

# Islamic Perspective

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## **Moderation vis-a-vis Authentication of Hadith**

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### **Abstract**

Hadith Authentication is not merely a difficult task for Muslim scholars but also very delicate one. The experts in Hadith face a daunting challenge to develop and apply universally established and rationally valid criteria to ensure the authentication of whatever has been attributed to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) in terms of his sayings, doings, approvals, comments, prohibitions, praises, and practices. Several Muslim scholars like Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Qayyim have suggested use of "moderation", among others, as a criterion to accept or reject a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) as recorded in the sources. This article represents an attempt to deliberate over the significance of moderation from the Qur'anic and Prophetic perspectives, define moderation as a criterion for Hadith authentication, and highlight some relevant examples of traditions attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) that stand unreliable when checked against the criterion moderation.

**Keywords:** Hadith, Tradition, Moderation, Authentication, Criterion.

### **Introduction**

Hadith compendia are replete with so many apparently exaggerative traditions the reason finds difficult to swallow them. It is not sufficient for a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to be reliable that it has been recorded in black and white. Using the simile of "all that glitters is not gold", one may say that all that is recorded in the name of the Prophetic traditions may not necessarily be original statements or actions of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). Man, by nature, prefers what is moderate and tends to reject or, at least, dislike what is immoderate. The Qur'an declares its followers as the people of the middle path (2:143). Islam is in total consonance with human nature (21:10). Its rules and regulations are all moderate. Anything, which is attributed to Islam and appears to be somewhat exaggeration, may not be originally Islamic. Many Muslim scholars, including Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Qayyim have come up with some criteria to check the

authenticity of traditions attributed to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). One such criterion is “moderation”. Since Islam from all angles represents a moderate way of life, it will not be imaginable that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said or did something that falls under immoderate comments and actions. This article is devoted to the task of applying this criterion to a number of very popular traditions attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.).

### **Qur’anic Stand on Moderation**

The Qur’an renames the adherents of Allah’s messages as *ummataṅ wasaḻān* (justly balanced nation): “*Thus have We made of you a nation justly balanced [ummataṅ wasaḻān]*” (2:143). This position of Muslims signifies avoidance of all kinds of extremism and extravagance on the part of the true believers. It seems the followers of the Qur’an are required to abandon the too much materialism of the followers of Moses, on the one hand, and keep away from too much spiritual exercises and practices at the cost of even simple worldly life as demonstrated by those who claim to be the upholders of Jesus’ teachings, on the other. Neither materialism of extreme nature nor spiritualism of limitless extent denotes normal life which accommodates within its bounds both material pursuit and spiritual development in a highly balanced way.

Man is a multi-dimensional being. Justice demands that all of the dimensions of his life are proportionately taken care of. Family life, social order, economic undertaking, political system, cultural activity, educational pursuit, intellectual growth, moral sanction, and religious practice constitute man in the real sense of the word. Any kind of imbalance in any part of the life will cause extremity in one or the other walk of life. If a person is taking too much interest in religious rituals and rites, devoting much more time than the required one, it will certainly effect his family relations and other social and economic responsibilities. This is disproportionate life. The Qur’an invites man to be in the middle path in every situation whatsoever. An example may suffice to bring the message home: “*Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just balance between those extremes*”. (25:67). The message of this Verse may be taken as something related to economic life and not to every field of life. That is not correct. The chief message conveyed by the above-mentioned Verse is the principle of moderation, which is applicable to everywhere regardless of time and space. Verses 25:63-74 draw an image of a normal believer who does not suffer from superiority complex (63); who does not get entangled on non-issues with anyone particularly the ignorant (63); who devotes himself sincerely to his Lord (64); who feels always concerned about the end-result of his acts in this life (65-66); who

remains frugal in his earning and spending (67); who abstain from unjust killing (68); who maintains his chastity (68); who repents for wrong doings (69-71); who desists from false testimony (72); who eschew frivolous acts honorably (72); who tries to have insight into the message of God (73); and who plays his role in the most appropriate manner to take care of his family (74). This description speaks volumes of balanced approach of Islam to man. There is certainly no room for any form of extremity in Islamic life.

Allah commands the believers to uphold justice and demonstrate generosity: “*Allah commands justice, generosity, and giving to the kith and kin*” (16:90). Here the message conveyed is that all the acts of man should be based on a balance between justice and generosity. This is indeed a principle of moderation.

### **Prophetic Approach to Moderation**

The Prophet (s.a.w.) himself kept away from extremity in anything and also advised his followers to be just and balanced in their life, avoiding all sorts of maladjustment. ‘Uthman ibn Maz‘unn and some other Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) were very much inclined to extreme kind of spirituality; they wanted to run away from worldly relations. They, therefore, appealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) to allow them to castrate themselves. The Prophet (s.a.w.) vehemently rejected their appeal and made it clear that there was no room for any kind of injury and infliction in Islam.<sup>1</sup> Once some people enquired the Prophet’s (s.a.w.) wives about the Prophet’s (s.a.w.) daily routine. What they heard about the Prophet (s.a.w.) appeared to them very little. They, therefore, decided to do more than that. One of them vowed to always spend his time in prayer; another made up his mind to fast daily; another one imposed on him celibacy. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) came to know about their approach, he expressed his displeasure over what they decided. He said that piety was not in extremity but rather in the balanced life which comprised both material and spiritual enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As was very much inclined towards high spirituality. One of his practices toward that end was recitation of the entire revealed portions of the Qur’an on daily basis. The Prophet (s.a.w.) disapproved it and exhorted him to recite the whole Qur’an in a stretch of at least a week.<sup>3</sup> He also fasted every day. He was once again advised by the Prophet (s.a.w.) not to go to that extreme.<sup>4</sup> While sending off his representatives to Yemen, Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari and Mu‘aadh ibn Jabal, the Prophet (s.a.w.) advised them, among other things, to make the things easy for the people and not to make them difficult.

Salman al-Farsi found his friend, Abu Darda' disenchanted with his matrimonial life. So he counseled him that his body, his eyes, and his wife had rights over him hence he must give everything its due rights. Abu Darda' took Salman to the Prophet (s.a.w.) to seek his comment on Salman's advice. The Prophet (s.a.w.) admiringly approved the observation of Salman.<sup>5</sup>

One can see that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was not to convey something which was indicative of any kind of extremity. All of his teachings, sayings and doings represent moderation and only moderation. It is this reason that anything extreme that has been attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) should be rejected as false.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent as mercy (*rahmah*) for all the people (21:104). It indicates to the nature of his messages. His teachings were all precisely in accordance with human nature. As has been referred to earlier, man does not like extremity in life. Had the lessons given by the Prophet (s.a.w.) been of extreme nature, man would surely have rejected them forthrightly. Arabs who were the first addressees of the Prophet (s.a.w.) accepted his message mainly because his messages consisted of moderation, which is the beauty of life.

### **Moderation: Precise Definition**

It is now obvious that neither the Qur'an nor the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) advocates any kind of excessiveness in life. Thus moderation appears to be one of the bases of Islamic ideas. Moderation may, then, be defined as justly balanced approach in Islamic message, whether conceptual or practical, excluding all forms of extremity therein.

### **Moderation and Hadith Authentication**

There are many Hadith compilations comprising hundreds of thousands of hadith attributed to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). Each hadith thus recorded and compiled in the sources is composed of two elements, chain of narrators (*sanad* or *isnad*), and text of the narration (*matn*). These prophetic traditions, without any exceptions, have been recorded on the basis of only one criterion, that is, authentication of chain of narrators (*sanad*). As regards the text of narration (*matn*), it seems to have been ignored as to its authenticity as such because it was assumed by Muslim scholars who compiled hadith works that authentication of chain would automatically confirm authenticity of the text. This assumption does seem to be working justly. The hadith text is by itself constitutes a component which needs to be looked and investigated into separately. There are traditions that spell out extreme rewards for too much trivial and highly

negligible good act; warn of too seriously grievous punishment for very minor sin; condemn certain persons, places, and things in extremely hurtful matter; and praise certain persons, places and things disproportionately. Such traditions have caused too much harm to the Muslim *ummah*. Since these traditions are in contradiction with the principle of moderation, these may be considered reliable from any angle.

### **Relevant Examples of Traditions**

Some examples of traditions are given here below to see how these traditions stand before the principle of moderation.

#### **Solat al-Tasbih**

It is reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) taught his uncle ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ab al-Muttalib a special kind of prayer the procedure of which contained many things extra and much more than that in the normal prayer. The extra things to do in that prayer are: (1) after completing the reading of al-Fatihah and another surah as required in normal prayer in the state of standing, one must recite the phrases—“Subhan Allah wa al-Hamdu li Allah wa La Ilaha illa Allah wa Allahu Akbar” (Hallowed is Allah; All the praises are due to Allah; There is no God but Allah; and Allah is the greatest of all)—fifteen (15) times, (2) in the state of bending one has to do the same for ten (10) times, (3) after rising from bending state one has to recite the same phrases ten times, (4) in the state of prostration one has to recite the same ten times, (5) and the same is to be repeated in every cycle of the prayer which contains four cycles. The significance of this peculiar prayer, as informed in the tradition is that the performer of this prayer will be granted general pardon for ten categories of his sinful acts, the first sin, the last sin, the old sin, the new sin, the minor sin, the major sin, the deliberately committed sin, the inadvertently occurred sin, the hidden sin, and the open sin.<sup>6</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi has declared this tradition unreliable due to the occurrence of some unreliable reporters in the chain of narrators. He has quoted this tradition through three chains of narrators: 1. Hibat Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Husayn—Abu ‘Ali al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn al-Mudhahhab—Abu al-Hasan al-Darqutni—‘Uthman ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Ad Allah—Abu al-Ahwas Muhammad ibn al-Haytham al-Qazi—Ahmad ibn Abi Shu‘ayb al-‘arrani—Musa ibn A‘yun—Abu Raja’ al-Khurasani—Sadaqah—‘Urwah ibn Ruwaym—Ibn al-Daylmi—al-‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib—The Prophet (s.a.w.); 2. Al-Husayn—Abu ‘Ali ibn al-Mudhahhab—al-Darqutni—Abu Bakr al-Nisapuri and ‘Abd Allah ibn Sulayman ibn al-Ash‘ath—‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Bishr ibn al-Hakam—Musa ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz—al-Hakam ibn Aban—

‘Ikrimah—Ibn ‘Abbas—The Prophet (s.a.w.); (3) Ibn al-Husayn—Ibn al-Mudhahhab—al-Darqutni—Abu ‘Ali al-Katib ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Juhm—Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Malik al-Susi—Yazid ibn al-Hubab—Musa ibn ‘Ubaydah al-Rindi—Sa‘id ibn Abi Sa‘id mawla Abi Bakr ibn al-Hazm—Abu Rafi‘ mawla of the Prophet (s.a.w.)—The Prophet (s.a.w.).

As for the first chain, there is Sadaqah ibn Yazid al-Khurasani who is an unreliable narrator. In the second one the narrator Musa ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz is an unknown person. In the third one Musa ibn ‘Ubaydah is unreliable reporter. That is why Ibn al-Jawzi categorizes this report about the special prayer as unreliable, even though there are several other traditions on the same matter. He rejects all of them as unacceptable on the ground that one or the other reporter in those chains is weak, unknown or unreliable.<sup>7</sup>

Even if all or only one chain of narrators were authentic, the subject matter of the report would not allow the tradition to be classified as reliable. What has been reported in the above tradition concerning the special kind of prayer exudes extremity. The Prophet (s.a.w.) taught the method of obligatory and supererogatory prayers that are quite balanced in terms of time and energy involved. But the tradition quoted above looks entirely abnormal as it demands too much time and energy on the part of the performer. The basis of rejection of the above tradition should be, then, its disproportionate nature, and not merely the existence of weak and unknown reporters in the chains of narrators.

### **Other Supererogatory Prayers**

In the Muslim society the world over, particularly in mystic circles, some supererogatory prayers are given special attention to. The related people perform those prayers with a view to be highly blessed in this world and in the hereafter. The very basis of such practice is the availability of traditions on special supererogatory prayers in the sources. Those peculiar prayers are Saturday Prayer, Sunday Prayer, Monday Prayer, Friday Prayer, 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram Prayer, 1<sup>st</sup> Rajab Prayer, 15<sup>th</sup> Sha‘ban Night Prayer, Prayer on the eve of Eid al-Fitr, Hajj Day Prayer etc. Only one example of such traditions may suffice to give an idea of the nature of these traditions.

“He who prays four cycles of prayer at Sunday night, reciting in each cycle 15 times surah al-Ikhlās (112) after al-Fatihah, Allah, on the Day of Judgment, will grant him a reward reserved for reading the entire Qur’an ten times and acting upon all the injunctions of the Qur’an; he will be raised from his grave with his face radiant like the 15<sup>th</sup> night moon; he will be given for each cycle of this prayer one thousand bungalows made of ruby stone; each bungalow will contain one thousand rooms; each room will

be furnished with one thousand beds; on each bed will be seated a maiden before whom there will be one thousand male and one thousand female servants”.<sup>8</sup>

This and other traditions describing the method and reward of special supererogatory prayers have been rejected as unacceptable simply on the ground that the chains of narrators are defective. Did they not see the bizarre nature of the report? The text of such tradition speaks volumes of its fabrication.

### **Excessive Reward and Punishment**

Like the *Qur'an*, *ahadith* (plural of *hadith*) also inform man about the rewards of good deeds and the punishment of evil deeds. As for the *Qur'an*, it provides such information in a general manner. For instance, it says, at a number of places, that the denial of the truth will lead to grievous suffering and humiliation, and obedience to Allah and the Prophet (s.a.w.) will be rewarded graciously on the Day of Judgment. At times, it does mention the detail of both the reward and the punishment. But, it, nowhere, seems to be disproportionate. The case of hadith literature is a bit different. One can find therein minute details of reward and punishment, which appear to be exaggeration. There are traditions, which inform about too much reward for even negligible good acts, and about too severe punishment for a small evil practice. Such traditions abound in the sources. Some examples of such traditions may suffice to prove the case in point.

1. “He who recited ‘*Subhan Allah wa bi Hamdihi*’ (hallowed is Allah and all praise is due to Him), Allah will plant for him in the paradise thousands of date palm trees, whose roots will be made of gold”.<sup>9</sup>

2. “He who reads a particular du‘a while going to bed, 700,000 angels will be raised for each letter of the recitation, who will glorify him and ask Allah for his forgiveness”.<sup>10</sup>

3. “He who reads a poetic verse after the night prayer, his prayer of that night will not be accepted”.<sup>11</sup>

4. “He who reads words of praise for Allah while going to bed will turn as innocent as he was on the day of his birth”.<sup>12</sup>

5. “If one remembers Allah only once in the market place, Allah will remember him a hundred times”.<sup>13</sup>

6. “If one says in the beginning of night: “May Allah bless Noah and peace be upon him”, he will not be stung by scorpion that night”.<sup>14</sup>

7. “If one reads “*Al-Hamdu li Allah Rabb al-‘Alamin* (All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds)”, an angel will call him from the place from where his words cannot be heard: Allah has indeed come forward to you, so supplicate Him”.<sup>15</sup>

8. “O Ibn ‘Umar! Read from the dawn until the morning prayer time one hundred

times these words: “*Subhan Allah wa bi Hamdihi; Subhan Allah al-‘Azim; Astaghfir Allah*” (hallowed is Allah; all praise is due to Him; hallowed is Allah the Great; I seek forgiveness of Allah), the world will be at your feet with all its treasures; and Allah will create out of every word you recite an angel who will glorify its reward until the doomsday”.<sup>16</sup>

9. “One who devoted himself to Allah for forty (40) days, from his tongue will gush out springs of wisdom”.<sup>17</sup>

10. “One hour pondering is better than sixty-year devotion”.<sup>18</sup>

*Hadith* scholars have declared these traditions as fabricated. There is no need of looking at the nature of chain in such traditions. Merely by looking at the text, one can determine its value. Ibn Qayyim is of the view that the reports consisting of exaggeration in reward and punishment are certainly unreliable.<sup>19</sup>

### **Denunciation of the Rich**

A number of traditions have been reported in the sources concerned, which denounce the rich people and association with them. Some examples are given here below.

1. “Allah curses the poor who honors the rich for the sake of wealth. He who does that, Allah will take away one third of his religion”.<sup>20</sup>

2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) advised his wife ‘A’ishah: “The secrets of your meeting with me are that you do not ever associate with the rich people and never change a dress but insert a patch on it”.<sup>21</sup>

These traditions are certainly unacceptable. These have been fabricated by liars. Ibn al-Jawzi condemns these traditions as lies.<sup>22</sup> The Qur’an time and again invites its followers to be generous in making financial contribution to the cause of Islam (63:10), in helping the poor meet their needs (90:12-16), in developing military power (57:10), and in building the Islamic state from all dimensions (3:92). If the people do not devote their time and energy to earn wealth and keep it reserved, how will there be the positive response to the call of Allah?

### **Condemnation of some Camps in the Muslim Community**

In Hadith literature there are many traditions attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.), which condemn certain sections of the Muslim community disproportionately.

1. “The optimist (murjiite), the supporter of human freedom (qadrite), the rejecter of human freedom (jabrite), and the rebellious (kharijite), one fourth of their faith in the unity of God will be withdrawn, and Allah will throw these disbelievers into the hell to abide by therein forever”.<sup>23</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi declares this tradition as fabricated one.<sup>24</sup>

### **Disapprobation of Certain Individuals**

In the Muslim community a number of traditions which condemn and curse some individuals well known in the history are taken for granted as acceptable. For example,

1. The Prophet (s.a.w.) cursed Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah because he would kill Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet (s.a.w.) before the eyes of the people who would not help the victim, and said: Yazid and the people who would not help Husayn would be subjected to grievous suffering".<sup>25</sup>

2. The brother of Umm Salamah, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) wife, got a son who was named al-Walid. The Prophet (s.a.w.) disapproved that name, saying: "You have named the child with a name of your pharaohs; there will certainly be a person who will be named al-Walid who will be far more mischievous to this ummah than the Pharaoh was to his people".<sup>26</sup>

3. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "There will soon be in my ummah a person namely Wahb; Allah will grant him wisdom; and also there will be another man by the name of Ghaylan who will be far more harmful for my ummah than Satan".<sup>27</sup>

Ibn Qayyim is very categorical in denouncing these traditions as fabricated ones.<sup>28</sup> He does so on the basis of the unacceptable text of the reports. But Ibn al-Jawzi classifies these traditions as unreliable due to the existence of unreliable reporters in the chains of narrators.<sup>29</sup>

### **Unreasonable Admiration of Some Companions**

Traditions placing unnecessary praise on some Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) abound in Hadith literature. For example,

1. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Abu Bakr is the best of my ummah and the most pious person in my ummah; 'Umar is the most beloved and the most just in my ummah; 'Uthman is the most modest and the most generous in my ummah; 'Ali is the most intelligent and the smartest in my ummah; 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud is the most trustworthy and the most honest in my ummah; Abu Dharr is the most pious and the most truthful in my ummah; Ab' Darda' is the most devoted to Allah in my ummah; and Mu'awiyah is the most clement and the kindest in my ummah".<sup>30</sup>

2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Verily, Allah made me His friend just as He did to Abraham; my place and that of Abraham in the paradise will be facing each other, whereas al-'Abbas will be placed in between the two friends of Allah".<sup>31</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi has declared these reports as unreliable because of defective chain of narrators. But the nature of the text of these reports appear terribly exaggerative hence unreliable.

### **Amazingly Peculiar Significance of Qur'anic Surahs**

There are traditions which describe the significance of the Qur'anic surahs in proportionate manner; and there are traditions which depict the advantages of the Qur'anic surahs in an inordinate way. For example,

1. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "If one hears Surah Ya Sin (36), the reward of spending ten Dinar in the path of Allah is credited into his account; if he reads it, the reward of twenty Hajj is adjusted for him; if he writes it and drinks its potion, there enter his heart one thousand satisfaction, one thousand light, one thousand blessing, one thousand mercy, one thousand sustenance, and get out of his heart all kinds of ill-will and diseases".<sup>32</sup>

2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "One who reads Surah al-Dukhun (44) at night, seventy thousand angels pray to Allah for his forgiveness until the following morning".<sup>33</sup>

3. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "If one reads Surah al-Ikhlās (112) after ablution one hundred times followed by his reading of Surah al-Fatihah, Allah writes for each letter ten good deeds, effaces ten evil deeds, raises him to ten levels up, builds for him in the paradise one hundred castles, turns his deeds of that day equivalent to the deeds of a prophet; his reading that Surah is accounted for reading the whole Qur'an 33 times; this Surah serves as freedom from polytheism, causes the angels to be present to him, chases Satan away; this Surah echoes around the throne of God as to its reader until God looks at him; if Allah looks towards him, he will never be punished".<sup>34</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi finds these traditions as enormously excessive merely on the ground of defective chains of narrators. Such reports are not to be checked from the angle of the chain but mere exorbitant statements suffice them to be denounced as unreliable.

### **Incredibly Envious Position of the Qur'an's Reader**

Almost in the entire Muslim world the significance is attached with the reading and memorization of the Qur'an. This is praiseworthy approach as it is based on the authentic traditions in the most authentic works of Hadith. But side by side with that, there are so much misconception in the Muslim minds about the position of the memorizer and reader of the Qur'an. The main factor for such misgiving is the mention of incredibly remarkable position of the Qur'an's reader and memorizer in hadith reports. Two such traditions are given here below.

1. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "If one reads one third of the Qur'an, he is granted one third of the prophethood; if one reads two thirds of the Qur'an, he is given two thirds of the prophethood; if one reads the whole Qur'an, he is virtually in the perfect position of the prophethood; he will be told on the Day of Judgment to read

the Qur'an and get elevated a level up for each verse recited; when the process of his going up will be over, he will be granted two things: 1. immortality, and 2. everlasting blessings".<sup>35</sup>

2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "If one who was taught the Qur'an by Allah complained about poverty, Allah would write poverty between his eyes to remain there until the Doomsday".<sup>36</sup>

These traditions are undoubtedly fabrications by liars. Even the chains of narrators of these traditions are all deficient.

### **Unnecessary Praise of Cities and Towns**

Traditions which heap high praise on some cities and towns abound in the memory of Muslims as well as in their literature. Some examples are given below.

1. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "'Asqalan is one of those brides from where Allah will raise on the Day of Judgment seventy thousand martyrs".<sup>37</sup>

2. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Four gates of the paradise are opened into the world, Alexandria, 'Asqalan, Quzwayn, and Jeddah; the position of Jeddah is superior to these cities just as the House of God in Makkah is superior to all the other mosques in the world".<sup>38</sup>

Ibn al-Jawzi counts these and other traditions of the same nature as unreliable on the ground of the deficient chains of narrators. The words and statements in the reports are enough to consider such reports lies attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.).

### **Classification of the Week Days**

There are traditions in which some days of the week have been praised and some other days have been condemned. Certainly, these traditions are all lies. For example,

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Saturday is the day of beguilement because Quraysh wanted to beguile that day; Sunday is the day of construction and plantation due to the paradise being built and planted that day; Monday is the day of travel and business because one son of Adam killed another one that day; Wednesday is the day of evil omen causing errors and letting the young grow old because Allah sent the tornado to destroy the people of 'Ad that day, Pharaoh was born that day, Pharaoh proclaimed godhood that day, and he was destroyed that day; Thursday is the day of visiting the ruler and getting the needs fulfilled because Abraham entered the court of Egyptian ruler and got his wife back along with his needs fulfilled; and Friday is the day of proposal and marriage because the prophets proposed and solemnized their marriages that day for blessings".<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

The Qur'an advocates moderation in life. The Prophet (s.a.w.) advises his followers to keep away from all kinds of excessiveness in thought and practices. Muslim scholars such as Ibn Qayyim suggest that the traditions which reflect extremism from any angle may not be considered reliable. It is true that the traditions containing information about disproportionate reward and punishment, illogical nature of condemnation of individuals and groups, and extreme idea of devotional matters have already been declared by Hadith scholars such as Ibn al-Jawzi as fabricated and unreliable on the basis of the defects in the chain of narrators. It may not be sufficient criterion for rejection of a tradition attributed to the Prophet (s.a.w.). The most important criterion, among others, may be the moderation. If a tradition is in apparent clash with the Islamic concept of moderation, it may not be given any weight as to its authenticity.

