



The Muslim Woman

Journey into the Light

1

Volume

Muslim Women and Comprehensive Change

The Believing Woman in a Turbulent World

Abdessalam Yassine

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*The Muslim Woman:
Journey into the Light*

Volume 1

*Translated from the Arabic
by Farouk Bouasse*

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Volume 1

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Editor's Foreword

What kind of Islam is the true Islam? Muslims all over the world struggle with this very question every day: A Traditional Islam that looks to the legacy of pre-modern scholars? A Sufi Islam that seeks to kindle the ecstatic way of the dervishes? A Salafi Islam that strips away the centuries of fallible human interpretation to recapture the light of the first generation? A Progressive Islam that marries the best of liberalism with the spirituality of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*? This is in no wise some dry, theoretical debate, but touches upon the very core of how Muslims see themselves and how they relate to the modern world. And Muslims in the West, as minorities living in the heart of the hegemonic culture of modernity, struggle with this even more so than their co-religionists in the core lands of Islam.

Traditionalism offers the richness of a fourteen-hundred-year-old legacy and the confidence of a once-mighty civilization, but risks straightjacketing twenty-first century Muslims into a set of rules formulated in a social context quite foreign to our own modern world. Sufism gives us access to a living spirituality that overflows with beauty and meaning – but one that can become too otherworldly, too withdrawn from the travails of the human race. Salafism promises the opportunity to critically engage the primary sources and live a pure, “untainted” Prophetic way of life; but this often lends itself to a compulsive fixation that refuses to contextualize individual passages of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and accordingly sees every act as sinful until proven innocent. Progressive Islam acknowledges liberalism's legitimate critique of how Muslim societies have strayed from their ideals and hence enables Muslims to engage in a more nuanced discussion with

Westerners and Westernized Easterners, while perhaps failing to recognize the colonialist ends to which such discourse has been put (indeed, it could be argued that the very word “progressive” itself necessarily rests on a colonialist narrative of modernity).

Imam Abdessalam Yassine’s intention in this book is to recognize the merit in each approach to look at the *Sunnah* with new eyes – not to create a peculiar “retro”, half-Traditionalist, half-modernist Islam for its own sake, but to appreciate the need for a fresh *ijtihād* based on a reevaluation of the primary sources while also contextualizing such *ijtihād* closely within the framework of the overarching objectives of Islamic Law (*maqāṣid ash-sharī’a*). He takes up the challenge that one Salafi blogger laid down before the Traditionalists to bring together al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Taymiyya, stressing how Ibn Taymiyya – so unlike the image projected by many of his latter-day followers – was not a grim, joyless figure, but someone who chided his disciples for lacking sufficient “ecstasy” in their worship. In that vein, the Imam seeks to take from the heart-expanding legacy of the Sufis (he gladly points out that he himself benefited from accompanying a Sufi master) while firmly stressing the utter imperative for an Islam that is pro-active and engaged in this world. As such, the believers need to brace themselves for the fact that a perfect Islamic society cannot be simply declared or promulgated through legislation, but can only be attained through generations of relentless social and spiritual struggle.

This book is by no means an academic treatise, weighing the polemics of Ibn Taymiyya with the discourses of al-Ghazzālī rounded out with an analysis of Kantian ethics and a reformulation of the principles of Islamic law to produce a flawlessly constructed description of how Islam should be manifested in all facets of the modern world. Rather, it is a series of meditations meant to recapture the ethos of that original Islam that not only imbued men with confidence and empowerment, but so too empowered women and assigned them a role as fundamental in striving (spiritually, socially, and politically) for a more beautiful world.

This book is ostensibly addressed to believing women, but make no mistake that these teachings are just as relevant to the men. Liberalism tends to formulate women's rights precisely as that: the rights of one half of the human race vaguely disconnected from the other, male half. But women's issues of course are really about how men and women relate to each other. Imam Yassine refers to the occasion that prompted the revelation of the verse: "Verily, for the *muslimīn* and the *muslimāt*, for the *mu'minīn* and the *mu'mināt*, for truly devout men and truly devout women..." (33:35): the female Companion Umm 'Imāra Nuṣayba ("who stood firm in the Battle of Uḥud and defended the Messenger with her sword when many men fled") complained to the Prophet that women were never explicitly addressed in the Qur'ān (although of course the Qur'ān addresses women when the general category of "believers" is mentioned). Similarly, what the author is trying to accomplish here is not to address Muslim women as some sort of separate species, living on some other continent, cut off from any humans carrying a Y chromosome, but to make explicit those issues which should be encompassed within the general discussion of how to revive the Muslim community, but which have been ignored and suppressed.

This truth – that the fate of men and women are inextricably bound together – comes out no more vividly than when the author argues that the pitiable decline in the status of Muslim women over the centuries is but the secondary effect of the general political decline of the Muslim world, whereby the widespread establishment of authoritarian regimes stifled critical discourse and led to the reproduction of the authoritarian model on the micro-level of the household. Hence, empowering women to those roles occupied by the female Companions of the Prophet is but the first step to emancipating Muslim men from their own shackles.

Empowering Muslim women to be leaders while also trying, in the face of a militant Western feminism, to uphold the ideal of a "complementary" relationship between husband and wife: Muslims in the West (both men and women) have struggled mightily to find

an exact balance between these two, to be pro-woman but not simply ape the cultural mores of the European bourgeois. This is a fraught question and one that deserves the attention of religious scholars, historians, and activists with experience working on women's issues on the ground. Readers will not find a definitive legal answer to this ongoing debate; but the purpose of the author is precisely to pull readers back to make them see the forest and not just the trees, to stress the ethos of the first Muslim community with regards to women's rights and not fixate on debating isolated *ḥadīths* that may or may not clash with our modern concept of "women's rights." For whatever the interpretation we assign to certain historical reports, there can be no doubt that the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* did boldly set out to raise women up to be leaders in scholarship, society, and even the military. And this is exactly the approach needed as a starting point: not a rehash of the academic debates on historical or legal methodology, but a coming together around the indisputable, original values of empowering women we find in early Islam, values that can instill in modern Muslims confidence and enthusiasm to march forward and change their condition with their hands and not just with their hearts.

What the Imam further emphasizes in his wide-ranging reflections over the many facets of modern life, and that is just as essential, is living a faith that is not merely political, not merely social-activist, and not merely spiritual, but a dynamic combination whereby the struggle to attain *iḥsān* (beauty/perfection/the highest state of God-consciousness) manifests the fundamental connection of all three. To that end, the author seeks not so much to develop an intellectually-compelling vision of what a Prophetic Islam should look like in the modern world, as to *inspire* the hearts of the believers to manifest the all-encompassing meanings of the *Sunnah* and strive for beauty in this world.

One final word: the Moroccan translator of this book, Farouk Bouasse, tragically passed away before he could see the publication of this English edition. To have a native speaker of Arabic and a

native speaker of English work together in translating and editing an Arabic work often holds the potential for great synergy and, indeed, in every chapter of this work, I came across several instances where Sidi Farouk managed a *bon mot* that very neatly captured all the nuances of the word in its original Arabic meaning within its new English casing. For such phrases, by myself I would have been able to come up with something that would have conveyed the basic meaning, but not the full connotations of the Arabic. And this despite the fact that he never resided in an English-speaking country (furthermore, most educated Moroccans are fluent in French, not English). But this is a gift with which the Lord sometimes inspires the sincere. I just pray that the final product meets Sidi Farouk's sincerity and efforts.

John Halliwell

New York, NY

July 20, 2015

Translator's Foreword

At every pivotal moment in the history of the Islamic *umma*, our merciful Lord (Exalted is He) sends forth pioneering, charismatic reformers who bring the community back to its original grandeur after a period of decline and inconsequence. Such gifted catalysts infuse new life, spur on immense momentum, open new vistas, set lofty goals, and outline the path towards eventual recovery, while at once showing the obstacles to be braved and the challenges ahead.

The fifteenth Islamic century (the twenty-first century of the Christian calendar) is no exception to this rule. Indeed, God has blessed this century with a host of reformers at the forefront of whom stands Imam Abdessalam Yassine who managed to unite within himself high spirituality, multidisciplinary knowledge, and fully-engaged activism. These three qualities, which very few of our *umma* have ever successfully mastered in combination, are indeed a *sine qua non* for the success of any reformist who seeks to marshal the efforts and energies of the *umma* in order to establish the promised second *khilāfa*, which will run according to the true Prophetic method.

Indeed, Imam Yassine has crafted a revivalist project which promises to usher in a new era for our *umma* – an era wherein our worldwide community can hope to recover its lost dignity, freedom, self-confidence, power, independence, and unity, and thereby regain its rightful place among the powers that be. Broadly speaking, the Imam's revivalist project has two complementary goals: first, to reestablish justice; and second, to spiritually revive the hearts of individual Muslims. Through their exemplary behavior both as individuals and as a society, these transformed Muslims shall transmit the last message of God to mankind – a message of love, peace, and sense and sensibility to an ailing, bewildered world.

Joining theory to practice, Imam Yassine founded both the Justice and Spirituality School (JSS) and the Justice and Spirituality Movement (JSM). The JSS seeks to draw out a theoretical framework while the JSM seeks to implement such a framework in an ongoing process of self-evaluation, rectification, and enhancement. In other words, the JSM is a litmus test for the feasibility and viability of the reformist project advocated by the JSS. The theoretical corpus includes so far over forty books, covering areas as various as history, politics, economics, society, art, culture, morality, spirituality, Islamic Law, international relations, and futurology.

The six pillars of this project are summed up in the titles of the Imam's foundational works: *The Prophetic Method* (Al-Minhāj an-Nabawī, 1981), *Introduction to the Prophetic Method* (Muqaddima fī al-Minhāj, 1989), *Notes on Islamic Law and History* (Nadharāt fī al-Fiqh wa-t-Tārikh, 1989), *Spiritual Excellence* (Iḥsān, 1998), and *Justice: Islamists and Governance* (Al-ʿAdl: Al-Islāmīyyūn wa-l-Ḥukm, 2000). The final foundation is the present book, *The Muslim Woman: Journey into the Light* (Tanwīr al-Mu'mināt, 1996). Indeed, Imam Abdessalam Yassine always considered the Muslim woman an indispensable protagonist in his revivalist project; accordingly, in his writings, she is portrayed as the Muslim man's full-fledged partner in all the issues concerning her and her *umma*.

Yet to show the true worth of the Muslim woman and to properly highlight her crucial role in the success of the revivalist project, Imam Yassine saw fit to devote a special book that discusses at length all the issues related to the Muslim woman from her own perspective. Thus came *The Muslim Woman: Journey into the Light*, whose original Arabic title literally translates as "The Enlightenment of the Believing Women."

As the title suggests, the author invites the Muslim woman on a journey that has two dimensions: one that is spiritual in which the author offers to help her ascend the three rungs of the steep pathway leading to God (*islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*); and one that is

socio-political in which the author-guide takes the Muslim woman through history back to her roots so that she can fully understand the present condition of her *umma* and confidently take the necessary steps to make the future better and brighter. Hence, the “light” connotes initiation, discovery, guidance, truth, hope, success, and a happy ending in this life with complete delight in the life to come.

In its English version, the book will be published in five volumes, each comprising twenty sections divided between two chapters.

Before embarking on this journey, the author's Preface seeks to remind the Muslim woman of the need for pure intention and sublime aspiration. Every enterprise should be undertaken for God's sake with no less an aspiration than nearness to Him (Exalted is He) and the eternal beholding of His Countenance. It should go without saying that the Muslim woman, just like her partner the Muslim man, is capable of attaining human perfection at all levels, including the spiritual.

Volume I gives a historical analysis and candid criticism of the root causes of the miserable condition which the Muslim woman currently finds herself in. In light of the *ḥadīth* that prophesies the advent of a second *khilāfa* which will govern according to the Prophetic method, Volume I discusses how the woman's deteriorated status is intimately linked to the general decline that has befallen Muslim society as a whole since the Umayyads usurped legitimate power from the last of the rightly-guided caliphs, Imam 'Alī (God be pleased with him). Such oppression at the hands of our fellow Muslims was subsequently compounded by the invasion of the Europeans who colonized our lands as well as our minds.

Volume II shows how a Muslim woman can enjoy life and take full advantage of all its lawful pleasures while avoiding the traps of libertinism, bestiality, and consumerism. The rights and privileges of the Muslim woman are reviewed and highlighted according to their priority. The greatest privilege, however, is that the Lord (Exalted is He) has honored the Muslim woman in this life and

prepared for her an eternal reward in the life to come. At this point, the author discusses in detail the articles of faith in order to firmly establish the Muslim woman in her convictions, for they shelter her from the blowing winds of a turbulent, atheistic, and materialistic world.

In the same vein, Volume III focuses on those moral and spiritual values that enable the Muslim woman to perfect her faith, identity, and character. In addition to the basics of faith, these values emphasize that proactive force that enables the Muslim woman to brave the obstacles in front of her, both internally and externally. For any enterprise not built solidly on the ethos of Islam will eventually be doomed to failure and deemed worthless and futile in the sight of God (Exalted is He).

After discussing the moral and spiritual values that nurture the Muslim woman's personality, Volume IV sheds light on her role and conduct in the household as a young lady, a wife, and a mother. The rules of etiquette, relations with the opposite sex, the symbolism of *hijāb*, the philosophy and ethics of marriage, marital rights and duties, polygamy, and other controversial subjects are discussed from a newer, broader perspective. Volume IV describes the marital relationship as one based on a spirit of cooperation and complementariness, not rivalry. Imbued with love, affection, and respect, this relationship places each partner in the strategic position that befits their respective profile.

Volume V further advances the Muslim woman in her reformist mission. Thanks to her innate sympathy and maternal skills, she is entrusted with the delicate task of raising the younger generations and giving them a balanced education that nourishes their souls, minds, and bodies, a task which is not made easy by a society hostile to traditional spirituality. From here, the path is then open for the Muslim woman to take part in the *umma*'s general mobilization. Volume V closes with didactic lessons from the stories of the illustrious female Companions whose lives were a

series of character-building trials and who, as role models, played a decisive role in the nascent Islamic community.

The Epilogue gives a synopsis of the Prophetic method for change. The author reminds the motivated Muslim women of their mission, the challenges facing them, and the conditions which they must meet to achieve the aspired goals. The path will not be strewn with roses, and westernized, anti-religious feminists will vie with them over the leadership of the *umma*.

In the end, I would like to express my gratitude to all those kind and generous people who helped make this translation see the light of day. I wish to thank in particular my respected mother Khadija and my lovely sisters, Nadia and Siham, for their prayers and encouragement. Special thanks also to Imad Benjelloun, the translation project manager, and to the distinguished editor and translator, John Halliwell, for his valuable editorial work. The last of our prayers is: Praise be to God, Lord of all creatures.

Farouk Bouasse

Casablanca, Morocco

July 23, 2013

Preface

Praise be to God, the Light of the heavens and the earth, Who has taken neither consort nor child. Exalted is He Who has created us from a single soul, and from him created his wife, and from them both propagated a multitude of men and women. ¹

I bear witness that God – besides Whom there is no other god – is the Sovereign, the Bountiful, the Extensive in His favor and power, and the Severe in punishment. He has issued both warnings and glad tidings to His creation in the Qurān: “Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except but by the like thereof. And whoever does a good deed, whether man or woman, while they are a believer, those will enter Paradise in which they will be given provision without account.” (40:40)

To Him I address the praises of a servant whose helplessness and powerlessness are manifest. I implore Him standing at the gate of His generosity and grace. I resort to Him through His beloved Muḥammad, the Master of the children of Adam, who alone will be able to mediate for us on a Day when no other bargaining or friendship will be of any avail. I seek His forgiveness for my bad manners and evil deeds. I worship Him in a state of sorrow for my negligence and inadvertence. I seek His aid so that He may show us the path of those whom He has favored: the people of perfection who are drawn near to Him.

Then, I pray to God to shower His blessings and peace on the Prophet of Mercy who came with the announcement: “And among His signs is that He created for you wives from yourselves that you might find quietude with them, and He has put love and mercy between you.” (30:21)

¹ Female Muslims.

May God shower His blessings and peace on him, as well as on his pure and noble Family¹, his Companions² from the Emigrants and the Supporters, and his Brothers³ of old times and of later times.

I present my book as a modest gift to every righteous, devout woman who guards in her husband's absence what God has ordered her to guard, then to every humble person who turns constantly to God, and finally to every frivolous person beguiled by the charms of this world, for I pray that the Lord grant us all wakefulness and repentance.

The Lord (Exalted is He) has proclaimed: "Remain conscious of God in whose name you demand rights (from one another) and be dutiful to (your) ties of kinship!" (4:1)

My hope is that the glorified Lord make this writing a clearing away of the clouds, an illumination of the obstacles to be overcome,

¹ [Translator's note:] *Āl al-Bayt*, literally "the People of the House." Besides his wives, the Prophet's Family comprises the descendants of his grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and those of his uncle al-'Abbās and his paternal cousins, 'Alī, Ja'far, and 'Aqīl.

² [Translator's note:] *Aṣ-Ṣaḥāba*, the Prophet's Companions, are: the Emigrants (*al-Muhājirūn*), those who migrated from Mecca to Medina, leaving their kinsfolk and possessions for the sake of God and His Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace); and the Supporters (*al-Anṣār*), those who received and supported with their persons and possessions the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and the Emigrants.

³ [Translator's note:] The Brothers of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) are, first of all, the Messengers and Prophets before him from Adam to Jesus (peace be upon them all) and, secondly, those who believe in his mission without having seen him or met with him. The latter include the second generation of Islam (*at-Tābi'ūn*) and the subsequent generations until the Day of Judgment as demonstrated by the following narration from al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*inter alia*) on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him): One day, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) entered a cemetery: "Peace be on you, O house of believing men and women! We will soon join you, God willing. Oh, how I wish I had seen my brothers!" The Companions who were present (God be pleased with them) said: "Aren't we your brothers, O Messenger of God?", to which he replied, "You are my Companions. My brothers are those who will come after."

and a guide to those men and women whose aspirations are high and whose ambition is not satisfied with grazing among the human livestock on the slopes of defeat and capitulation.

I seek God's assistance, proper guidance, and strength to expound the issue of the Muslim woman in her ordeal and the ordeal of her *umma*.¹

This book looks to both the vast present and the ample future. Yet from the outset, the book seeks to direct the readers' minds and focus their sights on the mother of all issues that has otherwise been neglected: the fact that the servant is inevitably heading back to their Lord.

This book is not intended as a mere exercise in consciousness-raising (whether political, cultural, or artistic) about the plight of the Muslim woman: there is already a bevy of such works being dumped into people's brains and hearts, where these ideas further feed off each other and breed more such ideas. The problem with this discourse is that it has emptied educated minds and activist minds of any concern of the Hereafter. They have muffled that inner voice which is inquisitive about the meaning of our existence, the truth of our presence in this world, and the purpose of our passage through this extraordinary, bizarre life. For indeed, nothing is more extraordinary in this life than the mystery of our existence, and nothing more bizarre than our herd-like submission when we march rambling in the path of the herd which claims that everything in this world is utterly absurd.

I sincerely hope that this book will help to awaken the sleepy and stimulate the inert so that the believing seeker, woman or man, may seize their ego and passions by the neck and force their minds to ask that question which the ego in its wicked idleness furtively

¹ [Translator's note:] The *umma* refers to the Muslim community worldwide.

evades: What is the quality of our *īmān*¹? How do things stand between us and our Lord? Lost and forgotten amid the racket of activism, is there any way to salvage this spirituality? When we originally set out and eagerly claimed to be answering the call of God, supporting His *dīn*², and engaging in *jihād* for His cause, were we true or were our hearts empty and desolate?

It is my sincere hope that this book's candid message may satisfy the anguish of the believer, the ambition of the expectant, and the skepticism of the heedless. It is the hope of this book that a flame of regret, a blaze of ardor may light up in the depths of the soul of the reader – that servant of God, man or woman, who does not know who they really are. This book hopes to plant within the innermost part of the reader's heart concern for their destiny in the Hereafter, ardent grief for their heedlessness, and those questions which, while disquieting, help to prod us to salvation: How confident am I in my Lord? How sincere am I with Him? How honest am I in seeking His goodly-pleasure? Where am I in relation to the sincere servants who worship Him with love and reverence? How much certainty do I have? How satisfied am I with God as my Lord, Islam as my

¹ [Translator's note:] See following note.

² [Translator's note:] I retain the original Arabic and Qur'anic term *dīn*, avoiding as much as possible the word "religion" owing to its ambiguous – and sometimes negative – connotations. Our *dīn* [that is, Islam] comprises three ascending steps, distinct yet inseparable: *islām*, *īmān*, and eventually *iḥsān*. As for *islām* (with a lower-case "i"), it is to testify that there is no god beside God and that Muḥammad is His Messenger, to do the prescribed prayer, to give the *zakāt* (the prescribed alms due each year for the purification of one's wealth and one's soul from niggardliness, if that wealth has reached the threshold of liability), to fast the month of Ramadan, and to make the pilgrimage to the holy precincts of Mecca and Medina if one has the means. *Īmān* is to believe in God, His angels, His Revealed Books, His Messengers, the Day of Judgment, and God's Predestination of both good and evil. Moral rectitude, achieved progressively through assimilating the branches of *īmān*, should accompany such beliefs. *Iḥsān*, the highest degree, is to worship God as if you could see Him, or to be conscious that if you do not see Him, He sees you. *Iḥsān* carries other significant connotations: to do the assigned duties proficiently and to be magnanimous, kind-hearted, considerate, and courteous to all living beings, not least one's family and neighbors.

dīn, and Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) as my prophet? How quick and steady is my pace among the servants who race to win the high ranks of Paradise near to Him?

Only after our hearts have been roused and our relationship with our Lord made the central issue will all the other issues of our life fall into their proper ranks of priority. For then, the means will serve the end, the branches will join the root, and the requisites will not eclipse the prerequisite.

This book aspires to awaken not only those who have been sleeping on the bed of indifference and withdrawal, but also those who have been engaged in activism: those who vie with each other for worldly things, those who vie with their despotic rulers for their usurped rights, and those who vie with their co-workers and neighbors over leadership and distinction.

The book's goal will be achieved if this spiritual awakening leads to self-criticism, self-evaluation, and follow-up.

If we have enough courage in the face of our ego, we will admit that our lives are little more than a series of jumps and starts and missed opportunities; similarly, if our negligence were a house, it would be a veritable fortress which we continually fortify with low-quality materials to please our arrogant selves in front of the crowd.

Seek perfection, O woman! Seek perfection, O man! Yes, but what is perfection? What are the means? What is the end? What have the more lenient jurists considered permissible? What have the more stringent Muslims judged as heretical? Is there any way to make the journey towards the greatest happiness of the Hereafter without complications and ordeals, without a dauntless resolve that braves all obstacles?

If you think so, sleep on, undisturbed!

The author prays to God that He spread the fragrance of His mercy onto those readers whom He wills from among His female and

male servants, for these fragrances can help lead them toward their perfection.

Yet be mindful! For the fragrances of the divine Mercy and the inner thoughts that seek to show you the right way may be scattered by the winds of passion and the storms of worldly attractions. The thorns of doubt and skepticism may snag the garments of your natural will. You may be confronted with obstacles set up by your ego and the Devil that aim to disable and confuse you and cause you to wander aimlessly in this life.

So either sleep on undisturbed or come along and follow the pages of this book patiently. My intention – God make it for His sake – is to enlighten the minds of the believing women and believing men with the knowledge about the purification of souls alongside, or ahead of, that activism that seeks to do justice to the woman. The aim is to incorporate into such activism a theoretical knowledge of purification as well as a practical system of purification for our soul and heart. For on the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any use, only those with a heart free from evil will prosper.

O believing woman free from overt and covert *shirk*,¹ the flame of your *īmān* will falter and die out if your heart's inner feelings and your limbs' outer acts are not arranged in a luminous line that can show you through the darkness and that can raise you from the abyss of bestiality to the purity of the angels. Your *īmān* is fragmented and broken, for it is at odds with your passions and the devil's whisperings; sometimes you resist these, and sometimes you succumb. But once you have rolled up the sleeves of your resolve, restrained the evasive impulses of your ego with unflinching sincerity, turned your face toward God, and enjoined upon your

¹ [Translator's note:] Overt (or greater) *shirk* is to worship other gods or to associate other deities with God, for example claiming that God has begotten children. Covert (or lesser) *shirk* is to do pious acts not for the sake of God but to be seen and praised by others.

ego the observance of the *Sunna*¹ that His Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has clearly presented to you as a model – only then will you know what is good for you and what is bad on the pathway to the Hereafter.

