

The Process of Islamization

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From the Foreword by Mahmoud Rashdan:

"The Islamization Process - Its Challenges and Promises" was the theme of the M.S.A.'s 13th Annual Convention, held at the University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio at the end of August 1975.

This booklet is a revised version of Professor Idris' presentation at the convention. It is being published in book form owing to its scholarly merit and in response to requests from the M.S.A. membership.

...Dr. Idris' presentation on the "Process of Islamization" has the credit of being vivid and systematic. The reader will find the writer clear and direct in his treatment of this important topic. He does not leave the reader to speculate on where he stands on controversial positions but rather states his position clearly and yet without any pretension of "I know better" and without the "protection" of confusing the professional jargon which so frequently plagues "westernized" Muslim scholars. To his credit also, Dr. Idris refers to the Qur'an directly to derive the Islamic theory of social change. He raises questions and does not hesitate to give his answers. He suggests that the social law of change is contained in the verse:

"Surely God does not change the state in which a people are until they change that which is in themselves." [ar-Ra`d, 11]...

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Part 1 The Process of Islamization

The aim of the Islamic movement is to bring about somewhere in the world a new society wholeheartedly committed to the teachings of Islam in their totality and striving to abide by those teachings in its government, political, economic and social organizations, its relation with other states, its educational system and moral values and all other aspects of its way of life.

Our organized and gradual effort which shall culminate in the realization of that society is the process of Islamization.

This naturally leads to the question: Is there an Islamic process of Islamization? In other words, does Islam only specify the aim to be reached and leave the method of achieving that aim to the intelligence of individuals or does it also specify the means by which that aim is to be reached?

The answer will become clear once we begin to see some of the major issues that are involved in this question.

How does certain social order come to be? The answer to this question has to depend, in the last analysis, one's view of the nature of reality. This is so because the achievement of certain social results depends on the correct performance of certain actions which, in turn, are based on the belief that there is a causal connection between these action and the desired result. The choice of these causal actions will depend on your conception of reality as a whole. A materialists who believes that there is ultimately nothing in the world except matter and its movement will not include in such actions anything like prayer, intentions or moral values. These are for him mere names which do not designate any reality and thus cannot in any way be effectual.

If the means of achieving an aim are thus connected with one's view of the world the process of Islamization must be related to the Islamic view of life. This is confirmed by the fact that Islam is both a message and a method. It is a body of facts which a believer should translate into reality, and it is a method by which this translation is to be effected. The principles of this method are outlined in the Qur'an, but they cannot be rightfully understood without the perspective of the sira of the Prophet which was a successful translation of these principles into action.

In what follows I shall give a brief but, I hope, comprehensive account of that method, starting from the basic conceptual issues and coming down to some practical details.

Part 2 Determinist Theory of History

Our method of Islamization has to be based on our concept of social causation and historical explanation, i.e. on our view of the process whereby nations and civilizations rise and fall. To identify the Islamic explanation of this important type of social change, it might help to contrast it with a contemporary philosophy of history which, though influential, is misguided. According to this philosophy, history is a movement which follows a single and definite path that leads progressively and inevitably from one stage to a more developed one. Men can influence this movement by either increasing or decreasing its tempo but they do not have the power to arrest it or change its direction. Those who try to stop it or change its direction and thus slow it down are the reactionaries; those who give it a push and accelerate it are the progressives. If one's efforts are to materialize one has to find out this historical movement, see to what future state it is leading and identify his aims and ideals with that stage and direct all his efforts to the goal to which that historical movement is inevitably leading; otherwise his days will be lost in futile reactionary efforts.

We know that the Communists subscribe to such a view, but it is not they alone who do so. Many staunch enemies of Communism unwittingly assume the truth of such a view. Among them are Western and Westernized men and women who believe that the stage which the West, and especially the United States, has now reached is, in its entirety, a more developed stage both materially and culturally. More over if it is the stage towards which all nations that aspire to be both industrialized and civilized must inevitably move. This position, which has many adherents in the Muslim world both in its Communistic form and Western cloak, takes the endeavor to Islamize society to be a futile one because it goes against the historical trend. For the Communists the historical trend leads toward the Soviet Union and to the ideal Communist state; and for the agents of Westernization it moves toward the United States and thence to what will become of the United States.