## Note

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3. *ibid.*, vol. 2, Kitab Faza'il al-Qur'an, Hadith No. 4666.
4. *ibid.*, Hadith No. 4665.
5. *ibid.*, vol. 3, Kitab al-Adab, Hadith No. 5674.
6. Ibn al-Jawzi, 'Abd al-Rahman, *kitab al-Mawzu'at* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 63-64.
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8. *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
9. Ibn Qayyim, *Al-Manar al-Munif fi al-Sahih wa al-Da'if* (Maktab al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah, Halb, 1982), p. 44.
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11. Ibn al-Jawzi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 190.
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19. Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
20. Ibn al-Jawzi, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 326.
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25. ibid., pp. 352-353.
26. ibid., p. 353.
27. ibid., p. 354.
28. Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., p. 117.
29. Ibn al-Jawzi, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 353.
30. ibid., p. 339.
31. ibid., p. 341.
32. ibid., p. 178.
33. ibid., pp. 179-180.
34. ibid., p. 181.
35. ibid., p. 183.
36. ibid., p. 185.
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## **Spatial and Artistic Configurations of Spiritual and Religious Practice in ‘Sacred Space at Clifton Pier’, Nassau Bahamas**

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the spiritual and religious symbols and practices surrounding the creation of an artistic site in Nassau, Bahamas. The site is known as 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier' with the central attraction of the space being called 'Genesis'. The author argues that the sculptural articulations of power, the gaze, spirituality and history disrupt lineal notion of time through an experimental narrative where sea and sky become the negative space of the canvas. In the creation of an accessible liminality, the artists create a mirror for Caribbean societies. In other words, though the aspects that make up our identity are broken and disembodied, we can claim sacred space in the interstitial existence in defining our identity.

**Keywords:** Liminality, Sacred, Bahamas, Identity, Narrative

### **Introduction**

This text investigates the spiritual and religious symbols and practices surrounding the creation of an artistic site in Nassau, Bahamas. The site is known as ‘Sacred Space at Clifton Pier’ with the central attraction of the space being called ‘Genesis’. Genesis consists of twelve life sized and larger than life statues still rooted in the old slave plantation on which they stand. At the edge of the cliff is perched an old Haitian sloop carved into what the artist, Antonius Roberts calls Jacob’s ladder. Created in seven days, armless, with heads wrapped and bodies grooved, these twelve Africanesque women reminisce on a painful history of slavery but a more recent history of recovery, renewal and restoration. Their production was through the initiative of Pastor Clint Kemp, leader of a non-traditional church called the New Providence Community Centre. Kemp invited artists Antonius Roberts and Tyrone Ferguson to celebrate the

space through art. The site becomes one of identification and recognition for individuals, a form of collective resistance and site of power struggle with the government. The sculptural articulations of power, the gaze, spirituality and history disrupt lineal notions of time through an experimental narrative where sea and sky become the negative space of the canvas. In the creation of an accessible liminality, the artists create a mirror for Caribbean societies.

### **Spatial and Artistic Configurations of Spiritual and Religious Practice in ‘Sacred Space at Clifton Pier’, Nassau Bahamas**

The recent and artistically grounded past of Clifton Pier is founded on, and intertwined with, a spiritual pursuit that held far-reaching implications. This northern side of the island of New Providence, Bahamas was once a derelict site adorned with garbage and old barges. It became the site of a spiritual quest for Clint Kemp, pastor of the New Providence Community Centre, who would sit expectantly waiting and meditating there almost daily for two months. Anticipating that the calm of the sunset and his conversations with God would reveal a deeper calling and purpose for his life, Kemp had unwittingly embarked on a journey.

The New Providence Community Centre (NPCC) is a church committed to spreading the Word of God through practical interventions. In the seventh year of the church’s existence they began to build their first official church residence. Shortly after the commencement of the project, Kemp was having tea in the company of a Methodist church pastor in Nassau, Philip Stubbs. The beauty of the mug in which he drank was the starting line for a trajectory of spirituality through experience and specifically community building in the course of artistic enlightenment. The cup was gifted to Stubbs by a Methodist pastor in Michigan who had visited to work at Stubbs’ church. The experience of this ordinarily prosaic, quotidian object was sufficiently destabilizing/inspiring as to provoke Kemp to inquire as to the provenance of the cup and to travel to northern Michigan in pursuit of the origins of this little treasure that he had discovered. Its home was in a studio where an enclave of artists practiced under the tutelage of two elderly artists whose workshop Kemp likens to that space ‘that the Keltics talk about’ (Kemp). It was according to Kemp ‘a thin space’ (Kemp). It was a zone where the distance between the spiritual and natural realms seemed to be compressed and the boundary, which sunders them, indiscernible. It was for Kemp the most pregnant and compelling spiritual experience of his lifetime and it birthed the impetus to pursue artistic beauty as a means to a deeper, less theoretically bound, spirituality. Kemp’s new value of art was integrally connected to a community orientation and public space. He re-conceptualized the physical and institutional

framework of his church to mirror the value of the aesthetic as central to community development and spiritual encounter.

With the assistance of experienced artist Brent Malone, also known as the father of Bahamian art, Kemp's church became an incubator to encourage and celebrate the arts and especially young artists. Malone was instrumental in the shaping of the vision and Kemp's own understanding and appreciation of visual art, and designed the church facility as a series of spaces featuring a gallery, arts studios and a sports court, which doubled as a sanctuary for services. Malone also established the bridge between the NPCC and the arts community, inviting artist Antonius Roberts to become involved in the development of the space. Roberts subsequently extended the same invitation to artists Tyrone Ferguson and John Cox. The artists formed a coalition they named 'One' and began designing a stainless steel sculpture to embody the significance of their unity of effort, to be housed outdoors on the grounds of the church. Amidst this process, during the final drawings of the larger than life sculpture Malone unexpectedly took ill and passed away.

About two years into the construction of the new church facility, Kemp had begun visiting Clifton Pier, five times a week. The site was a trash repository for the Lyford Cay community, an elite gated community nearby, as well as a harbor for industrial waste and abandoned cars. Kemp purposed to clean up the site with the sole desire to facilitate the existence of a beautiful and safe spot for the community. The project began with high school students cleaning the area during summer vacations. Individuals and groups visited the space regularly of their own accord. The church would assemble on weekends to clean and would at times forego church services in lieu of this unified restoration effort. It became a frequented space. Kemp recalls:

People started showing up from different places. Almost every time he went out to the site, they were out there, a drum circle, individuals, couples, a lot of people enjoying the quiet. It was a quiet, safe, sacred place. Tourists were constantly stopping by. People would come out and cry at the space, dance in the space. There was a very deep powerful thing going on (Kemp).

Stuart Cove provided the rejuvenation team with boats and dive equipment to assist in the dislodging of tons of fishing line wrapped around coral heads and tangled in old car parts that polluted the water. Kemp initiated discussions and plans with artists Antonius Roberts and Tyrone Ferguson to celebrate the completion of the restitution project with an art exhibition. On visiting the site, the artists were inspired to create site-specific pieces rather than bring completed works that bore little or no relation to the space. In this same space Ferguson had proposed to his wife and both Roberts and Kemp had played there as children. They acceded that it was a sacred

space and resolved to name it as such. Ferguson actualized the project installation by hanging bells from the trees and inscribed the name into the artistic railing that was intended for the site: 'Sacred Space'.

On one of these restoration excursions while Kemp and his team were submerged releasing the coral heads an unexpected visitor beckoned them out of the water. Perry Christie, the Prime Minister of the Bahamas at the time, had heard of the effort and decided that they should witness it personally. The Bahamian government was considering the purchase of this track of land from the OAKs to be used as a national park. The small group walked the area for about an hour with the Prime Minister. The fervent and sustained rejuvenation efforts of the church enhanced Christie's proposal put forward in parliament—his argument was that a community group had already recognized the significance of the space and had begun to reclaim it from its squalor.

The artistic installation continued, and in March of 2006, Antonius Roberts cut off the tops of twelve dying Casuarina trees in seven days, carving them into the forms of women. Tyrone Ferguson continued creating metal gongs of varying colors, sizes and tones. He hung them in the trees surrounding the sculptures with strings attached so that passers by could ring them. These twelve sculptures have blackened faces, wear head ties and are cloaked with synchronized grooves running diagonally across their bodies. They are armless figures that vary in height from about 4 feet to 6 1/2 feet. Each figure has a different attitude and posture and they look toward the sea, the trees and toward each other. Some are gathered in twos and threes and some stand alone, away from the group but looking toward it. On the edge of the cliff is perched the only sculpture that was brought to the site from its home in the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas: 'Jacob's Ladder'. It is carved out of the mast of an old Haitian sloop and stands about 8 feet tall. The twelve figures stand amidst small white limestone pebbles and are bound by a circle of larger rocks upon which is a metal plate with the word 'Genesis'. To the right of the figures is a cast concrete balcony with a set of stools carved from Casuarina stumps by Roberts and a wrought iron railing created by Tyrone Ferguson.

The site had sparked attention locally by Bahamians and tourists to the island but it also impacted persons overseas who had never traveled to Nassau La Mesa, a cluster of mostly young, progressive ministers from North and Latin America, would congregate once a year in the Bahamas to decompress. There was no agenda or specified objective outlined for these annual encounters but they repeatedly sojourned at 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier' throughout the process of its clean up and subsequent artistic installation. Rick McKinley—a pastor from Portland, Oregon with a large

church in the inner city—was stirred by ‘Sacred Space’ and decided to replicate the effort in his community. Adopting a park, they invited forty artists to get involved with the project. By the following year, the *Sacred Space Mission* in Oregon had grown exponentially to 40 spaces and 400 artists and is ongoing. To Kemp’s knowledge, sixteen different churches have since embarked on Sacred Space projects and the movement has gone viral. The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill also became involved and a Caucasian church in the suburbs partnered with an inner city black church to fashion a Sacred Space as an initiative of healing and reconciliation.

‘Clifton Pier,’ as this area is known, was once privately owned but was purchased by the government due to its historical significance. It now falls under the care of The Clifton Heritage Authority as required by the Clifton Heritage Authority Act of 2004. NPCC continuously engages artists in community projects that connect younger artists with mentors through activities. As part of the project of ‘Sacred Space at Clifton Pier,’ NPCC invited young artists to create artworks for an exhibition at the church gallery as a response to the site. In their ongoing quest to stimulate community and spiritual awareness through artistry, NPCC also embarked on the ‘Remember Garden.’ It involved the carving of figures out of rock: mother figures, father figures, tangible expressions of care and respect to those who are integral to self-formation but who are not often venerated. In the midst of this project, Kemp discovered massive 5-ton limestone boulders on a property in the West that seemed the perfect scale for his vision. He inquired as to the ownership of the property and wrote requesting the rocks, explaining their intended purpose. The owner acquiesced and, over five months, the church hired cranes to relocate the enormous boulders, carving them into the ‘Remember Garden’.

The significance of the preservation of Clifton Pier is based on the travel of African peoples on these treacherous seas to the shores of Nassau. Clifton Pier is among the first shores on which the African peoples landed. Many came directly from Africa, and some from America as the slaves of American lawyers. This space was once a large sugar estate known as the Whylly Plantation. William Whylly, the owner of the plantation, tried very hard to bring the Methodist religion to the slaves. Unlike many other slave plantations on the island, blacks of the Whylly plantation were ‘able to participate fully as buyers and sellers in the markets of Nassau ... due to the politics of their owner’ (Haviser 264). This made Mr. Whylly a controversial character. ‘Whylly considered himself to be a reformer of slavery, but was never an abolitionist’ (Haviser 266). The site of ‘Sacred Space at Clifton Pier’ does not seek to efface the past of slavery that is our heritage; it uses that history as the building block for re-visioning that period as one of strength rather than simple oppression.

New Providence Community Church has a unique model in that it uses community projects and the arts to affect ministry. The invitation to this project was to artist Tyron Ferguson, a calling. In his artist's statement he says:

Clifton is an embodiment of the spirit of our past, present and future. She is a fountain of vision and energy with a face of her own. In fact, Clifton is a living sculpture. Go to her as the sun is setting and you would know that God is, indeed, celebrating His own creativity. Pass by her Cliffsides by boat and you would know that God alone chiselled those stones ... .

In Egypt there are pyramids; in China, there is the great wall; in Barbados there is Harrison's Cave; in Jamaica there is the Milk River Bath; In Bahamas ... more than Junkanoo; we have Clifton, celebrating the resilience, ingenuity and creativity of the Bahamian spirit (Ferguson 1). The canvas of this artist is energy, time, light and space: a vast, elemental canvas to fill. The sky represents the endless possibility of this threshold space on the cliff. In 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier,' the rhythm of energy of the canvas is the constant crash of the waves on the rocks and in their seething story of blues; the gentle and sometime eerie whispering whistle of wind through tangles of foliage and scanty branches, the sparse footsteps and wondering voices, the sounds of intermittent chimes of the gongs as people traverse. Light, space, time and energy are harnessed into the conversation of the circular space where the sculptures stand, through the negative spaces between the figures, through the symbolic configuration of threes and seven within the circle marked by limestone rocks of varying sizes. Time and space are further emphasized through the direction of the figures gazes toward the tress, toward each other, toward 'Jacob's ladder' and beyond to Africa.

Having understood the canvas of this story, one's focus shifts to the rhythmic indentations, light grayish, almost white, coiled smoothness of the bodies. Some figures lean while others stand poised, but all seem to possess a generational wisdom in their stance and in the traumatic blackness of their faces. The black seems to represent the anger, and yet acceptance, of their slave history. The color is almost a scar but one that signifies a feisty resilience. As in the designs and theatrical presentations of costume designer Peter Minshall, art mimics life, and so too Minshall's purpose is that life mimics art. Antonius Roberts' sculptures mirror this intent. They bemoan yet celebrate and pay tribute to the tragedy of our history. These figures perform a theatre of the present and herald the future by invigorating the concept of a 'Sacred Space.' The aesthetic quality and historical significance of the sculptures create a timeless message that allows transcendence.

The figures are 'disproportionate' to the landscape in which they are canvassed. Some of their hunched forms and raised shoulders are taller than life-sized, while the

‘grandmother’ figure and the ‘young person’ are shorter. Their cloaked forms exert a presence that is ‘larger than life’ in heralding an intellectual African past through their grooved markings (typical of African sculpture) and in permanently disturbing and redirecting the gaze of the ‘Other.’ Form, shape, line, texture, value, color and space are the elements within art that utilize the principles of ‘balance, emphasis, harmony, variety, gradation, movement, rhythm and proportion’ (Mittler 26). Just as configurations of space are culturally decided and reflect hierarchies of power, principles and elements of art within a composition such as ‘Sacred Space’ can be culturally read as a narrative. It is through these elements and principles that social structure and power relations can be established and maintained, order or chaos generated. In the tableau of ‘Sacred Space,’ the seemingly ‘middle aged’ women are taller, more poised figures, grouped in discursive clusters of twos and threes. Almost in the middle of the gathering, but standing alone near to a boulder, is an older looking figure, her ‘age’ conveyed as she is slightly shorter with deeper grooves, hunching and heavy set (see fig. 25). At the edge of the group closest to the precipice is a slender, shorter, less grooved and contorted form that seems ‘younger’ than the other figures. This pattern of interaction, these differences in positioning, age and character seem to suggest that the burden of slavery is borne by the historical ‘grandmother’ figure who, though weighted, is the central pillar of fortitude and knowledge. She stands alone, in the solitude in which the confrontation of pain and self takes place. At the same time, the presence of the group (or village) surrounds her, and supports the renewal that seems apparent in the younger ones who group themselves in discursive twos and threes. Through the arrangement of these young and old, and the sense of history stirred by the ‘grandmother’ and ‘Jacob’s Ladder,’ a hierarchy and order are established in the space rather than chaos. There is stillness and calm about this tableau, which is simultaneously restful and disturbing as consciousness and the unconscious are reunited into a single vision of emotionalism. The ‘interaction’ of the figures seems to describe a plot/narrative. The three dimensionality of sculpture invites multiple perspectives as one walks around and between the sculptures. As they are a group of twelve, multiple routes and vantage points change the canvas. This is also why I submit that ‘Sacred Space’ can be analyzed as a performance as each viewer would take a different ‘route’ within the site and would thus interact differently with the site. Since the figures are life-sized, the movement of persons within the space, especially at dusk, is almost indistinguishable from the figures themselves, making this canvas unique and dynamic. Spiritual imagery is present through the symbolic use of numbers in the grouping of threes and the sites creation in seven days and made more significant in that the entire gathering is twelve statues: in the book of Genesis in the

Bible, the world was created in seven days, in addition the Holy Trinity is a pivotal belief in Christian theology and there were 12 disciples of Christ. Jacob's ladder, is also an element taken from a biblical passage in Genesis (Genesis 28: 10-19) where Jacob has a vision of a ladder going to heaven with Angels on every step. It symbolizes hope for 'redemption,' and is present at the threshold of cliff and sea at 'Sacred Space'. The ladder is the promise of the ownership of lands as far as the eye can see. The transformation of the mast of an old sloop from a Haitian ship is symbolic of the potential and promises of new or re-birth. The use of the word genesis written on one of many stones set in a circle is of course used in tandem with the story of the book of Genesis in the Bible and the creation of a circular earth and universe. The entire image thus hearkens back to both the fall of man (in the pain apparent on these blackened faces) and the redemptive power of God imaged through 'Jacob's ladder.' The artist intended to create 'pearly gates' at the entrance to the site using the natural arches of trees but was inhibited by the foundation governing the use of the space.

The grooves of the figures are reminiscent of African sculptures with multiple markings resembling the tribal marks of warriors and the ritualistic marks bestowed in ceremonies where adolescent boys 'become' men. The grooves thus reflect suffering and pain, as well as celebration, strength and overcoming. They are marks of memory, mercy and merit. They are typically marks of manhood, but have been bestowed on these women, honoring their roles, their endurance, fortitude and beauty.

The Industrial Port, with its large visiting tankers, has created a dynamic backdrop and an imposing force for users of the space. The creation of this space has represented a history, a testimony of the present on myriad levels: social, socio-economic and socio-political. It has revealed issues of power and agency in the Bahamian context. For example, while German videographers, local artists, overseas visitors, church groups and other groups continue to be attracted to the space, the Clifton Heritage Authority have inhibited its further artistic development. The foundation believes that a structured approach (rather than a spontaneous artistic approach) is necessary for the development of the site as a heritage park. The stimulus of identity re-formulation that this space potentially engenders may possibly be de-stabilising to their sense of power: their future control of the process of identity formation is threatened, and this control determines political prowess. The brochure issued by the Clifton Heritage Authority on the recently constructed Clifton Heritage National Park has no mention of 'Sacred Space.' A sense and understanding of identity determines an ability to act for or against regimes. The cultural and socio-political integrity of the space—its capacity as a signifier, a representation, an agent of social change—facilitates a reconstruction of identity

through recognition of the sacred. This manipulation of power to hinder the artistic development of this site emphasizes the power relations, power distinctions and hierarchy in the Bahamian nation as the rulers of the nation have attempted to disable the people's voice within the 'nationalistic' imperative of the site.

### **Meta-Levels of Meaning**

The statues are rooted in a dismal earth of loose, light grey sand, compacted by the limestone tragedy of fragmented foundations and grayed from the death of their green leafy covering. This rootedness of the trees signifies both a connection with soul-land/history and immovability from this cliff top. The positions of the statues in the earth speak simultaneously of a level of powerlessness and insanity and of strength in standing firm, the ability to bear the weight of their situation. Through the physical encircling (by the stones) of their rebellion by the artistry of Roberts, both their refugee state and their action of revolt are sanctified. And this circle inscribed 'Genesis' becomes a burying ground of loss and a birthing place of hope.

Their groupings in twos and threes are reminiscent of and incite discursive exchange of statue and onlooker concerning episodes, setting and character. Social patterns are established through their placement of opposition, acceptance, discrimination, motherhood, sisterhood, the perspective of those who flee, those who are perched on the edge of insanity (by the closeness to the sea) by this experience and fear. Within their demeanor, their visual iterations are acts of 'spectacular resistance' (Bhabha 172). Their silent discourse hangs heavy in the air like a base voice rumbling in the insides. These discriminatory subjects have planted themselves and coerce the onlooker into a reality that deems the lucidity of the present a doubtful knowledge, invoking the passion of the past and precipitating an uncanny disturbance of spirit.

Like Morrison, Roberts seeks to disrupt 'lineal time' through 'experimental narrative' (Redhead 5). According to Roberts, what he is determined to explore is how the element of space relates and bears significance to our journey through time and through states of being. The journey is one of identity construction, transitioning and understanding. What has this spatial distance added to our being and how must we conquer and embrace the geography of space that our beings may achieve the elevation of spirit, and truth that our ancestors seem to be speaking to us? (James 28)

The conquering of geographical space is an exercise using the 'experimental narrative' of 'Sacred Space' to engender a mental space that deals with the mapping of an individual and collective passage to the future (Redhead 5). The essence of space is then an essential element in the psychological construct of identity. 'Sacred

Space at Clifton Pier' interacts with the internal sacred space where the formation of identity occurs. The semiotics of these figures set in this space on Clifton Pier is both public and private.

### **The Depths of Sacred-The Spiritual**

The artist articulates a spiritual sacred, a poignant point of reference for the elevation of the Caribbean person. The space is a point of connection with the divine through Jacob's stairway to heaven perched on the edge of the cliff. The ladder referred to in Jacob's vision (spoken of in Genesis 28: 12) is symbolized in 'Sacred Space' by the carved mast of an old Haitian sloop. The sloop itself also reflects the anguish of the Haitian peoples, many of whom lost their lives on these boats while attempting to enter the island. The grooves of the ladder continue the pattern of grooves on the statues, only here they clearly form the rungs for ascent. The source of the allusion is identified on one of the stones forming the circle surrounding the site, where the word Genesis is inscribed on a metal plate. 'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it' (King James Version Gen. 28: 12). To contextualize this symbol, the ladder alludes to the second born Jacob, lowly in rank (like the African man), and his spiritual rise to a place of significance and authority when God changes his name to Israel. The ladder represents the portal between earth and heaven, a point of divine access and connection. The physical depiction of this symbol establishes the space at 'Clifton Pier' as spiritually sacred within a Judeo-Christian context. The land on which the ladder was set in Genesis represented the place of torment of Jacob, much like this old slave plantation and point of admission for slaves to the island of Nassau. In the Genesis account, the place of struggle was actually transformed into a sacred place and named *Peniel*, meaning 'the face of God.' 'For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved' (King James Version Gen. 32: 30). Jacob's ladder of the Old Testament prefigures the cross of the New Testament—the symbol of the suffering Christ who facilitates the redemption of the sacred in man.

Jacob inherits God's promise to Abraham of the 'Promised Land' for his descendants who will be as plentiful as the dust of the earth. God promises that their territory will be extended in all directions, and that (through their descendants) He will bless all nations. Through his experience at *Peniel*, Jacob is grounded by a sense of rootedness, connectedness and hence identity in God. This inner positioning gives him the foundation of faith to contend with the fear of annihilation, which he must face when he confronts his brother. The message of 'Sacred Spaces at Clifton Pier' is then

one of purpose, faith and identity. The value and purpose of the Afro-Caribbean man is affirmed through the presentation of the 'Sacred'. We re-vision ourselves. Beyond the sloop is the precipice, the alternative, treacherous seas beneath vast skies: spaces that are often unpredictable, nonnegotiable and challenging to navigate. The presence of the ladder at this juncture emphasizes the need and effect of the 'Sacred.'

The number of trees still rooted in the ground alludes both to the twelve disciples and the twelve tribes of Israel. Trees are life and the twelve tribes represent twelve spheres of life/influence. Israel is the prince of God and represents God's governance on earth. Each of the twelve tribes had a specific responsibility/calling/purpose to execute; a sacred position. Levi was the tribe of priesthood, Judah of praise and worship, Benjamin of armed forces, Asher of agriculture, Issachar of labour force, Zebulun of merchants, businessman, trade, and so on.

### **Women within the Sacred of Sacred**

Within this context, which I have called 'the sacred of sacreds,' it is interesting to investigate the significance of the presence and dominance of the female form. The major male representation is the symbol of Jacob's ladder. Delving into the meaning inherent in the artist's use of the female, in the context of the Biblical role and representations of women, is intriguing. In order to decipher the symbol of woman in 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier,' one is best advised to consider certain bases for analysis: Meaning within the Bible is not bound and it can be read by different persons, learned and unlearned, to reveal itself in different ways. Is the use of the female form by the artist only an aesthetic preference, or is it projecting a re-positioning of women—a remembrance of the sacredness of Motherhood, which leads to an understanding of women as sacred? The women here are gathered in threes & twelve, which were only numbers used in reference to men in the Bible. The women are positioned to climb Jacob's ladder. Does this site represent a giving over of agency and some sort of redemption of women? Sacred Space at Clifton Pier seems to present binary opposites for consideration: destruction and death versus reclamation and life as it relates to womanhood.

