

Islam and Christianity

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THE CONSTITUENTS OF ISLAM

Islam appeared in the free desert which was like the ocean, where winds and storms burst, and among peoples who had not strived with their hands in the land and had not lifted stones on their backs like people used to do in these ancient times, and their necks had not been humiliated by a king or an emperor, neither had they been subdued by the regime of any system with its controls. They were free and lived the nomad life ruled by intuition and custom, dwelling in tents or in simple houses, bearing the burning sun during the days and the stingy cold of the nights, giving cult to fabricated gods and having neither impediments nor allowance rules of any type, and imposing sacredness or taboo on nothing; not even did they have a mythology as the Greek's or the Hebrew's (which is the Torah with all the legends and the stories added to it) that would be a burden for them or would complicate their understanding.

In spite of that hardness of life, the Arabs were qualified to promote a new civilization that would provide the most important element, i.e. courage and dignity. They were like the *Vikings* and lacked only a doctrine that would unite them and the leadership able to secure their victory. That is what Islam has offered to them, by offering the universal doctrine and also the inspiring leadership.

Islam has inherited from the desert its freedom, which is suggested by the immense uniform and yellow carpet, and by the winds that blow openly and freely encountering no mountains to limit them, and the sky that no fog hides thus appearing from one horizon to another; this corresponded well to the principle of freedom and equality, as to the simple life - with no reasons for discrimination – which is the nomad bedouin life; besides the absence of kings or gods or ruling systems or central government, which meant no laws to impose castes of people over one another. Thus Islam was addressed to everybody, i.e. to all humanity under the name of “ sons of Adam “, and also considered that importance and priority are to be given to piety, not to denominations or to pomp, opulence or strength. That is why the Islamic

society has neither had a caste system (social classes) nor hereditary titles, nor barriers between upper and lower classes which were renowned in the Roman and Persian empires and persisted until the French revolution leaving reminiscence even up till our modern time in some societies. The Arabs have not known the legalized aristocracy even when they had reached the stage of the empire, because the old civilizations have not been able to penetrate the basis of equality that was rooted in them by the desert and strengthened by Islam. This similarly involves the absence of a Church or a religious institution which would have orders for its men and levels and dresses and a priestly organization having the right to allow or to excommunicate. Islam may be seen – from these aspects – as “secular” or civil. In fact, the mosque is an open area, and everybody practices prayer at home and in the fields, and anyone who has memorized parts of the Coran can become an Imam – a prayer leader -; moreover, the relation between the believer and God is direct and accepts no interference from anyone. The Islamic society remains open, and the specific capabilities and merits of any individual would raise him up; knowledge and religious expertise were at hand reach of everybody, so that through it the least in line was capable of acquiring the highest positions, which is what the “Mawaly” did (they were initially servants). Commerce and craftsmanship were also free.

The Arabs, in the midst of whom Islam appeared, had not practiced arts such as building, drawing and design, or music, as it was for the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Persians and others; their only pride was poetry with its eloquence, its abundance and its truthfulness in depicting; their boasting of poetry was such as to hook their best poems on the Kaaba – which gave them the name “ hooked poems”.

This reality has required from the miracle of Islam to become a literary and technical “matter” overcoming the hooked poems with its rhetoric formulation; this has been put forward in the “Coran”, which is the mostly marvelous piece of literature or technical composition in the Arabic language, so that when the Arabs have been confronted with it, they welcomed it, as it was neither a poetry of poets nor a rhyme of priests nor a rhetoric of speakers : the Coran has been the miracle leading them to faith.

This leads us to find out that all the preludes gather up from the various directions into a unique current in Islam, according to the will of God, the last prelude being that which has required that the miracle of Islam be based on a book in the Arabic language which in turn is convenient for a more important truth : that the era of miracles was over and that the time had come for the era of reason, because when the miracle is represented by a book, one must read

that book and assimilate it by using much of reflection and aptitude – that is the work of reason.

Moreover, when Islam has decided that it is the last in line of all religions, by that it ended the epoch of the prophets and started the epoch of man.

These original factors are those which have formulated Islam and constituted it according to the will of God, and also to the will of the prophet.

There is also another series of factors which were built up along with the development of the Islamic society, and have imposed their requirements on Islam and have produced judgments that are different and – sometimes – opposed to those of the Coran, practically because they were born not of Islam but of the circumstances.