Part 3 Islamic Theory of Social Change

Perhaps the best way to introduce the Islamic philosophy of social change, in light of which we should make our program of Islamization, is by way of a commentary on that famous Qur'anic verse.

"Surely God does not change that in which a people are until they change that which is in themselves." (Qur'an xii,11)

The main points we find in this verse are:

1. A God who has absolute freedom of action.
2. Human beings whose freedom of action is limited.
3. A change which man brings about inside himself.
4. A change in man's condition which God brings about as a result of that human change.

These four points constitute the Islamic explanation or philosophy of social change. Let us therefore examine their implication briefly.

1. The first point distinguishes our conception of social change from the materialistic and naturalistic theories which assume the non-existence of God and therefore adopt the principle of the self-sufficiency of this world i.e. the principle that phenomena of this world, whether they be social or otherwise, can be sufficiently explained with the help of laws pertaining to it. This atheistic assumption has unfortunately been identified with scientific method as such, so much so that any reference to God in the explanation of phenomena is immediately ruled out as unscientific and not merely un-atheistic. We must beware of this unjustified confusion and insist on the justifiability, necessity and desirability of seeing the role of the Divine in the explanation of the natural and social phenomena of our world.

This point also distinguishes our conception from those atheistic viewpoints according to which the Creator is a mere prime mover whose only role was merely to start creation and then leave it to take care of itself.

The second point shows the advantage of our conception of social change over the deterministic theories which assume that man has no real efficacy or freedom of choice and that everything he does is imposed on him by a divine power or by natural or social causes. Man cannot indeed do anything against the will of God, but God has willed to give him the freedom to choose and the power to realize some of his intentions even if they go against the guidance given by God. One of the very important areas on which God gave man the freedom to act is his internal state. But since much of what happens to man depends on what kind of internal state he has, man can be said to be largely responsible for his destiny.

The third point tells us about a change that man brings about inside himself. What kind of change is this? Is it a change from good to bad or vice versa or could it be any of them. This last one is now the popular interpretation of the verse. Almost everyone now understands by this verse that when people change from good to bad, God punishes them by changing their condition from good to bad and vice versa. But this is not the interpretation that we find in the older commentaries. The older commentators seem to be agreed that the change referred to in the verse is a change from

good to evil. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation because it is the only one that is comparable with a basic Islamic principle and because it is supported by many other verses.

The fourth point tells us that when a people so change, God punishes them by withdrawing from them some of the spiritual and material bounties which He had bestowed upon them and thus causes them to face hardship.

Part 4 Bounties are Allah's Grace

Why do I prefer the interpretation which says that the change mentioned in our verse is a change from good to evil? I say so mainly because according to the Qur'an, bounties are not bestowed on men as a result of any good they do. They are given to them as a grace from God. God is Rahman, which means that He initiates good and gives it gratuitously, and does not wait until people take the initiative of doing something good and only then reward them for it. Bounties, whether they be spiritual or material, are given to men by their Lord out of pure rahma and fadl or grace. If they are grateful the bounties shall be maintained and even increased. But if they commit acts which express ungratefulness, then He punishes them by withholding from them some, if not all, of His bounties. But if they repent and return, the bounties also return.

This is very well exemplified by the case of Adam. At his creation God put him in the best of conditions. He granted comfort. But when he ate of the forbidden tree (which was not a tree of knowledge) he lost some of this.

The same principle applies to other communities and nations who are often referred to in the Qur'an as qura or ahl al-qura. Let us start with the sunan that govern the decline or destruction of ungrateful nations, and then turn to those that govern the survival and ascendancy of grateful ones. Here are some examples of what happens to ungrateful nations.

The people of Saba who lived between two gardens were told to eat of the provision of their Lord and to be grateful to Him. But they turned away and so the flood of Iram was sent to them and in exchange for their two gardens they were given two other gardens bearing bitter fruit, the tamarisk, and here and there a lote tree. Commenting on what happened to them God says, "We awarded them because of their ungratefulness. Punish We never save the ingrates" (Qu'ran 34: 17)

We are also told about "a township that dwelt secure and well content, its provision coming to it in abundance from every side, but it disbelieved in God's favors, so God made it taste the garment of death and fear because of what they used to do." (Qu'ran 16:112)

Decline or destruction is therefore the ultimate and inevitable destiny of any ungrateful nation, any nation which rebels against God and follows the path of immorality.