The Bible often personifies destruction, foulness, unwholeness in female terms: 'Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman' (Ezekiel 36: 17.) 'Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. Her filthiness in her skirts ...' (Lamentations 1: 8: 9, Revelation 17: 1-18). Roberts' work seems to undo fundamentalist notions and

patriarchal gender roles that are promulgated by the Bible in order to promote a deeper understanding of women in the context of the sacred.

'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier' brings the consideration of the content of the Bible into the constructs of culture. It helps us to reference our ideologies and attitudes to include Biblical perspectives, representations and ideas thus compelling us to analyze the construct of our consciousness. It helps to engage the social milieu in a deeper analysis of the spiritual/sacred concomitant with socio-cultural identity. It alerts us to how the dynamic of Biblical understanding affects the historical and cultural transformation of society.

## Conclusion

Though like Beloved's words, the aspects that make up our identity are broken and 'disembodied,' we can claim sacred space in the interstitial existence in defining our identity. The presence of spiritual energies within space such as those encountered by Kemp is a potent means of engaging spiritual discourse and sensibility. Such a sensibility does not produce compartmentalized denominations of religious sentiment but rather a collective sense of spiritual belonging, validation and searching.

The visual and three dimensional space that Roberts has created at Clifton Pier seems to represent that interstitial existence between the spirit of the trees and the spirit of forefathers, between the cliff and the sky—sometimes beautiful, sometimes ominous. And it seems to be that *Bridge of Beyond*, as Schwarz-Bart's book elucidates. This 'Bridge of Beyond' represents 'being' beyond the natural, beyond the traditional, concept of time, beyond the parameters of the geographical space in which we exist and beyond the conceptual space that is so carefully allotted by the imperial 'Other.' As in the writings of Chamoiseau in *Texaco*, the sacred space is rooted in a knowledge, understanding and oneness with the forces of nature. We become like these figures transfixed, rooted in knowledge of the soils of our identity and engulfed by the drama of elements around us.

This particular original configuration and location of the concept of 'Sacred Space' is known as 'Genesis', an apt name for the foundations of alternative production and recognition of spirituality. 'Sacred', 'the complex net...over a multi-dimensional space' (Schweigger-Hiepkö 242), is the interaction of multiple races and origins with 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier'. The net is formed through the similar reactions (of like intensity and value) but different perspectives. 'Sacred Spaces' brings a resting place for the ghost of Beloved. It is the physical mirror for the concept of that threshold, that 'liminal' space, and one that evokes an awareness of its significance in onlookers.



Figure 1. 33 Figures at Dusk



Figure 2.



Figure 3. The face of a statue at 'Sacred Space at Clifton Pier'

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## **Beyond Conflict and Compromise: The Practice of Interreligious Dialogue for Peace**

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### **Abstract**

In the final quarter of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church was given prominent attention by academics and policymakers because of the role it played in the democratization movements around the world. Scholars have pointed to the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council as the catalyst for its rapprochement with the modern, secular world. Alternately, after the events of September 11, 2001, many scholarly and popular voices cast Islam in an increasingly negative light. Traditionally, religion is often associated with intolerance and violence among academics, and is singled out in the questionable etiology of Samuel Huntington's now (in) famous clash of civilizations. Thus, the once problematic relationship between Catholic and democratic values has been superseded with whether or not Islam is reconcilable with democracy—suggesting that Muslims are inherently unhappy in (and even hostile to) democratic societies. This article will take a different approach and offer an alternative understanding to the much maligned religion of Islam.

**Keywords:** Alternative Approach, Islam, Democracy, Religion, Clash of Civilization.

### **Introduction**

It is a hallmark of secular modernity to associate religion with intolerance and violence, particularly since it was singled out in the questionable etiology of Samuel Huntington's now (in) famous clash of civilizations.<sup>1</sup> Huntington had argued that the primary source of international conflict in the future would not be ideological or economic but civilizational. In the final quarter of the twentieth century, however, the Catholic Church was given prominent attention by academics and policymakers because of the role it played in the democratization movements around the world. Scholars (including Huntington, ironically), have pointed to the Catholic Church's

Second Vatican Council as the catalyst for its rapprochement with the modern, secular world.

Alternately, after the events of September 11, 2001, many scholarly and popular voices cast Islam in an increasingly negative light. There was a renewed interest, therefore, in Huntington's clash of civilizations; particular attention was given to that part of his thesis that discussed the clash between Islamic and Western civilizations. It seemed that in public discourse, the once problematic relationship between Catholic and democratic values had been superseded with whether or not Islam is peaceful—or safe—and reconcilable with democracy. The conversation turned to suggestions that Muslims are resistant to peace and are inherently unhappy in (and even hostile to) democratic societies. Such was the political atmosphere when newspapers quoted Pope Benedict XVI associating Mohammed with things evil and inhuman in his 2006 lecture in Regensburg. Later, in 2010, there was new controversy over the legitimacy or propriety of building a mosque near Ground Zero in New York City (known as Park 51); both events stirred public outrage and turmoil. In both these instances, the cacophony of public outrage drowned out serious efforts at interreligious dialogue towards greater understanding and maintain peace.

Although the scholarly and public preoccupation with politicized religious violence may be warranted, it contributes to the weakness in the literature and understanding of religion and politics in general. Scholars Kenneth Wald and Clyde Wilcox have argued that most of the research on religion in politics has adopted a 'current events' perspective and has had little engagement with the broader issues and questions proposed by academia.<sup>2</sup> Such questions and issues would include themes of peace and justice. To go beyond the mass market 'current events' packaging of such matters, my work seeks to expand upon strategic peace studies, which draws from both the humanities and social sciences to better understand and construct peace. For a more general audience, my work helps to clarify the peace efforts of religious organizations, which have become increasingly important in a time when religiously motivated terrorism is on the rise. Thus, this chapter will address the question: 'How does interreligious dialogue contribute to peacebuilding?' Rather than narrowly focusing on a comparative textual analysis of inter-religious dialogue, my project responds to the call of peace scholars to go beyond a 'least common denominator approach'.<sup>3</sup>

According to strategic peace scholar Gerard Powers, the impact of such an approach to peacebuilding is minimal since it often results in the dilution of specific religious concepts in the name of commonality. My research, therefore, takes a different approach and offers an alternative approach to understanding the recently much maligned religion of Islam. Using the cases of Pope Benedict XVI's 2006

Regensburg Lecture and the 2010 controversy of Park51, I will present this alternative understanding from the perspective of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church's approach to Islam and interreligious dialogue and the particular measures it has taken to foster peace during these controversies will be examined.

Both cases reflect how interreligious dialogue, during times of intense crisis, was able to produce intended outcomes of greater mutual understanding, peace, and reconciliation. These outcomes, however, did not result simply from an exchange of words or allowing opposing viewpoints to state their opinions. Both cases demonstrate how interreligious dialogue is a sustained practice that begins with 1. self-reflection, 2. engagement with the other, and finally, 3. a sincere recognition of other viewpoints and how individuals came to those viewpoints in the first place. Furthermore, both cases demonstrate how interreligious dialogue asks that participants take into account the 'demands of the time'. This aspect of interreligious dialogue, which is often overlooked, is what deepens and challenges one's religious and political commitments. Interreligious dialogue, therefore, is not simply an exchange but a challenge to oneself and an effort to forge a consensus between what is too often portrayed as irreconcilables.

My reason for taking a Catholic and not an Islamic perspective is three-fold. First, experts on Islam have already discussed the relationship between Islam and its approach to the modern world.<sup>4</sup> Second, inadequate attention has been given to how another traditional religion such as Catholicism offers an approach to understanding Islam. This approach, however, does not aim the line of questioning at Islam but at itself for self-examination. That is, this approach asks whether or not non-Islams have opened themselves to listening to what Islam has to say about the modern world. In effect, one does not question the other, one questions oneself. This approach from a non-Islamic, Western, yet still religious, perspective serves as a primer for grasping how Islam can be compatible with the modern world. The practice of interreligious dialogue will demonstrate that religion should not be *de facto* associated with intolerance or violence. This research, therefore, contributes to our understanding of interreligious dialogue as a form of peacebuilding, and the concerted efforts to engender peaceful and progressive political outcomes.

Third, this particular approach is in line with Powers' understanding of how to assess interreligious dialogue. To do this, we would need to look at whether such dialogue 'enhances the ability of moderate religious leaders ... to draw on their improved understanding of the 'enemy' and what is distinctive in their own tradition to more effectively counter the extremists in their own community'.<sup>5</sup> He cites the case of Mindanao, Philippines in the mid 1990s, where following a decade of interreligious

dialogue, the Catholic-Muslim peace process concluded with education and dialogue within the individual religious communities in order to overcome misconceptions about the other.

This was the experience of Father Roberto C. Layson, who in October 2007 at an international conference on Church Interreligious Dialogue and Peace-building, recounted his experience of interreligious dialogue in the parish of Pikit in the province of Cotabato, Philippines. Pikit, with a minority Christian population, is described by Layson as being at the heart of an armed rebellion led by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. War had been waged here between 1997 and 2003 resulting in government enforced evacuations and the displacement of millions of Muslims. Layson notes that during an all out war in 2000, the exclusive parish of Pikit was divided over whether or not to provide humanitarian assistance to the mainly Muslim evacuees, many with family ties to the rebel groups.

After reflection, the Church decided to open its doors to all, regardless of faith. Layson argues the Pikit experience demonstrated that the war in Mindanao was not a religious one and providing humanitarian assistance, '[f]or us Christians ... is a duty and a social responsibility. After all, when you hear the cries of mothers and children weeping in the night, you don't anymore ask whether they are Muslim or Christians'.<sup>6</sup> Reflection on the Church's mission and responsibility, therefore, translated into compassion. Layson concluded 'a new vision was required—one that responds to the demands of the times.'<sup>7</sup> The Pikit experience is a good example of the Catholic Church's approach and practice of interreligious dialogue. It demonstrates how during times of crises, interreligious dialogue can play an integral part in humanitarian assistance and eventually, peacebuilding.

### **Interreligious Dialogue: What does it mean?**

Interreligious dialogue became an integral part of the Catholic Church's approach to the modern world in 1964 with Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*. As a precursor to the Second Vatican Council's 1965 Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), *Ecclesiam Suam* opened by addressing not just Catholics or Christians but to 'all men of good will.' *Ecclesiam Suam* outlined the three aims of Paul VI's pontificate, which was indicative of the overall tone of the Vatican II meetings. The three aims of the Church at this time were 1. engage in self-examination and seek deeper self knowledge, 2. through self examination, renew itself to correct the flaws and faults of its members, and 3. to engage in dialogue.<sup>8</sup> The Church made it clear that when it engaged in dialogue, it would not set limits to its approach, be dependent on the likelihood for success, or use it to its own advantage.<sup>9</sup>

The following year, 1965's 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*)', Pope Paul VI articulated his respect for Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims. With respect to Muslims, he recognized the shared beliefs of the two faiths, and urged both to go beyond their divisive, painful pasts and reach a mutual understanding in order to better humanity. The criteria outlined in this document were meant to serve as a practical foundation and guide for reaching out across centuries old divides. It is remarkable that the first step is self-critical; an examination of the self and an understanding of one's faith is a presupposition for dialogue with the other. Recognizing that since every one is made in the image of God, Paul VI concluded, 'No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned'.<sup>10</sup>

One year after his election to the papacy in 1979, John Paul II declared his commitment to follow Paul VI's outreach to the non-Christian world stating, 'The non-Christian world is indeed constantly before the eyes of the Church and of the Pope. We are truly committed to serve it generously'.<sup>11</sup> In 1984, the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians issued the document 'The Attitude of the Church toward Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission'. Reviewing prior statements issued by the various popes, the document reiterated once again the foundation and need for dialogue between religions. Twenty years after *Nostra Aetate*, the document reviewed the Church's historical position on interreligious dialogue, and intended the current document to assist the Christian communities to better engage with others. The document also was meant to be a way for other religions to better understand the Church's views and approach towards them: 'Mutual affirmation, reciprocal correction, and fraternal exchange lead the partners in dialogue to an ever greater maturity which in turn generates interpersonal communion'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1986, Pope John Paul II hosted the World Day of Prayer for Peace. This event would be regarded by John Borelli, then Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as the event that changed the nature and understanding of interreligious dialogue. On that day in October 1986, 48 individuals representing 30 different Christian churches along with 'Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Shinto, Sikh and traditional or tribal representatives from Asia, Africa, America and elsewhere came in equal numbers as official representatives'.<sup>13</sup> By inviting the Community of Saint Egidio to host annual celebrations that would bring together Christian and non-Christian religious leaders, Pope John Paul II ensured dialogue between the religions would be sustained and deepened. This is in contrast to prior popes, who made overtures to non-Catholic

leaders but was met with resistance and reluctance by those *within* the Catholic community to further such relations. In 1988, the Vatican's Secretariat for Non-Christians was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; the new name better reflected the intention and mission of that office.

According to Francis Cardinal Arinze, President of the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue between 1985 and 2002, interreligious dialogue is neither aimed at conversion or a comparative exercise in order to find a 'lowest common denominator acceptable to all.' Interreligious dialogue, he maintains, requires mutual respect and sincerity so that discussion, listening, and learning are not mutually exclusive. In order for interreligious dialogue to be constructive, participants proceed from their commitment and understanding of their own religion. Thus, Jaco Cilliers notes that a truer understanding of 'who we are' and what we bring to the process of interfaith dialogue that progress can be made towards constructively addressing 'what we do' through face-to-face interfaith peacemaking efforts'.<sup>14</sup>

But talking does not exhaust the notion of dialogue – actions are also part of the notion – which present different types of challenges. In 1991, the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue issued a 'Declaration and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientation on Interreligious Dialogue,' which outlined the forms of challenges to dialogue. According to the Council, there are four forms of dialogue: on life, action, theological exchange, and religious experience. Within these forms, dialogue encourages daily interaction, collaboration for development, respect for different religious heritages, and to share their religious practices. It is clear from the Declaration, that dialogue is not limited to speaking and listening and that it requires a deeper level of engagement that goes beyond what the word dialogue ordinarily conveys.

In addition to the criteria for dialogue, the 1991 Declaration also recognized the obstacles that may be present. First among those obstacles was insufficient grounding in one's own faith followed by insufficient knowledge of other religions. This ordering of obstacles dismisses the notion that successful dialogue is mainly contingent on the openness and cooperation of the other religion. Critical self-knowledge as well as an awareness of circumstances – that is, the historical and social contingencies are a crucial aspect of interreligious dialogue. As noted by the Council, an awareness of circumstances 'always implies a certain sensitivity to the social, cultural, religious and political aspects of the situation, as also attentiveness to the 'signs of the times' through which the spirit of God is speaking, teaching and guiding. Such sensitivity and attentiveness is developed through a spirituality of dialogue'.<sup>15</sup>

With the program and practicality of interreligious dialogue defined, we can turn to specific instances in which it was put to the test. As the cases indicate, even the

best laid plans—in intention and structure—meet many contingencies that complicate, frustrate, and battle those who seek positive outcomes. In the cases of Regensburg and Park51, general misunderstanding of interreligious dialogue’s criteria of awareness of circumstance were reported instead as the transgression of one’s right to religious freedom. The exercise of interreligious dialogue became lost in the politics of legality and rights.

### **Regensburg**

As the new leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI has continued the program of interreligious dialogue. During the August 2005 World Youth Day Conference, he stated, ‘Interreligious and intercultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is in fact a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends’.<sup>16</sup> In a post-9/11 world, this statement has serious significance; not only due to historical context, but also because as Cardinal Ratzinger, he was known for his hardline defense of traditional Christian dogma. Four years later, Benedict XVI would set a papal record of entering two mosques when he entered the Hussein bin-Talal mosque in Amman, Jordan in 2009 (he first entered the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey in 2006).<sup>17</sup> Yet, on September 12, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI’s lecture at the University of Regensburg was considered a step back in relations with the Muslim world where he was quoted as saying, ‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached’.<sup>18</sup> The lecture was quickly denounced by those within and outside of the Muslim community; the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt led protests against the speech and were just one of many groups who demanded an apology. Days later, Benedict XVI announced his regret for the reactions to his speech and reiterated that he was quoting a historical conversation between 14th-century Byzantine Christian emperor, Manuel II Paleologus, and a Persian scholar. He also clarified, which was not made clear during the lecture, was that the quote did not reflect his personal views: ‘The true meaning of my address,’ he said, ‘in its totality was and is an invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with great mutual respect’.<sup>19</sup>

Upon closer examination of the lecture delivered, its missteps in presentation with regard to explicitly distancing himself from the negative comments towards Mohammed reflect the challenges associated with interreligious dialogue. Taken out of context, the lecture fueled a number of violent acts against the Church including the killing of an Italian nun in Somalia and the fire-bombing of five churches in the West Bank and one in Iraq.<sup>20</sup> A transcript of the lecture reveals how Benedict XVI did voice

what can be considered a rejection of the characterization of Mohammed, however, it was weak and ambiguous in nature. Benedict XVI states that in the emperor's conversation with the scholar, '[the emperor] addresses his interlocutor with a *startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable*, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying:

Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup>

The pope's disapproval with the emperor's remarks and his final message of rejecting the use of violence in the name of religion and to furthering the interreligious dialogue established by his predecessors, however, were drowned out by the sensationalism that often attaches itself to religion and politics.

Sensationalism, however, does not always prevail and extremism, both secular and religious, can be tempered by interreligious dialogue though it is a longer and more difficult path. On October 15, 2006, 38 prominent Muslim leaders and intellectuals issued an open letter in response to the Pope's lecture. The letter is exemplary of interreligious dialogue in action because instead of 'saying they are offended and demanding apologies, they express their respect for him and dialogue with him on faith and reason'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, rather than outright condemnation of the Pope's remarks, the open letter immediately engages in dialogue. It begins with the recognition of Benedict XVI's rejection of positivism and materialism but is then followed by their wish to clarify the errors in his message.

Responding directly to the quote that resulted in protests across parts of the Arab World, the letter provided additional background information to help clarify a non-Muslim's understanding of Mohammed. The letter dismissed the quote in which the emperor asserted that 'anything new' brought by Mohammed was 'evil and inhuman'. In addition to noting that there is no command directing Muslims to spread faith by the sword, they state:

What the emperor failed to realize—aside from the fact (as mentioned above) that no such command has ever existed in Islam—is that the Prophet never claimed to be bringing anything fundamentally new. God says in the Holy Qur'an, Naught is said to thee (Muhammad) but what already was said to the Messengers before thee (Fussilat 41:43), and, Say (Muhammad): I am no new thing among the messengers (of God), nor know I what will be done with me or with you ... Thus faith in the One God is not the property of any one religious community. According to Islamic belief, all the true prophets preached the same truth to different peoples at different times. The laws may be different, but the truth is unchanging.<sup>23</sup>

This excerpt reflects the key components of interreligious dialogue with a final condemnation by the 38 of any violence committed in reaction to the lecture as ‘completely unIslamic’.<sup>24</sup> The letter was publicly recognized and supported by various faiths, among them the United States Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbis of Israel, the various Orthodox Churches, and the World Council of Churches.<sup>25</sup> Since the Regensburg lecture, dialogue between faiths did not end with published statements. The following year, the Muslim community continued their dialogue with non-Muslims. The 38 signatures were joined by one hundred more and the original letter was expanded to the statement that is now known as ‘A Common Word Between Us and You.’ In this statement, the similarities between Islam and Christianity are outlined, which includes: belief in one God, love for fellow neighbor, and the significant role of Jesus and Mary. Finally, the letter reiterates the significance of interreligious dialogue and the peaceful social and political outcomes that can be achieved from its practice:

Together [Christians and Muslims] make up more than 55% of the world’s population, making the relationship between these two religious communities the most important factor in contributing to meaningful peace around the world. If Muslims and Christians are not at peace, the world cannot be at peace. With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Muslims and Christians intertwined everywhere as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict between more than half of the world’s inhabitants. Thus our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is perhaps at stake.<sup>26</sup>

The letter represents an excellent exercise of interreligious dialogue this time initiated by the Muslim community. The signatories, furthermore, were just as significant as the statement itself. They were from 40 different countries, both in the West and in the Arab World, who put aside intra-Muslim conflicts and moved the discussion between religions away from geopolitical conflicts onto theological grounds and, ultimately, practical ethical and social concerns.<sup>27</sup>

Following a meeting between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and signatories of ‘A Common Word’, the Vatican announced in March 2008 the establishment of the Catholic-Muslim Forum, which had its first meeting in Rome the following November and a second in Jordan in November 2011. The Forum was a success in terms of bringing together leaders of the two faiths to openly discuss and debate their theological similarities and differences. The point was not to reach a compromise, but an understanding of how each religion approaches the world in which we live. What resulted was a public affirmation of mutual understanding and how that understanding could serve as the basis for collaboration towards the common good.<sup>28</sup>

As the rounds of candid dialogue between high-ranking officials of each faith were successfully established, efforts to trickle down the practice of interreligious dialogue have been underway. However, this process appears to be equally long and difficult; according to Scott Appleby, advancements made in Catholic-Muslim relations had yet to be more widely circulated. That is, while interreligious dialogue was successful at the highest levels, the positive outcomes of those conversations have not been well conveyed to the ‘seminaries, madrasahs, to the priests and teachers, and even less to the common believers’.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, various projects and initiatives have been established since the Catholic-Muslim Forum to address this need. Such projects include Appleby’s Contending Modernities Project (University of Notre Dame), the Yale Common Word Initiative (Yale University), and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (Georgetown University), which has held two conferences (2009 and 2011) examining the practical outcomes of ‘A Common Word.’ The public conversation continued with the publication of two books in 2009 and 2010, both of which provided additional commentary on and the application of ‘A Common Word’.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, while the fruits of such efforts of dialogue are quite real, they take much time and care to properly ripen. On the level of elites, positive ground has been gained, but perhaps this group is more predisposed to the critical self-reflection and resulting discussion that followed. Creating a much more widespread and generally public process of dialogue is confronted with the same obstacles though in much different concentration. Simply, getting everyday people to engage in critical self-reflection, sober assessments of their faiths, and equally objective appreciations of their social contexts seems insurmountable. But it may only seem that way. The case of Park51 highlights how interreligious dialogue challenges people’s religious and secular-political commitments.

### **Park51: Dialogue and the Right to Religious Freedom**

Plans to build a Muslim community center two blocks north of Ground Zero began in 2009. Initially, there was little controversy since the proposed location was already being used for Muslim worship. The center’s organizers included real estate developer Sharif El-Gamal, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf (founder of the American Society for Muslim Advancement) and Rauf’s wife Daisy Khan. It was El-Gamal who had the idea of developing a center at 51 Park Avenue that would be modeled after the Jewish Community Center on New York’s upper West side. The center, therefore, is proposed to house an auditorium, pool, wellness center, culinary school, sports and artists’ facilities, and separate prayer spaces for Muslims, Christians, and Jews.

