

A MUSLIM RESPONSE

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WORLD FAITHS  
AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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## 8

**A Muslim Response**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Although an economist by profession and training, I have no hesitation in suggesting that the problems involved in changing the world economic order are too serious and too complicated to be left solely to the economists or the politicians of our time. It augurs well that the religious leaders of four major faith-oriented communities are meeting here to deliberate upon the issues that confront humankind in the context of the contemporary international economic crisis.

My own interest in the subject is rooted in my two major roles, that of an economist and more important that of being a Muslim, a worker in the Islamic movement. Yet, these two roles do not drive my thoughts into conflicting directions; instead my ideas and aspirations, emanating from both these roles converge amicably. Separation between economics and religion has launched economics into chaotic waters on the one hand, and driven religion into isolation from life and its multifarious problems. Fresh efforts are needed to impregnate economic thinking with moral insights. The present symposium can make some contribution towards this challenging end.

I propose to present this paper in two parts. First, I will make a few observations on the subject of the main paper written by Professor Robert Bellah, outlining the relation between faith and the changing world economy. Secondly, I will present my own response, as a Muslim economist, to the overall problem of the new international economic order.

## II. RELIGION'S PLACE AND ROLE

Professor Bellah's paper is full of stimulating ideas and insights. His formulation of the problem is clear and incisive. That the changing world order could be a challenge to faith-oriented communities is acknowledged on all hands, but what is not realized generally is that faith can be, and is, a challenge to the changing world order. It is idle to assume that religion is necessarily at the receiving end. This is somewhat typical of the West to always formulate the proposition in a way that would assign a secondary position to religion. It is fashionable to assume that religion must change to give way to the demands of economic and political change. Professor Bellah brings into sharp focus the other dimension, suggesting how faith could be looked upon as a challenge to the changing economic scene and be a positive factor influencing its future dynamics.

Professor Bellah's critique of modern Western ideology has especially interested me. His presentation is as thoughtful as it is sharp and trenchant. He has candidly shown the limitations and biases of the Western approach. That helps one to some extent in having a clearer idea about how and why humankind has been plunged into its contemporary crisis. This part of his presentation is illuminating.

I have, however, strong reservations about some of his other observations, particularly the ones about the nature of religion and its role in the solution of human problems. I am afraid his approach remains very much tainted, albeit unconsciously, by the biases of the Western ideology which he has so forcefully criticized.

The idea of the "mobilization of faith communities" for "direct action," of the "use" of religion "to solve problems," of "religion going beyond the articulation and internalization of symbols" by creating "new structures" are not necessarily repugnant and self-defeating, as he seems unfortunately to assume. His typology of religion is very much attuned to the history of the religious tradition of the West. He has failed to comprehend all the ramifications of the movement type model of religion. He gives an exaggerated importance to the idea of 'religiously charismatic leader' and too little to the social transformation and societal reconstruction that such an approach involves.

I feel strongly that the Islamic model does not conform to any of the three arch-types he has outlined. I will try to elucidate some aspects of the Islamic approach in the second part of my paper, and would like to submit that religion can be a factor of critical importance in our search for a new world order.

### III. ISLAM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

#### A. Grounds For Hope and Disappointment

A careful perusal of the current debate on the New International Economic Order leaves one with two rather conflicting feelings: hope and disappointment. The fact that some of the major incongruities and injustices that characterize relationships between individuals, institutions and nations in our times are no longer being accepted passively as a *fait accompli*, and the fact that the need for changing the present state of affairs is being voiced from all quarters and not merely by the aggrieved parties, give some cause for hope. Smug complacency over the status quo that has held the ground for so long has now begun to dissipate.

This in itself is a significant development, as it opens up new opportunities for review and reappraisal, for fresh thinking and for an

examination of alternatives available to humankind, in its search for creative possibilities to rebuild and restructure society and its institutions. This gives rise to new hope, even though it be a tiny flicker. The worry, however, is that this little newborn flicker of light and hope is trembling in the face of confounding winds. The level at which the entire debate is taking place is, to put it frankly and bluntly, quite disappointing.

## **B. Themes and Issues in the NIEO Debate**

It would be fair to suggest that the discussion on the New International Economic Order in almost all international forums, academic as well as political, is being undertaken at three levels—descriptive, analytic and prescriptive.

### 1) The Level of Description

At the level of description, the plight of the Third World is being brought into focus. There is an increasing acknowledgement of the revolting facts of poverty, misery and deprivation, of disease and illiteracy, of death and starvation, of underdevelopment and retardation of growth, of widening gaps in economic wellbeing and the mounting weight of international debts, of deteriorating terms of trade and depletion or mismanagement of natural resources, of apathy and misdevelopment.

The failure of the developmental effort made over the last three decades in the underdeveloped world, which contains two thirds of the human race, and the deterioration of relations between the developed and the underdeveloped worlds are being highlighted. The leaders of the Third World are becoming more and more vocal and assertive. Those who speak for the industrialized world are increasingly willing to acknowledge some of these realities, even though still haltingly and with reservations.