But this ultimate destruction is brought about in accordance with principles. Here are some of them.

a. Destruction or chastisement does not befall a nation until it is sufficiently warned. This warning can come to them through the medium of a Messenger from God:

"And never did Thy Lord destroy the townships, till He had raised up in their mother-town a messenger reciting unto them our revelations. And never did we destroy the townships unless the folk thereof were evil doers." (Qu'ran 27: 59)

"Never did We destroy a population, but had its warners-----by way of reminder; and We never are unjust." (Qur'an 26: 208-209)

Or they may be caused to know in some other way that they are guilty and should therefore expect to be punished.

"Many a town have we destroyed, our punishment visiting them by night or while they are resting at midday. When our punishment thus visited them they had nothing to say but 'We were indeed unjust.' " (Qur'an 7:4-5)

The meaning of this verse is made clearer by a hadith of the Prophet which affirms that no nation is destroyed until it admits that it has no one but itself to blame for such destruction. This is confirmed by the verse;

"That is because thy Lord would never destroy the cities unjustly, while their inhabitants were heedless." (Qur'an 6: 131)

We may deduce from this Divine principle or Sunna that given two societies which are equally corrupt and ungrateful, the one which has been sufficiently warned will be destroyed before the one which has not been warned. Hence we see in the stories by bygone nations related in the Qur'an that their destruction and downfall followed their rejection of God's Prophets.

b. Destruction is not immediate, i.e. not every nation is destroyed or caused to fall immediately after it shows signs of ungratefulness. Again this is a result of God's rahma. He gives gratuitously and in plenty but does not take away immediately.

"How many a city I have respited in its evil-doing; then I seized it and to me was the homecoming." (Qur'an 22:48)

"But thy Lord is the all-forgiving, full of mercy. If He should take them to task for that they have earned, He would hasten for them the chastisement; but they will have a tryst from which they will find no escape. And those cities, we destroyed them when they did evil and appointed for their destruction a tryst." (Qur'an 18: 58-59)

c. The fall of every nation as we read in the verse above has a definite time which can neither be deferred nor hastened.

"Never a nation have we destroyed, but it had an assigned term and no nation outstrips its term or puts it back." (Qur'an 15:4-5)

d. Before a nation is destroyed it might be put to serve hardships that might cause it to repent and return to the right path:

"Corruption has appeared in land and sea, for that men's own hands have earned, that He may let them taste (the consequences of) some part of that which they have done, that haply so they may return (to the right path)." (Qur'an 30:41)

e. Punishment is not meted out for all sins in this world otherwise all people would have been destroyed:

"If God should take men to task for (all) their evil-doing, He would not leave on the earth one creature that crawls." (Qur'an 16:61)

Those were the causes of hardship, unhappiness and fall of nations. What then are the causes for the rise of nations and their material and spiritual prosperity?

Primarily there are the normal human conditions in which all of us should be and in which God loves to see us. God creates everyone of us at the hour of birth with a good nature, the essence of which is the acknowledgment that he or she is the servant of only one Creator. This acknowledgment constitutes the essence of our humility, and is both the spring and the lifeblood of everything that is good in us: sound reasoning, moral sense, aesthetic taste, brotherly feeling, etc. Moreover God created everything around us for the purpose of serving us. Our normal state is therefore one of internal happiness and peace of mind which come as a result of a natural acknowledgment of our servitude to God, an acknowledgment which finds justification in the Divine message which is conveyed to us through God's messengers. It is also one of external bliss which is the result of everything being subservient to us and meant for the satisfaction of our needs. Every one of us is born with that internal state of happiness, but alas none of us finds himself in that material comfort. Many of those who went before us have changed that internal state internal state of happiness, but alas none of us finds himself in that material comfort. Many of those who went before us have changed that internal state in which God created them and have thus caused Him to withhold many of his bounties from the world. But God is too merciful to make the situation a hopeless one. Still the door is open for every group of people who returns to the path of God to enjoy that material bliss. Here are some of the kinds of happiness that such a people are promised in the Qur'an.