But if the waves of this concern have not yet struck your shores, then alright – sleep on undisturbed! Otherwise, let us leaf through the pages of *The Muslim Woman: Journey into the Light* to discover what kind of *jihād*² will be accepted from us, and how to proceed.

O Lord, You are the Companion on our journey! So make our journey a journey of the rightly-guided who in turn guide to Your Way, and show us the Straight Way – the way of those whom You have favored, not the way of those who earn Your wrath, nor of those who go astray. Amen.

¹ [Translator's note:] The *Sunna* refers to the teaching and practice of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and includes his sayings, deeds, and tacit approvals.

² [Translator's note:] Throughout the book, the word *jihād* will not be used in the narrow sense of military effort. *Jihād*, as Imam Yassine sees it, is above all a striving for the liberation of the Muslim mind and soul from all kinds of moral and material subservience, and for the reconstruction of the shattered edifice of the Islamic *umma*. In his *al-Minhāj an-Nabawī* (The Prophetic Method), Imam Yassine lays out 11 pathways for *jihād*. In none of these pathways of *jihād* is violence to be used as an instrument of change.

*I. Muslim Women
and Comprehensive Change*

1. Braving the Obstacles

“God accepts only from those who are wary of Him (*muttaqūn*)” (5:29) – and so replied Abel, the son of Adam, when his brother Cain threatened to slay him out of envy, as related in Sūrat al-Mā’ida when the Lord accepted the sacrifice of the former and not the latter. Then Cain murdered his brother, ruining his soul as did the people of Hell about whom God has said, “They have lost their [very] souls.” (7:53)

The sons and daughters of this world all too often succumb to the control of their egos and passions, which bring them to perdition and hurl them into the eternal abyss. Their souls become lost when they give in to their base impulses and turn aside from the lofty appeal to God and the Hereafter. God (Exalted is He) has said: “And for him who rebelled and chose the life of this world, the abode will be the Fire. And for him who feared to stand before his Lord and restrained his soul from passions, the abode will be Paradise.” (79:37-40)

Eternal victory and prosperity belong to those who restrain their lower selves and tremble at the thought of standing before their Lord; those have the glad tidings of Paradise. Because they are wary of God and safeguard their religion, He shall accept their works. They shall have precedence over others by virtue of their faith, righteous deeds, and firm resolve.

God has promised the pious ones a goodly reward: “Those will be rewarded for their patient endurance with the highest place, and they will be met therein with greetings and peace. To abide therein: how beautiful an abode and place of rest!” (25:75-76) This refers to the most august place in Paradise, among whose wonders is the greeting from God’s angels who will descend upon the believers

from every gate – but the highest felicity therein shall be to behold the Face of God, the Sovereign, the Bestower.

No room shall there be in such a sublime place for those enthralled to their base passions, for the abode of rest can only be for the servants of the Merciful who were wary of Him.

The main virtue for which these believers will receive this lofty reward is their patience, as we previously saw in the verse: “Those will be rewarded for their patient endurance (*ṣabr*) with the highest place” (25:75) and also in this passage: “Peace be upon you, because you persevered in patience” (13:25), in reference to the greetings of the angels.

But what exactly is this mother of all virtues? The imams of the Arabic language maintain that “Patience (*ṣabr*) is to hold the ego to doing what is obligatory according to the Law¹ or to reason (*‘aql*) or conversely to restrain it from what is prohibited according to the Law or to reason.”

Hence, patience is of two kinds: to keep the baser self from doing what is prohibited and to urge it to acquire upright manners and perform righteous deeds. To restrain the ego from its passions is akin to reprimanding one’s beast of burden and holding it back from its fodder: and this is in fact the linguistic origin of the verb *ṣabara*, to practice patience.

Thus we see that controlling the ego and holding it back from giving in to the perversions of its animal instincts or alternatively prompting it to perform acts of obedience for the Lord’s sake, out

¹ [Translator’s note:] Islamic Law is called *shar‘a* in Arabic, which simply means “the way.” The Muslim, submissive to God, follows a way, a disciplined path, a method of life. *Shar‘a*, the way, covers the entire normative field of individual and social life, but is not restricted to actionable rules and regulations, which the term “law” normally connotes. It comprehends, for example, the rites of worship, and therefore it can in many contexts serve as a synonym for *dīn*, the religion as way of life.

of fear of Him and out of belief in His promise – this is the supreme virtue around which is centered one’s fortune or misfortune, one’s success or perdition.

For the pious who persevere in patience is the highest station in Paradise along with salutations of peace, a promise which is recounted in the last verses of Sūrat al-Furqān following God’s description of His true servants as those “who say: our Lord, grant us spouses and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us a pattern for the righteous (*muttaqūn*) to follow!” (25:74)

O sister in faith! Look at the commentaries for the sixty-third verse of Sūrat al-Furqān and discuss the virtues mentioned there with your fellow Muslimas.¹ Understand that in Qur’ānic Arabic, the masculine plural is used to refer to men and women alike – this is purely linguistic convention, and not because of any preference for males. For the true servants of the Most Gracious are those who, male and female, acquire the moral virtues cited in these noble verses, the greatest of which is patience. The real criterion of honor is the ability to control one’s passions, not one’s gender.

In a similar vein, felicity in the Hereafter is not confined to those who had lived as monks, whatever their claims. In Heaven, the servants of the Most Gracious will be lounging peacefully on their majestic cushions along with their spouses and offspring. And in this world, among their acts of rightly-guided worship is that they pray to their Lord thusly: “Our Lord, grant us spouses and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us a pattern for the righteous (*muttaqūn*) to follow!” (25:74) This prayer can be uttered by either spouse. This “comfort of the eyes” – an expression conveying the utmost felicity – begins in this world with the affection between a believing man and wife and their having believing offspring. But most of all they can rejoice in the fact that they, and their descendants, are steadily progressing on the path to eternal bliss.

¹ Female Muslims.

So how does one acquire the resolve to resist one's base passions, take command of one's ego and hence of one's direction in life? In other words, how does one achieve true happiness? Can patience divorced of *īmān* make one happy? Is patience something embedded in the *fiṭra*¹ of every person, or is it acquired through spiritual education, like *īmān* itself? How does *īmān* become worn out and how is it renewed? How does *īmān* decrease and how does it increase? How can one strengthen their will? How can the ego be restrained and dissuaded from its unruly desires? These are the essential questions that will be examined in this book, God willing.

Let us now discuss the path which the pious servants of the Most Gracious must tread to arrive at felicity. This is an arduous path fraught with many obstacles and ordeals. Walking this path carries with it the full meaning of the word "patience": it is a matter of strength and determination, of *iqtiḥām*. The word *iqtiḥām* is a word of mighty significance which Muslim linguists (God have mercy on them) have defined as "braving formidable adversities."

Sūrat al-Balad makes a fervent appeal to man – both male and female alike – to brave the obstacles and proceed to mount the steep path. Elsewhere we have spoken of what these obstacles entail and how they can be overcome; here we want to focus on the linguistic meaning of *ṣabr* and *iqtiḥām* and their prerequisites in a world of constant effervescence and agitation. The righteous Muslima is commended to acquire virtue and resist vice and to build up the strength of *īmān* in order to attain perfection in her spirit, mind, and *jihād*.

¹ [Translator's note:] *Fiṭra* is a Qur'ānic term meaning the natural or given disposition of a human being, as distinct from the characteristics gained from one's social environment. It further represents our most basic spiritual instinct which directs us to the worship of the one and unique Creator: "And so, set your face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) which God has instilled into man (*faṭar^a an-nās^a 'alayhā*)..." (30:30)

In this section, we have focused primarily on the inner force of the believing men and women because it is the decisive factor in the battle between Islam and *jāhiliyya*¹ and the condition for receiving the Lord's assistance. By inner force is meant the force of *īmān* that is consolidated through proper comportment, the will-power which steers one toward a destiny pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, where one willingly sacrifices on the harder path – for one's wealth, after all, is a small investment when compared to the payoff of the Garden, the salutation of the angels, and the chance to behold the Divine Countenance.

In the following pages, God willing, we will devote ample space to considering the challenges facing Muslims in the world, our complex social and economic issues, the deteriorating situation of women and men, the duty to reawaken the Muslims, and the fierce battles which Muslim men and women will inevitably have to wage.

We would be foolish to engage in discussions about the state of the world without saying anything about what is truly essential: knowing the true nature of the various groups who raise up Islamic slogans: those who engage in politicking and those who engage in violence; those who flat-out oppose the status quo and those who try to negotiate; those who try to resist the despotic regimes in the Muslim countries directly and those who resist indirectly.

We need to examine: what is the motivation of these varying groups? What kind of knowledge do they have of God? What is the reality of their *īmān*? What kind of spiritual mentoring did

¹ [Translator's note:] *Jāhiliyya*, from the root *jahala*, has two meanings according to Imam Yassine: being ignorant of God and being violent toward one's fellow human beings. In the Qur'ān, *jāhiliyya* has four aspects: misbelief (*ẓann al-jāhiliyya*), despotism and malgovernance (*ḥukm al-jāhiliyya*), wantonness of women (*tabarruj al-jāhiliyya*), and nationalism and tribalism (*ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya*). See Section 9 in Chapter II of this book ("When the Muslim Woman Deserts Her Strategic Tower") for more details.

they receive? What kind of mentoring do they promote among the members of their group?

For us to resist external tyranny while permitting the tyrannical passions of our own souls to go unchecked would betray a rank ignorance of our *dīn*, a mockery of the *jihād*. In turn, we cannot know how to overcome our passions if we do not know our own motives: is our righteous anger for His sake, or is it merely that aversion to injustice common to all progressive ideologies?

The purity of our intention is especially threatened by the process of osmosis whereby we absorb the states of our colleagues and rivals, friends and adversaries. In situations of cooperative social work, the temptation to apathy and disengagement lies ever in wait for the believing men and women. In situations of confrontation, disputation with one's opponents conceals another potential ambush: they argue and you rebut, they strike and you strike back, they act and you react. One day, without even feeling it, you will find that you have discarded your own way of thinking and have fully adopted their worldview down to the last detail.

Some Muslims are overcome with a sudden desire to change the condition of the *umma*. Others are agonized by atrocities perpetrated in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. A young girl might don the *ḥijāb*¹ to demonstrate her enthusiasm for the *dīn*. Another might be touched by a sermon. Yet another, whose relative died, might experience an overwhelming feeling of reverence and humility for a few days.

These poor people! They are visited by a shadow of repentance that never becomes real. They are like the woman who has never even

¹ [Translator's note:] *Hijāb*, literally meaning a screen, refers to the full Islamic dress for women, although it is often used to mean just the headscarf or head-covering. The style of *ḥijāb* varies from country to country and from one individual to another, but it is made up essentially of loose-fitting garments meant to cover the woman's body, in particular the head and neck.

opened a Qurān or one who listens to the recital of God's verses without feeling any tremor in her heart; and yet, they all eagerly hark to the voices of the Islamic Renaissance!¹

What is their destination and how will they get there? What willpower, what strength do we have to brave the obstacles before us? These are the main questions that must first be addressed.

Praise is due to God, first and last.

¹ [Translator's note:] By "Islamic Renaissance" is meant the general awakening of the current Muslim generation, their return to their Islamic identity, ethics, and values, and their aspiration to see Islam prevail in the Muslim lands as a comprehensive faith and way of life.

2. *The Prophetic Method and the “Religion of Imitating the Victor”*

The Way of Faith is an arduous, ascending path, the most difficult part of which is the psychological obstacles which can only be overcome through the virtue of patience. The Way of our base passions and Satanic impulses, on the other hand, is an easy path descending directly and precipitously to the bottom of the abyss. And then there are the worldly, exterior obstacles strewn forth by adversaries and allies alike, arising from our urgent economic and medical needs and the challenges occasioned by our societies’ underdevelopment.

The Muslim woman faces a double obstacle, stuck between a voice prompting her to do good deeds and another trying to thwart her aspirations. This second voice is firmly entrenched in those customs and an ossified and overly-stringent *fiqh*¹ from our centuries of decline which have embedded in her a feeling of inferiority and impotence, undermining confidence in herself and her Lord, severing her from any sense of responsibility outside the very restricted sphere of her private life.

The other voice which is motivating her comes from pristine Islam; for too long, it has been very faint but today can be heard by both men and women who, when they are awakened by this appeal, are then prompted to ask, “Now what?”

In the previous section, we read how God exhorts His servants, both men and women, to brave the obstacles, to overcome the formidable adversities, to exert one’s utmost efforts to ascend the arduous path, armed with self-control and the dauntless will to move

¹ [Translator’s note:] Muslim law or jurisprudence.

forward. To brave the obstacles means to keep oneself from evil and urge oneself to do good, for the destination is none other than God the Exalted. The goal is to gain His satisfaction. The reward is the highest place in Paradise. The touchstone is reason and Islamic Law. And the Law is a way and a method. So now what?

Virtue is worth nothing if the servants of God do not manifest it in deeds acceptable to Him – but of course He accepts “from those who are wary of Him (*muttaqūn*).” And *muttaqūn* is a plural word, encompassing both the male and female faithful “who believe in the Unseen, establish the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in the Revelation sent to you [Muḥammad], and sent before your time, and are certain of the hereafter. They are on true guidance from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.” (2:2–4)

Open your Qur’ān, sister in Islam, and read the opening verses of Sūrat al-Baqara cited above: you will see how the pious are defined as those whose righteous deeds are crowned by a certainty in the Hereafter as opposed to some vague, indefinite beliefs.

Those who are certain of the Hereafter, women and men, are always earnest: they take extreme precaution to ensure that their works are not in vain. They revere the Lord and do right so that their deeds may be inscribed in the record of accepted deeds. Not only that, they always seek the best of deeds, i.e., the fundamentals of *jihād*.

Also, sister in Islam, read these verses from Sūrat an-Nisā: “Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) – save those excused for illness or infirmity – and those who strive in the cause of God with their goods and their persons. God has granted a rank higher to those who strive with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all has God promised what is best. But those who strive has He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward – ranks specially bestowed by Him, forgiveness and mercy, for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (4:94–95)

Even if every single Muslim attained the highest degree of Godwariness and exerted their utmost efforts in doing righteous deeds – but did so only as *individuals* and failed to form a collective, proactive (*iqtiḥāmiyya*) force (which of course entails women being active partners with men), they would have failed to achieve the rank of *jihād*, thereby depriving the *umma* of its rightful position.

In the Islamic literature, we have become too accustomed to reading about the condition of the *umma* divorced from the condition of the believing women and men in the Hereafter.

But why a pro-active (*iqtiḥāmiyya*) force? First, in order that I as an individual may be granted the highest rank before God. Having a community that has been spiritually educated, is well-organized, is trying to take the steep path, and that finally achieves worldly victory is of no concern to me if it is not bringing me closer to the Divine. That ought to be my prime concern, first and last. Only after that should I spare no effort in diligently contributing to the achievement of the *umma*'s renaissance project. At the same time, I need to take heed of my ego's temptations lest my deeds ever go in vain.

The logic of piety in the verse “and are certain of the hereafter” and the logic of *jihād* in the verse “but those who strive has He distinguished” mark out the lines of the ascending path. Having been assured by the Book of God (Exalted is He) that we have a duty to boldly tackle this obstacle, let us now look to the Prophetic guidance for a practical way (*minhāj*).

Our way or method (*minhāj*) is the Prophetic *Sunna*, as noted by the Companion ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās (God be pleased with both of them). The word *minhāj* can be found in the following *ḥadīth*:¹

¹ [Translator's note:] *Ḥadīth* (pl. *aḥādīth*), lit. a saying, is used as a term to denote, individually and collectively, the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace). The *ḥadīth* constitutes a textual source for the *Sunna*, the Prophetic Tradition, which serves as a source of Islamic Law alongside, yet secondary to, the Qur'ān.

“The Prophetic Mission shall last amongst you so long as God wills, then He shall remove it when He wills. Then there shall be a *khilāfa* that runs according to the Prophetic method (*‘alā minhāj an-nubuwwa*), lasting as long as God wills. Then He shall remove it when He wills to do so. Then there shall be a rapacious monarchy¹ (*mulk ‘ādd*) which shall last amongst you as long as God wills, and then He shall remove it when He wills to do so. Then there shall be a tyrannical rule (*mulk jabrī*)” – perhaps a reference to the dictatorships which Muslims currently live under – “which shall last amongst you as long as God wills, after which He shall remove it when He wills to do so. Then there shall be another *khilāfa* that runs according to the Prophetic method.” [Reported by Imam Aḥmad with a chain of transmission going back to the Companion Ḥudhayfa (God be pleased with him).]

Al-Ḥāfiẓ² al-‘Irāqī declared the chain to be sound. Therefore, we must believe that another *khilāfa* will come to pass, no matter how long it takes, no matter how arduous the path to it.

We now come to the second theme of this chapter – the Religion of Imitating the Victor. It is a priority for us to delve deeply into the psychological obstacles within ourselves as individuals and within our *umma* as communities. By this I do not mean that we should step out of society and enter a quiet clinic until we have

¹ [Translator’s note:] *‘Ādd*, lit. biting, mordacious, meaning a rule in which the rulers are avaricious for power, cling to it and exercise it by any means, however cruel and illegitimate. “Rapacious monarchy” refers to the rule of the dynastic rulers who would come to power after the four rightly-guided Caliphs – Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī (God be pleased with them) and who transformed the system from one in which the caliph was elected by consensus of the leading figures of the *umma* to hereditary rule whereby the king forcibly commanded the allegiance of the *umma*. The most enduring of the dynasties who ruled in the heartlands of Islam were the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Ottomans. Of course, there were a few pious kings in those dynasties, but that is the exception that proves the rule.

² [Translator’s note:] A title indicating the highest proficiency in the Islamic sciences, especially *ḥadīth*.

cured ourselves and our society of its illnesses; what I mean is that, even while the course of life is flowing and the wheel of history is turning, we should focus on these issues. God (Exalted is He) has said: “Not equal are those who sit (at home) and those who strive in the cause of God.” (4:95) The procession won’t wait around for you, so if you lag behind, you’ll perish!

The phrase “the religion of imitating the victor” was coined by Ibn Khaldūn (God have mercy on him) who perspicaciously observed in his *Muqaddima* (the *Preface* to his *History*) that “The vanquished always wants to imitate the victor in his distinctive characteristics, dress, occupation, and other customs,” arguing that “the reason for this is that the human being always sees perfection in the person who is superior to him and to whom he is subservient. The former considers the latter perfect, either because of the genuine respect he has for him, or because he erroneously assumes that his own subservience is due to the other’s perfection and not his own weakness. When that erroneous assumption fixes itself in the soul, it becomes a firm belief, leading the vanquished to adopt all the manners of the victor and to assimilate himself to him.”¹

To this phenomenon of imitation among the vanquished I would add: a subservient culture, a colonized economy, and a deterioration of morals.

In another chapter of his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn (God have mercy on him) talks of “the Religion of Yielding,” by which he means the tendency of people to yield to their despotic rulers, a tendency that is inherited by successive generations, one after the other, who live under the yoke of rapacious monarchies and dictatorial regimes until such subservience becomes so firmly established in people’s minds that they wouldn’t even dare think of doing otherwise.

¹ Ibn Khaldūn’s *al-Muqaddima*, translated and introduced by Franz Rosenthal, abridged and edited by N.J. Dawood, with a new introduction by Bruce B. Lawrence (Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 116 – with edits by the translator of this volume.

The two illnesses afflicting the body politic of the *umma* have merged into one greater malady: one inherited from the centuries of our historical decline and the other occasioned by European colonialism. These two “articles of faith” have combined into one creed, the religion of yielding to local despots and the religion of imitating the foreign victor, as our wise Ibn Khaldūn has laid out. One illness and one creed that dwell in our *umma*’s body, mind, and soul.

Our history books and the collective memory of the *umma* relate the great wrongs and atrocities perpetrated against us by colonialism. Alas for Muslims in these grievous days when their brothers and sisters around the globe are suffering criminal aggressions that the pen is powerless to describe!

With the passing of time, the immediate influence of the victor’s civilization fades, but the psychological and cultural wounds remain. The vanquished first accepts the victor’s culture only begrudgingly, then self-deceivingly justifies it, and eventually adopts it as their own conviction and *raison d’être*. Such are the residues of colonialism, dwelling within us, stacked one above the other.

These elements of imitation abide in the innermost depths of the Muslim’s psyche, alongside their personal passions and the evil thoughts inspired by demons. God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) forewarned Muslims against imitating the unbelievers in numerous *ḥadīths*, counted by some scholars as up to eighty.

“The religion of imitating the victor” is a defeatist propensity, present even when the victor is not actively planning to indoctrinate the vanquished. So how much more powerful is contemporary colonialism if it has a deliberate plan for cultural, economic, and political conquest, and to that end has at its disposal the mass media and all its financial and military instruments?

How much more powerful is it if it has agents from among us, men and women, who are imbued with its doctrines, customs, and thoughts, and who are loyal only to it, notwithstanding their claims of being patriotic and of supporting the cause of their own people?

Secularized modernity before religion! That is the message of the victor echoed in our countries by his agents. But God – our Lord – calls on us to overcome life's obstacles while His Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) outlines the Method which promises right guidance for the *umma* and victory and prosperity for the pious. So what is the position of the sister in faith vis-à-vis this pro-active force? What is her contribution to the *jihād*? What is her share in carrying this heavy burden?

3. *The Woman: A Neglected Mass of Flesh or a Fetishized Doll?*

The Muslim woman fell along with the fall of the general Muslim community. This downfall began with the deterioration of the system of government from a *khilāfa* which followed the Prophetic method to a rapacious monarchy whereby the ruler appointed his heir and bequeathed to him the common wealth of the Muslims as if it were his private property. The woman soon became a commodity in the market, a slave in the palaces, a mistress, a neglected mass of flesh. When the Age of Secularism¹ – introduced by the agents of colonialism – came, it brought her the good news that, like her perfect counterparts in the West, she had now entered the Age of Freedom, where she was the mistress of her own body. Nowadays, the Westernized woman who has adopted the Religion of Imitating the Victor is militating for human rights, that is, her right to liberate herself from the yoke under which she has been a commodity and a neglected mass of flesh.

But how was this deterioration able to gradually take place?

The condition of woman did not degenerate in isolation, but occurred alongside the degeneration of the society, which in turn

¹ [Translator's note:] Anglo-Saxon secularism should be distinguished from French laicism. The former excludes religion from the operations and affairs of government, though it may retain a symbolic presence on strictly ceremonial occasions. By contrast, French-style laicism excludes religion from the whole public sphere (not only government), opposes it and expects it, over time and with the state's help, to wither away. The distinction will be important throughout the book.

occurred because of the degeneration of the system of government whose knots¹ had become undone. Accordingly, jurisprudence became static, the doors of *ijtihād*² were closed, the *fatwas* turned round and round in the restricted circle of imitation wherein the great scholars remained stationary in order to prevent any other knots from becoming untied so as to keep as much as they could of Muslim life within the framework of the Law. The Muslim mind – which once had been a pioneer in the universal sciences as much as it had been in Islamic Law – fell into a slumber. But this slumber will soon be followed by a total awakening, an active renaissance of the Muslim woman and the Muslim man.

The following are two examples that illustrate the decline of our society, the deterioration of woman's status, and the narrow thinking of jurisprudence. All these evils sprung from the rapacious institution that allowed "the bearer of the sword"³ to appropriate whatever territories he willed which he could then hand down to his heirs. The first example concerns slavery, while the second example has to do with the political fortunes of the Muslims in classical times.

Both examples convey some sense of how the issues of women, society, and power are interlinked. That is, the issue of the Muslim

¹ [Translator's note:] An allusion to the *ḥadīth* reported by Imam Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Abū Umāma al-Bāhilī in which the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) said: "The knots of Islam [Islam is here compared to a knitted garment] will come undone one by one. Each time one comes apart, people will grip to the other: the first knot to be untied will be worldly power [right governance] and the last is the prayer."

