

**OUR STANCE ON:**

**SECULARISM,  
NATIONALISM,  
AND SOCIALISM**

**Gamal Al-Banna**

## ABOUT THIS BOOK:

Preachers and newspapers, often quote these concepts of secularism, nationalism, and socialism. Popular views on these concepts tend to vary, as some people regard them as the work of Satan on earth, while others consider them the greatest achievements of our era.

This book presents the judgment on these concepts from an Islamic point of view, or rather the point of view of the Islamic Revival Call, by showing the pros and cons of each concept as the author seeks fairness and the noble aim of verifying the truth.

The author explains in this book that secularism, as it means the separation between religion and authority, i.e. the state or the government, and as long as it does not call for religious ideas, is not distant from the spirit of Islam which centers on the individual and then on the concepts of family, society, and the Islamic nation '*Umma*'. The Holy Quran mentions the term *Umma* in nearly fifty positions in its text, whereas the term '*state*' is never mentioned in the Quranic text. The author reaches the same conclusion on the premise that authority spoils ideology, i.e. beliefs and values. This applies to all ideologies like religions and socialism, and this is the notion explained by the author in his book titled "*Islam is a Religion and a Nation, not a Religion and a State*".

The main element in this subject as far as Islam is concerned, and that makes it nearer to secularism, is the absence of the notion of "religious institutions", as well as the vehement attack launched in the Holy Quran against clergy who stand between Man and God as mediators. We should remember that the oppressive tyranny of Catholicism was the reason behind the idea of separating religion and government in the European countries.

Yet, this is not to say that secularism is perfect, as there are notions in it that are contrary to the Islamic values, like confining oneself to life in this world, while overlooking life in the Hereafter.

The author sees that states in the Islamic *Umma* cannot be described as *secular*, and cannot be described as *Islamic* as well, but these states can be described as *civil*, as the main task of any state is construction, encouraging culture and science, serving its nation...etc.

The author says that he means by nationalism the notion of patriotism as called for by Islam. Yet, the notion of nationalism has

developed in the Arab society and it has been closely linked to the idea of finding an alternative to Islam. The author sees that nationalism without Islam resembles an oyster that has lost its pearl, and consequently its value. The author reveals in this book a rare document written by the imam and martyr Hassan Al-Banna, directed to the officials shortly after the formation of the Arab League. This document comprises ideas on the topic of uniting the Arab nations, and this rare, invaluable document does not appear in the writings of the Muslim brotherhood.

Lastly, the author tackles the concept of socialism, and sees that it has been a pre-Marxism stage in Europe as a symbol of justice ignored by the church and the state, and trampled over by theorizing and the capitalist practice. Hence, socialism has been the representative of the European conscience, but at the hands of Karl Marx, it took the quality of the limited theory that claims to be the only '*scientific*' one, utopian Marxism, dismissing other theories as dreams or wishes. When Lenin assumed authority in Russia, he established the worst ruling system ever in the world, as it trampled over liberties and spread terrorism, as the communist party assumed a totalitarian, unilateral rule. This book accepts socialism as an open call for justice, and rejects Marxism in theory and practice.

The author does not leave readers in a state of confusion after criticizing these three concepts; he presents in the epilogue a short chapter titled "**The Alternative**". This alternative is Islam when understood soundly and directly from the Holy Quran, the noble manner and behavior of Prophet Muhammad, and the civilized values of Islam that has made it a liberation revolution for the sake of freedom and justice.

Readers would find the truth in this book if they are not burdened with preconceived thought that might make their vision narrow, unilateral, and unable to receive new ideas, but it is hoped that this book would inspire readers to reconsider their thought.

## FOREWORD

We have written on the concepts of socialism, nationalism, and secularism in some of my previous books like " *The Contemporary Islamic Calls: its Pros and Cons*", " *The Islamic Program*", and " *Islam, Liberty, and Secularism*". We have felt the urge to combine these three concepts in one volume to facilitate the matter for readers who seek to know about these topics without searching for specific information in various books that might not be available, especially that some of them was printed 20 years ago. We have seized this opportunity to revise, modify, and edit these views according to the recent results of our research and the fruition of our thought. We have added many items and a last chapter titled " **The Alternative**".

Some people might have thought that socialism has lost its significance after the demise of the USSR that followed the socialist banner, but eventually surrendered to its archenemy, the USA. In fact, the downfall of the USSR does not mean the collapse of socialism, but the failure of the experiment adopted by the USSR, which was contrary to the essence of and politics of socialism during the period between the decease of Karl Marx and World War I. This right version of socialism was adopted as well by all socialist parties that bore the appellation "*the socialist democratic party*" until Lenin came up with the Bolshevik version of socialism, and put an end to democracy in the appellation of the ruling party and as a concept that once existed in the socialist society. This was the reason behind the fall of the USSR. When socialist parties regained the designation '*democratic*' in their appellation, it was considered a mark of return to the original socialist tradition. If capitalism stands alone with its values of opportunism and exploitation, its negative or dark sides might resurface, which propelled the appearance of socialism.

History tells us that the end of any era does not meant its total disappearance, as its remnants would remain, and the dead men of the old systems in their tombs still exert an influence over the living people as people prefer to follow what they are familiar with and was done by their ancestors, even if it was tyranny. The famous Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawki said:

**The one who just left the yoke  
Lives for a while lamenting its impact**

The number of those who lamented the loss of socialist ideals in the East has surpassed the numbers in the West – even when compared to Russia itself.

Anyway, the role of socialism in the history of modern political thought and in current political experiments cannot be overlooked. Development might allow socialism another round to prove its efficiency, as its existence is 'controversial' concerning capitalism in European societies.

This applies as well to nationalism, as a concept that has appeared in a critical moment in history, as a reaction, not an original veritable action. Nationalism had favorable factors that made it assume its space in the political arena and it had in some cases the major place, even after the collapse of the Nasserite project after the defeat in 1967 war.

The notion of secularism is no less important than the other two concepts, especially when the matter is related to religion. Some people assume that religion and secularism are incompatible, and in a state of conflict, but this might only be true as far as Christianity is concerned. However, this is not the case in Islam, as there are common points between Islam and secularism - as we shall explain- in many aspects, and there are other aspects in which both differ from each other, but secularism retains its significance so as not to let religious devotion be confined to the Afterlife, while ignoring this life on earth.

The ideas mentioned in this volume represent the stance of the Islamic Revival Call on the three concepts: socialism, nationalism, and secularism.

In our endeavor to present our stance on these concepts, we stick to honesty in our demonstration, showing the pros and cons, and we evaluate the three concepts fairly without distorting them. Our evaluation is based on the premise that we believe in the values of liberty, justice, goodness, knowledge, and coping with the necessities of our modern era. These are part of the Islamic values, and they are the essence of the Islamic Revival Call.

Some of our readers have requested that we mitigate the tone of our discourse, avoid points of contention, and focus on common points so as not to provoke the ire and enmity of our opponents. We appreciate this important piece of advice, but we prefer to reveal the whole truth, and to

present all dimensions. We seek to show truths, not words of compromise or mitigation, as this is a kind of thought and not politics. The role of the thinker is to convey the whole truth as he sees it, unashamedly and in an unhesitant manner. The Holy Quran and the Bible speak about deniers of the truth in plain, explicit statements that denounce them severely, and these Holy Scriptures show the meaning of wrong and deviation. It is never possible in the process of developing a theory that one might criticize it severely and unfairly just to avoid enmities or to gain friendships. This might occur when theories are within the maze of politics, and the responsibility lies on those who applied the theory in the wrong manner, not on the theory per se, or on its original author.

Gamal Al-Banna  
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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **OUR STANCE ON SECULARISM\***

The vague or misleading idea concerning the link between Islam and secularism is attributed to the confusion of the Islamic reference, as well as another confusion that stems from judging Islam on the grounds of what have occurred in Christianity.

#### **The confusion in the Islamic reference:**

This confusion has stemmed from considering the rules set by religious scholars and imams since the emergence of religious doctrines in the third century of Hegira, and their followers who renewed the *fiqh* (religious jurisprudence) like Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Hazm in the eighth century A.H., El-Sawkani in the eleventh century A.H., and M. Abdou in the fourteenth century A.H., and the leaders of contemporary Islamic calls (e.g. El-Mawdoudi- Hassan Al-Banna- Sayed Qutb). The views of these scholars and thinkers were used to represent the Islamic standpoint towards secularism and other similar concepts.

This sort of confusion is understandable, as professors of religious universities perceive these ancient scholars as their grand masters, while professors of civil universities and orientalist perceive them as the authoritative references of Islamic thought. Consequently, all people unanimously agree that these ancient thinkers and scholars are the authoritative references that represent Islam

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\* If *secularism* means idolization of the human being and denying the worship of God, and acknowledging the worldly existence while denying the Afterlife, then undoubtedly it is contrary to Islam. Yet, our understanding of *secularism* is not as such, but we see it as the separation of religion and the state, meaning that the state does not perform religious tasks or duties, and leaves religion to people to believe in it in their own ways. The secular state would tolerate the existence of churches without interfering in their work while not allowing them to interfere in the work of the state. There are many examples of this, as the liberty of belief is secured for all people, and churches still exist in the secular states that even have Christian political parties. This is what we mean by *secularism* in this chapter.

In fact, all these ancient scholars even the more renowned ones like the imams who founded the four Islamic doctrines, were subjected to a certain social, political and cultural climate, and they were influenced deeply by their environments. The documentation and writing of the *Sunna* (traditions and deeds of Prophet Muhammad ), after nearly a century after the decease of Prophet Muhammad, made room for interpolating a large number of fabricated *Hadiths* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad ) –maybe hundreds of thousands. The Quranic textual style that is based on figurative expression, musicality of language, and the psychological impact of diction, has made room for many interpretations, as well as the insertion of Israelite mythological stories in the authoritative volumes of interpretation. With the passage of time away from the era of the Prophet Muhammad, people were floundering in the miasma of the autocratic rule, the spread of ignorance, the control exercised by the Turks and the Persians on the Caliphate, and the divided Islamic rule. All these influences were reflected in the writings and rules of the scholars, as it is impossible that any writer might step out of the frames of his era and the level of understanding prevalent in his era. What proves this fact is that when forces of darkness and ignorance prevailed in certain eras, scholars themselves decided to close the field of *Ijtihad* (interpretive judgment), and this reflects the inability of thinking, and blind acceptance of what was passed down to them by their ancestors, which means intellectual bankruptcy.

Regardless of the truth of this argument, it is an elementary undoubted fact that Islam is truly represented by the Holy Quran. Hence, when we need to know the viewpoint of Islam concerning any issue, we should refer to the Holy Quran itself, not to its many interpretations rendered by many scholars, who were influenced by the above-mentioned factors, and whose interpretations do injustice to the Quranic text. The *Sunna* should be purified and purged from any interpolations and insertions that had crept to it by setting criteria based on the



Quranic text, so that we could exclude fabricated *Hadiths* that are in fact contrary to the fundamentals set by the Holy Quran.

This purification process is extremely difficult, and it goes beyond the *Salafist* (ancestral; traditional) frameworks and rules already set by the four imams of the Islamic doctrines. Hence, writers on Islam and orientalists preferred to get their rules from ancient scholars who set them since over one thousand years, and these writers considered these rules as the viewpoint of Islam.

Hence, this is the source of the first confusion, and the source of the notion that people accept whatever said by ancient scholars even if it was contrary to the Holy Quran, due to the factors that influenced them, as we mentioned before.

### **The confusion of judging Islam by what had occurred in Christianity:**

This second sort of confusion, concerning the viewpoint of Islam on secularism, is attributed to the fact that European writers applied their judgments concerning Christianity on Islam, despite the radical difference between them, or at least between Islam and the Christian church.

Those who studied the European civilization know that its real roots are Greco-Roman. These Greek and Roman civilizations were pagan civilizations – not in the sense that they worshipped idols – but in the sense that they ignore the idea of God as found in celestial religions, as well as life after death, and punishment and reward in the Afterlife<sup>†</sup>. These ideas were not just excluded from the Greek and Roman faiths, but they were contrary to the foundations of these two civilization. With the exclusion of the notion of God, these civilizations deified the human being. One of the first Greek philosophers expressed this idea clearly, when he said "*Man is the yard-stick of all things*", and this meaning was repeated by philosophers like Kant and Hegel in different ways of expression like "*Man is an end in*

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<sup>†</sup> The contradiction of the Greco-Roman paganism is not confined to Christianity, as it contradicts as well in greater way the religion of the ancient Egyptians and Islam, as in these two religions we find the major focus on the notion of the Afterlife.

*himself*". The European civilization is the legitimate heir of the Greco-Roman civilization, and the European Renaissance movement was a revival of the Greco-Roman civilization.

As the notion of the deified human being was formed in Athens and Rome, it was repeated in the form of the liberated individual, within the Bourgeois in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. in Britain and France. This liberated individual was the emblem carried by the contemporary European civilization which is based on liberty, not faith, on contracting, not commitment, and on the individual not the class, as in the feudal system. Hence, the bourgeoisie emerged in its two sides: the political one, i.e. democracy, and the economic one, i.e. capitalism. It is so meaningful and telling that in the course of European history, since the Greeks until the Romans, we do not find any reference to Prophets of God, as philosophers, thinkers, and men of letters had replaced them, and set the human 'conscience' and enriched the human sentiments by the arts they have created.

In all cases since the ancient times – the Greek civilization – until the end of history, as Fukuyama says, the major goals in any civilization were pleasure, profit, power, freedom, and control. The main values prevalent in any civilization were liberty, power, and order (or law), and the European civilization was indifferent to values of mercy, goodness, forgiveness, and justice.

Secularism is major, inherent part of such civilization, and nothing else would replace it. Yet, something else emerged with the advent of Christianity, with its ideals and values that differ from those of the European civilization. Christianity as a religion does not aim to rule and control as this goes against its nature, and this is proven by word of Christ " ***Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's*** " (Matt 22:22), as Christ denied that his kingdom is in this world. However, what happened was that in the later stages of any religion, the religious institution emerged with its monopoly and profiteering, then clergy would appear in temples, then guardians of temples, then collectors of money

who make profit from the doctrine of faith petrified by the church.

The nature of the religious institution differs, and largely contradicts, the nature of religions. Religious institutions are subjective by nature, whereas religions are objective by nature. Religious institution undergoes a process of psychological overlapping that merges the religious call and people who represent the religious institution, who speak in the name of religion and assume the role of faith advocates or representatives. Later on, those 'advocates' would themselves represent the call per se; hence, they project on the religious call human ambition and shortcomings.

This process repeats itself wholly in the political institution that applies the totalitarian ideology – e.g. communism, Fascism – as the political party assumes the role previously played by the church, and the leaders of this party would be like cardinals of the church who would monopolize the interpretation of the ideology.

Especially for Christianity, there were certain factors that made the church the only legitimate representative of religion. Certain conditions in the middle Ages in Europe made the church the only centralized authority among the archipelago of small states in Europe at the time. Each state was ruled by a duke, a count or a lord...etc. and guilds were spread in many cities separated by distances of geographical factors like mountains and rivers, before the advent of modern means of transport and communication...etc. Within such circumstances, the Catholic Church was the only power that had centralized authority and one head, i.e. the Pope, whose messengers and bishops roamed Europe, regardless of any frontiers among the states, and even some of the clergy ruled some states. The European public at the time regarded the church as '*Our Mother the Church*', where children were baptized, marriages were contracted, and the dead were buried. The Europeans used to live their lives in close link to the church, which took control of the administrative division in cities and villages, by dividing

them into parishes, and keeping records of births, marriages, and deaths.

The church worked to unify Europe on two occasions, the first one was the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 A.D. in France, and the church commissioned him to unify counties, provinces, states...etc. The second occasion was when the church attempted to end wars inside Europe among rulers, and to direct the united military forces of Europe towards the East. The Pope Urban II declared in 1095 A.D. the formation of the crusades that united arms of Europe against Islam<sup>‡</sup>.

Some powerful kings attempted to break free from the authority of the church, but the church quelled and subdued them. This is exemplified by what happened to the Germanic emperor Henry IV when Pope Gregory VII excommunicated him. The Germanic emperor Henry IV had to go to village of Canossa, in Italy, to humble himself before Pope Gregory VII, and he stood by his door for three consecutive days before he was allowed admission into his presence and gained his pardon.

The period between 1077 A.D. and Mid-1700s was rife with disputes and conflicts, until Henry VIII of England succeeded in breaking free from the authority of the Catholic Church, and claiming the Latin title "**Fidei Defensor**" or in English "*Defender of the Faith*". Martin Luther as well freed Germany from the authority of the Catholic Church. At last, the conflict was resolved to the side of monarchs and nations, especially after the French revolution.

The main reason behind the defeat of the church was that it resisted liberties: e.g., it opposed liberty of belief by establishing the Inquisition Courts, which was notorious for the use of torture with 'heretics'. It opposed liberty of thought by limiting printing of books and forbidding the circulation of any writings that oppose the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, according to a 'list' which was named in Latin "**Index Librorum prohibitorum**" which in English means "*Index of Forbidden*

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This call was repeated as well by the German thinker Leibniz five centuries later.<sup>‡</sup>

*Books*". The idea of this list dates back to the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. when it prohibited the book titled "***Thalia***" written by the Greek theologian Arius of Alexandria. The exact appearance and application of this '*index*' dates back to the council of Trinity in 1564. This index was issued by the Pope himself and it was updated and printed every year. The index included titles of books which the Catholic Church prohibited its printing and circulation. Among these forbidden books some unauthorized texts of the Torah and some gospels, as well as scientific and philosophical works of Galileo, Hobbes, Descartes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Kant, Goethe, Spinoza, John Stuart Mill, Victor Hugo, Fourier, Marx, Bergson...etc. The Catholic Church stuck foolishly to the idea of the earth as the immobile centre of the universe, i.e. heavenly bodies and the sun revolve around it, while it does not move at all. The church considered this unscientific belief as a holy tenet of the Christian faith. The church usually stood by the side of the nobility and aristocracy against the masses. Bishops had special representation in the House of Lords, and they resisted the early popular uprisings in Britain, which held the appellation "*Peasants' Revolt*" in the fourteenth century. The Protestant church, headed by Martin Luther himself at the time, resisted the *Peasants Revolt* in Germany in the sixteenth century, and Luther called upon the nobility class to quell and crush this rebellion of farmers with utmost force possible.

The above-mentioned historical facts prove that the activity of the church and not Christianity per se was the decisive factor that made the theocratic rule. As for Christianity itself, it bears no relationship with political conflicts, on the contrary we find in the gospels this well-known statement of Christ " ***Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's*** " (Matt 22:22). The negative evidence signifies the result itself; i.e., the absence of the religious institution or its removal is what allowed secularism to thrive in Europe. The church was the main factor, positively and negatively, and not Christianity per se, as the Christian faith still exists in Europe and considered as

one of the assets that built the European civilization beside other assets of the Greco-Roman heritage.

Conflict was bound to happen between the European society, whose roots are deep in the heritage of Athens and Rome, and the authority of the church, which came from the East. The European society, represented by its thinkers, resisted the church and its values until the French revolution in 1789, which was considered as a mark of victory of the European society over the church.

Gradually, the European society regained from the church authority and power, which the church used to wield and exercise over people. The church was not left anything beyond baptism, holding marriage ceremonies, and burials/funerals. When the church settled for its role, the secular European society gave it later a space among other institutions. For instance, in some European countries like Germany, authorities take certain percentage from salaries for charity and churches. Thus, secular Europe regained the origin of its civilization, i.e. secularism, but kept the church at the same time – as in ancient Rome when the Romans used to dedicate a monument for the unknown god<sup>§</sup>.

If we could imagine Christianity without the church, it would have been possible that long conflicts would not have been arisen. The aim of these conflict, more or less, was to regain this state of secularism, because Christianity, even if its values differ from those of European secularism, it would have been more beneficial if Christianity was confined to its call "*with wisdom and good advice*", and giving to Caesar things that are Caesar's. Yet, it was the church – and not the Christian faith – that aimed to assume authority, to resist scientists and thinkers, to establish the Inquisition Courts, to impose severe censorship over books and other publications...etc.

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<sup>§</sup> It was customary in some Roman temples to build a monument and inscribe in it the phrase "the unknown god", and this idea might be the origin of the idea of the monument of the unknown soldier later on.

Europe had settled its account with the theocratic rule, by the French revolution and consequent events that put the church aside from participation in the ruling system or exercising control over thought. Yet, we find that the church in the Eastern societies has major influence and authority as it assumes responsibility of Christians' interests, their participation in the ruling system, and their status in the Muslim societies as they represent a minority in it. Being a minority justifies the role of the church in the East, but it creates sensitivities and troubles as the church assumes authority over secular matters of its followers, and it should leave these matters to civil authorities and the present political systems. If this cannot be done, the Eastern Church would retain some authorities and influence that would govern its followers, like the Western Church in the past times in Europe.

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We have dispelled the first confusion and said we should make the Holy Quran our reference, and not the rules set by ancient religious scholars. We have dispelled the second confusion by saying that what was applied to the church cannot be applied to Islam, simply because Islam knows no such religious institution like the church. Hence, we have set the tone for tackling the concept of secularism and Islam.

The very first element that draws the attention is that Islam, in contrast to earlier celestial religions, did not rely on extraordinary miracles to prove its credibility, i.e. raising the dead, rendering the fire unable to burn, Moses' rod that was turned into a huge snake...etc. The miracle of Islam is the Holy Quran, and the means to attain faith is to recite this holy book. The Holy Quran refuses the demand of the polytheists who wanted Prophet Muhammad to perform miracles before them. *"And so they say: O Muhammad, we shall not believe thee till thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or thou have a garden of date-palms and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush, or thou cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as thou hast*

*threatened, or till thou bring God and angels face to face before us, or thou have a house made of gold, or thou ascend to heaven- but nay, we would not believe in thy ascension unless thou bring down to us from heaven a writing which we could read! Say thou O Prophet: " limitless in His glory is my Sustainer! Am I, then aught but a mortal man, an apostle?"(17:90-93).* These verses do not just refuse the request of the polytheists who wanted miracles, but they acknowledge in an impressive simplicity the human nature of Prophet Muhammad:" *Am I, then aught but a mortal man, an apostle?"(17:93).*

The Holy Quran depicts the psychological nature of human beings at the time in many verses. "*Yet they say ' What sort of apostle is this man who eats food like all other mortals and goes about in the market places? Why has not an angel been sent down unto him to act as a warner together with him? Or why has not a treasure been granted to him by God? Or he should at least have a bountiful garden so that he could eat thereof without effort!' And so these evildoers say unto one another: ' If you were to follow Muhammad, you would follow but a man bewitched! "* (25:7-8) "*And yet they say ' why have no miraculous signs ever been bestowed upon him from on high by his Sustainer?' Say: 'Miracles are in the power of god alone, and as for me- I am but a plain warner'. Why - is it not enough for them that We have bestowed this divine writ on thee from on high, to be conveyed by thee to them? For, verily, in it is manifested our grace and a reminder to people who will believe"* (29:50-51). The Holy Quran separates between the realm of miracles and our mundane world, and attributed the former to God, and says about Prophet Muhammad that he was "*plain warner "*(29:50), and it confronts the polytheists, saying that the Book is an enough miracle in itself.

## **Principles of the Secularism of Islam**

### **First: the nature of Islam:**



Islam has emerged in the Arabian Peninsula, where the desert extends like a sea, and winds move like storms, and among people who did not farm their lands or carried stones upon their backs, as the habitude of ancient people in bygone eras. These people did not submit to any monarch or emperor, nor did they comply with any ruling system. They were living in the Bedouin lifestyle, judging matters by intuition and natural disposition and simple conventions, withstanding scorching heat at day, and bitter cold at night. They used to worship gods of their own making; thus, these gods did not have the authority of allowing or forbidding things, nor even imposing a taboo of any kind. These people did not have any kind of mythology, that would have burdened their thinking, similar to the Greek or Hebrew one (i.e. the Torah, plus what was inserted in it like myths and legends),

Islam has adopted this nature, and it has emerged as a free, simple religion, with no complications, with nothing that oppose natural disposition and intuition. This simple nature makes Islam devoid of monopoly and exclusion, as these two notions are contrary to the free nature of the desert. God has chosen His Prophets to convey His message, nothing more, nothing less, for they had no authority of their own. Islam has not excluded from its call any category; on the contrary, its message has been directed to all human beings. The lack of exclusion and monopoly is the main feature of Islam.