There is greater consciousness of the transfer of resources from the Third World to the developed world because of a number of built-in mechanisms in international trade which favor the industrialized world and limit the options open to the Third World. The prices of raw materials have been a very unstable factor, with the result that the relative value of the exports of the Third World has been going down, while that of their imports from the industrialized world has been increasing. Many an effort to stabilize the prices of raw materials has been frustrated because it has been regarded as being against the interests of the industrialized world.

The first significant effort on the part of the Third World to gain control over the prices of their products has been the case of oil. This attempt to get an economic price of an essential source of energy has

been treated as a declaration of war against the industrialized world. Utterly neglected has been the fact that the North has deliberately kept the price of oil much lower than its real economic price and has built its own economic prosperity by keeping this source of energy cheap.

The technological dependence of the Third World on the industrialized world, and the unsuitability of the technology of the North to the conditions of the Third World, is another major theme in the debate. In spite of some transfer of technology, it is claimed that the new technology is unable to act as an internalized agent of growth. Instead, it is producing new technological destabilization, without really meeting the technological needs of these societies. Moreover, this increases the technological dependence of the Third World on the North and as the prices of capital goods are escalating, this technological dependence is also producing financial dependence.

The hope that foreign aid would act as the chief stimulant to development in the Third World countries has been dashed to pieces. In view of these failures, the Third World countries are asking for a new deal. In the new deal, they are demanding, among others, the following changes.

(a) A restructuring of the international institutions, particularly of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the operative organs of the U.N., particularly at the Security Council. The first major demand of these developing countries is the restructuring of the international institutions so that they may have a greater voice in economic and political decision making at the international level.

(b) Their second major demand is for an acknowledgement of national sovereignty over their own raw materials. This would mean that a country, where a certain raw material or source of energy is found, should have the right to own it, to price it and to benefit from it. Presently, these raw materials are either in the hands of multinational corporations, which are not fully under the control of the national governments, or their extraction, development and trade are so much under the influence of the developed countries that the latter are in a controlling position to manipulate prices and supplies. This puts these resources at the mercy of outside forces.

(c) Their third demand is for revision in the international division of labor. The present situation perpetuates the role of the Third World as producers of raw materials, while the industrialized world specializes in the production of secondary and tertiary goods. It also leads to the type of economic development the Third World is expected to have, with its consequences for the relative shares of economic power allotted to different parts of the world.

(d) Freedom of movement for their goods, particularly for their manufactured products, but also for agricultural and dairy produce, into West European and American markets is another demand of the underdeveloped world. They insist on access to these markets to accelerate their own economic development while seeking some permanent mechanism to stabilize prices.

(e) Finally, because the financing of development is becoming more and more difficult, Third World countries are now suggesting some form of compulsory transfer of resources from rich to poor countries through international institutions, as against bilateral aid. Due to the deterioration of the terms of trade, most of the underdeveloped countries are facing balance of payments crises, and foreign aid has failed to provide any real relief.

First of all, "foreign aid" is a misnomer because it is not a grant or subsidy. Almost 90 per cent of it is made up of tied loans, extended on commercial terms, and subject to a number of restrictions. The result is that the net benefit is often in favor of the giver more than receiver. The volume of aid is also far below the needs of the developing world. Total foreign aid from the developed world is substantially below the targets set by the U.N. for the 1960's and 1970's, with the result that the voluntary transfer of resources from the rich to the poor is not taking place. Then too, the burden of external debt has risen excessively high, and quite a significant part of the export earnings of most of the Third World countries is eaten up in service charges and debt repatriation.

This is why the Third World is now suggesting some form of compulsory transfer of resources. There is a general feeling in the Third World that the time has come when, instead of negotiating about each one of their specific problems, they must try to enter into a new deal with the North to restructure economic relations worldwide. And so a number of possible bargaining packages and strategies have been developed to help bring about a new economic order.

## 2) The Levels of Analysis and Prescription

At the level of analysis and consequent prescription, there is wide divergence of opinion. Even when some of the facts about international economic disorder are not in dispute, there is great controversy about the factors responsible for them.

Most economists and statesmen from the rich North emphasize the fact of greater interdependence between different parts of the world and the relative obsolescence of the idea of national sovereignty and autarchy. They throw light on the benefits that the Third World has derived from its contacts with the industrialized world and the continuing help and assistance the North is extending to it. They sug-

gest that natural economic factors are not being allowed to play effectively their proper role and thus yield their final benefits.