² [Translator's note:] *Ijtihād* is the exertion of one's conscience and reason to derive normative rulings on the basis of the Qur'ān and/or the *Sunna*, on matters on which these sources are not already clear and on which there is no established jurisprudential consensus. A *mujtahid* is a Muslim scholar qualified to do *ijtihād*.

³ [Translator's note:] An allusion to the *fatwa* issued by Imam Aḥmad (God have mercy on him) in which he accorded legitimacy to "the bearer of the sword," that is, to the one who used military might to achieve political power.

woman and all the other issues concerning Muslims are one, therefore talking about the history of women's oppression without its historical, political, economic, legal, or social context is an arbitrary separation of what is really inseparable.

Slavery was an institution where prisoners of war were able to learn about Islam and embrace it. Prisoners of war, whether men or women, are not crammed into concentration camps, but are entrusted to the care of a Muslim family which treats them with kindness and generosity and thereby endears the faith to them. "Your servants must be your brothers," as the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) once said. "Take care of your women and your servants" was his last counsel. He also instructed those who had servants, male and female, to provide them with the same garments and food as they provided for themselves.

Furthermore, God (Exalted is He) had enumerated various occasions in the life of a Muslim when they should set their slaves free. Thus, countless were the times where the prisoners of war could learn about Islam and embrace it. In turn, the freed men and women could go back to their countries and their people and convey the call of Islam after having been hosted humanely and mercifully.

The freed men and women therefore invited to a religion, a *dīn*, that they loved, a *dīn* they had embraced at the hand of a people whose generosity had compensated somewhat for the absence of their own people.

There are nine occasions where God (Exalted is He) commands His Muslim servants to free slaves. In the Qur'ān, the word *raqaba* (sing.) or *riqāb*¹ (pl.) is mentioned once in the context of smiting the unbelievers in war and nine times in the context of liberating slaves.

¹ [Translator's note:] Literally a neck, and figuratively a slave.

A slave should be freed in expiation for manslaughter, for *zihār*,¹ and for sworn oaths that have been broken. Among the eight categories available to fulfill the alms-tax (*zakāt*)² that each Muslim of means, man and woman, is obliged to pay, is one allocated to freeing slaves. How many prisoners of war would remain in the Muslim countries if we put God's Law into practice in accordance with its true spirit and its sublime example?

To free a slave is the first evidence that the believer, man or woman, has begun to overcome the obstacles. The sister in faith should read *Sūrat al-Balad* which has an explicit exhortation to free one's fellow man, both on the allotted occasions and in general. It underlines how freeing a slave is a pious act that brings one nearer to God, and is a way to purify both the emancipator and the emancipated.

This was the sublime objective, as underlined by the fact that one is supposed to liberate believing slaves who will convey Islam to other lands and other people, and not those who, when set free, will revert to the side of unbelief and help reinforce the enemy armies.

But then how did those poor slaves become nothing more than a cheap commodity in the market? And how did jurisprudence accommodate itself to the general view that male slaves were a great source of cost-free labor while the female slaves were a great source to fill the harems? No doubt because of a decline. The first people we should call to the witness stand are the inhabitants of the palaces: the "caliph" with his five-hundred sex slaves and

¹ [Translator's note:] An iniquitous pre-Islamic formula of divorce, abolished by the Qur'ān: the formula consisted of the husband saying to his wife: "You are to me as the back of my mother." This was held to imply divorce and freed the husband from any responsibility for conjugal duties, but did not leave the wife free to leave the husband's home, or to contract a second marriage.

² [Translator's note:] *Zakāt* (lit. purification) refers to a tax on any personal wealth above a certain minimum – intended to purify the wealth and to save the soul of its owner from covetousness. *Zakāt* is one of the "five pillars of Islam", a religious obligation that accordingly requires the presence of intention. Although the *umma* has the prerogative to enforce other taxes, such taxes do not have the same religious standing.

thousands of serfs, the rich man who gifted such-and-such prince hundreds of slave girls, and so on.

The second example symbolizing our decline is drawn from the history of the Moorish kings¹ in Andalusia; we will use Dr. Shalabī's *Islamic History* as a guide.

The age of the Moorish kings extended from 422 AH until 484 AH, i.e., six years after the fall of Toledo. The Moorish kings are an example of rapacious monarchy in its worst manifestation, given their extreme degeneration, disunity, impotence, deception, and willingness to ally with the unbelievers against their fellow Muslims. Inherited from the glorious reign of the Umayyads and the 'Āmirids, the Muslims' superior civilization prevented them from adopting the "Religion of Imitating the Victor" – nevertheless, Ibn Khaldūn's vocabulary can still be stretched somewhat to capture this society on the verge of complete collapse.

Shalabī says about the age of the Moorish kings: "With no less than twenty different ruling families, it was an age replete with social unrest, anarchy, flagrant tribalism, and destructive egoism."

Disintegration, blatant egoism, tribalism – and a king in each city. If we were to add other attributes such as "nationalism," "liberalism," "socialism," "laicism," or "economic and political subordination," we would be describing the despotic rulers of our own times.

Shalabī then quotes another historian to bring home his point: "Stanley Lane-Poole paints for us an exemplarily-detailed description for whomever is willing to draw a lesson, an edifying portrait for whomever desires to live in the light of day... 'The state was torn into small emirates while Alfonso VI managed to unify Asturias, Leon, and Castille. He knew what he had to do: just extend enough rope to the Moorish kings which they could hang themselves with.'"

¹ [Translator's note:] *Los reyes de taifas*: a Spanish term adapted from the Arabic *mulūk at-Tawā'if*. It designates those petty kings among whom the remnants of the dismembered Islamic state in Muslim Spain were divided until the last of them was expelled with the fall of Granada in 1492 CE.

Shalabī then continues: “Because these ignorant people did not look at the consequences of their actions but thought only about themselves, they spared no effort to weaken their rivals, who were fellow Muslims. They used to kneel down before Alfonso VI to beg his assistance whenever they felt they could not resist their Muslim brothers on their own. Hence, all those small states approached Alfonso VI to pay tribute. Each year, as his power increased, Alfonso VI would increase the amount of tribute demanded. He extended his territory whenever the occasion arose and took over the castles and fortresses, one after the other, until he captured Toledo in 478 AH. This assault provoked a great panic among the Muslims of Spain.”

After a resistance put up over four centuries by the Almoravids and Almohads from neighboring Morocco, the fall of Toledo heralded the fall of the whole of Andalusia.

Another lesson to be drawn from this: when the ruler of Toledo, al-Qādir, was informed that his troops had been defeated and that it was time to depart, he took out an astrolabe to calculate the position of the stars and determine whether the timing was propitious. Sorcery, defeat, imbecility, and kittens roaring the deeds of lions.

Where were the women in all that? The answer is to be found in the erotic poetry of that period and in accounts of the slave girls in the palaces. Note how the rot of treason was inseparably linked to the status of women at that time.

To give one example of how treacherous these Moorish kings were: there was Abū ‘Abdullāh who sacrificed every ideal for his personal ambitions, fighting his own father for the throne and collaborating with the King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella against his brother. When the Christians won and entered Granada, he sent his congratulations. But in the end, Ferdinand chased him out; he fled in tears to Morocco where he lived as a homeless beggar. But the punishment of the Hereafter will be more humiliating still, and the guilty will find no help.

4. The Impact of Colonialism

As noted above, Alfonso held out to the Moorish kings the rope with which they hanged themselves, intimidating them with his military might, demanding tribute, and using one group to strike at the others.

But all this is nothing more than a primitive subterfuge as compared with the stratagems of the current colonialists. In the days of Andalusia, although the military defeat and expulsion were certainly a heavy loss, at least the Muslims had a great civilization. The grave scandal of our times is the total retreat and debacle in the face of the West's cultural, economic, and military invasion.

What makes this so acutely painful is that the invaders' overwhelming superiority in the sciences, industry, economy, and military has exposed our vulnerability, our "colonizability" if you will, as Malek Bennabi (God have mercy on him) so deftly put it.

In this section, we will discuss – God willing – how the movement for libertinism and women's so-called "emancipation" arrived in our countries, and how it sought to make our women into fetishized dolls. In a later section, God willing, we will examine how the woman in the West is exploited and humiliated in a deceptively-attractive fashion.

Where was the Muslim woman when that vanquished idiot was toying around with his astrolabe in Toledo? Where was she when that despotic traitor was fighting his father and brother to hand over the lands of the Muslims to their enemies? She was stuck in the harem with hundreds of other slave girls or being tossed out to be replaced by a younger fourth wife.

The admirer of Islamic civilization – which was definitely an advanced civilization by all accounts (save for its system of

government) – might interrupt here to question all this antagonism against our past. There is a very good reason for such anger.

God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) frankly described an authoritarian government from which *shūrā*¹ is absent as “rapacious” so that it couldn’t hide behind the deceptive title of “caliphate.” Anyone who insists on calling the Umayyads, the Abbasids, or any other ravenous monarchy by anything other than what they truly were are only insisting on leaving the blinders over our eyes put there by royalist propaganda, which Muslims, anxious about preserving the *umma*’s unity, have remained silent about for centuries.

If we persist in keeping our eyes closed, that will be our failing, our conversion to the Religion of Yielding, our drifting along in the current of decline; in this condition, we shall not be able to see the Prophetic light in the clouds of our history. Adding to this our excelling at the Religion of Imitating the Victor and spreading the misinformation of our cultural invaders better than they, it will be hard for us indeed to find a path towards the promised second *khilāfa*.

What God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has denounced I have no desire to defend; following his cue, I wish only to trace all the deceptions and treasons in our history, without at the same time overlooking the *jihād* of the Muslims, their marvelous achievements and their magnificent sciences.

But we need to be clear that our acquiescence to the glorification of the so-called caliphate, justified by *ḥadīths* commanding our obedience to those in authority, is nothing but erroneous apologetics.

Those who try to debate the advocates of Westernization, libertinism, secularism, and atheism by blindly defending the Great Decline really only wish to see the Muslim woman return to the

¹ [Translator’s note:] The term *shūrā* refers to consultation between decision-takers (elected statesmen) and the members of the community.

harem and to see the Muslims remain forever under the yoke of men like the astrolabe guy. The only difference with our age is that our rulers now seek the advice of astrologers in Paris or London – *māshāAllāh* for progress!

If, in our attempt to rebut these Western ideologies, we rely on the Religion of Yielding – that is, intellectually justifying the historical rule of the rapacious monarchs and its repercussions into the present – we are only basing ourselves on falsehood. We have the authority of the Prophet’s indictment. But trying to resist the advocates of the Religion of Imitating the Victor with another falsehood is a fundamental mistake.

Our history is part of our being, we don’t deny that. On the contrary, we are proud of the Muslims’ resistance and of their achievements in spite of the corruption of their leadership. *In spite!* May God, the Almighty, forgive us. It is He Who, out of His solicitude, has guarded His *dīn* through the ordeals predestined by His wisdom.

Once this is settled in our minds, we can see the significance of colonialism’s legacy to our condition. Understanding the impact of colonialism and the diseases it has engendered – which are intertwined with the diseases bequeathed from our decline – is key to achieving a future based on the Prophetic method. It is a clearing of the sight, a liberation of the mind.

The current rulers, who hold power against the Muslims’ will, are a mirror image of the defeatist Moorish kings, just as the current partition of the Muslim world into multiple states is nothing but one strand of the cord which colonialism, past and present, has extended to us to hang ourselves with. Look around, sister, and focus your sight: have any of these rulers come to power without the use of blatant military force or without inheriting their position from their father? You’d be hard-pressed to find any.

I beg your patience, sister in faith. We are supposed to be discussing the issue of women and comprehensive change, but there is no way

to change the condition of the Muslim woman or of the *umma* as a whole until we change our own personal condition. And the first step to recovery is to know the disease. The sister in faith is the most concerned with finding the surgery necessary to achieving that recovery.

In his epistle entitled *Between Yesterday and Today*, the pioneer of the Islamic Renaissance, Hassan al-Banna (God have mercy on him), described the impact of colonialism on us: “The Europeans exerted every effort to have the wave of materialism engulf the Islamic countries... To this end, they devised a plan of sociological invasion and used their political and military power to achieve their ends... at which point they were able to reorder the foundations of power in our country, the judicial system, and the educational system. They were able to radically impress their cultural paradigm on even the most powerful Islamic countries.” (in reference to the crimes committed by Mostafa Kemal Ataturk against Turkey)

“They then flooded the Islamic countries with their indecent women, their wines, theaters, dance halls, night clubs, newspapers, novels, cinemas, and general licentiousness. They condoned crimes that they would not have condoned in their own lands. They made this debauched lifestyle seem alluring to naïve Muslims among the rich and influential classes. But they were not content to stop there: they established academic and cultural institutes that instilled in Muslim children a certain skepticism and godlessness and taught them how to disdain themselves, to despise Islam and their culture, while simultaneously holding all that is Western as sacred.”

Sister in Islam, reflect on this meaningful description of the Religion of Imitating the Victor from a man who suffered and strove hard for the cause of Islam. An anxious zeal for the faith almost pierces the paper he writes on. Ponder his profound awareness of the psychological alienation experienced by the colonized and how their hangman’s rope was woven.

Hassan al-Banna (God have mercy on him) also added: “These schools were tailored exclusively for the children of the upper

class who would become the ruling establishment. Those who did not grow up in these schools were otherwise indoctrinated by the missionary schools.”

The destruction of our lands, the looting of our wealth, and the killing of innocent souls was slight compared with the brainwashing of these generations, the distortion of their *fitra*, the effacement of their faith, the reduction of their identity to nothing. “Because this cultural invasion has been tremendously effective in winning hearts and minds, it is a thousand times more dangerous than the politico-military invasion.” May God have mercy on the pioneers of the Islamic Renaissance! How far-sighted and perspicacious they were!

Fifty years after this was written, we now see the graduates of these schools occupying influential positions of power. It is imperative that we understand the roots of this problem well, for it is from a profound comprehension of our decline – both from our distant and more recent past – that change can begin.

God is the Most High, the Omnipotent.

5. *The Emancipation of Women*

In 1899, Qasim Amin published a book titled *The Emancipation of Women* which caused great controversy among our virtuous scholars. Among many women suffering the constraints of their society's ignorance, the book gained wide acceptance; they made it their banner under which they militated.

As Western corruption became more widespread, the Islamic Call became more vigorous and conspicuous. Some Muslims, in order to counter the wantonness and licentiousness they saw, imposed oppressive restrictions on women based on the most stringent and coercive rulings in our legal tradition. As a consequence, believing women found themselves caught between the extreme wantonness of some and the extreme restrictions of others.

In his erudite study *The Woman's Emancipation in the Lifetime of the Prophet*, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Abū Shuqqa gathered texts from the Qur'ān and the books of al-Bukhārī and Muslim to show how gender interaction in the early Muslim community was far from that jurisprudence which is overly obsessed with preventing sexual temptation, an approach which inevitably pushes the observant Muslim woman into an awkward, distressing corner.

It would take much space to expound in detail how disbelief infiltrated the Muslim nation and how the cultural invasion took hold in each Muslim country. All the invading colonizers were identical in their ends and in their means – be they British, French, or Italian. The Muslims in turn were identical in terms of being underdeveloped, which made them all be caught unawares by the might of Europe, its strong industry and its attractive civilization.

Similarly, all those Muslims who capitulated were identical, regardless of their country, in that they all looked to the invader with

awe and surrender. Those who capitulated, men and women, were identical in their defeatism – be they like the Turkish nationalist Ziya Gökalp who called for a sharp break with the Islamic tradition or like the Indian Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, who started out as a Muslim reformer but, after mixing with the ruling class in England for many years, became seduced, and went home imbued with godlessness and materialism while pretending to defend Islam.

Those who were dazzled by the science and power of this false civilization were of the same stripe. In their hearts, the pull of faith diminished while materialism was magnified by the attractive arts, ideas, philosophy, and lifestyle of the dominant civilization. Against this tide of Westernization, this licentiousness, and this so-called “emancipation of women” stood the virtuous scholars, writers, and poets in India, Turkey, Iran, and all the other Muslim countries, with the fiercest battle taking place in Egypt.

The essential observation that should be made about the woman’s emancipation movement is that it sought to identify the woman primarily along the lines of gender. Hence, women in Egypt, India, or Turkey were to be identified first and foremost with fellow women in Paris, London, and Rome – religion was a matter to be forgotten in “civilized” circles. Religion was a sort of defect or, at best, a purely private affair.

After spending four years in Paris, Rāfi‘ Rifā‘a aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī came back from a mission which Muḥammad ‘Alī, one of the cruelest incarnations of rapacious rule, had sent him on. He was the first to provide a window to Egyptians and Arabs onto non-Muslim countries, and the first to promote their culture.

But the first person to actively organize against the injustices against the Muslim woman was a Christian Copt by the name of Marqaṣ Fahmī, who enjoyed extensive support from the Egyptian palace and particularly Princess Nazlī.

Qasim Amin in turn adopted all the views of Marqas Fahmī, which he justified with selected quotes from the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*. He was swung, as was the rest of the populace, by the gradual normalization of mixing with exhibitionist British women; although these scenes were first a source of irritation and disgust, they later became accepted and considered normal. For defeatist souls, such acceptance came to even be seen as a virtue. People adopted the Religion of Imitating the Victor or retreated, women and men, into the Religion of Yielding and indolent silence.

The perplexity of sensible Muslims and their wavering between traditional Islam and this alluring cultural paradigm is powerfully showcased in the verses of the preeminent poet Aḥmad Shawqī (God have mercy on him). Some of his poems, like *Nahj al-Burda*,¹ are a sublime illustration of loyalty to Islam, although others are excessively nationalistic and sing the praises of national leaders almost to the point of idolatry. In one of his better passages, he mocks Qasim Amin and defends the faith:

Your eloquent speech bears distinct erudition

But the path of your coarse demand is full of pernicious traps

We would not mind that you mention the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth

But we do not know: is it to defend Islam or to attack it?

After patriotic Muslim women took part in the uprising of 1919, Sa'd Zaghlūl brought the idea of exhibiting and “emancipating” women from theory to practice. In a public meeting, he symbolically removed the *ḥijāb* of the activist Hudā Sha'rāwī who was the symbol of woman's “emancipation.” Her baton was later taken up by debauched and disbelieving women (particularly those who were journalists, teachers, artists, physicians, and lawyers) who rebelled

¹ [Translator's note:] *On the Pattern of al-Burda*, referring to Imam al-Buṣṣīrī's famous poem *al-Burda (the Garment)*, a tribute to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace).

against the faith of their mothers and against the “male chauvinist” society that was admittedly oppressing them. Accordingly, they rejected Islam in favor of a democratic secularism that claims to grant women equity and enables them to take full ownership of their bodies to do as they please.

The cultural invasion reached its height in Egypt where the English plotters successfully argued the need to “reform” al-Azhar¹, that “dangerous hotbed of religious intolerance,” convincing Muslims that their *dīn* could not remain viable unless they could comprehend it in a way that befits the triumphal scientific thinking on the pattern of the Western model.

Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh (God have mercy on him) was put in charge of supervising this “reform.” To this end, he appointed “enlightened” teachers who soon tried to examine the tenets of the Unseen under the microscope of positivist experimentalism. The great Shaykh (God forgive him and forgive us as well) was not saved from the general bewilderment of the times; as a consequence, the senior religious authority in the country mixed with the twisted and exhibitionist women of the streets.

How can one stop the rain of disaster from drenching the masses if the umbrella of scholarship is itself pierced and perforated? Confident in their sciences and might, the victors dismissed scriptural stories about the angels and jinn as legends more befitting savage African tribes. Consequently, the shaykh tried to explain away supernatural phenomena, for instance interpreting the flight of birds and stones of baked clay (as mentioned in *Sūrat al-Fīl*) as really being an outbreak of smallpox, just as the Orientalists had claimed. In a similar vein, his followers claimed that the jinn were really invisible microbes.

And then there was Husayn Haykal who wrote the book *The Life of Muḥammad* – to which we should emphatically add “God bless

¹ [Translator’s note:] In Cairo, one of the oldest universities in the Arab and Islamic world, along with al-Qarawiyyīn in Morocco and al-Qayrawān in Tunisia.

him and grant him peace”!! – which portrays the Messenger as a great hero, a genius, a shrewd leader, and all sorts of other positive attributes, but which falls short of describing him as a prophet on whom revelation came down – because that, of course, would have made him seem irrational and made him lose credibility with the holders of the true sciences!

Yes, when devils play their tricks and make chairs and tables move or when sorcerers claim to summon spirits, there is no problem with dissecting the Unseen with concepts vogue in high-class European circles. But to try to scientifically probe the deep realities of existence would be foolishness and stupidity.

Regarding prophethood, this is what Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh says [I am quoting here from Sa’īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī’s *The Great Cosmic Certitudes* (Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyya)]:

“A prophet may be defined as a human being having a natural propensity for truth in knowledge and practice. In other words, he only knows the truth and only acts in accordance with wisdom. This comes out of his *fiṭra*, meaning that he does this intuitively. If he also has a natural disposition for calling his fellow human beings to this wisdom, then he is a messenger as well – otherwise, he is just a prophet.”

What is this ambiguity with the word *fiṭra*? God forbid you mention the word “revelation” lest you be accused of stupidity.

What kind of underdeveloped mind would try to explain away revelation and the Unseen? One wonders what is more pathetic: women rebelling and exhibiting themselves, the rulers capitulating, the intellectuals recycling this nonsense, or the scholars retreating in silence?

6. Callers at the Gates of Hell

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Abū Dāwūd reported that Ḥudhayfa said: “People used to ask the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) about good, but I used to ask him about evil lest I should be overtaken by it. So I said: ‘O Messenger of God! We were living in *jāhiliyya* and then God brought us this good [i.e., Islam]. Will there be any evil after this good?’ He said: ‘Yes.’ I said: ‘Will there be any good after that evil?’ He replied: ‘Yes, but it will be tainted.’ I asked: ‘How so?’ He replied: ‘There will be some people who will follow a *Sunna* other than mine and who will follow a guidance other than my guidance. You will approve of some of their deeds and disapprove of some others.’ I asked: ‘Will there be any evil after that good?’ He replied: ‘Yes. There will be some people calling at the gates of Hell, and whoever responds to their call will be thrown into the Fire.’ I said: ‘O Messenger of God! Will you describe them to us?’ He said: ‘They will be from our own people and will speak our language.’ I said: ‘O Messenger of God! What do you advise me to do if this should take place in my life?’ He said: ‘Stick to the community of the Muslims and their imam (leader).’ I said: ‘If there is neither a community of Muslims nor an imam (leader)?’ He said: ‘Then turn away from all those sects even if you have to move to the wilderness and live off of tree roots till death overtakes you.’”

This great *ḥadīth* is meant to make us recognize the true nature of those criminals who ruined our great blessing (i.e., the rightly-guided *khilāfa*) and gave us the worst ordeals that Muslims have ever had to experience, beginning with the assassination of ‘Uthmān and then of ‘Alī (God bless them both). We need to understand how Muslims lent intellectual justification to despotic rule generation after generation and evil after evil until Muslims

were forcibly ruled over by tyrants of the likes of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Kemal Ataturk.

Mostafa Kemal, who called himself Ataturk (“the Father of the Turks”), was molded from his youth by the ideas of Ziya Gökalp who had predicted the fall of the Ottoman state and advocated breaking ties with the Islamic tradition. After being hailed a hero for successfully resisting the European armies, Mostafa Kemal came to power and put these ideas into practice, setting the bar for blatantly attacking Islam, shedding the blood of Muslims, and forcibly making them change their religious way of life.

The Ottoman state had allied with the Germans in the First World War. When the Germans were defeated, the French and British attacked the aging, collapsing Ottoman Empire. General Mostafa Kemal did indeed resist the invaders heroically. But after the war ended and a peace treaty was concluded leaving the Ottoman Empire free (albeit dispossessed of all its territories in Europe and the Arab world), the General began to fervently and vigorously put the theories of his master into practice until he demolished the edifice of the empire that had for so long been the stronghold of Islam.

Ataturk waged his battle against Muslim scholars and Islamic institutions with the intention of fully eradicating Islam and to that end destroying any woman who would believe in God. He then declared himself a god and called on people to adore the supreme idol: Western civilization. But not only did he revel in its sciences and industry, he also flagrantly praised its alcohol and debauchery, since he himself was a dissolute who did not bother to hide his obscenities.

