

ISLAM'S WAR ON TERROR

A Historical Consideration

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ABSTRACT

This work will present a case for the argument that Islam is one of the best things that happened to mankind. This task will be accomplished by highlighting the evidence of effective Islamic justice and tolerance the world enjoyed for centuries. It will be seen in what follows that the Muslims, when in power, offered fair terms to the Other (Jews and Christians) and that the purpose of these terms/treaties was to uphold justice and protection of the weak. Some of the contemporary non-Muslim testimonies will also be discussed to show that these treaties were successfully implemented. Evidence from later periods will also be presented to underline the consistency of tolerant Muslim behaviour towards the Other. The paper will argue that the good fruits of Islamic justice and peace are a product of the teachings of the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition (the Hadith). One will see that the peace and justice emanating from the Islamic system produced some of the most civilised societies in the history of mankind. Even the Europeans benefited from the knowledge and experience of the Muslim civilisation. The evidence will show that the advent the Prophet of Islam ﷺ was indeed one of the best occurrences in history.

INTRODUCTION

Pope Gregory (594 CE), a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, lamented:

What is there now, I ask of delight in this world? Everywhere we observe strife; fields are depopulated, the land has returned to solitude...And yet the blows of Divine justice have no end, because among the blows those guilty of evil acts are not corrected...¹

Gregory was referring to the oppression and tyranny he was facing at the hands of the Lombards and he was bemoaning the pitiful condition of his world, the world of the city of Rome. The pontiff was not alone in his lament, as almost every society in the world was experiencing some oppression and injustice. Syrian Orthodox Christians were witnessing heavy persecution due to their differences with the ruling Byzantine Chalcedonian Church. The Egyptian Orthodox Coptic Church was facing a similar fate and Jews were on the brink of extinction at the hands of the Catholic Church in Spain. Some rescue effort to liberate the world from this reign of tyranny was necessary; the promise of God (Isaiah 42) to fill the earth with justice was soon to be delivered and then a book that shook the world was sent with a man from the children of Kedar (the second son of Ishmael, Genesis 25:13) born in the city of Mecca. The book proclaimed loud and clear:

And We have sent you (O Muhammad [SA]) not but as a mercy for the worlds.²

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was born in 571 and within a century of his birth the promised mercy was delivered. The foretold peace and justice was not only delivered to the Arabs, but the whole world reaped the fruits of this blessing from God. The Arabs were a people without any set moral values. Their moral values and rules emanated from ancient semi-barbaric traditions of their forefathers and were subject to change only if the powerful consented. These were a people who used to bury their daughters alive just because they were girls, not boys. Upon enquiry, the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ, Ja'far bin Abi Talib, informed the king of Abyssinia about the barbarity of his people and the positive change Islam had brought for them:

O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not associate anything with him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. We confessed his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God without associating aught with him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and

came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you O King.³

This is one of the most eloquent defenses of any religion in history. Ja'far not only painted an accurate picture of the Arabian society for his audience in the Abyssinian royal court, he also defended what he deemed to be better than the abominations of his people. To Ja'far Islam was a call of mercy and spiritual prosperity while the way of his forefathers was death and darkness. The people of Arabia were transformed within few decades and they became the torch bearers of a new civilization in the world, a civilization that changed the course of human history forever. The followers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ liberated not only their own people from the prevalent tyrannical socio-political order, they also brought freedom to the neighboring world. The promised mercy and justice was manifested through them and their initiative; a war on oppression, tyranny and terror was declared in the Qur'an. The following paragraphs will shed some light upon one of the most effective wars on terror in the history of mankind.

A SEVENTH CENTURY WAR ON TERROR

The Muslims pushed forward with the Islamic call immediately after the demise of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ had taught his followers that “*none of you will have faith till he wishes for his brother what he likes for himself*”⁴. The Muslims loved peace and justice for themselves and wished to share it with others. Also, the Qur'an stipulated that Muslims must help the oppressed at all cost:

And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women and children, whose cry is: “Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will help us”⁵

The Muslims were thus charged to help the oppressed people of the world. History testifies to the fact that the Muslim armies rescued the populations of Syria, Egypt, Spain and Persia from a reign of tyranny, as will be amply demonstrated below. Those who were liberated prayed for the Muslim armies and their success. When the Muslims had taken some parts of the Sassanid Empire, Ishoyabh III, the Nestorian Patriarch of Khurasan, stated in a letter to

Simeon, the Prelate of Persia, that:

...and the Arabs, to whom God at this time has given the empire of the world, behold, they are among you, as ye know well: and yet they attack not the Christian faith, but, on the contrary, they favour our religion, do honour to our priests and the saints of the Lord, and confer benefits on churches and monasteries.⁶