Among these factors is the fact that the tribe of “Quraish“ (of Mecca) declared war on Islam. That tribe represented the Arab paganism; and Islam found itself obliged to defend itself and its freedom of creed. Some enemies of Islam—among the hypocrites and the Jews—have succeeded to invent numerous “hadith” (sayings of the Prophet) and to introduce them among the Moslems, so that these sayings were adopted later on. Even more important was the fact that when the “Imams” (leaders of prayer) have established the fundamentals for the Islamic knowledge system—made of “tafseer” (interpretation) and “hadith” and “fiqh” (science of the religion, or jurisprudence)—in the 3rd century after the “Higra” (the emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, marking the start of the Islamic calendar), when the Islamic State had reached its climax in the Imperial stage (notice that the Imam Ibn Hambal was contemporary to the Caliphs al-Maamoon and al-Mu’tasem); at that time, it was inevitable that those Imams (or doctors) be influenced by the reality of things, and they actually couldn’t be free from their impact; indeed, one cannot easily be unaffected by his epoch, and those “Olamaa” (religious experts) found themselves in the middle of two sets of effects. The first was to exalt the clemency of Islam which gave way to the infiltration of sectal doctrines and beliefs into Islamic thinking; so that the reader of Shahrestani’s book “Sects and Doctrines” can get a view of the depth of their intrusion and of how widespread they came to be. On the other hand, there was the oppressive ruling, closed and keen on monopolizing power, that resisted to all opposition trends; thus the requirements of this situation imposed themselves on the Islamic knowledge system, so that it did not express God or the Prophet but the authorities and the circumstantial necessities instead.

The centuries passed on, with each century adding an explanation or a marginal “comment” over what the founding ancestors had established, leading to the over-amplification of the jurisprudential patrimony and to the increase in it of the reflected impact of the eras of disintegration and decline that the Islamic society has endured.

These “supplementary” factors have produced the Islam which the contemporary religious institution believes in today, which it supports and defends, although it really is the outcome of the social developments on Islam. But if that seems normal in a certain period of time, it is nevertheless not normal for that epoch of Islam that we call the Islam of the jurists (the “fuqahaa”) or the Islam of the patrimony.

It is disappointing that when some orientalist started to study Islam, they looked back at the references established by the ancestors; and that was normal due to the fact that the authors of these references were no other than the great doctors (“imams”), each in his field, such as al-Tabary, al-Qortoby, Ibn-Katheer, al-Zamakhshary... etc for the “tafseer” (interpretation), or the “4 imams” together with the following experts in “fiqh”, or like Ahmed Bin-Hambal, Yehya Bin-Moeen, then al-Bokhary and Moslem...etc for the “hadith”; all these are guiltless, but the orientalist have not taken into consideration that their heritage does not represent the Islam of the true genuine century, i.e. of the 1st century when the Coran descended and the Prophet lived, but that it does represent the Islam of the 3rd century which expressed the requirements of the Imperial nature of the Islamic State.

THE CORAN:

All Moslems believe that the Coran is the book of God who inspired it to the Prophet Mohammed by the means of an revelation brought to him by the angel Gobraeel. The first verse (“Aaya”) in it is “Iqraa” – which means: read – thus indicating the prophecy of the “Rasool” – meaning : messenger – who is Mohammed. The Coran continued to descend on the Messenger for the 23 years of his mission, starting when he received the word “Iqraa” until the descent of the last verse of the Coran, a few months before his death.

The Coran is exposed in a unique orderly pattern that can be found in no other book : it is neither prose nor poetry – the 2 renown styles of writing -, but it gathers both in a remarkable texture that no one else has been able to imitate, thus it remained unique.

The Coran is subdivided into “Suraat”, each “sura” containing a number of verses. Some “suraa” are very long, such as the “sura” of the cow with 286 “aaya”(verses), and the “sura” of the Omran clan with its 200 “aaya”; whereas some very short “suraat” have only 3 or 4 “aya”. The total number of “suraat” is 113, with 6236 “aaya”, the whole being divided in 2 major parts : the “Meccan “ suraat which descended in the first 13 years of struggle of the Messenger in Mecca, and are characterized by a hearty and strong style and by the repeated mentioning of the previous prophets, and of the eternal dwelling place and the permanent rejoicing that the faithful expect, together with the painful suffering that expects the “mushrikeen” (the “associators”, the polytheists). The 2nd division are the suraat of Medina, the city where the Messenger fled to – or emigrated, i.e. the “Higra” – and where he founded the Islamic society; and it contains the rules, and have had a 10 years span until his death.

