

PART TWO: FUNDAMENTAL PAPERS

The Fundamental of Peace

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I deem myself greatly privileged to have been assigned the honour of addressing this distinguished gathering of learned representatives of all the principal faiths associated together in spiritual fellowship with the purpose of sharing their thinking, inspired by the respective disciplines to which they belong and to which they profess allegiance, on the subject of peace. I am but one individual out of the vast body of Muslims spread around the globe. I claim no representative capacity and I have no pretense to high scholarship or to profound thinking. I shall proceed to make a humble effort to lay before you with deep respect certain lines of thought on some aspects of the purpose of this Conference. My thinking is derived from Islamic sources and though I hope it is shared and supported by a large sector of Muslim scholars, it does not bind any of them. Along with my fellow participants, I look forward

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to sharing in the wealth of thinking and wisdom that may be contributed during our discussions here on the topic of peace, a subject of vital interest to the whole of humanity at this fateful juncture in its history and fortunes. I am deeply grateful to the organizers of this great conference for their courtesy and hospitality in inviting me to the Conference and generously affording me an opportunity to make my humble contribution to these deliberations.

One or two elementary and explanatory observations may perhaps be helpful. The word "Islam," the name of the great faith of which I have the honour to be one of the least of its millions of servants, means peace and submission. In other words, it connotes the achievement of peace, both here and hereafter, through submission to the will of Allah, Creator, Sustainer and Lord of all the worlds. Its application is not restricted to the followers of the faith revealed through the Holy Prophet Mohammad, but comprises all the righteous in all the ages that preceded him who submitted themselves wholly to the will of Allah. In the Scripture of Islam they are all described as Muslims. That scripture, called the Quran, is a compilation of the verbal revelation vouchsafed to the Holy Prophet of Islam over a period of approximately twenty-two years (610-632) and is thus literally the Word of God. What the Prophet taught in exposition and illustration of the doctrine, teaching and philosophy revealed and laid down in the Quran has also been preserved and is available and serves as an indispensable guide to the meaning of the Quran, but is not comprised in the Quran itself. In my submission I shall base myself entirely on the Quran, for the reason that the values inculcated by a faith must be discovered in its

Scripture. If they have to be looked for elsewhere they cannot justly be ascribed to the faith. All quotations in the course of my submission are, therefore, except where another source is indicated, taken from the Quran and consequently the numeral references are to chapters and verses of the Quran.

It is well recognised that peace in its true meaning does not comprise solely physical security or absence of war and conflict. This condition is only a passive and limited, though very important and essential, aspect of the wider concept of peace. Peace means beneficent adjustment and orientation of the individual with and towards on the one side his Creator and on the other side his fellow beings. This applies to the entirety of the concentric relationship between individual and individual, individual and community, community and community, nation and nation and, in short, between the whole of humanity *inter se* and between man and the universe. It comprises all spheres of life, physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual. It is, and ought to be, the primary concern of religion. That is why this gathering together of wise men and women from all quarters of the globe and from all walks of life has been so aptly described as "World Conference on Religion and Peace." It is a most timely enterprise as religion has now for more than half a century been under pressure from various directions and all over the globe those who feel concerned with religion—and they comprise a vast majority of mankind—are apprehensive that these pressures may result in large-scale alienation from religion. This tendency is observable in large sections of the youth in many societies and is spreading rapidly.

Peace must originate in the heart of man. No one can be at

peace with his brother unless he is at peace with himself, and no one is at peace with himself unless he is at peace with his Maker. Society is a multiple of individuals and mankind is a multiple of societies and cultures. Thus the essence of the problem of peace is that the individual must be at peace with himself and with mankind through and in consequence of putting himself at peace with his Maker.

The essence of religion is faith in the Divine and to the degree to which that faith is perfect and steadfast, human life is beneficently adjusted and co-ordinated, and man is at peace.

Faith is not by any means confined to the intellectual acceptance of truth. It imports a heavy and continuous obligation of conformity to the will and pleasure of the Creator and Maker of us all.

How can man become aware of the Divine Will? It is a common and specious fallacy that human reason is alone adequate to discover both the existence of God and His Will. A moment's reflection would show that if that were so, human reason would be the creator of God. An utterly untenable position.

The wisdom of the Creator demands, and such has been the case throughout human history, that God should reveal Himself to man through the manifestation of His attributes and should furnish guidance to man whereby he may put himself in accord with the Divine Will. All religion, strictly defined, is based on revelation.