The nature of Islam portrays in a symbolic way the place of worship, the mosque, as it considers the whole earth as a pure mosque, and one can pray anywhere. It is a familiar scene that a villager prays on the bank of the river Nile, or a Bedouin who prays in the middle of the desert. The mosque itself is nothing but a stretch of land surrounded by a fence, and it has no furniture, i.e. it has no crucifixes, paintings, alters, statues, psalms, offerings, incense, crowns,...etc. like the Christian church. Anyone can establish a mosque anywhere, and anyone who has learned the Holy Quran by heart can be an imam in the mosque. Prayer itself, despite prostration and kneeling, does not necessitate certain rituals or secrets, and anyone can perform it

at home as well. Even the Friday noon prayer is no different prayer from the usual ones except for the sermon, which can be said by anyone who has certain knowledge of Islam, without wearing certain garment or assuming a clergy status. Hence, there are no differences between what is '*civil*' and what is '*religious*'. The simplicity of the mosque is part of the simple nature of Islam; the mosque is a place of worship and it is void of anything that might distract people who perform prayers.

There is a simple principle, as if it has been drawn from the uninhibited desert wind, which is "**the principle of the original innocence**". It means that the original state of things is that it is *Halal* (lawful) and Islam does not forbid things unless this forbidding is stated explicitly, undisputedly in the Holy Quran. This principle resembles another Islamic one: "**Islam is the religion of human natural disposition**" and that each child is born Muslim, but the parents might convert their child into Magianism, Judaism, or Christianity. Natural disposition, spontaneity and intuition are related to one another, as they lead to a certain degree of rationality that might be simple or naïve, but never deviant, and mostly right. Hence, Islam takes faith in the human heart, and perceives sin as what goes against the heart of the believer, and what no one would like others to know about. Islam perceives as well that honesty resides in hearts of believers, and Prophet Muhammad has told one of his companions "*Trust the judgment of your heart, even if you listened to the judgment of others*". Islam accepts the human body in the sense that believers are considered pure, and ways of cleanliness are nothing but methods of adopting clean habits for good health. Islam accepts as well the human nature and finds no qualms in the human need for nutrition and sustenance. "**Say 'Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?' Say: 'They are lawful in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith- to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day'. Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of innate knowledge**"(7:32).

The sexual natural disposition is no exception as well. Although some writings describe the sexual natural disposition as bohemian, Islam does not regard the human being as a flawless angel. The human natural disposition is sound, but human weakness and lust are ingrained in the human nature, and they might sometimes control people, as God has created mankind weak, but has guided mankind to differentiate the good and the evil. The attitude of Islam toward human behavior is rational, as human beings tend to be weak toward temptation and might succumb to it. Yet, this is not regarded as downfall, but as part of the weakness of human nature. When the believer sins and then asks God's pardon, God forgives the believer. God says that if people did not commit sins, He would rather bring forth new human race, which would sin, then ask God's forgiveness, which He will grant it. Islam perceives the sexual natural disposition in the human being as means to create progeny and to make love, a kind of sublime love that makes people reach the higher realm of happiness. Prophet Muhammad forbade believers to pursue a life of celibacy, and admonished those who fasted daily, those prayed night and day non-stop, and those who chose to remain celibate to the rest of their lives. Prophet Muhammad considered this as contrary to human natural disposition and to the *Sunna*, and said that when one satisfy one's sexual urge within lawful marriage, one is rewarded in this life and the Afterlife.

### **Second: the absence of religious institution:**

Although this kind of absence is negative, this element paves the way for secularism, and hence its importance. The existence of religious institution and its monopoly and hegemony in the fields of politics and thought was the primary reason behind the emergence of secularism as a reaction to it. Secularism helped the human thought to go on without being hindered by taboos.

Islam excluded the religious institution that monopolizes interpretation, forbidding and legislation, the one that stands as a

mediator between the believers and their God, which has a certain place with certain conditions to perform functions, like temples and churches, and that forbids rituals elsewhere and by any laypeople. Islam considers that it is a kind of polytheism to allow clergy in Judaism and Christianity to assume the position of mediators between Man and God, and to assume the authority of legislature, forbidding...etc. Islam does not link rituals to certain place built by any religious institution.

One of the reasons for the absence of the religious institution in Islam is the simplicity and clarity of the idea of divinity, which is not based on theological thought that would be hard for any laypeople to understand, and needs specialized clergy.

The Holy Quran establishes the idea of creation as the premise of the belief in God, i.e. logically speaking; this universe has to have a Creator. ***"Or do they deny the existence of God? Have they themselves been created without anything that might have caused their creation? Or were they, perchance, their own creators?"*** (52:35).

This truth is the main reason behind the secularism of Islam, as it positively lacks theological complexity that makes ordinary people cannot understand their faith.

Islam does not encourage the establishment of a religious institution, and it launches in the Holy Quran a vehement campaign against clergy, considering them as a power that prevent guidance and distort the word of God.

***"They have taken their rabbis and their monks- as well as the Christ, son of Mary – for their lords beside God, although they had been forbidden to worship none but the One God, save whom there is no god: the One who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His divinity!"*** (9:31).

***"O you who have attained to faith! Behold, many of the rabbis and monks do indeed wrongfully devour men's possessions and turn others away from the path of God, but as for all who lay up treasures of Gold and silver and do not***

*spend them for the sake of God- give them the tiding of grievous suffering in the life to come"(9:34).*

*- "Among those of the Jewish faith there are some who distort the meaning of the revealed words, taking them out of their context and saying, as it where, ' We have heard but we disobey' and ' Hear without hearkening' and 'Hearken thou unto us, O Muhammad'- thus making a play with their tongues and implying that the true faith is false, and had they but said ' We have heard and pay heed' and 'Hear us, and have patience with us' it would indeed have been for their own good, and more upright: but God has rejected them because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth- for it is in but few things that they believe"(4:46)*

*- "Then, for having broken their solemn pledge, We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden- so that now they distort the meaning of the revealed words, taking them out of their context, and they have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind, and from all but a few of them thou wilt always experience treachery. But pardon them and forbear: verily, God loves the doers of good"(5:13)*

*- "Can you, then, hope that they will believe in what you are preaching –seeing that a good many of them were wont to listen to the word of God and then, after having understood it, to pervert it knowingly?"(2:75)*

Islam does not only exclude the establishment of religious institutions, but also did not give Prophets, who represent religion and conveying God's message to people, any authority except to convey and reveal the word of God, whereas guidance is from God alone, and Prophet Muhammad did not have the ability to force anyone by necessity to believe in God:

***- "It is not for thee, O Prophet, to make people follow the right path, since it is God alone who guides whom He wills "(2:272)***

***- "Verily, thou canst guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills to be guided"(28:56)***

***- "Is then he to whom the evil of his own doings is so alluring that in the end he regards it as good? For verily, God lets go astray him that wills to be guided, hence do not waste thyself in sorrowing over them: verily God has full knowledge of all that they do!"(35:8)***

***- "Dost thou, then, think that thou couldst compel people to believe" (10:99)***

The Holy Quran says to Prophet Muhammad what to do when people whom he called to embrace Islam rejected his call:

***- "And so, O Prophet, if they give thee the lie, say: 'to me shall be accounted my doings, and to you, your doings: you are not accountable for what I am doing, and I am not accountable for whatever you do' "(10:41)***

***- "Is it conceivable, O Prophet, that thou couldst omit any part of what is being revealed unto thee, because the deniers of truth dislike it, and because thy heart is distressed at their saying "Why has not a treasure been bestowed upon him from on high? Or why has not an angel come visibly with him? Thou art only a warner, whereas God has everything in his care "(11:12)***

***- "But whether We let thee see in thy lifetime, O Prophet, the fulfillment of dome of what We have promised them, or whether We cause thee to die before this fulfillment- thy duty***

*is no more than to deliver the message, and the Reckoning is Ours"(13:40)*

*"Hence, proclaim openly all that thou hast been bidden to say and leave alone all those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God"(15:94)*

*"But if they turn away from thee, O Prophet, remember that thy only duty is a clear delivery of the message entrusted to thee"(16:82)*

*"Fully aware are We of what they who deny resurrection do say; and thou canst by no means force them to believe in it, yet none the less remind through the Quran all such as may fear My warnings"(50:45)*

*"Thus it is: never yet came any apostle to those who lived before their times but they said 'a spellbinder or a mad man!' Have they perchance handed down this way of thinking as a legacy unto one another? Nay, they are people filled with overweening arrogance! "(51:52-53)*

*"Now as for those who take aught beside Him for their protectors-God watches them, and thou art not responsible for their conduct"(42:6)*

*"Now as for him who believes himself to be self sufficient, to him didst thou give thy whole attention, although thou art not accountable for his failure to attain purity" (80:5-7)*

*" And so, O Prophet, exhort them: thy task is only to exhort, thou canst compel them to believe"(88:21-22)*

These Quranic verses that confine Prophet Muhammad's authority to just conveying the message of God, say implicitly that others have the right to refuse, but their reckoning is left to

God in the Resurrection Day. These verses tell Prophet Muhammad that he should not be sorry or upset by this, as God knows quite well the nature of the human soul, because He is the One who has created it, and He knows as well that too much urging or preaching might turn people off. Yet, when people are left alone to reconsider matters, they might repent and God will accept them and multiply their rewards and forgive their sins. God knows all things unseen by human beings like Prophet Muhammad. Those who rejected Islam might later on be true believers who would serve Islam as well. For instance, Khalid Ibn El-Walid and Omar Ibn El-Khattab used to be among the archenemies of Islam, but later they converted to Islam and had become among the most prominent figures in Islam.

Prophet Muhammad absorbed these Quranic instructions, and he requested from the polytheists of the tribe of Quraish "let me meet freely with ordinary people", because the polytheists used to prevent him from communicating with people by sending their servants to follow and hinder him.

We have to admit that the development of simple, limited societies that turned into huge ones with huge needs and issues imposed on societies a degree of specialization. When Islamic societies reached a certain degree of development, this necessitated the emergence of specialized religious scholars, *not* clergy. Yet, this major distinction between scholars of Islam and clergy of Christianity grew thin. Later on in history, the former resembled the latter in the monopoly of the religious 'profession' and their pretext was de-contextualized Quranic verses, e.g. "***...if you have not yet realize this ask the followers of the revelation***"(16:43), and they perceive themselves as specialized people like doctors or engineers...etc. whom people consult when necessary for their specialized knowledge.

We should remember the story of humanity with religions. Once a religion emerged, came along with it clergy and guardians to protect religion under many appellations and forms, as long as the goal was to monopolize religion.

Yet, to be fair, we should say that the religious institution in Islam by no means resemble the one in



Christianity; the former emerged by necessity of development and to satisfy the need for specialization, whereas the latter was based on religious texts and by means of historical circumstances of religion. Hence, no religious institution in Islam, directly or indirectly, tried to rule other believers as happened in the Christian church, as it ruled people and used to baptize and coronate monarchs, until this tradition was annulled by Napoleon Bonaparte. The religious institution in Islam did not have the authority to establish permanent courts to try 'heretics' and condemn them. When some ancient religious scholars condemned some people as deviant, heretics, or apostates, they were supporting rulers or trying to gain some degree of popularity.

Within the long history of the Islamic rule, some monarchs, caliphs, and princes were exercising control over religious scholars. Some religious scholars gained immense popularity and got appellations like *Sultan* or the *Emir* of the faithful, yet no one of them ever attained to power or even managed to exercise control over the ruler. Mostly, their highest achievement was to oppose a decision made by the ruler, who eventually discarded it when he would see that succumbing to the views of religious scholars would earn him popularity. Hence, rulers were eventually the only beneficiaries from religious scholars.

### **Third: Islam acknowledges liberty of thought:**

One of the major factors that support the concept of the secularism of Islam is the notion of liberty of thought. We have mentioned that the attempt by the Christian church to quell thought and intellect by struggling against scientists and explorers in the fields of astronomy, physics, mathematics...etc. was one of the main reasons behind revolting against its authority. This was the reason as well behind establishing a society that acknowledges the liberty of thought and grants the freedom for all who seek to explore the realm of knowledge, secrets of nature, the powers of the universe, the inner layers of the human psyche, and the components of the human body.

In this field of the liberty of thought, Islam has contributed the support of the pillars of secularism by setting the ambience of liberty of thought to make Islamic societies have the distinguishing feature of freedom on many levels. Yet, it is noteworthy that this distinguishing feature did not last for long, as factors of deterioration and backwardness crept over Islamic societies, which led to an atmosphere that could not tolerate interpretive judgments and independent opinions and views on faith, or what is known as *Ijtihad*.

One of the major points is that not only does the Holy Quran acknowledge the liberty of thought and belief, but also says explicitly that this issue is an individual one. That means that those who believe or disbelieve would be responsible for their choice individually in the life to come, i.e., this issue should not be the concern of the general ruling system that might justify the interference of authorities in the liberty of belief, contrary to the earlier traditions and customs, in ancient and modern times.

**Here are some Quranic verses that explain this notion:**

**(1) Belief and disbelief are personal matters, without compulsion or coercion:**

*"There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from the way of error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way: for God is all-hearing, all-knowing "(2:256)*

*"Say oh Prophet " O mankind! The truth from your sustainer has now come unto you. Whoever, therefore, chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good, and whoever chooses to go astray, goes astray to his own hurt. And I am not responsible for your conduct"(10:108)*

*- "Whoever chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good, and whoever goes astray, goes astray for his own hurt, and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden. Moreover, We would never chastise any*

*community for the wrong they may do ere We have sent an apostle to them" (17:15)*

*- "And say: 'The truth has come from your Sustainer, let then him who wills believe in it and let him who wills, reject it. Verily, for all who sin against themselves by rejecting Our truth, We have readied a fire whose billowing folds will encompass them from all sides, and if they beg for water, they will be given water hot like molten lead which will scald their faces: how dreadful a drink, and how evil a place to rest"(18:29)*

*-"Say O Muhammad: 'I have been bidden to worship the Sustainer of this City- Him who has made it sacred, and unto whom all things belong, and I have been bidden to be of those who surrender themselves to Him, and to convey this Quran to the world. Whoever, therefore, chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good, and if any wills to go astray say unto him 'I am only a warner!' And say: 'All praise is due to God! In time, He will make you see the truth of His messages and then you shall know them for what they are. And thy Sustainer is not unmindful of whatever you all may do" (27:91-93)*

*-"He who has denied the truth will have to bear the burden of his denial, whereas all who did what is right and just will have made goodly provision for themselves"(30:44)*

*-"He who made you inherit the earth, hence he who is bent on denying the truth, this denial of his will fall back upon him: for their persistent denial of this Truth does but add to the deniers' loathsomeness in their Sustainer's sight and thus, their denial of this truth does but add to the deniers' loss"(35:39)*

*-"Behold, from on high have we bestowed upon thee this divine writ, setting forth the truth for the benefit of all mankind. And whoever chooses to be guided thereby does so for his own good, and whoever chooses to go astray, goes but astray to his own hurt, and thou hast no power to determine their fate "(39:41)*

**(2) Guidance is from God, and it is done according to His will:**

*"It is not for thee, O Prophet, to make people follow the right path, since it is God alone who guides whom He wills"*(2:272)

*"How then could you be of two minds about the hypocrites, seeing that God has disowned them because of their guilt? Do you perchance seek to guide those whom God lets go astray - when for him whom God lets go astray thou canst never find any way?"*(4:88)

*"And had thy Sustainer so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained to faith: all of them: dost thou, then, think that thou couldst compel people to believe, notwithstanding that no human being can ever attain to faith otherwise than by God's leave, and that He who lays the loathsome evil of disbelief upon those who will not use their reason?"*(10:99-100)

*"Verily, thou canst guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills to be guided, and he is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided"*(28:56)

*"Is then he to whom the evil of his own doings is so alluring that in the end he regards it as good? For verily, God lets go astray him that wills to be guided, hence do not waste thyself in sorrowing over them: verily God has full knowledge of all that they do!"*(35:8)

**(3) Plurality and differences among people occur due to God's will, and He will judge people's differences in Resurrection Day:**

*"Verily, those who have attained to faith in this divine writ as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, the Christians, and the Sabians- all who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds- shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve"*(2:62)

*"Furthermore, the Jews assert 'the Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs ', while the Christians assert 'the*

*Jews have no valid ground for their belief ' – and both quote the divine writ! Even thus, like unto what they say, have always spoken those who were devoid of knowledge, but it is God who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ "(2:113)*

*-"Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other Prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves. And if others come to believe in the way you believe, they will indeed find themselves on the right path, and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and God will protect thee from them: for He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing "(2:136-137)*

*-"For every community faces a direction of its own, of which He is the focal point. Vie, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself, for verily, God has the power to will anything"(2:148)*

*-"Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and in that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other Prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves"(3:84)*

*-"And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community, but He willed otherwise, and so they continue to hold divergent views. All of them save those upon whom thy Sustainer has bestowed His grace. And to this end has He created them all. But as for those who refuse to avail themselves of divine guidance, that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled: most certainly will I*

*fill hell with invisible beings as well as humans, all together!"(11:118-119)*

*"Convey into others whatever of this divine writ has been revealed unto thee, and be constant in prayer, for ,behold, prayer restrains man from loathsome deeds and from all that runs counter to reason, and remembrance of God is indeed the greatest good, and God knows all that you do. And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelations otherwise than in a most kindly manner- unless it be such of them as are bent on evildoing. And say 'we believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto him that we surrender ourselves' "(29:45-46)*

*"Say: 'O God! Originator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is beyond the reach of a created beings' perception, as well as of all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind! It is Thou who wilt judge between Thy servants on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ!"(39:46)*

*"And on whatever you may differ, O believers, the verdict thereon rests with God. Say, therefore,' such is God, my Sustainer, in Him have I placed my trust, and unto Him do I always turn! "(42:10)*

*"Say: 'O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship which I worship[, and I will not worship that which you have worshipped, and neither will you worship that I worship, unto you your moral law, and unto me, mine!"(109:1-6)*

**(4) There is no worldly punishment for the charge of apostasy:**

*"Would you perchance ask of the apostle who has been sent unto you what was asked aforetime of Moses? But whoever chooses to deny the truth instead of believing in it has already strayed from the right path"(2:108)*

*"But if any of you should turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth-these it is whose works will go for*

*naught in this world and in the life to come, and these it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide"(2:217)*

*-"Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth after having attained to faith, and then grow ever more stubborn in their refusal to acknowledge the truth, their repentance shall not be accepted for it is they who have truly gone astray"(3:90)*

*-"Behold, as for those who come to believe and then deny the truth, and again come to believe and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth- God will not forgive them, nor will He guide them in any way "(4:137)*

*-"O you who have attained to faith! If you ever abandon your faith, God will in time bring forth in your stead people whom He loves and who love Him – humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth: people who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear to be censured by anyone who might censure them: such is God's favor, which He grants unto whom he wills, and God is infinite, all-knowing "(5:54)*

*-"The hypocrites swear to God that they have said nothing wrong; yet most certainly have they uttered a saying which amounts to a denial of the truth, and have thus denied the truth after having professed their self-surrender to God. For they were aiming at something which was beyond their reach, and they could find no fault with the faith save that God had enriched them and caused his apostle to enrich them out of His bounty. Hence, if they repent, it will be for their own good, but if they turn away, God will cause them to suffer grievous suffering in this world and in the life to come, and they will find no helper on earth and no one to give them succor "(9:74)*

*-" As for anyone who denies God after having once attained to faith- and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but only to him who willingly opens up his heart to a*

*denial of the truth: upon all such falls God's condemnation and tremendous suffering awaits them"(16:106)*

*-"Verily, those who turn their backs on this message after guidance has been vouchsafed to them, do it because Satan has embellished their fancies and filled them with false hopes"(47:25)*

It is noteworthy that these Quranic verses are better than the article in the text of the Egyptian Constitution written in 1923, which was the most liberal form of any Egyptian Constitutions ever written. This article was number twelve in the 1923 Constitution under the title "*the absolute liberty of belief*". The first phrasing of this article was done by a commissioned committee was "*the absolute liberty of religious belief*". Yet, Sheikh Bikheet, a member of this committee that phrased the 1923 Constitution, did not approve of this phrasing by saying "*This present phrasing of the article cannot be approved by any celestial religion, as it might lead to chaos and anarchy. I demand that the text of the article should be confined to the acknowledged religions, celestial and otherwise, to avoid the establishment of new religions or the emergence of someone claiming he is the awaited **Mahdi** (i.e. the 'guided one' who is awaited before the end of days to restore the reign of justice, according to Islamic beliefs) and tries to set up a new form of faith*". This suggestion was welcomed by his eminence Anba Johannes who said " This is a sound suggestion, for recently a man named Sergius rejected Christianity and tried to establish a new religion. He requested from the government a license for this, but his request was refused, and this was an evidence that the government cannot accept to license any religion except for those acknowledged by the state". Sheikh M. Khayrat Radi omitted the word '*religious*' from the first paragraph and the sentence was "*the absolute liberty of belief*" and explained, " Otherwise, anyone might reject one religion to embrace another without bearing civil or non-civil responsibility". Ibrahim El-Hilbawy wondered whether the word '*belief*' included religious belief or not, and Sheikh Bikheet answered him by affirming



that belief is something, while religion is a different matter; for Muslims were divided into 73 divisions, to each one its belief, but they have one religion - Islam. In the session dated 28-8-1922, Sheikh Bikheet said " to resolve this clash concerning the liberty of religion, I propose to omit the word '*religious*' from this article, and the sentence would be " *the absolute liberty of belief*" instead of " *the absolute liberty of religious belief*". This suggestion was unanimously agreed upon.

The State Council ruling concerning the Baha'is in 26-5-1952 is a manifestation of this article in the constitution. The committee said about it " This article protects Muslims who change their doctrine within Islam (Sunnite, Shiite ...etc.) and Christians who change their doctrine within Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism ...etc.), but does not protect Muslims who reject Islam, and makes them bear the civil or non-civil responsibility of their choice. This article does not tolerate that anyone might claim himself to be the proclaimed Messiah, Christ or the awaited El-Mahdi, nor even a new Prophet who preaches new religion and sacred book". Thus those who thought the sentence" *the absolute liberty of belief*" is stronger than the sentence " *the absolute liberty of religious belief*" are wrong, as the omission of the word '*religious*' means that liberty of *religious* belief is excluded. This explanation is still present in the current Egyptian Constitution, and this is exemplified in the ruling of the administrative court in the recent case of Baha'is, which is based on this explanation of the distinction between '*beliefs*' and '*religions*'\*\* .

The cited Quranic verses show explicitly three points: firstly; the liberty of *religious* belief, overlooked by the constitution, secondly; this liberty is absolute " ***...let then him who wills believe in it and let him who wills, reject it...***"(18:29), thirdly; the issue of belief and disbelief is an individual one, and the ruling regime should not interfere with it:

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\*\* See the book titled: *Sectarianism: To Where?* By Farag Fouda, PhD pages 40-42

**" Whoever chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good, and whoever goes astray, goes astray for his own hurt." (17:15).**

These Quranic verses are better manifested in the International Declaration of Human Rights, article no. 18.

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Contrary to the belief of some people, the policy and behavior of Prophet Muhammad were application of the Quranic verses. When Prophet Muhammad entered the city of Medina, there were tribes' leaders who had high stature due to their wealth or lineage, and some of them did not welcome Islam or Prophet Muhammad as Islam shook their high status of authority, and made all people equal before God. The leader of these people was Abdullah Ibn Obay of El-Khasraj tribe, and this tribe was preparing a crown to coronate him as their ruler, but with the advent of Islam, the ruler was Prophet Muhammad and his faithful believers.

Some people from this tribe joined the Jewish community in a pact against Prophet Muhammad with the purpose of laying obstacles before the new call and conspiring against it. Abdullah Ibn Obay withdrew third of the forces under his command when Prophet Muhammad decided to fight the polytheists in the battle of *Uhhud*, and he remained in Medina. One of the methods of these dissenters was to pretend that they were Muslims at one time, and then declare they are non-Muslims, with the purpose of shaking the faith of steadfast Muslims, and to spread rumors. This type of people was called the hypocrites, whose truth was revealed by God in many Quranic verses, and in the chapter of "The Hypocrites" in the Holy Quran.

What did Prophet Muhammad with those people about whom the Holy Quran says "***those who come to believe and then deny the truth, and again come to believe and again deny the truth, and thereafter grow stubborn in their denial of the truth***" (4:137)," ***they uttered a saying which amounts to a***

*denial of the truth, and have thus denied the truth after having professed their self-surrender to God "(9:74), and "Do not offer empty excuses! You have indeed denied the truth after having professed your belief in it"(9:66)?* These verses tell us about those who turned apostate, after their earlier conversion to Islam. Prophet Muhammad treated these people kindly, and when the son of Abdullah Ibn Obay suggested to Prophet Muhammad that he would kill his own father lest he should be killed by any other Muslim, which would make the son feel bitter, Prophet Muhammad said to him "No, we will treat him kindly".