One day, Ataturk summoned the chief Muslim scholar in Turkey, the Shaykh al-Islām; when the latter had the gall to disagree with him, Ataturk threw a Qurān at his head. Muslims were shocked because not even a bum would dare to desecrate the scripture, much less a head of state.

Ataturk then imposed a changing of the dress code, forbidding men to wear the turban and women to wear the *ḥijāb*; this war on Islamic garments ended up being quite bloody. When the Turkish people inevitably revolted, gallows were built, trials held, and several scholars hanged.

The petty-minded tyrant further banned the Arabic alphabet, substituting it with the Latin alphabet, thereby sparing himself the effort of having to set the huge bookstores and libraries ablaze.

He established secular schools to fight Islam. From those schools graduated a generation that was instructed that its father was Mostafa Kemal, the master of heroic feats.

This despot, it is said, used to raise his fist to the sky to challenge the Lord Whose existence he did not actually believe in.

But now, seventy years later, God has brought a new lease of life into the Islamic Call which in actuality was never fully stamped out. Islamism in Turkey is amongst the strongest and most active Islamic movements in the world. So praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures.

As a downright unbeliever, Ataturk is the perfect example of one of those who summon the people to the gates of Hell. But there were hypocrites whose rancor against Islam was no less acute than that of unbelievers.

In Tunisia, Tahar Haddad was a local version of Qasim Amin. He condemned the enslavement of urban women and the oppression of rural women and advocated for seamstresses and housemaids who were forced to accept paltry wages. But he also fought against *ḥijāb* which he likened to a dog's muzzle and protested against Islamic jurisprudence which grants the woman a lesser share of inheritance and grants the man greater initiative in divorce proceedings.

When Tunisia finally won its independence, the "Greatest Fighter" (as the activist lawyer Habib Bourguiba used to call himself) came

to power. Previously, Bourguiba had stated in his speeches and writings that Tunisians needed to preserve their customs, as their particular culture was the last stronghold of their endangered national identity. Note how, when this brand of Westernized people speak of “customs,” they rank Islamic practice along with superficial things like national dress and cuisine.

Five months after independence (1956 CE), the president promulgated the Code of Women’s Rights which, among the legal systems of all the Islamic countries, does the most to countermand Islamic Law. The Code banned polygamy and delegated matters of divorce to secular tribunals. Because the Code did in fact include some clauses that promoted equity for women (such as upholding their right not to be chased out of the home in case of divorce), it was well received among women; hence the evil in it was snuck in under the escort of the good in it.

Despite being oppressed by Bourguiba and having their leaders put on trial, the Islamic movement was in a predicament about how to separate between the president’s evil – which was nothing short of blasphemous – and his just actions. But then the old man became senile and was ousted from power by a cruel general who inflicted on our Islamist brothers and sisters what Mostafa Kemal had inflicted on the scholars of Turkey. May God demolish him!

In his Code, Bourguiba had found an instrument by which he could propagate his ideology, reinforce his leadership, and gain the support of the Europeans. Those same Europeans who used to be his enemies in the past became his allies when they were assured that he would protect their interests better than overt colonialism.

Bourguiba toured the whole country, condemning the enslavement of the Muslim woman and her confinement to the house. He scoffed at the Muslim scholars who wrote petitions against him. He claimed to be more qualified to do *ijtihad* because he had spent many years of his life fighting for independence while those easy-

going scholars had been supposedly busying themselves with time-dilapidated jurisprudence.

He revolted against the traditional norms of decency, declaring that scientific progress forbids us from giving any importance, as customs do, to the virginal blood of the wedding night. Similarly, he denounced the *ḥijāb* as a “black shroud” and an “old rag.”

When Bourguiba returned to his homeland after having lived for several years in France, he was accompanied by a Frenchwoman named Matilda, his comrade in activism. When he was compelled to end that relationship because of his assuming power, he went on to choose the most scantily-clad of women as his consort.

He broke the fast in Ramadan and ordered others to break the fast, among them the army. He claimed his right to this *ijtihād*, stating that God’s Messenger (God bless him and grants him peace) and his Companions broke the fast in Ramadan in order to be sufficiently strong to fight the unbelievers. In his opinion, *jihād* also includes preventing any fall in production so that the Tunisians could be strong enough to fight their enemy: poverty and underdevelopment.

Although Bourguiba declared himself a *mujtahid*, for him, Islamic jurisprudence was a joke. He and his stripe are devilish traitors among Muslims. Both he and Ataturk exploited their nationalist credentials to carry out the dreams of the Westernized elite, who had taken up the issue of women’s rights as a cover under which to fight Islam. What an evil burden these criminals will bear on the Day of Judgment!

7. *The Degree Which Men Hold Over Women*

Although the advocates of women's so-called emancipation were correct in that the conditions of the Muslim woman were wretched, their intentions were not sound. Had they judged the injustices done to women according to the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*, we would have welcomed their initiative. Had they assigned the matter of *ijtihād* to those with the requisite qualifications – the most important of which are authentic knowledge and God-wariness – we would have congratulated their effort. But they judge Islam according to Western fashions of liberty and practice *ijtihād* in the name of progress so as to “rescue” Muslims from the “darkness” of submitting to God and His Messenger.

Certainly the Muslim woman was – and still is – the victim of injustice. She has suffered from illiteracy and has been confined to her household. Nowadays, she is caught in the crossfire between the Westernizing movement and the fall-out of her *umma*'s decline. The claims of those who advocate “emancipation” are true to a great extent: the enslavement of urban women, the maltreatment of rural women, illiteracy, ignorance, paltry wages, the ruthless exploitation of young girls in factories, abusive polygamy, unjust divorce laws, forced marriage, deprivation of their just share of inheritance, among many other items.

Why are we so inclined to forget about these traditional iniquities while we vehemently denounce the more recent problems of licentiousness, apostasy, and imitation of European women?

These current issues only came about because traditional Islamic jurisprudence and traditional Islamic rule did not solve the older

issues. The wrongs suffered by Muslim women must be examined by Islamists¹ inseparably from their criticism of immodesty and Westernization. They must work out practical ways of addressing unjust customs in addition to addressing the deforming process of modernization, since this deformation could never have happened had the injustice of customs not been there.

If we do not seek to devise practical solutions, the increasing injustice – disguised under the precedent of a “realist” jurisprudence that, yielding to the status quo, is stringent and neglectful of women’s needs – will inevitably drive Muslim women to join internationalist movements far removed from religion.

Sister in faith: if you find the fatwas of a static and hyper-stringent *fiqh* to be at variance with the explicit and authentic texts of the *Sunna*, which will you follow?

The Western-inspired movement for women’s rights turns around a central demand: complete equality between the man and the woman even if that entails eliminating all the special rulings that Islamic Law has prescribed for Muslim women, particularly the ruling that men should have a “degree” (*daraja*) over women.

To accept that men have a degree over women is to accept the Qur’ān; alternatively, to reject this ruling is to reject the Qur’ān. This is the decisive criterion distinguishing us from the enemies of Islam. As God (Exalted is He) has proclaimed, “And women shall have rights similar to those (of men) over them, in accordance with justice, but men have a degree (*daraja*) over them. And God is mighty, wise” (2:226). This verse came in the specific context of divorce. But as Muslim jurists say, what is significant is the

¹ [Translator’s note:] *Al-Islāmiyyūn*: “Islamists” ought to mean any observant man or woman actively working to re-establish Islam as a faith and a way of life for the *umma*. Owing to the power of the Western media to demonize, in part enabled by the disgraceful image presented by some Muslim militants, Islamists are often presented as radical, violent terrorists.

underlying principle which is drawn from a given ruling, not the ruling itself. Therefore, the degree that men have over women is established not only for the private sphere of domestic life but also the public sphere of political and social life.

But what does this “degree” really entail? Is it a license and a *carte blanche* given to the man to crush the woman under his feet, or is it a kind of responsibility whereby the husband is supposed to be a trustworthy guardian and compassionate leader?

The Qur’ān is liable to various interpretations, as Imam ‘Alī (God bless him) has noted, so we must turn to the *Sunna* to determine its practical application.

According to one narration from the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace): “Behold! All of you are guardians, and all of you are responsible for those under your care. The supreme commander of the people is a guardian, and he is responsible for all those under his charge. A man is a guardian over his family and he is responsible for those under his charge. A wife is a guardian over her husband’s family and children and she is responsible for them.” [Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.]

The “realist” jurist gives the notion of degree, guardianship, and responsibility an interpretation congruent with the social values of his time. In al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr’s commentary on the Qur’ān, this degree is construed as “superiority in terms of virtue, physical constitution, social standing, right to be obeyed, financial responsibility, and merit in this world and in the Hereafter.”

In short, the woman is viewed as a second-class citizen in both this earthly life and in the otherworldly one. But this reading stands in stark contrast to the first part of the verse which stipulates that “Women shall have rights similar to those (of men) over them, in accordance with justice” (2:226), and with the promise of the Almighty that “I shall not lose sight of the work of any of you, be he male or female” (3:195).

With regards to the phrase “A man is a guardian over his family,” there is a wide spectrum for the connotation of the word “over” (*‘alā*) from an authoritarian tone to a more just, responsible one. Hence, there is a wide interpretive gap between reading this “over” as one where the man subjugates the woman and confiscates her rights and one where he is a kind, responsible leader.

Furthermore, in some narrations of the *ḥadīth* on guardianship and responsibility, the wording is “The man is a guardian in (*fi*) his family” with the preposition “in” instead of “over.” The narration with “in” undermines the authoritarian interpretation of “over.” In any case, the real model of a man in his family is the God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), who was at the service of his wives when at home. His spouses used to disagree and argue with him, to which he would respond with mercy and indulgence.

The idea of an authoritarian ruler reigning “over” the people arose when political power fell from enlightened to despotic, then evil, and then absolutely evil. With the fall of political guardianship, such decline had an adverse effect on what should have been a responsible type of guardianship of men over women. As a result, the woman found herself under the most severe degree of oppression.

The quality of the guardianship of men with regard to women dovetailed the general decline of society. So the wife, mother, and sister all became imprisoned in their homes, with almost no influence on the overall social and economic system.

The jurisprudence of sequestering women ruled supreme, demanding that the woman not leave her house except on two occasions: once from her father’s house to move into her new husband’s house, and then from her husband’s house to the grave.

The use of this arrogant “over” was a tool used to keep women down in all fields of life. The “realist” jurisprudence argued that, since her inheritance is only one half that of her male relative, she

must be inferior in all other situations. The reality is that in no way does the Qur'ān promote the idea that the woman is half a human being. She received half the share of a male heir because the latter was financially responsible for his family as father and husband. This degree and guardianship have been established for the man so that he may guide the boat and protect the caravan from falling into disorder. A wife's obedience to her husband – just like the believers' obedience to their commander – should be on the basis of *shūrā* and consent and is not meant to demean her.

In the Prophet's example, the woman is a person who is respected and honored, independent and courageous, one who teaches and learns and takes part in all spheres of life: she is not some neglected mass of flesh. Her public rights are respected and she is cherished and treated with kindness at home. The Prophet's example also presents that of a guardian who holds this degree with mercy and courtesy, not despotism and obstinacy.

Al-Bukhārī reported from Abū Burda, who reported on the authority of his father, that God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) said: "Three persons will have a double reward: a man from the People of the Book who believed in his own prophet and then believed in Muḥammad; a slave who observes the rights of God and the rights of his master; and a man who educates his slave girl and teaches her proper comportment and then manumits and marries her."

It has also been narrated that "In Medina, a slave girl could take the Messenger of God by the hand and lead him to wherever she wished." Even though she had the lowest social position, she was able to have the leader with the supreme degree accompany her in person to redress whatever injustice had been done to her. This is an example of the living, practical jurisprudence where the guardian duly practices his public responsibility. Now the question is: how did the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) use his degree in his private life at home?

In *Provisions for the Return* (*Zād al-Ma'ād*), Ibn al-Qayyim (God have mercy on him) wrote: “His *Sunna* with his wives was to associate with them in the best of ways and treat them with the best of manners. He used to invite the girls of the Anṣār to play with ‘Ā’isha. Whatever she preferred, he preferred. When she drank from a glass, he would take it, put his mouth where she drank from, and then drink. When she ate meat from a bone, he would take it and put his mouth where she had eaten from. He would rest his head in her lap and recite the Qur’ān, even if she was having her period. He would tenderly kiss her even while observing the fast of Ramadan. He was noble and kind with his wife and often would invite her to play. He let her see the Abyssinians carry on with their lively performance in his mosque while she leant on his shoulder and watched the performance. He sometimes raced with her and one day they playfully pushed one another as they were going out of their home.”

*Subhānallāh!*¹ I can’t understand how Muslims have closed off these windows of light! How can we overcome the obstacles of blindly following the “realist” jurisprudence so that Muslims, men and women, can escape the dire straits they are in and free themselves from their shackles? “Truly you have in the Messenger of God an excellent example for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to God, seeks the Hereafter, and remembers God unceasingly.” (33:21)

¹ [Translator’s note:] Glory be to God!

8. *Everything's a Sin!*

Among the virtues of the servants of God is that they are strong against hostile unbelievers but compassionate amongst each other and that they pray to their Lord to grant them wives and offspring who will be a comfort for their eyes and to make them leaders of the pious. For those who do not follow the true model of God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) but instead follow those narrow-minded extremists, their spouses will be a source of displeasure for them and their offspring will contribute to a society of hatefulness, and the literalist, stringent religion they promote will push people away from God.

God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), the supreme guardian of the *umma*, whom the Lord has commanded that we take as an example, let his beloved wife 'Ā'isha lean on his shoulder and watch the lively performance of the Abyssinians. And where was this performance? It was in the mosque itself! And the Prophet never bothered her about leaving and going home, but lingered with her until *she* grew tired. That was how the Mother of the Believers¹ was treated, even though her obligations were so much greater than that of ordinary Muslim women.

Is the Islam that we want to promote one that treats women with kindness and compassionate humility, or do we want to promote an Islam that sneers at them, makes things overly complicated for them, and hurls the harshest and most stringent words at them?

¹ [Translator's note:] An honorific, exclusive to the wives of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), based on God's saying in the Qur'ān (33:6), Exalted is He: "The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than [they have on] their own selves [seeing that he is as a father to them], and his wives are their mothers."

If we see a pious wife imprisoned behind her burka or in her home, patiently putting up with a husband who abuses his guardianship, we dismiss it as an exceptional case and have few words to say. But we voice our opinion loudly if someone claims that Islam is a religion of rigidity and compulsion, a religion antithetical to freedom and justice!

Speaking up for the oppressed is a sign of chivalry (*murū'a*) and high morality. Islam promotes *murū'a* so that speaking up for the truth – such as refuting those who do not accept that the *Sunna* of God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) is to treat women kindly – may take precedence above all other priorities and duties.

Beyond the clear *Sunna* of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) are only reports of questionable authenticity, rulings from scripture that were once operational but later were abrogated, rulings meant for a very particular circumstance that cannot be generalized, or linguistic expressions which are liable to many different interpretations. The divinely-protected *Sunna* says, "You should be playful with your wife and restore the rights of the oppressed woman!" But the hard-liner will always cry foul.

This hard-liner may be one of us, he may be sincere in his faith, but we cannot accept eccentric fatwas that are regarded as sacred only because they are centuries old and because their author has grown so famous that his opinions are considered *Sunna*.

"Your evidence?" you may ask. Is any further explanation needed to understand the explicit *ḥadīth* mentioned above? Any Muslim woman can grasp the meaning of the report that the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) spent time with his wife watching the Abyssinian performance, or the report that the slave girl was able to take the supreme commander by the hand (understanding of course, that this is different from men and women shaking hands, which is unlawful).

Any wise woman or wise man should be able to draw from these exemplary acts the spirit of cordiality, gentleness, and respect that was prevalent in the Prophet's home and larger society.

Does this mean that *ijtihād* is within the reach of any Muslim woman or man who has enough knowledge of the Arabic language to read these *ḥadīths*? Of course not, but in this case, no *ijtihād* is needed to understand the lesson; rather, the challenge is following a clear *Sunna* established by a clear text.

Ijtihād has its prerequisites, the first of which are God-wariness and sound knowledge, after which are the methodological tools of theoretical jurisprudence. *Ijtihād* has a particular objective: to draw rulings from texts that seem incompatible or whose meanings are liable to different interpretations.

In this field, there is no room for the pious, fervent preacher unless he furnishes sound evidence of having assimilated the methods of theoretical jurisprudence (*‘ilm al-uṣūl*). These methods are the most precious legacy that our learned jurists (God be pleased with them) have bequeathed to us.

Hard-liners often offer a reading of the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* that is extremely literal, fragmentary, superficial, and simplistic, one that divides everything into that which is “allowed” and that which is “not allowed.” They pretend they can do *ijtihād* and decide what is lawful and unlawful just because they have a basic reading knowledge of the Six Books.¹ But these people are wholly ignorant of the different degrees of rulings – from mandatory (*wājib*) to near-mandatory (*khilāf al-awlā*)² to desirable (*mandūb*) to undesirable (*makrūh*) to unlawful (*ḥarām*).

¹ [Translator's note:] The six major books compiled by Bukhāri, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, an-Nasāī, and Ibn Māja

² [Translator's note:] Non-compulsory acts that observant Muslims should ideally not miss doing. For instance, performing the *ḍuḥā* prayer [forenoon prayer], doing *ghuṣl al-jumu'a* [the ritual washing of the whole body before the Friday Prayer], ...etc

While no one may close the door of *ijtihād* since God's Messenger himself (God bless him and grant him peace) flung it open, men and women who are solicitous of their *dīn* should not tackle matters of *ijtihād* until they have met the requisite qualifications.

Ijtihād has established certain ground rules that need to be respected to prevent reckless individuals from distorting Islam. The problem is that the need to revive *ijtihād* is used as a pretext by people like Qasim Amin, Bourguiba, the godless feminists, and the self-proclaimed experts on Islam to disparage our legal tradition and show off their knowledge of history, developmental economics, the history of women, and the authoritarian economic relationship between men and women and husbands and wives.

These libertines misinterpret the Qur'ānic verses and the *ḥadīths* to support their follies. Meanwhile, the solicitous Muslim struggles with various forms of temptation, among which is Muslim women wearing indecent clothes. Although this is indeed blameworthy, he lacks even a modicum of knowledge of the root causes of this, and so his remedy is simplistic and reckless. Driven by a sincere zeal for the faith, he finds no other weapon to defend the fortress of Islam than to denounce everything as sinful.

The Law of God is where the interests of the Muslims lie. Whoever fails to fully apprehend the current status of the Muslims, the historical roots of their ordeals, and the neo-Judeo-Christian crusade against them, will fail to implement the Law of God, particularly since those in power have no love lost for Islam or Muslims. Under these sorts of intense pressures, proclaiming that everything is sinful becomes an expression of defiance, pushing away the virtues of patiently promoting gradual progress, which is what is direly needed.

Protecting the interests of the Muslim community was the overriding principle that our classical jurists were following when they legitimized the seizure of power through the sword: they wanted to bring rebellion within the framework of the Law lest the

unity of the *umma* be rent apart. In other words, they were giving precedence to one public interest over another, seeking the lesser of two evils.

Thus, *ijtihād* became restricted because of the pressure put on the scholars by rulers whose reign could not otherwise be legitimized by the Law. The jurists subsequently vacated the political arena and refrained from addressing issues related to power. If you look in our legal heritage, you'll find that the jurisprudence on political power is nearly non-existent. The legal discourse on women's rights paralleled this development, so that their rights were lost amid the general loss of civil rights that befell society as a whole.

The narrow-minded Muslim weakens our *dīn* when he promotes old fatwas without regard to their historical circumstances. He endorses them unconditionally while neglecting the counsel of our pious predecessors (God be pleased with them), who argued that fatwas must change according to their time, place, and "circumstances" – which was a code word for the rapacious rule that locked the door of *ijtihād* and caused vigorous and conscientious legal thinking to become atrophied. In other words, the scholars are saying to us: "We did the best *ijtihād* that our political circumstances allowed us; be men and do the best *ijtihād* you can!" Those who blindly follow old fatwas thus feed on legal corpses and dwell in the ruins of *ijtihād*. With the eyes of the dead, they look at a living reality being controlled by others, which makes them angrily shout that everything is forbidden and sinful.

The self-proclaimed *mujtahid* comes with a literalist jurisprudence whose ideal is to live out in the wilderness with a camel. With regards to the *ḥadīth* on the Abyssinians' lively performance, they claim that such a performance is forbidden unless one is specifically Abyssinian and specifically performing it in a mosque: thus, they make everything in the world prohibited because it is not a carbon copy of the world they have constructed in their heads. As if God (Exalted is He) created the earth exclusively for a specific set of

people from a specific time in history and not for all people at all times, as if His testing of mankind has no room for continually-changing circumstances.

But those who do not take into account the ever-changing realities that God has made as a trial for His creatures, along with the Qurānic texts and the authentic *ḥadīths*, will certainly fail to properly worship God and to properly practice *ijtihād*.

The period of the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) and of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs¹ provided the momentum for Muslims to exercise *ijtihād* according to their “circumstances” for over four centuries, but by the end of the fourth Islamic century, *ijtihād* had fallen into decrepitude. For an Islamic Renaissance, we need to revive *ijtihād* – it is a matter of life and death. Do we have to wait for Imam al-Mahdī² to come and upbraid us for constantly arguing that everything is sinful, an argument which only betrays our complete incompetence?

There is no god but God and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.

¹ [Translator’s note:] The term “Rightly-Guided Caliphs” names exclusively the first four successors of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), namely Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī (God be pleased with them).

² [Translator’s note:] The Mahdī, according to Tradition, will be a descendant of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, whose real name will be the same as that of the Messenger: Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abdullāh. According to several authentic *ḥadīths*, Imam al-Mahdī will assume power before the Day of the Last Judgment. He will rule the Muslim community with justice and equality. In his reign, Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) will descend from heaven to slay *al-Masīḥ ad-Dajjāl* [the anti-Christ].

9. Change Between Revelation and Renewal

An understanding of the nature of change without an accompanying will to change is no better than daydreaming. On the other hand, a will to change without understanding or sound knowledge will inevitably lead to violent turmoil, an angry uprising that is destructive and that in the end must prove to have been much ado about nothing.

In his *The Beginning and the End* (al-Bidāya wa-n-Nihāya), al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr reports that ‘Umar (God be pleased with him) said: “By the Lord of the *Ka’ba*,¹ I know when the Arabs will perish: when they are no longer ruled by the senior Muslims who saw *jāhiliyya*.” The “senior Muslims” refers to those who embraced the faith early, engaged in the *jihād* from early on, and were the foremost in merit and steadfastness in Islam.

What, then, is the responsibility of the believing woman? Should she be content with her man abusing his “degree” and guardianship over her? Should she remain dependent and confined, learning only those religious teachings immediately applicable to females? Or does she have a responsibility to combat evil and foster good?

The answer to these two questions – and the keys to a better understanding of change – is to be found in the above-quoted

¹ [Translator’s note:] The *Ka’ba* (lit. “cube”) refers to the building constructed in Mecca by the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (or: Ismail; some commentators of the Qur’ān like Abdullah Yusuf Ali choose to use the Arabic *Ismā’īl* instead of the biblical Ishmael because the latter is negatively depicted in the New Testament.) for the exclusive worship of God, Exalted is He. Throughout the year, and especially in the season of pilgrimage, Muslims from the four quarters of the globe come to Mecca to circumambulate this building. The *Ka’ba* is also the direction of prayer (*al-qibla*) for Muslims the world over.

statement of ‘Umar (God be pleased with him). Whoever fails to take into consideration how Islam raised the woman from a state of humiliation and how the women Companions (God be pleased with them) actively participated in building the Muslim community, can only help undermine the edifice of the *umma*, an edifice which wouldn’t even be conceivable without these believing women.

Now, of course, this reading of the *ḥadīth* is focused on the women specifically: the more general reading is suggesting that those who did not pass through the long *jihād* where the believers learned the patience and forbearance of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) would either be brought to despair by the first challenge they faced or alternatively would try to impatiently crush whomever stood in their way.

Those who are raised in a society that knows no way of life except Islam and did not witness the historical change from *jāhiliyya* see the challenge before them as Manichaean battle of darkness versus light, *jāhiliyya* versus Islam, right versus wrong. For such people, the only way out is to have right immediately triumph, darkness immediately be dispelled, *jāhiliyya* immediately fade away.

