

affinity-inducing strains.⁸ These may be defined as *integrative* in terms of their contingent and situational impact and *universalistic* in terms of their temporal and spatial thrust. Together, they may be seen to constitute the ontological axis of the Islamic factor, or its input, in history generally. They also coincide with the essence of Islam, as faith/belief-system and faith/community, as they project its morphology and articulate its foundational ethics.⁹

This observation has its implications for assessing our point of departure in exploring the region. Given the inherent disruptive potential of the present politics of the region for the state of world order, there is a need for a conceptual framework which can establish the elements of the specific or the unique, as well as those elements that hold some prospect for convergence. The Islamic dimension seems to fulfill these requisites for it provides a framework for differentiation as well as for trans-regional or intra-regional association. The cultural divide equally assumes the role of cultural integrator so as to pave the way for unique convergence between the contextual and the conceptual in approaching our study.

Assuming the primacy of the Islamic dimension for apprehending the politics of the contemporary Middle East calls for more elucidation. There is a need to ascertain the import of Islam for the region in a historical and socio-cultural perspective. If thus far we have been concerned with locating the parameters of the quest, it is necessary to explore their purport for the region.

2. The Multiple Facets of Islam: *Bringing Analogies and Paradigms into Focus*

The statement that Islam constitutes the key to understanding the history and politics of the region may strike a note of discord. This ap-

8. It is an attempt to distinguish the structural or systemic from the incidental and variant that is behind the few initiatives at devising an ordering framework of inquiry, for studying the region. Cf. Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 225-237.

9. For recent work on the subject see Richard Hovannissian, ed., *Ethics in Islam* (California: Undena Publications) especially the article by Frederick M. Denny, "Ethics and the Qur'an: Community and Worldview" (pp. 103-121); the strains mentioned here as characteristic of community formation are brought out from a different perspective in Montgomery Watt's notion of the "charismatic community". See *Islam and the Integration of Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

plies to the uninitiated, especially to an outsider to the region, and more generally, given the dominant secular culture of the times, it might even apply to many a "cultured" insider as well. The implicit assumption in the mind of the average American or European student, for example, is that it is quite possible to understand the peoples and cultures of the different nations in Europe today, without necessarily having to learn about Christianity. The latter would belong to a course on theology to the extent that it dwelled on religion, while any political ramifications could be summarily addressed through some cross-referencing to Church-State relations in the Middle Ages as a prelude to the rise of the nation-state in modern times. So by analogy, it is presumed that the scholarship on the Middle East should proceed along similar lines especially when the subject matter is the setting of the contemporary peoples and the modern nation-states. At best the Islamic factor may be dealt with perfunctorily as an aspect of the past, needed to fill out the background of the canvas, but it would by no means figure as pertinent, far less integral, to the political comprehension of the modern setting. This attitude is only reinforced by the ambiguities in the specialized literature itself which is torn between attempts to deny the impact and hence the relevance of Islam to history on the one hand, and to revivify an interred Islam and attribute all the foibles in the history of Muslim societies to its contaminations.¹⁰

The analogy between the place of Christianity, or of the Judaic and Christian tradition, in the evolution of the culture and the political history of the West and that of Islam in its socio-historical and cultural area is misleading. While the former tradition remains indisputably a basic constituent of the Western heritage, yet its formative impact there was only partial, and in the historical evolution of the West this impact was

10. It is against these extremes that one should understand the more "measured" postures of conservative critics like Hourani when he remarks that "Islam and the terms derived from it are ideal types to be used subtly with infinite reservations and of adjustments of meaning, and in conjunction with other ideal types, if they are to serve a principle of historical explanation". See "The Present State of Islamic and Middle Eastern Historiography" in *Europe and the Middle East*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 185; more relevant to our context is the distinction between the "ideal" and the "real" suggested by Meryll Wyn Davies in her penetrating attempt to introduce a valid referent for social inquiry which would be consistent and meaningful with Islam—beyond its usage as a term. *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology*, pp. 64-65 and 124-126; and more generally chapters 4 & 5.