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We find other examples of apostates in the era of Prophet Muhammad, who did not get punished or killed, and no one offered them a chance to return once more to Islam, in the two cultural messages titled "**Contemporary Salafism: The Destination**" and "**Who are The Sunnite?**" by M. Zaki Ibrahim, leader of "Tribe of Muhammad" group, and member of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs. Here are a few examples:

- There were many people in the era of Prophet Muhammad , individuals or groups, who deserted Islam after embracing it, and Prophet Muhammad did not fight them or ordered Muslims to kill them, although many of them deserted Islam many times, fluctuating between belief and disbelief.

- A man who used to write the holy revelation of the Quran, later deserted Islam, and after returning to paganism he said shamelessly that "Muhammad does not know except what I had written for him", and this statement is found in many earlier books of heritage, like El-Bukhary, among others. Yet, Prophet Muhammad did not punish him and let him live freely, and that man died in bed a natural death. (See also the book titled: "**El-Bari's Guide on the Hadiths Compiled by El-Bukhary** ").

- Twelve men deserted Islam in the era of Prophet Muhammad, and left Medina for Mecca, among them El-Harith Ibn Suwaid El-Ansari. Yet, Prophet Muhammad did not order

Muslims to kill them; he just recited this Quranic verse "*If one goes in search of a religion other than self-surrender unto God, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost*"(3:85).

- Obaidullah Ibn Gahsh deserted Islam after embracing it, as he immigrated to **Habasha** (what we call know Ethiopia) and converted to Christianity. Prophet Muhammad did not order Muslims to kill him, nor demanded his return from the king of **Habasha**.

- There were two young brothers, who converted to Christianity, and their father complained to Prophet Muhammad and said, "Shall I let my two sons go to Hell?" Prophet Muhammad did not tell him to kill them, but told him this Quranic verse '*There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from the way of error*'(2:256).

As for the Hadiths attributed to Prophet Muhammad, in which he said that Muslim blood should not be shed unless in three cases: punishment for murder, punishment for fornication committed by married people, and the renegades who shun their religion, community and work against them, most religious scholars, especially Ibn Taymiyya, said that what is meant by the renegades who shun their religion, community and work against them are those who fight against Islam after rejecting faith, but no one was ever killed just because he rejected faith.

The most powerful hadith cited on this issue is "*Anyone who rejects his faith should be killed*", but hadith-collector **El-Bukhary** accepts and mentions this hadith from the narration of '*Ekrema*', whereas hadith-collector **Muslim** rejects all Hadiths told by '*Ekrema*', saying he is not trustworthy, not to mention that this hadith is doubted because the behavior of Prophet Muhammad and his companions contradicted it. These companions later on did not accuse people of heresy who called to the doctrine of fatalism, i.e. God predestined every human being to a certain fate, and thus He made men different in belief and disbelief. Obedience and disobedience, like differences in other facial and bodily features, and man cannot control or

choose his fate. When leaders of these various philosophical doctrines died, they received Islamic burial and funeral.

Even the group of *Mu'tazila* were not considered infidel, although they claimed many things contrary to Islam: that the Holy Quran is a creature of God, those who committed major sins are in the in-between status of being a Muslim and a non-believer, those who committed major sins would be in Hell for eternity, God does not predestine human beings to sin as they are responsible for their sins, and finally that the Holy Quran is not the word of God but one of his creatures.

Even the group of *Murje'a* were not considered infidel, although they claimed many things contrary to Islam: faith is in the heart, not accompanied by good deeds, the mere belief in God and his Prophet Muhammad is enough in faith without prayers, and a believer is like angels and Prophets, i.e. in the same stature.

Even the group of *Gahmia* were not considered infidel, although they claimed many things contrary to Islam: there is no god on a throne to be worshipped, God did not reveal Holy Scriptures as His Word, and they denied the Night-Journey of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, and his ascension to Heaven. This group even denied the epithets of God mentioned in the Holy Quran, and Ibn Mubarak said, "We would better talk about the Jewish faith, and not about the doctrine of *Gahmia*". Yet, when the leader of *Gahmia* died, whose name is Gahm Ibn Safwan, and his secretary Ga'd Ibn Dirham died as well, they had Islamic funeral and burial, no one charged them of being infidels, polytheists or apostates. It is noteworthy that these groups, and the ones that came after and before them, are said to be from the 72 group that left the general, mainstream Muslims and condemned to Hell in the well-known hadith, if it is correct. Many scholars consider this hadith as a very weak one.

Ibn Taymiya said that Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal did not accuse these groups of heresy, and he prayed in the funerals of

some of the men in these groups, whom Ibn Taymiya described as "aberrant and deviant groups"<sup>††</sup>.

As for the so-called war of the renegades in the era of the caliph Abou Bakr, it is well known that most of the so-called *renegades* were believers who fasted and prayed, but they refused to pay *Zakat* (alms) and rejected the centralized power exemplified by the caliph Abou Bakr. Hence, this conflict was a military revolt against the state, while the renegade tribes revolted against the Islamic state as well, i.e., these conflicts were political and economic, not intellectual or related to faith.

#### **Fourth: Islam acknowledges the principle of calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones:**

Islam has highlighted the new principle of public work; i.e., calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones, and Islam considers this measure to be distinctive feature of the *Umma* of Islam. "*You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for the good of mankind, you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong*" (3:110). This principle precedes in some Quranic verses the mention of prayer and alms. "*And as for the believers, both men and women – they are close unto one another: they all enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostles. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace: verily God is almighty, wise!*" (9:71).

This principle of calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones is one of the guarantees of secularism as it is a license for the liberty of thought, and an affirmation of it. If this principle did not exist, it would be probable that many wrong deeds might infiltrate into societies without criticism or protest, and some wrong deeds might destroy liberty itself. Good deed, without this principle, might be rare or wrongly done without someone to rectify matters, and the general rule in the society would be "*it is none of my business*".

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<sup>††</sup> See the book titled "*Contemporary Salafism: To Where?*"

Yet, this principle might be misinterpreted and be a tool to abort the process of secularism, not a tool of guarantying it in Islamic societies. This misinterpreted view of this principle might be adopted by those who hold a unilateral vision and the motto "one, unified stance", and hence this misinterpreted view might be a lethal weapon that would be brandished to terrorize those who hold different views. This might not be very harmful if confined only to the intellectual level (i.e. verbally, like in the well-known hadith: "*If anyone of you sees a wrong deed, one should try to change it by hands, if one cannot, then by tongue, if one cannot, then by heart, this is the weakest form of asserting faith*"). Some people leave the intellectual, *verbal* level and move on to the level of action or '*hands*' and might resort to violence in the name of faith.

The phrasing of this well-known hadith, which is the basis of this tendency, differs from the phrasing of many Quranic verses, which calls for doing good deeds and forbidding wrong ones, whereas the hadith includes change by three levels. This different phrasing surely has proper justification.

In our view, this hadith includes change by '*hands*' in certain cases that leave no room for other alternatives; e.g. when someone tries to commit a crime like arson, beating an animal mercilessly, or committing suicide, then others inevitably have to stop this sort of crimes by hand or force. Some religious scholars wrongly believe that the change by '*hands*' means one's authority on others that gives one the right to chastise them, e.g., the patriarchal authority of a father on his son, or a husband on his wife. Yet, Prophet Muhammad had never beaten any one, wife or servant.

In our view, the interpretation of this hadith should be within the context of many Quranic verses that define the means of conveying God's message by Prophets. We have mentioned some of these verses earlier, especially the ones that tell Prophet Muhammad not to be sad by the adamant refusal of the polytheists, and that he should try to gain believers by many different ways. It is unconceivable that any Muslim, from common people or rulers, might be ardently careful to protect

Islam more than Prophet Muhammad himself, or might do things that transgress the limits of Quranic teachings directed to Prophet Muhammad himself

Not all these levels might be absorbed by those who want to change things using action or *hands*, unless they have deep knowledge of the human psyche, but such comprehensive knowledge is very rare, and most people do not have but recklessness and zeal. These Quranic verses exemplify the principle of calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones, by using one's tongue and heart, and never resorting to one's hands; i.e., by force, except when necessary, in the cases we mentioned before, otherwise resorting to force or violence would be contrary to the spirit of the Quranic verses. The one who is calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones by force or violence would not be more caring about Islam than Prophet Muhammad who was commissioned to convey the message of Islam and accordingly would have been more passionate and determined to lead people to the righteous path. Yet, the Quranic verses tell him the following "***Although thou art not accountable for his failure to attain to purity***" (80:7).

These Quranic verses explain the application and control of the principle of calling for doing the right deeds and forbidding wrong ones. This would ease the formidable task of differentiating between the objective willingness to make a change or a difference, and inherent personal feelings and impressions, mingled with the desire of assuming authority, due to pride and arrogance, though pride is one of the seven deadly sins. Trying to impart the personal matter a public quality is considered a type of hypocrisy that crept into the human psyche.

#### **Fifth: Islam acknowledges pluralism:**

Islam calls for pluralism, which is a feature of secular society, in many Quranic verses. This feature present in the Quranic verses was overlooked by ancient and contemporary Islamic writers, and some even called for things contrary to it, claiming that Islam, as the religion of the oneness of God, it assumes the oneness of everything; i.e., one God, one *Umma*



(Islamic nation), one doctrine, one party, one leader...etc. These writers overlooked that Islam acknowledges *only* the oneness of God, while acknowledges pluralism otherwise. Muslims proclaim, "There is no god but God, He has no partners", but otherwise, ironically, Islamic society is pluralistic, and consequently secular in nature. The very first Islamic society in El-Medina set by Prophet Muhammad in the document of *El-Muwada'a* was a pluralistic society that considered *Al-Muhajireen* (immigrants), *Al-Ansar* (supporters), and the Jewish community that supported people of El-Medina, as one Umma, where Muslims and Jews lived peacefully side by side, and everyone kept to one's religion. This ideal society would have been prospered, but for the Jews who reneged on their promises and pledges with Prophet Muhammad.

We acknowledge that this trend was not followed in later eras. Some sort of narrow fanaticism in Islamic societies prevailed and imposed 'oneness' in the sense that Muslims isolated themselves apart from others, as well as the fact that followers of every Islamic doctrine isolated themselves from the rest of Muslims; e.g., the Shiites isolated themselves from the Sunnites. Yet, not all this is attributed to Islam; on the contrary, these are influences of corruption that crept to the Islamic society and distorted many things such as the concepts of oneness, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Islamic rule, and the position of women...etc.

As for the Islamic society described in the Holy Quran:

*"And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but He willed it otherwise in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie then with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return, and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ" (5:48). "And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community, but He willed otherwise, and so they continue to hold divergent views. All of them save those upon whom thy Sustainer has bestowed His grace. And*

***to this end has He created them all. But as for those who refuse to avail themselves of divine guidance, that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled: most certainly will I fill hell with invisible beings as well as humans, all together!"(11:118-119)***

It is noteworthy that later Islamic societies in history, though did not follow pluralism per se, but welcomed the non-Islamic communities, and allowed its existence, granting them freedom of faith and protection in return for the tribute, which was a meager sum of money, but non-Muslim old people, women, and children were exempted from it. This rare image is considered 'advanced' in comparison to the conditions of Europe in the same eras, when European societies did not tolerate pluralism and eradicated Islam from lands they conquered. These European societies did not even tolerate pluralism within Christianity itself, hence the wars between the Catholics and the Protestants in the Middle Ages in Europe, that has remnants in Ireland in the present day.

This kind of tolerance in Islamic societies was based on the Quranic teachings that urge Muslims to believe in the previous celestial religions, and Prophets of ancient times, as exemplified in many verses:

***"Verily, those who have attained to faith in this divine writ as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, the Christians, and the Sabians- all who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds- shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve"(2:62)***

***"Furthermore, the Jews assert 'the Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs ', while the Christians assert 'the Jews have no valid ground for their belief ' – and both quote the divine writ! Even thus, like unto what they say, have always spoken those who were devoid of knowledge, but it is God who will judge between them on Resurrection Day with regard to all on which they were wont to differ "(2:113)***

*- "Say: we believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and in that which has been bestowed upon Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been vouchsafed to all the other Prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them, and it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves"(3:84)*

*- "And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community, but He willed otherwise, and so they continue to hold divergent views. All of them save those upon whom thy Sustainer has bestowed His grace. And to this end has He created them all. But as for those who refuse to avail themselves of divine guidance, that word of thy Sustainer shall be fulfilled: most certainly will I fill hell with invisible beings as well as humans, all together!"(11:118-119)*

*- "Say: 'Who is it that provides for you sustenance out of the heavens and the earth?' Say: 'It is God. And behold, either we, who believe in Him, or you, who deny His oneness, are on the right path, or have clearly gone astray! Say: 'Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor we be called to account for whatever you are doing "(34:24-25)*

*- "Say: 'O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship which I worship[, and I will not worship that which you have worshipped, and neither will you worship that I worship, unto you your moral law, and unto me, mine!'"(109:1-6)*

The Holy Quran speaks fairly about Christians and Jews, and in an objective manner that should be taught as a lesson on unbiased fairness. The Holy Quran denounces the adamant fanaticism of the Jews, yet it acknowledges that some Jewish people are virtuous:

- *"And among the followers of earlier revelation there is many a one who, if thou entrust him with a treasure, will faithfully restore it to thee; and there is among them many a one who, if thou entrust him with a tiny gold coin, will not restore it to thee unless thou keep standing over him- which is an outcome of their assertion " No balm can attach to us for anything we may do with regard to these unlettered folk" and so they tell a lie about God, being well aware that it is a lie" (3:75)*

- *"But they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation there are upright people who recite God's messages throughout the night and prostrate themselves before Him. They believe in God and the Last Day, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him"(3:113-115)*

- *"And, behold, among the followers of earlier revelation there are indeed such as truly believe in God, and in that which has been bestowed upon you as well as in that which has been bestowed upon them. Standing in awe of God, they do not barter away God's messages for a trifling gain. They shall have their reward with their Sustainer- for, behold, God is swift in reckoning!"(3:199)*

- *"Thou wilt surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who believe in this divine writ are the Jews as well as those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God; and thou wilt surely find that, of all people, they who say "Behold, we are Christians" come closest to feeling affection for those who believe in this divine writ: this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance. For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, thou canst see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth, and they say: "O our*

***Sustainer! We do believe: make us one, then with all who bear witness to the truth"(5:82-83)***

The Holy Quran says with wonder how the Jews called upon Prophet Muhammad to judge among them:

- "***But how is it that they ask thee for judgment – seeing that they have the Torah, containing God's injunctions...***"(5:43)

The Holy Quran speaks about the Bible:

- "***...the Gospel, wherein there was guidance and light, confirming the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah , and as a guidance and admonition unto the God-conscious***"(5:46)

- "***Let , then, the followers of the Gospel judge in accordance with what God has revealed therein: for they who do not judge in the light of what God has bestowed from on high- it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!***"(5:47)

The Holy Quran admonishes the faithful to leave the judgment of other people to God alone: "***Now those people have passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned, and you will not be judged on the strength of what they did***"(2:134), "***Verily, thy Sustainer alone is fully aware as to who has strayed from His path...***"(68:7)

The Holy Quran says plainly:

- "***O you who have attained to faith! It is but for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you are on the right path...***"(5:105)<sup>‡‡</sup>

- "***Now those people have passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned, and you will not be judged on the strength of what they did***"(2:134)

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<sup>‡‡</sup> Some of the Prophet Muhammad's companions misinterpreted this Quranic verse, and supposed that it calls for doing good deeds and keeping away from bad ones, but Prophet Muhammad told them it speaks about Christians and Jews. Yet, this interpretation did not reach all the companions as the misinterpretation continued till the era of Abou Bakr (see *Musnad* of imam Ibn Hanbal)

*- "Say : " Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing"(34:25)*

*- "...thy Sustainer is fully aware as to who has strayed from His path, and fully is He as to who follows His guidance"(53:30)*

*- "Verily, thy Sustainer alone is fully aware as to who has strayed from His path, just as He alone is fully aware of those who have found the right way"(68:7)*

### **Six: the principle of the original innocence:**

Islam acknowledges this principle of the original innocence, a principle that is very significant, and it is the most precious expressions in the Islamic thought. Its significance is not confined to the aspect of allowing or forbidding things; but it expresses the Islamic understanding of Mankind and the human nature. According to this principle, the human being is originally innocent, but might occasionally sin if conditions and motivations are set in a certain manner. This is exemplified in the story of Adam in the Holy Quran. God created Adam, breathed soul into him, granted him knowledge, made him lodge in Paradise, created Eve for him; thus Adam lived in a state of innocence for a period. Satan managed to deceive Adam, made him sin, but he repented, and God granted him his forgiveness. *"Thereupon Adam received words of guidance from his Sustainer, and he accepted his repentance, for verily He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace "(2:37).* Whether Adam's repentance was from these words from God, or from the original innocence that led him to know that he had sinned, and then to repent, then he received words of God, all these lead to the same conclusion, which is the return to innocence, and repentance of sins. Innocence is the original status of human beings, whereas sin is accidental.

The *Sunna* asserts this idea presented in the Holy Quran, and its primary notion before religious scholars phrase the term 'the original innocence', as Prophet Muhammad spoke about "natural disposition". this term has the same connotations of the

term 'the original innocence', and Prophet Muhammad asserts that Islam is the religion of the natural disposition, and every human is born in an innocent state, but non-Muslim parents convert their progeny to their religion, be they Magian or Jewish...etc.

The *Sunna* did not coin the term '*natural disposition*', but it is a Quranic expression as in: "...*the natural disposition which God has instilled into Man...*"(30:30).

This accommodation of Islam to the human nature grants human beings liberty of taking the first step toward repentance and makes them confident that God will forgive them without the interference of priesthood. This feature of Islam supports the individual and the society, and leads to liberating human beings from any inhibitions. Human beings in Islam are innocent, but liable to err, and the innocence is linked in Islam to the natural disposition.

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The principle of the original innocence entails that originally all things are lawful, and exceptions are due to incidental reasons; for instance, the following verse shows that forbidding of things in Islam is the exception and originally all things are lawful: "*All food was lawful unto the children of Israel, save what Israel had mad unlawful*"(3:93). This lawfulness in Islamic terms resembles the expression of liberty in modern writings.

The Quranic verses show explicitly that unlawful things are not so many, and assert that God solely has the right to forbid things or make them lawful. The Quranic verses denounce those who give themselves this right, and forbid many things and lie to God and say that their forbidding of things is according to God's teachings:

*-It is not of God's ordaining that certain kinds of cattle should be marked out by superstition and set aside from the use of man, yet those who are bent on denying the truth*

*attribute their own lying inventions to God, and most of them never use their reason"(5:103)*

*-"Say: "Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?" Say : " They are lawful in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith- to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day. Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of innate knowledge! "(7:32)*

*-"Hence, do not utter falsehoods by letting your tongues determine at your discretion: "This is lawful and this is forbidden", thus attributing your own lying inventions to God, for, behold, they who attribute their lying inventions to God will never attain to a happy state! "(16:116)*

*-"Say: " Have you ever considered all the means of sustenance which God has bestowed upon you from on high- and which you thereupon divide into things forbidden and things lawful? Say: "Has God given you leave to do this- or do you perchance attribute your own guesswork to God?" "(10:59)*

There are many other Quranic verses that advise people to hold into the lawful, good things, to eat and drink without excess, and to beautify themselves when they enter mosques...etc.

In order to limit the number of unlawful things, the Holy Quran forbids questioning that lead to increasing of the number of unlawful things: *"O you who have attained to faith! Do not ask about matters which if they were to be made manifest to you in terms of law might cause you hardship, for, if you should ask about them while the Quran is being revealed, they might be made manifest to you as laws. God has absolved you from any obligation in this respect: for God is much forgiving, forbearing. People before your time have indeed asked such questions- and in result thereof have come to deny the truth "(5:101-102)*

The *Sunna* affirms the same notion, as Prophet Muhammad said in his *hadith*, *"Do not pose many questions on*



*what I have said to you; earlier people were doomed because they used to argue with their Prophets. If I ordered you to do something, then try to do it as much as you can, and if I forbid you from doing something, then do not do it "*.

In another **hadith**: "*What is lawful in the Book of God is allowed, and what is forbidden is unlawful, what is not mentioned is not unlawful and therefore it was not mentioned on purpose, and we should accept this grace of God, for God does not forget*". This wonderful hadith is great in its meaning and intention, clarifying in the graceful expression "*...we should accept this grace of God...*" The meaning manifested in the above-mentioned Quranic verses.

The meaning of this **hadith** was repeated in another one: "*What is forbidden and what is lawful are both mentioned in the Book of God, and what is intentionally overlooked is lawful*". Prophet Muhammad asserted – and he is the one commissioned by God to convey His message – that what is forbidden or declared lawful, both are written in the Book of God- the Holy Quran.

There is another **hadith** that affirms the same meaning : "*God has ordained certain injunctions, do not neglect them, set limits, do not transgress them, forbidden things, do not commit the forbidden things, and overlooked some things on purpose to have mercy upon you, so do not ask about them*".

Here is a last one: "*the wicked of all Muslims is the one who keeps questioning something that has not declared unlawful, but due to his questioning was declared unlawful*" (this **Hadith** is mentioned in the books of **Hadiths** of El-Bukhary and Imam Muslim).

**Lastly: Islam is a religion and a nation, not a religion and a state:**

What is strongly link Islam and secularism is what we reached by our **Ijtihad** (point of view), which is that Islam is a religion and a *nation*, not a religion and a *state*. It is know that the essence of secularism is the separation between the state and

religion, and this recent *Ijtihad* agrees with the essence of secularism.

This *Ijtihad* is based on the fundamental premise that authority corrupts ideology. The state owns authority, and accordingly, it might corrupt the ideology of Islam. This happened historically when the idea of selecting wise rulers in the early era of Islam was replaced by the system of hereditary caliphate or monarchism, this brought many problems in the Islamic societies.

This matter is not related to Islam exclusively, but includes as well all values like Christian or socialist values. In another book published by us on this subject, we have mentioned in a detailed chapter, how that the Christian authority turned the religion of love into the horrible inquisition courts. In another chapter, we have mentioned how authority turned socialism, which was the hope of workers, into a scourge that whipped workers, and into a totalitarian state that established the foundations of the totalitarian rule, absorbed by Hitler and Mussolini, as a general principle. Secularism is right in the idea of separating religion and the state.

This does not mean that the state in the Islamic *Umma* is secular, as there are a large number of factors that impose themselves in Islamic societies, and make the position of the state relatively different in comparison to the Western states.

No doubt that Islam has set social, political and economical principles of the welfare of society, but these principles are not presented to the 'state', for the term never appears in the Quranic text, but to the *Umma*, a term mentioned about 50 times in the Quranic text.

In politics, Islam forbids injustice and tyranny, and calls for justice and consultation. In economy, Islam forbids usury, hoarding wealth without spending and exploitation, and calls for *Zakat* (giving alms). In the social sphere, Islam calls for equality, and that no Arab is better than non-Arab or vice-versa except in the criteria of piety and devoutness.

It is taken for granted that a democratic state is the one that is responsive to its nation and rule according to the will of

its nations. If this nation happens to be Muslim, there must be responsiveness and sympathy especially that Islam is deeply rooted in the psyche of its believers, and it is unconceivable that the state would assume a neutral position. In sum, the state should not undertake to perform Islamic duties and assume Islamic identity; yet, this does not mean that the state would be secular, as it could not be neutral to the sentiments of its nation.

Western states managed to be secular because religion does not assume a high status in the psyche of European people at present, especially that Christianity is not concerned with worldly matters, and did not present major outlines, as in Islam, that regulate *Zakat*, and forbid tyranny, usury, injustice...etc. The faith, which is deeply rooted in the American/European societies, is paganism, which was a legacy of the Greco-Roman civilizations, which was one of the greatest components of modern civilization. The state institution in Europe, though secular, it rules by the faith deeply rooted in the European mindset, i.e., the deification of the human being. That is why secularism is compatible with the psyche of the European nations. In sum, the state institution in Europe and America sympathizes with the church, but it is independent from it, but this independence does not mean neutrality. There are instances when the state institution Europe and America supports many churches and assumes a hostile attitude toward other religions and calls, e.g., it supports the Zionism even at the expense of the liberty of thought, which constitutes the cornerstone in any secular democratic state.

Some writers would convey the impression that Western states are one hundred percent secular, but the truth is what we have mentioned before.

Hence, we cannot describe the state in an Islamic nation as *secular*, but the proper epithet would be *civil*, as the states of Islamic nations are civil ones that do not perform Islamic duties, rather civil duties like education, medical services, economical development...etc. Besides, this state cannot ignore the will of its nation, which wants to apply certain Islamic guidelines. The

state has no option except complying with the will of its nation as the nation, and not the state, is the source of authorities.