Once the project was approved, however, it quickly became the target of anti-Islamic groups. The language used by its opponents is indicative of the types of misconceptions interreligious dialogue is meant to unravel. Despite being a community center the project was identified by its opponents, such as the group Stop Islamization of America, as the ‘Ground Zero Victory Mosque’ or the ‘Monster Mosque’.<sup>31</sup> Conservative Tea Party leader Mark Williams asserted that the center would house a ‘Mosque for the worship of the terrorists’ monkey-god...and a ‘cultural center’ to propagandize for the extermination of all things not approved by their cult’.<sup>32</sup> Former NYC mayor Rudolph Giuliani called the presence of a Muslim prayer space near Ground Zero a ‘desecration’ and stated in no uncertain terms, ‘If you are a healer, you do not go forward with this project . . . . If you’re a warrior, you do’.<sup>33</sup> New York City buses would carry ads opposing the project, juxtaposing an image of the World Trade Center before the second tower was hit with a picture of the planned center and the words, ‘Why There?’.<sup>34</sup> Opposition to the center reached its peak in July 2010 when Terry Jones, pastor of the Dove World Outreach Center Church in Florida, promoted ‘International Burn a Koran Day’ to take place on the eve of the ninth anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Thirty-five religious leaders of various faiths denounced the anti-Muslim bigotry of Jones. Together they stated,

The partnerships that have developed in recent years between synagogues and churches, mosques and synagogues, and churches and mosques should provide a foundation for new forms of collaboration in interfaith education, inter-congregational visitations, and service programs that redress social ills like homelessness and drug abuse. What we can accomplish together is, in very many instances, far more than we can achieve working in isolation from one another... [B]y working together for interfaith understanding across communities and generations; and by cooperating with each other in works of justice and mercy for the benefit of society, all of us will demonstrate our faithfulness to our deepest spiritual commitments’.<sup>35</sup>

In response to this opposition, Islamic, Catholic, Jewish, and other Christian leaders issued a joint statement voicing their concerns over the divisiveness of Park51 and concluded with a statement of their willingness to facilitate a dialogue.<sup>36</sup> Supporters of Park51 referred to the right of freedom of religion and that Muslims in America were no less American than their non-Muslim counterparts. Some urged full support for Park51’s current location while others suggested that the relocation of the Center would be a fair compromise. Mayor Michael Bloomberg called Park51 ‘a test of our commitment to American values’.<sup>37</sup>

In his testimony before the US Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Hearing on ‘Protecting the Civil Rights of American Muslims’, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick on behalf of the US Catholic Bishops’ Conference stated the Church’s unconditional

support for the dignity and rights of Muslims. Pointing out the interreligious partnership, he noted that by defending the rights of Muslims, the Church also welcomes and *expects* reciprocity and solidarity from the Islamic community when the *rights of Christians and other religious groups* are violated around the world. He concluded, ‘Solidarity among people of every religion in the face of attacks on people of any one religion is an example of respect for religious freedom in action’.<sup>38</sup> As was mentioned previously, all this is meant to highlight the action oriented as well as speech based aspects of interreligious dialogue.

### **Dialogue and Understanding**

Taking into account the loss felt by families of the victims of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the proposed location of Park51 near Ground Zero, some Catholic and Muslim voices have urged prudence. Muslim scholar Tariq Ramadan has noted that because the location of Park51 near Ground Zero affects the collective sensitivities of American society, it should be moved. ‘This is a moment to go beyond rights and reach for the common good: To build it elsewhere, if possible, would be a sensible and symbolic move’.<sup>39</sup> For Ramadan, it is the diverse responses to the events that transpired in reaction to Park51, and not the building of Park51 itself, which helps us to better understand the practice of interreligious dialogue. For example, Ramadan points to the widespread condemnation of Terry Jones’ ‘Burn a Koran Day’ as well as the Jewish and Christian support for an Islamic Center, regardless of location. It also was encouraging to see non-Muslim political leaders defend Muslims’ political right to religious freedom.

As Catholic Church officials publicly supported the right to religious freedom for all, then New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan offered to mediate between those in favor and against Park51. Dolan stated:

Legitimate and understandable concerns about these two endeavors have arisen, and it is good these are being aired and discussed ... Yes, it is acceptable to ask questions about security, safety, the background and history of the groups hoping to build and buy. What is not acceptable is to prejudge any group, or to let fear and bias trump the towering American (and for us Catholics, the religious) virtues of hospitality, welcome, and religious freedom.<sup>40</sup>

Dolan is declaring how the right to religious freedom is inalienable but the right should not preclude discussion when issues of security and safety are present. Dolan, therefore, suggested a possible relocation of the Islamic Center, which is not unprecedented. The suggestion was based on the Vatican’s 1989 order to a Carmelite convent in Auschwitz, Poland. In 1984, the Carmelite nuns moved into a building

that was once used by the Nazis to store Zyklon B gas. Located on the perimeter of the former concentration camp, the nuns were cloistered in the building to pray for the lost souls of the Holocaust. The Jewish community both inside and outside of Poland considered the nuns' presence an insult to the memories of the millions of Jews killed at the camp. Following a 1987 meeting in Geneva, both Catholic leaders and Jewish leaders agreed the nuns would be moved to an interfaith center, whose building would be funded by the Vatican and the Polish Catholic Church. Rather than being right outside the perimeter of the former camp, the interfaith center (eventually called the Center for Dialogue and Prayer), would be located 600 yards away. Tensions over the convent culminated in 1989, when Jewish protestors and Polish workers inside the convent clashed; the Vatican soon thereafter issued a statement ordering the nuns to move.<sup>41</sup>

Yet even a sincere attempt at sensible, self-critical dialogue is a tricky matter when played out in public. Supporters and opponents of Park51 immediately adopted Dolan's reference to the Auschwitz convent. Journalist Charles Krauthammer's use of the convent reference to vehemently oppose the location of Park51 is a good example of the misapplication and misinterpretation of interreligious dialogue. Krauthammer argued that when Pope John Paul II ordered the convent to be moved, 'He was teaching them a lesson in respect: This is not your place; it belongs to others ... No commercial tower over Gettysburg, no convent at Auschwitz - and no mosque at Ground Zero. Build it anywhere but there'.<sup>42</sup> Krauthammer appears to be arguing in absolutes; such an approach misses the intention and practice of interreligious dialogue. Yet, the debate over Park51 eventually became exactly what Cardinal Francis Arinze made clear is not interreligious dialogue: expecting one religion to unconditionally yield for another. Even mutual tolerance or peaceful coexistence, Arinze noted, is commendable and necessary, but those still do not yet fulfill what is meant by interreligious dialogue.<sup>43</sup> The initial moment of critical self-understanding seemed to be lacking; those outside of the religious elite, such as Krauthammer, may simply not grasp what it means to engage in such dialogue.

More proof of this is found in the statements of Jeffrey Feldman. Critical of Krauthammer, yet equally remiss, Feldman argued that the Auschwitz example has provided moral justification to those opposing Park51. He states that by making reference to the Auschwitz example, Archbishop Dolan has 'added his voice and stature to the media melee converging with torches and pitchforks on the Park51 center...'.<sup>44</sup> Nowhere can we find the criteria for interreligious dialogue, which worked so well to resolve the controversy stirred by Pope Benedict XVI. Nowhere is it grasped that in the convent example, talks over the development of the Catholic run

interfaith center did involve Jewish Leaders, and since its completion in 1992, has been recognized by various faiths for its role in promoting reconciliation and reflection. Krauthammer and Feldman both neglected to engage in self-examination and engagement with the other, and so precluded any kind of nuanced understanding or recognition of opposing viewpoints.

What also makes the convent example relevant to Park51 is the desire to avoid violence, which was present in both cases.<sup>45</sup> As noted earlier by Arinze, however, interreligious dialogue does not end with peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance; it simply is not enough. To find a way to coexist and tolerate an imagined antagonist only seems to preempt conflict. With violence present in both cases, it was important to ask if the mere suppression of hostility was an appropriate path and an acceptable tradeoff to advancing one's faith. It is perhaps for this reason—for finding a way beyond hostility and violence before it got out of hand—that Archbishop Dolan suggested the relocation of Park51 using the example of the Auschwitz convent. The Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Auschwitz did involve the Jewish community in its planning—not, however, so that each side could tolerate the other, but so that they may grow together as a community pursuing a common good. It was in this spirit Dolan noted that those still affected by the memory of the victims of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks raised 'legitimate questions that ... deserve attention'.<sup>46</sup> However, he did so while simultaneously maintaining Park51's ultimate right to religious freedom. After the opening of Park51, el Gamal recognized his mistake of not involving from the start families of the victims of September 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>47</sup> On September 22, 2011, Park51 opened, without controversy, with a photography exhibit, titled 'NYChildren'. The exhibit was by Jewish photographer Danny Goldfield who photographed children from 169 countries.

The case of Park51 demonstrates how the discourse on interreligious relations and dialogue can be dominated by polemics that are devoid of self-reflection and sincere efforts to understand the other on its own terms. Furthermore, such polemics are seized by the mass media and overshadow the less sensational news of peaceful and cooperative interreligious dialogue. Park51 overshadowed the Muslim-Catholic Dialogue that was already established and had been growing in the United States since the 1990s. In 1996, three regional dialogues were established by the United States' Catholic Bishops' Conference and various Muslim organizations.<sup>48</sup> These dialogues were one of many responses to Vatican II's call for increased collaboration with other faiths. Following the second annual meeting of the West Coast Dialogue of Muslims and Catholics in 2001, the group's co-chairman, Archbishop Alexander Brunett of Seattle noted that in addition to the dialogue that has taken place between

popes and Muslim leaders, living room dialogues in neighborhoods and communities also were encouraged. Reiterating once again that while compromise is an integral part of the American political system, it is not the endgame of interreligious dialogue; progress and development is the real goal. Participants in interreligious dialogue ‘seek to understand how each of them understands what one must do to be holy’.<sup>49</sup> How they can get there together while being free to worship on their own is the substance of this work.

These sentiments were echoed by Muzzamil Siddiqi, Brunett’s counterpart to the West Coast Dialogue and director of the Islamic Center of Orange County in California. Siddiqi reminded Muslims that their faith urged them towards dialogue and identified the guidelines for it in the Qu’ran.<sup>50</sup> Brunett and Siddiqi, as representatives of both faiths, concluded that increased communication, cooperation, collaboration, and not compromise, were needed in today’s world. One of the important outcomes of the four annual meetings of the West Coast Dialogue was the recognition of the transformative nature of dialogue. While dialogue increased understanding of oneself as well as the other, it also called the faithful to work together, across faiths, for the common good, particularly in the areas of peace and justice. Their final report stated, ‘It is not enough to transform ourselves; we need to transform society’.<sup>51</sup> Thus, interreligious dialogue begins as an exercise of self-reflection followed by mutual recognition and understanding, and concludes with communal action.

Liyakat Takim, Sharjah Chair in Global Islam at McMaster University, also recognizes how action-oriented dialogue between religions can address humanitarian issues. With reference to Muslims in particular, he noted how they could be politically engaged with issues of which they are not commonly associated. He states, ‘Muslims need to go beyond the classical bifurcation of the abode of Islam and the abode of war. They need to articulate a theory of international relations that will incorporate notions of dignity, freedom of conscience, rights of minorities, and gender equality based on the notion of universal moral values’.<sup>52</sup>

On a more local level, the interchange between Muslim and Catholics has gone beyond mere discussion and has included bilateral visits of the faithful to mosques and churches.<sup>53</sup> According to the Interfaith Center, interfaith dialogue between Catholic and Muslims has resulted in the building of projects focused on the social service needs of each community. Grounded in the teachings of each religion, a partnership has developed between Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and various independent Muslim social service organizations and mosques.<sup>54</sup> It is the act of going beyond talking to learning and then to action that makes interfaith dialogue integral to peace and development.

## Conclusion

Whatever one might conclude regarding the validity of Huntington's civilizational conflict between the 'West and the rest,' this clash is not primarily religiously motivated. It is perhaps best described as Muslim leaders Feisal Abdul Rauf and Jihad Turk state it, between radicals and moderates in the rest as well as the West.<sup>55</sup> Borelli echoes this sentiment, who after sixteen years of working on Catholic-Muslim relations, concluded, 'Christians and Muslims have let the extremists too often do all the talking in public discourse'.<sup>56</sup> This seems quite accurate; and the reasons for this extend beyond the scope of this inquiry. In dialogue, the levelheaded have an optimum chance to prevail; the trick is to find parties willing to enter into such dialogue. They are often available and willing – though they are much slower than the polemical talking heads that dominate public discourse. It is said, however, that slow and steady wins the race.

Those who are willing to enter into such a dialogue, as Abdul Rashied Omar argues, need to focus on intrinsic reasons from within their faith in order to forge collaborative long-term relationships. In doing so, interreligious dialogue could go beyond providing quick fix solutions to problems and have long-term effects.<sup>57</sup> This approach is long term solution because not only does it encourage but also 'enables participants to go back and work within their communities to help them break out of myths of unique victimization, counter stereotypes and prejudices, and promote better understanding and respect for the hopes, fears, and legitimate grievances of the other community'.<sup>58</sup> Omar raises an interesting point, however, when he asks if the need for interreligious dialogue exists if there is no conflict or problem to be dealt with collaboratively; the link between intrinsic reasons and intentionality remain unclear. What the cases of Regensburg and Park51 shows is the recognition of the intrinsic reasons within each religion to continue with interreligious dialogue long after the presence of crisis. While crisis highlights the practice of interreligious collaboration, it alone does not determine its longevity. A sincere examination of intrinsic reasons should solve the problem of intentionality and considering today's complex, increasingly interdependent world, it would difficult to imagine a situation in which there was no problem that could not be deal with collaboratively.

With the increased role of religion in current affairs, both religious and secular communities can mutually benefit from learning more about the nuances and complexity of inter-religious dialogue. By examining the internal efforts of each religion and the resulting inter-religious dialogue on those efforts, we are able to see how these progressive interests can outshine the darker (and more studied) instances of politicized religious intolerance and violence. Such an analysis can help to transform our notions of the global future of religion.

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## **Breaking the Iron Cage: Max Weber, Erich Fromm, and the Sociology of Religion**

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### **Abstract**

This article attempts to explain the problem with Weber's 'key' to the 'iron cage.' First, using one of Erich Fromm's concepts, the article summarizes the central factors that make up the social character of the Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit of Capitalism.' Starting with Protestant Ethic, the reader will receive a brief review of 1. Martin Luther's *sola fide, sola scriptura*, and his ideas concerning how to please God; 2. John Calvin's predestination and code of conduct for those who are 'saved;' 3. Pietism—a movement born out of the 'Thirty Year War' in Germany; 4. John Wesley's push towards *imitatio Christi*; and 5. Anabaptism and their religiously sanctioned separation practices. In addition, the reader will come to see (a) the differences between the social character of Catholics versus Protestants, (b) how the Protestant Ethic is driven by salvation anxiety, and (c) how the 'Spirit of Capitalism' "co-participated" in modern capitalism's rise to global domination. This summary section ends with an explanation of how these new theological ideas tended 'to stabilize and intensify the new social character' and direct the believer's actions like a gale wind blowing against a small sail boat. Next, the article succinctly defines the 'Spirit of Capitalism.' After this foundational review, the reader's attention is focused on Weber's concepts of the 'iron cage' (an internalized belief that one must have an economically driven, vocational calling), ascetic rationalism, and the charismatic leader. Finally, the article concludes with an explanation of how each new 'key,' which is created in the hands of a 'new' charismatic leader or *human idol*, only leads to another 'iron cage.'

**Keywords:** Sociology of Religion, Comparative Religion, Social Psychology, the Frankfurt School, Erich Fromm, Critique of Max Weber.

### **The questioning of Weber's theory**

What is this 'iron cage,' as Max Weber (1864-1920) first described it in 1904-5, *and* can

we free ourselves from it? Can modern humans use the philosophies born out of our present economic system (i.e. capitalism) to free ourselves from the *remnants* of the social character of the 'Protestant Ethic' and the 'Spirit of Capitalism'? Can Weber's 'key,' ascetic rationalism, unlock the iron cage? This paper will attempt to address these questions by summarizing Weber's descriptions of the social characters known as the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Once these two social character types have been addressed, I will attempt to articulate Weber's ascetic rationalism and see if it has the potential to unlock the cage. In order to begin, the reader must understand what is meant by the phrase 'social character.' Let us turn our attention to Erich Fromm (1900-1980), a first generation member of the Frankfurt School.

### **Social character**

In order to understand the focus of this paper, the reader needs to comprehend the "psychological motivations," or, in the words of Fromm, the social character of faith based communities.<sup>1</sup> In the appendix of Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941/1994), he describes that

The social character comprises only a selection of traits, the essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, social character is not interested in "the peculiarities by which these persons differ from each other, but in that part of their character structure that is common to most members of the group."<sup>3</sup> It appears that Fromm agreed with Weber, to the extent that "ideas can become powerful forces, but only to the extent to which they are answers to specific human needs prominent in a given social character."<sup>4</sup> In Weber's analysis, as we will soon see, the center of the social character of Lutherans, Calvinists, Pietists, Methodists, and Anabaptists was a rationality that attempted to completely eliminate one type of theodicy.<sup>5</sup> In short, *to alleviate salvation anxiety*.

Before we begin, a few remarks concerning the form of this paper. For convenience and efficiency, the ideologies known as Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism will be shortened as PE and SoC, respectfully. In addition, I have enumerated the factors that define PE for reading convenience, something that Weber didn't do.

### **Max Weber**

Weber was a political economist who wanted to understand the relationship between religion and the work ethic. According to Kalberg, Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was Weber's attempt

...to demonstrate that one important source of the modern work ethic and orientation to material success, which he calls the “spirit of capitalism,” is located *outside* the realm of “this-worldly” utilitarian concerns and business astuteness.<sup>6</sup>

To put it another way, Weber wished to ascertain

... to what extent, religious influences *co-participated* in the qualitative formation and quantitative expansion of the spirit [of Capitalism] across the globe. We wish further to assess which practical *aspects* of the *culture* upon which [modern] capitalism rests can be traced back to these religious influences.<sup>7</sup>

The modern work ethic that Weber is describing was the one that first appeared shortly after the Reformation and continued to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In short, Weber argues that the religious ideology of the ‘Protestant Ethic,’ as he coined the term, set the stage for the SoC. For Weber, several religious factors from these five Protestant theologies (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and Anabaptist) make up this PE.<sup>8</sup> In other words, according to Weber, as people acted socially among the different Protestant faiths, these theologies, as understood by the laity, combined to create the PE.

## **Martin Luther**

The first three factors of the PE come from the theology of Martin Luther (1483-1546). The first two factors are Luther’s world renowned dogmas: *sola fide* - ‘faith alone’ and *sola scriptura* – ‘scriptures alone.’ A dogma, be it religious or secular, as it was taught to me in WMU’s Comparative Religion program, is an assertion or set of assertions made with the highest level of certainty. Luther’s dogmas, like all other dogmas, instilled a particular orientation of action to ‘this-worldly’ reality in order to affect the ‘next-worldly’ reality. In Luther’s case, the quintessential elements in achieving salvation in the ‘next-world’ is declaring (in this world, of course) one’s faith in the ‘Risen Lord’ since the scriptures (and not the Pope) are the sole authority in the life of an individual believer. The third factor is Luther’s assertion that the fulfillment of one’s duties in ‘this-worldly’ reality constitutes the *only* way to please God, i.e. the assigning of vocational calling, meaning, “one’s task is given by God.”<sup>9</sup> These three theological arguments were born out of Luther’s concern and fear for his own salvation.<sup>10</sup> According to Weaver,

Anxious about his own salvation, Luther thought that monastic life was the best way to overcome the doubts about his relationship with God ... Luther came to see that one is saved by faith alone.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Luther wanted to know, *with certainty*, whether he got into heaven *before he lived his life*.

These three factors, created by Luther, are counter to Catholic doctrine, which teaches that salvation is achieved by faith *and* 'good works.'<sup>12</sup> To put it another way, Catholics rejected Luther's theology which argued that the fulfillment of one's duty *in* one's vocational calling *is* the highest expression of moral activity. By adopting Luther's theological argument, Lutherans avoided the salvation anxiety of Catholics (i.e. not knowing if one is heaven bound until after 'Judgment Day') and de-emphasized the importance of 'good works,' replaced Church authority with self authority, *and*, at the same time, allowed more time for other activities that did not involve 'salvation,' like capital accumulation.

## John Calvin

The next two factors come from the theology of John Calvin (1509-1564). In Calvin's theology, he keeps Luther's *sola fide* and *sola scriptura* but adds to the mix the doctrine of predestination, the fourth factor of the PE. Weber refers to Calvin's doctrine of predestination as "Calvinism's most characteristic dogma."<sup>13</sup> Weber's selective quotes from Westminster Confession of 1647 paint a vivid picture of predestination:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ... By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and other foreordained to everlasting death.<sup>14</sup>

### Summarizing Calvin's argument,

God elected those to be saved and predestined those to be damned, and then God saw to it that those on the road to damnation were sinners and those on the road to salvation were saints. God's people—the elect—have been put on earth to work out the divine plan; election, therefore, is a calling and the Christian life a serious vocation.<sup>15</sup>

From this argument, Calvin concludes that 1. everyone is born a sinner; 2. people are incapable of sinless acts; 3. God elects those who will be saved; 4. Christ only died for those who were saved; 5. the believer has no choice whether they are saved or not; 6. those who are not predestined for salvation are damned; *and* 7. it is impossible for those who are saved, i.e. the elect, to fall away once they are converted *unless* they fail to live saintly lives.<sup>16</sup> In addition, if that does not paint the darkest of all portraits of human nature and its efforts, Calvin's argument destroys what notions Luther kept from the Catholic Church's theology of 'good works.' In short, why perform 'good works' or, for that fact, the sacraments, if they can't assist the faithful into heaven?

## **Faith and salvation anxiety**

The fifth factor of the PE is not a dogma like Calvin's predestination but a way of behaving that allows the believer to testify to one's faith and, at the same time, alleviate their own salvation anxiety.<sup>17</sup> In the course of developing his new theology, Calvin created a code of conduct for those who were 'saved,' i.e. those living saintly lives. This code of conduct forced, by the will of the individual and not the Catholic Church, to deny all physical desires. In other words, as Weaver put it

The Calvinist system blended well with the demands of emerging capitalism: Calvin extolled thrift, hard work, sobriety, responsibility, and self-reliance, the very virtues that were crucial for those who wished to make substantial progress in modern mercantile society.<sup>18</sup>

According to Weber, Calvin's theology tried to free the Christian from the bonds of the Catholic Church but, in fact, it created a "spiritual isolation of each person."<sup>19</sup> In short, the social character of the PE *started to resemble a cage*.

## **Pietism**

The sixth factor, Pietism, was born out of the reaction by German Lutherans to suffering that was caused by the 'Thirty Year War.' According to Brenner,

The leaders of Pietism saw a lack of piety in the state church and they wanted to correct it. They saw a lack of concern for the poor, the underprivileged, the pagan and the Jew, and they wanted to help their people develop genuine concern. They wanted to duplicate the conditions and successes of the early Christian Church. But they came up with the wrong answers to accomplish their purpose. Pietism departed from Lutheran orthodoxy in a number of areas. But we can group most of them under one or the other of the following two characteristics: 1) Pietism emphasized sanctification instead of justification; and 2) Pietism fostered subjectivism.<sup>20</sup>

Weber argues that

The defining emphasis was so thoroughly shifted to the *praxis pietatis* [practice of piety in daily life] that dogmatic orthodoxy fell into the background and occasionally seemed merely a matter of indifference.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, Pietists shifted from theological arguments that attempted to alleviate salvation anxiety by emphasizing charitable actions, i.e. a Protestant version of 'good works.' According to Weber,

Pietist principles had in the end two practical effects. They led to a *still* stricter ascetic control of the organized life in one's calling, and they anchored in religion the ethical

significance of the calling even more firmly than did normal Reformed [Lutherans and Calvinists] Christians.<sup>22</sup>

In essence, the social character of Pietists was defined by a heartfelt or feeling-based religious devotion to ones vocational calling, charitable activities, and pastoral theology *opposed to* the guiding elements of the Catholic Church or the dogma of Luther's or Calvin's theology.

### **John Wesley**

The seventh factor of the PE come from the theology of John Wesley (1703-91). Wesley's theology is defined by *sola scriptura* – 'scripture alone' and *imitatio Christi* – "imitate Christ." In other words, all authority comes from scripture alone and the purpose of scripture is to help the believer imitate Christ. Wesley argued that the life of Christ is marked by asceticism, directly giving aid to the poor, caring for the sick, *and*, like Luther's, Calvin's, and Pieties' theologies, denying worldly reward for those rewards in heaven. According to Weber, Methodism increased the emphasis on the validity of scripture and the indispensability of testifying to belief through conduct *but* it also strengthen the anti-Calvinist doctrines that grace can be lost.<sup>23</sup> Weber does not direct our attention to *imitatio Christi* but to Wesley's methodological approach to religious action, the seventh factor. What is important to Weber, is that

Methodism's "regeneration" produced in the end only a *complementary* component to the pure idea of salvation through good works: a religious anchoring of the ascetic organization of life after the idea of predestination had been abandoned.<sup>24</sup>

However, "the emotional act of conversion was methodically induced."<sup>25</sup> In short, methodological religious action towards salvation, over time, became methodological secular action towards success in this world of the here and now.