They also suggest that the internal organization of society and the economy in the Third World countries leaves much to be desired, with the result that it obstructs efforts towards economic development. According to this thesis the prosperity of the two is interdependent. The Third World can prosper only if the industrialized world prospers. Anything that damages the North and its economic prospects is bound to adversely affect the prospects of the Third World.<sup>1</sup>

Third World theorists too have now developed a framework for the analysis of the relationship of their countries with the North. As against the North's concept of a benevolent world economy, in which their growth and prosperity results in spreading wealth to the underdeveloped world, the general thesis of these writers is that the industrialized countries constitute the powerful central core of the world economy, while the entire Third World is its weak periphery, dependent upon this center which sucks in resources from the periphery. The result is a hierarchical and exploitative world order with built-in arrangements for the transfer of resources from the underdeveloped to the developed world. Development and underdevelopment are not two autonomous realities, but two aspects of the same process. This state of affairs has its roots in the imperialist mode of production, established during the colonial period and it continues unabated today, although some of its forms and instruments of control have changed. The multinational corporation now figures very prominently as the midwife of this neo-imperialism.

These theorists argue that the Third World cannot reasonably hope to achieve self-sustaining development without breaking away from this system of dependence and bondage.<sup>2</sup> Marxian analysts try to develop this thesis in the context of their own thinking on the nature and dynamics of international capitalism and of imperialism and neo-imperialism, while other analysts lay greater emphasis on the elements and structures of dependence without committing themselves definitively to the nature of the system.

The prescription each group offers for the solution of the contemporary international economic crisis emerges largely from their analysis of its causes. Most Northern economists believe that solutions to the problems raised are possible within the overall framework of the present order through more efficient allocation and use of resources, and by transfer payments within the system. The Third World group, on the other hand, insists that structural changes are an essential precondition for any real change in the situation.



### C. The Real Challenge of our Times

This lengthy digression recapitulates the mood and the themes of the debate on the new international economic order. The facts of the situation are not very much in dispute. The 'interdependence' thesis and the 'dependentia' theorem both contain elements of truth, but none of them goes far enough to explain the whole truth. They remain partial in their explanation of the present crisis. Each explanation is very much rooted in the overall sympathy-framework to which the analyst happens to belong, psychologically, culturally and economically.

My contention, on the other hand, is that the crisis is not confined to economic relations and institutions. It is rather an all-pervading crisis, and as such, the real causes will have to be traced in the context of the crisis of civilization and not merely of the economic order. It is too partisan and consequently too unrealistic to assume that the disease is specific to the context of capitalism.

The basic problems that confront us today are very similar, whether under capitalism or socialism. In fact, both these systems are products of the same culture system, Western civilization. Capitalism and socialism are both equally exploitative and unjust. The establishment of a just and humane order for the moral wellbeing of people is not their primary concern. They deal with different blueprints of mechanistic structures of society. Their real failure has not been their inability to answer correctly some basic questions but their inability to ask the right questions. They do not treat the universe as a moral order. They regard men and women as self-sufficient, and regard material and economic progress as their real objective. They cannot offer as ultimate goals anything higher than material privileges: economic wealth, political power, military strength, international influence. Conflict of interests is built into this concept of life, and is bound to result in a crisis of values.

Because Joseph A. Camilleri, a perceptive analyst of contemporary history, describes this crisis of our times brilliantly, I quote him here at length:

"The contemporary human crisis is so profound and pervasive that the very attempt to analyze it—let alone resolve it—seems to defy the power of human reason and imagination. The battle for survival is currently being waged by millions of men whose precarious existence is one of poverty, squalor and even hunger. Man's predicament impinges on the future of entire nations that are threatened by external attack or internal disintegration. It dominates the vast network of international relations so delicately

poised on the dangerous and ultimately unstable 'balance of terror'. . . .

Traditional conceptions of time, space and movement have been overthrown by the technological revolution and the shift to an exploitative, power-centered culture. The ensuing social and psychological discontinuity and moral vacuum have produced a severe crisis of conscience and a large-scale flight from reality. . . .

The crisis which confronts twentieth century man is truly global, not simply by virtue of countless men and women, but in the more far-reaching sense that it permeates and vitiates the whole fabric of human relations and human institutions, and is now distorting man's entire relationship with the natural order. . . . No human community, no individual, no corner of the globe, however remote or isolated, however powerful or well endowed, can now escape from the disorder which affects the entire planet. . . . Perhaps we can best describe the global crisis in terms of a fundamental disequilibrium which severely limits and may ultimately destroy man's capacity for biological and cultural adaptation to his environment.