This is the inevitable democratic route.

The term '*civil state*' bridges the gap between secularism, which is neutral toward religion, and the religious state that makes worldly realm in the service of religion. At the same time, this does not contradict the main principle of democracy: the *Umma*, and not the state, is the source of all authorities.

To achieve this, our constitution should remove the statement: "*Islam is the religion of the state*" and the principle that the *Sharia* (Islamic jurisprudence) is the main source of legislature, as this might harm the civil nature that is required to the state. Such statements could be used by Islamist cliques that misinterpret Islam and might impose on the state what would oppose the liberty of belief and requirements of development and general welfare of society, not to mention that such statements provoke Coptic sensitivities. These real threats may paralyze the civil nature of the state. It is a deeply rooted myth in the Islamic thought that the state is the defender of faith. This false notion is not confined to Muslims, as Europeans believe in it as well, and some European monarchs are referred to as defenders of faith, yet, Europeans learned the lesson of development, while Muslims dwell in the old myth.

In our book titled "**Islam As a Religion and a Nation, Not a Religion and a State**", we explained that it is profitable to Islam that the state would give up the mission of defending it, as this would lead to nothing but evil and doom.

### **The scope of secularism in Islam:**

Do the above-mentioned facts mean that Islam is secular as in the secularism in European societies?

Islam agrees with secularism in the separation between authority (government) and religion. Although Islamists would object to this, but the truth is that modern views on separating religion and government are sound and approved by Islam, as Islam is based on wisdom and good advice, and its real principle is *faith*, which cannot be forced upon hearts. There is no room

for faith amidst burdens of authority and its corrupting nature, which sometimes relies on terrorizing or artificiality. The natural, permanent place of faith is the *Umma*.

Yet, secularism has a side that is contrary to Islam, and this side has nothing to do with the state. This side is the fact that European secularism means sometimes worldly, mundane existence; i.e., confining oneself to life in this world while denying, overlooking, or being indifferent to the life in the Hereafter, to the extent that one denies the existence of God. This atheist attitude is mentioned in the Holy Quran: "***And yet they say: 'There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time destroys us. But of this they have no knowledge whatever: they do nothing but guess'***"(45:24), "***And yet, whenever God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who will not believe in the life to come contract with bitter aversion- whereas, when those imaginary powers are mentioned side by side with Him, lo, they rejoice!***"(39:45).

Secularism in the sense of devoting oneself to this worldly life and denying the existence of the Hereafter is contrary to Islam. Islam believes in the Hereafter, reckoning, reward, and punishment in the Resurrection Day...etc. and this fact compels us to say that Islam has a civil nature, and it agrees with secularism in the notion of separating religion and the state, but it opposes the notion of denying the Hereafter and the existence of God.

It is well known that religious values (Christian or Islamic) do not agree with the confining secularism to worldly affairs. There is huge difference between a society whose members do not differentiate between the profane and the sacred, and do not care for anything but their own interests to achieve the utmost degree of free enjoyment, and a society that sticks to values which differentiate between good and evil, committing the human being to restrain and control lusts and individual demands. The major point here is that as long as religions call for wisdom and good advice, and leaving what belongs to Caesar, to Caesar, then this call is useful to form a

state of balance to control lusts and excessive, chaotic freedom. Dialectic coexistence is easy to formulate between secularism and religions, which would be based on complementarity, which necessitates that the thesis and antithesis would form synthesis.

There is a difference between Islam and Christianity exemplified in their stances toward sexual relations. Christianity is influenced by the thought and attitude of St. Paul, the actual founder of Christianity, and it sees sexual relations in light of mere bodily lust. Since sexual desire is a dominant instinct, abstaining from it means craving and burning with this desire, and St. Paul had to accept marriage but with certain limits – one wife, and forbidding divorce...etc.

But in Islam, we perceive a more secular view, as it sees sexual desire as instinct created by God to preserve the human being from the danger of extinction, and one who has sex within lawful boundaries of marriage would be rewarded in the Hereafter, while the one who has illicit sex would be penalized in the Hereafter. The dominant notion in Islam is the idea of regulation and control, and Islam. Islam legalizes polygamy and divorce with certain conditions, and contracting marriages should be based on mutual consent.

This complies more with the human nature, unlike Christianity that forbids polygamy and divorce, and has to face illicit sexual relationships that replaced holy matrimony we find in Islamic societies. Eventually, many Western states legalized divorce despite the disapproval of the church.

Islam agrees with secularism in the point that it refuses theocratic rule, as ruling is a political contract, as if Islam has realized the *social contract* centuries before it is described by Jean Jacque Rousseau.

The only exception that mixed religion with rule is the followers of the Shiite doctrine that made their imams infallible rulers and formed a religious institution that has its own references and sources. This goes against what mainstream Muslims agreed on, and may lead to the establishment of theocratic rule, which prevents the emergence of secularism. This opposition was apparent long ago, when Ibn Taymiya was

prompted to write his book on the legitimate politics to refute the ideas of Ibn El-Motahar El-Hally, who belonged to the Shiite imams' doctrine.

Mainstream Muslims refused the Shiite doctrine and the theocratic rule.

Yet, the Shiite state when it reappeared in the modern era, when the Khomeini revolution succeeded, it underwent a process of revision and correction to remove old unsuitable traditions and adapt to spirit of modernity.

Rule is not the only one that is based on contracting, for most economical activities are based on contracting, as well as marriage – despite its private nature- whose essence is a civil contract, which is based on mutual consent, among other additional conditions, excluding conducting marriages in a church by a priest.

Islam does not call us to overlook our share in life **"...without forgetting thine own rightful share in this world"(28:77), "Say: 'Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?' Say: 'They are lawful in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith- to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day'. Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of innate knowledge! "(7:32).** Islam forbids monasticism and abstinence from things made lawful by God in this world, but Islam is not confined to life in this world – as we see in secularism – as it cares for life in the Hereafter as well. Hence, Islam calls people to care for both lives – in this world, and the next world. One should work in this life as if one never dies, and work for his life to come as if one would die the next day. There is no contradiction in this except what might lead to any form of transgression. If this transgression is in the human behavior, Islam has certain mechanisms for atonement, repentance, and asking God's forgiveness – i.e. doing good deeds so that God forgive one for committing evil ones. If this transgression is related to society, there are means of punishment to deter wrongdoers, but

punishments should not be exacted in the name of injustice or exploitation, as Islam orders them in the name of justice.

From this presentation, we see the common points between Islam and secularism, especially in what is related to secularism of rule.

### **Three aspects to be taken into consideration**

After the objective study of the relation between Islam and secularism, we see three aspects that should be taken into consideration; firstly, the scope of the purity in European secularism; secondly, the specific nature of Egypt and the Arab world; thirdly, the results of applying secularism in the Western society in the modern age.

#### **A) The scope of the purity in European secularism:**

In-depth studies on the modern European society reveal that this society has rejected the celestial religion, and has made up an earthly one. The modern European society denied the existence of God, the One mentioned in Christianity and Islam, and believed in other gods and idols brought by the movies, ruling systems, arts, and sports. Hence, the modern European society is not wholly secular in reality, as this secular mode is directed only to ancient religions. In contrast, the stance of the modern European society toward the new rising powers is the stance of a believer who worships these powers. Human beings naturally were neither gods nor creators of themselves or other things on earth, but they are the deputized creatures to own and use all things on earth, and these things have to have a Creator. Human beings' rejection of the idea of God happened in the ancient world and the modern one. In ancient Greece, poets created the set of gods on Mount Olympus, and wrote legends and literature on these gods, whose names were later given to Modern Europe. In ancient Rome, Roman emperors became gods, and the Roman senate used to 'appoint' those who deify the emperor from the great men of Rome. Before these



civilizations, ancient Egypt was full of different gods: the god of the Nile, another of the sun...etc. All this was justified by feeling the innate need to have a Creator. The Holy Quran refers to this in a symbolic style: "***And whenever thy Sustainer brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: 'Am I not your Sustainer?' – To which they answer: 'Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!' Of this, We remind you, lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Verily, we were unaware of this'***"(7:172).

Accordingly, once the secular West rejected the interference of religion in the society, it allowed the existence of other idols from within this society to fill the vacuum, like movies stars and famous people (e.g. when Rudolf Valentino died, many women around the four corners of the modern world committed suicide). Pin-ups of these famous heroines and heroes do exist in the walls and wallets of young people. These heroes include movie stars and sportspeople who get millions for their matches that make people glued to the TV screens, and they are more famous than scientists, ministers, or even presidents. In socialist societies that revolted against such 'bourgeois' idols, there are other gods. For instance, Lenin who was mummified and buried in a tomb that is similar to a Pharaonic pyramid, and children stand in rows in the severe cold of winter to look at him. Similar position was given to Stalin, Mao Tse-tong, and Ho Chi Minh. There are millions of Chinese young people, who regard the Red Book of Mao Tse-tong as their holy book, as it got more popular than the Bible, and there are huge statues erected to honor these tyrants, and they are more colossal than statues of Ramses II and other Pharaoh kings and queens. Socialist societies rejected the worship of God, and it was considered something backward, created by the injustices of capitalism. Hence, the worship of individual replaced the worship of God, and this kind of worship has its own priests and clergy. There is no difference among the Politburo, cardinals of the Pope in Rome, and Ayatollah in the city of Qom.

These variations resemble the religious faith that was supposed to be contradictory to secularism, but in fact, these variations of strong quasi-religious beliefs flourished in all secular settings, be it socialist or capitalist, and the gods of such beliefs had their own hell and paradise in this world, not in the life to come. This paradise appealed to all secular idols like movie stars, sportspeople...etc. and it appealed as well to tyrant rulers who control destinies. This hell of these idols tormented workers in the inferno of the capitalist exploitation, before workers managed to form unions. This hell of these idols made the corrupt retinue of rulers in communist Russia and Nazi Germany throw the masses in prisons or concentration camps to work in forced, unpaid labor within vile conditions and in diabolical methods, far worse than the methods used by ancient Romans.

Thus, the modern Western society rejected Christianity but worshipped new idols and gods that it believed they would offer it pleasure or wretchedness. These idols were created by this society itself, as they bore the worldly quality, and this new 'religion' was nurtured in the midst of secularism.

We cannot apply the experience of European rejection of Christianity, when it adopted secularism, to our society, and claim that adoption of secularism might endanger Islam, *for two reasons*. *The first reason* is that the European society had many different theological doctrines and churches of many denominations. Even followers of one sect, i.e. the puritans, were those who immigrated to North America to flee persecution and to establish the new city of 'Zion', and these puritans were fundamentalists. The spread of Protestantism in Germany led to the flourishing of Christianity and the emergence of many religious groups and Christian political parties. Hence, we should not take for granted that adoption of secularism led to rejection of Christianity or religion in general.

*The second reason* is more profound and serious; which is that Christianity has included the Torah, i.e. the Old Testament, in the Bible. The Torah deeply influenced the European society, as it contains a kind of mythology that is

filled with chronicles of wars, gods and goddesses, kings and queens, plots and intrigues, romances and sexual content. Greek mythology deeply influenced the European psyche and prepared it to accept the Hebrew one. Most European poets, writers, artists, and leaders were deeply influenced by the Hebrew mythology that contained gory events of wars, struggles, romances...etc. which paved the way to sympathize with Zionism that aim at occupying lands between the River Nile and the River Euphrates. Even Balfour, British Prime Minister Lloyd George, and American president Wilson supported the Zionist project on the basis of the claimed promise of God to Abraham and his progeny (i.e. the Jews) thousand of years ago to own these lands. Why would a secular country (Britain) establish a state (the Hebrew one) on a religious basis?

Another impact of the 'Hebrew mythology' (the name we called on the Torah in our book titled "**Islam as a Religion and a Nation, Not a Religion and a State**") was in the USA. It is exemplified in the emergence of Jewish/Christian fundamentalism (or rather Zionist Christianity) which called for the necessity of the Jewish presence in Palestine to pave the way for the Second Coming of Christ. The last four American presidents believed in this myth. The American support for Israel, which is the Hebrew state that is based on racial discrimination and religious one, is the evidence to prove the weak, shaky nature of the American secularism.

In France, the country of liberties and the French Revolution, the French government issued a law to ban any mention of the Nazi Holocaust that purportedly exterminated six millions of Jews. The French law prosecuted and condemned the French thinker, philosopher, and leader Roger Garaudy when he violated this cultural taboo.

### **B) The specific nature of Egypt and the Arab world:**

Callers of secularism should fully know the religious nature of Egypt and the Arab world, and the impact of this nature on accepting the notion of secularism. This is the region,

where Prophets of God were commissioned to convey the divine message, and people of this region in turn conveyed this message to the rest of the world. Since the early history of this region, especially Egypt, religion was the most significant feature of society, from which jurisprudence, rule, morals, conventions, traditions and customs were derived. The religion of the ancient Egyptians left us a legacy of pyramids, temples, and obelisks that now ornate some squares in Europe and America. In the Coptic era, the two leaders of early Christianity in Egypt were in Alexandria, i.e., Arius and Athanasius, and religion was the axis of resistance of Copts against the Byzantine rule, though Christian, but its doctrine differed from the one adopted by the Coptic Church. In the Islamic era, Egypt, under the banner of Islam, won victory over the crusaders and freed Jerusalem. Egypt saved the Middle East from the invasion of the Tartars, when it won victory over them in the Battle of Ayn Jalut.

In the modern era, sheikhs of Al-Azhar Mosque were the leaders of the popular resistance against Napoleon and then Kléber. They shook off the Turkish rule in 1805 when they refused the Turkish governor and appointed Muhammad Ali Pasha as governor of Egypt, when he pledged to rule according to Islamic jurisprudence and justice.

Al-Azhar Mosque remained the platform of the national call that led to the revolution of 1919. This is the place where Nasser declared the beginning of the struggle against 1956 aggression. In times of Prayers, the TV stops its transmission to present the prayer call (*azan*) followed by a presentation of one *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad. Life in Islamic nations takes another form in the holy month of Ramadan. Feasts and holidays are originally Islamic ones (e.g. the Lesser Bairam, the Greater Bairam, the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, the beginning of a new Hegira year in the Islamic calendar...etc.) these festivities are kept even by governments that have no Islamic orientation, only under the pressure to gain popularity among common people and to gratify the masses.

Pioneers of the renaissance period in Egypt, also known as the enlightenment period, were in El-Azhar Mosque, like Sheikh El-Tahtawy, Ali Mubarak, and Ahmed Orabi. The Egyptian society's reawakening was due to the call of Gamal El-Deen El-Afghani and his assiduous work in Egypt for eight years in El-Azhar Mosque, and his Azharite disciple Sheikh Muhammad Abdou. The latter had disciples like Saad Zaghloul, the pioneer of Egyptian liberalism, and Qassim Amin, the leader of the movement of the liberation of women. It is known as well that Taha Hussien and Ali Abdel-Raziq were educated in El-Azhar as well.

Pioneers of enlightenment did not denounce Islam; on the contrary, they declared their deep respect for Islam, the Holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad. This includes contemporary callers of secularism like late Farag Fouda, and Nasr Hamid Abou Zayd. The late novelist and journalist Ihsan Abdel-Quddous the owner of the magazine *Rose El-Yusuf* said: "*I live as a Muslim, and my public and private lives are influenced by Islam. When I do something right, that is because Islam guided my way, and when I err, that is because I failed to follow the teachings of Islam*"<sup>§§</sup>. The Nobel-laureate novelist Naguib Mahfouz said in El-Ahram newspaper issue of 11-11-1994 in his word on the project of civilizations: "*to sum my opinion, the project of civilizations should be based on Islam and its development and dialogue with other civilizations*". We will mention in the next chapter on nationalism, words of Coptic Christians on Islam. It is noteworthy that when leaders of Marxism criticize Islamic trends, they say that these trends have nothing to do with 'mainstream, genuine Islam', as if they are defending Islam in a certain way.

This basic truth differs radically to religious indifference in Europe, as well as the vehement attack against religion by communists who call it the opium of the masses, or by scientists of sociology and history who cast doubts on the existence of Christ itself, and the dubious history of the church.

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<sup>§§</sup> See the magazine *Sabah El-Kheir*, page 9, issue of 17-1-1991 AD, 1<sup>st</sup> Ragab 1411 AH

No honest thinker can overlook the signs of this basic truth, as what is de rigueur in Europe differs from what is de rigueur in the Arab world.

**C) The results of applying secularism in the Western society:**

The glitter of progress, wealth, luxury, the spread of arts and literature, the high standard of living and the other manifestations of beauty makes researchers blind to see the other side of the coin. The societies of Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, the USA and Russia under the reign of czars had one common starting point to achieve progress: the looting and plundering of the East.

Britain and Spain exterminated the peaceful Indian tribes to seize their lands, throughout two centuries abducted 100 millions of Africans, as if they were beasts, and shipped them in huge floating prisons. The third of this number died during the journey to America and from forced work in enslavement. The rest were forced to unpaid labor in the fields of sugar cane, tobacco, and cotton. Capitalists, before laying their hands on the wealth of the East and enslaving its people, used to manipulate children and women of their societies in iron mines, coalmines, and textiles factories for three generations, before workers formed their unions to protect them against manipulation.

European countries waged war against one another, including World War I (1914-1919) and World War II (1939-1945), and other countries were drawn into these wars, which increased bloodshed. Forty millions died, no to mention the unprecedented amount of destruction.

In the contemporary era, Western societies suffer epidemic social crises, like organized crime (that includes unfamiliar fields like children prostitution and homosexuality), drug trafficking and distribution, political corruption, the hegemony of the rich and the major manufactures on elections, economic corruption, the control of media and its impact on the youth, and the hegemony of the international and multinational

manufacturing entities on economies of their countries and overseas countries. Western authorities cannot control such rabid deviation that occur under the umbrella of liberty, and these authorities are enslaved by these powers by means of bribery and pressures to influence leaders and media, which in turn influence the public.

Some Arab thinkers who are influenced by the European civilization think that secularism unites, whereas religions divide, and that secularism means tolerance, whereas religions mean fanaticism. This is a grave error of judgment. Secularism is a dividing element more than religions as it allows excessive freedom for any individuals or groups to form an entity of any kind. For instance, in the USA, any mentally deranged charlatan or imposter might find supporters or disciples even if he ordered them to kill indiscriminately or to commit suicide. Pluralism reaches its highest degree in any secular society, whereas religions, even if they divide, are limited in number, as the whole world does not have but five major religions.

As for religion, what happens is the vast majority in a given country belongs to one religion, and there is no division, as it is taken for granted that in the democratic systems, decision-making is for the majority, and the minority has to comply with any decision. Yet, Islam stands against the wild ambition of majority if it would do injustice to the rights of minorities. Islam gives religious minorities the liberty of belief and the freedom to follow their systems of marriage, divorce, inheritance...etc. Islam orders the Muslim majority to preserve the liberty of other religious minorities, who are protected by the Quranic text, and they are called in Islamic jurisprudence *dhimmis* (i.e. in Arabic *ahl el-dhimmah*: people of the pact of protection). This expression might provoke the ire of some minorities who feel in it the idea of discrimination and division, but in fact, it is some kind of protection for them and an acknowledgement of their status which they try to evade – in vain – that they are minorities. If they try to get rid of the status of *dhimmitude* that puts them in the protection of the Holy Quran whom no Muslim can contradict, so that they embrace

secularism and the rule of the wild majority, they would be fleeing from the frying pan to the fire. They would undergo what happens to the Muslim minorities in Europe that claim to be secular but it rules by the Christian laws in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance, despite the fact that this contradicts the faith of these Muslim minorities. It is acknowledged that the term *dhimmitude* is archaic and obsolete from bygone eras like tribute, slavery, spoils of war...etc.

If considering religions as sources of inspiration would divide people, then people would be divided into five major religions. As for Islam, it acknowledges and confirms that Muslims should retain peaceful relations with followers of other religions, and acknowledges all Prophets and messengers of God without distinction among them.

As for religious fanaticism, Islam is the last religion to be associated with fanaticism. The real fanaticism is racial not religious, and this was the feature of European societies since the era of the Greeks and the Romans, until the era of colonialism and the contemporary period. The recent image of this fanaticism was that of the Serbs against Muslims in Sarajevo. This fanaticism, either driven by the church or the conventions and customs, is what we find in Europe, and the whole continent remained silent before this barbarity due to the wide spread fanaticism.

Crises that befell modern European civilization and factors of deterioration were enough to destroy any civilization. Yet, the European civilization was spared a fate similar to what befell the Roman civilization because of liberty and knowledge that resisted factors of deterioration and degeneration, and enabled the European civilization to remain and resist extinction, but at a costly price that cannot be always paid. This shows that Europe is in bad need to religious values to protect it from decline and downfall. These religious values cannot be replaced by any other values, as they are divine, holy and objective, and therefore more powerful than any other values.

At the end, we find ourselves before a kind of irony. In Europe, where Christian values are contrary to the secular ones,



we find that a kind of dialectical coexistence has occurred between secularism that prevails in the European society, and the church that tries to do its best to hold the reins. Yet, this is not wholly done, as the law of change is more powerful than the stagnation and the church had nothing but to accept its fate. This acceptance was easy as the church, through a thousand years in European soil, has gradually absorbed European values and it bore the appellation 'the Roman Catholic Church', as if it is the legitimate heir of the Roman civilization.

In the Islamic society, where Islamic values are compatible with secularism, though both differ in certain aspects, we see that Islamists and callers of secularism struggle against one another, as each group demands full control and does not believe in the dialectic complementary coexistence. The Islamic world cannot live in constant strife for long. We have no centuries' long struggle between religion and secularism as in Europe in the Middle Ages. The synthesis aimed at in the Islamic world is the emergence of an Eastern version of secularism that keeps Islamic values as source of inspiration; hence, the balance between elements of stability and powers of progress and development.

It is supposed that those who claim to represent the 'Islamic call' would agree on this fair version, and reject the idea of reviving the past and backward notions, as this is an impossibility and of course not desired in the modern era.

The dilemma facing modern thought is how religious values (be it Islamic or Christian) can be revived and deepened in the souls of believers to ward off deviation and aberration, and to form inner conscience without mechanism to urge for righteousness and goodness? If we create a certain mechanism, it would turn into a church or a religious institution, which would lead to the formation of clergy that would monopolize the religious calls – or at least control these religious calls, which is unacceptable.

Difficulty and complexity that surround the process of reaching a solution to this dilemma should not hinder exerting efforts to reach a solution, for this is not impossible, but it is

inevitable, to make the issue of secularism a matter of civilization, not the concern of religious institutions. This issue should be tackled by society, not by the state. There should be room to develop a sort of Islamic secularism that retains the rational, liberal aspect of secularism as well as the main principle of faith, which is the belief in God, His Prophets, and the values of Islamic civilization.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **OUR STANCE ON NATIONALISM**

The concept of nationalism emerged on the arena of Arab thought, fostered by certain favorable factor that made it stand out in the foreground, to the extent that some thinkers saw it as an alternative to the two trends that provoke sensitivities; i.e. socialism and Islamism. Yet nationalism, when applied, failed like the two formerly mentioned trends.

#### **The origin of nationalism:**

In order to understand comprehensively and deeply the concept of nationalism, we should know its dimensions, inner recesses, factors that lead to its emergence, and its pros and cons.

Here are some points to demonstrate this:

**Firstly**, nationalism was not always the system applied in Europe or even in the eastern world. It represented a transitory or an interim stage that remained as long as certain conditions are at work in certain phases. Other universal systems preceded nationalism like Hellenism of Alexander the Great, Pax Romana of the Roman Empire, the universal Christianity of papal hegemony, and the universal Islam in the era of caliphates.

During these historical eras, nationalism was nonexistent. We can imagine a future void of nationalism, as it might be subsumed within the framework of international entities that have the universal quality; i.e. a capitalist or a socialist international entity, and we have the contemporary example of the European Union (EU).

Nationalism did not arise in Europe until the emergence of capitalism that made the market rise from the level of villages to a nationalist level, and put an end to the feudalist system with its traditional bonds and restrictions of the guilds. Later, the centralized authority of the state emerged and controlled all services and facilities, and merged them in one crucible. Often, this was associated with achieving independence from colonial powers, or regaining occupied lands.