Here Ishoyabh is simply acknowledging the facts on the ground. He made this statement to remind Christians to stick with their faith, as Muslims do not force them to convert. Muslims fought the Persian Empire so that the masses can hear the word of truth and gain freedom from oppressive rulers. Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabri's (d. 923) annals of Islamic history provide an example of this in one of the diplomatic exchanges between the Muslim representative, Rib'i bin Amir al-Tamimi, and the Persian General (Rustam), which took place just before the battle of Qadsiyah (636). It was this battle which caused the downfall of the Sassanid Empire. In response to Rustam's query as to why the Muslims had come to Persia, Rib'i stated the motives of his mission:

Allah has sent us and brought us here so that we may free those who desire from servitude to earthly rulers and make them servants of God that we may change their poverty into wealth and free them from tyranny of [false] religions and bring them to the justice of Islam. He has sent us to bring his religion to all His creatures and to call them to Islam. Whoever accepts it from us will be safe and we shall leave him alone but whoever refuses we shall fight until we fulfill the promise of God.⁷

The promise of God was to bring justice and peace to the world. Hugh Kennedy confirms that the alternatives offered by the Muslims to the enemy were *conversion, submission and the payment of taxes, or continuing war*.⁸ Michael Bonner agreed: *'When Muslim armies encountered non-Muslims outside the lands already under the rule of Islam, they were supposed to offer them the choice of conversion to Islam; payment of jizya and acceptance of dhimmi status; or trying the fortunes of war'*.⁹ Hence the purpose of the Muslim struggle was not to convert people forcefully, rather the aim was to establish Islamic hegemony by removing despotic tyrants so that the masses can hear the word of Islam and make a voluntary choice. Those who accepted Islam were embraced as brothers and others were allowed to live in peace. This much is clear historically that exploitation and plunder of resources usually followed an invasion. Nothing

much has changed, as recent wars have demonstrated the reality of human greed to attain wealth and power at the expense of thousands of human lives. Muslims were not perfect but they were, arguably, better than all other contestants in this regard. The followers of Muhammad ﷺ not only liberated hundreds of thousands of people, they also brought prosperity and progress to the masses of freed lands. Even some of the Enlightenment thinkers acknowledged what Islam had done for mankind. Adam Smith (whose portrait is illustrated on the back of current British £20 note), the 18th century founding father of the modern capitalism, had appreciated Islam as follows:

The ruin of the empire of the Romans, and, along with it the subversion of all law and order, which happened a few centuries afterwards, produced the entire neglect of that study of the connecting principles of nature, to which leisure and security can alone give occasion. After the fall of those great conquerors and the civilizers of mankind, the empire of the **Caliphs** seems to have been the first state under which the world enjoyed that degree of tranquility which the cultivation of the sciences requires. It was under the protection of those generous and magnificent princes, that the ancient philosophy and astronomy of the Greeks were restored and established in the East; that tranquility, which their **mild, just and religious government** diffused over their vast empire, revived the curiosity of mankind, to inquire into the connecting principles of nature.¹⁰

Adam Smith (1723-1790) was one of the most outstandingly intelligent economists of his time. His works such as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* are thought to be the cornerstone of western literature. The latter work (studied as a reference point to this day) seems to be very much concerned with an inquiry into how nations might acquire success and prosperity. Some of the ways of acquiring prosperity and scientific advancement, which he expressed in the aforementioned quote, are through a sense of security, tranquillity and justice, and he believed that the **mild, just and religious government** of the Muslim Caliphs (who governed with *Shariah Law*) made all of that possible. He went even further and reminded the Europeans of the benefits they had reaped from the civilisation of Islam:

The victorious arms of the Saracens carried into Spain the **learning**

as well as the gallantry, of the East; and along with it, the tables of Almamon, and the **Arabian translations** of Ptolemy and Aristotle; and thus Europe received a second time, from Babylon, the rudiments of the sciences of the heavens. The writings of Ptolemy were **translated from Arabic into Latin**; and the Peripatetic philosophy was studied in Averroes [Ibn Rushd] and Avicenna [Ibn Sina] with as much eagerness and as much submission to its doctrines in the West, as it had been in the East.¹¹

Adam Smith was not alone and certainly wasn't the last one to recognise the fruits of Islam and their significance for the material as well as spiritual well being of mankind. The following paragraphs will illustrate as to how Islam's war on terror and tyranny awakened mankind to recognise its true potential to attain peace and justice. Ignorance and fear however were tools used by the oppressors of mankind; Islam replaced them with love and enlightenment. It is this enlightenment which is much needed today, as the world is facing the same corrupting forces today as it was facing in the seventh century. One needs not to be a rocket scientist to recognise the fact that if Islam could do it then, it certainly is able to do it again today. God was Merciful then, He is certainly as Loving today. It will be seen that the Muslims offered fair terms to the Other and these terms enabled the masses to co-exist in peace. This peace and sense of security consequently produced one of the most successful civilisations in the history of the world. The following pages will discuss how the Muslims liberated the lands of Syria, Egypt and Spain from a reign of terror.

