

Tolerance, Radicalism and Muslims

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The philosophy on the basis of which the United States is founded is different from that on which Canada is built. Both countries are nations of immigrants. There is no “American”, in fact. The true American is the Indian – the Red Indian. All the rest – some are coming from Poland, some from the Arab world, some from England, some from... all of them are foreigners. In the science of sociology, the philosophy of America is referred to as the “melting pot theory”: bring all those people from different backgrounds, different cultures, different languages and races, and put them in one pan and light the fire under them to make them one, and call them American. That’s the idea of the melting pot.

In Canada, they do not subscribe to that theory. They follow a theory which they call multiculturalism. Multiculturalism means that each of you, wherever you came from, maintains your own methods – of dress, language, food, and so on. If you would like to dress like a Pakistani, dress like a Pakistani, and no one will look at you in the street as if to say where did that human being come from, or, this person is not Canadian. No one can say that. You eat the food you like, you speak the language you like; there is a salad of languages when

you go to a bazaar, or some place like that. If you go to a store like Sears and you listen to the people talking in the aisles of the store, you hear tens of languages in the same store. Everyone is talking in his own language, not afraid of discrimination; rather, the government policy encourages that. The government encourages that to the extent that there is an advantage which we don’t have here in America. The Canadian government supports the full-time Muslim schools in Canada to the tune of \$1300 a year per child. Why? Because they embrace the multiculturalism theory; they want the people to hold on to different cultures. What they expect from you is that your political loyalty should be with the land where you are living. So if Russia should fight Canada, don’t be on the side of Russia and fight Canada. That’s what they require. Aside from that, you are completely free and encouraged to practice every aspect of your culture. As a result, when you go to Canada, you find that all the people feel that they are foreigners, and no one says, “This city is mine”.

When we apply the above concepts to Islam, we find a group of Muslims, nowadays, that wants to establish Islam as a “melting pot”, and that is the reason why we fail in everything.

Look at the revolution of Iran: it came as an Islamic revolution and every one of us, in his or her heart, was full of hope that Islam is rising. So where is the revolution of Iran now? It's finished! Iran and United States are one – in one basket! Why did the revolution fail? Because of the methods employed to achieve the goal. The goal was very good. No one disagrees with the goal. But the method was wrong. The first decree that was issued by the revolutionary council in Iran was, "Close the bars!" That is not the way. But, we go by appearances, so we applaud the bars being closed. So what if the bars are closed? If you close the bars, does that mean I will stop drinking? I'll manufacture it at home!

If I am a true alcoholic, do you want to tell me to stop drinking in 24 hours? If you do, then, it means you don't *think*. In the hospital they get a person off alcohol step-by-step, and even *give* him alcohol, but in small quantities, until he is detoxified. You cannot come one morning and say, "Close the bars, no drinking; if you drink, we'll lash you 80 times." That's not the way to practice Islam. When people are over-weight, they take that Slimfast to get slim very fast, until they reach their goal, and by that time they are keen on eating again. So, as soon as they reach the goal, they start to eat until they put on more weight than they had lost. Why? Because it happens very quickly. The Prophet, when he preached Islam, gave the Muslims one spoonful of Islam every day. He was supported by the Divine power, but he did not try to preach Islam and change the Arabs into Muslims in one day and one night, or in one year or two years. It took him 23 years. For the greater part of these 23 years, he concentrated on what we call *Al Aqeeda* or the dogma: *La ilaha Illallah Muhammad-ur Rasoolullah*¹ and what it means. So, eventually when the Muslims did acquire Islam, they did not lose it, because they acquired it slowly, step by step, and with priorities. The Prophet didn't come from the first day and impose upon the people to pray five times a day, or to fast. All these things came later and gradually, but present-day Muslims are going by *appearances*, while the Prophet said, "God will not look at your shapes and your looks, but He will look at your hearts and your deeds."