When he formulated his statement, ‘Umar (God be pleased with him) must have been thinking of the occasion of his embracing Islam: He took his sword and went to kill God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace); on his way, he assaulted his brother-in-law Sa’d Ibn Zayd, and struck his sister Fāṭima. He must also have been thinking of all the suffering of the Companions (God be pleased with them) who had to migrate, first to Abyssinia and then to Medina, leaving behind their families, belongings, and dwellings.

Revelation counsels the believers forbearance, patience, and perseverance to implement progressive change. Those who fail to take account of the practical side of the *Sunna* in the Prophet’s *jihād* will inevitably demand change to happen all at once.

Let us take, for instance, the verse in the Qur'ān that commands the believers to separate from their unbelieving spouses (“And hold not to keeping the bonds of marriage with unbelieving women” (60:10)): when was this passage revealed? Not until 6 AH, almost nineteen years after the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) was first charged with his mission.

Hence, in 2 AH, after the Battle of Badr¹, Lady Zaynab, the daughter of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) sent her necklace as ransom for her idolator husband Abū al-Āṣ Ibn ar-Rabī', who had been taken prisoner. In response, God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) felt sympathy for her and urged his Companions, “If you are able to set her detained husband free, kindly do so!” But when the verse on separation was finally revealed, the Companions of course complied, with 'Umar divorcing his idolator wife Qarība Ibn Umayya Ibn al-Mughīra and Talḥa Ibn 'Ubaydullāh divorcing his wife Arwa Ibn Rabī'a Ibn al-Hārith Ibn al-Muṭṭalib.

We need to hold fast to the lived *Sunna* which the Mother of the Believers, Lady 'Ā'isha (God be pleased with her), explained: “The first chapters of the Qur'ān to be revealed talked about Heaven and Hell. Only when Islam had become firmly established in people's minds and hearts were the verses dealing with the lawful and the unlawful sent down. Had the first verse to be revealed commanded that ‘You shall not drink spirits,’ the people would have said, ‘We will never give up alcohol!’ And had the first verse commanded that ‘You shall not fornicate,’ the people would have said, ‘We will never give up fornication!’” [Al-Bukhārī]

In another *ḥadīth*, when God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) was sending off Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal to the people of Yemen, he counseled him: “You will find that they are People of

¹ [Translator's note:] The first battle between the Muslims and the pagans of Mecca. The Muslims won an overwhelming victory over the people who had forced them to flee their native city.

the Book¹, so let the first thing you invite them to be the worship of God alone, Exalted is He. Once they have known God, tell them that He has ordered them to perform five prayers in the day and night. After they have started performing the prayers, tell them that God has levied the alms tax [the *zakāt*] on their belongings, to be taken from the rich and distributed amongst the poor. If they obey, then refrain from taking anything else of their belongings.” [Reported by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Abbās (God be pleased with both of them).]

Above all, we have the soundest, most solid evidence from the Qur’ān itself: “And it was by the grace of God that you dealt gently with them. For if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from you. So forgive them, pray that they be forgiven, and take counsel with them in all matters of public concern. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust in Him.” (3:159)

When the believers were instructed to engage in *jihād* and vigorously resist the hostile unbelievers, were they motivated by revolutionary anger or tribal fury? Not at all. Rather, it was the compassion and mercy emanating from the Prophet, their trustworthy leader, that streamed into their hearts, rallying them and endearing *īmān* to them. Addressing the *umma*, God (Glorified is He) says: “Indeed there has come unto you a Messenger from among yourselves: heavily weighs upon him [the thought] that you might suffer [in the Hereafter], full of concern is he over you, and full of compassion and mercy to the believers” (9:129). Is this just empty rhetoric, so that we are free to be the epitome of harshness and severity in our private and public lives?

Someone might counter that contemporary Muslims don’t deserve this sort of compassion because they have regressed to

¹ [Translator’s note:] Title for people of earlier scriptures, i.e., Jews and Christians.

jāhiliyya after having known Islam. Such a person might then try to strengthen their violent position by misquoting the two great scholars, al-Mawdūdī and Sayyid Quṭb.

In a subsequent chapter, we will discuss what *jāhiliyya* is and how someone cannot be cast out of the Muslim community for any sin, no matter how big.

Our Lord has praised compassion, kindness, and leniency and has criticized severity and hard-heartedness so that we might acquire the best virtues and discard the worst vices. This conduct is further commanded by the authentic *Sunna*.

For instance, in a *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Lady ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her), the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) said, “God loves gentleness in every single endeavor.” In another narration from al-Bukhārī, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) says, “‘Ā’isha! Be gentle and avoid being severe or obscene.” Al-Bukhārī and Muslim also report that Lady ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her) said, “Each time the Prophet had to choose between two options, he always chose the easier one so long as it was not in obvious contravention of God’s recommendations.”

Now why are these *ḥadīths* on gentleness, leniency, and progressive change reported by a woman? No doubt because of the sensitivity from her being naturally disposed to care for life since she carries life in her womb, gives birth with great pain, breastfeeds with great affection, weans with gentleness, and goes on to take care of him through the various stages of his life. All of this requires a great deal of suffering, patience, and love. The woman is indeed the best qualified to understand the nature of change and teach man its methods. Nevertheless, it’s an uphill battle for her to try to convince these zealous young Muslims that trying to force women to cover their hair merely aggravates their estrangement from the faith.

In the reflections above, we focused on narrations from the age of Revelation; now we move to the age of Renewal to examine the compassion practiced by one of the greatest chiefs of Islam, ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (God have mercy upon him), the fifth caliph and the Renewer¹ of the first century AH.

Because ‘Umar was trying to restore the rights of the people who had been victimized by the successive rulers of the Umayyad dynasty, the Umayyad princes were hatching various conspiracies to depose their cousin. Hence, his righteous son ‘Abd al-Malik urged his father to expedite the reforms he was undertaking: “Father, why haven’t you implemented your program already? By God, I don’t care what may happen to you or to me in the path of Truth, even if we’re boiled alive!”

In other words, here was a young man who was hasty for change; but his father was prudent, and cautioned him: “Don’t be hasty, my son. In the Qur’ān, God revealed two separate passages disparaging the consumption of wine before outright forbidding it. I am afraid if I suddenly impose justice on the people, it will cause great discord and make them leave it all at once.”

‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, the great-grandson of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭab, was immune to the hasty fervor riling up the young Muslims because he was knowledgeable of the true essence of the *Sunna* and he had studied the reports from Lady ‘Ā’isha that the Revelation was only sent down progressively.

In a *ḥadīth* recorded by Imam at-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abū Hurayra, God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), after being informed that some of his Companions were pushing

¹ [Translator’s note:] The Renewer (*al-mujaddid*) is the one about whom the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) said: “God will send to this *umma* at the beginning of each century someone who will renew its *dīn*.” [Authentic *ḥadīth* reported by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him).]

themselves to extremes in performing acts of worship, said, “Every human being passes through a period of fervor, but every fervor must end in lassitude. So if you manage to channel this fervor moderately, you can hope for your deeds to be accepted. But if this zeal makes you attract the attention of the people, do not consider yourself among the saved.”

Those overcome with fervency and vehemence are bound to failure, whether that fervency pushes them to extremes in acts of worship or to treat people harshly.

God save us from the evil inclinations of our lower soul!

10. Change between Reality and the Ideal

Setting his slave girls free was the first act which the repenting prince, scholar, and *mujtahid* ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz did after he had abdicated the office of “caliph” with which Sulaymān Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik had invested him, and after the people had rallied around him to pledge a new oath of allegiance that earned him – to borrow a modern phrase – popular legitimacy. He granted those slave girls the choice to leave or to stay under his financial aegis as free women. This was in his private life.

With regards to his role in public life: once, a woman named Fartūna, who was a confederate of the Dhū Aṣṣbaḥ tribe, wrote to him, complaining that thieves could easily jump over her wall and steal her chickens. In response, the caliph dispatched a letter to one of his governors, Ayyūb Ibn Shuraḥbīl, ordering him to personally ensure that the wall be reinforced.

This act was very much in the tradition of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), who let slave women take him by the hand. For a time, the justice of the Age of Revelation had been restored. ‘Umar once again opened up the channels of communication between the rulers and the citizens; in the reign of his predecessor, the mail service had been confined to correspondence among members of the government.

The resolve of the Renewer ‘Umar (God have mercy upon him) to right the wrongs of the Umayyad princes was equaled only by his determination to restore the rights of the weak. ‘Umar combined compassion with progressive change, just as the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) had. One example of this is found in the letter he dictated to his governor, ‘Uday Ibn Arṭā’a, who had requested the authority to use torture to extract confessions from

some individuals accused of stealing large amounts of money: “I am extremely astonished that you would request this, as if my imprimatur would save you from the Lord’s wrath. Pass judgment only on those whose guilt has been established by evidence. If someone makes a statement from their own free will, then accept his confession. Otherwise, if he denies wrongdoing, ask him to take an oath and then set him free. That they should meet God (Exalted is He) with their crimes is more desirable to me than that I should meet Him with their blood on my hands.”

This desire to minimize bloodshed is reminiscent of when God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) made his triumphant entry into Mecca and pardoned the unbelievers; upon hearing the most merciful Messenger say to them, “Go, for you are free,” they hastened to embrace Islam.

The wisdom of Revelation illuminates the way to renewal. But the accumulated veils of the past centuries stand between us and this original wisdom; the deeper into decrepitude we fall, the thicker those veils grow and the more firmly the seeds of violence become established.

The strong will of the peerless ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz penetrated those veils that stood between the first period of Islam and his own period, which was fraught with discord and tragedy. But where was the strong will of the woman? Where was that spirit that produced the Mother of the Believers Khadija, the first female martyr of Islam Sumayya, the scholar ‘Ā’isha, and all those women who fought with God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace), who sacrificed their lives for his sake, who were so forceful in demanding their rights that God Himself revealed verses upholding their case, who migrated to Abyssinia, who migrated to Medina, who provided moral and material support to their brethren from among these immigrants?

Who extinguished these embers? Who turned off these lights? Who dragged the women from a life full of boundless energy and

possibility down to a debased life of slavery and concubinage in the palace? ‘Umar II repented and released his slave girls as God willed, since he realized that the purpose of slavery is to initiate prisoners of war into Islam through exemplary behavior and not to exploit them for their labor or their charms; nevertheless, even in his reign, concubines remained a widely marketable commodity in Muslim society.

After the age of the Prophet and of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, we find no mention of the accomplishments of women, as if the upheavals that compelled the men to yield to the despotic rulers and that therefore deprived them of their self-esteem had made the women barren of those virtues that distinguished that dynamic generation of women Companions (God be pleased with them), who had played a fundamental part in building the *umma*.

After all, it was the resolve, steadfastness, and generosity of a woman that provided the moral foundations for the Islamic movement. When our mother Khadija (God be pleased with her) married Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace), she supported him morally and financially. Whenever he wanted to enter into seclusion and worship alone in the cave of Mount Ḥirā’, she would provide him with supplies. She was the first person to believe in him and succor him when he came trembling to her, claiming that the archangel Gabriel had come to bring him revelation. When he expressed fear for his own safety, she reassured him: “I swear by God that He will never put you to shame! For you are kind to your relatives, you speak the truth, you bear every burden, you share your earnings with the deprived, you treat your guests with hospitality, and you help people deal with the misfortunes of life.” [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of ‘Ā’isha (God be pleased with her)]

The skeptics among the so-called “experts” criticize us for clinging to the Age of Revelation and the formative years of the *umma*, alleging that we are adhering to a mythical history embellished by

our imagination because our current reality is so wretched and we are trying to console ourselves. This criticism is valid only insofar as we might fail to dwell on the human weakness of not only the uncouth Bedouins, but also the Companions closest to the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace), which is so faithfully reported by historians, as well as their suffering and patience in the face of incremental change.

Yet the real intention of the godless, the skeptics, and the other enemies of Islam is to deny the Unseen (*al-ghayb*)¹: for them, the Unseen World is one of abstract ideals, wild imaginings, empty nothingness; for us, belief in the Unseen is the alpha of guidance while belief in the Hereafter is the omega of guidance.

Muslims find in Khadīja, the Mother of the Believers (God be pleased with her), the summit of spiritual perfection; it would be no exaggeration to say that, not only did Islam raise her, but she in turn raised Islam. For the skeptics, however, all these amazing stories about her are nothing more than mere fantasy and fiction. For us, of course, it is the absolute truth. From a narration of al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with him): “Gabriel (peace be upon him) came and told the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace): ‘O Messenger of God! Khadīja is on her way to bring you some food and some beverage; when she comes, tell her that her Lord salutes her and that I salute her, and announce to her the glad tidings of a golden mansion in Paradise wherein there is no din or toil.’”

*Lā ilāha illallāh*² How great is the merit that Lady Khadīja earned! This noble woman protected the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and comforted him in that most critical period when the earth encountered Heaven.

¹[Translator’s note]: The reality that is not perceived by the senses or accessible by unaided human reason.

² [Translator’s note]: There is no deity worthy of being worshipped except God!

A perfect model indeed. Yet what do we see when we look at the present reality of Muslims? When you try to talk to women about lofty spiritual ambition, belief in the Unseen World, and perseverance on the path, they are preoccupied with more urgent, earthly issues: the housing crisis, the low wages for employed women, husbands who can divorce as they please and chase their wives and children out of the house, the difficulty of getting married, streets filled with debauchery and depravity, the indecency of affluent women, the cursed misery of destitute women, prostitution, underdevelopment, moral degradation – in short, defeat and failure in all spheres.

Can we expect the believing women to tackle these pervasive concerns, armed only with unfailing resolve? Can the believing women liberate themselves from the yoke of injustice, slavery, and poverty without taking part in addressing the other challenges ahead of us?

The women Companions (God be pleased with them) used to surmount the obstacles and helped their fellow men believers do so as well. Dear sisters, please re-read the words I wrote about Khadija. The righteous believing woman of that time used to assume the same responsibilities as that of the man and helped him to elevate himself and avoid falling into evil. She feared God in this world and longed for the meeting with Him in the Hereafter. She would tell her husband, “Bring home only lawful food, for we can bear the pangs of hunger, but we cannot bear the fire of Hell and the wrath of the Almighty.”

Indeed, some of these women bravely overcame the obstacles facing them without waiting around for the men to help them: how many women Companions, when they embraced Islam, left their unbelieving husband, parents, and clan who had provided them protection and subsistence all their lives? How many of them left their home for the sake of God and His Messenger out of their own initiative and resolve? May God similarly plant a strong will in the hearts of this generation and endow them with the necessary *īmān* and conviction.

Let's summarize and review the method of acquiring *īmān* and of cultivating the power necessary to surmount the obstacles. This will then allow us to segue into the following chapter where, God-willing, we will discuss how believing women are required to take part in changing our reality so that they may convey the message of Islam to the world in addition to overcoming their earthly concerns.

Among these methods is to teach oneself discipline and moral rectitude in the worship of God (Glorified is He) as well as joining with other believers who are rigorous against hostile unbelievers and compassionate among each other: the believing women will not become true servants of the Lord until they manage to successfully combine both rigor and compassion. Vigilant rigor is required to confront the agents of evil among us, both men and women; were it not for these traitors in our midst, the enemies of Islam would never have been able to inflict all these woes from which we now suffer.

The *jihād* of the believing woman is to overcome the obstacles of ignorant customs and a reactionary mentality. The problems facing the believing women can only be settled within a comprehensive plan in which they take part as leaders alongside the men, and not as subordinates.

And God is the protector, worthy of all praise.

***II. The Believing Woman
in a Turbulent World***

1. The Crusader Assault

The world around us turns at a frantic pace thanks to the instantaneous means of communication that has made the world into one global village. The world is divided between a rich world that is oppressive and a poor world that is devastated. The giants of the capitalist economy are engaged in a ferocious rivalry over goods and investment funds. While scientific inventions and discoveries are spectacularly revolutionizing our life, the earth, water, and air are being polluted and the lands of the world's oppressed are undergoing desertification. Through international law, the rich assault the poor, determine the balance of world power, and hold sway over the destinies of whole peoples.

How does the believing woman, who has just been awakened by her faith, see herself and her mission in this turbulent world? Should she view herself as a humble and weak individual overwhelmed with down-to-earth daily concerns which she is destined to suffer in silence? Or as someone qualified to take part in the Islamic movement, someone with a strong will befitting a true believer, someone who should be as concerned as anyone else about the future of her *umma*? Can her resolve transcend the narrow and parochial boundaries established by traditional Islamic society? Can she aspire to bravely take part in the *jihād* for change and community-building along with her fellow brethren in the faith?

The mighty oppressors of the world are not mistaken when they see in the *hijāb* of the believing woman a menacing symbol of the march of Islam. A few years ago, the French state was shaken when two Muslim girls, daughters of emigrant workers, donned that symbol of the Muslim woman's awakening.

Your *hijāb*, sister in Islam, is the symbol of a new life, a renaissance – let it not be a mere show beneath which lies an empty faith. Otherwise, how can Muslim women grant triumph to Islam if the signifier and the signified are poles apart?

The world's mighty oppressors are not mistaken when they see in the Islamic renaissance – in which Muslim women are taking active part – a promise of the *umma*'s liberation. They thought that Islam was over and gone, but now they are asking themselves with increasing concern, "How has this happened?" and "What are we to do now?"

In their opinion, the return of Muslim men and women to their *dīn* means nothing but the awakening of an old peril. Hence, their Crusader spirit is reawakened to unleash their campaigns against Islam once again. The Crusader spirit spares no effort to annihilate the Muslims¹, to that end mobilizing its indigenous agents – i.e., the treacherous renegades amongst us – to undermine Islam overtly and covertly.

In one of his speeches after the destruction of Baghdad, American president George W. Bush declared, "Our cause [in Iraq] is just, our cause is humanitarian, our cause is good."

But what is this cause, really? Is it the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution against Saddam Hussein, that recalcitrant despot who survived so many assaults on Iraq only to, in the end, provide the enemies of the Muslims a pretext to devastate his country?

No, this cause is much older: its rhetoric has repeatedly been renewed over the centuries to crush the weak and the less fortunate under foot. This is nothing but a new phase of the Crusades – those wars which the enemies of Islam have waged for nine centuries now.

¹ [Translator's note:] The ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina is one example among many.

In 1095 CE, Pope Urban II rallied his flock at Clermont, exhorting them to fight against the Muslims: “an accursed race, a race utterly turned away from God which has invaded Christian land... Christian brethren! Let all hatred between you dissipate, let all quarrels end, let all your fratricidal wars cease! Instead, take to the road! Go to the Sacred Sepulcher to snatch this ground from the accursed ones! It is God’s will!”¹

Although the Christians at times fought one another, such as in the two world wars of the twentieth century, they ultimately reconciled and joined together to occupy the Holy Land in order to support their allies, the Jews. In his contemporary Crusader language, President Bush has conveyed the same message to his own flock. Urban II’s troops might have failed, but today’s Christians continue the assault in Palestine, Iraq, and Bosnia.

In the nineteenth century, even though the authority of the Church diminished and atheistic secularism² triumphed, the fiercest enemies of Christianity in Europe still expressed the same Crusader spirit. Thus, in 1862, Ernest Renan wrote that “At this very hour, the essential condition for European civilization’s expansion is the destruction of Islam. That is the eternal war, the war that will not cease until the last son of Ishmael has died in misery or has been relegated to some remote desert. Islam is the most complete negation of Europe... Europe shall conquer the world and bestow on it its religion of law, liberty, and human respect – the belief that there is something divine in the human heart.”³

Such is the tolerance of a philosopher who advocates liberty and respect for all humankind!

¹ [Translator’s note:] Antoine Sfeir. *Atlas des Religions*. Paris: Hachette-Jeunesse, 1990, translated from the French.

² [Translator’s note:] The reference here is to French-style laicism, distinctly anticlerical in origin, and a state apparatus that is militantly anti-religious.

³ [Translator’s note:] Vincent Monteil. *La pensée arabe*. Seghers, 1987, p191.

Under the banner of Renan, the advocates of the Crusades renewed the colonial project: an imposition of a religion of law, “human rights,” and the right to military intervention. And after direct colonialism ended, there was still an all-encompassing economic and cultural colonialism. European “tolerance” grants you the freedom to either change your religion and identity and convert to the religion of might or to be savagely decimated.

Behind this hypocrisy of law, liberty, and human rights, the religion of might can be summed up as the rationale of the market economy around which everything else must revolve. The older identity of Western civilization is gradually fading; the West is progressively losing its *raison d'être*, limiting itself to a self-centered consumerism that sucks up all the world's wealth and waylays all who would dare resist. Its message to the world is: Imitate me and be a docile consumer of my products or else!

Because of Hitler's massacres, the West feels it owes the Jewish people a great debt. But who should pay? The Muslims, of course. As Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher, wrote: “Europe did not pay the tremendous debt it owed the Jews; instead, it has forced innocent people to account for this, namely, the Palestinian people.”

The disease of *jāhiliyya*, whose violence reached its zenith in Nazism, is still alive in the West, allied with a Crusader spirit that targets, above all else, Islam.

In the eighteenth century, the European mind became obsessed with invading the rest of the world. Inebriated by the spectacular progress they had achieved in science and industry, the Europeans began looking down at other nations just as an adult would look down at some immature child.

Europe hoisted on the Muslims and the other oppressed nations the same authoritarian banner of the Church, which disparages the “accursed race.” This Crusader spirit has alternatively been implemented under the rubric of “civilization,” “democracy,” or “human rights”: now, it is referred by the “right to intervention.”

The atrocities of the very Catholic Inquisition – perpetrated against the Muslims in Andalusia – have more recently been repeated against Muslims in Bosnia by the savage Serbs with the collusion of the Jews and Crusaders.

“History has ended!” With the demise of communism, History has allegedly crowned Western democracy triumphant: now the West was free to turn its attention to others who resisted its hegemony. Hence all the animosity vented against Iraq. Europe used to be the stronghold of the invading Crusaders, but now the campaign is both European and American, with the Americans as the masters of the New World Order.

America provides the financing and weapons and mobilizes its allies – friends today, but potentially enemies tomorrow if Europe ever unites or if Japan joins forces with China. China poses a formidable threat given its size and potential, and given Chinese skills in Taiwan, Chinese industry in Hong Kong, and Chinese expertise in Singapore.

This latent concern, this apprehension about the future, holds the potential to cause an economic war that will eventually split the Crusaders. Then will rise the real powers of our time: Japan and Germany. In the short-term, China will rise and America will deal with its anxiety over this prospect by turning against the Crusaders’ centuries-old enemy, the Muslims.

In America, there are two trends on what strategy should be adopted with regard to this renascent “menace.” While Baghdad was still blazing in the wake of the First Gulf War, the *Washington Post* (1/13 – 1/19/1992) published a dialogue between opinion-formers of both sides¹.

The first position, exemplified here by Graham Fuller, holds that there is no cause for alarm if the Islamists come to power because

¹ [Translator’s note:] “Islamic Fundamentalism: No Long-Term Threat,” editorial by Graham E. Fuller, a senior political scientist at RAND; and “Wishful Thinking about Islamic Fundamentalism,” editorial by Amos Perlmutter, a professor of political science at the American University.

“electoral politics will profoundly moderate those absolutist tendencies latent in almost any kind of religious fundamentalism... There is no doubt that many fundamentalists are not well-disposed toward the West. A residue of considerable anti-Western sentiment will always remain in much of the Third World that still feels anger that the colonialism of the past – as well as the present-day Western-dominated international political order – often delivered a raw deal to developing countries. We are going to have to live through this phenomenon, both by adopting policies more sensitive to the needs of Third World economies and by demonstrating that the West can indeed create valuable partnerships with other, poorer states.”

The second position is voiced by Amos Perlmutter: “This protest movement should not and cannot be confused with democracy, but should be stifled at birth... Islamic fundamentalism is an aggressive revolutionary movement as militant and violent as the Bolshevik, Fascist, and Nazi movements of the past.” Perlmutter vehemently rejects the notion that “The world – and especially the West – has got to come to terms with Islamic politics whether we like it nor not.”

May God, the Almighty, forgive us. We have reviewed the turbulent state of the world with a purely descriptive view. But what can America do when all power belongs to God alone? What can America do when His eternal Law states that He shall support those who support Him, that it is the righteous who must triumph in the end?