SYRIA RESCUED FROM BYZANTINE TERROR

The land of Syria was in very close vicinity to the Arabian Desert. The Prophet ﷺ and his companions had had encounters with the Byzantines, who were governing the land of as-Shaam (consisting of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine) at the time. Following the death of the Prophet ﷺ, in the reign of the second Caliph, Umar bin Khattab, the Muslim armies began liberating the people of Syria. The Christians of Syria were divided in many different denominations and almost all of them were facing severe persecution at the hands of the ruling Byzantine Melkite Chalcedonian Church. Monophysites, Jacobites and Nestorians were facing the wrath of the Byzantine/Roman might. When Heraclius, the emperor, attempted to unite the Christians by hook or by crook, his initiatives were rejected and hence the threat of persecution. Thomas Walker Arnold stated that:

Indeed, so bitter was the feeling he [the emperor] aroused that there

is strong reason to believe that even a majority of the orthodox subjects of the Roman Empire, in the provinces that were conquered during this emperor's reign, were the well-wishers of the Arabs; they regarded the emperor with aversion as a heretic, and were afraid that he might commence a persecution in order to force upon them his Monotheletic opinions. They therefore readily – and even eagerly – received the new masters who promised them religious toleration, and were willing to compromise their religious positions and their national independence if only they could free themselves from the immediately impending danger.¹²

Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, a Jacobite (or a Syrian Orthodox Christian) patriarch from 818 to 845, also discussed some reasons as to why the Syrian masses preferred Muslims over Byzantines. He stated in his chronicle, which covers the period from 582 to 842, that Heraclius mustered three hundred thousand men from Armenia, Syria and the Roman heartlands to expel the Muslims out of Syria. Muslims decided to withdraw from cities to fight an open pitch battle. However, whilst pulling back, the Muslims decided, out of fairness, to refund the money which they had taken as tribute from the Syrian Christians:

Abu Ubaydah, whom Umar had put in command of the Arabs, ordered Habib b. Maslama to return to the Emesenes the tribute which he had exacted from them with this message: “We are both bound by our mutual oaths. Now we are going to do battle with the Romans. If we return, this tribute is ours; but if we are defeated and do not return, we are absolved of our oaths.” So they left Emessa for Damascus; and the emir Abu Ubaydah ordered Saeed b. Kulthum to return the tribute to the Damascenes likewise...To them he said: “If we return victorious we shall take it back. But if we are defeated and prove powerless to save you from the Romans, here is your tribute, keep it. We for our part shall be absolved of the oaths which we have sworn to you.”¹³

This was an unprecedented demonstration of honesty and justice. The non-Muslims pay the Jizya tax so that their lives, honour, religion, intellect and property are protected. In this case Muslims knew that they were unable to protect the Christians of Syria due to an

imminent attack by Heraclius. It was not fair to keep the money in the absence of any ability to protect the masses. Also, one must note that this was taking place in seventh century Syria where plunder, robbery and injustice were a common occurrence and the Muslims had shocked the Syrians with their merciful conduct. Another point worth mentioning is that this incident is narrated by a ninth century Christian source, which testifies that the Muslims did not abuse power and they did not betray the trust Christians had bestowed upon them. Thomas Arnold adds, from an Islamic source (Abu Yusuf, *Kitabul Khiraj* [Book of the Taxes]), that:

In accordance with this order, enormous sums were paid back out of the state treasury, and the Christians called down blessings on the heads of the Muslims, saying, “May God give you rule over us again and make you victorious over the Romans; had it been they, they would not have given us back anything, but would have taken all that remained with us”¹⁴

It is difficult to imagine that the Christians would pray for the return of the Muslims, especially when one considers the fact that the latter were confronting a Christian enemy, the Byzantines. Why did the Muslims return such big sums to the Christians? Why didn't they keep this wealth when they needed it the most, as they were facing a huge army? Who did they fear, as the Christians of Syria were not able to overpower them? The response to all these perplexing questions is that the Muslims feared God and followed his injunctions, which can be found in the Qur'an:

Verily, Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching, which He gives you! Truly, Allah is ever all- Hearer, all-Seer.¹⁵

Dionysius confirms what Arnold quoted from Abu Yusuf above:

So the Arabs left Damascus and pitched camp by the river Yarmuk. As the Romans marched towards the Arab camp every city and village on their way which had surrendered to the Arabs shouted threats at them. As for crimes the Romans committed on their passage, they are unspeakable, and their unseemliness ought not even to be brought to mind...The Arabs returned, elated with their great

victory, to Damascus; and the Damascenes greeted them outside the city and **welcomed them joyfully** in, and all treaties and assurances were reaffirmed.¹⁶

It is very clear from what was discussed above that the Muslims not only came to Syria with an intention to liberate the masses from the Byzantine terror but they also enabled all Christian denominations to live in peace thereafter. The Christians of Syria preferred the Muslim rule over the oppressive Byzantine hegemony, as the Muslims had brought justice and good governance vis-à-vis the Roman tyranny. One cannot imagine the conquered welcoming the conqueror “joyfully”. It happened in Syria once upon a time.