The titles of some “suraat” bear names of animals, or natural events or of specific news. We can find the cow (the longest sura), the bees, the ants, the spider, the ostriches...; also the suraat of Yussuf, of the clan of Omran, of Ibrahim, of Mariam, of Mohammed...; those of the light, the thunder, the star, the moon, the tours ... This strange collection is somewhat due to the fact that the Coran is the book which speaks the most of the natural realities among the “divine” books : the Earth with its animals and its heavenly surrounding including the sky and the planets, and the phenomenons taking place on top of it including rain, winds and storms...so that the Coran can be considered as a universally global book.

The Coran possesses a strong influence which carries away its reader and its listener; it has been the only means with which the Messenger would lead the Meccan people to faith. He would read the Coran, they were taken by it and most of them would turn to Islam, or at least leave “with a different state of mind”, as they used to say. That strength was due to the assembly of the musical and descriptive structure with a psychological treatment that touches the psychic chords of strength

and weakness, of richness and poorness,... etc; and also the introduction of noble values... All that made the Coran similar to a symphony like Beethoven's which produces its goal as soon as it is heard, needing no explanation. Thus, that marvelous advantage affected the listeners from the first impact, and became an essential part in the structure of Islam leading to the exclusion of clergy and of men consecrated religiously, because it confided in the individual.

The specific formulation of the aayaat is almost musical, and it established a special way of reading called "tagweed" (rendering better) which is closer to the composition of notes in music. The great musical composers have originally been coranic readers who relied on "tagweed" before going on to use the trends of modern music.

The Coran is not like the other books; it does not use the story telling style, and does not follow a chronological sequence; it is not subdivided into chapters each leading to the next, and each chapter does not tackle only one subject. The objective of the Coran being to lead people to the truth, it thus used a technical style and a musical system and instrumentalizes symbols and rhetoric; and as this only subject of guiding the people is the great goal of the Coran, every sura may contain some of the guiding power. Moreover, the Coran took into account that the common Moslem would not be able to memorize it all – or even read it all – so it made the guidance act in each sura in order to produce in its reader a certain amount of guidance even though he would read only 1 or 2 suraat.

In general, the fact that the Coran did neither use the common story telling nor the subjective order, not even the repetition of its meanings, but continuously moving from a topic to another ...all of this caused perplexity to the orientalisists and it even made the sympathizers of Islam not like that pattern, maybe because they overlooked the fact that this book is concerned only of guidance and thus it uses whatever would enhance it and disconsiders any other element.

What has also embarrassed the occidentals is that the Coran included diverging judgments, which may be conflicting in some cases. That was also the case for the Islamic interpreters themselves, which lead them to adopt the idea that the last verses have been a transcription of the first.

That is not so. The fact is that the Coran did not want to confine the people into only one and eternal plan, because it acknowledged that that would be contrary to the rules set by God for the development of the human societies; it also knows that it has descended for all the peoples in all times, and so it must be ample, flexible and offering alternatives. Nevertheless, whatever may be the variety of these alternatives, none of them would contradict the genuine Islamic morality. Indeed, that versatility is governed by flexible and lenient limitations, but it would never deviate from the essence, the spirit and the values of Islam as a religion meant to guide the people, which means – in the terms of the Coran itself – pulling them out from darkness to light. This is how the Coran is able to go together well with the evolution of the societies.

In the Coran, a few allusions to the rejoicing in heaven and the suffering in hell did not please some critics, thinking that these diminish the honorability of the Coran. The fact is that Islam is a practical religion which deals with the human nature as it is, as God made it, including debauch and piety; it knows that people are intuitively harsh and cruel and are moved only by the hardest threatening images. The Coran has not descended for any elite, but for everybody in all times so that, in principle, it had to use those expressions with also encouragement and threat; it is common indeed that the “ipso facto” method is applied in every institution and system, and without it any organization would fall down.

