

6. How The Islamic Society Came Into Existence, And How It Continues Its Existence

There is no doubt that every society is created as a result of a single objective of its various members. This single objective is a unique spirit which spreads in every direction and is somehow limited with them.

This objective in non-religious communities is the worldly life of man, of course a life which is common between all the members, and not the private life of each individual, that is, the exploitation of material benefits in a collective manner.

From the viewpoint of effects, the differences between collective and individual enjoyments and exploitation is this, that if man could live alone, he would be absolutely independent in each of his life's enjoyments, since he would have no rivals or opponents except in case where some organs of his impose limitations on other organs. For example, man is not able to use up all the air that exists, since his lungs have not the capacity for all that air, even if he had the appetite for it. In the same way man cannot eat all the foodstuffs that exist since his stomach has not the capacity for them.

But if we suppose that he has no other partner in benefitting from matter, then there is no reason why he should limit the field of his activities. The condition of such a man would be contrary to a man placed within a social environment, for, if this man were independent in his deeds and behavior, the result would be for individuals to hinder and check one another'. Such a state will ruin life and destroy mankind¹.

The only factor that causes law to be established in and rule over society is having a single goal, but self-growing societies cannot understand their own state through deliberation and thought.

In societies, customs and traditions are created by the innumerable disputes and conflicts of members. The result of these conflicts and struggles is to compel everyone to observe certain ways, so that order may be kept to some extent, and as these regulations and matters do not have firm foundations, they are subject to violation and annulment, and thus change and disappear soon.

But civilized societies base their social conditions on a firm and permanent foundation, and by means of limits and their way between the wills and actions of the individuals in the society, and then all the power is concentrated in one place, which guarantees the execution of the articles of law

Hence several points become clear:

(a) Law is in fact something that limits the wills and actions of people, thereby removing molestation and disputes from among them.

(b) The members of a society governed by law are quite free beyond law. This requires man's equipment with understanding and will and ratification these two powers (that is, after the people's will and actions are rectified, a man who is equipped with understanding and resolution, will be free). So you see that existing laws are not opposed to divine teachings and ethics. And these two important matters, namely divine teachings and ethics take the form that law gives them.

Divine teachings and ethics must on account of their dependence arrive at a compromise and agreement with law, and as a result sooner or later must take the form of a number of superficial customs and traditions which lack spiritual worth.

We observe for the same reason that politics plays with religion; one day it issues decrees against religion, and tramples on it, and the next day it turns to religion and insists on elevating its words in an exaggerating manner. Sometimes, too, it frees itself from the burden of religion, and leaves it to itself.

(c) This method of legislation is not without defect, for, although the guarantee for the execution of law belongs to the power which is concentrated in one or a few individuals, yet this guarantee in itself has no guarantee; that is, if this source of power and sovereignty turned away from righteousness so as to transform the government of people over people, and changed the course of law, who is there who could vanquish this transgressing tyrant, and bring him back to the course of equity and justice?

This statement, in addition to much historical evidence, has numerous proofs in the present time, which is the era of education and civilization.

You may add to the above defect another defect, that is, the violation of law may be related to the executive power or go beyond its domain.

Let us return to the beginning of the discussion: civil society is made to have unity by one objective, and that is the exploitation of the advantages of worldly life which they believe to be happiness.

But Islam considers the orbit of human life wider than a worldly material one. It believes it to be the next life which is the reality of life. Islam believes that worldly life has no use except to absorb divine teachings which end in monotheism. Islam believes that these teachings will not be preserved except by

moral virtues and by the purification of the self from every debasing vice.

And finally Islam says: This morality will not attain perfection except through a proper social life based on devotion to God; a life which is humble before the divinity of God; a life which treats people on the basis of social justice. It is on these profound principles and permanent foundations that Islam has set an objective for human society. The objective on the basis of which human society is created and through which it gains unity is the religion of monotheism.

Islam has drawn up all of its laws on the basis of monotheism, and in forging the law it has not limited itself to the adjustment of people's will and action, but completed it with acts of devotion and proper teachings and ethics.