Study and observation both confirm a process of evolution in every sphere of life. Human intellect is no exception. To meet this contingency, revealed guidance has been furnished in stages, each stage being suited to and adequate for the needs of

the people to whom it was directed. A comparative study of religion, objective and unbiased, would confirm this process of evolution in revealed guidance. It would also be confirmed that revealed guidance has always kept ahead of human needs and requirements and has never fallen behind.

When the process of intellectual evolution of man was about to reach its culmination, Divine Revelation had already arrived at its culmination in all its aspects. Not that culmination in either sphere barred further progress. Quite the contrary. In each sphere the culmination meant that vast vistas of progress were thrown open which would continuously expand and press forward through the process of the application of the human intellect to the study of the laws of nature and of the human mind to reflection over the wisdom and philosophy comprised in the consummate revelation. The Quran has in fact been designated Consummate Wisdom (54.6).

It also possesses this unique character that being the literal World of God, it has the same quality as the universe, which may be described as the Work of God, in the sense that both are alive. Human life and the universe are both dynamic and so is the Quran. Some concept of the vastness of its reach may be gathered from the following:

“Tell them: If the ocean became ink, for transcribing the words of my Lord, surely the ocean would be exhausted before the words of My Lord came to an end, even though We reinforced it with the like thereof.” (18:110)

And again:

“If all the trees that are in the earth became pens and the ocean became ink, with seven oceans reinforcing it thereafter,

the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (31:28)

Then how does this vast and limitless reservoir of Divine guidance treat of peace? It does so very simply and yet comprehensively. It says:

“Those who have faith and do not let it be debased by the least injustice are the ones who shall have peace. It is they who are rightly guided.” (6:33)

That is the fundamental of peace. It is a wide and comprehensive concept. I propose to submit brief comments on some of its outstanding aspects. Consideration of time does not admit of more detailed treatment.

The very heart and center of religion, faith in a Beneficent Creator, has in the last few years been under vigorous attack both from inside and outside religion. Reference may in this context be made, among other publications, to *Honest to God*, by The Right Reverend John A. T. Robinson, till lately Anglican Bishop of Woolwich, England, whose thesis is that there is no being outside of us to whom worship or obedience is due, the center of our being is the only god and a number of volumes published lately on behalf of a certain number of American clerics, proclaiming: God is dead. It may perhaps be said that all this and a great deal more of the same type is not so much a denial of God as a rejection of outworn concepts of the Divine which human intellect is no longer able to subscribe to. However that may be, it has become imperative to examine the concept of the Divine set forth within various religious disciplines.

The Quran has a rich contribution to make in that context.

Its very first chapter opens with :

“All types of praise appertain to Allah Who has created, nourishes, sustains and leads, stage by stage, toward perfection, all the worlds; Who has made provision for the fulfilment of all needs before they arise; Who invests righteous action with beneficent results and Who is the Master of the Day of Judgment.”

A moment's reflection would show that these four Divine attributes are so comprehensive as to be the source, in principle and in essence, of all other attributes. A contemplation of the grace, mercy and beneficence portrayed in these attributes predisposes the human mind to the worship and obedience of the Creator and generates in it an overpowering yearning for communion with Him and to supplicate Him for strength, help and succor in carrying through every benign design. This alone opens out tremendous vistas for contemplation by the human mind which is in itself a form of worship towards which there is constant exhortation in the Quran.

The subject of Divine attributes is treated in the Quran with a wealth of detail which it is not easy to condense within the compass of this address. One or two quotations may, however, be permissible and may be of help.

“Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth glorifies Allah. He is the Mighty, the Wise. His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He is the First and the Last and the Manifest and the Hidden. He knows all things well. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then He settled Himself on the Throne. He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it and what comes down from heaven

and what goes up into it. He is with you wheresoever you may be. Allah sees all that you do. His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and to Allah are all affairs returned. He causes the night to pass into the day and causes the day to pass into the night. He knows all your secret thoughts." (57:2-7)

"He is Allah and there is no god beside Him, the knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Gracious, the Merciful. He is Allah and there is no god beside Him, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted. Holy is Allah far above that which they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner, His are the most beautiful attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise." (59: 23-25)

He is the Creator of the universe through the exercise of His will and not merely the first cause. Having created the universe He does not sit back merely contemplating it but continuously regulates His governance of it.