Among the most common forms of pathological behaviour in modern industrial society, one would include the preoccupation with having and acquiring, rather than with being or becoming; the obsession with the power to dominate rather than liberate; the profound sense of alienation from rather than participation in the wider social reality; the attitude towards work and leisure as means of killing time rather than creatively living in time, the predisposition to an in-group rather than an out-group psychology which discriminates on the basis of sex, race, creed or nationality; the tendency to resolve conflicts through the use or threat of force. . . . What distinguishes the super-industrial system—and the global spread of its empire—is the high degree with which social pathology has been institutionalized through the pyramidal stratification of wealth, power and knowledge, but above all through the growing monopoly of industrial production over the satisfaction of human wants. . . . The institutional integration of pathological behaviour has now reached such proportions that it is not merely the quality but the very survival of human life which is at risk. . . . If this is an accurate diagnosis of the serious and deteriorating condition of our civilization, then no piece-meal, provisional, or parochial remedy is likely to prove efficacious. It would appear that in order to sustain the organic evolution of the human species it will be necessary to develop perspectives and responses that are both radical and global in inspiration." <sup>3</sup>

#### **D. A New World Order—Not Just NIEO**

In face of this real challenge to humankind today, all men and women of faith must state with all the force at their command that the real issue is not simply one of a new international economic order but of a new world order, based on a new concept of the human person and a different vision of society and of the destiny of the human community. Any effort at reform under the inspiration of the world faiths in general and of Islam in particular must start by correcting this perspective for understanding the human predicament.

The real need is not to seek concessions here and there to bring about some changes in the superstructures. It is rather to re-examine the foundations on which the entire structure of society and the economy is built and the ideals which the culture aspires to achieve. The crisis in economic and political relations is the natural outcome of those ideals and the structures which have been built to realize them. Islam, therefore, suggests that it is only through inviting humankind towards a new vision of man and society that its house can be set in order. This calls for a basic change in our approach. This change of approach must contain the following elements:

##### **1) More than a new economic arrangement**

The real problem is more basic and covers a much wider area than that of mere economic crisis. As such the economic crisis deserves to be examined in the wider context of the overall human crisis—of the crisis of civilization. Our objective should be to strive for the establishment of a just and humane world order and not merely to create a new economic arrangement. This cannot be done in isolation from the totality of the human situation.

##### **2) A value-oriented or moral approach**

Economic analysis provides valuable insights but it is idle to assume that even economic problems can be solved merely by resort to the tools of economic analysis and policy. People's efforts to solve economic problems by isolating the economic from the total matrix of the moral are collapsing in futility. Economic science is moving deeper and deeper into the throes of a crisis. For if crisis in a science is symbolized by its continued inability to meet the challenges that confront it, then few would disagree that economics is in serious trouble.

The phoenix-like rise of macro-economics from the charred debris of the crash of the 1930's generated a new confidence and valor among economists. A solution to almost every problem seemed within sight. All looked green in the valley of economics. This confidence has

proved false and short-lived. Not only the old problems have remained unsolved; new ones have emerged with threatening overtones. Mass poverty; frustrated take-offs in development; increasing disparities at regional, national and international levels; coexistence of hunger and affluence; irrational use of non-renewable resources; incongruity between technology and developmental needs; unsuitability of production and consumption processes to environmental needs; exploitation of the poor and the afflicted by the rich and powerful; inflation and stagflation; structural deformities in relations between developed and developing countries; all of these and many more problems fail to be tackled within the framework developed by post-Keynsian economics. This is being realized even by those economists who had earlier thought that their sophisticated economic models could now deliver the goods.

Nobel Laureate, Paul Samuelson, for example, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) laments the disarray into which economic theory has fallen. He warns "there are no signs that we're converging towards a philosopher's stone that will cause all the pieces to fall neatly into place." Professor Otto Eckstein of Harvard says, "We are always one inflation too late in specifying the exact form of the price-forecasting equation." And Robert Heilbroner goes a step further when he says, "Economists are beginning to realize that they have built a rather elaborate edifice on rather unsubstantial narrow foundations."

The predicament of economics has been searchingly examined by Kurt Dopfer in his *Economics in the Future: Towards a New Paradigm*.<sup>4</sup> The near consensus that emerges is that what is needed to salvage "the duck of economics" from the "tangled weed" in which it is stuck at the bottom of a rubbish-ridden pool—to use Veblen's analogy—is not just some new interpretation of this or that economic theory or some changes within the current paradigm of economics. There is, rather, need to change the paradigm itself and to move towards a new paradigm under which economic problems can be approached not as economic problems in isolation but in the context of an entire social system and as part of the overall moral problem.<sup>5</sup> What is needed is a widening of our approach from merely an isolated economic approach to a moral approach within which the technical aspects of the economic approach are fully assimilated.

Our approach should be value-oriented. In economics, as in any branch of human activity, there is an area which deals with technological relationships. But such technological relationships *per se* are not the be-all and end-all of a social discipline. Technological relationships are important and they should be decided according to their own rules. But technological decisions are made in the context of

value relations. Our job is to weld these two areas together, to make our values explicit and to assign to them the role of an effective guide. It is only through a thorough understanding of the social ideals and values of religion and of a realistic assessment of one's socio-economic situation—resources, problems and constraints—that faith-oriented communities can develop a creative and innovative approach to change.

This approach would be ideological as well as empirical and somewhat pragmatic. Pragmatic not in the sense that ideals and values can be trimmed to suit the exigencies of the situation, but rather pragmatic in the sense that ideals and values are to be translated into reality in a practical and realistic way.