Islam has placed the overall responsibility of execution of the laws on the Islamic government in the first place, and on society in the second place. This guarantee consists of suitable education in theory and practice, guidance in promoting good and forbidding wrong. The most important thing in this religion is that its parts are so inter-related that a perfect unity is generated between them, in the sense that the spirit of monotheism spreads over the high morality which is promoted by this religion, and the moral spirit reigns over the deeds to which the members of the community are bound.

Islam is based on monotheism. This means Islam goes beyond mere ethics seeking adherence to the Will and Purpose of one God. In other words, a higher order of ethics aligned to monotheism constitute the basis of Islam.

If our reader says: The defect which was attributed to civil laws, meaning that they are such that there is the possibility of their being rejected by the executive power, or that people's violation of the laws may be hidden from the eye of the executive, the same criticism is quite true of Islam, Our reader may claim as the clearest evidence of this that religion is weakened, and its domination over the community is destroyed, when it cannot impose its precepts on the people.

We offer this answer to our reader: the truth of general law whether divine or human is nothing but a set of mental forms registered in people's minds. But when man wills, they become practicable and perceptible. It is clear that if man's will becomes rebellious and refuses to carry out those laws, no action will appear to correspond with the law.

The point is that there should exist something by means of which the execution of law should be possible, so that the law can stand on its own leg. The defect of civil law is that it gives importance to the majority's will only to suspend actions and has no other purpose. Civic laws have given no attention to what may protect this will.

A society can attain its goals, including mainly the maintenance of law and prevention of corruption as long as its members sustain their will to live responsibly and with dignity. In case of social evils and disintegration of a society's moral fabric, it cannot uphold the rule of law

In occurrences where the executive finds no way to become aware of them, such as secret crimes, or when it cannot extend its domination over them, such as the events which are beyond its influence, in these cases there is no possibility or hope of carrying out the law.

Most of the ramifications which occurred after the First and Second World Wars are the best examples of our claims.

Corruption and violation of the law and social dispersion occur only when society pays no attention to what preserves people's will by means of its power because high morals are the guarding will.

For, as psychology has shown, 'will' gets no other help other than a suitable morality for its stability, permanence and continuation of its life.

If the way and laws which reign over a society do not have a firm foundation of high morals, they will be like wild and rootless plants which do not last. The appearance of communism is a good warning. This school was produced by democracy. It was a result of the extravagance and excessive revelry of one class as against the deprivation of another class.

Society had found, too, completely opposite points, very remote from each other, one of which was hard-heartedness, cruelty and unfairness, and the other was concentration of anger, rancor and enmity.

Moreover the World Wars which followed one another and still threaten mankind with a third war, produced much ruin and destruction and even annihilated some species of plants. Is the cause of war any other factor than pride, selfishness, and greed?

We conclude from these two historical testimonies that when laws have no high moral basis, they will have no guarantee of execution and duration.

Now that the reader has understood the course of law in a civilized society, he should also pay attention to the basis of Islamic legislation. Islam bases its laws and current rules on ethics and insists always on bringing up people with chaste morals, for, current laws in practice are guaranteed by good morals.

Ethics accompany man both openly and secretly, in public and private, and performs its function much better than the police or any other force responsible keeping order.

We admit that public education in those countries intends to educate people on the basis of fine qualities, and tries hard to encourage people to follow this way, but these efforts are of no avail to them.

The reason is first that the only source of wicked qualities, is nothing but extravagance and excess in material voluptuousness or unlimited deprivation in material things. Some people resort to wickedness through affluence and repose and others because of misfortune and helplessness.

Laws have left people perfectly free in this matter, exploitations and pleasures have no legal limitation. This freedom has given one group total affluence, and deprived another in every respect.

Thus would invitation and encouragement to moral excellence have any meaning but an invitation to two contrary matters? Are legal freedom and invitation to morality anything but a demand for two wholly opposite things?²

Moreover as you know, they are socially-minded, but their society keeps on suppressing small communities, and tramples on their rights, and exploits whatever they possess. It tries to enslave them, and extend its oppression on them as much as it can. Thus an invitation to virtuousness is a contrary action, and such an action will be quite sterile.

Secondly, if virtue is to be constant and permanent, it requires a guarantee to protect and maintain it. What performs this function is monotheism.