"Allah is the Creator of all things and He is Guardian over all things. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth." (39: 63, 64)

"Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without any supports that you can see. Then He settled Himself on the Throne and He pressed the sun and the moon into service, each pursuing its course until an appointed term. He regulates it all. He clearly explains the signs, that you may have firm belief in the meeting with your Lord. He it is Who spread out the earth and made therein mountains and rivers, and fruits of every kind He has created in pairs. He causes the night to

cover the day. Therein surely are signs for a people who reflect.” (13:3, 4)

The announcement from across the Pacific being repeated with a certain degree of fanfare, that God is dead as a historical fact in our age, is not rejected by the Quran merely by the axiomatic implication that by His very nature the Divine being eternal is not subject to death, but has been refuted expressly 1400 years in advance:

“Allah—there is none worthy of worship save He, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber overtakes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that dare intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows all that was before them and all that is behind them; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except that which He pleases. His knowledge comprehends the heavens and the earth; and the care of them wearies Him not. He is the Most High, the Most Great.” (2:256)

Even more specifically:

“Put your trust in the One Ever-Living Who dies not, and glorify Him with His praise. Sufficient is He as the Knower of the defaults of His servants, He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods and then settled Himself on the Throne. The Gracious One.” (25:59, 60)

It is stressed that God needs not the worship of His creatures or His glorification by them but that man is in need of establishing communion with Him through worship of Him and obedience to Him.

“If you and all those that are on the earth were to deny God it would not in any manner detract from His Majesty. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.” (14: 9)

All God’s attributes are in operation all the time and suffer no weakness or diminution thereby:

“Surely We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods, and We perceived no weariness in consequence.” (50: 39)

And again:

“Have We become weary in consequence of the first creation? Nay, but they are in confusion about the new creation.” (50: 16)

When He determines a matter He commands that it be and everything concerned therewith in the universe then cooperates, so that His command is carried into effect. (36: 83)

Man and the universe were not only created through the exercise of divine will, they have been created with a purpose.

“We created not the heavens and the earth and all that is between the two by way of sport. If We had wished to find a pastime We would surely have found it in that which is with Us, if at all We were to do such a thing.” (21: 17, 18: 44: 39, 40)

“We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them without purpose. That is the view of those who deny Us.” (38: 28)

“We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between the two but in accordance with the requirements of wisdom.” (15: 86; 46: 4)

Man has also been created with a purpose and with a responsibility.

“Do you imagine that We have created you without purpose and that you would not be brought back to Us? Exalted is Allah, the True king. There is no god but He, the Lord of the glorious Throne.” (23: 116, 117)

Man has been created so that through the true and sincere worship of his Maker he may become a manifestation of His attributes or, in other words, His image. (51: 57)

To help him towards the achievement of that purpose man has been endowed with appropriate faculties and capacities. “We have created man in the best mould.” (95: 4) He suffers from no inherent handicap. His nature is without sin or stain. (30: 31) Evil enters from outside; it can be kept out but should any steal in the way to win back to purity through prayer, sincere repentance and reform is open.

All through his history man has been provided with revealed guidance through the Prophets and divine Messengers. “There is no people to whom a Messenger has not been sent.” (35: 25)

God has charged himself with providing revealed guidance whenever it is needed. (92: 13) He has also promised that He would guide along the paths that lead to Him all those who strive after Him. (29: 70) He has directed: “When there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso follows My guidance, he will not go astray, nor will he come to grief. But whosoever turns away from My Reminder his will be a strait life, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind. He will implore: Lord, why hast thou raised me up blind while I possessed sight before! He will be told: Thus it is, Our signs came to thee and thou didst disregard them. In like manner wilt thou be disregarded this day.” (20:124-127) This is an

assurance and a warning that divine guidance is forthcoming at all times. We must seek it earnestly and may disregard it only at great peril.

God's concern for His creatures and the bounties He has bestowed upon them do not stop there.

In addition to the inestimable gifts already mentioned, namely, man's faculties and capacities and Divine guidance, the universe, having been bound by law, operates all the time for the promotion of man's beneficent purposes and designs.

"How can you deny Allah, when you were without life He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then He will restore you to life again and to Him shall be your return. He it is Who has created for you all that is in the earth. (2: 29, 30)

"Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth and caused water to come down from the clouds and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance and he has subjected to you the vessels that sail through the sea by His command and has subjected to you the rivers. He has also subjected to you the sun and the moon, both performing their functions constantly. He has subjected to you the night as well as the day. He has bestowed upon you all that you required of Him. If you try to count the favours of Allah you will not be able to number them. Truly, man is very unjust, very ungrateful." (14: 33-35)

"Your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods; then He settled Himself on the Throne. He makes the night cover the day which pursue it swiftly. He created the sun and the moon and the stars, all made subservient by His command. Verily, His is the creation and the command. Blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds." (7: 55)

“He has pressed into service for you the night and the day, and the sun and the moon; and the stars too have been pressed into service by His command. Surely, in that are signs for a people who make use of their reason.” (16: 13)

The two fundamentals that the universe is bound by law and that everything in it is designed for beneficent service are at the bottom of all science and technology. There is neither incongruity nor flaw in the universe. (67: 4)

On the basis of this assurance man can embark upon his study of God’s law which is in operation in the universe in the full confidence that his study will prove fruitful.