A. Material comfort:

"If the people of the towns had but believed and kept from evil surely we should have opened out to them blessings from the sky and from the earth. But they rejected the truth and so we caused them to suffer for their misdeeds." (Qur'an 7:96)

"If they had observed the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them for their Lord, they would surely have been nourished from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them are people who are moderate, but many of them are of evil conduct." (Qur'an 5:66)

B. Spiritual Happiness:

"Whosoever does right, man or woman, and is a believer, we shall cause to live a good life." (Qur'an 16:97)

C. Victory Over Their Enemies:

To the extent that a people have faith in God and trust in Him, and to the extent that they obey Him, to that extent will He be with them.

"God is with those who believe." (Qur'an 3:68)

And when God is with them, He will defend them.

"God defends those who believe." (Qur'an 22:38)

He will come to their help.

"If you help God He will help you." (Qur'an 47:7)

"We do help our Messenger, and those those who believe in this world and on the day when the witnesses arise." (Qur'an 40:51)

And if God defends them and helps them, then nothing can conquer them.

"Already has Our word been passed to our servants who are sent (by us) that they shall be assisted and that our forces shall be victorious." (Qur'an 37: 171-173)

"How often by God's will has a small force vanquished a big one? God is with those who steadfastly persevere." (Qur'an 2:249)

And so long as they keep their covenant with God, they shall always be their own masters and never shall they be subjugated by unbelievers.

"And never will God grant to the unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers." (Qur'an 4:141)

"Might belongs to God, to His Messenger, and to the faithful." (Qur'an 63:8)

The core of our philosophy of social change has now become clear. Nations do not rise and fall haphazardly and without any laws that govern their coming into being and passing away. History is not a single track which every nation has to tread whether it likes it or not. Our social world is governed by its Creator who causes nations to rise or fall, to prosper or suffer, to be victorious or subjugated, in accordance with the moral law of gratitude.

Part 5 Application of the Theory

In what way can this theoretical explanation of the rise and fall of nations help us in finding our way to the Islamization of society?

Firstly, since Islamization has to be planned and planning is based on prediction of future happenings, this Qur'anic explanation of social change helps us to look behind the facade of the physical strength of any nation to the real factors that hold it together or cause it to disintegrate. We know that the only way to ensure the continuity of God's bounties is to follow the path which He has chosen for His creatures. Any nation that deviates from that path is sure to be weakened if not utterly destroyed. No wealth, worldly knowledge, or physical power of any kind can save it from this inevitable end.

"What, have they not journeyed in the land and beheld how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than themselves in might, and they plowed up the earth and cultivated it more than they themselves have cultivated it; and their Messenger came to them with the clear signs; and God would never wrong them but themselves they wronged. Then the end of those that did evil was evil for that they cried lies to the signs of God and mocked at them." (Qur'an 30:9-10)

Our duty is not to sit back and rejoice in the expectation of this inevitable downfall of deviant communities. No, this is not the attitude of responsible people. Our duty is to warn such communities in a sincere, compassionate and convincing manner, helping them to see the similarities between their ways and the ways that led to the downfall of other communities, and by expounding in some detail the mechanism whereby deviation from the path of God causes unhappiness, results in hardship and leads ultimately to the downfall or even utter destruction of a community.

This attitude of sincere and convincing warning should be our attitude towards all communities and nations whether they belong to Islam or not. Our aim and duty is not to destroy Western civilization and build on its debris but to attempt to save and guide it to the correct path. If it refuses to heed our warning, or listen to our advise its downfall is inevitable and we shall not be responsible for it.