relativized and eventually marginalized.¹¹ In fact, it is commonly conceded that Christianity itself in its European setting was absorbed into the dominant Graeco-Roman culture of its day and was accordingly recast in its theological wellsprings and its institutional structures.¹² This is the same process which has continued unabated as the Church has admittedly been forced to give in steadily on many of its "fundamentals" before the irreversible currents of modernity.¹³ In contrast, the formative impact of Islam on the peoples and the cultures who came in contact with it proved to be historically paramount. Gibbon's 18th century celebrated analysis in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* gives us the cue. In Europe, Christianity was the catalyst to the dissolution of Empire, while in the world of the middle Orient, stretching from the Mediterranean basin to the Transoxiana, the "Nile to the Oxus" expanse, Islam was the catalyst to the rise of empire and the bloodline of a new civilization. The difference was hardly one of different historical contexts, although doubtless the latter is integral to any comprehensive analysis. But it essentially stemmed from the nature, purpose, and orientation in each religion, a difference which was duly projected on the temporal plane.

Cautioning against the obvious is sometimes necessary. When it comes to understanding the politics and culture of the respective regions, the implicit analogy with Christianity is misplaced. Yet, this analogy is not an uncommon one, and it has had far-reaching negative consequences for shaping perceptions and attitudes in the West to Muslim realities. Its more familiar source lies in the nature of Western "orientalist" scholarship on the region - which notwithstanding *Marx and the*

11. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York: AMS Press, 1979); Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

12. Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, (New York: Gordon Press, 1974).

13. See e.g., the compact overview of development of respective positions of Catholic and Protestant Churches on a divisive issue in John Greene, *Darwin and the Modern World View* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1961, 1981), Ch. 1; For an discriminating insider's critique of the "fall" in the Church see James Hitchcock, *What is Secular Humanism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1982), pp. 115-138. A good illustration of what Hitchcock is criticizing is found in Roger Shinn's *Man: The New Humanism* (New Directions in Theology Today, Vol. 6), (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968); an example of a compact Muslim point of view on the subject of humanism and religion may be found in A. K. Brohi, *Islam in the Modern World* (Lahore: Publishers United Ltd., 2nd ed., 1975), pp. 1-21.

End of Orientalism—persists beyond the ranks of the professional or conventional Orientalists. Embedded in the legacy of the European Enlightenment, the secular bias of this analogy further constitutes a real constraint in any attempt to deal meaningfully with religion as a historical and sociological reality.¹⁴ This difficulty is further complicated by the fact that the historical and sociological articulation of Islam differed from that experienced in the realms of Roman Christianity. The nature of the Islamic historical experience would seem to have persistently evaded a Western sensibility – an evasion which was compromised by historical collusion as much as by divergent conceptions of what constituted religion itself. A summary profile for the purposes of the discussion may be a useful reminder. This will evidently be given from the Islamic end of the spectrum.

As a comprehensive, divinely revealed message, Islam addresses the Here-and-Now in the perspective of the Hereafter.¹⁵ This has a number of practical implications. First, the conception of political ideology in Islam transcends the strictly political, which it necessarily encompasses and subsumes. It also means that for a Muslim as an individual and as a member of a collective entity, the eschatological perspective continues to be historically relevant and ever present. It is not simply an existential matter. It further means that its claims on the total allegiance of its adherents in faith and deed subsumes their “interiority” as well as their external manifestations: i.e., their spiritual and personal dimensions, as well as their public, societal implications.

In a secular or positivist paradigm of knowledge, these aspects of Muslim reality are meaningless for they are simply non-data: Not only does such a paradigm deny their relevance; it is not even adequately equipped to question their existence. Its essence is a materialist and nominalist reductionism and as such it can hardly cope with a *holism* or accommodate the *transcendental* dimension. Both of these aspects are integral to the Islamic worldview and are comprised in a *tawhīdī*

14. This theme is addressed in “The Islamic Dimension in the Scholarship on the Middle East” op. cit. If one compact example were to be selected to illustrate how misplaced analogies and false paradigms are typically confused in the literature it would be Claude Cahen’s essay on “The Body Politic” in G. von Grunebaum, ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1955).

15. The implications of eschatological dimension are succinctly discussed in a relevant context by Fazlur Rahman. *Major Themes from the Qur’an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), Ch. 6.

episteme.¹⁶ The very matrix of a sociology of religion as it is conceived and practiced in the positivist medium of the existing social sciences cannot comprehend the categories of Revelation as history. Yet it is this very paradigm which comes to be imposed on an inhospitable setting in a "disciplinary" effort to reduce and arbitrate its realities. The latter however remain irreducible preliminaries without which any understanding of the practical implications of Islam for the politics of the region is nullified. These implications can only be grasped from a perspective which admits *tawhīd* as a conceptually relevant category to social and political inquiry. Only then too can the genesis and nature of political community in Islam be fully and adequately grasped.