If conformity to law and orderliness were not characteristics of the universe no progress in science could be achieved. If fire were to boil water one day to freeze it the next all would be confusion. Because of the assurance that everything in nature conforms to law and is beneficent there has never been in Islam the so-called conflict between science and religion. Science in fact is the handmaiden of religion and proves its truth and wisdom at every step. That is why almost every page of the Quran draws attention to the phenomena of nature and urges reflection upon them describing them as Allah’s Signs. For instance:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships that sail in the sea with that which profits mankind, and in the water that Allah sends down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and spreads out there in all kinds of beasts, and in the courses of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth, are indeed Signs for a people who

understand.” (2: 165)

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day there are indeed Signs for men of understanding; those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creations of the heavens and the earth.” (3:191, 192)

“He it is Who sends down water for you from the clouds; out of it you have your drink and there grow from it plants on which you pasture your cattle. Therewith He also grows corn for you and the olive and the date-palm and the grapes and all kinds of fruits. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect. He has pressed into service for you the night and the day and the sun and the moon; and the stars too have been pressed into service by His command. Surely, in that are Signs for a people who make use of their reason. He has pressed into service for you the things He has created in the earth, varying in colours. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who take heed. He it is Who subjected to you the sea that you may eat therefrom fresh flesh and may take therefrom ornaments which you can wear. Thou seest the ships ploughing through it that you may thereby journey and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful. He has placed in the earth firm mountains lest it roll beneath you, and rivers and paths that you may take the right way.” (16: 11-16)

“Verily, in the heavens and the earth are Signs for those who believe. In your own creation and in that of all the creatures which He spreads out in the earth are Signs for a people who possess firm faith. In the alternation of night and day and the provision that Allah sends down from the sky whereby

He quickens the earth after its death and in the course of the winds, are Signs for a people who try to understand. These are the Signs of Allah which We rehearse unto thee with truth." (45: 4-7)

Whenever a phenomenon is described as a Sign of Allah there is an urge towards contemplation and study of it so that by apprehending the laws that govern and regulate the Signs of Allah, man may add to his knowledge and through such knowledge progressively increase his mastery over and control of the forces of nature and apply those forces to his service, that is to say, towards the promotion of mankind's welfare. Man is thus most favorably situated in respect to the achievement of the purpose for which he has been created. He must, however, make sure that his use of all that has been bestowed upon him and has been provided for him is beneficent.

"Keep in mind the exhortation of your Lord. If you will use my bounties beneficently I shall continue to multiply them unto you, but if you neglect them or misuse them my punishment is severe indeed." (14: 8).

With all this continuously made available to us and within our reach, why has our alienation from our Beneficent Creator reached a point where we are told: God is dead; He has died as a historical fact in our age?

It is a truism that God is not perceptible through our physical senses, but it is equally true that He has ever manifested Himself through the operation of His attributes.

"Your eyes cannot perceive Him but He manifests Himself before your eyes. He is the Imperceptible, the All-Aware." (6:104).

Every art of His creation proclaims His existence, sings His

praise and glorifies Him. The most familiar form of experience of God, however, is through the acceptance of prayer and through becoming the recipients of His word, both of which are means of communion with Him.

“Your Lord says: Call on me, I will respond to you.” (4:61)
“When My servants enquire from thee, O Prophet, concerning Me, tell them: I am close. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when He prays to Me. So should they respond to Me and have firm faith in Me, that they may be rightly guided.” (2: 187)

To those who are steadfast in their faith in Him He manifests Himself at every step in diverse way.

“Upon those who affirm: Our Lord is Allah; and then remain steadfast, descend angels assuring them: Have no fear nor grieve, and rejoice in the garden of Allah’s pleasure that you were promised. We are your friends in this life and in the hereafter.” (41: 31, 32)

Within the discipline to which I have the honour to belong continuous experience of God through communion with Him is most common. The truth is that Allah never withdraws Himself from His creatures. It is we who turn away from Him and shut the door of communion upon ourselves. We choose to draw close the blackout curtains around us and then pretend that there is no light or that light is denied. We stuff our ears with cotton-wool and assert that there is no response to our supplications. Indeed, we have almost forgotten the habit of humble, earnest, sincere, yearning supplication.