Secondly, and more importantly, with the knowledge that nearness of God is the secret of success we should resolve to do everything that helps us to achieve that goal and firmly refuse to be distracted from it by tactics and stratagems which to the blinkered and shortsighted may seem the short cut to success. If by success we mean the mere seizure of power by any group of people, something that we see happening around us every other day, then we do not need to seek guidance from Islam on how to do it. But if we intend that power to be held by people who shall use it to create and maintain a community which shall enjoy the favors promised by God to virtuous communities, then there is only one way of doing it. Before any group of people becomes worthy of favors which would mark it out as the best of nations, it has to prove that it is on the side of God. The essence of being with God is something that resides in the heart, and as such is not accessible to direct observation by other people. But it is known to God and God looks at our hearts to see whether we deserve His help and support. Every element of shirk and insincerity is a potential hindrance in our path and a potential cause of setbacks. Thus, whenever the Muslims at the time of Prophet suffered any temporary defeat or setback in their battles against the

unbelievers, God directed them to look for its cause in their hearts. For example, the cause of their temporary defeat at Uhud was traced to the fact that some of them desired this world and at Hunayn to the fact that they were proud of their vast numbers.

We should therefore be on our guards lest such impurities creep into our hearts, and when they find their way to them, do our best to cleanse ourselves of them by istighfar , repentance, performing acts of generosity, and other acts of worship. Our sins are our real enemies and sincerity is our real indestructible weapon.

Emphasis on this point can lead to apprehension that this might be an invitation to a kind of passive sufism, a negation of all public and especially, political activities. An erroneous conclusion might be drawn from it that the desire by any group of Muslims to hold the reins of power is a sinful desire.

Hence I hasten to say that such is not my purpose. I should also add that this kind of fear is itself the result of an incorrect conception of the relationship between our mental state and our actions and activities. Our effort to purify our hearts should not be conceived of as a diversionary act which hinders or slows down our public activities; nor should the latter be shunned as secular enterprises unworthy of a pious person. A purified and God-conscious heart is a driving force and directing wheel of good external actions. The nature of our public activities is the external expression of the kind of a faith that resides in our hearts.

I have said before that a person's method of achieving a desired aim depends on what he considers to be its effective causes and on his concept of the relation that exists between those causes.

The atheists confine themselves to a natural causes and human effort, thinking that these alone are real efficient causes of any change in the world. We add to these our belief that since everything in the world is created by God, He alone is the Ultimate cause of everything that happens in the world. It would be natural for us therefore to include prayer, istighfar, repentance, doing what God enjoins and avoiding what He forbids, in our system of efficient causes. It is through such acts of worship that one attains the status of awliya allah. And when the favor and love of the Being who governs this world has been won, nothing can stand in our way.

Our approach will sound strange when compared to the ideas and philosophies now prevailing in our world. In the words of the prophet Islam seemed strange when it first appeared and shall seem so again.

If we wish to be on the side of God and win His favor, it is necessary but not enough to be sincere and pure of heart. To the right actions and ways that please Him and which He judges to be the best means to achieve the ends we have set before us. This applies to our desire for a model Muslim state. Since it was one of the aims of the Prophet, while at Mecca, to create such a state, his authentic sira and sayings should be studied in addition to the Qur'an.

Part 6 Fundamental Importance of the Islamic State

Turning to the Prophets sira, it is necessary to justify the statement that I have just made about his objective of an Islamic state. The Prophet's aim as a messenger of God was to convey His message to His servants. This is true, but it is also true that the attempt to create such an Islamic state is an important part of that message. It has been said that had it been one of his aims to create such a state the Prophet would not have turned down the Meccan offer of kingship. The prophet did reject that offer, but he did so because its acceptance would not have made him the head of a Muslim state. He would have become king of a people who did not even believe in his Message, and who in fact offered him status as a bribe to abstain from propagating it. A man, who accepted such an offer would not be a genuine Prophet but a man possessed by lust for power, who would be using the claim to prophethood only as a means to gratify that desire.

The fact that the Prophet was desirous of creating a Muslim state comes out clearly in the fact that besides his attempt to convert individuals to the new faith he was doing his best to win over the power of an organized and independent community to be the stronghold of this faith. To that end, he used to contact the chiefs of different tribes, especially at the annual Makkan fairs, and ask them to accept him as Prophet and be the protectors of the new faith. Finally two tribes of Madina, al-Aws and al-Khazraj, did so, and made possible the first Muslim state to be in their land.