As for the East, the notion of nationalism began dubiously or even ominously at the hands of Community of Unity and Progress in Turkey in the early 1900s. Nationalism appeared in the Arab world as a reaction and not as an original action; i.e., it was not the direct result of objective factors like market expansion, capitalism, or centralized authority, but it constituted a stance of the Arab world against the policy of Community of Unity and Progress. This historical situation was a challenge, and challenge is a well-known starting point for the appearance of national movements, e.g. the German nationalism emerged as a reaction to the French invasion of Napoleon to Germany. Arab nationalism did not take the form of voluntary, positively challenging attitude, because the group of "free Arabs" until the very last moment was ready to support Turkey in the World War I, and the only group that wanted complete liberation from the Ottomans was the Maronite Christians who contacted France to seek protection. Community of Unity and Progress were fanatics and did not respond to the free Arabs. Hence, Arab nationalism stemmed from the necessities and emergent conditions in this historical moment. This led to alliance with Britain as a practical starting point, despite its colonialist ambitions and well-known conspiring treaties with France. It was a bad starting point that no nationalist movement

can be proud of, yet, this provided the Arab nationalism with some distinctive features that made it appear in many historical moments of hegemony or conspiracy. Nationalism was adopted by Nasser in Egypt, as well as Ba'ath (i.e. revival) parties in Syria and Iraq. Its staunch advocates added to it a supposedly secularist flavor as well.

**Secondly**, the nationalist trend is not the best one to be the basis of political systems, as this trend, however broadened, includes limitations of race, frontiers, language...etc. and if broadened beyond these limitations, it will be self-defeated or discarded later as an interim stage. If nationalism were reinforced, this would be at the expense of human, universal values as it is the case of closed, isolated nationalisms, like Germanic Aryan nationalism defined by Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Hitler, or Hebrew nationalism in Israel by Ben-Gurion and other Israeli extremists. Communist and religious calls denounced nationalism. Marx and Engels considered it as "egoistical and self-centered", and said in the communist manifesto that the distinctive feature of communists is that they favor the interests of the universal proletariat over nationalist interests. This was the orthodox line of communism, held by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg to face magnates of World War II, who launched war against them. Islam denounces nationalist trend, even if it stemmed from Arabs. The eternal words of Prophet Muhammad denounce it as well, when he said *"Discard fanaticism and tribalism; for they are evil", "People should stop taking pride in their dead ancestors, for they are, in the sight of God, less in value than dung beetles. God has removed from you the pagan pride in ancestors who were nothing but either pious believers or wretched sinners. All people are descendants of Adam, who was created from dust"*. Likewise, in Christianity, belonging is to the church not to a certain nationalist trend or a certain country. British nationalism was launched by the execution of the best Christianity thinker in Britain, i.e., Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, who opposed Henry VIII on the proposition of breaking the Church of

England away from the Catholic Church. French nationalism, emerged from the French Revolution, sacrificed the masses that fueled it and made them work to the interests of the arising bourgeois class. This manifests itself in the statement of "***The Rights of Human Beings and Citizens***" and Napoleonic Code that crystallized the interests of the bourgeois class at the expense of the interests of workers.

Hence, nationalism did not satisfy the needs of the masses, nor did it realize the hopes of philosophers. In fact, nationalism was the instrument of politicians and a tool of the bourgeois class.

This is exemplified as well in the Arab world. Despite long discourse on Arab nationalism, Arabism...etc. yet, every Arab country sticks to its nationality and frontiers, and poses difficulties on entry visas, not to mention high customs and duties on goods. Other features are discriminatory behavior among Arab people, and taking pride in one's nationality, similar to the pride of Germans of the Aryan race. Where are the traces of Arabism? The remains are just theories and empty sloganeering. These constraints and discriminations were nonexistent in the Islamic era, when merchants, pilgrims, and students used to roam the Islamic world without restrictions or alienation. Even in the era immediately before the advent of the nationalist call, one writer notices that the first government of King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud comprised ministers of different Arab nationalities: Abdullah El-Damlougy (Iraqi), Fouad Hamza (Palestinian), Hafiz Wahba (Egyptian), Yousuf Yassin (Syrian), Rushdie Malhamy (Palestinian) and Khaled El-Karkany (Libyan). This writer quotes Anis El-Sayegh:

*" ...two thirds of the ministers in the first decade in Jordan were not Jordanian. All prime ministers of that period were either Syrians or Palestinians, and the third of the number of employers in the government were non-Jordanians for more than twenty years..."*\*\*\*

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\*\*\* Galal Kishk in his book titled "*Nationalism and Intellectual Invasion*" p.39

**Thirdly**, we should not take the forming of nationalisms in Europe as examples to follow in forming Arab nationalism or Arabism. European nationalisms were formed in historical, economic, and political contexts, and it took centuries to emerge, not to mention that they had their own specific conditions and circumstances that could not necessarily apply in Arab societies. As we have mentioned before, Arab nationalism did not emerge as action but a reaction to Turkish policies; thus, it has no historical grounds and was associate with colonialism.

It is taken for granted that there are main principles that regulate the development of the human society, and these principles do not change in any state; yet, there are within this big framework specific and subjective factors that have their impact on the main principles. These factors are not abstract ideas, but direct results of the interaction of human and economic factors that were existent in Europe, and not necessarily in the East or West. For instance, Islam emerged after six centuries of the emergence of Christianity, which means it is more modern than Christianity, and this fact has its impact and reflections in the different contexts of development...etc. in the East more in the West.

**Fourthly**, the modern Arab nations were formed thanks to Islam, and before the advent of Islam, they did not exist and they did not have historical significance. In the pre-Islamic era, Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula were just separate tribes that were rivals and took pride in their poets, stallions, or generous men. Arabs of the city of Medina were under the intellectual guardianship of the Jews. Egypt, Iraq, and Syria were colonies of Rome or Persia, and had different interests and languages according to the colonial power that occupied them.

The advent of Islam formed the modern Arab nations, freed them from subordination to colonial powers, gave them liberty and independence, effaced language and race differences among them, and granted them the Holy Book, the sword, and the balance to carry a great, universal, humane message that cannot be conveyed unless via these three elements.

When any Arab political party took the appellation '**Ba'ath** Party' (revival party), it occurs to the mind that what is meant is *Islamic revival* as it is the only method to unite the Arabs, for Islam is the factor that gave a history and a civilization for the Arab nations. Misguided and biased people refer the word **Ba'ath** to "*the Arab revolution<sup>†††</sup> that erupted in 1916 to liberate and unite the Arab nations*", as mentioned by Ba'ath party. This 'revolution' was headed by the misguided Al-Sharif Hussein and the colonel Lawrence the officer in the central intelligence, and funded by British money. Eventually, this '*revolution*' failed to unite the Arab nations, and failed as well to undermine Egyptian Arab nationalism and nationalism of North African Arab states. Later Ba'ath party discarded this '*revolution*'.

**Fifthly**, the role of Islam in Arab nationalism cannot be compared to any other religion, for the following reasons:

A) The Islamic bond was so strong that it granted the Arab nations with leadership in times of peace and war. It made Arabs pioneers in arts and sciences, even if they were Muslims of non-Arab origins, e.g. from Tareq Ibn Ziad (the Berber), to Gawhar El-Sakali (the Sicilian), to Gamal el-Deen Al-Afghani (the Afghan), not to mention the constellation of writers and scholars from India, Khorasan, and countries beyond the river, until the frozen lands of Siberia. These scholars increased the scientific thought with their wisdom and wrote their ideas in Arabic, to be honored to write in the language of the Quran.

B) The caliphate and **Shari'a** (Islamic jurisprudence) were the pillars of political, social, economic life of the Arab nations, since the advent of Islam until the first decade of the twentieth century; i.e. for thirteen consecutive centuries. These pillars are still alive and glowing in the psyche of believers and Arabs,

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<sup>†††</sup> [Article 9 in the constitution of Ba'ath party](#)

though now are applied in a bad manner, and outside forces made them withdraw from the rule domain.

C) Arabic language is the main backbone to Arab nationalism, and the Holy Quran and Hadiths elevated the Arabic tongue. Arabic language cannot be separated from Islam, as the Holy Quran has standardized and canonized Arabic tongue, and that eased the prospect of Arab nationalism and unity in many occasions. If it had not been for the Holy Quran, local dialects would have supplanted the Arab tongue and developed with the passage of time into separate languages, as the case with European languages that were derived from the Latin language, and this certainly would prevent any form of nationalism and unity. The callers for nationalism should know this, and place the Holy Quran before their ideology to preserve their identity, not to dwell in narrow regionalism that does not worth much in the era of gigantic entities, and to preserve their language to be able to hold discourse with the rest of the Arab world.

**Sixthly**, no liberation movements against colonialism in the modern era in Arab countries, which led to nationalist trends, emerged in the hands of callers for nationalism, but under the banner of Islam and *Jihad* and this realized liberation for Arab countries. For instance, the leader named *El-Mahdi* and his call led to the liberation of Sudan. It was the call of the *Senusiyya* Islamic Order and its leader Omar El-Mokhtar that led to the liberation of Libya. Other Islamic leaders that led to the liberation of other Arab countries are Abdul-El-Kader and Abdel-Hamid Ben Badis in Algeria against the French, Abdel-Karim El-Khattaby in Morocco against the Spanish. In Egypt, sheikhs of El-Azhar Mosque led the revolt against Napoleon Bonaparte, and made Muhammad Ali Pasha the governor of Egypt in the Ottoman era, in defiance to the Turkish caliph, and later Gamal El-Deen El-Afghani was the Azharite sheikh that led the call for the modern awakening in Egypt.



**Seventhly**, historical development for the Arab nations that were reborn in Islam and adopted its language, jurisprudence, customs, and traditions, made pre Islamic eras vanish into the corner of historical unconsciousness in the collective memory of Arab nations. This historical development made Islam the conscience of the Arab nations, a symbol of their entity, pride and dignity, and their major contribution to the world civilization. Islam tied their fate to its fate, and discarding Islam means a kind of loss and going astray in a labyrinth, and spiritual hollowness. The idea of separating Arabism and Islam means that Arabism would be soulless, or like an oyster without its pearl. Islam, if discarded by Arab people, would easily find other non-Arab believers in it, but Arabism would not find another Islam or another Prophet Muhammad to unite Arab nations in a perfect manner. If Islam needs Arabs, they need it more by thousand folds. No one can condescend to Islam by being a Muslim; because what Islam has granted to us make anything else dwindle in comparison to it.

Fair non-Muslim thinkers did not overlook this fact, as it is a historical truth, not a mere hypothesis. Yet, European Dark Ages since the times of crusades prevented most European thinkers to know this historical truth, but Christian Arabs knew it very well. Fair Christian Arab thinkers acknowledged this fact firstly because it is true, and secondly because, though non-Muslims, but they were happy to be under the banner of Islamic justice, and they were enchanted by the miracle of the Holy Quran. Prof. Constantine Zoriq of the American University in Beirut says in his book titled "***National Consciousness***", which deals with Arab nationalism and religion, on celebrating the occasion of the birth of Prophet Muhammad, that there is a relation between Arab nationalism and Prophet Muhammad:

*"Prophet Muhammad was the founder of Islam, the merciful religion, and he was the one to spread it to the whole world. The influence of this religion is present in all aspects of our Arab culture. We cannot understand our ancient Arab heritage, in philosophy, science, or arts, unless we deeply study the texts, systems and laws of Islam. This Arab heritage is part*

*of our contemporary culture, or rather its foundation that cannot be discarded or replaced by modern Western culture. Arab heritage is part of this Western culture and this is our distinctive feature among other nations. This heritage is fertile, powerful and a source of pride, and we should preserve it. Every Arab, from whatever religious denomination, should preserve this ancient culture and try to revive it. This is the primary duty of nationalism. Every Arab should study Islam and its truth, and celebrate the birthday of the great Prophet Muhammad the founder of Islam.*

*Prophet Muhammad, on the other hand, is the one who had united the Arabs, who were rival tribes in a constant state of war, who were not linked by any powerful bond. Islam and Prophet Muhammad united these conflicting tribes, fusing all in the crucible of faith, and granted them power, civilization and development"###*

**Amin Nakhla says:**

*"There is no contradiction between sticking to nationalism and one's language, and sticking at the same time to one's religion. There are two Arab religions, of the Quran and the Bible, and there are two 'Islams' that of religion, and that of language and nationalism.*

*As if all Arabs are Muslims when Islam is defined as the guidance of Muhammad, and sticking to his sense of nationalism and to Arabic language. There are as well non-Muslim Arabs who do not embrace the religion of Muhammad, yet stick to nationalism and to Arabic language, but believe in the religion of Jesus Christ, son of Mary, and his Bible, which is brimming with mercy, and speaks about a cross that ended an era and began another era.*

*If there are Arabs who do not acknowledge Muhammad, nor his language or sense of nationalism, they are strangers in our societies.*

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### *National consciousness by Constantine Zoriq, second edition p.128-129*

*O Muhammad, I swear by the name of my religion of Jesus Christ, son of Mary, and by his cross that we, the Arabs of Lebanon, pay homage to you. Our minds are in the Bible and our eyes in the Quran".*

There is another example, no less poetic or fantastic than the previous one, by the great Arab literary figure (the Lebanese Maronite) Marron Aboud. He not only asserted his Arab identity and his pride in the Arab- Islamic history by mere words, but in real action in his private life, as he named his first born male Muhammad. He liked it when people called him Abou Muhammad (i.e. the father of Muhammad) and he composed a nice poem to celebrate the birth of his son Muhammad:

*Long live to you my son, the best of sons, born in the month of Ragab*

*His mother give birth to him not as a Muslim or Christian, but an Arab*

*We hailed his name: Muhammad, O history, do not be astonished*

Many other Christian Arab poets assert this meaning of taking pride in Islam and its Prophet, as they are part of their Arab nationalism and history to which they belong. One of these poets is Rashid Khoury, in his large volume of poems we find tens of poems that deal with the theme of Arabism, like the following lines:

*Arabism has in every kingdom  
A Bible of love and a Quran of reason  
Ask the eras of the Levant, of Baghdad, of Andalusia  
About the depth of its philosophy and just rules  
Its heart is enraptured with the love of Muhammad  
And Arabism is the ideal and Islam of every Arab*

He says in another poem, that shows pride in the heroes and grand achievements of Arabism, the following lines:

***Will the leaves of Arabism wither away in the mounts of Lebanon***

***Or they will stay fresh and bloomy, never to fade away?  
How could we find better ancestors than the honorable  
People like Abou Bakr, Omar, and Ali?***

He says on another occasion, *"I was a true Arab even before I was born. Yet I did not have a true idea about Prophet Muhammad, his book, and his Hadiths...yet, having read them, ignorance was removed from my head, I gained new insight, and I was flying in the realm of our spiritual heritage, a domain that I never had known before. Any freeman loves and sticks to the truth wherever he finds it. Any man of letters would fall in love with the eloquence of the Quran and the Hadiths...I felt it certain that my Arab nation is superior, and that certainty was increased since then. My love and enthusiasm increased by this certainty"*<sup>§§§</sup>

In addition, Michael Aflaq himself, in a moment of true inspiration, said:

*"The idea of abstract nationalism in the west is logical and justified, as it was decided that nationalism would be separate from religion because religion had come from outside Europe, and hence it is foreign and alien to its nature and history. This religion was the essence of the creed of the Hereafter and morality, in a foreign language and not in a native European tongue, and accordingly did not stem from European environment, and did not mix in European history. Unlike the case with Islam, it is for Arab people not only a creed of the Hereafter or abstract morality, but also the most clear form that represents their universal sentiments and their*

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<sup>§§§</sup> From the book titled *"This is our nationalism"* by Abdel-Rahman El-Bazar pages 238-241

*perspective to life. This religion is the most powerful expression of their unity and identity, where words mix with sentiments and thought, contemplations mix with work, and the soul is related to fate"*\*\*\*\*

In Egypt, the Coptic writer Dr Nazmi Louca was the author of "***The Great Islamic encyclopedia***", which has a number of the best books on the life of Prophet Muhammad. The Coptic political leader Makram Eibeid once said, "*I am a Muslim in terms of my country and homeland, and a Christian in terms of my religion*". He was the only Egyptian political leader that broke the blockade of soldiers, which surrounded the house of the martyred imam Hassan Al-Banna after his martyrdom to prevent the entry of people, in order to offer his condolences to his family. The Islamic writer Galal Kishk gave him a copy of his book titled "***Nationalism and The Intellectual Invasion***".

The well-known Coptic writer Salama Mousa was known for his anti-religious attitude, but he said in his book titled "***Self-Education***" that every youth who seek to be cultured, especially on ancient Arab culture, should get his copy of the Quran, as it is the foundation of Arab society. He said that this should be mandatory for Jewish and Christian Arabs, not only Muslim Arabs. He said as well, "*Islam is the nearest creed to the human mind* ", and he was the first one to call for celebrating the millennium of El-Azhar.<sup>††††</sup>

### **Nationalism without Islam:**

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\*\*\*\* For the sake of Ba'ath party, Michael Aflaq wrote this under the title "*In the Memory of the Arab Prophet*". It was rumored that he converted to Islam, but made it his will not to reveal this except after his death. We were in London when we had read the article titled "*Michael Aflaq died a Muslim* "in the magazine titled "*Suraqia*" (blending the names of Syria and Iraq). A picture in that magazine showed Aflaq's body carried by Iraqi Ba'athist leaders, on top of them was Saddam Hussein, where they entered a mosque to pray the funerary prayers for his soul. If that incident was true, then it had a deep significance, and if it was not true, then its significance is deeper.

†††† See the chronicles of Salama Mousa

In contrast to the nationalist line that is based on the above-mentioned historical facts and the struggle against colonialism under the banner of Islam, we find that other nationalist alternatives that ignore Islam flounder and fumble a great deal. When Islamic institutions could not reach a sound formula to advance the modern Arab society, this left room for these alternatives. Ignoring Islam in these alternatives created a gap that could not be bridged. These alternatives were based on the people who created them, and were influenced by the circumstances of their environment as well as by other subjective factors. This is why these alternatives were not ready to give Islam its rightful position in the Arab society and they renounce and sever all relation to the Islamic past roots, claiming the sole interest in the present. These alternatives tried to bridge the gap done by ignoring Islam by trying to affiliate themselves to any ideology of one major country, especially the USSR and France. For instance, the Maronite group made Paris their Mecca and each group of them accepted the values and civilization of the state they clung to and sought to be subordinates to it.

Other calls followed the methods of fabrication, from Anton Sa'ada the founder of the Nationalist Party, to Ba'ath (revival) party and Arab communism established by Nasser. There were other fabrications in other Arab countries, but all were mere attempts that were supported by the military ruling regimes, and if it had not been for this support, these attempts would have vanished. These alternatives and fabrications did not manage to gain followers and disciples, and failed to stop the infiltration of communists that undermined them. The only result of these fabrications was that they created a class of beneficiaries in authority positions to defend its gains, and in turn, protect the ruling regime.

Arab nationalism for these beneficiaries started by statements similar to the one said by Mustapha El-Shihaby who believed theories propagated by George Antonius in his book titled "*Arab Reawakening*" in Beirut . Among the pioneers of this Arab nationalism were Nasif El-Yazgi, Boutrous El-

Bustany, and Yousef El-Asir. This group fought against Turkey and placed the Arabic language and Arab identity in place of Islam as adopted in Turkey.

The constitution of this Arab nationalism group was a fiery poem by Ibrahim El-Yazgi, aiming at arousing Arabs to revolt against Turkey using arms and violence, and leaders of this group considered it like an anthem like la Marseillaise or a holy psalm. This is its first line:

***O my fellow Arabs wake up and stir  
Calamities and injustices abound, beware!***

The main observation that leaders of this group overlooked in this poem was that although it includes the call for revolt against the Turks, but it does not present the positive basis or a theory for Arab nationalism.

Despite this shortcoming, but it was a step forward. From the Islamic point of view, those who claim to protect the Arabic language and take pride in it should put into consideration Islam and the Holy Quran. The turning point was the emergence of a French group that lacked Islam and the Arabic language together, yet claimed to call for Arabism! Historians of Arab nationalism place this group among founders of nationalism, like Naguib Azoury who founded the "*Arab World Society*" in Paris in 1940 and wrote in French a book on the "reawakening of Arab nations". His ideas included that Egypt is not an Arab country and objected to the Egyptian independence from Britain. He established in Egypt a small party that cooperated with the colonialist states and placed his hopes of Arabism as a Syrian in France and then in Britain.

One historian comments on the call of monsieur Azoury and said:

*"...his call did not easily find support in the Arab world as its activities took place in Paris and in French, and its founder was considered a propagandist for western states especially France and Britain, and his books were full of statements glorifying both countries, that is why his work was suspicious".*

Another historian asserts that no Arab youth cared for the book written by monsieur Azoury.

Gamil Beiahm said that the French consul was a member of one of the many societies in Beirut that aimed at removing the Turkish rule.

Edouard Atiya says:

*"Syrian Christians hated the Turkish rule and were looking forward to liberating from it, but they did not intend to form an independent Syrian state, fearing that in that case they would subjugate to the rule of an Islamic majority that would lead, in their opinion, to persecution and injustice. That is why they were looking forward to liberating from Islamic rule by the aid of European states that would remove the Turks from their country and rule Syria instead.....this was not considered a kind of subjugation to foreign rule, as long as this European state is Christian and followed their doctrine. Are not they their fraternal brothers who follow the same creed? Thus, they would get rid of the Muslim view of them as minority and second class citizens, and the persecution they suffered for hundreds of years"* \*\*\*\*

Some Syrian and Lebanese schools of thought agreed on excluding Islam but they did not affiliate themselves to one state, but tried to establish an intellectual basis to the notion of Arab nationalism. From such attempts stemmed the Syrian Nationalist Party by Anton Sa'ada, and the Ba'ath Party by Michael Aflaq. Anton Sa'ada was a pale example of Hitler and Mussolini, and he failed in forming a group of officers to organize a coup d'état and to rule in his name. Ba'ath parties managed to do so in both Syria and Iraq. Yet, Michael Aflaq himself was a dreamy thinker, and did nothing but incite the sentiments of his readers and audience, even if his Ba'ath party forced its way to rule with iron and fire in both Syria and Iraq.

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\*\*\* See the book titled "*Nationalism and Intellectual Invasion*" by M. Galal Kishk pages 219-292



Finally, Arab nationalism, despite sentiments incited by its leaders and followers, and despite the fact that they claimed that it is not based gender or race, as it is open for all people whose tongue is Arabic (because practically, all Arabic native speakers constitute the Arabs), it will never be but a chauvinist racist tendency, polarized between fascism and sentimentalism. With the exclusion of Islam, Arab nationalism lacked the following:

A) Objective criteria.

B) The humane element.

C) The only totalitarian theory that emerged in the Arab world and it lacks the shortcomings of fascist and communist totalitarianism, because totalitarian element in Islam is based on voluntary belief; i.e. *Islam* in the sense of voluntary submission to God.

D) The great contribution the Arabs presented to the civilization when they embraced Islam and held its banner. Islam is the basis of Arab civilization, and there were people who participated in this civilization from non-Arab races and origins when they embraced Islam. Abou El-Rayhan El-Bayrony, one of the Persian great thinkers and erudite men, once said, "*To write satirical poetry in Arabic is better than panegyric poetry in Persian*". Another poet said:

***With Islam we are united after division and alienation  
And we are linked to it forever beyond separation***

Ba'ath parties had failed, deceived people, and resisted the course of history when they talked about the 'eternal message' of Arab nationalism. Any movement of Arab nationalism did not leave eventually any kind of eternal messages, whereas Islam is the only historical factor that made the Arab people prominent in history after centuries of oblivion and separation. Islam gave Arabs unity, glory, and pride, and if they ignore Islam, they would ignore their real contribution in world civilization.

Exclusion of Islam in nationalist movements had led to deception and floundering in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. These failed nationalist attempts were initiated by just some thinkers and intellectuals who were not trustworthy or well known. Yet, when this tragedy happened in Egypt by an intellectual and writer who was an acknowledged erudite, trustworthy man, who could not – due to many number of factors – give Islam its due merit, this grave error could not justified by his knowledge and culture. Ignoring Islam made the image of nationalism distorted.

Dr. Louis Awad speaks about the so-called "*the first independence project*" put by El-Moalim Yacob during the French Expedition in Egypt.

Dr. Awad says in his writings that Yacob was a Copt working in the service of some Mamelukes. When the French invaded Egypt, Yacob joined the army of the French general Dizier and fought bravely and fiercely against the Mamelukes and the French bestowed on him an honorary sword. When Napoleon Bonaparte left Egypt, Yacob returned to Cairo. He was commissioned by Kléber to hold a position similar to the minister of finance and a commander of the Coptic legion that was formed in Egypt to help the French in their war against the Mamelukes and the Turks. Yacob was appointed as a consultant to monsieur Steve the general director of public income. He was promoted by the general Abdullah Jacques Minou to the rank of general, and an assistant to the general Billiard in Marsh 1801 to defend Cairo against the attack of the Turkish and English armies. Since this date, the destiny of the Coptic legion and general Yacob was linked to that of the French army in Egypt. When the French left Cairo in June 1801, general Yacob participated in the peace and evacuation treaty, and left Cairo to go to France by sea with the French army, after having served the French for three years.