Those who so confidently affirm, “God is dead,” are at pains to explain that He did create the universe, was alive but is not

so any more. At the bottom of their assertion is the conviction that He heard and spoke through the ages but they assume that He no longer hears and speaks and that, therefore, He is no longer alive. In fact He hears and He speaks the same as He always did and always will. All that is needed is to have faith, to keep our hearts open and to put ourselves in tune with Him in complete humility and in utter sincerity.

The guidance set forth in the Quran is all comprehensive, is universal and is for all time. That is why unlike the previous scriptures it is conveyed in the very word of God as had been foretold:

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethern like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to My words which he shall speak in My name I will require it of him.” (Deuteronomy 18: 18, 19)

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you unto all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.” (St. John 16: 12, 13)

The word of God possesses the same quality as the work of God, that is to say, it is alive as the universe is alive and keeps abreast, indeed ahead, of all developments and perpetually yields guidance as the pattern of human life goes on changing in a dynamic world.

It would be helpful to draw attention to some of the basic guidance contained in the Quran for the adjustment of human

relations so as to establish and maintain peace between man and man.

The diversity which we observe all around us is part of the divine design and is an expression of divine wisdom. It has many uses but this is not the occasion to dilate upon them.

“Among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely are Signs for those who possess knowledge.” (30: 23)

This diversity is neither a sign of superiority nor an indication of inferiority nor does it comport any privilege or constitute a handicap.

“O mankind We have created you from male and female and have divided you into tribes and groups for facility of intercourse. Verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (49: 14)

The only badge of honour recognised by Islam is the righteousness of a person's life and conduct. Everything else is adventitious and confers no privilege.

Part of the diversity in the divine scheme is the diversity of man's intellect. This leads, among other things, to diversity of creeds and beliefs. This has often been alleged to be a source of conflict. There is not the least reason why that should be so.

Truth has only one, but error has many facets, yet no compulsion is permissible even in so vital a matter as the fundamentals of faith. It is part of the dignity with which man has been endowed by his Maker that his conscience is left free. By its very nature it cannot be compelled. It might be possible to compel or coerce a person to subscribe verbally to a doctrine but it is not

possible to force any one to believe, for belief and faith are matters of conscience and conscience cannot be compelled. This is very unequivocally proclaimed by the Quran:

“There is no compulsion in matters of faith. Surely guidance has been made distinct from error.” (2: 257)

“Proclaim, O Prophet: The truth is from your Lord; wherefore let him who will believe, and let him who will disbelieve.” (18: 30)

No doubt he who rejects the truth and turns his back on it inflicts upon himself privation of every description but this is his own free choice. He reaps the advantage of the exercise of that choice or suffers the disadvantage or harm that may ensue therefrom, but he cannot be forced in the matter of his choice. This is the first and the most fundamental freedom which must be scrupulously observed if there is to be hope of peace between mankind. The Quran goes so far in formulating and establishing this freedom that it proclaims that even God Himself, Who indeed possesses the power to do so, would not force anyone in the matter of conscience. Whatever a person does in that respect must proceed from his free choice.

“If thy Lord has enforced His will, surely, all who are on the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou, then, force people to become believers?” (10: 100)

On the other hand it is obligatory on all of us that we should be anxious to share with our brethren that which we believe to be the truth, in as much as the truth imports the highest beneficence, and true brotherhood and friendship demand that we should be eager to share every kind of beneficence with our fellow being. Even this urge, however, must be carried out

with due regard to the freedom to which we have just adverted.

“Call unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and reason with them in the way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and He knows best those who are rightly guided.” (16:126)

The attitude of Islam towards other faiths is one of respect and reverence. As already observed, Islam bases itself upon the truth that divine guidance has been vouchsafed to man all through the ages. It follows therefrom that all the great faiths had a divine origin and must therefore be respected and revered.

“Proclaim, O Prophet: We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and in that which was given to Moses and to Jesus, and in that which was given to all the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit ourselves.” (2: 137; 2: 85)

After naming several of the prophets mentioned in the Bible the Quran directs:

“These are those whom Allah guided aright, so follow thou their guidance.” (6: 91)

“Surely we sent down the Torah wherein was guidance and light.” (5: 45)

“We caused Jesus Son of Mary to follow in their footsteps fulfilling that which was revealed before Him in the Torah and we gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light—fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Torah and a guidance and an admonition for the righteous.” (5:47)

“Proclaim, O Prophet: I believe in whatever Book Allah

has sent down, and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us is the recompense of all that we do, and for you is the recompense of all that you do. There is no quarrel between you and us. Allah will gather us together and to Him is the return." (42: 16)

"Contend not with the people of the Book except in a manner that is best; and contend not at all with such of them as are unjust. Tell them: We believe in that which had been revealed to us and in that which has been revealed to you; our God and your God is one, and to Him we submit." (29: 47)

The following invitation was extended 1400 years ago and has been for all time a basis for mutual accord:

"Proclaim, O Prophet: People of the Book, let us agree upon a matter that is the same for both of us—that we worship none save Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside Allah." (3: 65)

In the domestic sphere there is compulsory obligation to seek settlement of disputes in the last resort through the judicial process and to accept the final decision without demur and to carry it out to the full.

