

## Preface

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*

*All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.*

*May God's blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad and his Progeny.*

What you hold in your hands is a treatise whose genesis is in a 1996 seminar at the West Ja'ffari Islamic Centre (Toronto) where I made a presentation on "Islamic Business Ethics". Between the seminar and this publication, I have thoroughly revised the material and have added more details in all the sections of this publication.

The treatise begins with a discussion on the relationship of human beings with this world, with their Creator, and their personal attitude towards time and money. Then it moves on to describe their interaction with fellow humans while they go about pursuing material blessings: their customers, employees, and business partners.

This is followed by an overview of the types of businesses and trades which are considered legitimate or otherwise in Islam. Finally, I have appended the transcript of my 2003 speech on the challenges that Muslims face while working in the West as the last chapter of this treatise.

I would hereby like to thank my friends, businessmen and academicians alike, who reviewed the manuscript. Their comments and questions helped me to further improve the final text.

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The primary sources of Islamic teachings are two: the Qur'an (the Divine revelation) and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny). According to Shi'a Muslims, the true interpretation of the Qur'an and the authentic tradition of the Prophet have been preserved by the Imams of Ahlul Bayt.

These sources have been extensively studied and thoroughly analyzed by the jurists (*fuqaha'* or *mujtahidin*) over the last fourteen centuries.<sup>1</sup> What you see in this treatise is the Islamic view on issues related to business ethics.

Imam 'Ali (a.s), when he was the ruler of the Muslims, publicly announced: "O business people, learn the *fiqh*, then engage in trade; learn the *fiqh*, then engage in trade; learn the *fiqh*, then engage in trade...The business person is a sinner and the sinner is in the Fire except he or she who takes what is rightful and gives what is rightful."

Muslims are expected to learn the religious law (*fiqh*) of their trade and profession. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for committing sins.

I hope that this treatise will help Muslim business people and professionals understand the Islamic perspective on life, this world, pursuit of material goods, and their responsibility towards society in general.

*Wa ma tawfiqi illa bi-llah.*

Toronto, Canada

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1. For more on the sources of Islamic laws, the reader may refer to my brief treatise, An Introduction to the Islamic Shari'ah (1992).

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