I'm sure every one of you received the *Monitor* this month² in which there is an article I translated from Arabic into English under the title "The Ministers, the Devils, and the

Women in Jordan". What has happened in Jordan is that the Islamic party won the election and the majority of seats in the Parliament. And what was the first decree they issued? "Separate the males and females! Put the women one side and the men on another side because 'where there is a man and a woman, the devil will be the third.'" So, does that solve the problem? I'll meet her in Hudsons.³ I don't need to meet her in the ministry office! We can date each other on the telephone. If you are to practice true Islamic behavior, and to fight the devil, fight it inside – inside your heart and inside your brain – don't fight it outside by assuming a certain *appearance*, and don't shy away from the struggle by separating the men and the women in the ministry offices. I predict that the Jordanian movement will also fail, because by doing this, you antagonize a certain section of the people, and when you antagonize one section, the division and antagonism grows until it ends up with the failure of the movement. Then, the people accuse Islam as unfit for our present time, while Islam is very flexible. I liked that article because it talks about something sensible, so I put it in the *Monitor*.

If I were the head of those people in Jordan, this is what I would do: I'll say, people, I am setting a goal schedule: Islam will be our constitution and our way of life by the year 2050. Then I'll go about making policy changes to achieve that goal. The policy starts with the schools. I'll change the entire curriculum from kindergarten up, thereby creating a new generation of Muslims who are converted as a result of this education – or call it brainwashing, if you like. When that generation reaches the pinnacle of power between 30 or 40 years of age, they will implement that goal because this is how they studied it, this is how they were educated, and this is what they have been exposed to. But our problem is that the fanatics would like to accomplish everything in 24 hours. So we fail. What we lack, as Muslims, are efforts at bringing up a true generation of Muslims. Wherever you go in the Muslim world, you find that people are talking about the skin and leaving the core. That is sometimes due to political reasons; they are scared of the secret police. If the imams talk about anything sensible, the secret police come to the mosque and arrest them after the prayer. But nowadays there is a new development, unheard of in the history of Saudi Arabia. The secret police, present among the congregants, will arrest the imams right from the *mimbar*, without allowing them to even

¹ There is no God but one God, and Muhammad is His messenger

² September/October 1991. The bimonthly publication of the Islamic Center

³ An upscale local department store

complete the khutba, when the imams criticize the royal family.

What we need, when it comes to an Islamic movement, is a long-term plan. You know. . . . The Muslims of Toledo, how did we come to build this mosque? Why did no other community, even many times larger, build something like that? The reason is that we have a committee, since the very beginning, called the Long-term Planning Committee. That long-term planning committee came up with what we call "a dream". There were some people who said, you are crazy, you will never achieve it, and so they opposed that "dream". Other people said yes, the moon starts as a crescent, then it becomes a full moon after 15 days, so in time we will achieve this dream of ours. If you decide to go to Detroit walking, and you walk the first mile, you will pursue your goal and never look back. But if you say I am *planning* to walk to Detroit and you don't take the first step, you'll never get there. I have said it at the start, and I am repeating it now: we, the Muslims, in any non-Muslim country, are like an island in an ocean. The waves are battering it from every side every day. If we don't keep that island intact, if we don't try to build something around it, if we don't keep unity inside that circle, we'll be pushed away and we'll be part of the ocean. And, at that time, we'll not be crying tears, but we'll be crying blood. And it will all be our own mistake.

The world has tried Soviet Unionism but it has failed; Americanism or Capitalism, and it has failed. So, now we are saying there is one way we haven't tried, and we need to try it: that is Islam. There is now what we call an Islamic uprising. Everywhere you go in the world, you find that people are starting to wake up, especially after this war.⁴ Islam is the faith which gathered together the Persians, the Abyssinians, the Arabs, the Andalusian, the Malaysian, and the Pakistani, and melted all of them in one pan under *La ilāha illal-lah, Muhammad-ur Rasoolul-lāh*, and that is the thing we have to struggle for if we are to build our own identity as a group in this life.