### **Anabaptism**

This brings us to the last social character type, Anabaptism. The Anabaptist theology is defined by its advocacy for 1. a 'separation from the world' because it was, and in their opinion still is, controlled by evil, e.g. the shunning of nonbelievers and outsiders; 2. refusal to swear oaths due to Jesus' teachings<sup>26</sup>; 3. refusing to "fight evil with evil" because Jesus never did it<sup>27</sup>; 4. that baptism is an external witnessing of the believer's conscious profession of faith and since infants could not understand the Gospel's message, therefore, they should not be baptized; and 5. the belief in sharing one's goods with everyone, i.e. communal property.<sup>28</sup> Weber lists the Quakers and

Mennonites as Anabaptist. However, he categorizes them as “The Baptizing Sects and Churches.”<sup>29</sup> Weber emphasized the point that Anabaptist saw their community as a “community of *sincere believers and the elect*” – and ‘only these people,’ causing these faith based communities to “practice a strict avoidance of ‘the world.’”<sup>30</sup> This religiously sanctioned separation, the eighth factor in Weber’s PE, created and maintained a social inequality more rigid than previous Protestant theologies. In addition, Weber points out, due to the elimination of all other sacraments except baptism, the only

“inner light” of continuing revelation now enabled believers to acquire true understanding, even of the biblical revelations of God ... [and] without the inner light, human beings, and even persons guided by natural reason, remained pure creatures of desires and wants.<sup>31</sup>

In short, a reemergence of Calvin’s code of conduct that advocated thrift, hard work, sobriety, responsibility, and self-reliance without Pietism version of ‘good works.’

## **The Protestant Ethic**

To summarize, as the theologies of Lutherans, Calvinists, Pieties, Methodists, and Anabaptists interacted with each other, over the course of history, they converged to create, what Weber calls, the ‘Protestant Ethic.’ For Weber, the social character of the PE is marked by 1. a calling to fulfill one’s vocational duty; 2. a belief that one’s vocational calling was the highest expression of moral activity; 3. a belief that secular success (like fame, money, and/or power) are signs from God that the believer is doing the ‘Will of God’ and that the believer has been ‘saved;’ 4. that enjoyment of the fruits of secular success would cause one to lose salvation; 5. that acts of ‘good works,’ charity, and/or engaging in religious activities (even church attendance) were *unnecessary* for salvation; *and* last, but not least, 6. that the believer’s personal understanding and interpretations of the holy scriptures were the sole authority in the believer’s life. Putting it another way, using Fromm’s words, these new theological ideas tended ‘to stabilize and intensify the new social character and helped determined’ the believer’s actions.<sup>32</sup> This stabilization allowed economic and secular forces to transform, over a period of time, the Protestant Ethic into the Spirit of Capitalism. In short, the SoC is the remnant or ghost of the PE. As a point of clarification, Weber does not argue that the SoC was the sole cause of modern capitalism. However, Weber does argue that the SoC “co-participated” in modern capitalism’s rise to global domination and wishes to show how modern capitalism can be “traced back to these religious influences.”<sup>33</sup>

If one had to give an alternative sub-title to Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, it would be 'How fears stemming from the Book of Revelation and the Theology of Predestination helped give birth to the Spirit of Capitalism.' I argue, based on their life stories and theologies that were born out of their anxiety concerning their own respective salvations, that Luther's and Calvin's theological extrapolations stem from their need to defend themselves from Revelation 14:1-3. According to the Bible, John of Patmos dreamt that,

... the Lamb appeared in my vision. He was standing on Mount Zion, and with him were the hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. I heard a sound from heaven which resembled the roaring of the deep, or loud peals of thunder; the sound I heard was like the melody of harpists playing on their harps. They were singing a new hymn before the throne, in the presence of the four living creatures and the elders. This hymn no one could learn except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been ransomed from the world.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, heaven had a limited seating capacity and they, Luther, Calvin, and all those who hold dear their theological orientations, needed a sign to determine that they were one of the 'chosen' few.

## The Spirit of Capitalism

Now, let us turn our attention to what Weber meant when he used the term SoC. According to Kalberg, the SoC is defined by

... a configuration of values that implied the individual's duty to increase his capital, to view work as an end in itself to be performed rationally and systematically in a calling, to earn money perpetually (without enjoying it), and to view material wealth as a manifestation of 'competence and proficiency in a vocational calling.'<sup>35</sup>

But SoC is not industrial capitalism. For Weber, the 'spirit of capitalism' is the secular version of the 'protestant ethic;' In other words, thinking historically, SoC sits between the PE and industrial capitalism. Weber explains the SoC using the words of Benjamin Franklin, who stated,

The acquisition of money, and more and more money, takes place here simultaneously with the strictest avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of it. The pursuit of riches is fully stripped of all pleasurable (eudämonistischen), and surely all hedonistic, aspects.<sup>36</sup>

What we, in the US and most of Europe, are currently experiencing is post-industrial capitalism—a shift from manufacturing jobs to service jobs and jobs that manufacture, sort, and/or disseminate information. Now that the reader has a good idea of the origins of the PE and the difference between SoC, industrial capitalism, and

post-industrial capitalism, let us turn our attention to the question, *Can Weber's 'key,' ascetic rationalism, unlock the iron cage?*

## The Iron Cage

At the very end of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber paints a picture that modern humans are born into a cage that was constructed by the 'vocational callings' of the PE. Weber states,

Tied to the technical and economic conditions at the foundation of mechanical and machine production, this cosmos today determines the style of life of all individuals born into it, *not* only those directly engaged in earning a living.<sup>37</sup>

Originally, using one of Weber's most famous sentences, "The Puritan *wanted* to be a person with a vocational calling; today we *are forced* to be"<sup>38</sup> and borrowing Fromm's definition of social character, the social character of Protestants wanted to be a people with a vocational calling so they could attain entrance into heaven because the salvation anxiety in the social character of Catholicism was too great to bear. Putting it another way, the social character of Protestants, at the time of Weber's analysis, was based upon 1. wanting a 'sure thing,' when it came to salvation; 2. 'knowing' that they lived in an 'iron cage' but failing to understand that the cage was constructed by a) the economic forces that caused humans to sell their labor-power in order to live and b) the property and exchange laws that dictated who owned what, what was produced, and how it was to be sold; *and*, finally, 3) the key to the 'iron cage' was accepting 'Jesus Christ as your Lord and *personal* savior,' who would let you out of the cage (after you died, of course) because you were predestined to be 'saved' and live in Heaven for all eternity.

## A cage with no key

As time moved on, the so-called 'key' disappeared. As the social character types of the PE and the SoC gave way *to* the social character types of industrial and post-industrial capitalism, religion was kicked out of the public realm and forced into the private realm of personal matters. This relegated religion to a minor philosophical/moral orientation with no social power. Now that 'God is dead'<sup>39</sup> and its counterpart religion is on life support with the new proletariat,<sup>40</sup> all we are left with is the aphorisms of industrial and post-industrial capitalism (e.g. 'There must be winners and losers,' Gordon Gekko's "Greed is good,"<sup>41</sup> "...God helps those who help themselves,"<sup>42</sup> 'Only the strong shall survive,' 'He who dies with the most toys wins,' 'Let the poor die and

decrease the surplus population,<sup>43</sup> etc.). In short, we are now forced to find a vocation or suffer a life of poverty and an early death for ourselves and our families.

I believe that Weber knew that we could not return to religion and, for this very reason, Weber's suggests, using Kalberg's translation, that we should investigate or "chart the significance of ascetic rationalism" in order to find the key to the iron cage.<sup>44</sup> In other words, Weber has no 'key.' However, he has an idea where to look for it. One gets the feeling that Weber sees the 'key' in the hands of a future secular charismatic leader that is ascetically orientated but still holds dear the current bourgeois ideology of capitalism.

### **A never ending cycle**

Weber has shown in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, that the dissemination of a charismatic leader's ideas (in this case, a theology that will assure you, before you die, that you are getting into heaven) causes the ideas to become 'traditional thinking' for his disciples and future followers. For example, Luther's, Calvin's, and Wesley's ideas became religious traditions and then social institutions. Over time, increased membership, the need to have organizational direction, pressure from economic forces, and new technology caused these social institutions of 'traditional thinking' to take on a legal-rational orientation, e.g. a bureaucracy. From here, the bureaucracy continues until its authority is challenged and/or the bureaucracy can no longer perform its function, usually due to economic forces. This in turn creates a need for a 'new' charismatic leader who could 'fix' the bureaucracy. In short, a cycle of change that goes something like this: 1. economic failure allows for the; 2. emergence of a charismatic leader who gives 'hope,' challenges the established authority, and the way things are run; 3. the leader's ideas become dominant and, therefore, the new traditional way of thinking; 4. then, over time, the ideas become institutionalized, i.e. a functioning bureaucracy, and, finally, returning back to the beginning; 5. the failure of the bureaucracy to maintain order, social stability, economic stability, and/or a 'sense of fairness' creates a need for a change and a 'new' charismatic leader or *human idol*. In summary, a never ending cycle, which only seems to get faster with each new set of technological advances, which is spurred on by the mantra 'production for profit,' and not 'production for need.'

### **Breaking the cycle**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and the Frankfurt School, on the other hand, offer a different solution-breaking the cycle of bourgeois philosophy and its wasteful (due to over

production and a dishonest distribution of a worker's surplus value), its deceitful (due to its 'fine-print,' 'simple interest,' and ridiculous maxims, like 'let your money work for you'), and its irrationally organized economic system (i.e. profit over need).<sup>45</sup> In other words, again quoting Erich Fromm, as he discussed social transference,

Even though man is helpless not only as a child but as an adult, this adult helplessness can be overcome. In a society which is rationally organized, which does not need to confuse man's mind in order to deceive him about the real situation, in a society that encourages rather than discourages man's independence and rationality, the sense of helplessness will have disappeared and with it the need for social transference. A society whose members are helpless need idols.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 3rd edition, transl. Stephen Kalberg, (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2002), Pp.55; and Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, (New York: An Owl Book – Henry Holt and Company, 1994/1941), Pp. 275-296.
2. Erich Fromm, 1994, Pp. 276.
3. *ibid*, Pp. 275.
4. *ibid*, Pp. 279.
5. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 63. In addition, see Weber's definition of theodicy on the top of page 519 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).
6. *ibid*, Pp. xi.
7. *ibid*, Pp. 49, first bracket added for clarification, second bracket added by Kalberg.
8. *ibid*, Pp. 53.
9. *ibid*, Pp. 39-40.
10. see "anfechtungen," in particular, "Career of the Reformer IV" and "Table Talk," found in Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, transl. Jaroslav Pelikan, Volume 34 and 54, respectively, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1955).
11. Mary Jo Weaver, *Introduction to Christianity*: 2nd edition, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc., 1991), Pp. 94.
12. *Gospel of Matthew* 5:16, 7:17-20, 16:27, & 25:34-36; *The Epistle of James* 2:14-17 & 2:20-24; *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* 3:7-9 & 15:58; *The 2nd Epistle of Paul to Timothy* 3:16; *New American Bible: Saint Joseph Edition* (1970). New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications; and Karl Keating, *The Usual Suspects: Answering Anti-Catholic Fundamentalist*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), Pp. 48-53.
13. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 55.

14. *ibid*, Pp. 56.
15. Mary Jo Weaver, 1991, Pp. 98.
16. *ibid*, Pp. 96-99.
17. Max Weber, 2002 Pp. 74-75.
18. Mary Jo Weaver, 1991, Pp. 99.
19. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 62-63.
20. John Brenner, *Pietism: Past and Present*, Pp. 4. An Essay delivered at WELS Michigan District Southeastern Conference Pastor/Teacher/Delegate Conference on January 23, 1989 and WELS Michigan District Northern Pastoral Conference on April 3, 1989.
21. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 81.
22. *ibid*, Pp. 82, brackets added for clarification.
23. *ibid*, Pp. 91.
24. *ibid*, Pp. 93.
25. *ibid*, Pp. 92.
26. Matthew 5:33-37.
27. This point ignores the fact that Jesus flogged the money changers and the merchants in the temple, see John 2:13-16.
28. Mary Jo Weaver, 1991, Pp. 101-102.
29. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 93.
30. *ibid*, Pp. 93-94.
31. *ibid*, Pp. 95-96, bracket added for clarification.
32. Erich Fromm, 1994, Pp. 296.
33. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 49.
34. *The Book of Revelation* 14:1-4.
35. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. xlv.
36. *ibid*, Pp. 17.
37. *ibid*, Pp. 123.
38. *ibid*, Pp. 123.
39. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), Pp. 181. Note: the word in the title 'gay' refers to the word 'happy' and not to the word 'homosexual.'
40. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991/1964). Also available on line at [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/one-dimensional-man/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/one-dimensional-man/index.htm); and Walter A. Jensen, *The 'New' Proletariat: Marcuse's One-Dimensional Human Being*. Available on line at [http://www.walterjensen.net/hand-outs/P\\_The\\_New\\_Proletariat-Marcuses\\_1DHB.pdf](http://www.walterjensen.net/hand-outs/P_The_New_Proletariat-Marcuses_1DHB.pdf)

41. *Wall Street*. Dir. Oliver Stone. Perfs. Michael Douglas, Charlie Sheen, Martin Sheen. 1987. DVD. 20th Century FOX, 2000.
42. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 69. Note: to the best of my knowledge, this phrase does not appear in any Christian Bible.
43. A paraphrase of Ebenezer Scrooge's remark to two men collecting for the charity houses, see Stave 1, in Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. 1843.
44. Max Weber, 2002, Pp. 124-125; or Talcott Parsons' 1958 translation of the same work published by Charles Scribner's Sons, Pp. 181.
45. Robert C. Tucker, eds. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978.
46. Erich Fromm, *The Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980, Pp.43.

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## **Allama Jafari and the Russellian Eurocentric Project**

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### **Abstract**

This is an article on Allama Jafari's take on Sir Bertrand Russell. In other words, the author has approached how Allama Jafari conceptualized the Russellian project in relation to certain questions within philosophy and religion. To put it otherwise, this essay could have been written differently by comparing Russell and Jafari in a systematic fashion which is current within comparative philosophical discourses in academia. But the author is more interested in the Jafarian reading of the Russellian project. It is argued that this mode of analysis has been significantly undertheorized for various intellectual, institutional and structural reasons and that's why it is important to transform the "Eurocentric Tide" within mainstream philosophical discourses.

**Keywords:** Eurocentrism, Russell, Allama Jafari, Religion, Metaphysical Canopy.

### **Introduction**

Is there any difference between a sage and an intellectual? How could one differentiate between these two concepts? Why is it of importance to pay attention to this distinction within modern context? Could the distinction between the two concepts be related to the debates on "fact" and "value"? In other words, could one argue that an intellectual is a thinker who attempts to unearth the unknown territories of the *fact* while a sage is a contemplative thinker who sticks to values no matter what the facts demonstrate? There is a tendency within the modernist paradigm to inculcate such an interpretation in regard to the distinction between an intellectual versus a sage. To put it differently, there is a tendency among discursive philosophers who argue that intellectuals are those kinds of individuals who have renounced the "epistemological significance" as well as "categorical importance" of *religion* and instead they have embraced the paradigmaticity of *science* as a new form of *dis-closure*. To put it otherwise, in this mode of reading the mentalité of a

sage is a *passé* and therefore in contrast to the scientific mode of analysis which is exclusively considered valid by proponents of discursive rationalité. This binary opposition may be of significance within the dominant discourse of academic rationality but it lacks fundamental significance in the primordial school of philosophy/social theory where a sage is not defined in terms set by the modernist paradigm. Needless to restate that the modernist paradigm is based on a novel Comtian reading of history of human mentalité which has interpreted the “story of human maturation” in three broad stages, i.e. the theological stage which is broken down into three stages of its own, including animism, polytheism, and monotheism; the metaphysical stage and the positive stage. At any rate, the paradigm which includes the discourse of sagacity is conceptualized within the paradigm of “Hikmat” where the Comtian differentiation of mentalité and intellectual antagonization between reason, intellection and sensual perception are absent from the epistemological frame of the “Hikmatic Vector”. In the “Hikmatic Paradigm” each of the human faculties does correspond to a certain level of reality in a spiral fashion which is absent in the flat mode of perception present in modernist point of vantage.

In other words, the sagacious discourse is not inherently indifferent to the “social” as portrayed by enlightened intellectuals who have colonized various domains of reasonability by wrongly accusing anybody who does not share the ideals of the Enlightenment Tradition as reactionary. Here we are going to explicate these implicit issues within the discursive historiography in a non-discursive fashion.

### **Non-discursive historiography of intellectual history**

Since the dawn of the Enlightenment Tradition, intellectuals have occupied a significant role in shaping the textures of the public square in relation to the institutions of power vis-à-vis the public. The decline of religion in the public sphere and the incessant attacks on any sign of “religiosity” by laic intellectuals institutionalized the belief that there is a fundamental contradiction between religion and reason at metaphysical level and concomitancy of religion and regressive political establishment at sociopolitical stage among modernist philosophers and social scientists. When these assumptions were incorporated in the body of modernist episteme then the public intellectual was a figure who took distance from religion as the negation of this detachment would endanger the responsibility which an intellectual should assume in the public square. In other words, the underlying assumptions of the modernist concept of intellectual is construed in terms of contradiction with the notion of religion as the latter is represented as an epitome of irresponsibility vis-à-vis the “people” and the “power”. Sir Bertrand Russell belongs to

this tradition of Enlightenment where religion as such denotes a regressive association and it would be embarrassing for a public intellectual in the paradigm of the Enlightenment Tradition to emphasize the positive or emancipative dimensions of religion in the course of human history. However when this tradition of intellectual engagement is considered as a particular form of scholarly critique there would not arise any problem but this has not been the case in the history of modernity as we have known it in an institutional fashion. To put it differently, laic intellectuals have come to conceptualize this particular form of critique as the sole valid universal modality that should replace all forms and as a matter of fact annihilate the other modalities in any part of the globe.

Allama Jafari represents another type of critique where religion is not in contradiction with public responsibility. He himself uses the term “conscientious illuminated sage” rather than “enlightened intellectual”. Why is he doing that? Is it by purpose or an accident? By having a synoptic approach to the Jafarian discourse one can easily discern that this is not an accident but an intentional move due to his critical stance on modernity as a civilizational project where religion is separated from the “management of life”. In other words, Allama Jafari believes that a conscientious illuminated sage should accept public responsibility in demonstrating the emancipative dimensions of religion and at the same time deprive the ill-minded people of power to usurp the interpretation of “sublime human activities” as without these activities life would be meaningless. (Jafari, 1966. 200) To put it otherwise, this requires a sense of profound responsibility before others, the society, humanity and God and the praxis of Allama Jafari attests to this sense of conscientiousness. If this is established then how could one account for concomitancy of religion and critique in the Jafarian paradigm and incompatibility of critique and religion in the Russellian framework?

The contradiction between these paradigms is not soluble analytically as both could back up their assertions based on their respective reading of the histories of religion and modernity without realizing the multiple possibilities which exist within the multifaceted contexts of religion and modernity. Here again we are faced with a classical case of incommensurable example where two towering figures of philosophy in the twentieth century have talked by each other without attempting to understand the assumptive frameworks of the other.<sup>1</sup> However the very attempt by Allama Jafari in unlocking the Russellian discourse on responsibility of intellectuals is a significant step forward but this is not sufficient if we are looking for a productive and life-shaking dialogue between East and West.

The question of responsibility of thinkers of integrity is an issue which itself, apart from paradigmatic differences, need to be taken seriously into consideration as there is always a danger that

... science, politics and any kind of sublime human activities could be corrupted in the hands of utilitarian felons (Jafari, 1966: 200).

## **Religion and Eurocentrism in Russellian Paradigm**

One of the most significant questions within the context of philosophy of science and social sciences is the issue of reference-point which affects one's overall picture of reality in one way or the other. There are many sociologists such as Jeffrey C. Alexander who argue about the pivotal position of what he terms as "background assumptions" in the constitution of theories and worldviews of intellectuals, thinkers, philosophers and social theorists in a fundamental fashion. (Alexander, 2003) One may not be aware of the impact of these assumptions as they are weaved into the textures of one's referential point of departure in a subtle fashion without any sense of "presence" which could cause within us a sense of uneasiness. On the contrary, they are what they *are* due to their delicate absent presence which very rarely are considered by each of us as an external element imposed upon us which we need to be reflexive about. One of the contemporary problems within modernist discourse has been the question of "Eurocentrism" which has encompassed all aspects of *laic episteme* (ontology, epistemology, methodology, method, and individual mores) in a total fashion. Eurocentrism is *the practice of viewing the world from a European perspective and historical experience.*<sup>2</sup> The term Eurocentrism was coined during the period of decolonization in the late 20th century. The term Eurocentrism was coined relatively late, during the decolonization period following World War II, based on an earlier adjective Europe-centric which came into use in the early 20th century. The term appears in precisely this form in the writings of the right-wing German writer Karl Haushofer during the 1920s. For instance, in Haushofer's "Geo-Politics of the Pacific Space", Haushofer contrasts this pacific space in terms of global politics to the "European" and "Europe-centric". (Jorn, 2004, 120) The term Europocentrism appears in the 1970s, through the Marxist writings of Samir Amin as part of a global, core-periphery or dependency model of capitalist development. 'Eurocentrism' appears only by 1988, in the titles of Amin's books as the definition of an ideology. The view of Sir Bertrand Russell on the European position and the "experiential significance" of European history (both as a model and criterion to evaluate the *other*) are deeply cherished by Russell. (Miri, 2013) In other words, the Russellian discourse was formed in the age of Eurocentrism and in this regard his position on vital issues of humanities is deeply "Eurocentric" as far as fundamental questions of social theory and epistemology are concerned (Blaut, 2000).

To put it otherwise, in the fashion I have read the Jafarian approach to the Russellian paradigm, it is discernible that the idea of “European Exceptionalism” is shared by Sir Bertrand Russell in a very serious manner and this is one of the main issues which have been detected by Allama Jafari in a systematic style and time and again forced the latter to question the universal claim of Russell on issues related to eschatology of human self; the role of religion in the constitution of self and society; the locus of values in the fabric of society; the place of virtues in the symbolic universe of human personality; the dialog of religion and philosophy; the dialectics of fact and value; and the dynamics of morality and ethic in the texture of human ethos.

In the Russell-Wyatt Dialogue, Wyatt asks Russell about the importance of religion and if the latter has brought about any positive effect upon human life in general (Jafari, 1966, 203). In respond, Sir Russell states that the followers of Benedictine Order

... did some good in the beginning but later on they caused great many harms ... (1966: 203).

Allama Jafari argues that when Wyatt asks about religions Russell refers only to Christianity and the history of Christian orders in the European context without realizing that this is only a particular aspect of religious life in the course of human history. In other words, it seems Russell is not aware of his deep “*eurocentric*” inclinations and Allama Jafari has realized this bias when the question of Eurocentrism was not an issue within academic social sciences in 60s. (1966: 203) However, Allama Jafari seems not having found the right concept to describe the Russellian “*eurocentric*” dedication.

## **Religion and the Question of Nihilism**

In the *Russell-Wyatt Dialogue* the question of religion in relation to existential concerns was raised by Wyatt and the subsequent ponderings of Sir Russell is of great perennial significance which compelled Allama Jafari to take issue with what he terms as the *paradox of nihilism* (Jafari, 1966: 205-208). If faith is considered as the inner roadmap which without one feels that the insurmountable burden of life would be agonizing then what would be the answer of Sir Bertrand Russell and Allama Jafari respectively to this question?

The Russellian approach would be that people who feel like that

... are not aware that the cause of their feeling is a kind of fear ... which in other fields of life it is despicable ... but because in this case the fear is ascribed to religious issues then one excuses her/himself by arguing that this is not fear but dread of an existential kind ...

so it is not contemptible ... but a noble act. In whatever manner described I cannot appreciate fear as in any sense it is appalling in my view (1966: 206).

In other words, religion as a category is rooted in fear and there is no need to sooth the pain of search for existential meaningfulness by clinging to an archaic form of meaning-system such as religion when there are more advanced forms of science and philosophy. I think this is the spirit of Russellian approach towards religion as a whole which imbues the very spirit of his philosophical stance which is eloquently expressed in his classical *history of western philosophy* (Russell, 1946) and glimpses of that spirit is evident in certain passages of *Russell-Wyatt Dialogue*. On the other hand, one needs to inquire about the philosophical position of Allama Jafari in regard to this question.