Let us now assume that a number of Muslims have decided to work towards that end. In what way can they benefit from the Sira of the Prophet at its Makkan stage?

Part 7 Two Extremes

Two extreme positions have been adopted by various people. The first one is that since the Prophet's message was finally brought to completion in the form of the Qur'an and the collections of authentic Hadith that are now at our disposal, the earlier stages through which this message passed are now irrelevant to the kind of method that we should follow in propagating or practicing it. Our religion is complete and must be practiced in its totality. No part of it can be, for any reason, suspended or deferred in application.

The other position is that people have now relapsed to the kind of Makkan Jahiliyya which prevailed at the time of the Prophet's mission. We have therefore to start at the point from which the Prophet started and pass through all the stages through which he passed until we finally create our Muslim State.

Both of these are untenable positions. The first because it ignores the important fact, mentioned above, that Islam is both a message and a method. The way the message is to be conveyed or practiced is an inseparable part of that message and as such cannot be ignored. If this is accepted then we can always find guidance in the methods the Prophet adopted at any period of his life.

The second position is untenable because it is impossible to transfer an entire historical situation from one period and superimpose it on a later one. But this is exactly what the second position demands. The consequences of such an attempt can be seen in the living example of some young men I know who tried to follow this method as a result of a literalist understanding of the great Muslim writer and martyr Sayyid Qutb. They started by forming a group and electing a leader. This group was supposed to be like that of the early Muslims. But it ignored the fact that those who gathered around the Prophet were the only Muslims on earth. To match their group exactly to that of the Prophet's they called it Jamaat-al Muslimin, an expression which suggests that they are the only Muslims, and they did believe that one who did not belong to their group was not a Muslim, or as the more moderate among them would say, majhul-al-hal i.e. his case is doubtful. When I once asked some of them what right they had to deny Islam to a person who professes the shahada, who performs his prayers, and whom they know to be morally upright. The reply was "But to be a Muslim you have to belong to the Muslim community and these people are living in the Jahiliyya community." "If by a Muslim community you mean a society like yours" I said, "then there are many other Islamic societies." "They are not Islamic," they said, "because they accept as Muslims those who live in the Jahiliyya community and anyone who considers such people to be Muslims is himself a non-Muslim."

They believed that being at the Makkan stage they should follow the example of the Prophet in inviting people only to the principles of belief and tell them nothing about things like economics, politics, social justice, etc. The question arose that should they themselves practice that part of the shari'a which was revealed at Madina. On this issue the group split into two, at least one of which considered the other to be non-Muslim.

The group who believed that they should not practice the Madinan part of the Shari'a went to the extreme of neglecting the study of the Qur'anic Madinan verses.

That part of the group which believed in the practice of shari'a in its entirety went to the extent of whipping a member who confessed to have committed adultery.

I think that the example of these enthusiastic and in many ways sincere young men serves as a good warning against this kind of extremism.

Part 8 Similarities and Differences

The correct standpoint, I think, is that one should look for similarities but also acknowledge the differences between a contemporary Muslim group in a particular country and the Prophet and his companions at the Makkan as well as the Madinan periods. Whenever such a group finds itself in a situation similar to that of the early Muslims, it should follow the exemplary behavior of the Prophet in that situation.

A few examples will illustrate this point.

1. The people who accepted Islam in Makka were not left to live as isolated individuals. They formed an organized group. I think the wisdom behind this is:

Firstly, that Muslims according to the Qur'an are an ummah, they are brothers and as such can not be proper Muslims if they live separately. It may seem paradoxical, but it is true that when we live as isolated individuals, our individuality will not be realized and will not be complete because there is a vacuum inside each of us that cannot be filled except by other Muslim brothers.

Secondly, that if our ultimate aim is to form a community of our own, then the embryo of that community has to be formed in the womb of the community that we desire to change. Only in this way can we face the challenges of the community to which we are opposed. Thus we can experience something of the blessings of living in a Muslim society and give others a living example of that society.

The lesson from this for any people who want to work for a proper Muslim community, which could develop into a Muslim state, is that:

a. They must organize themselves into a group and have a leader

The proper thing is that there should be only one such group of Muslims working in a particular community of Jahiliyya or semi-Jahiliyya. The more groups we have, the further we go from the example of the Prophet, and thus the more we delay the process of Islamization.