DOCTRINE AND THE “SHARI’A (THE LAW):

It would make it easy to understand Islam if one knows that it is based on doctrine and “Shari’a”. Doctrine is the essence of Islam because it concerns the belief in God the Highest, in his Messengers, his Books and the Last Day. These are the specifications of Islam which make of it a religion. The position of Islam in the various issues is inspired by this creed, and based on it.

Whereas for the Shari’a – the Law -, it concerns every aspect of the worldly matters, including the political, economic and social systems. One might find religions which would neglect that aspect of things or give it little importance, because it does not pertain to the core of the doctrine. Whereas for Islam, in spite of having not spoken of the details or of a specific system, it nevertheless exposes broad lines indicating

what the society should be like in its economic dealings, its social aspects and its ruling manners. These gross lines do not specially indicate any specific organizational system, but they include the values on which the social, economic and political relations and statuses should be established.

In the economic field, Islam forbids – by coranic text – amassing of money, and prohibits very strongly all kinds of economic abuse. In that same line, it prohibits usury which was the old way to enslave the poor. It also genuinely imposed the “Zakat” (alms-giving), and the Coran has – unusually - determined its receivers in details in the verse 60 of the sura of conversion, which briefly includes all the domains of what we call social care and economic solidarity either in case of poverty or unemployment or sickness ... etc, and the expression “for the sake of God” may include these cases and others.

The Coran also deploras luxury and sees it as an indication to corruption in the society that means its end. The verse says: “When we decide to exterminate a village, we give order to its opulent people to be depraved, so that the village would deserve the saying: and we have destructed it terribly” (16 of al-Israa).

The story of Qaroun whom God has opened the earth and made it swallow him, is a symbol for he who amasses and accumulates richness.

In the political domain, the Coran deploras very harshly the ruling of the Pharaohs and of the kings who bulge into a village and destroy it and to humiliate its dignitaries; it also laments the minister who adapts himself always to the rulers, and symbolizes him through “Haman”.

In the social field, Islam has shun aristocracy that is based on class levels and kinship, and deplored tribal fanaticism, and equalized between people as the “teeth of the comb”; it called piety a virtue, and equalized between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the subordinate and the governor.

The accurate ruling established over heritage is also part of the “shari’a”. In it, it takes into consideration the degree of kinship with the deceased. Women never inherited before, but were themselves a heritage! The Coran came to give them a part which may be more than the part of men in thirty cases, excepting the case of a brother and a sister where the former obtains double the part of the latter. These are the major ruling

lines which together form what is called the “Sharia “.It also includes some sanctions, such as death to anyone who intentionally kills another, and the whip for an adultery or a slanderer, and hand-cutting for the stealer.

A story has been told about the Messenger having stoned an adultery – although that has not been mentioned in the Coran.Nevertheless, most “fuqahaa” (religious experts) have accepted that story. We mention it here just to state that the Messenger may not be cruel, and may not more severely than what is in the Coran.We do accept the less cruel rulings of the “sunna” (rules of Islam) because the Messenger is “ mercy for the all the world “, “ he pities your hardship, cares for you with tenderness and clemency “, “ and if he would abide to you in various matters, you would suffer “. That is why we chose the less cruel sanction because it applies alleviation, ease and mercy. It is probable that the behavior told about the Messenger was before the descent of the sura of the light, so he decided by himself - with the absence of a text – to go by the sanction of the old testament on the adultery.

The “fuqahaa” (religious experts) have frequently studied these sanctions (“ hudood”) with great care, and some of them decided to avoid the hand-cutting for stealth, choosing to impose a fine on the stealer. The cutting is applied only for repeated stealth, and if the robbery is so big as to cause economic damage, like those who steal billions from banks using false letters of guarantee...and so on ...

With our efforts and “calling to revive Islam”, we identify two strictly different domains.

The first is that of the ideas, that of the beliefs, and is based on freedom; the second is that of the action (the shari’a) and is based on justice . We believe that all the laws of the shari’a have descended for just reasons which existed at the time of their descent. But it may happen that – due to the evolving life in the world – evolution includes changes that eliminate the reason why the specific judgment was given, and in that case the sanction is nullified. That is what happened when Omar Ibn-el-Khattab found that Islam did not need anymore the support of the “joined hearts “to whom the Messenger had been paying the “zakaat“ for them either in order to join their hearts and bring them to Islam or to avoid their opposition; and all these justifications had disappeared at the time of

Omar Ibn-el-Khattab, so he did not hesitate to abrogate that judgment, although it was textually mentioned in the Coran. He also abrogated the cutting of the hands for stealth when a famine occurred.