He weds the question of meaning to religion and the absence of the latter as the essential step towards the loss of the former. In other words, if the adventurous life of human being which is fraught with great many breathtaking events

... is not relied upon faith then ... .. the very life in all its complexity would turn meaningless. This is an important issue which has been emphasized by great many scholars [of East and West] ... (1966: 206).

The second issue which constitutes the very backbone of Jafarian approach is the critique which he leveled against the Russellian view on religion. In Allama Jafari's view,

... Sir Bertrand Russell has neither in these dialogues nor in other occasions explicated clearly his definition of religion ... . In other words, Russell does not clarify what kind of religiosity is intertwined with the element of fear in human life? To put it otherwise, Russell does not say what kind of religion leads towards fear as in my view [the best example of] religion is Islam. In the kind of Islam [which I have understood based on my reading] there is no trace of fear involved in the constitution of faith. On the contrary, Islam is an [intellectual system] which encourages people to participate in social life in an active form ... the question of education is compulsory for any Muslim ... Muslims should be concerned about the welfare of their own society in a fundamental fashion ... and finally a Muslim is a person who has a deep sense of duty towards others ... . Anybody who does not care about these moral, ethical, social, political and religious issues then s/he has not understood the spirit of religion of Islam (1966: 207).

By stating these issues Allama Jafari attempts to refute the Russellian claim that religion is an act of obscurantism or the Russellian thesis that religion for its institutionalization instills a sense of fear in its adherents as in Russellian reading the main argument is that there is no intelligible element within the universal category of religion. In other words, the Jafarian approach is a respond to the Russellian thesis that the rise of religion is equal to the decline of reason and the growth of reason would entail the disappearance of religion in all its forms and modalities. Having said these

issues, as a student of comparative philosophy and social theory one needs to know that it seems here Allama Jafari has missed a very important point in the Russellian approach. Of course, this is not to argue that the Russellian critique on religion is justified as Russell has focused solely upon the oppressive dimensions of religion in the course of human history without realizing the emancipative aspects of religion. To rephrase the question one could problematize that in what sense has Allama Jafari missed the point in regard to the Russellian approach?

When we talk about an intellectual life it should not be forgotten that any intellectual pursuit is mainly comprehensible when it is contextualized in the frame of an “intellectual tradition”. In my reading of Allama Jafari in regard to Russell’s critique of religion, I have noted that Allama Jafari has not worked on the question of tradition which Russell belonged to, i.e. the Enlightenment Tradition.

In other words, Russell’s sentiment as far as “science” and “religion” or “morality” is concerned is a *typical modernist* sentiment which favors science over against religion and dissociates the former from morality by confining the dimensions of morality to the realm of “individual discernment” without any connection to the “First Principles” or “Metaphysical Canopy”.<sup>3</sup> (Levenson, 1984: 180) By neglecting this fact, it seems that Allama Jafari is not *talking to* Russell but *talking by* Russell. In the Enlightenment Tradition, there is an ideological conception of “religion” (i.e. Christianity as its frame of reference or yardstick) which views religiosity as a negative byproduct of the past. Allama Jafari has not been able to distill this ideological background in Russell’s worldview which could have assisted Allama Jafari in his critical engagement with the modernist discourse, in general, and Russell, in particular. For example, when Russell talks about the “divine intervention” and the pitfalls of this theological attitude within the parameters of *post-Christian negative theology* in the occidental context, the Jafarian approach (1966: 207-211) demonstrates clearly the detrimental effect of taking an intellectual out of her/his context. This problem is conceptualized as “fallacy of quoting out of context” within philosophical literatures when the spirit of dialog is not considered in a very serious fashion due to inherent incommunicability state of paradigms, namely when two persons or two traditions are unable to engage when the necessary means are absent inherently in either paradigm or tradition. This practice is termed as contextomy. It refers to the selective excerpting of words from their original linguistic context in a way that distorts the source’s intended meaning, a practice commonly referred to as “quoting out of context”. The problem here is not the removal of a quote from its original context *per se*, but the very fact that one disregards the spirit of the author that lies behind the lines.<sup>4</sup>

## Revelation and Intellect

Within the course of human history the relation between revelation and reason has taken many different ups and downs in terms of the *principle of priority*, i.e. which one of these poles is crucial over against the other. Is the revelation the key to understand the human existence or the reason? On this question, I have come to understand that we have at least five key positions in the history of ideas. I shall briefly mention these positions and then move to the positions of Allama Jafari and Sir Bertrand Russell respectively and finally explicate the underlying problems which have been instrumental in this incommensurable context of dialogue between these two towering figures of philosophy in the twentieth century.

The first position belongs to thinkers and theologians who argue that revelational conceptualization of reality takes precedence over intellectual conceptualization of *leben*, i.e. the gamut of reason should be defined within the parameters set by revelation. The second position belongs to intellectuals and philosophers who endorse an intellectual conceptualization of reality by arguing that the substantial significance of revelation should be determined by reason as the latter is not solely an instrument but a source of knowledge. The third standpoint belongs to authors who argue that there is a conflict between reason and revelation and this twain shall never meet. In this reading, the substantial dimension of religion is not recognized as the proponents of this perspective believe that there is no *cognitive significance* within the parameters of religion as a category. The fourth point of view belongs to thinkers, philosophers, theologians and mystics who argue for the compatibility of revelational and intellectual conceptualization of reality in all its dimensions and aspects. Within this paradigm the revelational reading of horizontal and vertical dimensions of existence is in accordance to intellectual conceptualization and vice versa. The fifth stance belongs to thinkers and writers who argue that the revelational and intellectual frameworks are two different ways of looking at reality which posit distinctly incomparable conditions. In other words, it could be concluded that we are faced with five ideal-types: 1. superiority of reason over revelation; 2. superiority of revelation over reason; 3. compatibility of reason and revelation; 4. contrast of reason and revelation; and 5. contradiction of reason and revelation.

If these are the broad positions within the history of ideas then where should we position the Russellian and Jafarian perspectives? In my reading I have come to realize that they differ fundamentally on revelation and reason and this metaphysical difference has demonstrated itself on various issues, in general, and on the cognitive significance of religion, in particular. Allama Jafari argues that

I believe that humanity is equipped with two significant sources of cognition ... .. i.e.

revelation and intellect. Based on these two sources ... .. humankind is able to distinguish between truth and falsity ... everywhere and anytime ... .. and by the aid of revelation and sound reason ... .. humanity is capable to establish a truthful life for themselves (1966: 214).

This is the tradition which Allama Jafari belongs to, i.e. where “intellect” and “revelation” has been reconciled in the complimentary fashion proposed by Alfarabi. (Corbin, 1993) Now we should turn to Sir Bertrand Russell and the position upheld by him. Where does he stand in regard to this question? Earlier we mentioned that the tradition where Russell comes from is broadly described as the Enlightenment Tradition which does not assign any cognitive significance for religion as an intellectual category. As a matter fact, within this tradition the history of human mentalité is divided into three broad stages of 1. the theological stage; 2. the metaphysical stage; and 3. the positive stage. (Giddens, 1974) Within this paradigm, the category of religion has no crucial locus within the present positive stage. Besides, one should add that Sir Russell is one of the founding fathers of Analytic Philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which was a reaction against Absolute Idealism<sup>5</sup> (Ayer, 1971). Within this tradition, the pioneering scholars such as Sir Bertrand Russell tended to avoid the study of religion, largely dismissing (as per the logical positivists’ view) the subject as part of metaphysics and therefore meaningless.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, in accordance to our analytical scheme Sir Bertrand Russell fits very neatly within the fifth category where there is a diametrical contradiction between reason and revelation which compels Russell to disregard wholeheartedly the very category of religion from his philosophical sphere of concern. If we assume that the intellectual kernel of religion is of metaphysical nature then we can easily discern why Russell time and again refutes any cognitive importance which repeatedly is attached to the same category by Allama Jafari along his dialogues.

To put it otherwise, in terms of the relation between reason and intellect, it could be stated that the Russellian theory is one of contradiction while the Jafarian approach is one of complementarity. The distinction between these two approaches and the pivotal significance of religion in the Jafarian approach and the irrelevant position of religion in the Russellian paradigm has put an indelible trace in their respective weltanschauungs as well as philosophical standpoints on fundamental questions of universal significance such as freedom, being, existence, life, death, God, religion, meaning, metaphysic, afterlife, time and so on and so forth.

## **The Roots of Religion**

In Russell’s view religion as a cognitive system is meaningless and due to this

analytical fact then religion as a category within human life both in its individual dimensions and collective aspects has played a destructive role in the arduous course of human history. However, here one question may arise and that is why does religion frequently appear in human social life? In other words, if religion is detrimental then why does humanity insist on having a religion? This is the question which Wyatt asked Sir Bertrand Russell and his answers raised Allama Jafari's eyebrows in a serious fashion. Allama Jafari thinks that the Russellian reply is inconsistent with what he has told earlier. For instance, when Wyatt asked Russell about the cause of suicide among Swedes in despite of their affluent state of affairs the response given by Russell seems to contradict what he states here. In answering Wyatt's question here, Sir Bertrand Russell states that

... the insistence on sticking to religion is not the act of humanity but the acts of few among human race. The reason this minority is deeply attached to religion is due to habit ... (1966: 233).

If inclination towards religion is of "habitual type" then why Russell argues that the high rate of suicide among Swedes is

... because they are not restricted in their lifestyles by religion (1966: 233-234).

Besides, Russell in his *A History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1946) states clearly that when one looks for a synonym to sound reason then science is the best equivalent but humanity is in profound need of "enthusiasm", "zeal", "zest", "art" and "religion" (Russell quoted by Jafari, 1966: 234).

Allama Jafari argues that when we put these statements next to each other we can firstly realize that Russell is inconsistent as far as religion is concerned and secondly religion

... is so deeply rooted in the soil of human soul that it could endow upon humanity an accurate meaning of life ... .. and in this way it could prevent us from committing suicide ... .. (1966: 234).

In other words, if religion is of habitual nature and this is ascribable to minority among human race then why does Russell explain the phenomenon of suicide among Swedes by reference to ethereal presence of religion in Sweden? Isn't this an argument for the importance of religion in the psychological makeup of human existence? In addition, if we agree that a fulfilled life is not solely consisted of dry scientific ethos then if religion along with art and other issues could enliven human existence therefore we cannot assume that religion is a meaningless system. Because Russell admits that a life based on dry scientific ethos will not be fulfilling humanly then something which

can bring fulfillment into the existence of human universe it could not be meaningless. On the contrary, it should contain one of the highest systems of meaningfulness which has not been realized by analytical philosophers à la Russell. This is what Allama Jafari was trying to argue vis-à-vis Sir Bertrand Russell.

Another important issue in relation to religion is the future role of religion. Russell believes that

... it ... .. depends very much on how successful people are in overcoming their social problems ... (1966: 234).

In Allama Jafari's view, this answer clearly demonstrates that

... religion is fundamentally rooted in the soil of societies ... (1966: 234).

In other words, Allama Jafari argues that Russell is not consistent when, on the one hand, he states that religion is a "habitual phenomenon" and, on the other hand, he believes that religion has a social origin. This is a contradictory approach to one and the same problem. Either religion is of habitual origin or of social origin (Jafari, 1966: 242).

However this is a very paradoxical problematique which may not support Allama Jafari's reading of Russell's approach to the question of religion and social problems. For instance, Karl Marx argued that

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation (Marx, 2012).

The esoteric nature of the quote has led to some confusion among social theorists and philosophers, who are divided as to whether Marx was speaking in favor of or against organized religion. Though Marx does state that religion is "the heart of a heartless world," and that "the demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions", which could be taken to mean that religion is a necessary component of society, true or false.

In other words, one could read Russell in this sense that if the situation which conditions the existence of religion is changed then religion would disappear and this is not how Allama Jafari has understood Russell in terms of religion and social problems. Nonetheless one could see that behind the arguments proposed by Allama Jafari and Sir Bertrand Russell there are deep-seated assumptions which need to be spelled out in an unambiguous fashion. Otherwise, we will not be able to understand the core questions which may have caused misunderstandings between the proponents of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. It is not an exaggeration that one of the main tasks of comparative philosophy is to delineate these difficult problematiques which are not spelled out but assumed in the *backyard* of background

assumptions in an implicit fashion. Of course, it is not always certain that one could agree on all aspects but the purpose of dialogue is not accepting all that the other holds dear but expecting that the other has the ear to listen to arguments put forward in a sympathetic fashion.

### **Religion and Philosophical Inquiry**

How should the emergence of religion be interpreted? Is religion an offshoot of magic or a precursor to the scientific mentalité? Is religiosity an outcome of fear or a sign of neurosis? Is religion rooted in the soil of society or a heavenly tradition?<sup>7</sup> All these questions and many other queries of these kinds have been put forward by various philosophers, social thinkers, psychologists, theologians and historians as well as mystics who have been concerned about the quiddity and role of religion in the constitution of self and society both as a worldly matter and otherworldly problematique. Sir Bertrand Russell and Allama Jafari had wrestled with these questions too and each had tried to craft reasonable answers to these perennial queries based on their respective intellectual paradigms which should be understood in terms of their larger intellectual traditions. If these intellectual traditions which make up the fabrics of these thinkers' intellectual systems are not taken into considerations then their differences would be reduced to important (as far as the context of discovery is concerned) but irrelevant (as far as the context of justification is concerned) geographical or ideological indices. Both of these philosophers were, unlike postmodernist philosophers, concerned about the question of veracity *sui generis*. In other words, Sir Bertrand Russell and Allama Jafari were public intellectuals in the truest sense of the word by being concerned about the cultural forms and contours of people outside the circles of experts. In this sense, one of those factors which influences the public sanity negatively (Sir Bertrand Russell) or positively (Allama Jafari) is the question of religion which in their respective views should not be left alone as its involvement is of a comprehensive fashion. On this latter account both philosophers seem to agree upon the unconstructively (Sir Bertrand Russell) and constructively (Allama Jafari) unique role of religion in the constitution of human civilizations. Why does humanity incline towards religion? Russell is of the view that

... .. calamities are the underlying factors behind the fondness of religion among human beings ... .. (1966: 248).

On the other hand, we have the view proposed by Allama Jafari who argues that religion cannot be explained by external factors as the cause of religion is embedded

within the textures of existence. In other words, the origin of religion is the existential questions of

Whence have I come? Where have I come? Why have I come? Where am I heading to?  
... (1966: 248).

As long as these essentially challenging questions are not answered

... religion with its deep root that has within human life ... shall remain attractive for humanity at large ... Unless we can prove that these questions should not be asked ... but how can we extinguish the fire within the soul of human persons who have been asking these questions since the time immemorial? One may argue that science may answer these questions in the “future” but the burning questions of existential nature could not be postponed to an unknown future which may never arrive ... (1966: 248).

In other words, the fondness of religion could not be reduced to any other external phenomenon as the questions which are harbored within the fabric of religion originate from the very “ground of existence”. However this *existential ground* should be fathomed in the fashion which is conceptualized by Allama Jafari who seems to be inventing an alternative to the Russellian *theory of calamity* as the basis of religious attachment. What is the “ground of existence”? In accordance to Allama Jafari,

... phenomena which constitute ... the general aspects of human existence could be divided broadly into two distinct but interrelated parts: 1. The permanent phenomena and 2. The transitory phenomena ... (1966: 248).

## **The Permanent Phenomena**

In Allama Jafari’s view, the permanent phenomena

... are those kinds of facts which constitute the inalienable dimensions of human reality which are not changeable along the course of time in the real sense ... examples are abundant but here few are enumerated in order to highlight the point in a clear fashion: 1. The interest to continue life in accordance to one’s delight; 2. Utilitarian nature of human self which is, in general, the cause of many conflicts among human beings; ...; 3. ... 4. The makeup of human brain compels one to be curious about the nature of reality and life in general (1966: 249).

## **The Transitory Phenomena**

In Allama Jafari’s point of view, the transitory phenomena

... are those kinds of occurrences ... that their reality is dependent on different factors which ... may change by the passing of time and transformation along the course of human history ... Examples are plentiful but here few could be spelled out

briefly in order to make clear the point under debate: 1. The scope of human knowledge in relation to the external world and the current events within the gamut of reality; 2. The quality and the quantity of natural exploitation/utilization/management/deployment by human being; 3. The determination/designation of legal/economical/political contracts ... . In general, most of instances of permanent principles of human significance could be considered as transitory phenomena. For instance, the type of life led by a caveman is different from the life during agricultural era in terms of factors and outcomes ... .. but both are similar in terms of the general phenomenon of the survival instinct ... the same applies to forms of good and evil, felicity and misfortune, justice and injustice and so on and so forth ... .. the forms of these examples have no permanent realities ... .. and as a matter of fact they change along the course of time with different and infinite characteristics ... .. (1966: 249).

### Criterion of Distinction

By refuting the calamity as the foundation of religion, Allama Jafari attempts to argue that religion should be treated as a permanent category which has deep roots within the soil of human leben. However there is a question which is unavoidable and that is what aspects of religion should be taken as permanent and impermanent? In other words, what is the criterion of distinction? How could one distinguish between the permanent dimensions of reality and the temporary aspects of life? Because this is the high point of Jafarian critique of Russell which enabled the former to rebuke the latter in regard to the very category of religion which was treated as an epiphenomenon by Russell without attaching any essential significance for “religious sensibility”. Allama Jafari argues that

... as far as we can appraise ... .. based on scientific analyses, philosophical inquiries and also observable realities in the external world ... .. it is possible to catalogue certain phenomena as permanent in contrast to impermanent things but we haven't yet found any universal law that could enable us to distinguish between these two different kinds of phenomena ... (1966: 250).

To put it otherwise, self-evidently we can realize the distinction between transitory and non-transitory phenomena but intersubjectively we have not found any criterion for stating the principle of distinction in a universal fashion. However, Allama Jafari believes that

... the absence of intersubjective formulation of such a principle should not deter us from neglecting the immense importance of this question ... (1966: 250).

Here Allama Jafari seems to move beyond the field of philosophy by relinquishing *reasonable demonstration* and resorting to *informative lecturing* or *rhetorical preaching* which is popular in the philosophical climate of Iran where

religious and philosophical discourses have become intertwined in a systematic fashion. In other words, the Russellian approach seems inadequate in ascribing the emergence of religion to calamity but the Jafarian approach has not overcome the problem either as far as the “principle of distinction” is concerned. Russell does not attach any essential significance for religion as a category and that’s why he ascribes its emergence to an external accident based on archaeological reading of history of humankind within the frame of evolutionary theory. But this is not the way how Allama Jafari reads religion as a universal category. In his Bergsonian reading of human history, Allama Jafari argues that

... we know of societies in the past or present that may not know of science, technology and philosophy but there is no human society on the face of the planet earth... .. without having a religion (1966: 235).

In other words, the universal significance of religion is beyond any reasonable doubt and this universality enables Allama Jafari to argue vehemently that there is a

... foundation for religion which based on observation of external realities ... .. leads us to assume that ... .. religion belongs to the category of permanent phenomena ... .. (1966: 251).

To put it differently, Allama Jafari views the foundation of religion in essential terms which is not reducible to any other indicator (social, historical, psychological or genetical) and this view is in diametrical opposition to Sir Bertrand Russell’s perspective that regards religion as an epiphenomenon which could disappear when the contingent *raison d’être* of religion shall vanish “out there”, i.e. fear, calamity, ignorance, power (of certain people who insist on keeping religion) and so on and so forth.

## **The Global Future of Religion**

Is there any conceivable future for religion possible? To answer this question one needs to clarify one’s epistemological theory and ontological assumptions in regard to human being as well as the nature of reality in its ontic meaning. As far as the question of religion in the worlds and works of Allama Jafari and Sir Bertrand Russell is concerned the religion has a complex future which its survival depends on various factors. To be certain, there is a deep disagreement between these two philosophers’ views on the global future of religion which incidentally form the background assumptions of the present course of politics of religion in East and West and additionally informs the nature of variety of conflicts between different interest groups regionally and globally. Of course, I don’t mean that Russell and Jafari are responsible

for these global courses of actions in Euro-Atlantic and Islamic worlds but their distinct approaches to religion seem to have very deep civilizational grounds which could not be disregarded simplistically.

In Russell's view, religion has a social basis which affects one's course of social actions. If human beings are able to overcome

... their social problems then religion would annihilate ... .. but on the other hand, if they cannot solve their social problems then ... .. religion would not disappear as we have had many instances in the history in France and Russia during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (1966: 241).

Nevertheless Allama Jafari does not share the Russellian view and instead argues that religion belongs to the permanent category which may be transformed formally but

... its ground seems to be unshakeable ... .. because even for ordinary people the foundation of religion may be grounded on certain deteriorating propositions ... .. but for others, ... religion is the outcome of an inner necessary emotion and ... .. the absolute reason embedded in the textures of reality ... .. (1966: 252).

In other words, the future of religion is not solely related to the state of the "social" but it is connected to the existential state of human being as an ontic reality which could not be treated epiphenomenally. Because religion is an attempt to provide seismic answers for four perennial questions of

Whence have I come? Where have I come? Why am I here in the world? Where am I heading to? (1966: 252).

The future of religion is intertwined with the question of meaning. As Professor Buik Mohammadi<sup>8</sup> argues, even when the social problems are solved the religion shall remain as certain questions such as "death", "meaning of life", and "problem of existence" are not exclusively dependent on social indices. Humans have always pondered upon the mystery of life because *it* could have not existed but *it is* and this *isness* poses itself a question. This question arises from the very ground of existence and could not be reduced to any other aspect of reality as Russell seems to do so. As it was stated earlier there are no universal criteria for distinguishing between the permanent and impermanent dimensions of *leben* but we can deduce from various instances in the texture of life certain parameters which could enable us to draw some tentative conclusions. Allama Jafari argues that

... the cosmic consciousness and the imperative four perennial questions ... .. have been part of human existence since the Stone Age ... .. up to this very age and as a matter of fact these modalities have been among the most permanent dimensions of psychological makeup of human existence ... . In other words, on these accounts one

can see no difference between humanity in the Stone Age and now in this century ... (1966: 252).

To put it otherwise, the religious modality and the curious mentality of human person have changed in formal aspects but in substantial dimensions we are what we have been always. However, the distinguished philosophers have not

... paid due attention to the very importance of this question that we need to have a grounded criterion in distinguishing between the permanent and impermanent phenomena ... . To put it differently; it is not clear the damage brought about by thinkers such as Schopenhauer who argue that for knowing human being one needs to study the Herodotus' history carefully as human being is the same in all places and all times except in terms of form and appearance ... (1966: 250).

In other words, the question is not as simple as Schopenhauer has imagined as the distinction between the permanent and impermanent phenomena is a very complex problematique which has not been clarified conceptually in an intellectual fashion. However this is not equal to neglect the very question as such due to the very importance which "principle of distinction" has for Allama Jafari in his quest for the global future of religion. To put it otherwise, although Allama Jafari disagrees with modernist thinkers on various questions of importance such as universality of truth, accessibility of reasonable argument, necessity of intellect, compatibility of reason and revelation, eternity of soul and many other issues nevertheless this does not mean that he embraces the postmodern paradigm of constructivism. On the contrary, Allama seems to applaud Russell's yearning for truthful account of reality but diverge from the Russellian incompatibility thesis on revelation and reason due to his philosophical commitment to **Alpharabiusian Paradigm** where religion is conceived as a symbolic rendering of truth.