EGYPT SAVED FROM CHALCEDONIAN PERSECUTION

Egypt was also governed by the Byzantines and the fate of the masses there was no different to what had happened in Syria. The ruling Church was utterly against the existence of any doctrinal dissent. The Egyptians were mostly Jacobites and did not agree with the Greek Byzantine Chalcedonian version of Christianity. The result of this disagreement was heavy persecution at the hands of the ruling elite. Arnold summarised the situation as follows:

The Jacobites, who formed the majority of the Christian population, had been very roughly handled by the Orthodox adherents of the court and subjected to indignities that have not been forgotten by their children even to the present day. Some were tortured and then thrown into the sea; many followed their Patriarch into exile to escape from the hands of their persecutors, while a large number disguised their real opinions under a pretended acceptance of the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁷

When the Muslims arrived in Egypt, led by ‘Amr bin al-‘Aas, they were greeted as liberators and the Copts supported their intervention. According to Dionysius, the Coptic Patriarch submitted Egypt voluntarily to the Muslims:

We have found in the tales and stories of Egyptians that Benjamin, the Patriarch of the Orthodox in Egypt at the time, delivered the

country to the Arab general Amr b. al-As out of antipathy, that is enmity, towards Cyrus, the Chalcedonian (Byzantine) Patriarch in Egypt.¹⁸

This enmity was obviously fuelled by the persecution of the Copts. John of Nikiu (690), a Coptic bishop in Nikiu (Egypt), was perhaps one of the sources of “*the tales and stories*” referred to by Dionysius above. John also asserted that one of the reasons of the Muslim success in Egypt was the hatred of the masses for the Byzantines:

When Muslims saw the weakness of the Romans and the hostility of the people to the emperor Heraclius because of the persecution wherewith he had visited all the land of Egypt in regard to the orthodox faith at the instigation of Cyrus the Chalcedonian Patriarch [in office 631/2-41], they became bolder and stronger in the war...And people began to help the Muslims.¹⁹

In some cases the Egyptians not only refused to fight the Muslims,²⁰ they facilitated the conquest. It is to be noted that these are contemporary Christian sources testifying that the Muslims were actually greeted by the Egyptian Coptic Christians. If the Byzantine had treated the masses with respect and dignity, only then the Jacobite Coptic population of Egypt would have considered fighting the Muslims. It was the tolerant attitude of the Muslims and the barbarity of the Byzantines which facilitated the rapid downfall of the latter in the land of the Pharaohs. John of Nikiu reported elsewhere in his chronicle that the Muslims destroyed some places because they met with stiff resistance (often from the Byzantines who didn't wish to give up Egypt, a rich fertile land, so easily). Some of the secondary treatments of the history of Egypt at the time of the Muslim conquests take this information with caution, as the bigger picture presents a different view. It must be noted here, however, that even in war, when they might be facing severe opposition, Muslims are not allowed to kill women, children, elderly and non-combatants. This is clearly outlined in the Muslim constitution, the Holy Qur'an:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but **do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.**²¹

Also, in another place the Qur'an instructs the Muslims with regard to those non-Muslims who do not fight them because of their faith:

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for

(your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, **from dealing kindly and justly with them:** for Allah loveth those who are just.²²

Muslims are not supposed to fight anyone who desires peace and co-existence and in the absence of any religious hostility and persecution, they are commanded to be kind to all. It is evident from the verses above that the Muslims, even in war, cannot kill indiscriminately. Atrocities and destruction of any kind are utterly forbidden in Islam. Even animals cannot be killed unless they are going to be consumed as food. Targeting women and children is out of the question. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ left clear instructions for his followers as to what transgression in war constitutes. In the book of Sahih al-Bukhari it is narrated on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar that:

In one of the Maghazi [battles where the Prophet was present in person] a woman who had been killed was seen. The Prophet ﷺ forbade the killing of women and children.²³

The Prophet ﷺ had taught his companions well and had warned them to be careful with regards to the rights of humans as well as animals. Abu Bakr (r. 632-34 CE), the first successor of the Prophet ﷺ, instructed the Muslim army to observe the following rules, while on an expedition heading towards Syria:

I advise you ten things: Do not kill women or children or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place. Do not slaughter sheep or camels except for food. Do not burn bees and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly.²⁴

These are the rules of war in Islam and they cannot be overstepped. One of the greatest commentators of the Qur'an, Ibn Katheer, when commenting on the verse 190 of Surah 2 (see above), clarified the meaning of transgression in war:

'Then Allah (ST) states that he does not like the transgressors. Meaning, **do not** disobey Allah, **do not** mutilate, betray and steal; **do not** kill women and children; **do not** kill those elderly who are neither able to fight nor take part in it; **do not** kill monks and those who are in seclusion; **do not**, unnecessarily, cut the trees nor kill

animals and this is how Ibn Abbas, Umar bin Abdul Aziz and Muqatil bin Hayyan commented on this verse.’²⁵

When Muslim armies advanced into other lands, this was the attitude they demonstrated and in most cases these rules were obeyed and upheld. These rules came from the Messenger of God ﷺ and by extension from Allah (God) himself. It is for this reason that some scholars take information from the ecclesiastical chroniclers (who were in most cases hostile toward the Muslim cause) with a big pinch of salt. Alfred J. Butler, whose work on the Arab Conquest of Egypt is to this day an authoritative reference point, studied the relevant chronicles and made many profound statements pertaining to the Islamic leadership’s tolerance and protection of the Christian population. Such as:

After all that the Copts had suffered at the hands of the Romans and the Patriarch Cyrus, it would not have been unnatural if they had desired to retaliate upon the Melkites [the Romans]. But any such design, if they cherished it, was sternly discountenanced by ‘Amr, [the Muslim conqueror of Egypt] whose government was **wisely tolerant** but perfectly impartial between the two forms of religion. Many facts might be cited in proof of this contention...two forms of Christianity must be imagined as subsisting side by side under the **equal protection** of the conquerors.²⁶

It would seem, therefore, that in matters ecclesiastical the Copts were granted every reasonable **freedom**.²⁷

That the early government of ‘Amr was animated by a spirit of **justice** and even **sympathy** for the subject population, can hardly be questioned.²⁸

Butler, as a historian, was certainly convinced that the Islamic hegemony brought effective protection for all denominations of Christianity in Egypt. If it wasn’t for the successful arbitration of the Islamic leadership, the Jacobites would have loved to annihilate the ruling Melkite Church in revenge. Arnold goes as far as to suggest that the Copts preferred the Muslims over the Byzantines: *‘The rapid success of the Arab invaders was largely due to the welcome they received from the native Christians, who hated the Byzantine rule not only for its oppressive administration, but also – and chiefly – on account of the bitterness of theological*

*rancour...to the Copts, as the Jacobite Christians of Egypt are called, the Muhammadan conquest brought a freedom of religious life such as they had not enjoyed for a century.*²⁹ This is exactly what had occurred in Syria. The Syrians preferred the Muslims so did the Egyptians. It was the justice of Islam that appealed to both populations. Butler also narrates a fascinating repeat of the Muslim honesty in Egypt, whereby they returned the tribute (Jizya) to the Christian population of Alexandria following the Muslim recapture of the city (after the Romans had taken the city back once it had submitted to Muslims):

One characteristic anecdote must not be passed over in silence. After the recapture of Alexandria, the Copts of the various Delta villages which had been ruthlessly plundered by the Roman army, came to 'Amr and complained that while they had stood loyal to the Arabs as bound under treaty, they had not received the protection to which under the same treaty they were entitled, and in consequence they had suffered severely. The justice of this remonstrance is obvious: but it is not every victorious general whose conscience would be troubled by such a protest. Of 'Amr, however, it is recorded that he was struck with remorse, and exclaimed: "Would that I had encountered the Romans as soon as they issued forth from Alexandria!" What is more, **he at once ordered full compensation to be paid to the Copts for all their losses.** This frank admission of responsibility and frank restitution prove at once the excellence of 'Amr's principles of government and the nobility of his nature.³⁰

It is evident from the historical record presented above that the Muslims liberated the masses of Egypt from the terror of the Byzantine Church. The Copts not only welcomed the Muslims, they facilitated the conquest by joining the ranks of the conquerors. The primary as well as the secondary sources both confirm that the rule of the Islamic government was tolerant and progressive, unlike what the Byzantines had to offer. Muslims were bound by a certain code of conduct and they did their best to adhere to it. This behaviour of the Muslims was not accidental; rather this is exactly how they intended to do things. This is evident from the consistency of their conduct in different lands in different times. The people of Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal) were also, just like the Egyptians and the Syrians, facing severe conditions at the hands of their ruling elite. The Muslims brought the mercy of God to the people al-Andalus and the promise was duly fulfilled.