There are documents that prove that Yacob was the intimate friend of general Dizier. When the news of the death of the latter in the battle of Marengo reached Cairo, soldiers of the French army in Egypt began to collect money, to erect a monument to commemorate general Dizier. Yacob wrote to the

general commander that he would donate a third of the required sum to erect this monument, as general Dizier 'gave him his heart', as Yacob said. When Jacob was dying, his last words to general Billiard were to bury him in the tomb of Dizier.<sup>§§§§</sup>

This was the '*national*' hero and his '*patriotic*' acts of heroism.

Dr. Awad says that Yacob refused to remain in Egypt after the defeat of the French and left with them, and he was fortunate to be on board the frigate *Pallas* with general Billiard, and the commandant of this frigate was the Captain Joseph Edmonds. The frigate headed to Cypress and the coast of Asia Minor, but within two days, Yacob was stricken by a fever and died after four days.

On his deathbed, Yacob revealed to the captain his project of the liberation of Egypt. Judging by the '*struggle*' of this '*hero*' against his fellow citizens and his help to invaders whom he fought with, this project was akin to the British call to impose its mandate over Egypt. The core of Yacob's project of the '*independence*' was the following:

*"...the Ottoman Empire is debilitating, and it is important that the British should find guaranteed means to make use of this historical rupture to ensure their future political interests. It is impossible for Britain to invade Egypt as a colony, it would just be under the British influence as Britain holds hegemony over the surrounding maritime routes/ the independence of Egypt would hasten the process of development and prosperity, but it would never be but an agricultural state, rich in abundant crops due to its fertile soil. Egyptian trade is unique with African countries and this would bring forth more prosperity for the British if they invade Egypt, and would make Egypt more important to Britain than India is, due to trade conditions and routes..."*

As for how the Egyptian people would gain self-rule, this was how this project tackled this point:

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<sup>§§§§</sup> Dr. Louis Awad "*A History of Modern Egyptian Thought*" part I, page 181

*"...if European governments allowed the independence of Egypt, then the question is how the Egyptian people would rule themselves and how they would defend their independence.*

*Firstly, this document was hastily written and could not delve into details of the project of a government as a proposal made by the Egyptian delegation. It is enough to note that establishing this government will never be a result of a revolution prompted by enlightenment or any conflicting philosophical doctrines, but a result of a dominant power over ignorant, mild people whose two ruling sentiments that direct morals: they are interests and fear. This new government should bring prosperity to people, and this is not difficult to manage, and would make people love defend this new government as it would be preferred to the Turkish tyranny. Anything in the world would be better than the Turkish rule, hence, then new government should be just, cruel, and national...and it would be loved, trusted, and obeyed.*

*Secondly, how Egyptians would defend their independence? They would not be able to defend themselves against European powers unless after long-time and only when this nationalist power organized and respected. If this defense would be against Turks and Mamelukes if they attack Egypt, it should be left to European powers. Egyptians could get foreign mercenaries (12000 to 15000 soldiers) as temporary forces to crush Mamelukes inside Egypt and keep Turks off the borders. This force would be a nucleus to a national force. Ottomans would do anything for money and money made them stop fighting if they attacked Egypt. Mamelukes used this trick if Istanbul turned against them".*

We do not need to comment on this so-called 'independence' project. Dr. Awad did not give Islam its due concerning its influence on the Egyptian society. If he did, he would not have named such project 'the first independence project'. It is noteworthy that Dr. Awad did not only exclude the role of Islam, but also did the same for the Arabic language. He

was the one to adopt the call for "*discarding and smashing Arabic rhetoric*" and the one who said that Classical Arabic poetry was dead in 1932 when the famous poet Ahmed Shawki died. Dr. Awad did not study Arab culture and thought, and his culture and mood was '*foreign and European*', and he acknowledged that he considered himself European.

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These groups ignored Islam and eventually had gone astray. The Lebanese Maronite group did not find a role model except in the subordination to France. The Arab nationalism group of Anton Sa'ada and Michael Aflaq were mere chauvinist trends that were widespread in the 1930s and they were later mingled with communists and sentimentalism, only to be distorted eventually as fabrications devoid of faith and were based on force, but in vain. The Arab nations still lack their solid foundation – Islam.

**Aziz El-Masry: the pioneer of Arab Islamic nationalism:**

As opposed to the above mentioned distorted attempts and fabrications in theory and practice devised by anti-Islamic leaders and thinkers, there were other movements that called for a sound notion of Arab Islamic nationalism, which considered Islam as the main asset and special feature. These movements emerged strongly since the establishment of the Community of Unity and Progress in Turkey, and its policy of adding the Turkish features to other races in the early 1900s. Arab soldiers united (from the Levant and Iraq in Egypt that was independent from Turkey) around the figure of the Egyptian officer Aziz El-Masry, who traveled to Balkans, Tripoli, Yemen, Istanbul, Jeddah, and Cairo. In the military field, he could be compared to Gamal El-Afghani in the intellectual field. He represented the major Egyptian contribution in the movement of Arabism. He was the one who trained and directed most leaders that carried the banner of the Arab renaissance later on.

Most people do not know much about Aziz El-Masry, and we will quote some paragraphs from an unbiased writer contemporary of Aziz El-Masry, this writer is As'ad Dagher and the quotations are from his book titled "*My Memoirs on the Margin of the Arab Cause*":

*"Aziz El-Masry is the bearer of the banner of Arab nationalism, and this fact and this man should be known in history....he was a main member of the Turkish Community of Unity and Progress, and he rendered to it great services and was deeply respected by other members. He left this community when it adopted an extreme policy of adding the Turkish feature to all races. He advised members of this community to reject this policy and pave the way of renaissance to all Ottoman elements especially Arabs. He once held a grand scale meeting at his house that was attended by Turkish big figures and members of Community of Unity and Progress, where they discussed the topic of securing the Ottoman unity. He presented a project that appealed to all of them except Ahmed Aghayev whose vehement opposition aborted the project of Arab renaissance and made Aziz El-Masry leave the Community of Unity and Progress, and this led to the separation of the Turkish notion of unity and the notion of Arab nationalism.*

*His project was based on reinforcing the Ottoman Empire by strengthening its subjects and uniting them. Yet, he saw that the community adopted extreme racist policies that would not appeal to Arabs and other races, and these policies would lead to a political impasse and destruction, especially that Arab states were targeted by colonizers. He realized that no hope of survival could be maintained except by reinforcing Arabism. Aziz El-Masry formed a secret military group named '**the covenant**' that had headquarters in Istanbul, and organized means of communication among its members. Some free Arabs formed as well the secret society named '**Youth**'.*

*He was the mentor for the youth of the literary forum. \*\*\*\*\*  
He used to engender in them the notions of Arabism, patriotism,*

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\*\*\*\*\* [It was a center and a forum for Arab youth in Istanbul](#)

*and morality. He used to teach them history of Arabs in sciences, arts, literature, politics, administration, wars, and other inventions and discoveries in their ancient civilization, to make them take pride in their heritage. He taught them as well, in a discreet manner, how to develop taste, appreciation, and manners of elevated societies.*

*Aziz El-Masry was transferred to the front of Scope, he helped to reinforce the control of the Community of Unity and Progress there, and he declared the constitution there hours before this was repeated by the leaders Anwar and Niazi. The place he supervised was a safe haven to free Arabs.*

*When a revolt took place in Yemen, and Ottoman army were defeated in the battle of Gizan and lost 28 thousand soldiers. Ammunition and supplies did not reach them because of the Tripolitan war, but Aziz El-Masry made a peace treaty with Imam Yahya ruler of Yemen that lasted between Arabs of Yemen and the Ottoman Empire until World War I. His true patriotism drove him to Tripoli where he managed to keep off Italian forces for a long time despite lack of sufficient number of soldier and lack of supplies and money. His enemies acknowledged his superiority in battlefields, and German war periodicals mentioned that his battle of 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1913 when he defeated Italian forces was like the battle of Kan in which Hannibal defeated the Romans, and it was a model of the best leadership".*

A group of officers formed and headed by Aziz El-Masry to establish "***The Young Arab Society***" instead of the "***Covenant Party***". Other parties and groups formed by intellectuals and religious scholars was the decentralized party that included the sheikhs Rashid Reda and Ahmed Tabara, and Abdel-Hamid El-Zahrawy the head of the Arab Conference in Paris in 1913, and all of them had Islamic tendency. There was the literary forum that included Arab youth of Istanbul, headed by Abdel-Karim Khalil. Another society was the Reform Society in Beirut that included a select group of Syrian elite, and the Basra Reform Society, headed by Talib El-Naqeeb.

These parties and groups demanded self-rule for the Arab countries within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. No group demanded full independence or revolt against the Turks. Later, the Turks' racist attitude and hate toward Arabs reached a degree that could not allow room for cooperation. Arab officers were removed from leader positions in the army, the Arabic language was resisted, and Islamic traditions were ignored. Gamal Pasha the ruler of Syria ordered the execution of many Arab politicians and thinkers, an incident that rendered any sort of cooperation impossible. Staunch advocates of Arab nationalism could not deny this, as Arab leadership showed its support for Turkey, and Arab parties did the same until World War I. The most prominent book published by Arab organizations at the time was the one titled "***The Arab Revolution***", printed in Cairo in 1916, and was dedicated to Arab martyrs executed by the Syrian ruler. The author was a member of a political group, and he dedicated the fifth chapter of this book to cite evidence of the loyalty of Arabs to the Turkish Unionists. He says, "*...Arab rulers and parties are loyal to the Turkish Unionists before and after the constitution, after the 1913 treaty, and after World War I. there are many proofs to exemplify this...*". The author cites many letters written by Arab heroes and officers like Selim El-Gaza'ery, who was the second most prominent man in the Arab movement after Aziz El-Masry, Mokhtar Bayhim, Abdel-Karim Khalil, the hear of the Literary forum, and Abdel-Hamid El-Zahrawy, the magnate of the decentralized party and the member of the Ottoman senate. All these men were among the group executed in Syria. After citing these letters, the author says:

*"...these secret political letters and hundreds of other exemplary ones prove the loyalty of Arabs to the Turkish Unionists before and after World War I in Europe. This grand loyalty reached its zenith when the Ottomans entered World War I. Arabs put aside their disputes with the Turks and supported and united with them in joint defense in battles in Iraq, Caucasus, Dardanelles, and the channel. These battles*



*rendered tens of thousands of Arabs dead in battlefields. The Arab nations willingly paid taxes and war funds at the time, which, according to formal statistics, were more than paid by Turkish people.*

*If Arab thinkers and leaders were working to spilt from the Ottomans in times of tribulations, then Gamal Pasha would have the right to execute them, as this would have been considered treason punishable by death according to military rules, and he would not have been considered a brutal shedder of blood.<sup>†††††</sup>*

*If we would analyze trends that attracted Arab thinkers and leaders at the time, we find them as the following:*

*A) The Islamic trend that demanded politically self-rule within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, and socially a kind of reform based on Islamic foundations. This trend continued until the executions of 1916, which could be considered a turning point.*

*B) The nationalist trend, which demanded independence of Arab countries after relations were severed among Arabs and Turks after the executions, had no Islamic basis at first, but later made Islam the main foundation of the new movement. That is why Al-Sharif Hussein and his offspring were chosen and the revolution against the Turks included the denunciation of Turks' attack on Islam.*

*That is to say that the nationalist trend did not gain momentum except when the Islamic tendency became the motivating force, because the efficiency of nationalism, however enthusiastic people were to it, was not enough to establish a state and declare a revolution.*

*C) Some Christians who supported the nationalist-Islamic trend like As'ad Dagher who recorded his impressions when he visited Istanbul shortly before the World War I. He said, "... politicians in Istanbul showed two opposed views, on of them was to form an Islamic League, and the other was that*

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<sup>†††††</sup> **The irony is that this criminal Pasha was falsely accusing Arabs of trying to split with the Ottoman Empire but in fact, he was negotiating with the Allies forces to rule the Arab countries independent from the Ottomans, but the Allies refused his proposal.**

*nationalism should be the basis of states from now on, and that all efforts should be directed to serve Arabism and not any other causes.*

*I was among the supporters of the first Islamic view as I thought that it would grant Arabs major power if it were to be used wisely. Yet, the majority of Christians thought that coexistence in the new independent Arab society is impossible. They sought a special stature or a French mandate. Some of them held correspondences with foreign organizations. When these documents fell into the hands of Gamal Pasha, his suspicions about leaders of Arab nationalism were reinforced".*

### **A suspicious start and a disgraceful ending:**

Arab nationalism that overlooked Islam, and adopted by ***Ba'ath*** party and advocated by Maronite Christians and some other Christian denominations, started by the movement of King Hussein when he revolted against Turkey and joined the Allies, who promised him in letters of McMahon with a dominion under his rule from Hejaz to the Levant, including Iraq. At the same time, Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France divided the Arab states between them, and Britain formed the Balfour Declaration. According to this suspicious start, Colonel Lawrence led the movement behind the scenes. He was the de facto financier and motivator for King Hassan's movements and his sons Feisal and Abdullah. Later it was transpired that these promises were deceptions to pave the way for the French invasion of Syria, creation of Israel on Palestinian lands, and British mandate on Iraq. Iraqis revolted and Britain had to appease King Abdullah by appointing Feisal the son of King Hussein as king of Iraq and made prince Abdullah ruler of East Jordan.

From this suspicious start, Arab nationalism was adopted by anti-Islamic military parties like ***Ba'ath*** party in Syria, led by the tyrant Hafez el-Assad, and ***Ba'ath*** party in Iraq, led by the tyrant Saddam Hussein. The rule of those two tyrants was a big insult to the Arab nationalism they both claimed to support. It was more surprising that bitter enmity began grew

between both Syrian and Iraqi parties because of the desire to monopolize leadership and rule. The man, who desires to rule, as the caliph Abdel-Malik Ibn Marwan said, does not prefer partners. Competition between the two parties and the two tyrants to assume the leadership of Arab nationalism led to a rupture in the diplomatic and political relations between the peoples of Syria and Iraq, who became enemies.

When Nasser, who did not believe in the idea of Arab nationalism, became the Egyptian president, he wanted a theoretical cover to resist Islamism, which he fought fiercely, and thus he had to adopt the notion of Arab nationalism. He became at short notice the main advocate of Arab nationalism! This mania of Arab nationalism led to the union between Egypt and Syria, which soon dissolved and created enmity between the two states for a while. It seemed as if Arab nationalism brings nothing but enmity among Arab nations.

After the death of Nasser, Arab nationalism movement faded in Egypt, *Ba'ath* parties in Syria and Iraq assumed leadership in it, and each formed organizations to fund and propagate it.

Another new leader of Arab nationalism was the Libyan president Qaddafi who considered himself the heir to Nasserism, and he funded this notion enthusiastically and made many things; yet in vain, as he failed to accomplish his goals and made clashes with the Arab League and made enmity with Arab monarchs. Qaddafi accepted grudgingly the presence of Assad and Saddam as first leaders of Arab nationalism, and they were as well, like him, military leaders. Eventually he failed, lost many things, and felt despair and remorse. He declared his rejection of Arab nationalism did not hide his desire to withdraw from the Arab League and directed his funds and efforts toward Africa, hoping to form a union of African states. With the death of Saddam, the withdrawal of Qaddafi, and isolation of Syria, sources of Arab nationalism dried up before those who advocated it with all means.

It is a pity that many of the best Arab intellectuals had wasted their efforts and thought over the notion of Arab

nationalism. They had done that just to follow policies of their rulers or they were deceived with false hopes and illusions. They kept holding forums and conferences, making declarations, taking decisions, spending money, and publishing newspapers to serve this false cause. They should have tackled this notion in terms of Arab reality and mad procedures to prepare for priorities like economic complementarity, the Common Arab Market, and means of intellectual relations like facilitating shipping of magazines and newspapers among Arab countries.

The Arab intellectuals should have put plans for practical nationalism; i.e. should all Arab countries be one State with one presidency and sovereignty or this union would be federal or confederal one. It is best to form this union gradually within confederal framework; for instance, an entity including Egypt, Libya and Sudan, another entity including North African countries: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania, another entity including Arabian Peninsula countries: Hejaz, Yemen and Gulf countries. Yet, each state would maintain a degree of sovereignty and independence, while removing customs and duties on people and commodities, to make free zones and remove boundaries and restrictions of movement from one state to another. If these entities were materialized, a framework could be devised to comprise all of them in one Arab Union. Europe did this gradually, slowly but steadily, until the EU was formed, as Europe removed national boundaries, customs and duties, frontiers, and obligatory entry visas. Later, Europe initiated unified currency and economic policies, until EU was formed, and very soon would comprise all European countries.

**A vision for the union of Arab nations, by the martyr imam Hassan Al-Banna.\*\*\*\***

This vision of uniting Arab countries was presented in a document by the martyr imam Hassan Al-Banna to Arab

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\*\*\*\* The complete text of this document is published in our book "*The Responsibility of The Failure of Islamic Caliphate in Modern Age*" pages 147-185

leaders, who gathered to form the Arab League, in 18 September 1944. This document did not receive its due interest and attention by diplomats who were too proud of their titles and positions...etc. to form the ill-fated Arab League.

This document was written on the notion of "*Arabs as one nation (Umma)*" as "*this is the clearest, most just and successful case in history*". The document says that Arab unity should be reinforced by spiritual, linguistic, geographic, historical factors and common interests. The unity must be based on the notion that Arabs from the Persian gulf to the Atlantic ocean share many common features, and this does not need evidence or proof, but needs steady faith of believers and justice of fair people.

**This document tackles the realization of steps for unity of Arab nations:**

There are primary practical steps to realize the desired unity and they are the rights of Arab governments without interference:

- 1) Removing customs and duties.
- 2) Removing passports and allowing free movement for all Arabs in all Arab states after checking his ID, and allowing immigration to any Arab state following an easy system.
- 3) Expanding economic cooperation and forming wide-scope Arab companies in Arab countries, which include people from all Arab countries, while studying and reviving common Arab projects like Hejaz Railways that was funded by Arab and Muslim means.
- 4) The development of cultural, legislative, and military cooperation is by unifying education programs and curricula, rules and sources of legislation, and methods of military training. It is an Arab demand that the Arab unity conference should acknowledge these steps and plan its implementation to realize them in all Arab states.

Realizing nationalist hopes should begin with aiding colonized countries to gain independence and help new nations resume their renaissance after gaining independence.

After realizing the above-mentioned steps, we should take into consideration unfulfilled national demands and political rights of Arab countries. It is needless to mention the historical incidents and factors that led to this lack of fulfillment, but we should face reality and the status quo, and endeavor to fulfill these demands and obtain these rights. The conference of Arab unity and its committee should plan the routes of this joint struggle, and should decide that cooperation of all Arab states is essential to gain success in a number of issues:

1) Gaining full independence of Egypt and maintaining the unity of the Nile valley (Egypt and Sudan). Any action to strip Egypt of independence and disunite Egypt and Sudan is considered unjust, and has deep impact on all Arab *Umma*. Every Arab nation and government should aid Egypt and its government to gain independence. The international public opinion should know that when Egypt retains the unity of the Nile valley, it does not aim to control and subjugate a nation or to expand its geographical frontiers, but aims at unifying Egyptian and Sudanese people in one nation, and retain its entity, sources, efforts, wealth...etc. the Nile valley needs Egypt's protection more than the Egyptian need for the sources of the Nile valley.

2) Gaining independence of the Levant countries. If Lebanon persisted in asserting independence from Grand Syria, then let that be until Lebanon realized that unity of the Levant is better. We are in the era of huge, powerful entities, but if Lebanon insisted on its stance, it would be enough to agree with other Arab nations on the steps toward a practical unity. This emotional, sensitive case should not be an obstacle to the conference of Arab unity.

3) Solution of the Palestinian problem in a way that suits the Arab point of view and maintains the safety of Palestine, as its location is in the heart of the Arab region. Jewish aggression should be resisted and its international support should be stopped. All Arabs and the committee of the conference know the dangers of Jewish settlement in Palestine. All Arab nations have the intention to protect Palestine from this looming danger. We sympathize with the Jews in their tribulation, but this does not mean allowing them to settle in Palestine and taking lands and properties by force from its original people the Palestinians. The Jews could settle in western countries that have vast expanses of land and need more population and activities.

4) Aiding other Arab nations to gain full independence (the states of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and their annexed lands) and resume renaissance. Political conspiracies should be resisted, especially that these regions face severe international competition socially, politically and economically. These regions should seize this opportunity of uniting Arab nations to achieve the desired goals and provide welfare in the present and the future. If this chance is overlooked, it might not be attained once more.

5) Gaining independence of North African states to make them enter into the Arab unity. Libya should not be divided into cantons and should remain one nation after independence from colonizers. In the lands of the Abyssinians, the British expelled the Italians and the land returned to its rightful emperor by aid of Britain. The same should be done in Libya with the aid of Arab nations, to liberate Libya and maintain its integrity as one nation.

Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco were colonized, sometimes mandated by, the French, and endeavored to resist the colonizers and to achieve independence, they supported the Allies in the World War II, and this great support was acknowledged by Churchill and UN leaders. The army of Free

France that engaged in wars for France in North Africa was formed by native Arab soldiers. The Arab conference should mention these facts to demand the rights of these countries to gain independence for twenty millions of Arabs who suffer injustice and a fierce attack on their Arab identity and Arabic language by social and cultural invasion. Colonizers made some of these Arabs naturalized French citizens, while with some other Arabs; colonizers resorted to severe pressure and terrorism to subdue them. The colonizers sent missionaries to convert Muslims to Christianity and tried to resist Islamic consciousness, but in vain; as North Africa would remain Arab Muslim part of the Arab nation.

The conference should have representatives from North Africa and Palestine to discuss their problems.

The document speaks further about "*the political entity of the Arab nations' unity*", and notes that it is a matter of **nations** and not **states**:

The third step after the previous ones is the general mode of the political entity of these united Arab governments. It is not the right time or the right circumstances to discuss this matter in this conference. This matter should be left to the nations; each one should choose the kind of government that suits it. The conference should decide on the following:

1- Independent Arab governments should be represented in any referendum of liberated Arab nations and other Arab nations that has not settled national government yet. 2- There should be a decision on a kind of political link among Arab governments, like a supreme consultative council to allow regular interrelation and communications. This council would be the basis of a more complete unity in the future.

The previous quotes from the document of the imam Al-Banna show the difference between an organized, peaceful thought and the shallow sloganeering of mobs.



## **The stance of Islamic rule on minorities:**

It is an important point to tackle the stance of Islamic rule on non-Muslim minorities in the Arab world. Some preferred to ignore this sensitive, thorny issue, and some Islamic scholars misunderstood it and presented it in a distorted manner, which aggravated matters. Others made this issue a 'demon' to make people fear Islamic calls and to make governments fear the specter of sectarian strife. These false claims should be faced courageously as there should not be any taboos for writers that would made them refrain to tackle any issues. Matters are either right or wrong, and opinions should be expressed without fear.

Since long ago, the European colonizing powers tended to destroy the unity of Arab colonized nations by this main plot: **debilitating the Islamic component in Arab Muslims and reinforcing the Christian component in Arab Christians**. At the same time when Europe blamed Muslims on making Islam a component in their national identity, it encouraged Arab Christians to consider Christianity as the only component of their lives. This was the European attempt to wreak havoc in Muslim-Christian relations in the Arab world, to foster fanaticism similar to the one found in Europe, and to create enmity between a Muslim majority and a Christian minority.

This issue aggravated because of many factors, chief among them overlooking of Islam as a basis of the Arab society by political leadership, and ignorance of Islamic leadership of he best stance. This combination of ignorance and overlooking lend to this issue a kind of morbid sensitivity that blocked the way to find the best sound solution.

Moreover, these sentiments, incited by colonizers in the past in the Arab world, lingered because of agents loyal to Europe, who engender in Christians animosity towards Muslims, assuming that Muslims are cruel fanatics. This is palpable but unproved by tangible evidence of written documents because such trends enter through unwritten history of secret counsel. Yet there are some proofs like the ones written by As'ad Dagher in his book titled "*My Memoirs on the Margin*

*of the Arab Cause*". He says that when he was a child, he was enrolled in a school run by monks in Lebanon. A Muslim child was enrolled in the same school, named Riyadh El-Solh. Both children became intimate friends in studying and playing. The French headmaster of the school noticed this and said to Dagher:

- Whom are you playing with?
- With Riyadh.
- Why do not you play with someone else?
- I play with him and with others, and I was now playing with him.