## Note

1. See for instance, Russell's position on the detrimental effects of religion on human society and the comments by Allama Jafari where the latter argues that it is a pity that Russell has not engaged with Islam which is not an otherworldly directed religion like Christianity. (Jafari, 1966. 202) It seems Allama Jafari cannot conceive that the category of religion is perceived in a negative fashion by Russell and in this sense there is no difference between Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, Russell tends to neglect systematically the fact that religion as a category could function in an emancipative fashion. In other words, this is an example of what I termed as incommensurability of philosophical paradigms of Russell and Jafari which should be taken into consideration very seriously by students of comparative philosophy.
2. The logical consequence of the critique of Eurocentrism in the social sciences is the development of alternative concepts and theories in social sciences and the development

of autonomous research agendas and so on. The critique of Orientalism and Eurocentrism in the social sciences is widespread. It is well-known and many works have been written but the emergence of alternatives is not as widespread and even less widespread is the implementation of these alternatives in teaching. So, "what I want to do today is to suggest how the critique of Eurocentrism in the social sciences can actually be implemented in teaching in the social sciences and reflected in the teaching of the social sciences. Before doing that it is necessary to define what we mean by Eurocentrism because that is also a problem in the sense that the term is often used but with different definitions. So, I am using Eurocentrism in the following way. I am referring to Eurocentrism in terms of four traits. The first trait is the Subject-Object dichotomy. This is what you find when you read histories of the social sciences or textbooks in the various social sciences. The Subject- Object dichotomy is a pervasive theme. Europeans are the knowing subjects and to the extent that non-Europeans figure in these accounts, they are Objects of analysis but not sources of ideas and concepts. That is basically the issue. For example, a scholar like Ibn Khaldun has topic of much research and study but rarely used as a source for the development of concepts and theories that can be used to develop a Khaldunian Theory of Society or State Formation or what-have-you. There are many studies of non-Western thinkers but not as sources of ideas and concepts. So that is the Subject-Object dichotomy. The second characteristic of Eurocentrism is the placing of Europeans in the foreground. In the teaching of sociology and many other social sciences, you have generally Europeans that are discussed even when it comes to the history of a particular discipline. If you take the example of economics, you have an interesting case of Dadabhai Naoroji's The Drain Theory. He is never discussed in economic textbooks in the West. And to the extent that he is discussed, he is discussed by non-economists. For e.g. in the course that I taught on Development Sociology, we discussed many of these Third World thinkers as precursors of ideas that emerged in the west. So this fore-grounding of Europeans in the presentation of the History of Ideas or the history of a discipline is another trait of Eurocentrism in social sciences. Related to this trait is the third, the idea of Europeans as originators. Europeans are generally regarded and written about as originators of various social sciences, even in cases where you have obviously important scholars from other parts of the world who should be considered as important precursors. To their credit, and I would like to give the example of Ibn Khaldun again, the earlier generation of scholars in the west around the turn of the century did give some credit to Ibn Khaldun. There are a few histories of sociology which gave a lot of prominence to Ibn Khaldun and even regard Ibn Khaldun as the founder of certain theoretical orientations such as Conflict theory. Some European scholars such as Gumplovich and Oppenheimer, writing around the turn of the century, in the early part of the 20th century, were not economical in their praise of Ibn Khaldun and took him seriously. But this lasted for a generation or so and later generations in the west did not pay much attention to Ibn Khaldun and almost ignored him in fact. The same can be said about other social thinkers from other parts of the Third World. For me what is the most important characteristic of Eurocentrism is the dominance of European categories and concepts. I would like to give one example - but this is pervasive in the social sciences - the concept of religion. It shows and exemplifies how backwards the

social sciences are. In this way, we, in the so-called South are complicit. The whole notion or concept of religion is derived from the Latin and when it came to be applied to Christianity it took on Christian characteristics and for most of the history of the concept of religion or 'religio', it applied to Christianity and the term was not used for other belief systems that we now called religion, for example, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, etc. were never referred to as religion. Hinduism, in particular, was referred to, as late as the 17th century, as heathenism. I remember reading some Dutch accounts in the Dutch encyclopedias, of the Netherlands-Indies, where Hinduism is referred to as heathenism. It is only in the 19th century where the term religion becomes applied to what we now call the various religions but even then, what you have, is a Christian understanding of these religions. What I mean is the characteristics of religion are understood in Christian terms.

When Islam is said to be a religion, characteristics of Christianity are read into Islam. So you have a hidden intellectual Christianization of other religions. In a sense this was the process going on in India when the Europeans encountered Indian religions, they imagined that the various belief systems that you had in India are all part of a single entity which they regarded as Hinduism and the various belief systems that Indians themselves may have seen as separate entities in the 8th to 10th century were then regarded by the Europeans as sects within a larger single entity. So here you have a kind of intellectual Christianization of other belief systems. This intellectual Christianization took a concrete form when the colonial bureaucracy came to work and organizations were set up to manage temples, e.g. the Hindu Endowment Board and these bureaucracies tended to concretize, to make a reality, what was imagined in the mind. We can talk about the intellectual Christianization of Islam. Islam, for a long period in Europe, was seen as Christian heresy so it is read in terms of Christianity and therefore judged in terms of Christianity. Hence the expression 'Mohamedanism' which is a parallel of Christianity but of course since Mohamed was not a true messenger of God, it was heresy. In every field in the social sciences, you will find this problem of the dominance of European categories and concepts and what is crucial is the study of the manner in which these concepts are problematic and dominate. An example of this study is the whole issue of the hidden intellectual Christianization of religion. Now if you pick up any textbook, particularly in sociology, philosophy or anthropology of religion, you will get this strange use of concepts. In Anthony Gideon's textbook on sociology, there is a chapter on religion and there is a table on church attendance. There only problem in this table is the church attendance of all religions – church attendance in Islam, in Hinduism, in Buddhism. So here you are applying a term 'church' and along with that denomination, sect, cult, etc. to other religions, giving the impression that 'church' is to Christianity, as temple is to Hinduism, as mosque is to Islam. This is just an example. You will find this problem everywhere in social sciences and we have not been studying these problems, for the most part, in a serious manner. The crux, the key to the development of non-Eurocentric discourse or counter-Eurocentric discourse is at the conceptual level, not at the level of identifying new topics of research or referring to non-European authors and so on. It's at the level of conceptualization. There are some other traits of Eurocentrism which I discussed but I won't get into them. For me, the goal of teaching is to reverse Eurocentrism by turning these traits

of Eurocentrism on the head. So when you talk about the Subject-Objection dichotomy, what we need to do when we teach for example, the history of the ideas of sociology, is to foreground non-western social thinkers. What we should do is to look at non-western thinkers, not simply as objects of analysis. We should not be only interested in their biography and where they lived and mention a few ideas that they contributed but we should develop theoretical frameworks and concepts from their work and apply them empirically, to the empirical study of any phenomenon. When we talk about the history of ideas, we should therefore reverse the Subject-Object dichotomy. We should put these thinkers in the foreground. We should recognize their rightful place in the history of ideas. For our students do not know the significant role that Ibn Khaldun played in the constitution of human sciences and humanities. Even if mention is made of him, they think there were one or two interesting ideas but it is really proto-sociology and not real sociology. People are not even aware that European thinkers in the late 19th century took him very seriously and regarded him as a giant and did not simply pay lip service to him. The whole idea of doing this is to start a process in which non-European concepts and categories get into the social sciences, not to displace western concepts, but to bring them into the social sciences and where possible have a merger between western and nonwestern concepts. For example, if one wants to talk about a Khaldunian theory of the rise of the Safavid Empire of Iran, Ibn Khaldun has useful concepts. For e.g. *Asabiya*, which enables you to conceptualize the cohesion among tribes, which were involved in the formation of the Safavid empire. But Ibn Khaldun has no notion of an economic system. It is possible to use ideas from Marx's *Mode of Production* or Weber's *Notion of Pre-Bendel Feudalism* to conceptualize the Safavid economic system. So here you have economic integration of ideas. We don't care where they come from. The thing is we don't want is to say that the only source of ideas is the west. Neither, obviously, do we want to throw the baby out with the bath water but we want to say that other civilizations like the Muslims, etc. are important repositories of knowledge, of concepts and ideas and not just literature, folklore and music. Therefore the question is, in the face of Eurocentrism, how do we bring non-European ideas and concepts into the mainstream? I talk about 7 ways, one of which has to do with Teaching. For example, conducting discussions at the method level, the theoretical level—looking at the methodological and the logical assumptions of the works of non-western scholars such as Ibn Khaldun. In the western social sciences, one way in which the ideas of thinkers gain acceptance and gain a certain permanence in the history of a discipline is through constant continuous discussions on their methods and their epistemology, their logical assumptions and so on and so forth. You create a body of knowledge that firmly roots them in their discipline. There also should be exposition and analysis of the theories and views at the empirical level of the various non-western thinkers. There also should be attempts to build new theories from their ideas. It's not good enough to describe the views of Ibn Khaldun or Al Biruni or Naoroji. What theory-building can we engage in, taking off from their ideas? Since we are talking about teaching, I would like to tell you what I did with a colleague of mine in Singapore. My colleague Vinita Sinha who is an anthropologist from India and I, have been teaching this module, on *Classical Sociological Theory* for a few years. One day

we decided why are we only talking about this whole critique of Eurocentrism all the time, let's implement it in the course. Up to then we had been teaching Marx, Weber, Durkheim, the same way the course is taught in Delhi University, Dhaka University, University of Jordan, University of Tehran and a few other universities around the world, What we decided is that we're not going to kick out Marx, Weber and Durkheim but we're going to introduce alongside some thinkers who lived in the same period as Marx, Weber and Durkheim, who were non-white and non-male because our position was that there was not only a Eurocentric bias but also an androcentric bias in the teaching of social theory. So we introduced Ibn Khaldun, Binoy Kumar Sarkar, Jose Vidal and we are planning to introduce some marginalized 19th century Russian thinkers, the thought of Alfred Weber, the brother of Marx Weber, who is also marginalized in sociology. We are for marginalized people, white or black. We are for the underdog, white or black. Apart from introducing the non-western thinkers, and the non-male thinkers, we also give a particular focus on the western thinkers. In the usual sociological theory course on Marx for example, what is focused on is the usual themes, the alienation, the labour theory of value, the pauperization thesis and so on. In our module, while we discuss these issues, we also bring in those topics which are not usually discussed in a typical north American-based syllabus, for example Marx's views on India, on colonisation, the Asiatic mode of production, Marx's statements for colonisation of Algeria even though he was critical of the British conduct in Ireland. So we talked about Weber's views on Islam, Hinduism, on Judaism, topics which are generally excluded from the basic sociological theory course in the west and topics which would only be discussed if there is a course on Islam. But we are saying that this has to be brought into the mainstream sociological theory courses. Our argument is that there are many important ideas in these western thinkers but in order to salvage these ideas, they need to be separated out from these Eurocentric and biased ideas. Similarly, we bring alongside these thinkers, the non-western thinkers and do not simply pay lip service to them and be condescending to them but that these people were serious students of society and they had an impact and their ideas are still relevant for the study of the present. We need to begin to extract their ideas from the context in which they wrote and lived and develop modern theories. There is the example of Ibn Khaldun. Al Biruni is another example. He was an amazing person. In fact he is an important person, a major source, Indian or non-Indian, for the study of the religion of Indians in that period. A proper study or contribution to the sociology of religion or the anthropology of religion would be to look at the concept of religion in the Latin Christian tradition, the concept of Deen in Islam, the concept of Dharma or Sampradaya in the Indian tradition and so on. Then you can come up with a concept of religion. You cannot come up with a concept of religion if you stay or confine yourself to the Latin Christian tradition. This has not been done for the most part. Pick up any textbook and you will find that it simply applies the Latin concept of 'religio' to other religions. It is basically a flawed way as far as concept formation and theory building is concerned. If you just take the concept of religion as an example, you will see the depth of the problem. And in every field in sociology and the social sciences, you have problems at this conceptual level. There are also other ways to bring non-western sociology into teaching. Teaching alone is not enough. We

have to be aggressive in terms of organizing conferences on these themes and topics at mainstream conferences to expose these ideas to others. We have to be aggressive in terms of publishing not only in our own journals and publications but also in mainstream journals and also in various languages even though we are not going to be rewarded for publishing in our own language because our own language periodicals are not international referee journals and publishing there is not going to get me promoted. But we should sacrifice a little bit. We can do both. And we need to cite each other and stop being proud, saying, I do not want to cite this person because I do not like the comment he made about me in such and such conference. We have to find out what each other's works are about. This is a problem because in Malaysia and Indonesia, people do not cite each other. They cite North American, Australian, British authors and not each other's works. I want to end on a point on self-criticism. I would like to refer to two works which discuss in a succinct manner the problem of reverse-orientalism. There is the work by Sadiq al Azam, a Syrian scholar, on orientalism in reverse, published in the '80s and a work by John Lee, a Korean sociologist of Japan, where he talks about Japanese sociology, using the interesting term 'auto orientalism'. There are problems in efforts to create indigenous or indigenised or de-colonised sociology. There are extremes to which they go so we have to be mindful of these problems in order to avoid them." (Alatas, 2010) Although this was a lengthy quote but it is worth reading it due to the importance of the critique leveled by one of the most sophisticated social theorists in the 21st century.

3. The term "metaphysical canopy" is borrowed from Levenson (1984, 180) where he reflects over Russell, James and Moore in relation to the question of the "Absolute". Although Levenson has used the term in a negative sense due to the fact that Eliot after publishing his paper in the *Monist* he became suspicious about the metaphysics altogether. Nevertheless I have employed the term in a descriptive fashion without agreeing with the philosophical inclinations of British analytical thinkers of the early 20th century. On the other hand, I should add that I used the term while I was writing the book without being conscious about Levenson's work. Later on I stumbled upon his work and found out about this debate and came across this concept. Thus I thought it may be useful to add this endnote.
4. The practice of quoting out of context, i.e. "contextomy" or "quote mining", is a logical fallacy and a type of false attribution in which a passage is removed from its surrounding matter in such a way as to distort its intended meaning. However this fallacy could include when there is an incommensurable state of affairs. In this context, it seems we are faced with a classical case of quoting fallacy where the message is not crossed over the distinct paradigms.
5. Some argue that analytic philosophy is not merely a revolt against British Idealism, but it should be seen as a revolt against traditional philosophy on the whole.
6. Of course, it should be mentioned that the collapse of logical positivism renewed interest in philosophy of religion, prompting philosophers like William Alston, John Mackie, Alvin Plantinga, Robert Merrihew Adams, Richard Swinburne, and Antony Flew not only to introduce new problems, but to re-open classical topics such as the nature of miracles, theistic

arguments, the problem of evil, the rationality of belief in God, concepts of the nature of God, and many more (Peterson, 2003).

7. The word “tradition” is derived from *tradere* which means “to hand over”. Within the perennial philosophy it is argued that the *logos* has been *handed over* by the “hand of God” to humanity. In other words, this marks a different interpretation of religion as a message of divinity which has no terrestrial origin but a transcendental source.
8. He is a professor in sociology and social theory at the esteemed Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies in Tehran, Iran. We talked about Allama Jafari’s view on Sir Bertrand Russell and he kindly shared his views on Russell. He agrees with Russell on many accounts but on this account he told me that even social problems are solved we would not be freed from existential questions and anxieties. This private talk was held on June 6 2012 at my office at 17.00.

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## **Ontological anxiety among Shii Muslims in Finland: A Case Study of First Generation Immigrants in the City of Tampere**

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on the Shii Muslim community of Iranian, Iraqi and Afghanistani background in Tampere. Tampere is located central Finland, it is the country's third largest city and the center of the Pirkanmaa Region, the second largest population cluster in the country. Tampere has the third largest constituency of immigrants in Finland after the capital (Helsinki and surrounding cities) and the Turku regions. The author analyses the main anxieties of the Shii community in relation to education and work, and looks at the roles of the local Shii mosque community and Finnish welfare state. The analysis suggests that more holistic policies on immigrant integration would be beneficial for lessening the anxieties among the local Shii Muslims. The study is based on qualitative interviews of ten adults and their families living from three to seven years in Tampere.

**Keywords:** Shiism, Muslim Community, Immigration, Integration, Anxiety.

### **Introduction**

Finland is Nordic welfare state and has one highest GNP per capita in the world. In religious terms, the Evangelic Lutheran Church is the majority's religion to which almost 80 per cent of the population belongs, even though religious practice is low as elsewhere in the Nordic countries. While the country has been culturally and religiously rather homogenous, it has during the last decades of the twentieth-century become more diverse (Ketola, 2011). This is in part related to post-cold war immigration, as migrants from around the world have established their lives and traditions also in Finland. Up to twenty per cent of the immigration to Finland since 1990 has consisted of Muslims from various countries, often as refugees from the

conflict ridden areas of the world. The contemporary Shii community of Finland has grown out of these new migrations, even though Finland has had a small Muslim minority since the 1870s (Martikainen 2011a, 2011b).

This chapter focuses on the Shii Muslim community of Iranian, Iraqi and Afghani background in Tampere. Tampere is located central Finland, it is the country's third largest city and the centre of the Pirkanmaa Region, the second largest population cluster in the country. Tampere has the third largest constituency of immigrants in Finland after the capital (Helsinki and surrounding cities) and the Turku regions (Statistics Finland 2011, 26-28). Muslims in the City of Tampere have arrived mainly as UNHCR refugees and independent asylum seekers, but also as marriage migrants, international students and workers. Largest countries of origin are Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia. While the exact number of Muslims in Tampere is unknown, it can be estimated to be some thousand individuals. The few hundred Shii are a minority among local Muslims.

The chapter analyses the main anxieties of the Shii community in relation to education and work, and looks at the roles of the local Shii mosque community and Finnish welfare state. The analysis suggests that more holistic policies on immigrant integration would be beneficial for lessening the anxieties among the local Shii Muslims. The study is based on qualitative interviews of ten adults and their families living from three to seven years in Tampere. The interviews were done in autumn and winter 2011, and were conducted, recorded and transcribed by the author. Further data was retrieved from the Tampere Population Information System and Statistics Finland. The chapter starts with an overview of Muslims in Finland and Tampere. Then it presents its theoretical framework and discusses the anxieties of local Shii Muslims. This is followed by analyses of the roles of the mosque community and the Finnish state. The chapter closes with a discussion and conclusion.

## **Overview of Muslims in Finland and Tampere**

The historical development of Muslim communities Finland is well known in its main characteristics. Settlement of Muslims started after 1808, when Russia annexed Finland (that was a part of Sweden since the thirteenth century) to its empire. Muslim individuals were found in the Russian military and at times they were served by an imam. Permanent settlement is not, however, related to the presence of the imperial army, but to the arrival of so called Tatar Muslims from central Russia in the 1870s. They arrived first as individual peddlers, but soon settled with their families. This migration ended in the 1920s due to the closure of the Soviet borders. The Tatar

community has remained in size under one thousand individuals and lives in a few urban settlements mainly in southern Finland, including the city of Tampere, where they have a small community. The Tatars have created their own community structure and have been officially recognised as a religious entity by the Finnish state since 1925 (Leitzinger 2006). The Tatar organisations remained the only Muslim bodies until 1987, when the first non-Tatar Muslim organisation was registered (Sakaranaho, 2006: 247).

Whereas there was small-scale Muslim migration even after the 1920s, it was not until the turn of the 1990s, when the number of Muslims started to rapidly rise. The largest countries of origin have been Somalia, former Yugoslavia (especially Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina), Iraq, Iran and Turkey, but Muslims have arrived also from several Arab countries, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia. The majority of Muslims live in proximity of the Helsinki capital region, but there is some variation in the geographical distribution of different national groups. Muslims are overrepresented among the poorer segments of society, which is related to their entry as refugees or asylum seekers and low levels of education. Also the lessening need for non-qualified labour in the Finnish labour market has proved to be a hindrance on the social integration of immigrants, as low-skill jobs often function as important entry points to working life for people with few skills in the majority society, including language proficiency. The estimated number of Muslims in Finland was 50,000-60,000 individuals in 2010. The majority of them are first-generation immigrants, but the number of the second-generation is growing. In addition, there are also Finnish converts and the well-settled Tatar Muslims (Martikainen 2011a).

Finnish Muslims have been studied on many different aspects of their lives, including everyday Islam, gender questions, media, organisations and school religious education. Of different ethnic and national groups, Tatars and Somalis have gained the most attention (Sakaranaho 2010). The presence of Shii communities has been noted in many studies (e.g., Martikainen 2004), but only few have focused on them. Harri Rautio's (1998) study on the acculturation profiles of Shi'ites in Turku based on his Master thesis, and Marko Juntunen's (2009) case study of secular Iraqis are the exceptions. The question of anxieties has not been studied as such, even though concerns on integration are common in studies of immigration integration that exist in abundance (for an overview, see: Väänänen et al. 2009).

The development of the Tatar community in Tampere has been presented in a community history (Baibulat 2004), but the contemporary Muslims of Tampere have not been addressed in academic studies. The contemporary Muslim population can from an organisational viewpoint be looked as three distinct groups. First, the local Tatars run the Tampere Islamic Congregation, are few in number, but they have

their own meeting place already since 1910s and an apartment mosque in central Tampere since 1977 (Baibulat 2004, 59). Second, the new local Sunni community is organised in the *Tampere Islamic Society* (in Finnish: *Tampereen Islamin Yhdyskunta*) in 1998. The organisation has a few hundred members and its premises for up to 400 prayer participants are located in central Tampere. The majority of the participants are of immigrant background from several countries (Tampere Islamic Society 2011). Third, the local Shii community is organised around a mosque community that runs a cultural centre outside the central part of the city. The place is shared by an Afghan and Arab (Iraqi) community. The Afghans have had their own imam, whereas the Arabs are served by a visiting imam from elsewhere in Finland. The majority of the community lives in the close proximity of the city. All of the mosques are transformed from other usage, and do not bear external signs of being Islamic places of worship. The two latter places are rented by community, whereas the Tatars have own their premises.

According to the Tampere Register Office (Interview, October 2011), Shii Muslims constitute a minority of Muslims in Tampere. Exact numbers are unavailable, but country of origin data allows us to identify the first generation immigrants born in Shii majority countries. There were 697 individuals from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq in Tampere in 2011 with the largest groups from Afghanistan and Iraq (see Table 1). However, not all immigrants from these countries are Shii, for example among Iraqis are many Sunni Muslim Kurds.

**Table 1. Immigrants born in Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq in Tampere, 2011.**

Source: Tampere Information Population System 2011.

Country of Birth	Male	Female	Total
<i>Afghanistan</i>	236	167	403
<i>Iran</i>	21	5	26
<i>Iraq</i>	159	109	268

The local Shii in Tampere are first generation immigrants and most of them have arrived as refugees to Finland during the 1990s and 2000s. General demographic characteristics of the main Shii nationalities (Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq) are as follows: In comparison to the majority population, they are young, are usually married with people of same national, ethnic and religious background, have many children, low educational achievements and high levels of unemployment. For example, whereas the national figure for unemployment was 9 per cent in 2008, it was 44 per cent among Iranians and 61 per cent among both Afghanis and Iraqis. These figures are much higher than the general 19 per cent unemployment figure for all foreign nationals in 2008 (Statistics Finland 2011, 31).

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective of this chapter uses insights from studies on ontological security (Giddens 1991; McSweeney 1999), belief systems (Smith 1988) and social institutionalism (Selznick 1994; Peters 2005). By using these approaches we can combine individual, community and societal perspectives and look at local Shii Muslims' anxieties also in relation to their social environment.

By *ontological security*, Giddens (1991, 36) refers to the 'tacit character of practical consciousness – or to the 'bracketing' presumed by the 'natural attitude' in everyday life'. This means that behind every-day, mundane matters may lurk a disturbing chaos that could lead to a loss of sense of the very reality of things. Hence, for Giddens (1991, 37), the potent chaos that threatens the ordinariness of the everyday life is interpreted in this study as *anxiety*. To understand those anxieties more thoroughly, we extend ontological security towards a psychological theory by reference to *belief systems*, whereby individuals interpret the world in a way they do. A belief system consists of private beliefs and affects how people understand the world around them (Smith 1988, 12-15).

McSweeney applies ontological security similarly to Giddens by discussing that everyday social interaction is the nexus to ontological security and a lack of that is experienced as relational stress. This hints that ontological security or existential trust is grounded in the security of social relationships. By situating ontological security into the concept of *trust*, the elementary, relational security system is associated with a basic and deep-lying trust to parental figures and in this case study to the Finnish welfare state as a caretaker. In this way, confidence is created in everyday social interaction by understanding what is going on (McSweeney 1999, 154-155). Furthermore, trust vested in a caretaker protects against anxiety (Giddens 1991, 37-38). From this analytical perspective, the inclusion of Muslims in Finnish society by the help of welfare institutions strengthens their sense of confidence and creates trust forming a source of security.

A central problem for ontological security is initiated, when a sense of cleavage is rendered by lack of common knowledge, common norms and social bindings. The situation creates an ontological insecurity by generating a sense of *us* and *them*. Within this arrangement, the insecurity and disrupted order could be repaired by the caretaker with remedies who repairs the defective communication and disorder (McSweeney 1999, 157-158). However, the caretaker has the means of repudiating the other object as a 'not-me' (Giddens 1991, 42). Such distrust may produce traumatic consequences. Yet, such considerations have skipped the function of intermediary social institutions. For example, a mosque as a social institution could integrate Muslims to one another

and function as a bridge to society (Emirbayer, 2003: 232). In social institutional theory, Max Weber (1976, 109) makes a link between social forces and structure in the society, and Selznick (1994: 232-233) notes that institutions are associated with the realisation of values. In more objective terms, social institutions form groups and practices. In a normative approach, institutionalisation is about the emergence of order and stable social integration.