2. The Law of the Jungle

The fall of Granada, the last stronghold of the Muslims in Andalusia, was coupled with the discovery by the Europeans of a new continent they later called America. In 1492 CE, Christopher Columbus inaugurated a new age that would last for five centuries: this was the age of colonialism, the plundering of the non-European world, the enrichment of the West at the expense of all the other peoples of the earth.

In the conquered regions of Andalusia, the Inquisition championed by the Church burned any Muslim who refused to embrace Christianity. Catholic fanaticism in South America and Mexico prefigured the atrocities later perpetrated by Protestants in North America, where tens of millions of American Indians were exterminated and their cultures and civilizations erased. In fact, the United States and Canada are still closely organizing this extermination on the reservations while in Brazil – where the law of the jungle still reigns supreme – this program is even more violent and cruel.

By the end of the fifteenth century, the program of colonialism was well under way thanks to the massive and effective fleets of the Europeans, the foremost of which were the English. No inch of land with its natural or human resources was spared by the colonial typhoon. This exploitation was then legitimized with concepts from international law such as “colonies,” “protectorates,” and “mandates.”

At international conferences, the Europeans would divvy up the spoils amongst themselves by drawing up maps that resembled those made by children who zigzag around and splash red, green, and purple wherever they feel like. These new boundaries were meant

to form cages to confine the indigenous peoples to areas called the “nation-state” to separate them from their history and distort their identity. And thus was the unity of the Muslims dismembered.

Colonialism cunningly played on tribal and ethnic allegiances, instigating the colonized peoples to fight each other. In this way were the Arabs mobilized in the First World War to ally with the Europeans and tear apart the Ottoman Empire which for centuries had stood as the bastion of Islam.

The European man – adventurous, dauntless, ferocious – advanced to conquer all quarters of the globe which enabled him to augment his until-then modest technical and economic achievements with the vast treasures of these lands, or “surplus wealth.”

“Surplus wealth” is a term for that which goes beyond what is required to meet the necessities of life. This can be disbursed either for supporting the lifestyle of the dominant social class or for building up the capital and investment needed for longer-term activities such as the construction of schools, healthcare, housing, scientific research, and infrastructure.

The surplus production and wealth of the colonized peoples then poured into the capitals of Europe for five centuries. This pauperized the colonized world while bestowing on the “center of civilization” the elements of wealth and power. To North and South America the European man carried generations of African blacks to serve as slaves in the cotton fields to feed the English textile industry which, after the national fleet, provided the most important means to British hegemony.

To India the English brought the East India Company which, as the perfect model of colonial pillaging, imposed an arbitrary administration and stifled the local crafts industry with its flood of cheap textile products from Liverpool and Manchester.

The other European countries raced to catch up in this game, dividing up entire continents among themselves. To destroy the

traditional economy and erase the indigenous civilization, they promoted two weapons which, over time, have taken various names and various forms: technology and “liberty.”

Both have been used to bolster the interests of the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. The governments in the far-away European capitals drew up the necessary strategies, made the decisions, and issued the orders while the local agents and those who managed the cheap workforce in the colonial lands carried out the dirty work.

Colonial technology and colonial freedom helped the European build his glory. I say “helped” because the European’s most important advantage was his personal strengths: dynamism, endurance, love of adventure, perfectionism, organizational genius, mastery of the empirical sciences, nationalist fervor, desire for repute, and a sense of entitlement.

It was these traits which were decisive; conversely, our weakness in these areas was – and still is – the ultimate reason behind our debacle. The wolves ate their prey not only because they were wolves but because we were lambs.

Through centuries of conflict amongst themselves, including two world wars fueled by massive armies and treasuries filled with the riches of the colonized world, the Europeans matured politically, forming democracy for their own citizens to co-exist and then forming the United Nations for the various European countries to co-exist.

Democracy is meant to maintain popular sovereignty, human dignity, peace, and stability for Europeans, whereas for us, it is only meant as a hollow slogan.

It is nothing short of a lie for them to suggest that estranging ourselves from our *dīn* and embracing the religion of secular democracy is a *sine qua non* to rescue ourselves from the abyss of underdevelopment, ignorance, and despotism. This is just another

trick to keep us as the passive consumers of colonial ideology just as we are already the passive consumers of colonial goods.

The sister in faith will surely have noticed that I have dedicated a large portion of this section to underlining the distinctive features of colonialism. I also did this in the previous section in order to detail our personal failings which we keep passing on to the next generation. My intention is to display the whole picture with all its contradictions and intersections, harmonies and disharmonies.

With regards to the believing women in particular, I have reviewed these historical events because it would be impossible for the *mu'mināt*¹ to become involved as responsible actors in the *umma*'s future without their understanding the *umma*'s state of affairs, past and present.

I would now like to quote from Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq ar-Rāfiī (God have mercy upon him) who described the typical colonizers (in this case, the English) and the typical colonized (in this case, the Egyptians):

Having contemplated [three Englishmen] for a long time, I have noticed in them a certain rigor, chivalry, serenity, and gentleness. They further possess a guise resplendent with charm and elegance. In a solemn and sober posture of power, they look like three cannons arrayed... As for the Egyptian, he is content to remain within his town, unfamiliar with any other locality. He does not venture out or take any risks. The Englishman, on the other hand, is filled with the conviction that every quarter of the globe awaits him... By God, it seems to me that each of these strong and self-important Englishmen could not leave his country without possessing a good dose of self-esteem, independence, and sense of identity.²

¹ [Translator's note:] Plural of *mu'mina*, the Arabic word for a believing woman.

² *Waḥyu al-Qalam* (Inspiration of the Pen). Aleppo: al-Qalam al-'Arabī Publishing, 1997, p195.

There was peace on some faces and war on the others. The peaceful faces expressed ease, flexibility, and eagerness for life. The belligerent faces reflected resolve and eagerness for the immaterial glory of life.¹

There are two types of people. One man relies upon his community to take charge of his life; he therefore lives a lazy, disengaged, and parasitic existence. The other is self-reliant and believes that he is responsible for his community; accordingly, he spares no effort to promote its interests... Similarly, there are two types of political education. One is based on verbosity and a bombastic representation of reality. The other is based on a composure that can surmount any challenge, a patience that can defeat any length of time, and a conviction that can achieve wonders... The environment of a country can mold its inhabitants in one of two ways. Accordingly, the Egyptian is easy, humble, modest, amicable, and generous, while the Englishman is tough, adventurous, and eager for life.²

Was Monsieur ar-Rāfiī more impressed with the English colonizer or more afraid of him? Actually, he was just trying to be fair in his account so that the truth would not be eclipsed by any bias or prejudice.

And the Lord gives wisdom to whomever He wills.

¹ *Ibid.*, p194–5.

² *Ibid.*, p195.

3. Two Worlds

Having gone over the ordeal of the colonized peoples in the previous section, God-willing we will now discuss the impact of colonialism on the Muslim woman.

In the West, only someone on the fringe would openly praise the colonial period because it represents a mark of disgrace on their civilization. The Left occasionally holds the Right accountable for colonialism and its consequences. Yet in the depths of their hearts, both Left and Right, lies that crusading rancor against Muslims and that racist contempt for all colored peoples. This disdain has only increased since huge numbers of the poor from Africa, Turkey, and other Muslim regions have migrated to Europe in search of a livelihood. This rancor and contempt find expression in outright insults and sometimes even killings. Radical political organizations seek to build their popularity through publicly declaring their enmity toward those who would supposedly threaten their civilization and steal jobs from the noble ethnic Europeans.

In the spheres of politics, economics, and international law, colonialism has, chameleon-like, put on a new, hypocritical guise. For instance, unlike the crusading Pope who outright declared “Kill the accursed race!”, the president of the United States tried to claim that “Our cause [in Iraq] is just, our cause is humanitarian, our cause is good.”

During the period of direct colonialism, the European Left hoisted the banner of defending what they called the “Third World.” When the Second, i.e. Communist, World collapsed, the new term was the North and the South, deliberately avoiding “colonizer” and “colonized.” As for us, we refer to the scripture, which divides the earth into the world of the arrogant oppressors (*al-mustakbirūn*)

and the world of the oppressed (*al-mustaḍʿafūn*). The oppressors seek to obstruct the Path of God because the Path of God represents justice, human brotherhood, human dignity, and a fair distribution of the earth's wealth.

Although the Leftist movement in the Third World to support the weak was motivated by a commendable chivalry, it was based on an ideology later exposed as malevolent. We have already talked about the colonial programs of Western Europe without mentioning the colonization by Russia of such Muslim countries as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and other Central Asian republics. In fact, the colonialism of the Czarist empire and then of the Soviet Union was even more atrocious.

Going back to the issue of women: in parallel with the growth of "Third Worldism" which sought to promote the interests of the developing nations, the movement for women's emancipation grew in power. Originating in Europe and America a century ago, the feminist movement advocated complete gender equality, to that end fighting for the justice of the "internally colonized," i.e., the European woman.

Just as the male leaders of Europe came to realize the wisdom of democracy through all their devastating wars, so too did the women of Europe take a lesson from the struggle of the nationalist liberation movements that eventually ousted the colonial forces. One of the most significant outcomes of this struggle was that women became free to do what they liked with their body, even if it meant rejecting all virtues and morals, destroying the family fabric, and spreading promiscuity like some vulgar commodity.

Today, the men of the West try to export to us an appealing package called democracy and human rights. Inside the package there is a secularism that cannot tolerate Islam in the political arena. And so too do the women of the West try to export to our Muslim women a libertinism wrapped in the package of equality of wages, emancipation from male custody, prohibition of polygamy, and

equality in inheritance.

This commodity is marketed by activists who work in Westernized schools, who speak the language of the West, who hold postgraduate degrees, and who have been imbued with an animosity against Islam which perhaps even surpasses the original colonialist impudence against the faith.

Secularism and libertinism are twin ideologies and complementary commodities. Secularism, packaged with democracy and human rights, is marketed for everyone. Libertinism, which is also marketed for everyone, is similarly covered in a transparent, diaphanous wrapping much like the clothing of certain Western women who are showcased like so many goods for sale.

The Western woman freed herself from a male chauvinism (the counterpart to racism) rooted in the teachings of the Church where, for centuries, the clergy debated whether women actually had a soul, how best to burn witches, and how best to purify men from the Devil's lieutenant – i.e., the woman.

Accordingly, the Church was viewed as the enemy of the woman. And when feminist activists saw substantial evidence that Muslim women were suffering similar oppression, they argued that Islam was another church that women needed to be liberated from.

The advocates of libertinism amongst us live a life of luxury similar to that of their comrades in the West: they have no feeling of want. Although their indignation against the injustices suffered by Muslim women is legitimate, it is really their lust for power that prompts them to rebel against these supposedly intellectually-deficient men who do not support the liberal sort of *ijtihād* pioneered by Tunisian president Bourguiba and others of his stripe.

Westernized women adhere to a strict division of the world: the party of women on one side and the party of men on the other. To promote its own interests, the party of women employs its own organizations, publications, conferences, and influence.

In the West, reconciliation was achieved between these two sides after a long struggle for the general principle of freedom. This freedom was snatched up in the French Revolution from the Church which had acted in collusion with the despotic monarchy. The slogan of this movement read: Let us hang the last of the kings with the intestines of the last of the priests. This ideology of freedom then reconciled the competing claims of men and of women.

Are there any shortcomings or gaps in our *dīn* that need to be filled by the likes of Bourguiba, Qasim Amin, or Tahar Haddad? Or are these gaps merely the result of the accumulated injustice inflicted on woman which in turn was occasioned by the injustice inflicted on Islamic society in general?

In trying to reconcile men and women, the alternative to a Western-style arrangement, which is based on being rid of religion, is one inspired by the Law of justice and *iḥsān*.¹ This law appeals to both sides to come together on the meeting ground of worshipping God alone. It invites both sides to jointly assume the responsibilities of this life in harmony, cooperation, mutual aid, and complementarity, so that they may surmount the trials and arrive in the Hereafter clean of the sin of usurping the rights of others.

The Islamic virtues of justice and *iḥsān* seek a united world in which reign compassion, love, and mutual giving – not hostility. The Islamic virtues of justice and *iḥsān* provide a framework of tolerance between men and women, a reciprocity in which the world of men and the world of women merge harmoniously.

In the Law of Islam, women are the equals of men with regards to their rights and duties. They are equals as brothers and sisters in faith who help one another in pious deeds and who assist one

¹ [Translator's note:] Mentioned both in the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*, *iḥsān* bears three meanings: one spiritual (to worship God as if you can see Him), social and human (to be kind and generous to all mankind, starting with parents and relatives, and all creatures), and professional (to excel in one's work, or every deed or endeavor).

another in crossing the wilderness of this life. The virtues of *ihsān*, compassion, and love permeate the truly Islamic society and protect the rights laid out in detail by Islamic Law just as a fence protects a garden of ripe fruits. If men oppress women or act arbitrarily towards them, both sides will only harvest thorns.

Any deficiency in achieving this ideal harmony must be attributed to that poverty which corrupts human nature and to that injustice which weighs so heavily on the conscience.

The Western model is deceptively attractive with its satanic charm, its wealth, and its achievement of having raised women from being mere dependents of men to financially-independent individuals. Those of our women who are subordinate to the West think that blindly copying Western women and acquiring the right to do whatever they wish with their bodies will guarantee them their welfare.

Not at all! For the West has adorned the body of the woman like a fetishized doll put in a display case while its ethos of absolute self-indulgence has failed to deliver real happiness. The West has been made wretched because of its hyper-material civilization just as much as we have been exhausted by our underdevelopment and material want.

Two worlds!

In the world of the oppressors, men and women have achieved reconciliation so that now they are one unified bloc endeavoring to sap the foundations of our edifice after the colonial devastation destroyed the walls. Hence, the believing women must join the believing men in confronting this aggression as one front.

One war, several battles, and numerous battlefields: culture, economics, politics, education, the media, and morality. This war is one between belief and disbelief. Muslim women are as targeted as Muslim men. The believing men and women must be mutual supporters of each other.

4. *The Law of God and the Law of the Market*

Islamic Law is God's justice on earth while the market is a life necessity through which He tries His creatures. Necessity calls out loud and deafens the ears. The voice of egoism vies with the voice of justice. The materialistic, instrumental mind¹ (*al-'aql al-ma'āshī*), incited by base passion, competes with the wise mind that adheres to the Law of God.

The Law of God and contemporary international law stand at opposite extremes in terms of their motives and objectives. God's Law and Covenant are a token of faithfulness to His worship; for whomever observes them and behaves justly, they are a guarantee in this world and in the Hereafter. On the other hand, positive laws – such as the constitutions of the various democratic countries or the various international conventions – are instruments based on power, not piety, meant to guarantee the worldly interests of the strong. This power in turn is derived from Western technology and freedom which, as noted above, benefit Westerners at our expense.

Colonialism used these two instruments to deplete the treasures of the earth and enslave masses of human beings. At the same time, the acquisition of technology and freedom is a *sine qua non* if we are to rid ourselves of our subordination and subservience. But we must critically evaluate economic liberalism, democracy, and industrialization in the light of piety, justice, and *ihsān* to avoid being controlled by the violence that haunts the might of the West,

¹ [Translator's note:] Contrary to the believing mind that has one eye on the Unseen World through Revelation and the other eye on the visible world through the tools that God put at its disposal, the instrumental or materialistic mind believes only in what is tangible, utilitarian, and worldly, is arrogant because of its scientific achievements, and proclaims itself a self-made god.

the spirit of avarice that inhabits capitalism, the spirit of hypocrisy that governs secular democracy and that claims to be neutral toward religion but is actually antagonistic.

Should we reprimand the strong who are bereft of *īmān*, justice, and *ihsān* if they oppress the weak?

In the jungle, it is the nature of the strong to devour the weak. It is the wont of the masters of the market to cheat the customers of the market. That is the law of nature. May God forgive us! This is why God (Exalted and Glorified is He) has ordered us to build up whatever force we are able to foster. This is why the noble Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) has warned us that war consists of ruse and stratagems.

“Hence, make ready against them whatever force and trained horses you are able to muster.” (8:61) Our ancestors, who had wooden arrows with iron heads and armies of infantry and cavalry, had their particular understanding of this verse; we need to have our own, contemporary understanding of this verse so that we do not ignore God’s Law in the universe and in history. Hence, we should not expect the angels to come down and grant manifest victory for the Law of God over the law of the market, we should not dream that one night a thunderbolt will blast the pillars of the hegemonic materialistic civilization, nor should we imagine that the *jihād* for salvation in the age of electrons and missiles could be undertaken by indigent believers uninitiated in the world of modern technology.

In our lack of material power and resolve, we are like the people of Moses (peace be upon him) when he ordered them to enter the Holy Land: “O Moses! People of extreme might dwell in this land. Never shall we enter it until they depart therefrom, but if they depart therefrom, then we shall enter it.” (5:24)

Our impulse to simply clone Western-style democracy, which we see as a crown atop the heads of the strong, will only further our debilitation and impotence and will inevitably oust us from

the realm of Islam, as the logic of secular democracy makes it a precondition that religion be chased out of the political arena.

Blindly imitating the West in its system of government will only push us far from the Law of God. Our own system of government is unique in the history of human justice and brotherhood, representing the law of *shūrā*.

As for the market and its instruments, it is vital that we engage it, otherwise we will wither away. Engaging the market on the market's terms is inevitable: only once we have achieved weight and influence economically can we impose our own conditions – not before.

This presupposes that we promote the unity of Muslims and reject the *umma*'s division into multiple nation-states, a division that was begun internally by the old despotic regimes and then fully mapped out and finalized by modern colonialism. The way to unification is a long one, but the sons and daughters of the Islamic Renaissance have heard the Call of the Lord and aspire to see His Law prevail.

The law of the market and the law of the stronger refuse such unity. Hence, the Baathists in Iraq who were only interested in parochial nationalism saw the fate of their ideology sealed when they launched their failed invasion of Kuwait which in turn provoked the invasion of Baghdad and the destruction of Iraq.

In the market of commercial goods, you find genuine commodities, ordinary cheap commodities, and fraudulent commodities stamped with the seal of quality.

The same applies to the market of life. The genuine commodity is adherence to the Lord's Law, while on the opposite side you have the fraudulent commodity being promoted by the agents of the West which is the commodity of the market's masters. Then there is a third category which is a mixture of these two, exported by the Western universities: a doctor in the fundamentals of Islamic

jurisprudence from Cambridge University, a doctor in the history of Islamic theology and sectarianism from the Sorbonne, a doctor in comparative law from California.

Of the various aspects of colonialism, this is one of the more cunning. This is a legal colonialism that seeks to assault Islamic Law and cut it off from its sources. There are professors in our universities who are promoted because of their hybrid degrees while the local degrees find no jobs, who teach Orientalist comparative studies, the marvels of archaeology, and the methodologies of skepticism – namely, those of Descartes, Montesquieu, and John Stuart Mill.

The Law of God, which the alien intellectuals with their eccentric creed and hybrid education endeavor to spoil, lays its emphasis on the well-being of man in this world so as to facilitate his journey toward the Hereafter. On the other hand, the law of the market, ignorant of the Lord and the Hereafter, focuses solely on productivity, how to increase goods and services, how the strong can maintain their tight grip on the sources of oil, raising the living standard of its citizens, and fighting an unemployment that menaces political stability.

The law of the market displays the woman as a commodity with her naked body, alluring physique, and excessive make-up. But it is a commodity without a soul.

Similarly, the law of the market recognizes gay marriage as a legal union that grants the “spouses” the same rights as a normal family. After all, who said that marriage between two men or two women is not normal? That is merely human nature with its different tastes and inclinations! That is freedom!

And you claim that virtue should be the foundation of the law; had you been powerful enough, your voice would have been heard.

What virtue? How can you persuade a market engaged in devilish business to believe in virtue?

In the absence of power, what virtue can halt the frenetic march of a genetic engineering that menaces the human race with tailor-made industrialized produce created in the service of quantity at the expense of quality?

The police, judiciary, and parliament in the industrialized Western countries have objectives inspired by consumerism and extravagance so that they have no interest beyond statistical production, consumption, or marketing. Because they live in a state of *jāhiliyya*, they have no interest in what they do not know: the fate of man to dwell eternally either in the House of Contentment or the House of Disgrace.

Although the law of the market is by its very nature devilish and obstructs from the path of God, we must inevitably engage it while seeking God's protection and remaining fully alert to the trials which He has set there.

As an-Nasā'ī has reported from God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace): "Market business involves speaking nonsense and falsehoods." A similar narration from Abū Dāwūd informs us that the devils go to the markets early in the morning with hoisted banners.

What can one say then about a world that has become a market governed by market law? How can the Law of God enter a place inclined to nonsense and falsehood, a place frequented by devils who arise early to prepare the ground?

This *ḥadīth* of God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) is multifaceted, as he was endowed with the miracle of expressing several teachings in very few words. The devils among the jinn¹ are part of the Unseen World in which we believe. Yet

¹ [Translator's note:] Spirit beings that inhabit the world and that are required to follow the commands of God and are therefore accountable for their deeds. They can be good or bad, just like humans. The word jinn in Arabic means "hidden," which indicates that they are invisible creatures. God created them from fire.

the devilry of our fellow humans, the nonsense and falsehoods of advertising, the mania of stock markets, the leaps and bounds of prices and interest rates, and the acrobatics of exchange rates are daily occurrences we see with our own eyes. The conscience of the believing woman and man must not be filled up with the racket of the visible market to the extent of leaving no room for belief in the invisible devils – otherwise where is *īmān*?

On account of the strength of this double devilry, God’s Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) urged us to recite the statement of God’s uniqueness as protection: “Whoever says upon entering a market, ‘There is no god but God, the Unique and Peerless, to Him belongs sovereignty, to Him belongs praise. He grants life and takes it. He is the Ever-Living. In His hand is all goodness, and He has power over all things,’ will have by way of reward one million good deeds written down in their record, one million bad deeds erased from their record, and be granted one million ranks in Paradise.” [Reported on the authority of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (God be pleased with him) by at-Tirmidhī, who ranked it as reliable (*ḥasan*).]

Speaking of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, he himself was a skilled, successful broker. How can the hopeless and simple-minded Muslims and those who serve foreign banks by depositing embezzled public funds hope to match him? Alas.

There is no power or might but with God.

5. The Industrialized Man

Victory eluded us when we failed to meet its conditions. The Hand of Fate committed us to laws imposed by the oppressors when we forgot the law of “God will never change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their souls.” (13:12) Success abandoned us when we neglected the command to “make ready against them whatever force and trained horses you are able to muster.” (8:61)

God-willing, throughout this book we will continue to remind the reader of the importance of cultivating a heart that is filled with total devotion to the Lord and of purifying the soul and changing its condition. In this section, we will examine one of the causes that has made us such easy prey for the plunderers of nations, subjected us to the laws of the market, and left us underdeveloped in the world of the oppressed.

The strength we need – hinted at in the verse “Make ready against them whatever force and trained horses you are able to muster” – lies specifically in development and industrialization which we will examine from two aspects.

First, Muslims need to industrialize within a framework of integrated development. There is no power without a strong industry: the *umma* cannot hope to achieve well-being if it eats what it does not cultivate and buys what it does not produce, if it remains simple-minded and unarmed while its malicious enemies have a monopoly on developing sophisticated weapons (such as the electronically-guided missiles dropped on Baghdad) and deplete our funds by marketing to us obsolescent scrap at an extortionate price of our money, independence, and dignity.

Since the modern world is based on economic self-sufficiency, industrialization is a necessity. This in turn requires surmounting a series of obstacles. Sophisticated and highly-motivated individuals can penetrate the fortress of scientific and technological hegemony through the fissures represented by those ready to engage anybody willing to learn and willing to pay. That's what Iraq's tyrant did; his real problem was that he violated the unity of the Arabs and broke international law. Saddam Hussein "resisted" with matchless obstinacy until the enemies destroyed the edifice built by an iron will.

Industrialization and development are within the reach of the *mujāhidūn* and the *mujāhidāt*¹. God-willing, they will acquire these skills battle-after-battle. The precondition for this is to marshal all the efforts of the Muslims around the world into one powerful bloc. This in turn is contingent upon the success of the Islamic movements because it is Islam that will unify the Muslims. This success in turn is dependent upon the strict compliance with God's universal laws so as to meet the conditions for victory. And He grants victory to whomever He wills, for He is the Mighty, the Bestower.