"They will not be accounted believers in the sight of Allah unless they submit to thy judgement in all that is in dispute between them and then find not in their hearts any demur concerning that which thou decidest and carry it out with full submission." (4: 66)

All transactions, except sales over the counter, must be reduced to writing, "This is more equitable in the sight of Allah, makes testimony surer and is more likely to dispel doubt," and

be witnessed by competent witnesses. The scribe must transcribe the terms of the transaction faithfully which should be dictated by the party undertaking the obligation or by someone authorized to do so on his behalf. The witnesses should not refuse to attend when they are called and should bear true testimony. No harm should befall the scribe or the witnesses. "If you are in default in respect of any of this it shall be disobedience on your part. Be mindful of your obligations to Allah. Allah grants you knowledge and Allah knows all things well... and conceal not testimony, for whoever conceals it his heart is certainly sinful. Allah is well aware of that which you do." (2:233, 234)

The obligation of adhering to the truth and of acting justly is not restricted only to matters of dispute and judicial proceedings. It comprehends all spheres.

"Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if the person concerned should be a relation." (6: 153)

"O ye who believe be mindful of your obligation to Allah and always speak the straightforward word. He will bless your conduct and forgive you your defaults. Whoso obeys Allah and His Messenger, shall surely attain a mighty success." (33: 71, 72)

Public authority in all spheres, including judicial authority, should be entrusted into the hands of those who are capable of discharging it in the best manner. Those to whom such authority is entrusted are directed to discharge it with justice. (4: 59)

Hostility towards anyone should not divert the course of justice.

"O ye who believe be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing

just witness and let not a people's hostility incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is closest to righteousness. Be mindful of your obligations to Allah. Surely Allah is aware of that which you do." (5: 9)

"O ye who believe, be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for the sake of Allah, even though it be against your own selves or against parents and kindred. Whether they be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them than you can be. Therefore, prefer not your own inclination so that you may act equitably. If you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of that which you do." (4: 136)

There is severe condemnation of attempts to obtain benefits through false claims or through perversion of the course of justice.

"Do not seek to devour wealth through falsehood, nor offer it as a bribe to the authorities that you may thereby obtain a part of other people's wealth." (2: 189)

In the economic sphere exploiting of others, whether by individuals, communities or nations, is prohibited and stress is laid on the development of the resources which Allah's beneficence has provided for each.

"Covet not that which We have bestowed on some sections of the ornaments of this world as a temporary provision so that We may try thereby. That which thy Lord has bestowed on thee is better and more lasting." (20: 132)

The accumulation of wealth within certain classes is condemned and its widest circulation is encouraged. (59: 8)

For better achievement of this purpose:

(a) Hoarding is prohibited under very strong moral condemna-

tion.

“Give to those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the cause of Allah (which in the terminology of the Quran always means the service of one’s fellow beings) the tidings of a painful punishment on the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded therewith and they shall be told: This is what you treasured up for yourselves so now taste that which you used to treasure up.” (9: 34, 35)

(b) Lending of money on interest is prohibited as it amounts to exploiting the needs of one’s fellow beings and goes on multiplying itself automatically.

“O ye who believe, devour not interest as it goes on multiplying itself and be mindful of your obligations to Allah so that you may prosper.” (3: 131)

Commerce, trade, cooperative and joint-stock companies are permitted as legitimate means of promoting individual and national welfare.

“Those who devour interest stand like one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. This is because they say: Commerce is also like interest: whereas Allah has made commerce lawful and has made interest unlawful. Tell them: He to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists shall keep that which he has received in the past and his affair is with Allah. But those who revert to the practice will be exposed to Allah’s wrath; therein shall they abide. Allah will wipe out interest and will foster charity.” (2:276,277)

“O ye who believe, be mindful of your obligation to Allah and relinquish your claim to what remains of interest, if you are

believers. If you do it not, then beware of war from Allah and His Messenger. If you repent, then you shall have your capital sums and thus you will not commit wrong nor shall you be wronged. If, however, the debtor be in straitened circumstances then grant him time for the repayment of the capital sum till he is in easier circumstances. But if you remit the capital sum als as charity that shall be the better for you, if only you knew." (2: 279, 281)