If for some reason or the other many more than one group exists then the second best attitude is that these groups should be friendly and should cooperate in working towards common ends and coordinate this work. They have to remember that the bond that ties them together, la ilaha il-la Allah is more important than the petty differences that divide them.

b. They must remember that their leader is not a Prophet whose every word is to be believed and followed. He is himself a follower of the Prophet and is therefore to be followed only so far as he follows the Prophet. An enlightened follower of such a leader must do his best to have direct access to the criterion by which he judges his leader i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunna. Such a leader is not only not a Prophet, he is not even an Amir of the Faithful in the sense that Abu Bakr, Umar or any of the Muslim khalifs were. To be an Amir in this sense one must be the actual ruler of the Muslims, i.e. the person who actually holds the reins of power and who can therefore implement the Islamic law. Our leaders are indeed amirs but they are amirs in a much more

limited sense. It would therefore be wrong on their part to claim the powers which the Prophet gave to rulers, and wrong on our part to invest them with such powers.

c. They should do their best to preserve their brotherhood which is the lifeblood of their unity, and remember that Satan will do its best to corrupt that unity by what the Qur'an calls *nazgh*, and be sure that quarrel and conflict bring nothing but frustration and disintegration.

d. In accordance with the same ideal, there should also be cooperation between Muslim organizations and present Muslim state that is willing to help and aid. One hopes that there will come a time when a Muslim state will consider its land the abode of all genuine Muslims, and open its doors for them. It would accept them as full citizens, and accelerate the process of Islamization all over the world as part of its duty, and thus give it all the moral and material support and backing that it needs.

2. At Makka, the Prophet, following the guidance of the Qur'an started by inviting people to the basic principles of the faith. I think that he did that because Islam is not a mere collection of orders and prohibitions. It is a system that is both rationally and psychologically ordered. So unless you strengthen the internal foundations, you cannot have any strong external building i.e. unless some Iman is firmly established in the hearts of men, it is futile to ask them to do what God enjoins or avoid what He forbids. This comes out clearly in the words of Aisha who, according to al Bukhari, said that when the Prophet came he started by telling the people about God and the hereafter and only after they believed in this, did he tell them not to drink and not to commit adultery. Had he started by the latter, they would have adamantly refused to comply with his orders and abstain from these sins.

Part 9 Larger Issues

But there are two points to observe here:

- a. The Prophet did not confine himself to talk about matters of belief only, but also and like other Prophets before him, explained the moral and social consequences of this belief. It is this, more than theoretical talk about a belief that resides in the heart, that usually causes people with vested interests in an anti-Islamic Jahiliyya system to strongly oppose and persecute Prophets.
- b. In calling people to new faith, the Prophet did not address them in a dogmatic or purely emotional way. He used a rational argument as well as material evidence. He challenged them intellectually and warned them sincerely. He asked them to ponder over and learn the lessons of history, and explained to them the fact that he was inviting them to the only way that would lead to their material and spiritual happiness in this and the life to come.
- c. The fact that this wise way of introducing Islam to people is not to be confined to the Makkan period is alluded to in the Prophet's Hadith about the strangeness of Islam.

This Hadith explains and confirms what I said about the similarities of situations. It tells us that there will come a time when people shall view Islam in the same way that the Makkans viewed it when it first appeared. Ibn Taymiyya, with his usual deep insight, deduced from this Hadith that when Islam becomes strange the second time we must adopt the same methods in propagating it that were used when it was strange the first time. That is to say we must concentrate on the main basic issues, use reason and rational argument in establishing the truth of these principles and prove the falsity of opposing ideologies.

In conformity with the sunna of the Prophet we should therefore do our best to explain the social and moral consequences of these basic truths, formulate a comprehensive critique of our society, and offer it a convincing alternative.

