SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL AUTHORITY IN ISLAM

يا ايها الذين امنو عليكم انفسكم-لا يضركم من ضل
اذا اهتد يتم-الى الله مرجعكم جميعاً فينبئكم با كنتم تعملون

O you who believe ! take care of your souls ; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way ; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so He will inform you of what you did. (The Quran, v. 104).

The authorities of church and state correspond from a general point of view to the spiritual and temporal powers which have formed the basis of all traditional societies. These authorities, which have taken diverse forms in each culture, are represented in the Western Christian tradition by two autonomous hierarchies. The church is the bride of Christ and the authority *par excellence* for the transmission of the purely spiritual message of the Lord Jesus, while the Christian state is an organization whose laws are not direct revelations from heaven but rather the result of human reason applied to religious principles. Such a division is the normal consequence of the exclusively spiritual role of Christ who was not a law-bringer like Moses or Muhammad but the supreme saint. That is why, in Islam, Christ is the *wali* while Muhammad is the *Nabi*. Instead of applying the terms church and state to Islam, it is perhaps wiser to use spiritual and temporal authorities which are free from the implications characteristic of the Christian Tradition.

Islam is the religion of unity, *Wahdah*, and all its functions whether social or spiritual are aimed towards the realisation of this unity. Being the last of God's revelations, it symbolically reinstates man in his primordial state of wholeness in which the temporal and spiritual authorities were united within one body. There is no better evidence of this unity than the claim of the Prophet to return to the religion of Abraham, to a time when the letter and spirit, social and spiritual life, were united: when the whole Semitic people still lived without any schisms. It was then that all authority derived its sanction from the same source which in the Bible is represented by Melchizedek. To return man to his

original stase of wholeness, Islam reunites the spiritual and temporal powers, historically in the person of the Prophet and eternally in the *Shari'ah* to which all mankind must be subservient in order to attain salvation.

As professor H. A. R. Gibb has remarked with regard to the *Shari'ah*, "Law is thought of, not as a product of human intelligence, an adaptation to changing social needs and ideals, but of divine inspiration and hence immutable."[1] The function of this divine law is to guide man to his end which is Heaven, and every Muslim from the lowliest peasant to a saint is bound by it. The religious, leaders, the *Ulama*, can only function as interpreters, and the political authority can do no more than provide the conditions by which the sacred law can be preserved, practised, and extended among men. A Muslim by submitting to the *Shari'ah* which is revealed through the Quran, thereby becomes free of all other authorities; his social and economic functions are as much a part of his religious duties as his fasting and prayers.

The Muslim stands at the centre of the universe in the sense that he can communicate directly with God without the aid of any intermediary body. In Christianity he occupies a peripheral position with respect to the clergy and depends upon the church as the intermediary between itself and God. "A lay Christian is by definition a peripheral being; a Muslim, by reason of his priestly function, is everywhere a central being within his own tradition, and it matters little whether or not he is externally severed from the Muslim community; he always remains his own priest and an autonomous unity . . . "[2] The sacramental function of the church is, then, completely absent from Islam. All religious authority belongs to to the *Shari'ah* itself, and the religious leaders, the *Ulama*, who act as the interpreters of the law to the Muslim community, hold their authority because of their superior knowledge of Divine Law.

The structure of the Islamic community is based upon the *Shari'ah*, in which both political and religious conduct find sanc-

1. Gibb, Sir H. A. R. *Mohammedanism*, (Oxford University Press, 1953, 2nd ed.), p. 90.

2. Schuon, Frithjof, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. (Pantheon 1953), p. 131.

tion. *In principio* in Islam there is neither a church nor a state in the Western sense, and the spiritual and temporal authorities have their function in interpreting and maintaining the Holy Law and preparing man during his short journey on earth for the return to his Maker. Over and above contingencies, which are a metaphysical necessity of all creation, the principles of Islam are based completely upon *Tawhid* within the cosmos and man, and therefore within man's society. Consequently man's allegiance is directed towards only one source, Allah, whose law covers the whole of man's life. In the ideal Islamic community—which most nearly existed on earth while the Prophet was alive—there is no autonomous political body any more than there is a church.