Societies have different requisite functions that must be performed if they are to survive (Parsons, 1951: 3-58). Hence, humans with various needs form societies and that is why institutions in a society promise different functions and support efforts to the fulfilment of people. According to Guy Peters (2005: 114), *sedimentation* reflects human life whereby current practices are built on past layers of values and understandings. Even though institutions are subject of the present, they retain and reflect the past.

### **Anxieties of Muslims in Tampere**

The discussion above leads to a set of theoretical considerations which frames the empirical study of the Shii community in the City of Tampere. As a whole, the multidisciplinary theorizing model in this study examines multi-sectoral anxieties of the Shii community by drawing out the Shii subjectivity. Although the weight of the theory remains on the state as a caretaker, the model notes also the function of the social institution of the mosque.

### **Employment**

Employment is a key concern for many immigrants, and it has also been pointed out by research as a significant entry point to Finnish society in general. Even though employment usually improves over time, the unemployment figures for many foreign nationalities, especially refugees, persist on much higher levels than among the majority population (Forsander 2002).

While the local Shii enjoy equal rights in comparison to the Finnish citizens in their chances to apply for jobs, they encounter many difficulties in practice. According to one young person interviewed, anxieties are about gaining (even) part-time employment with low qualification requirements and low pay. Also, when the contract is expired foreigners are the first to be dismissed, followed by foreigners with a Finnish spouse and native Finns are those that remain till last. However, a 60 year old Shii male, who is not a job seeker, states that it does not seem to be difficult to find a job. Whereas the latter viewpoint does not represent an ontological security account,

the former characterises an implied marginalised ontological security of the immigrants and the Shii Muslims in the Finnish workforce.

The immigrants' lack of success in the Finnish labour market is related to their levels of skill and qualification (Forsander 2002). For example, the majority of Shii job seekers are adults, whose education and qualifications are not easily compatible with Finnish requirements. Beside difficulties in employability, lack of qualifications also produces differences in wages between Finnish and non-Finnish employees (Interview, 2011). For these reasons, employment has become part of everyday anxiety of unemployed and part-time Shii employees, where an associated anxiety does not necessarily lead to distrust in the caretaker. The discussion of one Shii indicates that the Finnish state has been supportive for finding a job. The interesting point in this perception includes that the same person acknowledges that unemployment is a common phenomenon everywhere and we see also a considerable number of unemployed Finnish people (Interview, October 2011).

### **Education and Language Training**

The Finnish educational system has a flexible and open-end character which extends towards free education for everyone with permanent residence rights. Therefore, one should take into account that Shii Muslims have access to free education and that the anxiety on education would be less than on employment. When moving towards the language of teaching in schools, the material is taught in Finnish. While there are less difficulties for the Shii second generation to learn Finnish language and to follow education, attention should be paid to children who have immigrated to Finland in their teens. As one Shii interviewee says on her educational anxiety:

Now I serve as a master student. In the beginning of the arrival at Tampere, I didn't know any word of Finnish. I was taught in the language training course with adult people and that was boring for a teenager. I tried to learn the Finnish language soon, but still I have a few difficulties to write and understand it at the university (Interview, October 2011).

Muslim adult emigrants need to learn the Finnish language in order to be ontologically secured in the Finnish educational system particularly prior to the graduate studies. In contrast, the present account accords with the prospect of the Shii people that learning a Finnish language is difficult for a foreign adult and that a great deal of time and energy must be consumed (Interview, October 2011). This is consistent with other findings on educational attainment among immigrants (see, Heath, Rethon & Kilpi, 2008).

To reinforce our understanding on further anxiety of Shii Muslims on the educational system, the differences are resulted between some belief material taught in schools and what is in the back of the mind of one Muslim student. This distinction is an indication of further anxiety of some Shii Muslim families on how to progress the education of their children in a Finnish school and the same time to protect their Islamic beliefs and identity. Considering the anxiety of families, this can be seen in a quote from one Shii mother:

It is perfect that my small child learns the Finnish language in the kindergarten, learns how to become independent since the beginning of the childhood, but the risk is that what she learns is completely different from our culture. She only thinks about herself, her life and in sum, individualism (Interview, October 2011).

Similarly, the same anxiety is evident in the discussion of other mothers:

The major concern is how to protect the Islamic belief of our children. In doing so, at home, we watch the channel TV from our original country which helps the children not only to strengthen their native language but also keep their Islamic belief by observing Islamic programs. We watch the Finnish TV very rarely whenever the children want to watch the Children's Program (Interview, October 2011).

The analyses in this section also are reminiscent of a second type of anxieties which overwhelm the Muslims by externally impinging origin. To elaborate upon this, the Finnish society, in Giddens' (1991, 53) terms, as an external environment is preoccupied with Muslim apprehension of possible anxieties and paralysed in terms of practical action wherein the Shii immigrant teenagers do not have a strong Finnish linguistic base. Similarly, the anxiety for the second generation is perceived with the impacts of cultural and belief differences on children, and how to protect the Islamic identity of their children in the Finnish society is salient.

## **The Role of the Welfare State Authorities**

Taking into consideration the anxieties of the Shii Muslims, the activities of the Finnish welfare state as the caretaker for inclusion of the Muslims in the society is salient. Addressing the solutions to the inherent challenges to repair the partial disorder in the society (McSweeney 1999, 157-158) the Finnish state launches a range of activities and policies. Social citizenship of the immigrants is seen in operationalisation of social rights that focus on services in the areas of health, education, housing, the labour market, social and welfare services. Social security benefits include family allowance, sickness allowance, unemployment allowance and national pensions. Parental leaves related to the birth of a child, childcare and early

childhood education, cash benefits for parents, child care subsidies, and child home care allowance are central components for family policy which are equal for emigrants settling with a permanent residence in Finland (Martikainen, Valtonen & Wahlbeck, 2012). In the context of the broader society, by 2005 more than 260 Finnish municipalities have drawn an integration policy to integrate foreign Muslims. Employment and economic development centers will make a summary of the responses given by municipalities within their own area (Arajärvi 2009).

Language training and work experience training emerge as the hallmarks of the Finnish integration policy. According to Martikainen et al. (2012), this means that the labour market training is perceived as the state investment in ethnic equality and its trust to expand the skill base in the immigrant labour force. In the wider Finnish society, integration would be started by language training and the perception of the link between labour market success and language skill has motivated the emigrants including the Shii community to learn the Finnish language (Valtonen 1999, 478). For our purposes the more interesting language instruction has been accessible to all refugees and that is compulsory. Financial support during this full time orientation period of one year includes living and transport allowances. Childcare facilities provide a chance for both parents to learn the Finnish language. At the same time, the Finnish state with supports immigrants with language instructions and orientation courses to combine language education with following vocational training to labour market courses and labour market participation stage (Valtonen 1999, 479). Alongside these services, this should be noted that gender equality promotes female immigrants' formal position in the labour market. The concern that the majority of the Shii women merely perform as a house worker or trainees does not reduce the effectiveness of the programs. However, this distinction is attributed to the lack of their sufficient skills and this anxiety is understood in the statement of one Shii lady:

I have finalised a high school degree at my home country. But it is implied that this is not acceptable in Finland and we must pass some courses. After that finding a job is very hard unless we try to find some low jobs (Interview, October 2011).

The Finnish state as the caretaker has initiated serious activities to integrate emigrants including the Shii community into the Finnish society. This is also could be suggested that being in the initial stage of such organising, the efforts has not been on par between Finnish and non-Finnish citizens due to the fact that, for example, the Finnish welfare state include immigrants very slow and difficult. This means Finland's lack of sufficient experience in embracing immigrants and Muslims left her in the beginning a major movement in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

## **The Activities of the Mosque**

The second strand of remedy was suggested in the theoretical framework includes the function of a mosque to repair the religious and social ontological insecurity of the Shii Muslims. Putting forth this approach, in the wider perspective the European Council adopted the mutual integration of Muslims and residents of member states in 2003. Similarly, the European Commission proposed to facilitate intercultural and interreligious dialogue at European level and to develop the Commission Dialogue with religion and humanist organisations (European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia 2006, 20). In addition to the EU's efforts, with regard to the status of Islam in Finland, the freedom of religion was enshrined in the Constitution Act of independent in 1919. The principle of religious freedom was set out more precisely in the Law on Religious Freedom on 1922 and Muslims received official status (Heikkilä, Knuutila & Scheinin 2005).

While acknowledging this fact, it should be also recognised that in the Finnish society still Islam is an alien religion. As Martikainen (2000, 12) notes many Finns perceive Islam as a religion of threat. Mosque is an alien element in the Finnish culture and people dislike Islam as a religion (Svanberg 1999, 396). Topics such as terrorism and women's oppression are attributed to Islam. Martikainen, hence, takes a position reminiscent of the fact that Islam is a strange religion in Finland by generating some Finnish citizen discussions that "if mosques would be built, alien influence would become more openly present. The identity of Finns would be in danger as the local scenery would change" (Martikainen 2000, 12).

In this account, the Finnish collective identity has been confronted a breach vis-à-vis the Muslims and an implied social division and partial belief conflict has been initiated (McSweeney 1999, 157). Such a perspective has a potent consequence where one Shii lady concerns:

Once I visited my family doctor, she said putting a scarf on and cultural differences with the Finnish people are nexus ... in the cold weather, this is wise to put on a scarf but why do you put it on even in the warm weather as well? (Interview, October 2011).

Following the social institutional function of a mosque, I approach the Shii mosque in Tampere, by contrast to the viewpoints above, to indicate religious, social and cultural implementation of the mosque. Looking at both an empirical context and a direct observation around mosques indicates that mosque is not only a religious meetings place but also a social and cultural activities forum (Borell and Gerdner 2011, 1). This hints at Allievi's (2003, 331-369) point of view that Muslim congregation and religious activities conduct social and cultural activities. Claiming mosques as a robust social

integration venue, the mosque in the City of Tampere does not display such a strong and wide social activities. Contrarily, the imam of the mosque has been engaged with the cities around whenever the Shii people feel Islamic and religious requirements (Interview, October 2011).

With this preliminary remark, we can now adjust that religious beliefs and social work do not show an external image with the Finnish society and there is a limited inward looking in terms of integration among the Shii community at Tampere. Considering the inward looking and integration from a new angle, lack of profound religious activities and programs, and absence of an imam in the mosque in the past years merely gather a group of the Shii to sit and talk in the mosque (Interview, October 2011). Towards that end, this is the simplest activity of the mosque which has brought people together, promotes social bonds or network and creates social capital (Ammerman 1997, 326-327). In one interviewee perspective, by presence of an imam at the Shii mosque in the City of Tampere, the Shii people have spent part of their time fruitfully in the mosque by listening to religious advises (Interview, October 2011). Here it is important to note that participation in collective religious activities such as Ashura, and Eid Fetr attract numerous Shii people in the mosque even quite a few Iranians at Tampere who do not attend the mosque regularly (Interview, October 2011).

In posing further social work by the Shii mosque such as providing assistant to new immigrants, counselling and mediation on family disputes has provided the least activities. The key activity of the mosque is found to teach Quran and advise young people in a general to protect their Islamic identity in Finnish society. Acknowledging that both the Shii Arab and Afghan coexist in the mosque at Tampere, the Shii Arabs are more active than Afghans in terms of religious and cultural teachings. For example, an Arab couple teaches Islamic and religious instructions to children to socialise the next generation where the Finnish environment does not provide it (Interview, October 2011). This somewhat concurs with Martikainen's (2009, 178) finding in the whereby religious organisations are forum for collective religious practice and on the other hand, they provide the infrastructure for the religious education of the next generation in the City of Turku, Finland. Contrarily, moving one step further, although limited religious and inward social activities have been the ambition of the organisers in the Shii mosque, leisure and hobby activities were not as such.

Yet, lack of permanent physical space for the mosque makes anxiety among the Shii community in a sense of being closed the mosque where the rent is not paid on time by the community who attends the mosque. Lack of one voice among the Shii community has not aggravated the chance to consider about a permanent physical

place for the mosque at Tampere (Interview, October 2011). As a whole, to consider the Shii mosque at Tampere, it has been partially active in some religious and social activities such as praying, imperfect socialisation of young people and holding religious festivals and anniversary martyrdom ceremony of Imam Hossain. But one must be mindful that there are major challenges and anxieties that the mosque has not overcome them to perform as a robust social institution.

### **Assessment of the Finnish State and the Shii Mosque Activities**

Analysing the activities of the Finnish state and the Shii mosque in Tampere illustrate political and social efforts for integration of the immigrants including the Shii community at the City of Tampere. The processes in which both institutions state position determine to provide social and religious requirements of Shii at Tampere with different forms. The optimistic activities were considered in the sections above. Therefore, in this remaining section, the deficiencies are taken into account to find a route towards perspectives for the future.

The Finnish state activities build on integration plan and providing an equal situation for the Shii community too. However, this has not been suited best, as it has already mentioned, due to the nature of Finland as a welfare state. This implies that the services meet the requirements of a homogeneous society and approach the requirements of the immigrants very difficult. Hence, turning to the major anxiety of the Shii community, unemployment, the Finnish labour market seems to many immigrants including the Shii people. Although a good legal framework is in place, the social and economic reality in the Finnish labour market does not support the social integration of all immigrants. Concomitantly, lack of one voice among the representatives of the Finnish government adds an additional depth to the issue of immigrants. Whereas prior to the 2000s, the integration of immigrants was not a political agenda, a shift towards proactive immigrant policies is perceived yet, but with a controversial perspective (Martikainen et al., 2012).

The representatives of the Shii mosque at the City of Tampere suggests the necessity to shift towards the religious requirements of the Shii and merely provides basic services such as praying without an external connection with others mosques inside and outside Finland; or providing leisure activities to attract the young people. This is in contrast with the sedimentation concept where a mosque had been a place for both religious and social activities in the beginning of Islam up to now whereas the mosque at Tampere has not been much successful in that basis. Much anxiety is perceived when the mosque has not yet a physical permanent place. In a situation of

the least social connection with other mosques the possible assistance of other Muslim countries decreases to receive a financial support to purchase a permanent place as a mosque at Tampere. Additionally the underlining need to start engaging the mosque to provide leisure activities may imply that young people are activated in healthy hobbies. By embracing the statement of one Shii mother in the interview, the further anxiety of unemployed single parents to provide leisure activities for children is reduced:

Being as a single parent for four children, it is difficult to provide leisure activities for them as it costs much. The two children attend the leisure activities which have been provided for immigrants. But the other two have to stay at home without any hobby in absence of sufficient finance. (Interview, October 2011).

Overall, both the Finnish state and the Shii mosque at the City of Tampere present some capacities to repair the social and religious anxieties of the Shii Muslims in the Finnish society. But due to the lack of longevity of residency of the Shii community in Finland and Tampere, new integrative plans are still probing. On top of that the Finnish society has not become fully ready yet to respond to the requirements of multi-cultural communities. This is not unreasonable to expect the resistance of those anxieties by the mid-term for the first generation of Shii community at Tampere. It seems achieving considerably greater integration for the second generation of the Shii community within the Finnish society looks easier in terms that the majority of the second generation are born in Finland.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, it was suggested that despite the efforts of the Finnish state and the social institution of the Shii mosque, some anxieties among the Shii community in Tampere exist. By focusing on the small community of the Shii in the City of Tampere, the study overture to provide a better ground than existing studies. By implementing the first thorough analysis of the Shii community at Tampere, this study draws a multidisciplinary approach by employing a socio-political perspective accompanied by the subjectivity of the Shii Muslims. This line of reasoning is definitely promising as it helps us to uncover the underlying anxieties of the Shii community and how to proceed to reduce them by the Finnish states as a political institution and the mosque as a social one.

It was also argued that Finland without a long historic background to embrace the Muslim communities remains in the primary steps to integrate the Muslims in the Finnish society. This shapes the basis for understanding anxieties such as

unemployment, obstacles in language training and education, and vocational and professional training. Opening with the efforts the two caretakers, the Finnish welfare state and the mosque, they might embark on a long way ahead to make an effective integration of the Shii in the society. This also means better-fertilised activities of the Shii mosque at Tampere in order to retain the Islamic identity of the members of the community in the secularised Finnish society.

Of further matter of importance may open an option to account that the majority of the Shii emigrant from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan do not share the high quality skills meet the requirements of the Finnish society and it, for its part, initially foster the effort of the Finnish states to integrate them into the society immediately. Therefore, the anxieties for the first generation of the Shii emigrant might be persistent, however, how the second generation of the Shii Muslim finds its status in the Finnish society requires a further research.

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## Book Review

***Sons of Babur—A Play in Search of India* Author: Salman Khurshid, Publisher: Rupa & Co, New Delhi, Pages: 121, ISBN: 978-81-291-1315-3**

**Reviewed by: Yoginder Sikand**

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‘Sons of Babur have only two places: the graveyard or Pakistan!’ went the bloodcurdling cry of Hindutva fascists, seeking to whip up Hindu hatred against Muslims in the course of their movement to destroy the Babri Masjid two decades ago. For these venom-spewing fanatics, the Indian Muslims simply had no place in India at all. They were, they alleged, the progeny of foreign invaders. They linked them up with one such Muslim invader—but, curiously, not the first, and certainly not the most brutal of them—Zahiruddin Mohammad Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty. That their claim was, historically speaking, wide off the mark—the vast majority of Indian Muslims being descendants of local converts—was something that they did not seem to care about in the least.

This wonderfully-crafted play is a powerful rebuttal of Hindutva propaganda about the Indian Muslims being ‘aliens’ or the progeny thereof. Without sounding preachy, and not seeking to whitewash the darker aspects of Mughal rule, Khurshid presents the complexity of inter-communal relations under the Mughals, highlighting the fact that, over time, the Mughals had so closely integrated themselves into the wider Indian society that it makes no sense whatsoever to consider them to have been aliens or foreigners. He does not shy from dealing with the murky politics of several Mughal potentates—their lust for power and pelf, which even led father to kill sons or sons to plot against fathers, and the harsh policies of some of them towards their non-Muslim subjects. Khurshid does not condone all of this, but appeals to us to view these figures as creatures of their times and not judge them according to contemporary standards.

The play revolves around a group of college students at the height of the Hindutva agitation to tear down the Babri Masjid. Confronted with rival claims about Indianness and Indian history, in particular the role of the Muslims in all of this, one of the students, Rudranshu Mitra, travels in his mind all the way to Rangoon where he has a

series of extended conversations with the last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who lies buried in a decrepit grave in the Burmese capital. The Emperor takes Mitra on a series of voyages through the past, where he meets Babur and a host of other Mughal rulers. From them he learns of how the Mughals, who left their desolate Central Asian home, managed, over the years, not just to adapt to India but also help create the very idea of India as we understand it today. Khurshid presents Bahadur Shah Zafar as exemplifying that very idea in his own person, as a symbol that united Hindus and Muslims against British rule.

Khurshid's attempt to salvage the Mughals from Hindutva abuse does serve a valuable political purpose, of course. But to present Bahadur Shah Zafar as the herald of the idea of India seems completely far-fetched. Were Zafar and a host of Hindu and Muslim rulers who lent their weight to the revolt of 1857 really passionate proto-nationalists, as Khurshid would have them be? Or, as seems more likely, were they simply out to protect their tottering regimes? And were they as beneficent as Khurshid projects them as? True, they did have a role to play in the evolution of a sort of Indo-Muslim cultural synthesis, but what, one must ask, did they at all do for the oppressed masses, Hindus and Muslims alike? Defending them from Hindutva falsehood is fine, and indeed laudable, but to extol them as passionately committed to their subjects (particularly the poor, on whose bruised shoulders the entire edifice of their splendour rested) is surely a bit too much.

That said, the play makes wonderful reading. One would not have expected an Indian politician, and a minister at that (Khurshid is Minister of State for Corporate Affairs and Minority Affairs) to be such a gifted wordsmith.

***Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe, Widening the European Discourse on Islam,*  
K. Górak-Sosnowska (ed.), University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2011, Pages: 343**

**Reviewed by: Monika Ryszewska**

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The editor of the reviewed book is Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, Doctor of Economics, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology in the Warsaw School of Economics and in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Warsaw.

This book is the first work Górak-Sosnowska published in English as an editor. At the same time it is the first such comprehensive work presenting Polish and Eastern

European Muslims, which can potentially reach readers from other parts of the continent. The book is rendered widely accessible not only as it is published in English, but also because the majority of it (except the chapter on Bulgarian Muslims, which is available only in printed form) can be downloaded from the Internet as a document file. The electronic form of the book was prepared by the University of Warsaw and co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

The book is composed of 23 papers written by scholars from eight countries. The material has been divided into two parts, the first of which is devoted to Polish Muslims. The second part, as the title of the book suggests, focuses on countries from Eastern Europe. This division, however, is somewhat problematic. One can assume that the Ukraine is actually Eastern Europe, but in the case of Slovenia or Lithuania it would be quite wrong. The editor explains that the term “Central and Eastern Europe” can be used in both a narrow and a wide sense (p. 12). However, such a definition of the scope of the book in the title can be misleading for prospective readers.

The authors of papers published in the book are not only Arabists and Islamologists but also scholars specializing in religious studies, sociology, international relations, psychology, pedagogy, philosophy etc. This makes for the interdisciplinary character of the publication which looks at Muslims from various perspectives. It also proves that there is an increasing interest in Muslims among scholars from different fields (except Polish historians, who have been studying and researching Muslim history for many years). Such interest is also an attempt at catching up with Western trends, as in Western Europe the subject has been widely studied since 1990 (Larsson, Račius 2010, p. 355). This trend is mostly visible in the papers of younger scholars, who revisit previously studied phenomena, looking at them from new angles (e.g. Łyszczarz), and venture into new territories (e.g. Krotofil, Stoica). A similarly keen interest has been observed in the Nordic countries, as we can learn from Larsson’s paper presented in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* (2011, p. 724). The partly unclear methodological approach taken by some authors and the fact that they tend to generalize their research results are not the biggest shortcomings of the book if we were to compare it to some Western European publications. A graver problem is too few references to important theories, for example the ones pertaining to religious sociology or migrations. Papers written by more experienced authors (e.g. Danecki, Dziekan, Račius, Sakowicz) are devoted to areas of the authors’ long-lasting interests and present to the reader the history, culture and literature of Tatars living in Polish and Lithuanian territories and the dialogue between Islam and the Catholic Church in Poland. Taking into consideration the ambitious and comprehensive nature

of the publication, it is quite surprising that the editor failed to include some of the most recent research in this field (Tyszkiewicz 2002, 2008; Nalborczyk 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Konopacki 2010). To complete the presentation of the Muslim presence, there are papers on mosques (Nalborczyk), and religious organizations in Poland (Pędziwiatr), and similar ones describing those aspects of Islam in the Ukraine (Yarosh, Brylov) and Hungary (Molodikova).

The wide scope of subjects and the presentation of various groups of Muslims (Tatars, immigrants, converts) adds to the quality of the publication, but at the same time may give the reader a feeling that the selection of papers is somewhat random. It is especially visible in the case of papers on the non-Muslim Somalis (Walczak) who are rather scarce in Poland, on language behavior of Arabic speakers, some of whom are Christian (Woźniak) and on refugees from Chechnya (Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Trojanek, Łukasiewicz), which are too distant from the title and subject of the publication. A closing summarizing chapter might have been helpful in giving the book a more structured form, however, it is missing.

Significant differences (stemming from historical and political circumstances) between Muslims from Eastern and Central Europe and those from Western Europe render in-depth comparisons of these groups impossible. It would be quite impractical to look for analogies between the experiences of Tatars who arrived in Poland a few hundred years ago and Muslim immigrants from a former French colony, whose presence in Europe goes back in time only a few decades.

The book could be seen as a response to Larsson and Račius's appeal that is quoted by the editor on page 12. The two scholars suggest that research of Islam can help „reconstruct a more complete picture of the evolution of the European history in which Islam and Muslims have indeed constituted an important element in the European identity (ies) formation” (Larsson, Račius 2010, p. 21). However, in order to successfully participate in the discourse on European Islam (the editor suggests that it can be observed for example in the Balkans), one must refer to a greater number of works devoted to this subject, which is unfortunately not the case in this publication. One of the missing references and at the same time an interesting summary of the debate on the European version of Islam is the work by Al-Azmeh and Fokas published in 2007.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that one of the goals that the editor wanted to achieve with the book was presenting the situation of Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. This goal has certainly been fulfilled.

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