SPAIN LIBERATED FROM VISIGOTHIC TYRANNY

Muslims landed in Spain in 711 and many sources testify that they were welcomed by the population, as their reputation preceded them. This was, again, due to the severe persecution certain communities were facing therein. Under the Visigothic kings' rule (following their conversion to Catholicism from Arianism), the Jewish community, in particular, was severely oppressed. The Catholic hierarchy in Spain held many ecumenical councils to solve political and religious disputes and in these councils (many held in Toledo), severe edicts were issued against the Jews of Spain. One of the clauses in the text of the proceedings of the Fourth Council of Toledo (633 CE) states:

We decree that the sons and daughters of the Jews should be separated from the company of their parents in order that they should not become further entangled in their deviation, and entrusted either to monasteries or to Christian, God fearing men and women, in order that they should learn from their way of life to venerate the faith and, educated on better things, progress in their morals as well as their faith.³¹

Hence, the children of the Jews were to be forcefully converted to Catholicism and the parents were left mourning hopelessly. Jews weren't the only ones facing the tyranny but they were easy targets due to their distinct way of life. So, when the Muslims arrived, Jews were the first people to greet them as God-sent saviors. Zion Zohar, a Jewish American historian, confirms the appreciation Jews felt for the Muslim arrival:

Thus, when Muslims crossed the straits of Gibraltar from North Africa in 711 CE and invaded the Iberian Peninsula, Jews welcomed them as liberators from Christian Persecution.³²

This was the beginning of the Golden Age as far as the Jews were concerned. Muslims behavior in Spain was no different to their conduct in Syria and Egypt. They facilitated freedom of religion for all people regardless of any differences. This was a golden opportunity for the Jews to flourish and make progress. Prior to the Muslim arrival, the Jews couldn't imagine having religious freedom, as they were facing extinction at the hands of the Catholic Church. Zion Zohar summarized the benefits Jews reaped from the Muslim

protection as follows:

Born during this era of **Islamic rule**, the famous **Golden Age** of Spanish Jewry (circa 900-1200) produced such luminaries as: statesman and diplomat Hasdai ibn Shaprut, vizier and army commander Shmuel ha-Nagid, poet-philosophers Solomon Ibn Gabriol and Judah Halevi, and at the apex of them all, Moses Ben Maimon, also known among the Spaniards as Maimonides.³³

Thus the Islamic rule proved to be one of the best things in the history of Spanish Jewry. Every single Jewish individual mentioned by Zion Zohar excelled in his respective field. Hasdai ibn Shaprut, for instance, was vizier to one of the most powerful Caliphs (Abdur Rahman III) in Spanish history. Shmuel (or Samuel) ha-Nagid also attained a high political post in the Kingdom of Granada. Maimonides (also known as the second Moses) was a man of philosophy and literature in his own right. He is the one who penned *The Guide for the Perplexed*, one of the best works on the philosophy of religion. All of these men were born during the Golden Age of Islamic Spain. Heinrich Graetz, a nineteenth century Jewish historian expressed similar sentiments regarding Muslims in Spain:

It was in these favourable circumstances that the Spanish Jews came under the rule of Mahometans, as whose allies they esteemed themselves the equals of their co-religionists in Babylonia and Persia. They were kindly treated, obtained religious liberty, of which they had so long been deprived, were permitted to exercise jurisdiction over their co-religionists, and were only obliged, like the conquered Christians, to pay poll tax (Dsimma)'...³⁴ Jewish Spain became "the place of civilization and of spiritual activity- a garden of fragrant, joyous, and happy poetry, as well as the seat of earnest research and clear thought." Like the Arabian Christians (the Christians who lived amongst the Mahometans) the Jews made themselves acquainted with the language and literature of their conquerors, and often got precedence over them. But whilst Arabian Christians gave up their own individuality, forgot their own language- Gothic Latin- and could not even read the creeds, and were

ashamed of Christianity, the Jews of Spain were so little affected through this contact with Arabs, that it only served to increase their love and enthusiasm for their mother tongue, their holy law, and their religion. Through favourable circumstances Jewish Spain was in a position at first to rival Babylonia, then to supersede it, and finally to maintain its superiority for nearly five hundred years.³⁵

The Spanish Jews reached such a high level of learning and progress that they could now claim to be the leaders of the world Jewry. The Jews were certainly saved from extinction by the Muslim mercy and protection and the Islamic conquest of Spain rid the masses of the terror of the Visigoths. Some polemicists, however, disagree with the above "idealised" version of events in Spain at the time of the Muslim conquest.³⁶ They argue that the Islamic conquests were in fact like any other conquest, which caused much misery and disasters and they cite the following much exhausted passage (from the earliest Christian record of the events) in their support:

Musa himself... entered the long plundered and Godlessly invaded Spain, to destroy it...he imposed on the adjacent regions an evil and fraudulent peace...he ruined beautiful cities, burning them with fire; condemned lords and powerful men to the cross, and butchered youths and infants with swords...³⁷