These conditions for victory involve securing the necessary financial means, securing a geopolitical space of respectable size and influence, and allotting sufficient funds for training and research in the sciences. I write the word "sciences" in the plural to refer to the universal sciences, the empirical sciences, while I write "Science" with a capital "S" to name that perfect, comprehensive knowledge related to the Lord, His creatures, His worlds (this one and the Hereafter), and the meaning of man's existence. The universal sciences, and the industries they engender, either serve

¹ [Translator's note:] The *mujāhidūn* and the *mujāhidāt* are, respectively, all Muslim men and Muslim women who serve the cause of Islam according to the method of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) and work industriously to unite our divided *umma* by legitimate, peaceful means. All forms of violence or terrorism are absolutely contradictory to the Prophetic method.

the project to provide security and prosperity for man or plunge him into the material concerns of this world and make him oblivious to his future after death.

We now come to the second aspect of industrialization: its repercussions on man. For if we immerse ourselves in the *jihād* of industrialization while failing to notice its impact on the West, if we recklessly rush upon it the way camels raging with thirst rush upon fresh water, it will soon erase the last vestiges of our chivalry (*murū'a*) and *dīn* which have survived the cultural invasion. For industrial civilization and the speedy movement of the market-like world have destructive and fragmenting repercussions on man's body, mind, and moral constitution.

We must look at industrialization from a human perspective and with critical eyes. In place of the savage capitalist system we must present an alternative model of development that is friendly to humans, that is attractive and strong – an embodiment of the Islamic message.

Is this merely the fantasy of a wretched *umma* that dreams of relief from its ordeals? Not at all! It is a petition that Muslims set forth before the Fate of the Almighty, the Exalted in Power. It is a victory which they beseech from His generosity, a victory which He will surely grant them once they have met its conditions. For He is Exalted, the Generous, the Bestower, the Bountiful.

The socialist model of industrialization was a calamity for both man and his environment. It bore the seeds of its own demise, failure, and collapse. The capitalist model still gnaws at the moral, psychological, and physical constitution of man; the more it succeeds in producing new achievements and inventions, the more it destroys man.

The capitalist model of industrialization fragments man's time, forces him to adapt to its fast pace, and ruins the schedule of the five prayers that organizes the day and night of the believer.

The rhythm of factories, the entry and exit of the workers, the movement of the machinery are a logic totally different from the logic of the unsophisticated agricultural economy in which Islamic jurisprudence grew up, where Muslims were not stressed by time and were thus able to attend to their ritual prayers, day and night.

Industrialization manifests itself in clamorous cities, strict organization, congestion, and pollution. If people have to participate in the frantic competition which overwhelms the time for recollection of the Lord (Exalted is He), then people win their worldly welfare only at the risk of their own ruin. They thereby slide progressively into forgetfulness of Him until they discard Islam entirely and lapse into manifest perdition. They will then have lost their souls in this world and in the Hereafter.

Industrialization means the sovereignty of machinery and technology that hold sway over man, his time, his imagination, his desires. This is because the industrialized world is a market, and a market means the demand and supply of goods. The accompanying advertising is a component of trade exchange, a mania that buzzes in man's ear, seizes his eye, and causes acute temptation with gaudy colors and richly-decorated posters, courtesy of the latest design engineering.

The heading of this section, "The Industrialized Man," has two meanings. The first refers to how industrialized man and industrialized society stand opposite to the lazy and the simple-minded who are indigent and underdeveloped – a society that purchases but does not sell, that consumes but that does not produce, a society whose wealth is ravaged and devoured by the wolves of the world because it eats what it does not cultivate itself.

The second meaning of the "industrialized man" is the one we are examining now. It is when technology expropriates man and turns him into its slave, a mere organ of its own body. It is when the industrial community prevents the Muslim man and the Muslim woman from establishing a communicative relationship with their

fellow Muslims, joining together the ties of kinship that God has commanded to be joined, and centering their daily life around the mosque. The mosque should become the focus of our lives, so that our time is scheduled around the times of the prayers and that the call to prayer becomes more anticipated than the siren marking the end of the workshift.

How can the necessity of industrialization and the duties of the *dīn* be combined? How can the hearts keep invoking their Lord in the midst of all the factory racket?

In the West, this issue was settled by chasing religion out of the monastery of technology. The church of industry was built on the vestiges of the Christian church, with secularism as its religion. The State has washed its hands of the responsibility of caring for the spiritual concerns of its individual citizens. Capital does not ask man about his faith, only his productivity.

In the Muslim countries, the invasion of Western civilization continues to shake the ground beneath our feet. Part of this invasion is the spirit of the market, the hegemony of the market, advertising, corporate media, dazzling colors, women exploited like fetishized dolls whose exposed bodies are supposed to indicate the quality of the goods on display.

The logic of industrialization launches an all-out offensive on man's very being, his body, mind, senses, and instincts, making him think that he is the driver and maker of industry, while in fact he is the one being driven and manufactured by industry. Man manufactured the machine, but the machine turned against him and began to manufacture him. Man invented the machine, but then the machine began to invent him as an assistant machine.

How can we approach industrialization in a way that imbues our physical and intellectual efforts with the meaning of *jihād*, in a way that maintains man's sovereignty over a machine which seeks to turn him into a robot against his will?

How can we imbue our worldly labor with the meaning of a good deed to be treasured up in the Hereafter? How can we teach those Muslim men working out of duty and those Muslim women working out of necessity to excel in their work without breaching the trust of their Creator (Exalted is He)?

How can we make local capital and global finance respect the Law of God and the law of humanity and justice so long as they are based on usury, that worst form of injustice?

Industrialization is both necessary and hazardous to the *umma's* health. Even as a factory machine may devour a worker's limb if their vigilance fails them a split second, so too may the machine of industrialization gobble our souls and turn us into wandering phantoms.

None other than God is our Protector.

6. The Misery of Modernity for Women

In this section, God-willing, we will examine the repercussions of technology when it assaults Muslim society. We will also examine the other tool of industry, freedom, when it is forced on a Muslim nation in its secular democratic form. We will then review the bloody historical conflict between the Law of God and the law of the market.

The case of Algeria is typical of a Muslim country: A European nation at the summit of its power attacks a Muslim nation in utter decline and then occupies it after a heroic resistance that lasts several decades. The balance of power ultimately tilts in favor of the former because the contest is an unequal one between an industrialized nation and an armless one. The subsequent settler-colonization is rampant, assimilating the Muslim nation and all but wiping out its identity.

After a century-and-a-quarter during which three generations are Westernized and alienated, the Muslim nation is shaken out of its torpor by the causes of Islam, pan-Arabism, and nationalism. The slogan of the uprising is: there is no god but God and the French are the enemies of God.

The most important aspect of this phenomenon is that these revolutions are at heart revolutions of Muslims fighting against the enemies of Islam with an unparalleled fervor.

The Westernized elite joined the ranks of the revolutionaries, with whom they shared a patriotic fervor and aversion to the colonizers; they then took control of the movement by virtue of their administrative competence and their education. When the colonizer was compelled to retreat, the elites then assumed power and formed a single-party system based on a socialist ideology

straddling Arab nationalism, traditional Islam, and the exigencies of industrial development.

They spent some of their country's oil revenues on these exigencies while embezzling the rest. They imported a ready-made industrial base which was state-run and whose products were consumed by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the Westernized elites who exploited their past activism to ravage the country's wealth and plunge it into extreme indebtedness.

As a result, the Muslims became weighed down by poverty, victimized by the violence of a heavy industrial machine suddenly dropping on a predominantly-agricultural society (90% of which was illiterate). After more than a quarter century of independence and socialist maladministration, the Muslim people stood up to express their resentment against a management that lacked both integrity and intelligence.

In response to these grievances, the elites produced another remedy from the West's drugstore: freedom. Hence, they decided to introduce democracy, a multi-party system, and freedom of the press.

In contrast, the Islamists – who had grown up in the bosom of nationalist Arabism and on the margins of a dominant socialism – proposed the Law of God as a remedy. The democratic process then led to an Islamist landslide. The Westernized elite exploded with anger while the West panicked at the possibility of an Islamic state establishing itself on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The phrase “Islamic state” haunts the Western imagination with images of Imam Khomeini challenging the arrogance of the “Great Satan.”

History proceeded and social factors clearly favored the rise of the followers of God's Law at the expense of those idiots who had attempted to combine a moribund socialism with the rapacious law of the market.

I write this on Saturday night, Ramadan 5, 1413 AH (February 27, 1993 CE), while Algeria continues to be a hot spot of violence: fighting has become a daily occurrence, military tribunals sentence scores of believers to death, and the jails are crammed with *mujāhidūn* whose only crime was to try to resist the trend of Westernization and unbelief. The State is trying to adopt the trappings of liberalism while at the same time using its iron hands to brand its identity on an unwilling people who have rejected these custodians of socialism, turned away from the laws of the West, and declared their allegiance to God through supporting the Islamists.

May God, the Most High and Omnipotent, grant a speedy victory to those suffering in Algeria, Bosnia, and other places of tragedy with a victory which begins with the true believers assuming power and then continues with the general *jihād* of reconstruction and development.

Another ironic tragedy is that, despite the fact that the Muslims have rejected the Western model, when they inevitably inherit the state and the government apparatus from the Westernized elites (God-willing in the near future), they will inherit it along with their industrial and economic failures – no light burden.

Additionally, the future Islamic government will also have to inherit all the wretched women migrating from the impoverished countryside in search of a more dignified life in the industrial cities – that is, the peasant women who were victimized (alongside their husbands) by a colonialism that deprived them of their lands which it later (after being forced to retreat) handed over to the socialist state or the ruling class.

The ruin of the countryside has led to the ruin of the city: the latter has aggravated the misery of the former, while the former has exacerbated the corruption of the latter. The victims of urbanization closely mix with the jobless sons and daughters of the cities. In the slum-packed suburbs, the noble qualities of the countryside – family solidarity, modesty, decency, magnanimity, and honor –

have become erased. In a big city, people do not know each other; no one fears the disgrace of acting indecently because he is but an unknown amid the unknown, and she is but a wretch among the wretched. Both are nobodies amid nobodies.

In the countryside from which they came, the women had been used to herding livestock, harvesting produce, gathering wood, and laboring alongside the men. They were surrounded by the innocence of *fiṭra*, work conscientiousness, austerity, and a total immersion of having to attend to the basic necessities of life. From a poverty which was nevertheless alleviated by the bosom of nature and the affinity of kinship, they have fled the countryside for urban slums where poverty is aggravated by the vices of the city.

Those who have the chance to undertake vocational training among the poor urban girls or the second or third generation countrywomen might be able to find jobs in dressmaking or the canning industry, serving that boisterous machine that commands such absolute obedience. Nevertheless, they only work as temporary wage-earners without any security. They are laborers living day-to-day concerns. They suffer from the darkness of ignorance and illiteracy, a lack of psychological balance, an absence of financial security, extreme traffic congestion, mistreatment at the hands of their supervisors – not to mention homesickness for the rural lifestyle with its more sincere human relationships.

These are the repercussions of the law of the market on those lucky enough to have found a job. As to the hordes of job-seekers who are illiterate or semi-literate, the way is paved for them toward the sex trade, while others take the path of humiliation, of ruthless exploitation and become housemaids.

The housemaid is treated like a dog by the master and mistress of the house. She is forced to sleep on the ground with a worn blanket and to eat leftovers. In her heart she bears her resentment against the world which she silently vents on the children of her mistress who herself may suffer her own miseries at work.

Being handed over this heavy legacy, where can the Law of God start to repair this damage caused by the corrupters? How will it address the poverty of women and men? Are those wretched girls who display their bodies for sale in the streets of these wonderful modern capitals to blame for their condition?

The first thing a young girl from the countryside discovers in the city is its sham splendor. Her wants are kindled by the urban women's life of luxury: their elegant dress, cars, feasts, and parties, etc. There is no way she can begin to approach this world of luxury but to work as a maid in the houses of those who would subject her to all kinds of agonies while they themselves carry on with their *bon-vivant* ways.

What will you do, brother, you who hold to the fatwa that everything is sinful, you who claim to be the protector of God's Law and the custodian of the divine virtues?

What will we have accomplished if we forcibly cover the woman's body and pursue her in the streets to make her cover her hair? Will we have closed the market of vice and the door of misery if we still leave the latent disease to spread from within?

Only justice can remedy the misfortunes of poverty and the woes of vice. Justice means money. Money's homeland is the market. The market means goods, production, competition, and marketing. The market is global, while the world is controlled by the mighty and the wealthy. Justice is implemented through the law, the judiciary, and governmental authority. However, these institutions will be hollow if your goods can find no market, cash flow is scarce, basic necessities are nowhere to be found, and prices are increasing dramatically.

They will discard their *hijāb* and reject your Islam if it does not provide food, housing, or healthcare. Ordinary Muslims, men and women, will expect the Islamic government to deliver them from poverty. The keyword for Islamic change is the economy.

The keyword is *jihād* if the Islamists apply themselves wholeheartedly to studying the problems of the economy and finding the appropriate solutions. Otherwise, corrupted beliefs will germinate in the bosom of misery and only come back tomorrow. The economy is indispensable to bringing about change. But the market dares you with its impudence.

The market begs you importunately, here depleting wealth in the extreme while there squandering it extravagantly. God does not love those who squander wealth, but instead loves those who turn to Him constantly and purify themselves. From Him must we seek help, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.

7. *The Environment and Pollution*

How similar is the scorching trial of the political environment, which the Islamists must inevitably go through, to the wasteland of the industrial environment! In examining these two environments which are both spoiled and spoiling, the objective is the same: to seek a way to join together the knots of Islam that have come undone.

Both the utopianists who withdraw from reality and the zealots who immerse themselves in the books of our pious ancestors have the wish that God's Law prevail. Yet neither is inclined to sully their hands with the mud of development and reconstruction, nor yet to see their dress tarnished with the least spray of dirty water.

They are averse to having their reputation smeared by offensive words. Instead, they remain in the world of rhetoric, the world of heavenly purity. They stay in the noble and lofty towers of rejectionism, transcendence, and puritanism. But to engage in everyday action, to wage *jihād*, to cope with harsh realities and endure challenges is a matter of competition, arduous labor, and dealing with this dirt; it requires that you make a firm resolve to roll up your sleeves and enter into the arena, to face the foul secretions of the political environment, to suffer the reproaches of the hasty and the objections of the idealists, to confront the market lords, and to negotiate and make bargains in the marketplace.

Suppose you are a parent and one of your children has no food to eat, the other has no clothes to wear, and the third no place to live in. You are the only one responsible for them; the days of laying around and being a refusenik are gone. Either you assess the wide gap between the ideal and reality and assume your responsibilities, or you remain exalted in your contrarian puritanism, heaping

insults on a blameworthy reality and raising your fist in the face of those devils that go early in the morning to the market with hoisted banners.

Either you expose yourself to the dust of battle, the smoke of politics, and the mud of the economy or you stagnate in your fantasy missions and procrastinated promises – or worse still, you consume your whole soul in desperate violence and futile rage.

It is a matter of just braving the political and economic realities while remaining fully aware that a market is not a mosque, meaning that the law of supply and demand is the one in force, that the law of engaging in mutually-beneficial exchange with the global powers is the law in effect – and these laws compel you, unavoidably, to deal with your enemies. As the poet nicely put it:

Among the troubles caused by this life to free men

Is that they must deal with a foe and them befriend.

Bargaining in the marketplace of reality is just something you have to master if you don't want to come back empty-handed.

When fate knocks at the door to announce the Islamists' turn to assume power, many of them are caught unawares, still engrossed in the rhetoric of opposition and raging against evil. A rhetoric that soars in the high heavens of principled ideals often finds it hard to come down to earth to engage a reality fraught with inconveniences, to bargain for what is strictly necessary, to risk enterprises that might be wrong. The concerns of the idealist center solely on condemning evil, without examining the historical roots or global circumstances of that evil. Therefore, the idealist fails to measure the true value of the obstacles in front of them so that, after assuming power, they find themselves shackled by their past rejectionist declarations.

To this day, Iran – which pioneered the Islamic revolution – still labors to find a way out of the deadlock of the rejectionist rhetoric

and politics it formulated when it felt isolated, now realizing that dealing with the satans, both great and small, is just a reality of the marketplace. Iran has come to recognize that to be idealist is one thing in opposition, but that exercising power is to get your feet wet.

Those who defer the Islamic *qawma*¹ to some unspecified time in the future, when several generations have already been brought up in *īmān* and the foundations of the Islamic revival have already been carefully assembled into place, will almost surely be overtaken by lassitude. Conversely, those who think they can be an alternative to the scavenging vultures while they are yet a fledgling without feathers for flight will straightway run into despair. They may well grow into a powerful hunting eagle, but they are still a young bird in the nest.

The following quote from one Muslim preacher sums up well the stance of those who are frightened away by the polluted environment of politics: “Even were they to offer me power on a golden plate, I would refuse.”

Of course you can rest in tranquility if you climb into an ivory tower and assign responsibility for this change to future generations. No one will accuse you of currying favor with the West, of compromising with the satans, of shaking hands with unbelieving men or lending an ear to unbelieving women. On the margin of events, you will keep your hands clean and sustain your rhetoric of furious rejection. You will maintain the esteem of those who bow down only to God in prayer.

Safe and sound in your hermitage, you will preserve His Law in your private life. However, you will have failed to acquire knowledge

¹ [Translator’s note:] *Qawma* from *qāma*, *yaqūmu*, to stand up, to rise up. *Qawma*, in the narrower sense, is the Islamic method of legitimate uprising against despotic regimes. In its broader sense, *qawma* is a long-term revivalist project of change that encompasses all spheres of Islamic life, including the political and the spiritual.

of God's universal laws in making progressive change; you will have missed the lesson of the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace) who bowed down to the Lord for thirteen years at the *Ka'ba* while it was still surrounded by more than three hundred idols.

Let not our enemies be brighter than us! One of their fundamental principles is that there are no permanent enemies or friends, only ever-shifting interests. Once they realize that their strategic trading and economic interests lie in providing stability for the economy of the world – which is their world, since they are the powerful – and that in turn lies in coming to terms with the Islamic movements, they will soon enough stifle the inner voice of their crusading animosity.

Now, let us move from the mischief of the political environment to the squalor of chemical waste in the industrial environment.

What relationship is there between the political and industrial environments on the one hand, and on the other hand the believing housewife who is preoccupied with the daily concerns of her children's health, the price of vegetables in the market, and fetching the daily provisions for her family? What relationship is there between, on the one hand, the believing woman who is dedicated to her home and family as far as she is able, and on the other, the perforation of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, desertification, soil erosion, and the capitalist aggression against the earth's lung in the Amazon?

The relationship is that environmental pollution has direct repercussions on food supplies, children's health, and family housing. The economy is a global affair. The manifold disasters that take place in the globe's most remote regions find an instant echo in other parts of the world. The woman of faith – being a believer, and not only a housewife who cares for her own family – is aware that her family's prosperity is contingent upon mankind's prosperity on earth, and that mankind's well-being creates an environment

which is the most propitious for the spread of the Islamic Message. As Imam ‘Alī (God honor him) once said, “Poverty is almost synonymous with unbelief.” [Reported by al-Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar in his *The Sublime Aspirations (al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyya)*]

The woman of faith, as a believer, should know that her concern for the political and industrial environment springs from a concern for the affairs of the *umma* and for her ability to carry on the Message of Islam. This will bring her closer to God in comparison to those women who are content to focus on their own personal concerns or others who are simply unable to carry the Message owing to their illiteracy and indigence.

The pollution of the industrial environment – and indeed, the whole earth has more or less been invaded by industry – is not confined to the dense smoke emanating from the factories or the chemical poisons and insecticides which penetrate into the earth’s inner strata, spreading into the atmosphere and choking marine life.

The rich West lives in a post-industrial world. Armed with sophisticated electronic and information technology, it tries to build a clean industry on its own lands while transferring to the oppressed countries their noxious factories at extravagant prices and with restrictive quotas – i.e., according to the market law where the stronger prevail.

At the same time, we cannot escape the necessity of establishing these industries at home (even if they are inferior) and accepting this labor distribution whereby the strong of the world employ the weaker to perform their dirty tasks.

To gather up strength, as we are instructed to do, requires that we establish a long-term perspective and that we discuss with the rest of mankind how to create an alternative civilization to the civilization of *jāhiliyya*. We need to bear in mind that this path will be strewn with obstacles that will require our time, patience, and diligence.

Our perspective comes from the Qur'ān which has opened to us a way to cope with the political environment: "As for those who do not fight against you on account of (your) *dīn*, nor drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to deal with them kindly and justly. For God loves those who act justly." (60:8) So the question is: Is the ongoing crusade against us a fight inside or outside the *dīn*? What is the ruling with regard to one who utters words of unbelief under duress while their heart remains firm in *īmān*?

With regard to the industrialized environment, our perspective comes from the Qur'ān which has censured extravagance, boastful pomp, the amassing of wealth in rivalry, and self-centeredness, and has cursed the prodigal as brothers of the devil.¹

The Qur'ān has strongly criticized those aspects of the market economy which foster reprehensible attitudes which have in turn divided the world into two uneven parts whereby 20% of the world's people enjoy 80% of its wealth. For the earth's wretched, they leave only scraps, giving them a handful of dollars for the right to export toxic waste to their countries.

These base morals of *jāhiliyya* materialize in different forms: congestion in the industrial suburbs, noise pollution, a hyper-pace of life, incessant activity that distracts man and leaves him no time to think about his post-mortem future, a single-crop agriculture that impoverishes the soil, an abject poverty that forces the poor to uproot trees and cause soil erosion, a deforestation that poses a serious threat to the world's future, and a spread of concrete and asphalt that diminishes fertile lands.

These polluted morals also take shape in a provocative advertising that recruits women as fetishized dolls to sell worthless, disposable

¹ [Translator's note:] God (Exalted is He) says: "But do not squander (your wealth) senselessly. Verily, squanderers are brothers of devils, and the Devil is to his Lord most ungrateful." (17:26-27)

goods whose processing only serves to use up precious minerals, the efforts of the designers and manufacturers, and the already limited purchasing power of the poor. These ads are then rolled out in an informational flood in newspapers weighing several kilograms. Hence, those living in *jāhiliyya* are the environment's most serious polluters. For sure, the prodigal are the brothers of the devil.

8. *The Age of the Satellite Dish*

The smoke and poison which emanate from heavy industry attack man's body and his natural environment. The lungs become polluted, the limbs affected, and the fauna and flora of the land and sea poisoned. The temperature of the planet rises with the greenhouse effect and the perforation of the ozone layer menaces the material well-being of the earth's living organisms. This corruption of the earth leads to poverty which in turn leads to unbelief for, as Imam 'Alī (God honor him) once noted, "Poverty is almost synonymous with unbelief." [Reported by al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar in his *The Sublime Aspirations (al-Maṭālib al-'Āliyya)*].

But there is yet another form of corruption that is far more violent and atrocious and that is even more conducive to unbelief: the bestial, dissolute mass media that snoops on us from the rooftops and breaks into our houses through our satellite dishes and digital receivers.

The Age of the Satellite Dish represents the reign of the highly-influential culture of the mighty. The satellite dish and digital receiver are exported to us by the world's oppressors, who are the masters of this technology and all the science and genius behind it. They exhaust our public finances and our family budgets and dash our hopes of building our own domestic IT industry by fostering a black market and by cutting their prices time and again thanks to the high productivity of their automated factories.

In his sermons, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (God have mercy upon him) used to surprise his audience by challenging them with a spiritually-motivating question meant to hone their blunted wills: "What's your name in the Kingdom of Heaven?" For us, the

question is: What is our name in the world of industry and science? The answer is, no doubt: Mr. Nobody! Mr. Unknown!

The age of Islamic apologetics so fond of giving excuses and justifications is gone. No mindset so severely thwarts our high ambitions as the mindset of rejectionism and puritanism. Self-criticism alone is tantamount to trying to shape a rod of cold iron: what it needs is a practical project and a dauntless vigor to transform it into the inevitable reality of the *umma*'s future. Knowing our real weight in the modern balance of power – measured by our development and our possession of the sciences, industries, and technology – is necessary in order to wage the *jihād* of reconstruction and of demolishing the foundations of falsehood.