As creation implies imperfection, so does the historical development of Islam imply a gradual digression from the principles which were revealed through the Prophet. Islam was born in Arabia, and as a result fell into the danger of becoming an Arab religion rather than a universal faith. The allegiance to tribal *sunnah* which had been partially replaced during the time of the Prophet by submission to a new universal authority, and the feeling of brotherhood among all Muslims which had replaced previous tribal bonds were threatened with extinction at the time of Muhammad's death. Although Abu Bakr and Omar succeeded in firmly establishing an Islamic state, based primarily on the Quran and the actions of the Prophet, they could not help but incorporate much of the ancient Arabic tribal structure into the new scheme. The Prophet himself had been forced to make certain concessions while in Medina. By the time of the death of 'Ali, the imprint of Arab social tradition had left an indelible mark upon Islam. The new faith did succeed in freeing itself from the provincial status of an Arab religion, but the marks of the first contingencies of its career remained a part of all its subsequent development.

The early Islamic state was centered about the Caliph who was at the same time *Amir al-Muminin, Imam,* and *Khalifa.* He was above all defender of the faith, preserver of the *Shari'ah* and the leader in prayers. His duties were both social and religious and the law which he protected covered all realm of life. During the time of the first four Caliphs there was a theocracy with but one head and one law in which neither a church nor a state

could be discerned as a separate entity. With the coming of the Umayyad dynasty and the consolidation of the newly acquired territories of Islam into a vast empire, a new state came into being, one whose loyalties stood above those of the tribes and in which the Caliphs had a civil as well as religious role. Mu'awiya in trying to preserve the unity of Islam in the face of the ever-present dispersive tendency of the nomadic people, established for the first time in Islam a kingdom in which the temporal authority acquired a certain amount of secular character although both temporal and spiritual powers were still invested in the *Shari'ah,* which was protected by the Caliph.

To the north of Arabia lay great empires, the Byzantine and Persian, in which the institutions of church and state were established as two distinct bodies. Of course, the royal function as well as the sacerdotal one had divine sanction and was far from being secular. In conquering the Persian empire, Islam encountered the second great set of historical contingencies in its short life in this world. The influence of Persian culture did not begin to be felt to any great extent until after Abu Muslim's revolt and the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad ; but once this new Caliphate had been established, Persian ideals of the state became more and more widespread within Islam. Administrative laws adopted Sassanid models, and the Caliphs came to acquire characteristics of Persian monarchs in such matters as granting audience to subjects and appearing before the court.

The *Shu'ubi* movement, as this Persianizing development was called, gained ground over the centuries and threatened to destroy Islamic institutions in favour of alien ones. Islam again succeeded in freeing itself from a local culture, this time Persian, although once more a permanent effect was left upon it. As Professor Gibb has stated, "By this victory, the Islamic religious institution, which had already rejected any domination of its ideals of faith and order by Arab social traditions, now equally rejected the Persian social traditions."[1]

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1. Gibb, Sir H. A. R., "An Interpretation of Islamic History, I," *Muslim World,* Vol. XLV, No. I (Jan. 1955), p. 12.

The gradual weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate was followed by the rise of secular princes some of whom, like the Buwayhids, were Shi'ites. In the hand of these monarchs the concept of statehood took one more step away from the Islamic political conception. If under the Caliphs there had still remained a symbolic unity of social, political and religious functions, now the concentration of political power in the hands of princes caused a complete break with the nomocratic ideal. The designation of the title of sultan to the ruling monarchs further emphasised the new digression until in the 12th century C. E. it became necessary for the *ulama* to reconsider Islamic political theory altogether. Al-Ghazzali, who was the foremost thinker of the period, recognized the necessity of a sultan in addition to the traditional Caliph and the body of *ulama*. With the death of the last Abbassid Caliph in 1258 even the symbolic unity disappeared, and all good Muslims came to recognise that history had brought about that inevitable decay which lies within the nature of time itself. They realized that politics had been divorced from Islam and awaited patiently that day when the Mahdi would reunite the political, social, and religious functions within his authority. The Shi'ites had long ago perceived that 'Ali had been the only true Caliph ; now the Sunnites in turn realized that the true Muslim society had existed in the past, and would only again exist in the future when the Mahdi would return to redeem the world.