### 3) A unique approach to social change

The real objective which inspires faith-oriented communities is not a package of economic and political concessions or even some changes in the economic superstructure but the construction of a new world order, with its own framework of ideals, values and foundations. The approach of faith communities to social change has to be unique.

The Western approach has always assumed that radical change can be brought about by changing environment. That is why emphasis has always been placed on change in structures. This approach has failed to produce proper results. It has ignored the need to bring about change within men and women themselves and has concentrated on change in the outside world. What is needed, however, is a total change—within people themselves as well as in their social environment. The problem is not merely structural, although structural arrangements would also have to be remodelled. But the starting point must be the hearts and souls of men and women, their perception of reality and of their own place and mission in life.

### 4) The Islamic approach

The Islamic approach to social change takes full cognizance of these three elements. For Islam,

(a) Social change is not a result of totally predetermined historical forces. The existence of a number of obstacles and constraints is a fact of life and history, but there is no historical determinism. Change has to be planned and engineered. And this change should be purposeful, that is, a movement toward the ideal.

(b) Man is the active agent of change. All other forces have been subordinated to him in his capacity as God's vicegerent and deputy (*Khalifa*) on the earth. Within the framework of the divine arrange-

ment for this universe and its laws, it is man himself who is responsible for making or marring his destiny.

(c) Change consists in environmental change, and change within the hearts and souls of men and women—their attitudes, motivation, commitment, their resolve to mobilize all that is within them and around them for the fulfillment of their objectives.

(d) Life is a network of inter-relationships. Change means some disruption in some relationships somewhere. So there is a danger of change becoming an instrument of disequilibrium within men and women and in society. Islamically-oriented social change would involve the least friction and disequilibria, with planned and co-ordinated movement from one state of equilibrium to a higher one, or from a state of disequilibrium towards equilibrium. Hence, change has to be balanced, gradual and evolutionary. Innovation is to be coupled with integration. It is this unique Islamic approach which leads to revolutionary changes through an evolutionary trajectory.

These basic changes, if implemented, will revolutionize our approach to the problems of a new world order.

### **E. Islam: Its Meaning and Message**

I would now like to briefly explain what Islam is and how it proposes to establish a new order.

#### *No departmentalization of life*

Islam is an Arabic word. It is derived from two roots; one *salm*, meaning peace and the other *SLM*, meaning submission. Islam stands for “a commitment to surrender one’s will to the Will of God” and as such be at peace with the Creator and with all that has been created by Him. It is through submission to the Will of God that peace is produced. Harmonization of our will with the Will of God brings about harmonization of different spheres of life under an all-embracing ideal. Departmentalization of life into different water-tight compartments, religious and secular, sacred and profane, spiritual and material, is ruled out. There is unity of life and unity of the source of guidance. As God is One and Indivisible, so is life and our human personality. Each aspect of life is inseparable from the other. Religious and secular are not two autonomous categories; they represent two sides of the same coin. Each and every act becomes related to God and His guidance. Every human activity is given a transcendent dimension; it becomes sacred and meaningful and goal-centered.

#### *A worldview*

Islam is a worldview and an outlook on life. It is based on the recognition of the unity of the Creator and of our submission to His

will. Everything originates from the One God, and everyone is ultimately responsible to Him. Thus the unity of the Creator has as its corollary, the Oneness of His creation. Distinctions of race, color, caste, wealth and power disappear; our relation with other persons assumes total equality by virtue of the common Creator. Henceforth, our mission becomes a dedication to our Creator; worship and obedience of the Creator becomes our purpose in life.

#### *Divine guidance*

The Creator has not left us without guidance for the conduct of our life. Ever since the beginning of Creation, He has sent down Prophets who conveyed His message to humankind. They are the source for finding God's Will. Thus we have the chain of Prophets beginning with Adam (peace be upon him) and ending with Muhammad (peace be upon him). Abraham, Moses, Noah, John, Zechariah and Jesus (peace be upon them) all belong to this golden chain of Prophets. Prophets David, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (may peace be upon them all), brought revealed books of guidance with them. The Qur'an, the Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, is the last and final of these books of guidance.

The Qur'an contains the word of God. In it is preserved the divine revelation, unalloyed by human interpolation of any kind, unaffected by any change or loss to the original. In it is distilled the essence of all the messages sent down in the past. In it is embodied a framework for the conduct of the whole of human life. There are explicit criteria for judging between right and wrong; there are principles of individual and collective conduct. In it are depicted the human follies of the past. In it are warnings for humankind, and in it are assurances of continued guidance for those who seek God's help.

The Qur'an has depicted a path, the Straight Path (*Sirat ul-Mustaqim*) which when followed revolutionizes the whole of life. It brings about a transformation in character and galvanizes us into action. This action takes the form of purification of the self, and then unceasing effort to establish the laws of God on earth, resulting in a new order based on truth, justice, virtue and goodness.