The products of the media (movies, TV shows, magazines) and their cultural content and artistic medium (scripting and directing) are under the total control of the United States. Even the Japanese and European products in this field have been Americanized, so that most of their themes are now based on sex and violence.

The free TV shows, advertising, and propaganda pour down on us from the gutters. This audio-visual culture – a voyeuristic, clownish, and dissolute culture – has abducted sons and daughters from their mothers. Even worse, it has abducted these mothers as well and taken the whole family hostage of the next episode they await so passionately. The family awaits the destiny of the hero and heroine, which is postponed with some dramatic plot until the next episode through incidents of some wanton, ridiculous fiction. The family has become desensitized to scenes that used to offend one's modesty and affront one's sense of honor.

Debauchery and adultery are a European art that has flourished in their literature for many centuries. Granted, in our own periods of decadence, we have had debauched poetry, with works such as *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (The Book of Songs) which relates the adventures of princes with slave girls in parties where wine is served. However, European debauchery is quite different. In addition to the original

European tradition, there is the American-style directness and a very realistic technique of presentation which has made these audio-visual scenes so popular in our current times. The French *Encyclopedia Universalis* states the following:

Wantonness is one of the firmly-established traditions and constant features of literature... The spirit of wantonness is a system based on slander, suspicion, vulgarity, and contempt for everything related to the aesthetic: adultery, sex, and love. It should be noted that this contempt is always directed toward the weaker sex, that is, the woman. The spirit of wantonness debases the woman to an extreme degree in order to seize her, purchase her, or take her for nothing. It is the spirit of wantonness which calls the woman "mistress," "white goose," or "merry widow"... In this light, the woman becomes an animal, half-domesticated and half-wild, with devilish powers.

Let us ponder ourselves and our ethos so as to take note of the serious impact of this libertine advertising on the miserable doll woman. These lies pollute man's mind with vulgar falsehoods and pollute his heart with bestial debauchery, fashioning his desires to defraud him of his money, time, and children. People! What have you done with your lifetime? For long years you have been staring open-mouthed at that window of the devil that kept you benumbed night and day with his fictional showpieces.

It assaults man's soul with an explosive power, fragmenting the family. The mother, who is supposed to be the educator of generations and the maker of the future, no longer sits with her children. The father is too busy following-up on the flood of news, as if modern man must keep abreast of every airplane that crashes, every sound that is heard, every trivial event inflated by the media into a hot issue.

Even the grandmother has adapted herself to the media's polluted environment, keeping abreast with the world of communication,

the world of excitement and stimulation, even though she is on the verge of her grave.

This current of *jāhiliyya* amounts to squandering precious time and resources in amusement, pomp, and dancing to the rhythm of a consumerist hunger that only spurs your instincts to purchase more and more, and holds you in the arms of debauchery and exhibitionism so that you may sink deeper into the vanities of this world.

Muslims cannot compete in the digital industry so long as the sciences evade them, modern industry is absent amongst them, and technology is imported in dribs and drabs alongside boxes of imported wheat. This failure in turn is due to the dispersal of indigenous talent through the brain drain and to people not using their brains in the first place.

How can we foster media, literature, and art conducive to pious deeds? How can Muslims devise a model of civilization that is influential and attractive, one in which theater and music – cleaned from their devilish squalor – become a divine call for humans to worship God alone, to honor others, and to enjoy His beautiful gifts while avoiding being beguiled by this deceptive world?

Islamic literature can be invigorated and can overcome the tears of mourning over our harsh reality by looking to the talents of the Muslim youth, the Islamic aesthetic potential, the aspiration to everlasting delight in Paradise, the gifts and favors that God has bestowed upon people in this world, and in the propitious signs that the *umma*'s ambitions will in fact be achieved.

In the noble Qur'ān, in the Prophet's *Sunna*, and in the life stories of our pious ancestors, there are abundant treasures from which we may derive models to follow, from which we may draw inspiration to renew our trust in the Lord, our heroism, and our *jihād*.

In our Qur'ān, *sīra*, and Islamic history; in the renewed ambitions of the Islamists; and in the hearts and souls of God's servants,

men and women, permeated by the love of His *dīn*, there resides what may infuse life into dying wills, what may moisten our parched souls, what may light up the dark mazes lying before our bewildered minds. But this can only take place provided that the streams of Islamic literature are explored and brought together to form a current of light that pervades our environment, shines in our hearts, and stands up to the dark current of *jāhiliyya* – a current which is violent toward mankind, cynical toward mankind, turning the woman and man into objects by trafficking the former’s body and the latter’s manhood.

Preaching is a most serious mission, and must be at the heart of our public discourse. But if preaching is dull and repetitive, it will drive souls to weariness. By adopting the various forms of literature (poetry, parables, decent advertising, intelligent plays), gentle preaching will be able to inform people of the issues afflicting the oppressed of the world, to endear the Islamic lifestyle to people, to criticize *jāhiliyya* and its shameful deeds, to awaken in the Muslims the spirit of *jihād* and power, and to revive in them the will to carry the Message and build an exemplary society – one that espouses kindness to mankind, mercy to all creation, and solicitousness for justice and truth. It should be literature suitable for the man, the woman, the teenager, and the child.

Exalted be the Word of God, for He is Almighty, All-Wise.

9. When the Muslim Woman Deserts Her Strategic Tower

With regards to the Religion of Imitating the Victor, emulating the victor becomes even more pronounced when his supremacy is total in the political, economic, and artistic fields while in those same fields, the vanquished have nothing to show.

This in turn may prompt the vanquished to conceal their weakness and servile imitation beneath a fake authenticity; alternatively, it may inflame their spirit and incite them to refute all that reminds them of their material underdevelopment, thereby shunning reality and fleeing to the caves of seclusion or to violent extremism.

The world is bursting with the military, scientific, industrial, and financial achievements of the people of *jāhiliyya*. But *jāhiliyya* is the opposite of Islam, and the people of *jāhiliyya* are the enemies of the Muslims. Let us examine the essential features of *jāhiliyya* and the battlegrounds on which it wages war against us. In the following section, we will see how Truth may mix with Falsehood and how *jāhiliyya* may mix with Islam, so as to overcome the simplistic, violent view that accuses Muslims of unbelief and dreams of an ideal unsullied by reality, of an Islamic life free from shortcomings – in short, of a soul without a body.

In this section we will examine the points of conflict between Islam and *jāhiliyya*, among the most important of which is the position of woman in society. The battle is fierce: they want to alienate her while we want to protect her with *īmān*.

The difference between these two perspectives is that one seeks to obey the Lord's commandments while the second is arrogantly

rebellious; between these two standpoints are only the opinions of hypocrites, of men and women who feign to be Muslims but in reality are not.

Jāhiliyya is united as one monolithic bloc in its tools, principles, and laws. So too is Islam one indivisible entity. The issue of the woman is but one of many the battlefields reflecting total discord between the two blocs. For either party to try to compare itself to a program that lies so utterly outside its framework of commitments is like trying to lance an abscess with an infected scalpel.

The Noble Qurʾān categorizes *jāhiliyya* with four fundamental features: misbelief (*ẓann al-jāhiliyya*), malgovernance (*ḥukm al-jāhiliyya*), wantonness (*tabarruj al-jāhiliyya*), and tribalism (*ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya*); all other aspects of *jāhiliyya* are only branches of these four fundamentals.

Ẓann al-jāhiliyya means to embrace a corrupted faith. *Ḥukm al-jāhiliyya* means to legitimize despotism or those man-made laws which are divorced from the divine universals. *Ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya* means virulent, furious nationalism. With regards to *tabarruj al-jāhiliyya*, the Lord (Exalted is He) commanded the wives of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) thusly: “and do not flaunt your charms (*wa-lā tabarrajna*) as they used to flaunt them in the former times of *jāhiliyya*.” (33:33)

Literally, the verb *tabarraja* and the verbal noun *tabarruj* refer to a woman coming out of her *burj* (tower). In the context of this specific verse, the commentators of the Qurʾān have explained this word as meaning the condition wherein a woman inappropriately displays her body and her charms.

Since God (Glorified is He) revealed the Qurʾān in clear Arabic, there is no problem for us to go back to the root of this word in order to deepen our understanding of *tabarruj*. It is the tower which, if the Muslim woman leaves it, she enters into the world of *jāhiliyya*.

Complete *tabarruj* is when she deserts not only a decent outward appearance, but also her morals and *dīn*. *Tabarruj* means when the woman betrays her mission as a *mujāhida* who fights *jāhiliyya*, defends Islam, and takes part in establishing its foundations and building its edifice. For the tower that the Qurān and the *Sunna* specified as a model for the Muslim woman is not a prison with walls of repression; the tower is a position to defend the faith so that malgovernance may not rule supreme and to provide mutual support among the believers so that the tribal fury of *jāhiliyya* may not rend them apart.

The word *burj* is a word connoting *jihād* so that to commit *tabarruj* is to abandon your part in the *jihād*. Those who are commanded to station themselves in the towers are those in charge of the protection and security of the garrison. If Muslim men must remain stationed in towers involving the physical and military *jihād*, then Muslim women must remain stationed primarily in the towers of education, after which they may help their fellow men in other affairs of the *jihād*.

The women's tower is a *ḥāfiẓiyya*.¹ Describing the righteous women, the Lord (Exalted is He) says: "Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to God and to their husbands) and guard in (their husbands') absence what God orders them to guard." (4:34) We will come back later to discuss this subject at length (God-willing), for it is the core subject of this book.

We should mark a pause here to muse over the comprehensive therapy, education, and training that may take the woman from *jāhiliyya* to Islam and that may qualify her, in her tower, among the ranks of the brave champions.

¹ [Translator's note:] *Hāfiẓiyya* is the woman's participation in the management of marital affairs and the marital household with a female perception and in a spirit of complementarity with the husband's *qiwāma*, that is, his moral and financial responsibility. Both concepts are explored at length in subsequent sections.

Outside the tower there is a man and inside of it there is a woman. They cannot expect to be brave champions or to be able to protect their positions if the two of them do not free themselves from the traditional view that sees the woman as an inferior, marginalized individual to be held in custody who must, in order to defend herself, resort to the ruses of the weak and the intrigues of the oppressed.

For the believing woman to be able to repel the invasion of *jāhiliyya*, she must know what *jāhiliyya* is. Yet theoretical knowledge will only remain an abstraction if the Muslim woman does not know who she is or the obligations which the Lord has prescribed for her. That knowledge will be in vain if she does not remember the purpose she was created for, what awaits her after death, the mission assigned to her, and the reward reserved for her in the Hereafter if she carries it out successfully.

Hence this book endeavors to explain what makes a woman a believer and what guarantees that her actions will not amount to mere agitation, but rather a true *jihād* by which she can come closer to her Maker.

In *jāhiliyya* lie psychological handicaps, epitomized in unbelief, whose opposite is *īmān*. If a woman tries to ward off *jāhiliyya* with a kind of superficial *islām* or activism wearing a fake Islamic guise, her action will be futile and fruitless. Among the fundamentals of *jāhiliyya* is *ẓann al-jāhiliyya* (misbelief), a handicap of the psyche that disqualifies the man and the woman affected by it from the ranks of the brave believers. In its absolute form, *ẓann al-jāhiliyya* refers to the unbelieving man and woman who are skeptical of God and the Day of Judgment. A lower level of *ẓann al-jāhiliyya* describes a nonchalant Muslim who is not confident in God, forgets His remembrance, and does not pay heed to that most inevitable fact – that of one day standing before Him.

The question is: how to cure *ẓann al-jāhiliyya*? To cure a woman of *tabarruj* only with respect to her shameful display of her charms without providing a comprehensive therapy for the underlying

disease – a corrupted faith – amounts to hiding an abscess that will only get worse.

Another fundamental of *jāhiliyya* is *ḥukm al-jāhiliyya* (malgovernance), the political handicap leading to unbelief. The believing women must take part with the believing men in the *jihād* to establish an Islamic state and achieve the unity of the Muslims.¹ Their tower of defense is not a harem of seclusion, but rather a defensive position where they are the reinforcements to the men's vanguard. They are the reservists, the rearguard, while the men fight in the forefronts. And yet, in other fields, the believing women are the vanguard that occupies the foremost ranks while the men are the reinforcements and reservists.

Ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya is the fourth basic feature of *jāhiliyya*; it is the blind fury of tribalism. Based on the expansive eloquence of the Qur'ānic language, we should comprehend it in its wider meaning and extend it to all forms of partisan, nationalistic, and ethnic fanaticism that drive the politically-active Muslim, man or woman, to militate against the very *dīn* they claim to be part of. In other words, we ought to conceive it as a general fanaticism that functions in the place of the old tribal fury: whereas in the former times of *jāhiliyya* there were tribes defined by race, in our age we have other forms of partisanship.

Another question regarding the education and training needed to achieve change is: How can the man and the woman be cured of the symptoms of *ḥukm al-jāhiliyya*? How can we protect them from either taking part in the assault of *al-jāhiliyya* against Islam or becoming victims of this assault? How can we mitigate the fever of

¹ [Translator's note:] According to Imam Yassine's revivalist project of reuniting the Islamic *umma* in preparation for the advent of the second *khilāfa* according to the Prophetic Method, the Islamic movements should first work in unison to establish an Islamic State in each of their nation-states – prisons in which the foreign colonizers confined Muslims. Once Islamic States have been established throughout the Islamic world, the second mission lies in joining them in one union like, for instance, the European Union or the United States.

ḥamiyyat al-jāhiliyya and the outburst of rebellion against Islam? How can we spiritually educate the woman and the man so that they acquire the virtues of *īmān* and so that their heart will respond to the call for a defensive *jihād*?

In the next section, God-willing, we will speak of how certain aspects of *jāhiliyya* can mix in the inner selves of Muslim men and women, with reference both to our history and to our present socio-economic situation. Purity exists only in the world of the spirits.

Before broaching the subject of *fitna* in the following section, let me here mention an incident of *jāhiliyya* infiltrating the ranks of the Muslims. According to what I have been told, the majority of students at a certain Moroccan college for the Islamic sciences are Leftist atheists who, armed with daggers and spears, conduct regular attacks on the young Islamist students. But beyond these physical attacks, they have further armed themselves with Islamic knowledge so that they may try to demolish the fortress of Islam from within. Hence, the need for defenses, towers, *al-ḥāfiẓiyya*, and the mission of the believing woman, for there are dangerous invaders who must be resisted.

God has full power and control over His affairs.

10. *Fitna*

Since the word *fitna* occurs frequently in the writings of the Islamists, we ought to look at the origin of this concept and further explain its meaning.

The eminent linguist and philologist, ar-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī (God have mercy upon him), defines the word as follows: “The origin of *fatn* [the verbal noun of *fatana*] is to put gold in fire to test whether it is of good or bad quality. It is also used to express the condition of man when he is made to enter a [figurative] fire... *Fitna* is similar in meaning to the word ‘trial’ in the sense that both express the reaction of man when exposed to either adversity or prosperity, although their use in the sense of the former is more frequent.”

Hence, the idiomatic meaning of this word in the Qurʾān is: ordeal, trial, the testing of man in this world, as well as the exposure of the unbelievers to the Fire in the Hereafter – God save us from that!

The root *f-t-n* occurs sixty times in the scripture, demonstrating how it is as basic a concept in Islam as faith, piety, and the afterlife. The Lord (Exalted is He) has created life and death and the prosperity and adversity of this world to test whether men and women will believe or disbelieve, do right or do wrong.

Conversely, if the Muslim man and woman fail to take heed of the purpose of this divine trial, they will not be able to comprehend the disparities between various peoples and nations, the challenges they present to one another, the differences in their goals, and how their interests overlap. If God (Glorified is He) had so willed, He could have created this world as a place of serenity and harmony, yet His wisdom willed to provide trials so that what is latent in man’s predisposition can become apparent.

The divine trial uses some people to test others by making some enjoy the pleasures of this world while exposing others to adversities and misfortunes, by the unbelievers' assault on the believers, by the evil insinuations of the devils, and by the despotic rulers' torture of their people.

The divine trial is only one shade of the meaning of *fitna*. In the compilations of *ḥadīth*, we find sections titled "Chapter on *Fitan* [pl. of *fitna*]" which contain prophecies of tragic historical events that are supposed to befall the *umma*, such as rebellion, civil war, the corruption of power, and the advent of false prophets until the descent of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) right before Judgment Day.

The *fitan*, or upheavals, that God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) forewarned against are concrete events, some of which he mentioned with specific timeframes and actors, while others he left ambiguous and general.

For most of these, the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) ordered his followers to break their bows and arrows and sheathe their swords so as to abstain from taking part, since he adamantly prohibited bloodshed.

As a consequence, the silence of the Companions (God be pleased with them) in the face of the Greatest Ordeal – the assassination of the Commander of the Believers 'Uthmān (God be pleased with him), the usurpation of power by the Umayyads, and the subsequent battles – has been understood as them complying with the counsel of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace): "There will be upheavals (*fitan*) during which those who sit down will be better than those who stand up, those who stand up will be better than those who walk, and those who walk will be better than those who hasten. These upheavals will befall whomever witnesses them. So whoever can find a haven or refuge, let them resort to it." [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurayra (God be pleased with them all)]

The Companions (God be pleased with them) construed such warnings as an order to abstain from taking sides. After the Companions, there came the generation of the *Tābī'ūn*¹ (God be pleased with them) and then the third generation of Muslims, who found the sword of usurped power unsheathed over their heads; they too relied on these *ḥadīths* and on the *ijtihād* of safeguarding the public interest to justify their silence in the face of illegitimate rulers.

With the passing of time, the scholars and the majority of their followers yielded to this *fait accompli*. In the early period, there was the *qawma* and the assassination of Imam al-Ḥusayn (God be pleased with him); the leaders of the Prophet's family (Āl al-Bayt) – Zayd Ibn 'Alī, muḥammad an-Nafs az-Zakiyya, Ibrāhīm, and Yaḥyā – staged uprisings; and among the four imams, Imam Mālik engaged in protest, Abū Ḥanīfa supported the resistance of Āl al-Bayt, and Imam ash-Shāfi'ī and Imam Aḥmad suffered persecution for their political stances. But after this generation, you hardly find any scholars who understood these *ḥadīths* from any perspective other than quietism.

When God's Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) forewarned his audience of these upheavals, was he speaking out of some ambiguous intuition? Not at all! It was God (Exalted is He) who informed him about this hidden fate, prompting the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) to feel sympathy for his *umma* and try to counsel them.

Reading the verse “He (alone) knows the Unseen, and He reveals His secrets to none except a Messenger He has been pleased to elect” (72:26-27) makes it clear that the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) was informed by God about future events. There are *ḥadīths* compiled in al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's books

¹ [Translator's note:] The second generation of Islam, or the students of the Companions.

reported by Hudhayfa¹ (God be pleased with him) of a sermon where the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) stood on his pulpit and informed his Companions about what would happen from that time up until the Day of Resurrection; the narrator added that “Some of us remembered those events and some forgot them.”

The Veracious One who never spoke from caprice informed us that after him would come a *khilāfa* that would rule according to the Prophetic method, then a series of rapacious monarchies, then a series of dictatorial regimes, and then a second *khilāfa* that would once again rule according to the Prophetic method. So even if the *ḥadīths* on the great upheavals and the counsel to avoid bloodshed and disengage have been emphasized again and again until our minds have been overcome by the Religion of Yielding and our efforts have been crippled, nevertheless, the glad tidings about the advent of a second *khilāfa* should direct our attention to the future.

Between us and the future stands the present. Are we going to separate ourselves from our *umma*’s present and flee society? Are we going to call ourselves the only true Muslims and regard our societies as ones of disbelief and *jāhiliyya*, as if our hearts were filled with the light of piety while others were immersed in the darkness of heresy and unbelief?

This confrontation within Muslims societies, which despite representing one billion people are insignificant in the balance of power, is both a divine and a historical trial. The Islamists need to use this as an opportunity to carry out their mission which the Lord has sent them on by awakening their resolve and sending them pioneering guides such as Imam Hasan al-Banna, Imam al-Mawdūdī, and Imam Sayyid Qutb (God have mercy upon them).

¹ [Translator’s note:] Known as *Kātim Sirr Rasūlillāh*, that is, the Prophet’s private secretary. To him the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) entrusted all secrets, including the names of the hypocrites.

The challenge of external *jāhiliyya*, which assaults us and wreaks havoc among us, is not as serious as the internal *jāhiliyya* which inhabits our lands, as represented by our despotic men and our devilish women who are agents of the West. *Jāhiliyya* has penetrated our society deeply and occupied both the high echelons of power and the ordinary streets through tyranny, a philosophy of skepticism, spreading wantonness among women, and fanning the embers of tribal/nationalistic fanaticism.

So have Muslim societies become ones of unbelief and *jāhiliyya*, filled with apostates, hypocrites, and sinners? Or should they still be considered members of the *umma* of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace)? The question itself is a trial.

Imam Aḥmad and Imam Muslim have reported a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) from Abū Hurayra: “There are two types from the people of Hell whom I have never come across: men who beat people with whips like the tails of cows and women who arrange their hair like the tilted humps of camels and who wear transparent clothes to seduce men and lead them astray. They will never enter Paradise nor smell its fragrance, even though its fragrance can be smelt from such-and-such a distance.”

Two groups of people destined for Hell: those who beat people with whips and those who display their charms to seduce men.

But are we going to condemn the *umma* as being a nation of *jāhiliyya* just because there are among us despotic rulers, dissolute women, and hypocrites?

By no means! Rather, we should describe our situation as one of disorder (*fitna*) and our societies as societies of *fitna*. That is more proper and more likely to save us – and others as well – from a useless remonstrative extremism, and indeed save us from our ignorance of Islam, which is the greatest disaster to have befallen us.

The history of how Arabian society shifted from *jāhiliyya* to Islam informs us that Islam was never an isolated plot of land inhabited by pure angels opposite to which there was an isolated plot of land populated by unrepentant devils. It is true that by bearing witness to God's uniqueness and to the prophecy of Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) we discard unbelief, but does that mean that we are, at one stroke, freed from the remnants of our *jāhiliyya*? Was the first Islamic society itself ever so purified from its inward aspects of *jāhiliyya* that we may expect our contemporary society to attain angelic purity?

The Companion al-Barā' Ibn Ma'rūr once saw Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and noticed that the latter was wearing the same sort of clothing as his servant. When he asked why this was, Abū Dharr explained: "I once had an argument with my servant, and I insulted his mother. The Prophet (God bless him and grant him peace) said to me, 'Abū Dharr! How could you insult his mother like that? You are a man who still bears certain traits of *jāhiliyya*. Your servants are your brothers whom God has put under your charge. So if anyone has his brother under his charge, let him feed him from what he himself eats and dress him from what he himself wears. If you assign him a task, never assign him something he cannot bear; if it is too much for him, then lend him a hand.'" [Reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, among others. Al-Bukhārī lists it in his "Chapter on Sins that are Traits of *Jāhiliyya*."]

Let us abstain from inquiring about the traits of *jāhiliyya* that remained in Abū Dharr (God be pleased with him) and rather look at how he took heed of the Prophet's (God bless him and grant him peace) admonishment.

Let us look at the *umma* at large for the residues of *jāhiliyya* that it still carries. As Muslim has reported on the authority of Abū Mālik al-Ash'arī: "In my *umma*, there are four characteristics belonging to *jāhiliyya* which they will never completely abandon: boasting of

high rank, questioning the nobility of other peoples' genealogies, seeking rain through astrology, and wailing.”

Whoever has true belief in the Messenger (God bless him and grant him peace) and duly reflects on this *ḥadīth* will not be overcome with paralyzing horror at all these sinners, despots, wanton women, and heretics, but will on the contrary become inspired to endeavor to change these conditions through progressive action.

Verily, never will God change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their own souls.

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By the Same Author

Imam Abdessalam Yassine wrote more than forty books, which have been translated into various languages:

In English:

- The Last Testament of Imam Abdessalam Yassine, 2013 (*bilingual in the original Arabic and the English translation*)
- Day and Night Schedule of the Believer, 2007 (*bilingual in the original Arabic and the English translation*)
- The Muslim Mind on Trial: Divine Revelation versus Secular Rationalism, 2003 (*translation from the Arabic*)
- Winning the Modern World for Islam, 2000 (*translation from the French*)
- Memorandum To Him Who Is Concerned, 1999 (*translation from the French*)

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