A BRIEFING ON THE HISTORY OF ISLA:

The Messenger of Islam Mohammed, son of Abdallah, was born in the year 570 AD in a noble family in Mecca. His grandfather Abdel-Motteleb was the chief of the strong tribe of Quraish which was ruling Mecca and was famous among the Arabs because of the geographical position of Mecca along the way of the caravans and because it was the city of the “Sacred House “which is the dwelling place of the “Ka’ba” that was considered as very sacred by the Arabs who used to visit it as a pilgrimage on specific seasons. The “Ka’ba” was the shelter of the statues of the Gods of Quraish.

Abdul-Muttaleb, the grand-father of the Prophet, had 10 sons of whom he preferred the youngest, named Abdullah. This one married Amna, the daughter of Wahab. After just a few months with her, he had to join a trading caravan; but just after his return, he died and was buried in Medina; so, Amna lost her husband and the boy was born orphan, having lost his father.

When Amna gave birth to her son, his grand-father was very happy and named him Mohammad, which was unfamiliar name among the Arabs. His mother sent him with a feeding-nurse from the tribe of Bani-Saad; it was accustomed for mothers to send their baby-born sons to the desert in order to grow in a healthy atmosphere and to learn an eloquent Arabic language. He returned with his nurse to his mother after 5 years, but his mother died before she could rejoice of her child, so his feeding-nurse Om-Ayman took him in charge. His grand-father later died, so he was taken in charge by his uncle Abu-Taleb who was not of the same dignity as Abdul-Muttalib. At the age of 13, Abu-Taleb took Mohammad in a trading caravan to the Sham (the Syrian lands) reaching Bosra, where the adolescent Mohammad met the monk Behera. Much is said about that meeting, but the outcome of what can be understood from it all is that he predicted a bright future to Mohammed, and that he advised Abu-Taleb to keep him away from the Jew.

Mohammad then worked in commerce for a noble and rich woman called Khadiga; he traveled with her servant Maysara, made good trade; Maysara came back and told his master lady about his character, his chastity and his honesty. Being a widow and advanced in age, she thought of marrying him. So, at the age of 25, Mohammad became the husband of this lady whom history proved to be excellent. She gave birth to all the children of Mohammad who died during his life, except for Fatma who married her cousin Ali Ibn-Abi-Taleb and got of him el-Hassan and el-Hussein who have become the heads of the "Shiite" school called "twelvists" (of 12) which rules Iran in the present time.

Mohammad interrupted his commercial duties in order to rest and concentrate on the religious thinking which was overwhelming him since he saw that his clan was worshiping idols. He felt the need to isolate himself, which he started to practice in a cave called "Harraa", to think of the existence, of heaven, of the Earth and all that exists on it : man, animals, plants...That was for him a spiritual and psychological preparation for the mission that he was surprised to receive when he heard a voice calling him saying : "read". That was the angel Gibreel (Gabriel), and that was the calling for him to Islam and the beginning of revelation. Mohammad came back frightened and shivering to Khadiga who has been the first to become a Muslim, and has sustained him with her warm feelings and her moral and material support.

As soon as the Messenger (Mohammad) announced his prophecy and his calling, the people of Quraysh declared a ferocious war against him and tracked and persecuted the small first group of believers –who were among the weakest –, and killed two persons, Yaser and his wife Somayya, whereas their son managed to escape and became one of the great Muslims later on.

In the 10th year of his prophecy, his uncle Abu-Taleb who had protected him from the evil persecution of Quraysh; and also Khadiga died. The Messenger called that year "the year of grief".

The early signs of relief appeared when some people of Medina believed. They had come to Mecca for a pilgrimage, and the Messenger contacted them to propose Islam to them which they converted to. They had heard their allies, the Jews of Medina, speaking about a prophet whose time had come to appear. The year after, 72 men and 2 women of them came to the Messenger and consented collectively on protecting

him; so he sent with them one of his best companions, Mossab Ben-Omer to teach them the Coran, which he did so well that Islam spread in Medina. Thus, "Medina has been conquered by the Coran", as Aysha said. That conquest was accomplished with neither sword nor spear, and it has been the basis for all the following conquests.