#### *God's vicegerents*

Men play a crucial role in the making of this world. They act as God's vicegerents (*Khalifa*)—His deputies and representatives on the earth. They are morally prepared to play this role. Success lies in playing it properly, by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, by freeing people from the bondage of others, by demonstrating that a sound and serene society can only result if one harmonizes one's will with the Will of God. This makes seeking the

Creator's pleasure one's purpose in life, treating the whole of Creation as one's partner, raising the concept of human welfare from the level of mere animal needs to seeking what is best in this world and what is best in the Hereafter.

This is the Islamic worldview, and its concept of men and women and their destiny. Islam is not a religion in the Western understanding of the word. It is at once a faith and a way of life, a religion and a social order, a doctrine and a code of conduct, a set of values and principles and a social movement to realize them in history.

#### *No priesthood*

There is no priesthood in Islam, not even an organized 'church'. All men and women, who are committed to this ideal, are expected to live in accordance with its principles and to strive to establish them in society and history. Those who commit themselves to Truth try to see that Truth prevails. They strive to make a new world in the image of the Truth.

#### *A system of life*

Islam, as a system of life, prepares us to play this role and provides us with guidelines for the development of a new personality and a new society. For the purification of self there are prayers (*Salat*) performed five times a day in the confines of the home and in congregation in our mosques, strengthening our commitment to God, refreshing our loyalty to truth, reinvigorating us to work for the realization of our ideals. Prayer is supplemented by fasting (*sawm*) for the achievement of these objectives.

If prayer and fasting integrate us with God and provide us with the spiritual discipline we need to become godly in the midst of the rough and tumble of life, *Zakat* commits our wealth—our worldly resources—to the achievement of divine purposes in the socio-economic realm.

*Zakat* is a monetary obligation. Every Muslim who possesses more than a certain minimum amount of wealth has to contribute at least a certain percentage of his/her total wealth for welfare functions within society. It is not a charity; it is a religious right which the rich owe to the needy and the poor, and to society at large. But the spirit of this compulsory contribution is that it is paid by the rich as an act of worship and not merely as a tax.

This is how all that Muslims have, soul, body or their belongings, are harnessed for the service of virtue, justice and truth. It is also obligatory on Muslims to visit the *Ka'ba* at least once in their lifetime for *Hajj* (pilgrimage). This, among others, is an index of the unity of the Muslim community (*Ummah*), a community of faith and a symbol



of the unity of humankind. A universal order can come into existence only on the basis of a universal faith and not on the basis of commitment to the 'gods' of race, color, region or riches. The ideal of human brotherhood seeks actualization in Islam.

*Unique in values and principles*

A new model of human personality and a new vision of human culture are here presented. Science and technology are developed but they are not directed towards destroying either nature or our abode therein; they add to our efficiency as much as to life's sublimity. Islam aims at a new harmony between man and nature and between man and society.

The uniqueness of Islamic culture lies in its values and principles. When Muslims, after an illustrious historical career, became oblivious of this fact and became obsessed with the manifestations of their culture, as against its sources, they could not even fully protect the house they had built. The strength of Islam lies in its ideals, values and principles, and their relevance to us is as great today as it has been in history. The message is timeless and the principles Islam embodies are of universal application.

**F. Islamic Role in the Establishment of a New World Order**

In our search for a new world order today, Islam emphasizes that we must aspire to a new system of life which could approach human problems from a different perspective, not merely from the perspective of limited national or regional interest, but from the perspective of what is right and wrong, and how best we can strive to evolve a just and a humane world order at different levels of our existence, individual, national and international.

That the present order is characterized by injustice and exploitation is proved beyond any shadow of doubt. But Islam suggests that the present order fails because it is based upon a wrong concept of man and of his relationship with other human beings, with society, with nature, and with the world. The search for a new order brings us to the need for a new concept of man and his role. From the viewpoint of world religions in general, and of Islam in particular, the focus of the discussion must be shifted to a new vision of man and society, to an effort to bring about change at the level of human consciousness, of values, leading to new cultural transformation.

*A movement-oriented approach to religion*

Islam is a movement for social change. It not only gives a clear concept of society and the *modus vivendi* of bringing about the coveted change in history, but it also gives clear guidelines for socio-economic

policy, for some of the key institutions that guarantee the implementation of that policy, and an organized social effort under disciplined leadership to see that these objectives are achieved in space and time.

Muslims have this movement-oriented approach to religion. This model operates at three levels, that of the individual, of society and of the world. First, unless the individual has a new faith, a new consciousness and a new perception of his/her own role, required changes cannot be brought about. Second is the level of society. Initially it may be at the national level but later at the level of the whole world. The Islamic strategy is that it starts with creating a new consciousness in the individual, who imbibes its values and strives to work for the establishment of a just life, not on the basis of expediency or to seek personal or group interests, but to do what is right and just. The Qur'an shows us how an individual problem has to be approached at the universal level when it says that if one person is unjustly killed, this is tantamount to killing the entire human race, and that whoever saves one single life saves the whole race.<sup>6</sup> This is how an individual incident is transformed into a world problem, how an event moves into the realm of values.