This description of the Islamic conquest of Spain seems to be excessively exaggerated in light of some earlier contemporary material (see the treaty of Spain below) and the modern treatments of this period. Most recent historians, of course with the exception of religiously zealous and polemically enthusiastic writers, believe the contrary. For example, Thomas Arnold insists that *'such statement is too frequent a commonplace of the ecclesiastical historian to be accepted in the absence of contemporary evidence...of forced conversion or anything like persecution in the early days of the Arab conquest, we hear nothing. Indeed, it was probably in a great measure their tolerant attitude towards the Christian religion that facilitated their rapid acquisition of the country.'*³⁸ Arnold's assessment appears to be quite reasonable when the views of Reinhart Dozy, an authority on the history of Early Islamic Spain, are considered who asserts that *'the unbounded tolerance of the Arabs must also be taken into account. In religious matters they put pressure on no man...Christians preferred their rule to that of the Franks.'*³⁹ And Burke further strengthens Arnold's conclusions: *'Christians did not suffer in any way, on account of their religion, at the hands of Moors...not only perfect toleration but nominal equality was the rule of the Arabs in Spain.'*⁴⁰

Hence, despite what the chronicle of 754 states, major authorities in the field appear to be in agreement that the Arab conquests were in fact free of any religious persecution and barbarity. This tolerance and justice had an immense impact on the Christian population of Spain, many of them converted to Islam and others adopted the Islamic culture, literature and lifestyle. This is categorically substantiated by the ninth century Spanish Christian writer, Paul Alvarus (who was writing in the 850's at Cordova):

The Christians love to read the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the Arab theologians and philosophers, not to refute them but to form a correct and elegant Arabic. Where is the layman who now reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, or who studies the Gospels, prophets or apostles? Alas! All talented young Christians read and study with enthusiasm the Arab books; they gather immense libraries at great expense; they despise the Christian literature as unworthy of attention. They have forgotten their own language. For every one who can write a letter in Latin to a friend, there are a thousand who can express themselves in Arabic with elegance, and write better poems in his language than the Arabs themselves.⁴¹

Paul Alvarus was a clergy himself and his purpose in the above passage was not to praise Islam and its effects rather he was bemoaning the Christian inclination towards the culture of Islam. Due to a growing number of Christians embracing Islam and the attraction of the Islamic academic culture, some of the Catholic leadership was seriously concerned about this situation. Jessica A. Coope, in her book *Martyrs of Cordoba*, also makes the same point:

The worst fear of the radicals was that Christians would not only work for Muslims and read Arabic literature but would eventually convert to Islam; a man who associated too long with Muslims was liable to turn into one himself.⁴²

Some Christians decided to take action and a "Martyrs Movement" (see Coope, *Martyrs*) was initiated to halt the rapid conversion rate. These measures, however, did not make a difference and Christians continued to convert to Islam. The Islamic civilization of Spain inspired many historians and poets to lift their pens to pay their tribute to one of the best achievements in the history of mankind. Maria Rosa Menocal, one of the authorities on medieval European literature, authored a book to pay her respect to the peaceful co-

existence between three Abrahamic faiths in medieval Spain and she titled it the *Ornament of the world*.⁴³ This phrase was used by Hroswitha (a tenth century German nun) to describe the spectacle of Islamic Spain.⁴⁴ Indeed, al-Andalus was and this ornament of the world, and it was destroyed upon the departure of the Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula, as Burke puts it painfully:

The institutions that had flourished under the Moslem, died when the Moslem departed; and after four centuries of light and learning, Andalusia fell back, under the Christian rule, into a condition of ignorance and barbarism, nearly, if not quite, equal to that of the north western provinces of the peninsula.⁴⁵

It is abundantly clear from the evidence seen above that the Muslim conquest of Spain initiated one of the brightest episodes in the history of man. Darkness of terror and barbarity reigned over the Iberian Peninsula prior to the Muslim arrival. The mercy of Islam liberated the Jews and the Christian population of Spain. What followed was “the Golden Age” of Islam as described by Zion Zohar. Some of the Jewish authors argued that the Jewish living standards in Spain were sometimes better than what the Muslims experienced (see Ibn Paqudah, appendix). Even the Christians preferred the Muslim hegemony over what historians termed as “Frankish rule”. Having seen the evidence, one cannot deny that this was the promise of God in fulfillment:

And We have sent you (O Muhammad ﷺ) not but as a mercy for the worlds.

HOW DID MUSLIMS DO IT SO FAST?