The belief of that group – "al-Ansaar", the "supporters" – came in a convenient time. Indeed, Quraysh had just finished preparing a plot to kill the Messenger by calling young men from all the tribes to do it together, so that "his blood would be lost among the tribes", and they had agreed on the to execute that plot. They stood at the door of the Messenger of God while he was sleeping, waiting for him to come out; but God made him know about the conspiracy, so he went out in disguise leaving Ali Bin-Abi-Taleb sleeping in his bed covered with his cover; and he secretly informed Abu-Bakr who thus accompanied him in that journey of salvation, to Almadina.

It was a long and exhausting journey in which the Messenger escaped from the troops of Mecca who had been very angry when they discovered that he was safe, and had sent trackers to catch him...After that journey, the Messenger reached the gates of Medina where people were there waiting for him – men, women and children – singing a chant which has become famous in Islam:

"The moon has come upon us, out of the midst of farewell..."

With that emigration ("Higra"), a new chapter had started in the history of Islam. The Messenger had spent 13 years in Mecca, giving the call, and was subjected to persecution without ever trying to reply to his enemies or declaring war against them. These were long years of tribulation for the believers during which they demonstrated patient resistance; whereas now, that was over, and he had moved to Medina which had put itself under his orders.

The Messenger established a new type of State in Medina, with none of the usual characteristics of a State, i.e. to be an oppressive organization, having its permanent army, police and prisons, and imposing taxes on people. All that did not exist in the State in Medina. Moreover, the head of state was a prophet who received revelations – which have also corrected some of his decisions. This cannot happen in any other state. Nevertheless, it did have aspects similar to other states, as

the Messenger had set plans for war time and for peace time, and he signed pacts and sent to kings in order to call them to Islam.

The 10 years in Medina were full of strife and glory for Islam, as it had to enter in a series of wars because Mecca would not leave it, especially that Medina was on the way of its caravans. So the war started in Badr where Moslems gained victory; but they lost at Ohod. Those wars went on alternatively until the conquest of Mecca in the year 7 of the “Higra” (628 AD), when the Prophet entered it as someone grateful, not as a victorious conqueror, bowing upon the back of his camel to give thanks to God instead of showing pride in a victorious Roman procession; he looked at the masters in Mecca who had persecuted him and tortured his companions, without spoiling his generosity and his forgiveness, and he said to them: “go, you are free”. With that clemency, he gained conversion to Islam from them all, so their swords-from then on- were to serve Islam after having combated it.

The Messenger then came back to Medina. And in the year 10, he left the city with more than 10000 Moslems, on a pilgrimage to Mecca. That was his farewell pilgrimage during which the Prophet gave his last testament to the Moslems, commanding them to keep the oath, not to shed blood or rape others possessions, to eliminate usury, and to protect women and slaves. Following that, he died.

After his death, numerous groups renounced the faith among the Arabs who had joined Islam after having seen his victories; but they had joined it without internalizing its values, and now longed for their previous tribal life when they had neither to relate to a central government nor to pay the “zakaat”(compulsory almsgiving).The future of Islam at that moment was at high stakes. Fortunately, at that time appeared Abu-Bakr, the Prophet’s friend and his minister, and the first man to adhere to Islam. That very special man has been capable of reorient the deviating current. The “Ansar” (believers from Medina), after having lost the Messenger who cherished them a lot, had decided to submit the leadership to their chief Saad Ben-Ebada , and they gathered in the cenacle of Bani Saaeda. The “Muhagiroun” (emigrants) did not know of that reunion, until Abu-Bakr was informed at the last moment. He thus joined the throng and– with his wisdom and delicacy – convinced the Ansar that the Arabs would only abide to a leader from Quraysh, and they had made that choice earlier so that it was better for them now to