He pulled me by my hair and whispered in my ears:

- How do you do this while you are a Christian?
- What is wrong with that?
- You do not know his intentions, come closer to me.

I drew nearer to him, and he whispered as if he was telling me a secret:

- Do not you know that this child is a Muslim?
- What is the meaning of the word 'Muslim', reverend father?
- Have not you ever visited Beirut, son?
- I have been there once with my father.
- A Muslim in Beirut is the one who stabs a Christian with a dagger in his back!§§§§§

The innocent child believed that claim and decided not to play with his Muslim friend except while taking precautions, "*by not turning my back to him, so as not to give him chance to stab me...*" until another teacher refuted such claim to him later.

This should be clear at first: any Islamic rule is the nearest to Christianity, in comparison to any other rule, even if this rule is Christian. That is because Islam is the only celestial religion that acknowledges the prophecy of Jesus Christ and the immaculateness of the Virgin Mary. Islam acknowledges the fact that Jesus Christ was miraculously born, breached a

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§§§§§ "*My Memoirs on the Margin of the Arab Cause*" page 20

celestial holy book, the Gospel, and the Holy Quran tells Muslims, in many verses, that belief in the Gospel is essential for them. Islamic stance of Jesus Christ cannot harm the sentiments of Christians, although it does not acknowledge the notion of the divine son of God, but Islam reveres Jesus Christ as a prophet and a bearer of one of God's holy books, and regards Virgin Mary as the lady of all women.

On the other hand, the policy of Islamic rule toward Christianity is clear; which is granting social and religious liberty, freedom of traditions...etc. according to their beliefs. Even in times of war, when all submit to martial laws and liberties are restricted, Prophet Muhammad ordered Islamic armies explicitly to leave monasteries and monks unharmed. Christians did not bemoan injustices within Islamic rule unless these injustices were at the hands of an aberrant ruler whose injustices afflicted Muslims as well.

The notion that Islamic rule is better than a Christian one for Christians is an acknowledged fact, and not a mere hypothesis, especially in Egypt. The Christian Romans persecuted Egyptian Copts due to differences in doctrine, and drove the Patriarch of Egypt to flee the country. When Amr Ibn El-'As conquered Egypt, he granted Copts religious liberty which was restricted within Roman Christian rule and let the Patriarch come back to the country, and Amr Ibn El-'As revered him and made him one of his consultant. Elsewhere, the French Catholics exterminated the Huguenot in the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. The English Catholics committed massacres against the Protestants by the command of the Queen Mary, who got the name Bloody Mary. This struggle between Catholics and Protestants remains in Ireland today. Other similar examples could be found in many European countries, like Germany, Spain, and Russia.

Casting doubts on the justice of Islamic rule, in most cases if not all, did not happen by Arab Christians, as Arabic speaking Christians would have greater rapport with their Muslim brethren, and they are not influenced by European civilization that lacks tolerance. This point is made clear when

we compare Egyptian Copts and the Lebanese Maronite Christians. The latter were influenced by the French culture and they spoke its language. They rejected Arab civilization, and regarded Muslims with doubt and suspicion. In the Lebanese civil war, the Maronite committed untold atrocities. On the other hands, Copts who witnessed the Arab conquest and integrated into the Arab society did not feel any sensitivity or alienation toward Islamic rule or their Muslim brethren. Mutual respect and sympathy was and remains on religious occasions of Copts and Muslims in Egypt.

The Islamic Call magazine in the issue of February 1977 directed two questions to many Christian magnates in different doctrines:

A) Islam and Christianity coincide on the prohibition of fornication; do you mind the application of Islamic punishment in that case and other Islamic punishments in the Egyptian society? Does its application would harm the rights of Copts?

B) From your study of history, what is your view on the stance of Islamic rule toward minorities in issues of maintaining freedom of worship, safety of money and security of human beings?

Answering the first question, the cardinal Stephanous, patriarch of the Catholic Copts, said:

*"...celestial religions forbid murder and fornication, and guide people to human, brotherly love and link it inextricably to the divine love. Murder, fornication, stealing, and other vices are against this human love, because God created Man to be righteous, not sinful, to gain benefit from the divine guidance. That is why when one deviates from the divine teachings, having had life necessities; one should be punished as a kind of deterrence, and a warning to others, to prevent chaos if committing such crimes would go unpunished. Positive laws sometimes condone people, and criminals are sometimes*

*excused; hence, social security would be lost. I repeatedly have said that application of Islamic law punishments is necessary to all people within our society to secure safe life for all, and their application does not harm rights of Christian citizens."*

Answering the second question, the cardinal Stephanous said:

*"The one who respects Islam is respecting all religions. Every religion calls for love and fraternity. When people follow their religious teachings, they do not hate others, nor they be hated by others. Other religions, especially Christianity, in all eras of Islamic just rule, did find security and peace in relation to freedom of worship, securing one's people, ownership, and money,...."*

Answering the first question, Anba Georgius, bishop of scientific research and higher studies of theology in the Coptic Church, and the reprehensive of Orthodox Copts, said:

*"...No one objects to applying Islamic punishments in Egypt, as celestial teachings are divine light for the guidance of people. We believe that religions were inspired to Man to guide them to a better life, and divine inspiration guides man to the righteous path and to lead a happy, prosperous life(.....) Although Christianity as no text that indicates punishments like cutting off the hand of a thief or execution of murderers...etc., but we, as Christians, do not object to applying Islamic punishments in Egypt, if this is the will of our Muslim brethren. In our opinion, the best way to implement this is to grant full freedom to courts of law to investigate crimes and reasons for it.... "*

Answering the second question, Anba Georgius said:

*"Non-Muslim minorities - especially Christians - enjoyed under Islamic rule of tolerance freedom, security, peace, liberty of worship, and safety of properties...etc."*

Answering the first question, the priest Barsoum Shehata, the deputy of the Evangelist sect in Egypt, said:

*"...all religions prohibit crime, and the human psyche should be prevented from the tendency to commit crimes by serious educative, reformatory means, which are based on the revival of spiritual values in the human psyche, and which are linked to the divine guidance. Hardened hearts and foul souls that cannot be influenced by guidance and counsel are aberrant and deviant, and society should be saved from them...hence, applying Islamic law punishments would realize justice, peace, and love within our society. In my opinion, this should be left to the minister of interior as he represents the authority of the police, and courts should regain their sovereignty and sanctity, with full liberty of investigating crimes..."*

These venerable personalities did not offer such testimonies as a kind of flattery, pretence, or to avoid embarrassment. Some people may think otherwise. All ordinary Christians, let alone their magnates, know the words of Christ " Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and give unto God what is God's", and " My kingdom is not in this world". Christians know the guidelines of the Christian magnates Paul and Peter who ordered Christians to obey non-Christian rulers (this guideline of Paul came in the era of Nero the Roman emperor), and to be loyal to the states they live in as long as it does not interfere in their religion. This is the line adopted by the Egyptian Orthodox church, whose popes are known to be intelligent and civil, which made them amiable to rulers of Egypt, who in turn, granted them protection, wealth, and lands. These popes were depended upon since the era of M. Ali Pasha to assume internal money exchange, a field now inherited by Copts. Things changed when Pope Chenouda III became the head of the

Orthodox Church in Egypt, as he had ambitions to develop the church, but ambition in general is a mundane aspect. Even the Holy Quran ordered Prophet Muhammad not to hold the ambition of getting too many people to embrace Islam, especially high profile personalities, and not to be upset if few people believed in Islam, because guidance is from God alone. Because of his ambition, Pope Chenouda III clashed with late president M. Sadat, who ordered his confinement in a monastery. This incident was unprecedented. The Khedive of Egypt was the one who ordered the return of Pope Kyrillos V when a religious council decided on his exclusion, but he could not return until he made sure that the khedive ordered his return.

The policies of Pope Shenouda III led to holding a Coptic conference in Alexandria in 17 January 1977, which was the first conference of its kind, attended by Pope Shenouda III whose popularity among the Copts was in the rise since his ascendancy to papacy in 1971. This conference was organized by Anba Samuel, the bishop responsible for foreign relations of the Coptic church.

The conference outlined certain principles: liberty of belief, freedom of worship, equality and providing equal opportunities and representation of Copts in parliamentary bodies, and finally the danger of extreme religious trends.

The conference presented many demands to the authorities: abolition of the law punishing renegades (who rejected their former faith to convert to another one), not to apply Islamic laws on non-Muslims, abolition of laws dating back to the Ottoman era, which forbid erecting new churches, and stopping the exclusion of non-Muslims from assuming positions in the state on all levels.

It is a pity that these policies were just attitudes of expatriate Copts in Canada and the USA who spread the rumor of persecution of Copts in Egypt, tarnishing the reputation of their country to reinforce their position in foreign countries to which they had immigrated.

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The best way to tackle the Coptic issue is to exclude the sensitivities and deliberate disregard. Relations among Muslims and non-Muslims should be based on equality in duties and rights, and mutual respect. This is urged upon by Islam. No sensitivities should exist for non-Muslims as we mentioned before, and citizenship is not Muslim or Coptic but it belongs to homeland.

It is a grave error to give this issue more magnitude that it deserve, but in the same time we should not be obsessed by denying nonexistent problem by tedious talk of the unity of the cross and the crescent, the church and the mosque, and Muslim and Coptic clergy. We firmly believe that this phenomena, though encouraged as good, is not to the benefit of Copts in the first place, as this might induce them to hold excessive ambitions, and these sloganeering tarnishes the notion of the unity of our nation, giving the impression that the case in Egypt resembles what is in Cypress or Lebanon, and as if the number of Coptic minority equals or approximates the number of Muslim majority, or as of Egypt has two formal religions on equal footing on all occasions. This has nothing to do with unity; on the contrary, it fosters dichotomy or duality, and debilitating the unity of our nation.

Have officials thought of that? Have they thought that caring too much to render justice to minorities might do injustice to the majority, as they might put minorities and the majority on equal footing? Have they thought that too much talking of claims of national unity deepen sectarian feelings?

It is important that Copts should know that they could not make demands that might render injustice to Muslim majority and that if they emphasized the minority status, they would lose claims of national unity. If Copts want to stick to national unity, they should confine their religious identity within the framework of religion, not the state, and they should exclude sensitivities against Muslims.

Christianity is the religion of love, but not the egocentric love for oneself, rather the love for the other. In the Christian



point of view, sensitivities are selfish and should be discarded. This was the traditional policy of the Egyptian Coptic Church and its revered patriarchs, until pope Chenouda III came to be the head of this institution and changed its policy.

History tells us that flattery, partiality, or giving up legitimate rights by the majority would bring forth serious problems in the future for both the majority and the minority. Social and historical realities are not secrets and should stir no sensitivities: this country's religion today is Islam, and its glory, history, law...etc stemmed from Islam for 1400 years. Another fact is that the vast majority of the Egyptian population is Muslims. There is a considerable Coptic minority, living beside the Muslim majority, that has its specific nature, and it is not secluded from Muslim majority. Copts have the right of freedom of worship, and all citizenship rights. Islam urges on these rights, and this is manifested in the Islamic rule, the testimony of Copts, and the state of affairs.

This should not urge Copts to harbor grudges and sensitivities. It is most inappropriate that a Coptic writer says that late president Anwar Sadat added to his full name the first name 'Mohammad', and sees this as an indication of his policies toward Copts. Sensitivities might not disappear altogether, but they should not be exaggerated. Coptic grievances should not be a reason to debilitate the Islamic identity of Egypt and the Islamic constituent of its nation, because Islam never harms Copts; on the contrary, it acknowledges their rights of full citizenship and protects their religious rights, according to the Quranic teachings. The Islamic constituent is the root of the Egyptian society, weakening it will not benefit Copts, but will harm Muslims, and it has nothing to do with realistic, rational policy.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **OUR STANCE ON SOCIALISM**

All well-known socialist doctrines have one European origin, i.e., they were developed in European soil and their roots are deep-seated in European social, political, and economic systems. Socialist view of feudalism, for instance, is European in nature, and its view on religion is the same view held in Europe against the Christian church. Socialist view on capitalism is the same one held against British capitalism in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. Since most socialist thinkers in Europe, as most Europeans, are ignorant of Islam and its history, and of the history of the Arab world, they believe that the history of civilization began with the Greco-Roman civilizations, and then the European renaissance. Socialist thinkers believed that their theories apply to all people all over the world, and they resorted to the dialectic philosophy to support their theories.

When Karl Marx came up with his socialist theories, he observed the following:

A) British economy theories of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, among others, which outlined a certain number of significant economic principles, like the one that stipulates that work is the origin of value.

B) The flourishing German philosophy of Hegel, who revived the ancient dialectic philosophy theorized by the Greeks.

C) Attempts, experiments and notions of the French socialism that emerged as a reaction to the French Revolution, especially that it resulted in disappointment, because it was the revolution of the rising bourgeois class, rather than the revolution of the working class. These ideas were expressed in the writings of Saint Simon, LeBlanc, Fourier, Proudhon, among others.

These are the sources cited in the socialist books, and were at the hands of Marx when he began writing his work. Yet, there was another source that socialist books overlooked, which

was the biological studies of development of societies, which reached its peak in Darwin's book "*The Origin of Species*". That book gave Marx one of the main keys to his idea of the struggle that he borrowed from the field of biology to the field of economic production.

As for the circumstances of the emergence of communism, it was a reaction of zealots in the camp of class war. According to the temperament and conditions of the life of the thinkers who laid down the theoretical outlines of communism, they were filled with enmity and the desire to take revenge. They were like the Greek Furies or other revengeful gods, conspiring when weak, devastating and crushing when powerful, and this group of thinkers and their writings were devoid of morality and ethics.

This abovementioned fact is the reason behind the sense of alienation toward socialism in the Arab or Eastern environment, in addition to its incomprehensible rhetoric and jargon, and its dependence on certain European circumstances that had not occurred in the East. Hence, socialism in the Arab world is hollow, and those who called for it were foreigners, Arabs who imbibed Western culture, and Jews. When certain factors led to the emergence of communist rule in Arab and Islamic countries, this did not appeal to the public. The communist ideology was then confined to the ruling elite that held control of the state and its sources, and of the army, by whose support they reached authority by coup d'état. Hence, the state would have, in a novel manner, the wealth and military power to rule.

This is not to deny that socialism – especially before it was linked to the hated dictatorial authority – represented the European consciousness in the age when the Church gave up its humane role and scholars of politics and economics sided with the rising capitalist trend and saw that misery of workers was their destined lot in life.

In the history of socialism and its development, we should distinguish between two stages: the first one when socialism was an open call to which many thinkers in Britain,

France, and Germany had contributed, and the second stage that began with Marx and ended with Lenin, and this stage is called the Marxist stage. This stage was confined to Marxist thought as it was considered the practical side of socialism, while other socialist theories were considered idealistic or utopian.

**In the first stage**, socialism was the intellectual haven for all free, compassionate, conscientious men who were interested in the social cause. Chief among them was the British Robert Owen, who was in his adolescence a worker and later became an employer. He later gave up his work as an employer to lead the biggest workers' union in the nineteenth century, which was the biggest solidarity union in Britain. He began the first practical experiment to achieve considerable justice for workers by raising wages and lessening working hours, as well as educating workers. He created the notion of cooperation as an alternative to competitive capitalism. He tried to establish a society that lacks the shortcomings of capitalist society in Britain, and in the USA. He was the first one to use the term '*socialism*' in his speeches. In France, the great thinkers Proudhon, Fourier, and LeBlanc led the socialist discussions, and in Germany La Salle. Generally, socialism in that stage represented justice and fairness toward workers, to save them from capitalist exploitation by any means.

**In the second stage**, Marx came. He was a genius with encyclopedic knowledge (he used to memorize Shakespearean texts, and got his PhD in Greek literature, and he was a student of Hegel). Marx managed to reach to a mathematic formula by which *surplus value* taken by capitalists can be calculated. Marx's theoretical nature led him create the notions of philosophical materialism and historical materialism. He considered that ownership of means of production is the decisive factor of the development of history. He thought that every system of production bears its antithesis according to Hegelian dialectic thinking, and that capitalism would lead to socialism, which would replace capitalism by the revolution of the proletariat. In brief, Marx managed to make socialism a specified, compact theory', after it had been an open, free call.

Socialism as discussed in this book would be confined to that second stage, i.e. Marxian theorization and Leninist application of it, as these notions are what occur to people's minds when socialism is mentioned, and because pre-Marx socialist ideas are now unremembered history confined to books, not vivid in the memory of people.

Of course, we cannot present here an explanation of Marxism and Leninism; we would confine our argument to elements of difference and agreement between Islam and Marxism, according to the view of the Islamic Revival Call.

### **Elements of difference**

#### **First: denial of divinity and creation:**

When Marx made materialism the origin of his dialecticism, he excluded the existence of God the Creator of the universe. He perceived divinity as an ancient popular myth. This perception is the main element lacking in communism, and this lacking element is the origin of the deviance of communist thought. Yet, we should refer to the circumstances that led to that grave error. The ecclesiastic theology and the complicated concept of trinity, as well as the concepts of personified god, son of god, mother of god...etc. led thinkers and scholars in the Christian society to reject the ecclesiastic notion of God, and this mythological maze that could not be judged by reason or instinct. The church, along its history, sided with nobility and monarchs. Bishops had their seats in the House of Lords side by side with feudalists. When the peasants' revolt occurred in the sixteenth century in Germany, Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism, stood against the peasants and counseled the nobility to crush this revolt in a severe manner. What reinforced the opposing view of communism toward religion was that few Europeans knew enough about Islam and its miraculous concept of divinity, because crusades isolated Europe from Islam.

Hence, Marxism rejected the institution of the church, but this does not excuse them from the grave error of rejecting

the notion of divinity altogether. Communists ignored on purpose these important questions: what is universe? Is it just heavenly bodies like suns, moons, and galaxies? Is it self-made? Did it create its own precise laws? Did it exist by chance? Who created it? How could we accept the notion of existence by chance in the world of determinism? Is this development of universe random? How random elements developed this creative, precise design in life. Who set in motion all existent things from minute nuclei to huge galaxies? Who created the human body whose wonders are being discovered until now by science?

When we see a perfect portrait of someone or a natural scene, we recognize that a painter made it, not nature. Nature, for instance, cannot bring iron from mines, rubber from trees, glass from sand, and create cars within a period of millions of years of evolution.

The notion of 'millions of years of evolution' is the capital notion for the advocates of self-evolution, which is a materialistic evolution of primitive creatures to the intelligent human being. This explanation does not answer two questions: how laws that control the universe and the heavenly bodies are so precise, and what is the secret behind this life. A period of 'millions of years of evolution' cannot alone suffice to achieve a quantitative or qualitative development in living creatures just because change is latent in them. God put laws for that development, while the passage of 'millions of years' is a mere catalyst, not the original factor. 'Millions of years of evolution' can change the nature of some substances, but it cannot put laws of moving of heavenly bodies or give the tough of life on lifeless matter.

The notion of God belongs to reason. When there is reason and will, then there is God, and many regulations, laws, sequence, causes and effects. That is why when the Holy Quran reasons with unbelievers and calls them to believe, it sometimes scolds them saying: "Do not you have reason?"

This verse agrees with reason: "***Or do they deny the existence of God? Have they themselves been created without anything that might have caused their creation?***"(52:35).

It is wrong to assume that peoples in modern age in Europe, the USA, and elsewhere do not believe in God, or that Muslims are the only believer in God. A good percentage of these peoples believe in God in approximately similar ways akin to Muslims, and to instinct. Yet, this kind of belief is not strongly related to Christianity, because the notion of God in the church is no longer believed by most people, either due to its incomprehensibility or due to lack of acceptance of it by reason and logic. This kind of belief lost its efficiency, values and commitment, but it prevented total spiritual hollowness created by the ignoring of the notion of God or having lesser alternatives. No one denies the notion of God in the west except obstinate people who insist on their false notions. God describes such people in the Holy Quran: "***Thus, step by step, We bestow from on high through this Quran all that gives health to the spirit and is a grace unto those who believe in US, the while it adds to the ruin of evildoers***"(17:82)

Marxism avoided the discussion of the question of divinity as the only rational solution to the question of existence: i.e. the existence of the universe and its minute, precise laws, and the existence of the human being and human emotions, sentiments, life, intelligence, and conscience. Communism denounced the notion of God and creation without presenting convincing alternative. This fact shakes the depth and objectivity of communist thinkers, starting from Marx onwards. They are in Islamic perspective, people who discarded truth only to believe in mere falsehood, they feel irritation by the mention of God, and feel happy by the mention of mundane things, and they believe that this worldly life is the only one and nothing would happen beyond death, and death itself comes by time only.

When socialism denied the existence of God and the impact of religion on societies and individuals, it lost ethics and values, discarding all philosophical principles that formed

the European conscience. Hence, socialism fell into the same quagmire of capitalist ailments: cynicism and alienation, whereas Christ said, "Man does not live by bread alone". It is usual that opportunism was prevailing in individuals, parties and states, which believed in socialism. Socialism at the hands of Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tong, and communist ruling parties in Asia and Africa, imposed a kind of terrorism on people and caused more than one hundred million people to lose their life. Value and sanctity of human life comes only from God, and if they came from human source, they fall short of being appreciated. The Holy Quran asserts that religion places great value on human life, "*...If anyone slays a human being - unless it be in punishment for murder or for spreading corruption on earth- it shall be as though he had slain all mankind...*" (5:32)

**Second: refusal to suppress the character of the individual:**

As socialism rejects God as the Creator of the universe and its laws, it overlooks the human being and its role in society. It disregards the role of human will to run society, crushing the individual in social classes. This stance is a regression, or more straightforwardly backwardness, as this stance places human beings to ancient eras before the advent of religions saved them by granting them a sacred spirit, conscious conscience, and distinctive character, before the emergence of intellectual revolution that lifted the banner of liberty and achieved it in many fields.

In ancient eras, primitive human being thought that angry gods and impetuous powers of nature controlled society and the universe. This control was attributed as well to the ruler who personified the gods, rulers then had full control of life, death, work, and granting liberty, prosperity, and grace on his retinue as long as he was pleased with them. Other people, then, did not have individual characters, as it was dissolved within



their tribes or classes, not to mention staunch loyalty to the ruler.

With the advent of Christianity, man was saved from this disgraceful position, because of the link between human beings and God that gave people dignity. Religion crystallized human conscience and soul. The Church presented logical, stable, if not true, notions of the universe and society that gave stability to human beings for a while. Man became the master of the earth, which is the center of the universe, and heavenly bodies revolve around it. The universe moves according to the will of God, Who reward the righteous and punish the evildoers. Christianity presented objective criteria that allowed equality for all people in society. The church struggled against usury and corrupt methods of trade and imposed just dealings and care for the poor. It hindered the counter development as the eighteenth century industrial revolution could have occurred a century or two before that when the engines and machines were fabricated, but governments and churches banned their use.

Yet, many factors interfered to change the course of things, because of the overbearing authority of the church, and its corruption and riches. Popes, cardinals, and bishops isolated themselves from the public and from monks, priests, and believers. The church moved away from its erstwhile values upon which it was founded, and it worked for its interests, collaborated with aristocracy and monarchy against the public.

On the other hand, Christianity focuses on the soul, salvation, and sin, which allowed many historical factors, related to its origin, to formulate the Christian trend of thought that says that the Christian religion should not interfere with political and economic affairs. Its true message is the salvation of soul by glad tidings, love, and setting a good example, and the church should not interfere between Man and God, controlling will and conscience of human beings. These trends gathered momentum due to many historical reasons, and to sayings of Christ, and the two magnates of Christianity Paul and Peter. Other powers of development presented Christian trends of thought that glorified hard work and asceticism and saw

success as the sign of righteousness and God's favor. This climate paved the way to the emergence of 'ascetic capitalist' who would realize success by accumulation of profit and reinvesting it. This capitalist would not enjoy pleasures of life unless in later stages of his life and he would perform Christian acts of charity like building a church, a school, or an orphans' house. After a long journey through history, capitalism allowed the gradual return of usury, discarding care for the poor and just dealings. Hence, the climate paved the way for the emergence of full-fledged capitalism.

Capitalism began modestly in the cradle of boroughs. Later, with the spirit of adventure and risk in traders, sea voyages set to discover new lands and maritime routes. This was followed by colonialism, plunder and scramble for loot; hence, the accumulation of huge capitalist wealth, which allowed Man to tame powers of nature to serve him.

Thus, the medieval Christian society disintegrated under blows of counter powers, politics was separated from religion and economics, and that stage was crowned by the emergence of full-blown capitalism and laissez-faire economy. For the first time, then, appeared the individual independent character, free from the shackles of the state and the church.

Yet, capitalism presented the economic man, a distinct type of people appeared as a result of the political economy, who did not move or talk except by the motive to earn profits, and even wages fierce battles with workers, consumers, and competitors.

