the means to fulfill its purpose becomes a requirement for the community.

We outlined the framework of the future society earlier in this discussion. Now, we turn to focus on the individual, who is free in the truest and most absolute sense.

## **The Absolutely Free Individual**

There is no doubt that, despite all that can be said about society and its role in aiding the individual, true freedom can only be achieved through an individual's personal effort. While society can secure a person's life from fear, poverty, ignorance, and disease, it cannot eliminate the psychological complexes - both inherited and acquired - that bind the individual.

These inherited complexes date back to the dawn of human life, when society first imposed duties upon individuals. They are vast in scope but diminish as society progresses and as the acquired complexes of an individual's life lessen in response to this advancement.

These psychological complexes are the greatest obstacle to freedom, for they divide the human personality into an outward self that conforms to societal expectations and an inner self that, if exposed, would lead to alienation and discord among people.

This distressing division within the human personality requires individual effort to reconcile and integrate, in order to form a unified, and complete self. As Christ said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

It has been previously stated that the Qur'an and the acts of worship transmitted from the Prophet are the means to release these complexes. Imitating the Prophet's way of life with precision unlocks the meanings of the Qur'an. Understanding the Qur'an illuminates the dark recesses of the subconscious, where desires have been imprisoned for millions of years, far from light, warmth, and life.

As this light penetrates those recesses, the human personality emerges free, unbound, as if released from chains.

It must be understood that imitating Muhammad is not the end of the creative power within us. Rather, precise imitation of him is a means to liberation from imitation itself. Worship, as prescribed, is merely a tool for achieving individuality, our unique self that no other member of the human collective shares.

Imitation, in its highest and finest form, is ultimately a denial of individuality, and individuality cannot be realized through its denial.

Just as repression (*kabt*) in the early stages of human development served as a means to liberation from repression at its peak, imitation (*taqlid*) in the early stages of a seeker's path serves as a means of liberation from imitation when reaching maturity.

Every seeker on the path of freedom begins with Islam, progresses to faith (*iman*), and ascends through the various stages of excellence (*ihsan*), as previously explained, until they return to Islam on a higher plane.

The Qur'an addresses the seeker individually at each stage of their journey. For instance, when the seeker reads the verse: "For whoever wills among you to take a straight path. But you do not will except as God Wills, the Lord of the worlds." (81: 28-29)

At the beginning of their path, they understand it to mean that they have an independent will to choose straightness or deviation. Thus, they strive for straightness with diligence and determination.

When their experience matures and they reach spiritual equilibrium, they come to know with certainty that they have no independent will apart from Allah's. At this point, the verse: "But you do not will except as God Wills, the Lord of the worlds," applies to them with full awareness of its wisdom.

They come to see that the earlier statement, "For whoever wills among you to take a straight path," is abrogated in their case by the latter statement, as they now understand its deeper truth.

## **The Prescribed Prayer**

The Qur'anic command for prayer is expressed as follows: "Recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do." (29: 45)

The "*remembrance of Allah*" refers to the Qur'an. As previously stated, prayer is a means to the unlocking of the Qur'an's meanings, hence the phrase: "and the remembrance of Allah is greater."

All knowledge is encapsulated in the concluding words of this verse: "And Allah knows that which you do." This points to the perfection of Allah's management of all things, and the realization of this truth completes Islam.

Allah also says, addressing the believers: "So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me. O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient." (2: 152-153)

The call to seek help through patience and prayer is a directive to seek assistance in attaining contentment with Allah's Will, as previously explained in the verse: "So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during periods of the night exalt [Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied." (20: 130)

Further, Allah says: "Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the Believers with a decree of specified times." (4: 103)

The term "*specified times*" here refers to the obligation of prayer at designated times for believers. However, when believers elevate themselves through prayer, worship, righteous deeds, and the Qur'an from the rank of faith (*iman*) to the rank of excellence (*ihsan*), where they see Allah, they then surpass the status of mere believers, as they become Muslims.

At this point, they are required to emulate Allah, rather than Muhammad, as the Prophet said: "Adopt the attributes of Allah; indeed, my Lord is upon a straight path."

In this advanced state, the phrase "*a decree of specified times*" takes on a new meaning, indicating that prayer is obligatory only until a certain point is reached.