accept that policy...He finally did not leave them before they had unanimously consented on him as “Calif” a (leader following the Prophet), thus having prevented a schism that would have torn the unity among the Moslems. He then gave his speech by which he established in a few words the basis for Islamic ruling. He asked them to support him if he does things right, to correct him if he is wrong, to obey to him as long as he will obey to God, but to disobey him if ever he would disobey God. He stated these sublime principles spontaneously and in the midst of the rapid and consecutive events. He then had to deal with the apostates, who had started to cause trouble with Medina that had no army. In fact, before these events, Abu-Bakr had sent an army to the north by a command from the Messenger of God; so, as soon as that army returned, he sent them to face the apostates with an order to punish them strongly if they don't give up and obey. Abu-Bakr acted until the end by using such policies – waving between clemency and broad vision and wise foreseeing at times, and stiffness at others. Before he died, his wisdom lead him – just as he had started his leadership – to recommend the Moslems to consent on Omar Ibn al-Khattab after him, as the chiefs of the Arab had wanted. He wanted to avoid a dividing uprising similar to the one of Bani Saaeda's cenacle. The Muslims accepted Omar to become caliph, especially after having heard his first speech which was in the line with Abu-Bakr's words in the latter's first speech.

Omar was a administrator and a statesman by his natural character. He had a strong will, a piercing vision, and an insistence that could be moved only by his piety. In his epoch, conquests were multiplied: Persia, Syria and Egypt; nevertheless, he was keen on protecting the Moslem blood, so he never gave an order to invade until he was certain of all circumstances. He established the growing State upon fundamentals resulting from his geniality. His caliphate lasted for ten and a half years. Then he was killed as he was getting prepared to pray, by a Persian freed slaves) who could not stand the victory of the Moslems over Kisra (the Persian leader); so he made a plot and killed him.

The stabbing of Omar has practically been a stabbing of the caliphate itself, and its end for ever. Osman, who took the lead after Omar, did not behave as the latter did : with him, corruption started; and he was old aged and was dominated by his court and collaborators who were of Bani Omayya. Things got troubled until he was killed in an upheaval. After him, Ali Ben-Abi-Talib tried - in vain – to bring back the

caliphate to how it was in the time of Omar and Abu-Bakr; practically, corruption had penetrated the people so their faith and zeal faded, and these had been the values that secured continuity for the early epochs. Ali too was killed.

This briefing on the troubled second part of the first 4 caliphates – these four were called “the Rashida caliphates” meaning the reasonable – demonstrates that it was subdued by the same evolutionary factors which subdue all systems. It was not infallible as it was subjected to the change of times. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that it was the best governing experience the world has ever seen.

If the Europeans may tell of the “the Greek miracle” and of the period gathering together Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, then it is rightful for the Islamic historians to exalt that prodigious and unique experience of government that gathered the Messenger, Abu-Bakr, Omar Ibn al-Khattab and Ali Ibn-Abi-Talib, and to see in it an accomplished utopia.

In the year 40, Higura Moawiya Ibn-Abi-Sofyan transformed the caliphate into a detestable monarchy, ending the era of Islam of Man, starting the era of Islam of Sultan. The former is the true Islam called and corresponds to it, whereas the latter is the ruling of Moslems with their weakness or their piety. The caliphate that started with Moawiya cannot be called caliphate; it was only an oppressive and hereditary monarchy, as any other ruling system of the Romans, the Pharaohs or the Persians. Things went on like that till Mostafa Kamal Atatork cut the caliphate from the roots and eliminated it in the year 1924 AD.

The Islamic civilization appeared especially during the Abbasides caliphate (of Abbas and his successors), when Bagdad – in the epoch of Haroun el-Rasheed – was the capital of the world, or the “middle ages Rome “. During that period we find philosophers and medical doctors and scientists, who discovered algebra and its formulae, geometry, astronomy, physics,.. etc. But here we are telling not of civilization but of political history. The system of the State was globally corrupted, which led to its fall when the Tatars attacked Bagdad in 1258 and destroyed it and killed its people.

In spite of all that, the Islamic history was of universal dimension, Bagdad having been the greatest capital. When it fell down, Cairo took the lead of its role, and Egypt has been capable of defeating the Crusaders and the Tatars. In al-Andalos (Andalusia in Spain), excellent personalities

have shown-up : philosophers and medical doctors and scientists... But the political system in Andalusia and in Egypt was corrupt, so Al-Andalus fell in 1492 to the Spanish, and Egypt in 1517 to the Turkish.

In the year 712, Tarek Ben-Ziad and his Berber army defeated their Spanish enemies; they were not numerous, but they fighting for faith and felt they had a mission and did not fear when Tarek burnt his ships and they couldn't move back : the sea was behind them and the enemy in front, so they won. The Berber themselves were defeated at Poitiers (France) in 732 because they were very heavy to move, having insisted on carrying much war wealth, so when the enemy attacked they fought to defend their booty; the fight strategy was not balanced anymore and they lost. Tarek himself had deserved victory, but in as much the Berber deserved defeat.