Present Muslim communities in search of their muted history are better profiled against the background of their original model or progenitor. Although one of the best documented areas in world history has been precisely that of the emergence of the Muslim community which - under the guidance of its founder - had "grown up...in the light of history" and had its (meticulously) recorded texts open to study.¹⁷ Yet, perhaps not so ironically after all, considering that the enabling perspective was lacking, its abundant sources have been least adequately deployed in contemporary political scholarship. From these sources we learn how the identity and actions of the early believers came to be molded within the bounds of a bond effectively forged between Muhammad (upon whom be peace), as the acknowledged Messenger of God, and themselves as

16. See above, note 2. The holistic perspective is part of an authentic tradition of knowledge in the Islamic heritage (see such works of S. H. Nasr as *The Encounter of Man and Nature* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968) and *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: crossroads, 1981) - a tradition recently reviewed in C.A. Qadir, *Philosophy and Science in the Islamic World* (London: Croom Helm, 1988); this perspective is currently being recovered and reformulated in a dynamic context, e.g., Ziauddin Sardar, *The Touch of Midas, Science, Values and Environment in Islam and the West* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and M. A. Anees & M. W. Davies, "Islamic Science: Current Thinking and Future Directions" in Ziauddin Sardar, ed., *The Revenge of Athena: Science, Exploitation and the Third World* (London: Mansell, 1988), pp. 249-260; see also M. Abul Fadl, "Islamization as a global force of cultural renewal: the relevance of the *tawhīdī* episteme" in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, Vol. 5, no. 2 December, 1988, and "Contrasting Epistemics: *Tawhīdī* Episteme and Contemporary Social Theory" (Forthcoming). *AJISS*, Vol. 7, no. 1, March 1990.

17. Hourani, "Islam and the Philosophers of History," op. cit., pp. 49-50.

an evolving historical community.¹⁸ The battles, trials, and ordeals testify to the emergent unit and unity. We learn how this took place in the course of enacting the injunctions of the *Tanzīl* (Revelation) in a confluence and sequence of concrete historical situations. We learn too that just as *tawhīd* had its imperatives for the life of the individual Muslim, these imperatives also pervaded the life and stances of the community. In the sphere of the polity this meant that the exclusive sovereignty and overlordship of God as Creator, Sustainer, Legislator, Guide, and as ultimate Judge and Arbitrator constituted the norm in a consensual political culture. In its formative phases the nascent community was perfectly aware of the distinctions to be drawn in its leadership to this effect. Few today, for example, can realize the far-reaching implications of observing the principle of *shūrā* (consultation) as an operational norm in its original context. Its essence and effectiveness there was postulated on a prevailing consensus on ultimate values; it was not itself conceived as a means for deliberating on such values, nor was it intended for such a purpose.

In this way Islam provided a creed which from the outset had its practical moral implications for the individual and the group. It has continued to be seen as such by the mass of its followers since. As such too there was to be no segmentation in the worldly life of its community, and history was the unfolding record of the consequences. In this record, Islam constituted the *raison d'être* of the State, or the *khilāfah*, and it continued as the bonding, or the principle of solidarity, in the political community. Under the *sharī'ah*, its all encompassing ethical and legal code, the system was assured of its legitimacy while its social institutions comprised a "seamless web" that defied fragmentation. Any contrived dichotomies such as those familiar to the Western experience and embodied in distinctions made between the "private" and the "public" - such as existed for example in Roman law - was a meaningless and

18. Original efforts among Muslims in the past decade have sought to re-interpret the formative moments in the history of the *ummah*. 'AbdulHamīd Abūsulaymān proposed a new approach to the Sunnah and classical sources for developing an Islamic perspective on international relations (*An Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought* (Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1987); Ziauddin Sardar pioneered a chapter in Futuristics with his paradigmatic thinking in *The Future of Muslim Civilization* (London: Croom Helm, 1979/Mansell, 1987); cf. another unconventional approach to understanding genesis, nature and dynamics of the *ummah* in M. Abul Fadl, *The Polar Community: The Conception of the Ummah in Islam (al Ummah al qutb:)* (Cairo, 1982.) Institutional forums for re-interpreting and reconstructing Muslim history from an Islamic "liberal" perspective have also emerged in such organs as *Minbar al Hiwār* (Dialogue) and *al Ijtihād*.

derogatory redundancy in the *tawhīdī* paradigm. Conversely, it is the pervasive relevance of Islam which calls for a conceptual breakthrough to grapple with these realities. Only then is it possible to conceive of the general interrelatedness and interconnectedness of the different dimensions of its socio-cultural experience as it developed round the nodal experience of the historical revelation.