Through its historical development, Islamic political thought was gradually modified by foreign accretions until with the decline of the Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad, one could begin to speak of the state in Islam as a body separated from the religious authority. During this same period of foreign influence the religious authority succeeded in keeping itself free from external domination although in certain periods, as during the reign of Ma'mun, it came close to being destroyed. Orthodoxy in Islam has succeeded until the present day to preserve its autonomy and the doctrines of the Faith. The *ulama* have always been an undefined body and for the same reason have never been coerced into any kind of organization resembling a church. Throughout Islamic history "the Muslim Church" has been identical with the community of worshippers ; this has been true of the Shi'ite as well as the Sunni branch.

Therefore, if one can speak of the gradual corruption of the political authority into a "state," one cannot say the same of the religious concepts. Until now, Islam has been able to preserve its fundamental premise, that the Muslim is his own priest and has no need of an intermediary before God.

The movement from unity to diversity within Islamic history is clear. The death of Musta'sim symbolizes the end of the outward unity of Islam. But the inner oneness of the Faith remained preserved through the spiritual unity imposed by the Sufis upon the whole Islamic world. It is true that in certain areas, as in Persia, separate political authority was established on models of non-Islamic institutions. But when one remembers how the Persian kings until recently went on foot to the houses of the Sufi masters, it becomes clear that the spiritual authority continued to exercise influence upon the temporal power, thereby saving the latter from becoming a purely secular organization without divine sanction. Moreover, the *ulama* continued to exert prestige over the state through the interpretation of the *Shari'ah* which governed all social life. Attention came to be turned increasingly towards social and ethical rather than political life, but the community of Muslims persisted in instilling its ideals into the state organization.

In applying the Western concepts of church and state to Islam, it becomes evident that in principle the religious and temporal organizations which church and state represent, are united in Islam under a single authority and a divine Law. The historical development of Islam reveals that although a "state," in certain ways similar to the Western concept of this term, does gradually develop, there is at no time any Muslim organization which can properly be called a "church." The decaying effect of time succeeds in separating the religious and political life of Islam and forcing it away from its original unity to ever greater multiplicity. And so the Muslim realizing the degeneration of the world awaits the coming of the Mahdi who, in redeeming time, will once again unify the spiritual, religious, and temporal powers, thus returning to the principles of Islam freed from the dross of historical contingencies. The gradual separation of political and religious

life which is the result of the weakening of the holy Law, the *Shari'a*, among men was foreseen by the Prophet himself when he said, "Verily ye are in an age in which if ye neglect one-tenth of what is ordered, ye will be ruined. After this a time will come, when he who shall observs one-tenth of what is now ordered will be redeemed."[1]

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1. Muhammad Amin, *The Sayings of the Prophet Mohammad*. (Lion Press, Lahore 1955), p. 22.

THE RELATION BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

In his classic poem *Asrar-i-Khudi* Iqbal outlines the dynamics of an individual's development into an individuality. In his other poem *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi* he discusses how individuals can come together in a harmonious and creative group. But the relation he establishes between an individual and the group is far from clear. It is vague and it raises a crop of problems. One important problem that arises from this relation is the problem of methodology—the problem as to the exact relation between Psychology and Sociology.

Sociological laws or theories or hypotheses can be approached from three different points of view.

1. *The Holistic Approach* : This approach consists in regarding social change as being explicable in terms of the will or desire of a non-human agency or the unfolding of a pre-established pattern which may or may not have been conceived by a non-human intelligence. The scope of this approach not only comprises most of the theological interpretations of history but also all those holistic theories of history which commit the fallacy of historicism. The thesis of historicism is that men's motives and actions—whether on the individual or collective level—possess no causal efficacy. The nature of history or society or the dialectic, which is a holistic entity apart and independent from individuals, determines the nature and direction of social change.

2. The second approach consists in reducing sociological phenomena or the facts of social change to individual dispositions or desires. Such an approach would reduce, say, the development of capitalism to the greedy and megalomaniac dispositions of a few individual capitalists, their money-making propensities and their unusual and unbounded aspirations to dominate and exploit other people.

3. The third approach regards sociological theories or laws as autonomous. It is a fact that individuals form groups but according to this approach, laws of individual development are