It has been said that the combat of "Zalaaka" where the Moroccan prince Yusef Ben-Tashfeen defeated the Spanish has delayed the falling of al-Andalous for 300 years. Fine, but what next? The fall. Genius men may lengthen the age of a corrupted system, but they cannot keep it from falling in the end.

CONVERGING AND DIVERGING ELEMENTS IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

One of the converging elements is that Islam states that, being the last religion, it had to take a position with respect to the religions, and it did: religions are all one in their spirit, as their goal is the self-submission (which is the meaning of the word “islam”) of the heart to God the Highest, and anyone who achieves this becomes Moslem. Thus the Coran considered Abraham, Moses, Issa (=Jesus) and the 12 tribes all Moslems. The Messenger also spoke of religion as being similar to a house that has been strongly built, except for a gap in its construction, and Islam came to fill it up. He also spoke of the Prophets as brothers from one father, Abraham, but many mothers.

Islam also recognized that, although all religions are one in their theme—believing in God-, each one of them has its own laws representing its epoch and the society where it appeared... etc.

That is why Islam recognizes all the religions, and the Moslem does not have a complete faith unless he believes in all the Messengers of God: “We do not differentiate between any of them and any other”.

Whereas for the differences between the Holy Scripture books, Islam explains that they are due to errors in the numerous translations of the Bible, especially the Old Testament which descended in the time of the Pharaohs; they may also be in the differences between the Churches, such as the changes that Martin Luther introduced in the Gospel.

We shouldn't forget that there was not printing yet, but they used to rely on numerous scribes to write and copy the books.

Essentially, the elements of dissent come from the fact that Islam represents the principle of strict Unicity, while Christianity is based on the Trinitarian principle, which is the issue that has divided the Christian world up till now. For Islam, Christ is a prophet honored just like Mohammad, and nothing more.

Moreover, Islam has not been established on a miracle such as the ones attributed to Christ. It also has no church, and does not approve of any priesthood; it does not have a theology, because the proof of the existence of God in the Coran is the creation. The Coran has summarized that proof in 4

words : “ Have they been created, from nothing or they created themselves are they creators ?”(Surat al-Toor 35).

The idea of God in the Islamic doctrine is some what like nature in the European thought, if it could be supposed that nature had life and reason : God is the origin of life, of reason and of values. A saying of the Prophet mentioned by al-Bukhary says: “Do not curse the aldhur, because God is the aldhur”.

Because Islam was born away from the religious heritage it was not subjected to any specific position to be adopted with respect to Christianity or Judaism -, and being the last of all religions, it accepted them all and proclaimed that they all are one in essence because they stand on the “Islam” (self-submission) of the heart to God. Faith in God is the essential element in the religions, and this is visible in the three Abrahamaian religions. stop it up; Islam considers itself a journey where it represents the last car, and the end of the way of men in search of God.

By this logic – the self-submission to God –, Islam has considered that Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus “all as Moslems”. The Messenger considered the prophets all as brothers from one father -who is Abraham and many mothers. Abraham, Moses and Issa (= Jesus) are considered the most important prophets mentioned in the Coran where their names are praised many times more than Mohammad’s name is mentioned, although he is the Messenger of Islam.

One of the important points is that Christ is given an exclusive position, and is spoken of very similarly to what Christians say of him: a messenger of God and his word that he laied in the womb of Mary and that God the Highest has supported him with the Holy Spirit. But it absolutely confirms that he is neither God nor a son of God, and that he is not disdained to be called servant of God. The truly genuine Christianity pronounced by Christ is the “Sermon of the mountain “, and besides that everything has been added by those whom Christianity calls “Apostles” – the Coran calls them the “Hawariyun”, meaning those with whom Christ was dialoguing -, especially Peter and Paul. Thus there is no difference to find between the Coran and what really happened.

Islam also disagrees with Christianity in the idea of “original sin”, because it believes in the “original innocence” and that a deed is permitted unless a coranic text was issued that prohibits it; but it believes too that “no one takes upon himself the load of another, i.e. no one bears the sin of anyone else; this is why Islam does not know the idea of redemption.