Monotheism³ means that man should believe that this universe has only one God, who has many good names; that God has created man to give him perfection and happiness. God loves goodness and virtue, and dislikes evil and wickedness.

He will gather all creatures one day for a decisive and final judgment and will reward all completely. The reward of the good will be goodness, and the punishment of the wicked will be badness.

It is clear that if there was no belief in resurrection, the main factor which would not exist, and nothing would check the natural pleasures of the self; for the nature of every human being inclines to his own desires, not to what others benefit from⁴.

And if he wishes for something for others, he himself will benefit from it, too⁵.

In this way, when a man succeeds in violating other people's rights, and there is nothing to check him and no one to punish him, or blame him, what can prevent him from committing sin and oppression? Even when that sin is great and imaginary obstacles are suggested to mislead debaters, this point is true. For example, patriotism, humanitarianism a good reputation, etc. are a number of sentiments and inner desires.

These sentiments are preserved by education, but an unalterable and powerful factor is lacking in such a case. Therefore these sentiments are only accidental and ordinary states, the disappearance of which nothing prevents. Why should it be necessary for a man to sacrifice himself for another, so that after his own death the latter may enjoy life?

While in his opinion death is absolute annihilation and effacement, he might say: "My good name remains but a good name is on other people's tongue, and what benefit does a man get after he has sacrificed himself and his existence has come to an end?" In short, a thoughtful and clear-sighted person cannot doubt that a man does not deprive himself of something for which he receives a reward or

benefit.

In the above context, it is indicative of pride and error for anyone to assume that his reputation, honour and applause will not only outlast him in this world, but enable him to comfortably enjoy the same in the next world.

You have seen a drunken man who commits such acts in his excited condition that he would not commit in his sober state. In drunkenness he shows surprising indulgence, and is ready to give away his honour, wealth and anything else which is precious to him. This man is drunk and not sober, but he considers his act chivalry and manliness, while they are nothing but stupidity and madness.

We conclude, then that these checks that man has created for himself are not fundamental, and cannot prevent deviations and blunders. A man has no refuge as a barrier against blunders except that monotheism of which we spoke. Therefore, you see that Islam has based good morals which are a part of the prevalent way of Islam on monotheism, one concern of which is Resurrection.

The requisite of this matter is that a man is obliged to do good and avoid evil, whether anyone else is aware of it anywhere and at any time or not, whether he is praised for it or not, whether he is forced or not. It makes no difference for him.

He believes that God is with him, God knows, God keeps whatever he does, God is above everyone and sees their deeds⁶. He believes there is a day ahead when he will witness all his former deeds, whether good or bad, and will receive his due reward.

Such a belief which is based on reality and truth is the only way of the execution of law and preservation of order and justice in society; otherwise no agent can guarantee the execution of law and social life.

¹. This topic may be studied at length in the discussion of prophethood in volume 2 of Al-Mizan, and in the book on "Revolution or secret understanding".

². Meaning that freedom of action and good morality are two opposite matter, and if law asked people to have both, that is, if it left them free in their lusts, and at the same time told them to be virtuous, it would mean that freedom exists and does not exist, and morality exists and does not exist at the same time.

³. Although monotheism means belief in the oneness of God, yet all the points mentioned are the inseparable parts of true monotheism. Monotheism is not possible without Resurrection.

⁴. A belief in Resurrection allows a man to know that what he does is unto himself. Goodness and badness are related to him and as he is interested in himself and his own joys, he does good and attains favor.

But if he has no such belief, when goodness is harmful to his world, he will not commit it, for in his opinion someone else benefits from it, not himself. Man is by nature interested in his own profit, not that of others. So we see that the natural requisite of belief in Resurrection is good quality, and that of unbelief is lust and selfishness.

⁵. A man loves himself more than another. He understands his own pleasure, not someone else's. And when he performs a deed which benefits others, he is in fact giving himself enjoyment by his good deed, and so he, too, gains a benefit.

⁶. Fortunately now with the establishment of the Islamic Republic and influence of spiritualism in the army, the morals of soldiers has been so transformed, that they are ready to venture their lives like those in the early era of Islam, and annihilate the terrible enemy, for, they know that if an Islamic soldier is killed in war, he will win success, and if he kills the

enemy he will attain his goal.

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