(c) There is repeated exhortation towards charity which has two aspects. First, that which is compulsory and is levied by the state for the benefit of the community in the form of a capital levy called *zakat*. The root meaning of the word is "that which purifies" and also "that which fosters." The basic concept is that all original sources of wealth, that is to say, the earth and all its capacities, the atmosphere, the sun, the moon, the stars, are all divine bounties for the benefit of the whole of mankind. Capital and labour are applied to these bounties for the production of wealth. In the distribution of wealth therefore a share must be set aside for mankind, that is to say, the community, as well as for capital and for labour. The share of the community is the *zakat*. This levy purifies the rest for its use by capital and labour and the proceeds of the levy are applied for the purpose of fostering the welfare of the community at large. The obligation in respect of the payment of the *zakat* is stressed scores of times in the Quran. The average incidence of the *zakat* is two and a half per cent of the capital value of the asset on which *zakat* is leviable.

Secondly, voluntary sharing which may be described as alms or charity. Islam recognizes and safeguards the right of owner-

ship of property but subjects it to a heavy moral obligation in favour of one's fellow beings. The first charge on that which one earns or receives is the obligation due to oneself and those dependent upon one. That must however be discharged in a reasonable way. No extravagance is permitted.

“Render to the kinsman his due and to the poor and the wayfarer, but squander not your wealth extravagantly. The extravagant fall into evil company and misuse the bounties of their Lord.” (17: 27, 28)

This primary obligation having been reasonably met in all its various aspects, the rest is spare and should be used in the service and for the benefit of one's fellow beings.

“They ask thee how much should they spend in the cause of Allah. Tell them: that which is spare.” (2: 220)

But the exhortation does not stop there. Despite the voluntary character of this spending, and indeed because of that character, the urge towards the discharge of the obligation is repeated in diverse ways.

“The case of those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah is like that of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing. Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, then follow not up that which they have spent with reproach or injury, for them is their reward with their Lord and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Forebearing. O ye who believe, render not vain your alms by reproach or injury, like one who spends his wealth to be seen of man and believes not in Allah and the last day. His case is

like that of a smooth rock covered with earth on which heavy rain falls leaving it bare, smooth and hard....The case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to gain inner strength is like that of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it brings forth its fruit twofold. Even if heavy rain does not fall on it a light shower suffices. Allah sees well that which you do. Would any of you desire that, having a garden of palm trees and vines, with streams flowing beneath it, which brings forth for him all kinds of fruits, he should be stricken with old age while his children are small, and a fiery whirlwind should sweep through his garden consuming it all? Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to you that you may reflect. O ye who believe, spend of the good things that you have earned and of that which We produce for you from the earth; and do not select out of it for charity that which is useless, when you would not yourselves accept the like of it save with reluctance. Know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of Highest Praise. Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you that which is indecent whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty. Allah is the Lord of vast bounty, All-Knowing....Whatsoever you spend in the cause of Allah or vow as an offering, surely Allah knows it well....If you give alms openly that is indeed good, but if you give them secretly to the poor it is even better for you. Thereby will He remove from you many of your ills. Allah is well aware of that which you do.”
(2: 262-272)

Indeed this obligation of voluntary help to one's fellow beings is termed a right which they possess. The believers are defined as “those in whose wealth there is a recognized right for him

who asks for help and also for him who does not ask but is in need” (51: 20; 70: 25, 26)

The objects of beneficence are widely defined:

“Worship Allah and associate naught with Him and behave benevolently towards parents, kinsmen, orphans, the needy, the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer and those who are under your authority. Surely Allah loves not the proud and the boastful who are niggardly and enjoin people to be niggardly and conceal that which Allah has given them of His bounty.” (4: 37, 38)

The Holy Prophet has said that he had been admonished so persistently concerning the obligation due to one’s neighbour that he thought the neighbour might perhaps be included among the heirs of a deceased person.

In the discipline to which I belong everyone is under obligation which is checked upon from time to time by those in authority within the discipline, to ensure that a neighbour, irrespective of who he might be, does not go to bed hungry at night.

The Islamic system of inheritance also tends in the direction of wider distribution of wealth, which must be legitimately acquired and should be benevolently disposed of.

Certain restrictions on the mode of acquisition of wealth or property have been adverted to and one or two more may be briefly mentioned. Gambling, betting, wagers and the like are strictly prohibited.

“O ye who believe, intoxicants, games of hazard, idols and divining arrows are but abominations and Satanic devices. So turn wholly away from each one of them that you may prosper.”