Capitalists later resembled the ancient angry gods, and individuality dissolved in groups by varied degrees. Individual workers could not face capitalist exploitation and formed unions and parties to defend their rights.

This was the state of affairs, and he tried to reform matters but ironically, he aggravated matters! He wanted to free human beings from exploitation, but he made them lose more privileges. Peter Drucker said in that respect, "*[Marx] did not just prove that Man is not free within capitalism, but also proved that he does not possess the faculty to be free*"

Marx made materialism, not the human being, the starting point. He did not perceive in the human being except physical, animalistic entity. Evolutionary theories that appeared then influenced Marx deeply, especially concerning the origin of man as descendent from higher apes, but evolved in millions of years and during certain conditions, to be upright and his hands evolved to be able to hold things, to emerge later as the human being we know today.

This view opposes the view of religion and humanist philosophies, both added dignity on Man, bestowed on people by God. In Islam, Man is the deputy of God upon earth, and angels prostrated before him, as human beings are bearers of God's soul breathed into them through Adam; hence, human beings are dignified. In Christianity, man is the image of God who sent a son to redeem mankind. The Quranic verse "***...If anyone slays a human being - unless it be in punishment for murder or for spreading corruption on earth- it shall be as though he had slain all mankind...***" (5:32) refers to the fact that God dignified human beings. Dignity of man had many signs and symbols in other philosophies. Man in the humanist philosophies, which emerged in the liberal revolution of human intellect, became "*an end in itself*", and thanks to these concepts that involved religious notions, human beings had certain sanctity and natural rights – for just being human.

These natural human rights are foreign to communism, which sees human beings as a developed animal, and the factors of this development were more important than the will of human beings. These factors are not just natural, but economic and productive factors as well, in the first place. These factors develop and create relations in isolation from the will of human beings, according to this famous quotation of Marx, "*...social production makes people enter into certain productive and economic relationships, in isolation with their will, and these relationships agree with the degree of the development of material production...*". Thus, the development of production powers and its relationships impose themselves willy-nilly on the human will.

In light of the above-mentioned idea, we understand the harsh attitude of Marx toward workers and capitalists. Although he sympathized with the former group and cursed the latter group, but he saw that both groups had nothing to do with the dire conditions, capitalist could not help but stride toward their end, while workers had nothing to do except when they link their struggle to changing of relationships and ownership of means of production. We understand as well the underestimation of human rights that accompanied the application of communism, starting from Lenin until now. Application took different forms in many countries of the world. We understand as well the emergence of the notion of 'adapting' of human nature and the attempt to control and tamper with all components of the character of individuals. These practices began with Lenin since the Pavlov experiments with dogs, which led to brainwashing during the reign of Stalin.

In light of this idea, we understand that communist notion of liberty hailed unashamedly by Marxists, which was that liberty was knowledge by necessity.

Plekhanov explained in his book on history and the individual, considered the most brilliant philosophical, "*...consciousness seen through liberty is work done and preferred by human beings, and necessity is linked mentally to liberty [...]/liberty means one cannot break the unity between necessity and liberty, and this overt contradiction is the biggest manifestation of liberty...*".

This 'great' discovery results in the statement that liberty lies in lack of it! Moreover, failing to work what one does already is the biggest manifestation of liberty!

According to that theory, Stalin claimed that his 1936 constitution is the most democratic one. Communists claimed in any state they controlled that their ruling system – and not capitalist democratic systems – included vast space for liberty!

It is clear that the theory linking liberty to 'knowledge by necessity' as a definition of liberty was a bad one designed to deceive people. It is a fact that sometimes necessity places a certain framework or constraints on liberty and a motive to

bypass liberty, but matters are not recognized by their restrictions or by their contrary notions. For instance we cannot say that white is black just because black makes white prominent. Linking liberty to 'knowledge by necessity' was a kind of deception because necessity has many interpretations without control. Every day bears witness human superiority over necessity, and what was necessary yesterday becomes handy today. This definition could be mentioned when we talk about the relation between human beings and nature, and that necessity inspires human beings the desire to be free and conquer nature. This definition would turn into a way to accentuate human power that is stronger than necessity. Mentioning this definition in the field of social relations was meant to show that the socialist state is a necessity that absorbs liberty. This includes the relationship between production and ownership of means of production by the state. Anyway, liberty in this perspective has no other meaning but submission and compliance, to justify the hegemony of totalitarian governments.

This communist definition is a distorted version of the Islamic view of fate<sup>\*\*\*\*\*</sup> (exemplified in sayings like 'no harm would befall Man unless ordained by God', 'God choose the best for Man', and 'if we knew what is forthcoming, we would choose present reality'). This overt resemblance shows that the communist definition is a distorted version of the Islamic view on fate, which links it to God the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Perfect and the Absolute. No one could monopolize rule in the name of God. Whereas necessity in communism, as a notion, is merely the blind and deaf relations of production that has – without human beings - no vision whatsoever, except that necessity is represented by the communist state and its clique. Whereas in Islam, some thinkers reached the idea that Man is not a puppet in the hands of fate, but free to choose, and that God is Just by necessity. This notion surpasses any thought by soviet thinkers for their state or party.

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**\*\*\*\*\* Plekhanov mentions the similarity of his notion and the Islamic notion of fate. This is the only reference that shows knowledge of Islam in the west at the time, but it was a distorted knowledge of Islam and considered a misquotation.**

To get the larger picture, we should mention that liberty was always a European ideal, because European civilization is humanist in nature and nationalist, especially in its notion to make human beings face fate and powers of Greek mythology and aim at getting rid of them, and not submit to them. In pagan Greco-Roman European civilization, Europe did not know celestial religions and their notion of liberty. Religions in general and Islam in particular, are based on people's belief in liberty. Religious belief cannot be without human willingness and emotional acceptance and conviction. That is why religions place human beings in higher status as they are the means to build religious societies, and make the heart the bastion of belief. Religions acknowledge individuals, their distinctive characters, dignity and liberty.

What concurs with that notion is that the Holy Quran opened the door for all to advise people to perform good deeds and avoid evil ones, and makes all relationships based on justice. Islam liberated its believers gradually from the social stigma of slavery, as it is the negation of liberty. All liberties result from the belief in the individual, one's heart, and one's conscience. In all the above-mentioned cases, Islam contradicts [Marxist/ Leninist] socialism in its means to crush the individual and liberties of people, and its dictatorship.

### **Third: rejection of Leninist socialist state:**

What can we expect from a theory that denied the existence of God and crushed the individual character of people, if it reached the ruling system? In our book titled "*Islam as a Religion and a Nation, not a Religion and a State*", we prove that authority is the main distinctive characteristic of the state, and without it there would be no state. Authority corrupts ideology, values and beliefs. For instance, authority corrupted values like liberty, justice, equality...etc. and the best of values - religions- when authority, for instance, turned caliphate into hereditary monarchs system. Another example is Christianity - the religion of love and tolerance - turned by authority into the terrible inquisition courts. Authority corrupts all values and

religions, but what if the ruling theory of this authority is corrupt in itself? Marx sowed seeds of evil and corruption in socialism when he denied the existence of God and based his socialist theories on the philosophy of dialectic materialism. Marxist socialism crushed the character of the individual, and when it reached state authority, socialism turned rabidly aggressive by authority. Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky grew the seeds sown by Marx, and they reaped terrorism, dictatorship, bloodshed, injustices, torment prisons, and forced unpaid labor that made the Roman one dwindle in comparison.

The worst thing in this horrid socialist rule was that people became worshippers of modern idols like Lenin and Stalin, and their fanatic advocates of communism tried to apply it in China, Sudan, Cambodia, Indonesia,...etc. which added more false idols like Mao Tse-Tong and Ho Chi Minh, among others, who killed and tormented millions of people. Victims of Lenin's socialism are forty to fifty millions of people.

History would never forgive Lenin for losing the chance of a lifetime, when he ascended to power in the name of workers who considered him their savior from capitalism and submission to the mercy of wages. He had the unprecedented chance to establish socialist rule based on justice and freedom, and to replace capitalist work relations with socialist work relations. Yet, nothing of the sort happened, and he did not stand in the middle of the route like most democracies, but devised the extreme degree of workers' exploitation, worse than the capitalist one, based on the theory of Taylorism, devised by the American engineer Fredric Taylor. He made use of all workers and imposed on them blind obedience to overseers of workers. Taylor debilitated workers' unions and syndicates by annexing them to the socialist party as the *Porte-parole* of the socialist party to the masses. When workers' opposition movement emerged, headed by brilliant original elements in the socialist party, Lenin was furious and accused these elements of syndicalism and anarchy. He issues a decree to ban any opposition to the decisions of the socialist party, and gave unlimited authorities to Stalin the secretary of the socialist party,

at the time, to crush and quell any opposition<sup>†††††</sup>. His aide was Trotsky the minister of defense, who bombed the marine base *Kronstad* with its sailors who made the first revolt against socialism. He was the one who devised the style of taking hostages to coerce others to do what he wished. He militarized work and workers by making syndicates like barracks that employed pressure and military force. He authored a book titled "*On Defense of Terrorism*" to justify the right of the state to practice all sorts of terrorism.

Military tyrants like Caesar, Augustus, and Napoleon, tyrannized people on the pretext of military rule restrictions. Lenin and Trotsky quelled liberty, and their means to quell it were based on primary principles to make quelling unavoidable method, and a desired virtue or integral part of the work of the state!

Although socialism rejects Nazism and Fascism, yet both ideologies learned lessons of Bolshevist. We can say that Hitler and Mussolini were disciples of Lenin and Trotsky. Lenin was the first leader to establish the most powerful central intelligence agency with unlimited authority, and he named it '*the shield of the revolution*'.

We do not exaggerate if we say that political thought did not suffer such setback and backwardness as happened in socialist state base on the principles, means, and ends of Lenin and his disciples. The socialist state became the curse of this era, caused the death of millions of people, made other millions suffer torment in dungeons of prisons, and forced other millions to unpaid work camps. The first victims of the socialist state were the workers.

We refuse the Leninist socialist state altogether, and see it as a setback to human progress. Its only merit was that it proved that any attempt to buy justice and sell liberty is a lost deal that would make human beings lose both justice and liberty. The socialist experiment made people realize that freedom is liberty of thought, opinion, and expression, and that

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<sup>†††††</sup> See details of this incident in our book titled "*Workers' Opposition in the reign of Lenin*"



liberty should be the cornerstone of any state that respects the human being. Any call or justification to strip people of this liberty is false.

### **Elements of agreement:**

When socialism raised the banners of materialism, it was honest with the reality and sentiments of people. The vast majority of people cares for its life conditions in the first place, and cares for earning their living. They work all day long and their salaries or wages determine their standard of life, satisfaction of needs like nourishment, clothing, and shelter, and the standard of health, culture, and psychological state, consciousness of life problems like poverty, debts, and disputes.

Political democracy overlooked this important aspect - ignored before by the church - and this lacking element was serious, but socialist claimed to bridge this gap, but it could not do this in reality.

Hence, the benefit of socialism was that it showed and denounced the opportunism and exploitation of capitalism, called for the right of workers to revolt against this injustice, and presented methods to control the reins of this exploitation. Socialism in that way presented a great service to the cause of social justice for the common people. The Revival Call accepts the main principle that capitalism is opportunist by its very nature, but this opportunism could be controlled and kept to a minimum by forming syndicates for workers and reinforcing these syndicates by culture, knowledge, and proper organization.

The materialistic element should not be ignored; people should eat and drink before they can think and theorize. The Holy Quran says, "***Let them, therefore, worship the Sustainer of this Temple, Who has given them food against hunger and made them safe from danger***"(106:3-4).

Hence, satisfying one's hunger comes before worship and a reason for it. Islam established certain systems to satisfy human needs without violating the divine laws for Muslims. Islam does not encourage poverty and debts, and urged people to enjoy the material bounties of life without excess, that is why we cannot

blame socialism for its interest in materialism; on the contrary, it showed helpfully that the natural order of things for the vast majority of people is to satisfy the material needs and then other needs. Religions affirm this fact in particular; God created Mankind and know the necessity to satisfy materialistic needs of people to preserve their biological entity. Divine religions complete the other side of people, which is their humanist natural need for thought, values, spiritualities, and faith. The advent of religions presupposes the satisfaction of the materialistic needs, and religious values curb the predominance of materialistic aspect of life over human beings. Hence, it is the idea of complementarity, not struggle, between materialistic and spiritual needs, and Islam acknowledges the notion of satisfying materialistic needs in a healthy, wholesome, lawful ways, and rewards these efforts as well.

God created Adam from earth, and then breathed life into him; thus, the earthly formation of Man, and consequently his bodily needs, precedes the divine breath of soul into him, which carried spiritualities and values into Man. divine religions presupposed a certain shortage in people that they cannot fill themselves.

Islam cares equally for both the materialistic and the spiritual aspect of human beings. Some religious doctrines denied the materialistic necessities as something evil, whereas socialism disregarded the spiritual aspect altogether, claiming that religion is the opium of the masses. This was a serious error in Marxism, which should have realized that caring for the materialistic aspect does not mean necessarily denying the spiritual aspect of human beings, and that materialistic satisfaction at a certain point declines, according to the law of diminishing return. Satisfaction without control means that people are carried away to pursue profits, wealth and luxury. This aspect is capitalist and unacceptable, especially by socialism. It is noteworthy that materialistic needs are individual by nature, whereas values are communal and collective by nature. Society does not attain progress and cohesion except by principles and values that is why Marxism in its overlooking of

values appears amoral philosophy and it seemed to be betraying its supporters and people, which paved the way for dictatorship. It is a random, unjust attempt to compare the importance of the materialistic and the spiritual aspect of human beings. No aspect is more important than the other one, but they complement one another. Early classical socialist thought was idealistic in making values and spiritualities above its main foundation, as this was static link between values and materialism, and in fact, both aspects should be in a state of ongoing interaction.

Yet, the materialistic needs are nearer to the human being as a biological creature who has to breathe, eat and drink, get sheltered from hot or cold climate...etc. If biological, materialistic needs are not satisfied, human beings cannot enjoy beauty and art, may get nervous and short-tempered in a low mood, and would fall prey to tendencies like evil, aggression, flattery...etc.

Deprivation of materialistic needs prevents individuals in society from having a strong religious sense and spiritual sentiments. If conflict arises between the two aspects, the materialistic one would prevail, at least for most people, because, unlike spiritual needs, it is related to the existence of human beings. The practical step in Islam to prevent such state is *Zakat* (alms) to ensure economic solidarity and to provide justice on all levels. Justice may not necessarily provide materialistic sufficiency, but it prevents worst sentiments that might be caused by deprivation. Deprived people would see they are not alone, and justice would ensure the best distribution of wealth, and bridge the gap between the filthily rich and the impoverished. Talking about spiritual values in the presence of abject poverty cannot possible happen, as it refers to corrupt system, and makes it hard to order people to submit to it.

Yet, the materialistic aspect does not fill the void in the human soul; on the contrary, it might fill the stomach and influence thought, but some other important components of thought need values and principles that the material cannot provide. These values might exceed in importance the materialistic aspect when people withstand torment,

imprisonment, abject poverty for their beliefs. Marx himself exemplified this when he lived in poverty for the sake of his beliefs and was against hegemony of certain powerful attitudes.

If the materialistic aspect constitutes high priority to the vast majority of people, a few people place higher priority to thought and beliefs, and these few represent most of philosophers, prophets, scholars, poets, men of letters, men of knowledge, and great artists. These are the influential elements in a given society, and under their banners and beliefs, common people move. This does not indicate necessarily that their ideas are right, for it might be primitive or wrong, but in general, they are away from the materialistic criteria of profits and losses.

This distinction between the materialist elements and its influence over the intellectual elite makes matters rightfully arranged and renders justice for all, combining the importance of materialism and the importance of values, beliefs and thoughts without contradiction. Under the banner of thought, humanity progressed. Yet, at the same time, materialistic needs of the masses and powers of production have great influence over this progress as well to make the progress route contribute to achieving prosperity to the public.

Engels in his letter to Schmidt (fifth Augustus 1890) had to admit that he and Marx are to blame for the extremism of their disciples who thought that materialism is the only influential factor. Yet, he excused himself for not correcting this image by certain circumstances and lack of time; nevertheless, this cannot justify the grave error in the edifice he erected with Marx to be a new Mecca for the disciples and maniacs.

Even when materialism constitutes highest priority of people, it could not hold this position for long, as when a certain degree of satisfaction is reached, materialism becomes self-defeated and satisfaction diminishes. That is why communism succeeded in poor countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, when it promised providing food for all hungry people there. However, such promise does not attract rich people, whose appetites demand the best, and communism would not provide that.

Some may think that when communism provides even distribution of food, it does something great and it should be regarded as a benevolent call and should be applied by all. Yet, the point of contention is that communism does not offer anything but material welfare, and sometimes fails to do that in the best manner in most communist states, whose governments gains a lot in return for giving very little for people, and eventually people would not gain material welfare and they would lose freedom.

Emphasizing materialism and diminishing the intellectual aspect is not something to be proud of! Animals do not know except the materialistic factor, and humanity has the distinctive characteristic of recognition of values and ideals. Man is a sublime being, and this sublimity is a source of inspiration for people and makes them enjoy a humane life in the real sense of the word.

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Useful ideas introduced by socialism include production and economic planning and nationalization of means of production. These ideas prevent waste, chaos and competition of capitalism, uncontrolled by the mechanics of the market, and prevent individuals from exploiting workers and farmers.

The USSR applied central planning and nationalization by brutal, violent ways, not only stripped proprietors and capitalists of their wealth, but murdered them as well. This was among chief reasons behind the downfall of the USSR. Centralized planning meant adding governmental bureaucracy to state economy, with its slow pace and complexity. The desire to gain profits diminished and it was the reason for work. Competition dwindled and it was the criteria of success and efficiency. Thus, economy in capitalist countries resembled a racehorse, while in the USSR was like a slow turtle.

Nationalization, after it was applied forcefully and caused the murder of many people who owned nationalized property, was meant to prevent exploitation and opportunism. Ironically, when the USSR was the only owner of means of production,

nationalization became a form of state capitalism and not socialism per se despite all sloganeering. In the absence of liberty and political transparency, the ruling system combined evils of economic exploitation and political tyranny. Hence, the 'socialist' state in fact was a tyrannical capitalist state without liberty and justice.

Islam prefers socialist aspect of hard working of energetic intelligent people in any field as ambition leads to prosperity, progress and independence. Ruling systems should encourage such values without exploiting public categories like workers or consumers, allowing transgression of profiteering and competition, or wastage of resources, typical of capitalist societies. Yet, we cannot accept the removal of private and individual ownership altogether. For instance, we cannot castrate males to make them abstain from having sex. We should be courageous enough to accept complexities of necessities of life and manage to minimize any negative impacts. Islam does this by presenting a kind of guidance to the national economic policy to achieve welfare of people. What capitalists lose because of justice in distribution would regain it by preventing wastage of resources in fierce competition. In Islamic states, there should be a sense of commitment and accountability for public responsibility, stemmed from voluntary faith reinforced by laws and proper regulations as well. This is lacking in both capitalism and socialism as they stemmed from pure materialism without morals.

The legitimacy of these regulations is based on two principles: the first one is that ownership is deputized in Islam, as all property is originally owned by God. This is not empty rhetoric as God is the Creator of all matter. God deputized Man to benefit from wealth and resources found on earth. The second Islamic principle is that God prohibit misuse of right guidance, and if it occurred then its perpetrator discarded divine guidance and justice. The state has the fundamental right to direct economy according to the responsibility, knowledge and for the welfare of public. Yet, this does not deny that the original principle is liberty and ownership.

The state should enter into fields of investment that capitalist refrain from investing in them or help them with subsidies to urge them to enter these fields. Yet, the state should not run economic establishments, as governments are not capable of this mission, and if it did, failure is doomed to happen. Nationalization, if succeeded, would turn the state into a god who would control livings of people and this would not benefit people. Successful nationalization is a waste; a failed one is a catastrophe.

### **EPILOGUE: THE ALTERNATIVE**

After this demonstration of secularism, nationalism, and socialism, we see pros and cons of each one. We cannot apply one concept of them wholly with confidence and enthusiasm, as done by others.

Another integral point is that these three concepts reflect the development of European society, its soil, conditions, and circumstances, as a historical reaction through the last four centuries. We cannot adopt a whole concept that took place in Europe to our Arab societies, which differ from European societies, without alterations and modifications; otherwise failure is doomed to happen. The presupposition that all human societies are similar and develop in the same manner is not wholly tenable. Distinctions will be found in two siblings, let alone two different societies that have different history, climate, customs, traditions, and civilization. Hence, we cannot adapt any of the three concepts wholly. The best solution is to learn valuable lessons from each of the three concepts, and adopt what may be suitable and compatible to us, and then we should add the Arab identity on what we would adopt to be a legitimate part of our modern culture.

Thus, we would discard the three concepts, yet we should benefit of their pros and avoid their cons. This is our attitude as well toward democracy, though not mentioned in this book. No doubt, that democracy is better than the three concepts mentioned in this book, and it is the best alternative on the

international scene now. Yet, it originates in Europe as well, in Greece five centuries before Christ, and it has its own limitations, and pros and cons. We can say that democracy is better than dictatorship and communism, but not objective or absolute alternative to all concepts. Europe and the USA had no other option but to opt for democracy, as it is the final stage in human progress. We do not have the same obligation, from the perspective of development and preference. We already have an objective alternative that can be considered the fruition of the chain of development in the Egyptian and Arab society.

What is this alternative? It is Islam, not just as a religion but as a civilization.

Even before the advent of Islam, the Arab region historically – since 5000 or 6000 years- had a natural disposition toward faith and religious beliefs. Religions played a central role in legislation, politics, conscience and morality, before the advent of the three celestial religions. This occurred in ancient Egypt of the Pharaohs, for instance, and its brief Coptic era, then with the advent of Islam, Egypt won its historical victories over ignorant crusaders and belligerent Tartars. Islam for a millennium was the major and integral part in Egyptian history, legislation, civilization and as a religion. This relation between Egypt and Islam became deep-seated socially, historically and organically.

Objectively, religions are richer than any human thought. Religion begins where philosophy ends, presenting a philosophy of this worldly life linking it to the afterlife and to God, the Supreme Creator of this life. Religion tackles society and individuals, spiritualities and the materialistic aspect; hence, religion is ideal as it acknowledges the materialistic aspect and places it in a distinct place of goodness and lawfulness, removing evil from it. Islam allows society to combine both individualism and totalitarianism, unlike western concept of totalitarianism, because Islam is based on the voluntary internal belief bond, not obligatory external bond of any kind.

Although the slogan "Islam is the solution" appears to be flagrant and vague, but in fact, it represents the alternative most



suitable for us as it stems from Egyptian cultural roots. The idea lies in our understanding of Islam – if it is a sound understanding like that of the Prophet Muhammad's companions, we can revolutionize our life as the companions did in the early era of Islam. Yet, our understanding today of Islam is wrong and might lead to the downfall of our society. **The important notion is the sound understanding of Islam.**

We have spent 50 years on demonstrating the sound understanding of Islam, since the publish our book titled "*New Democracy*" in 1946, it includes a chapter titled " *new understanding of Islam*" and we still work on that subject. We began the Islamic Revival Call to present this new understanding of Islam, and there is no scope in this epilogue for further details.\*\*\*\*\* Suffice it here to say that this call is about Islam as interpreted by the Holy Quran not by ancient interpretations of religious scholars of past eras, the application of *Sunna* after removing fabricated *Hadiths* via criteria of the Holy Quran, and lastly using the faculty of reasoning and wisdom as mentioned together in the Holy Quran, "*Since God has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ and given thee wisdom...*" (4:113). This adaptation suits us and gives us elements of power, originality, and creation in culture and civilization . limited knowledge and interpretation of ancient scholars should be discarded altogether. It was the fruition of their thinking their eras, these were eras of tyranny and limited mental faculties, and their thought and judgments are filled with seeds of backwardness of the Islamic society, and overlooking of essentials of life and rights of people.

When we get rid of this ancient thought, we will return to the original source of Islam, the Holy Quran, whose wisdom is open for all, and we will find the alternative.

The new interpretation of Islam and the Holy Quran, relates Islam to modern civilization of our era, and relates Islam to common people, freeing them from authoritarian and materialistic systems. Islam would provide for them security,

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\*\*\*\*\* Details are found in our book titled "*Islam and Challenges of Our Age*"

safety, material satisfaction, dignity decent life, high standard of living, when wealth is distributed justly and fairly.

This solution needs moral support and materialistic abundance, and combines values and the common people. That is why it is the best alternative.

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