We, the Muslims, are always thinking negatively. Everywhere we go, we criticize. It is better to say that the cup is half-full, than to say it is half-empty: that is the difference between thinking positively and thinking negatively. A Saudi man who came and prayed Eid with us, saw this mosque, circled around it, and instead of saying that you people have

done a very good job, God support you and this sort of thing, he said to me: "Did you notice that the wall around the air conditioning units has some crosses in it?" That wall which he is talking about encloses a space where the air conditioning units are housed, and for decoration or ventilation it has some openings in it that are in the shape of a plus sign. It looks like a + not a cross, because the vertical hand of a cross is longer. But, I intended not to go into any explanation of the cross and the + so I made it short and I said to him: "Yes, we asked the builder to make it intentionally." He was shocked and said: "Why? Aren't you Muslim?" I said, "Yes, we are Muslim and we are going by the Qur'anic verse which says, "The word of God is above the word of the kuffar" that is why we have the crescent moon on the top of the minaret, and the cross is down here!" He was very pleased! That is an example of how we think.

There are lots of things in our community here that I don't like, and I don't accept. I would like them to be different – better than they are. But this does not mean that I have to go after them with a stick in my hand. I say, force will never make Islam, and I'll tell you a very nice story. In Saudi Arabia, there is a group that calls itself *Amr bil-ma'ruf wal nahya un-munkar* – the people who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. Each of them has a stick in his hand and their job, when the *adhān*⁵ is heard, is to go out into the streets and hit anyone they see on his or her back, and say to them: "To the mosque! Go and pray!"

There was a man who never prayed in his life and he was in Saudi Arabia visiting a friend. His friend told him he was sure he was going to pray in this country, but the man replied that no power on earth would make him pray. One day the *adhān* was heard while he was walking in the streets in Riyadh, and the *mutawwa* (the one with the stick) came and prodded him all the way to the mosque. He had no choice but to enter the mosque and when the people made *rukū'* he made *rukū'*, when they made *sujood*, he made *sujood*,⁶ and so on. He went through the motions of praying with them. *Assalam-u-Alaykum wa Rahmatullah, Assalam-u-Alaykum wa Rahmatullah*⁷ and his friend, after they finished said to him: "Didn't I tell you that you are going to pray by force in this country?" He replied:

⁵ The call to prayer

⁶ *Rukū'*, and *sujood*: bowing and prostration during prayer (salah)

⁷ Marks the end of the prayer

⁴ 1991 Gulf War

“Who told you I prayed. I was not even in wudu!”⁸

So religion will never come by force. The practice of religion should emanate from the heart. You cannot use scare tactics; you must use the method of persuasion and convincing. If I scare my daughter or my son, and force them to do this or that, then, as soon as I die, they will go back where they used to be. But if I convince them, and I die, they will be scared of the One who will never die, so they will continue on the right way. That is religion.

I'm sure many of you have seen the film *Jihad in America* last Monday,⁹ and, maybe, some of you have attended the meeting on Monroe Street, of the *Tablighi Jama'at*,¹⁰ this weekend, or, at least, heard about it. If you analyze these two situations, you find that they are the two extremes and there is no middle. On the one hand are the *Tablighi Jama'at* who sit all day with the book of hadith, reading and memorizing hadith, and praying 700 raka'ats everyday.¹¹ That's what they do. Ask any of them to pay five dollars to a poor person, and their whole world will turn upside-down. And they leave their families and children for seven, eight, nine months, or one year, in the name of Islam, while there is plenty of opportunity next door to them and they can preach Islam if they want; they don't need to come to America. That is one extreme: concentrating on *'ibadat*¹² – that's it.

On the other hand, *Jihad in America*. . . It is not in favor of us, Muslims – you cannot argue that. But, at the same time, the film does not show anything which we did not say: Muslims talking in Arabic, and translated into English by Muslims, saying, “We'll kill, we'll butcher, we'll do this, and we'll do that”, so, how do you defend yourself? I am a criminal already! I said it! Although I did not do it, but, I said I am going to kill you! So we turn Islam into full-blown politics, on the other extreme.