(5: 91)

“Woe unto those who give short measure; those who, when they take by measure from other people, take it full; but when they give by measure to others or weigh out to them, give them less. Do not such people realize that they will be raised up again unto a terrible day, the day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds.” (83: 2-7)

Under the Islamic system of inheritance the owner of property has full power of disposition by act *inter vivos* but he cannot by testamentary disposition dispose of more than one third of his property whether by way of legacy or charitable disposition. The remaining two-thirds must be distributed among the heirs whose shares are specified. If a person should die leaving him surviving his parents, widow, sons and daughters, everyone of them is an heir and has his or her specified share. (4: 12, 13)

In the sphere of international relations war is considered a harmful and destructive activity and it is Allah's purpose to stamp it out.

“Whenever they kindle the fire of war, Allah extinguishes it. They strive to create disorder in the earth and Allah loves not those who create disorder.” (5: 65)

In certain contingencies, however, fighting may become obligatory in defense of certain freedoms and values. Of these the most precious is the freedom of conscience. He who seeks to deprive another of that freedom endeavours to impose spiritual slavery which is most obnoxious and hateful. When this is attempted to be done by force resistance becomes obligatory even if it should involve the use of force.

“Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is

made, because they have been wronged—Allah indeed has power to help them—those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they affirm: Our Lord is Allah. If Allah did not repel some people by means of others, surely cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated, would be destroyed.” (22: 40, 41)

This is clear enough but is subjected to the further injunction: “Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely Allah loves not the transgressors....But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most-Forgiving, Merciful. Fight them until persecution ceases and religion is freely professed for the sake of Allah alone. But if they desist then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.” (2: 191, 193, 194)

If in the course of the fighting the enemy should give any indication to put an end to hostilities the opportunity should be eagerly embraced.

“If they should incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. Surely it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. If they intend to deceive thee then surely Allah is sufficient for thee.” (3: 62, 63)

Covenants and treaties must be strictly and faithfully observed (16: 92; 17: 35).

The purpose of a covenant or a treaty should be to promote peace, good will, understanding and co-operation. It should not be to steal a march against the other party.

“Make not your covenants a means of deception, out of fear lest one people should become more powerful than another.

Surely, Allah tries you therewith, and on the day of resurrection He will make clear to you that wherein you differed....Make not your covenants a means of deception, or your foot will slip after it has been firmly established and you will suffer evil because you turned people away from the path of Allah, and you will have a severe punishment. Barter not the covenant of Allah for a paltry price. Surely that which is with Allah is better for you, if you only knew.” (16: 93, 95, 96)

Should it, however, become clear that the other party to a treaty or covenant is determined upon a breach the covenant may be terminated, “in a manner that should occasion no prejudice to either side. Surely, Allah loves not the treacherous.” (3: 59)

There is a host of directions for adjustment of relations in the domestic, communal and national spheres but time would not permit even a cursory reference to them. Suffice to say that beneficence pervades all through and the inspiration for action, service and sacrifice is provided by the consciousness that the object is to win the pleasure of Allah rather than the approbation of one's fellow beings. An illustration may be cited:

“Let not those of you who are in easy circumstances determine to hold back their beneficence from the kindred, the needy and those who have left their homes in the cause of Allah, as a penalty for some default committed by men. Let them forgive and forbear. Do you not desire that Allah should forgive you. Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.” (24:23)

A graduation is established in moral values. For instance, due recompense for an injury suffered may be claimed, but there is constant exhortation to achieve a higher standard through

beneficence.

“The recompense of an injury is in proportion thereto, but whoso forgives and thus brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah....To be steadfast under a wrong suffered and to forgive is a matter of high resolve.” (42:41,44)

“Good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is just, and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity is as though he were a warm friend. But none attains to this save those who are steadfast; and none attains to this save those who possess a large share of good.” (41:35,36)

To sum up, the only guarantee of security is through faith in a Beneficent Creator of the universe, the winning of Whose pleasure should be the motive for all action. There are various degrees of beneficence but beneficence that proceeds from any lesser motive always runs the risk of being defeated through an emotional reaction or upset. If the winning of Allah’s pleasure becomes the dominant motive for all action, no defeat or diminution of beneficence need be apprehended.

“Hold fast, all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided. Remember the favour of Allah that He bestowed upon you when you were hostile towards each other and He united your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became as brethren. You were on the brink of a pit of fire and He rescued you therefrom. Thus does Allah explain to you His commands that you may be guided. Let there be among you a body of people who should invite to goodness and enjoin equity and forbid evil. It is they who shall prosper.” (3:104,105)