It should be noted that the end of prayer does not apply as a general rule but rather at an individual level, as it pertains to a specific spiritual station, not a universal one.

Someone might ask: "Why didn't prayer end with Muhammad?" The answer is that Muhammad is not an imitator; he is the original. While he

achieves individuality through prayer, as we are required to achieve ours through our own unique paths, guided by truth and sincerity.

The Qur'an points to the Prophet's realization of his individuality in the verse: "And during the night, pray with it as additional worship for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station." (17: 79)

This "*praised station*" refers to the station he attained on the night of the Ascension (*Mi'raj*), where he reached the *Sidrat al-Muntaha* (the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary). Allah described him in this station as: "The sight of the Prophet did not swerve, nor did it transgress." (53: 17)

"The sight did not swerve" indicates that his thoughts did not retreat to the past. "Nor did it transgress" indicates that his attention did not extend to the future. Instead, he was fully immersed in the present moment, witnessing and beholding. He became a unity of self in a unity of space and time.

In this exalted state, prayer was made obligatory for him. Upon returning to his human nature, prayer became a daily ascension (*Mi'raj*) for him and his community towards that lofty station that he attained before Allah.

Since this station represents the realization of individuality - or the unity of the human self - it becomes a goal for every Muslim to strive toward. In the later stages of the journey, originality and liberation from imitation become essential and unavoidable.

## **The Unity of Existence**

At the beginning of this work, we posed the question: Can spiritual experimental science trace all manifestations of human morality back to a single origin, as material experimental science has traced all material phenomena in the universe to a single origin? If this were achieved, [we

asserted that], it would bring harmony and alignment between human ethics, human behavior, and the material environment in which they exist.

Through this harmony, the discord that has scattered human efforts in all directions and severed the bonds of humanity among people would come to an end.

It may have become somewhat clear that Islam, from the very beginning, is based on surrendering the created human will to the promodial Divine Will: "And whoever submits his face to Allah while being a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handle." (31: 22)

My personal experience has left me with no doubt about the validity of this principle. Therefore, I firmly believe that all manifestations of human behavior - both good and evil - can be traced back to one origin: the Will of the All-Powerful Allah.

In truth, evil does not have an independent origin; the true origin is goodness. Evil is merely a consequence of our ignorance, which deceives us into believing that we possess an independent will.

When this ignorance is dispelled through spiritual experience, our focus shifts to perfecting our immediate duties, refining them with excellence, and becoming absorbed in this [process of] refinement. We cease to dwell on wishes or regrets. In so doing, we achieve peace within ourselves, and as a result, peace is realized on earth.

Listen to how the Qur'an speaks to us, guiding us toward sound human behavior: "No calamity occurs on the earth or within yourselves except that it is inscribed in a Book before We bring it into existence. Indeed, that is easy for God. \* So that you do not grieve over what has passed you by, nor exult in what He has given you. And God does not love every self-

conceited boaster. \* Those who are stingy and enjoin others to be stingy. And whoever turns away - then indeed, God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy." (57:22-24)

This verse demonstrates the depth of Divine Wisdom and the balanced perspective on human existence. It teaches us that surrendering to Allah's Will eliminates regret for what is lost and arrogance over what is gained, cultivating a calm and measured approach to life. This acceptance is the key to achieving true peace within oneself and harmony with others.

### **Good Character is the Proper Use of Freedom**

What is *character*? In its highest essence, it is the proper exercise of absolute individual freedom. This is why the Prophet said: "Good character is the greatest attribute of Allah." Proper exercise of absolute individual freedom includes leaving behind what does not concern you. Among what does not concern you are both the next moment and the past moment. What concerns you is only the present moment.

If you fill the present moment with productive and well-executed work, and if you live your entire life occupied solely with your immediate duty, performing it as excellently as you can, you will achieve unity of personality. You will overcome fear and anxiety, and you will attain inner peace.

Your life will become a blessing for yourself and for all humanity, whether you are aware of it or not. Every sound, fertile life enriches all life simply by existing within it.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, some may find this discussion strange. Let them not rush to judgment. Let them refrain from issuing verdicts before questioning themselves as much as they question others.

This discourse, to me, is truth and sincerity. I pray to Allah that it is also truth and sincerity before Him, for nothing is beyond His Power.