#### *Clear guidelines for action*

Islam is not a defense of the *status quo*. Instead, it is a critique of human life, including the lives of Muslims and the organization of Muslim society. The present day Muslim society falls far short of Islamic standards. Thus we believe that Muslim society has to be changed in order to establish those social, economic and political institutions which would establish justice in human relations. Islam wants to bring political power under the control of its moral ideals. Such a society and state would be established as a result of a social movement directed towards Islamic revival. Then the Muslim world would be in a position to play its ideological role in the world, by making its own resources available to build a model society where it has political power, and then by sharing it with others in the interests of justice, acting on the same principle as the Prophet used when he helped the famine-stricken people of Makka who were politically at war against him.

The Islamic State was not at war with human beings as such, but only with the institutions which represented belligerent political power. This may help lead humankind towards the model of a new world order where justice will be done to all, friends and foes alike, and where wealth will be shared with the needy not because it is expedient but because this is just.

*Zakat* is a right of the poor. According to the Qur'an, those who do not help the needy or who scorn the orphan are committing the

crime of denying *din*, the Islamic way itself. This idea of the sharing of wealth as a right is a revolutionary idea. It is with these insights that Islam enters this debate and gives to it a new direction, a new perspective and also clear guidelines for action. In the light of these guidelines a strategy for change can be formulated. A new just order is not merely the need of Muslims, it is a need of people everywhere, in the West as well as the East.

#### *Islam – more than a religion*

Islam is a faith and a way of life. It provides a definite outlook on life and a program for action, a comprehensive milieu for social reconstruction. It reshapes the entire personality of men and women and produces a new culture and civilization. It is deeply concerned with their moral and material existence, their psychological attitudes as well as their socio-economic behavior patterns. All aspects of individual and collective life are developed in a harmonious fashion, within the framework of overall human development known as *Tazkiyyah*<sup>7</sup> (purification).

Islam influences people at different levels of their existence: belief, motivation, personal character, individual behavior, social institutions, collective action. That is why it is more correct to say that Islam is a faith, a way of life, a process of change, and a social movement for the reconstruction of society and the establishment of a just world order, not just a religion.

#### *Basic values for world order*

The basic values on which this world order is established are as follows:

##### 1) *Tawhid*. (God's Unity and Sovereignty).

This is the foundation on which Islam's worldview and its scheme of life is based. It lays the rules of God-man and man-man relationship. *Tawhid* is not merely a metaphysical doctrine. The human approach to social reality is an inextricable part of this belief. The establishment of justice in human relations is a demand of this faith. Belief in God's Unity and His Sovereignty means that all human beings are equal, and that their rights (*Huqûq al 'Ibâd*) are a natural extension of God's rights (*Huqûq Allah*). The Qur'an says:

“Have you observed him who denies the *din*?  
 (the faith and religion, the divine law)  
 He is the one who spurns the orphan,  
 Does not urge the feeding of the needy.  
 Bitter grief to worshippers

Who are neglectful of their prayers;  
 Who would be seen in prostration  
 Yet refuse kindnesses and charity.”<sup>8</sup>

2) *Khilafah* (vicegerency).

Islam defines our status in the world as that of God’s vicegerents – His deputies and representatives. Everything that exists is at our disposal for the fulfillment of this role and is like a trust in our hands. This means that we are not the masters, we are God’s agents and our primary concern should be the fulfillment of the Will of the Lord. We are in the position of trustees in respect to all that is in the universe, our own personal faculties and all our possessions and belongings. All authority is to be exercised within the framework of this trust and we are accountable for whatever we do. This principle stipulates our active participation in life and invites us to treat the entire creation, not as foe, but as partner and friend, made to fulfill the same objectives. The Islamic concept of man’s equality and brotherhood and the creation of the ideological fraternity of the *Ummah* (the community of faith) are essential elements of this principle of *Khilafah*, our trusteeship and stewardship.

3) Establishment of justice among human beings.

Establishment of justice among human beings is one of the basic objectives for which God raised His prophets and sent down His guidance.<sup>9</sup> All human beings have rights upon all that God has provided and thus God’s bounties are to be shared equitably.<sup>10</sup> The poor and the needy have a right upon the wealth of the rich and of society.<sup>11</sup> They must be helped and enabled to participate in the struggle for living with skill and honor.

4) Political and economic power are not evil.

It is a part of our religious mission to harness them for the fulfillment of moral objectives. Instead of remaining instruments of oppression and exploitation, they must be made to serve the ends of justice and to promote good and virtue and to forbid evil and vice.<sup>12</sup>

5) There are no intermediaries between God and man.