The Jewish Defense League blew up a mosque in California. They did it quietly and nicely and made an oath by God that they didn't do it; they did not make any claims. They blew up a mosque in New York the same way, while we,

Muslims, don't act, but only brag about doing this or that. Some people are giving Islam a negative image because their Islam is just *'ibadat*, and all the while they are *acting* like devils. Others are preaching Islam as being all politics; full of blood, and full of killing, while Islam is not like that. So we are on the two extremes. What we are looking for is the middle. The Qur'an says, “And thus have We made you to be a community of the middle way. . . .”¹³ – that's Islam – *moderation*: “Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just balance between those extremes.”¹⁴ That is Islam. We are not doing that. What we have to learn from these verses is how to apply that Qur'anic principle in our life and make it the main goal which we should strive for, and forget about these emotions. Wherever you go to our mosques, you find arousing speeches, and just because they would like to play with the emotions of the people, they say “*Allahu Akbar-takbeer-Allahu Akbar*.” This is nonsense – Islam *never* even advocated that; even Islam does not like it. A Jew came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, one day and lifting his sword, said:

“Who can stop me now from killing you, Muhammad?”

He said: “Allah.” The sword fell from his hand. Then, Muhammad picked up the sword, and, in turn, said to the Jew: “Who can stop me from killing you now?”

The Jew replied: “Forgive me, Muhammad.”

He said: “I forgive you.”

The Jew said: “*Ashhadu Allah ilaha illallah wa ashhadu-unna Muhammad-ur Rasulullah*.”¹⁵ This could not be the character of any other than a prophet or messenger who forgives when he has the ability to hurt.”

That's how Islam was preached. It is not by emotional speeches and “*Allahu Akbar-takbeer-Allahu Akbar*.” When Islam spread all over Asia and Europe, it was not through ulama like me or religious scholars. It was through very, very simple people – business people – knocking on doors and selling. Those are the people who spread Islam, but they spread it by their actions, not by their tongues or by their words. Their morality, their ethics, their treatment of others, and their relationships were so unique that the people would ask them, “What is your religion?” Then they would emulate them.

⁸ Ablutions required prior to commencing prayers without which the prayer is invalid

⁹ Documentary aired by PBS November, 1994

¹⁰ A group of self-appointed men who travel all over the world to preach Islam

¹¹ The obligatory five prayers are approximately 26-30 raka'ats per day. Anything over and above that is voluntary

¹² Worshipping [and no actions to benefit the public]

¹³ 2:143

¹⁴ 25:67

¹⁵ I bear witness that there is no God but God, and Muhammad is His messenger

That is how Islam spread. And that is the way we have to follow ourselves if we are to make progress.

So, if our Islamic movements are truly willing to build Islam, we have to learn from the Jews: it took the Jews 2000 years of planning to occupy Palestine and they occupied it wholly and completely, and very soon they will take Syria, Egypt, and Jordan, and they will cross to Al Khaleej¹⁶ and Saudi Arabia, as well. Did you know that there is a book written and published here in the United States by a Jewish man who claims that Jabal Musa,¹⁷ where God talked with Moses, is in Saudi Arabia and not in the Sinai Desert?¹⁸ This book is on the market. This is their plan for the future: you can expect that one day, when you want to visit *all* these Arab countries you'll visit the Israeli embassy here, and have one

visa. You need not circle around in Washington for three weeks to obtain visas. It will be one visa – to Israel – that's the plan. We don't plan. We don't know what we are going to do tomorrow. All we say: "Just live your day, you'll be okay – *tawakkal 'alallāh.*"¹⁹ But you can't put your finger in the hole of the snake and say [when it bites you], "This is the Will of God!" We, the Muslims, believe in destiny, so why plan.²⁰ But we have to learn from the Jews, and remember this always: Muhammad, *'alayhi-s-salato wa-s-salaam*, supported by the power of God, continued 23 years preaching Islam. So it is not a matter of one day and one night, or one year or two years, or 10 years, especially *for people like us*. We have to plan – long range planning – and we have to set our priorities straight.

¹⁶ Arabic name for the Gulf States

¹⁷ The Mountain of Moses

¹⁸ Google search under *Jabal al-Lawz* lists, at least, five archeologists/authors supporting this claim

¹⁹ Depend upon God

²⁰ Imam states this with mock belief and is laughing under his breath