In doing so, it would be unrealistic, and unnecessarily rigid to confine ourselves only to the Makkan teachings of Islam. It is unrealistic because like early Makkans, many people including non-Muslims, are now familiar with the details of Islam that were revealed at Madina. We cannot therefore treat them as if they were ignorant of the Madani surahs and we cannot, without weakening our position, refuse to answer some questions such people raise. Such rigidity is harmful because it deprives us of an advantage which God put at our disposal. Each of the messengers before the Prophet Muhammad, besides calling people to the basic truth of religion, was concerned with the particular social problem of the particular people to whom he was sent. Thus Moses concerned himself with liberating his people from the sent. Thus Moses concerned himself with liberating his people from the oppressive rule of a dictator, Shu'ayb with the problem of eradicating economic injustice and Lot with a social perversion. Islam is meant to be for all people and all ages to come, so is dealt, in its completed form, with all the basic human problems. Now that all this treasure is at our disposal, and since people at a particular and a particular place may feel the urgency of any one of these problems, we can win them over to the right path by offering the solution to the problem which concerns them. I see no reason why we should not make use of this advantage. To do so effectively, to present Islam to any society in a convincing manner, we have to beware of confusing principles of Islam with the particular

historical form which those principles took at some period in the past, including that of the Prophet. The principles are the essence, their application at a particular time is the external changing from. But we should also beware of imposing on them an unsuitable form just because it happens to be that of a contemporary materially advanced society like that of the USA

3. I now consider briefly in the light of the Sira a collection of misconceptions of the Islamization process

a. Some groups while not going to the extent of consciously believing that they are the only Muslims, work and plan on that assumption, and so refuse to acknowledge the valuable contribution of other groups, individuals and official bodies and try to isolate themselves from them. There was indeed nothing Islamic at the time of the Makkan period except that which the Prophet and the few Muslims around him did. But the Prophet acknowledged as good, and encouraged everything which, in accordance with his Islamic standards, was good. Thus while at Madina he remembered and praised hilf al fudul, a confederacy whose aim was to defend the oppressed and help the poor and in whose formation he took part when he was twenty. Why should we then refuse to acknowledge the Islamic nature of a thing or work just because someone else did it? I believe that the right attitude is to acknowledge the Islamic nature of a thing or work just because someone else did it? I believe that the right attitude is to acknowledge and encourage everything Islamic irrespective of who did it, and consider it an asset for the Islamization process.

b. There are some who think that we cannot have an Islamic state in a particular country,

i. until we have made almost everyone who is to be a member of it a genuine and perfect Muslim. But the Prophet did not do that; and it is certainly wrong and utopian to think that such a state cannot be created in a country until a majority of its people have been convinced or even until we have given a proper Islamic education and training to all the personnel who are to man its institutions.

ii. until we have prepared a blueprint of that future society. Again the Prophet did not do that; and it has not been done by any reformist or revolutionary movement at any time.

iii. until we have as rulers, men as knowledgeable and pious as Abu Bakr and Umar. But we do not perform any act of worship at the high standard of Abu Bakr and Umar, nor did they themselves reach the higher standard of the Prophet. Let our state therefore be as imperfect as our prayer; it will still be better than a non-Muslim state, just as our imperfect prayer is better than no prayer at all Let us now assume that a group of Muslims working for the creation of an Islamic state somewhere in the world are,

a. sincere; and

b. are adopting the right method of Islamization

Does this mean that they are sure to achieve their end? If not why? And what then is the use of their work?

The answer is that their success depends upon one other condition, which is that the number of those who are fairly genuine among them must be fairly reasonable in comparison with those who are opposed to them. Otherwise they may be killed by their enemies, or compelled to leave their land for another as we were other Prophets and many genuine believers like the ashah al Ukhdu.

Even then their efforts will not be without value. Firstly, because God says "if you help God, He will help you" and since in this case His help does not--- for the reason we mentioned---come in the form of victory over their enemies, it is bound to come in the form of punishment for those enemies, as a revenge for the wrong they did.

So if the sincere small group of Muslims does not succeed in replacing the larger groups of unbelievers, it at least causes their downfall. In so doing it succeeds in lessening the amount of evil in the world and thus in giving good another chance to flourish.

Secondly they shall of course have their real reward in the real life, the eternal life after death, and enjoy the greatest happiness of being forever in the presence of Allah Subhanahu Wa ta'la.