It was also this record of imposing alien constructs on the Other and refusing to see the Other in its own terms, which unfortunately long constrained the vision and perception of Western learning on Islam in a way that made it hidebound to "unidimensional interpretations of complex processes and events".¹⁹ In the Western tradition of Christendom, Islam had continued at best to be investigated in terms of a peculiar brand of statecraft and political history that called for understanding in its own terms. At worst, it was branded for perfidy and expounded as a form of Christian heresy. The secular counterpart to this gross misconception was to view it as a medieval theocratic aberration that had outlasted its age and to proceed thence to probe into its archaic deformities.²⁰ It needs no comment to question the integrity of these views, nor to doubt their competence in coming to grips with the realities at hand in a Muslim context.

Beyond the inability to adequately perceive Islam as a religion that integrates faith and community and reconciles temporality to eternity, one could mention another factor which lent currency and credibility to misplaced analogies and reinforced the dominant paradigm. The politics of the twentieth century Middle East have been a function of the "refracted" or "prismic" polity.²¹ This would generally refer to a post-

19. Philip Stoddard, "Themes and Variations," in P. Stoddard, D. Cuthell, and M. Sullivan, eds., *Change and the Muslim World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 14.

20. Other than the classic overviews appearing in the early sixties, such as: R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962) and N. Daniel, *Islam and The West: the Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960) and J. Waardenburg, *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'occident* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961); the updated condensation by A. Hourani gives a useful overview: "Western Attitudes towards Islam", in *Europe and The Middle East*, op. cit., 1-18.

21. A concept originally conceived by Fred Riggs in the sixties in his "sala model" for political development: *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society* (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1964) still retains its analytical value. Currently he is involved in a project on the refinement of political concepts: the international/interdisciplinary COCTA (Cooperation in Conceptual and Terminological Analysis). Cf. below, note 63.

colonial entity, whose emasculated institutions, starting with the nation-state itself, were predominantly manned by westernized and pseudo-westernized and westernizing elements. The latter were the beneficiaries as well as the victims of the colonial rupture. (See below). Alienated from the mass culture, and themselves caught in the twilight zone of a post-traditional, pre-modern culture, they would seek the instruments of the modern age, the legacy of the colonial era, to model their societies on the Western metropole. It was not surprising therefore for the idiom of Middle Eastern politics to be a secularizing one. However, the political, social, and cultural realities of the region could hardly be contained within this idiom, and beneath a surface gloss, there was a far more complex core conditioned by the multiple facets of the living Islamic heritage.

3. Islam as Civilization: Form and Essence *The Equidynamics of Culture*

This is one of the multiple facets which could be briefly considered here in view of its implications for the modern setting. While an elaboration on the theme of Islam as the wellspring of civilization in the region is beyond our present scope, yet it is useful to point to the sources of its dynamic thrust in this direction and to indicate some of the attendant consequences. One of the more conspicuous traits about Islamic civilization was its ability not simply to contain diversity, but to positively thrive on it. This was not a matter of imperial expediency, nor was it the outcome of a maturing historical context. To be able to accommodate diversity, it was necessary to have a legitimating principle to this end. To be able to profit from it, it was necessary to have an *ethos* which favoured interaction. In both the one prerequisite and the other Islam played a decisive role. What could have been the sources of its impact?

To begin with, one could cite its attitude to adherents of other religions.²² In view of the paramountcy of the religious bond in the very foundation of its own community, including its political community one would expect an element of exclusiveness that would contest the right of other religious/ideological communities to share its political space. The lessons drawn from Catholic Spain after the *reconquista*, or those

22. A relevant and succinct overview in English is found in C. G. Weeramantry, *Islamic Jurisprudence: An International Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 85-93.