God’s guidance is available in the form of His Book, the Qur’an and the life-example of His Prophet, the *Sunnah*. They clearly state the ideals, values and principles that we need to build our individual and collective lives on truth and justice and there exists in this guidance a built-in mechanism to meet the demands of changing times. Evolution is possible within this framework. Only the divine law is eternal, all human expedients are temporary and time-bound. Pursuit

of the divine law is the greatest guarantee against human arbitrariness and relapse into injustice.

*Islam's all-embracing approach to rebuilding world order*

These are the basic principles on which Islam wants to rebuild the world order. The first contribution that Islam wants to make is at the level of one's approach to this problem. Islam adopts an all-embracing approach, based on a spiritual appreciation of reality. It approaches men and women in the context of their total existence, in relation to their Creator and His entire creation. It admits of no dichotomy between matter and spirit, nor between physical and moral. It welds the religious with the secular and treats life as one integrated and harmonious whole.

Islam stands for total change, as against all contemporary ideologies and some religious systems which are content with partial change. It purifies the individual and reconstructs society, making both the individual and society achieve a still higher ideal: fulfillment of the Divine Will.

Its approach is based on values and not on the demands of expediency, personal or national. Its outlook is positive and constructive, and not just negative or destructive. It seeks the person's total welfare—moral, social and economic. It stands for the realization of justice in all aspects of human living. It upholds the principle of universal good and justice and invites the entire human community to work for its establishment. It affirms the integrity of the individual and sanctity of his/her human rights, as rights guaranteed by the Creator and tries to establish a social order wherein peace, dignity and justice prevail.

*Islam's strategy for changing world order*

Islam's strategy for the establishment of such a world order consists in inviting all human beings to take this path, irrespective of their color, race, language, nationality, ethnic or historical origin. It does not speak the language of the interests of the east or the west, of the north or the south, of the developed or underdeveloped. It wants the new order to be established for all human beings in all parts of the world. Through this universal approach Islam wants to bring about a new consciousness of the ideals and principles on which the house of humanity should be rebuilt and invites them to spell out its implications for the reconstruction of human thought and policy.

Islam also launches a social movement, an international movement involving all those who accept these ideals and values to establish the

new order. Islam is eager to establish the new model in any part of the world. If it reconstructs its social order on these principles, the Muslim world could be the living example of this new order. But the present reality of the Muslims is far removed from the ideal. Once this model is established in some part of the world, this experiment can be shared with all the rest, as sunshine is shared by all. The prospects of this depend very much upon the Islamic movement that is trying to spearhead this social effort for the establishment of a new world order.

### FOOTNOTES

1. See Richard N. Cooper, *The Economics of Interdependence: Economic Policy in the Atlantic Community*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1968; "Economic Interdependence and Foreign Policy in the Seventies," *World Politics*, 24th January, 1972, pp. 159-81; and "Macroeconomic Policy Adjustment in Interdependent Economics," *Journal of Political Economics*, 83, February 1969, pp. 1-24; Fred C. Bergston, *The Future of the International Economic Order: An Agenda for Research*, Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1973; Harry G. Johnson, *International Economic Questions Facing Britain, the United States and Canada*, British North America Research Association, June 1970; Raymond Vernon, *Sovereignty at Bay*, New York: Basic Books, 1971.

2. See Raul Prebisch, "Commercial Policy in the Underdeveloped Countries," *American Economic Review*, 49, May 1959, pp. 251-73; Andrew Grunder-Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review*, 18, September 1966, pp. 17-31; Gunnar Myrdal, *Development and Underdevelopment*, Cairo: National Bank of Egypt Fiftieth Anniversary Commemoration Lectures, 1956; Benjamin J. Cohen, *The Question of Imperialism—The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence*, New York: Basic Books, 1973; Osvaldo Sunkel, "Big Business and 'Dependentia': A Latin American View," *Foreign Affairs*, 50, April 1972, pp. 51-131; Stephen Hymer, "The Multinational Corporation and the Law of Uneven Development," in *Economics and World Order—From the 1970's to the 1990's*, edited by Jagdish Bhagwati, New York: Macmillan, 1972.

3. Joseph A. Camilleri, *Civilization in Crisis: Human Prospects in a Changing World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 1-2; 5; 9; 11; and pp. 179-180.

4. Kurt Dopfer, *Economics in the Future: Towards a New Paradigm*, London: Macmillan, 1976.

5. See also, E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1977, pp. 135-154.

6. *The Qur'an*, 5: 32.

7. *The Qur'an*, 2: 129, 151; 19: 9-10; 87: 14.

8. *The Qur'an*, 107: 1-7.

9. *The Qur'an*, 57: 25.

10. *The Qur'an*, 14: 33-34.

11. *The Qur'an*, 51: 19.

12. *The Qur'an*, 2: 143; 3: 110; 17: 80-81.