It may be puzzling to some, who may question how the Muslims were able to conquer such large portions of land so rapidly (the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ died in 632 and a century later the Muslims had reached Poitiers, northern France)? This rapid expansion was phenomenal and couldn't have been humanly possible, especially when one considers the poor military capacity of the Arabs in the seventh century. As far as the early Muslims were concerned, they were simply tools in the fulfillment of God's promise and to them, this expansion was already foretold in the Qur'an; God made a promise of an imminent victory in the Qur'an:

Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous

good deeds, that he will certainly grant them succession [to the present rulers] in the land, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them authority to practise their religion which he has chosen for them [Islam].⁴⁶

History bears witness that this is precisely what occurred and here one must note that the Arabs, at the time, were the least able people to achieve this, primarily due to the lack of military equipment and resources. The Arabs were told in the Qur'an that they will overpower the temporal forces of this world so long as they believe and do righteous deeds. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ also confirmed what the Qur'an had prophesied and informed his followers of an imminent victory over the Persians as Narrated by 'Adi bin Hatim (one of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ):

The Prophet said: If you should live long, the treasures of Khosrau [Chosroes II] will be opened (and taken as spoils). I asked: You mean Khosrau, son of Hurmuz? He said: Khosrau, son of Hurmuz; and if you should live long, you will see that one will carry a handful of gold or silver and go out looking for a person to accept it from him, but will find none to accept it from him...I was one of those who opened (conquered) the treasures of Khosrau, son of Hurmuz.⁴⁷

'Adi confirmed that he witnessed the prophecy fulfilled, as when the Persian Capital Ctesiphon was taken by the Muslims, 'Adi was alive. There is no doubt that the early Muslims attributed their astonishing success to the promise of Allah. Even Christian writers attributed this rapid expansion of the Islamic Caliphate to Divine intervention. John Bar Penkaye (690), a contemporary of the early Islamic conquests, had this to say:

We should not think of the advent (of the children of Hagar) as something ordinary, but as due to divine working. Before calling them, (God) had prepared them beforehand to hold Christians in honour; thus they also had a special commandment from God concerning our monastic station, that they should hold it in honour. Now when these people came, at God's command, and took over as it were **both kingdoms**, not with any war or battle, but in a menial fashion, such as when a brand is rescued out of the fire, not using

weapons of war or human means, God put victory into their hands in such a way that the words written them might be fulfilled, namely, “One man chased a thousand and two routed ten thousand.” **How otherwise, could naked men, riding without armour or shield, have been able to win, apart from divine aid, God having called them from the ends of the earth so as to destroy, by them “a sinful kingdom” and to bring low, through them, the proud spirit of the Persians.**⁴⁸

John cannot see any other reasons for the rapid expansion of Islam than God’s direct involvement. He observed that semi-dressed Bedouins cannot possibly do this alone; God must be on their side. Byzantines and the Persians were utterly uprooted by these ill-equipped nomads. Some of the most renowned academics (in the field of Early Islamic Conquests) are perplexed to this day as to what exactly caused such a rapid expansion of Islam.⁴⁹ Johnston, however, attributes this phenomenal turn of events to the religion of Islam:

Seldom, if ever, has a set of ideas had so great an effect on human societies as Islam has done, above all in the first half of the seventh century. In little more than twenty years, the religious and political configuration of Arabia was changed out of all recognition. Within another twenty all of the rich, highly developed, militarily powerful world enveloping Arabia was conquered, save for Asia Minor and north Africa.⁵⁰

Johnston’s assessment is not void of sense, as it was the emergence of the Qur’an among the semi-civilised tribes of Arabia that changed their outlook on life. Once selfish, greedy and cruel, the Arabs were transformed into sensible, sincere and dedicated torch bearers of peace and justice. It was the Qur’an which awakened the nomads to the purpose of their existence. They were to manifest the promised mercy of God. Most historians, however, do not entertain Divine intervention as a logical or even a scientific hypothesis. They require a historical justification which is based upon political as well as socio-economic factors. In light of this there is a very reasonable explanation. The Muslims, when expanding, treated the non-Muslim inhabitants of the conquered lands with a previously uncharted level of tolerance, which in consequence encouraged the non-Muslim societies to embrace the approaching armies with open arms. Professor Thomas Walker Arnold gives an interesting account of such an occurrence:

When the Muslim army reached the valley of the Jordan and Abu Ubaydah pitched his camp at Fihl, the Christian inhabitants of the country wrote to the Arabs, saying: "O Muslims, we prefer you to the Byzantines, though they are of our own faith, because you keep better faith with us and are more merciful to us and refrain from doing us injustice and your rule over us is better than theirs, for they have robbed us of our goods and our homes." The people of Emessa closed the gates of their city against the army of Heraclius and told the Muslims that they preferred their government and justice to the injustice and oppression of the Greeks. Such was the state of feelings in Syria during the campaign of 633-639 in which the Arabs gradually drove the Roman army out of the province. And when Damascus, in 637, set the example of making terms with the Arabs, and thus secured immunity from plunder and other favourable conditions, the rest of the cities of Syria were not slow to follow. Emessa, Arethusa, Hieropolis and other towns entered into treaties whereby they became tributary to the Arabs. Even the Patriarch of Jerusalem surrendered the city on similar terms. The fear of religious compulsion on the part of the heretical emperor made the promise of Muslim toleration appear more attractive than the connection with the Roman Empire and a Christian government, and after the first terrors caused by the passage of an invading army, there succeeded a profound revulsion of feeling in favour of the Arab conquerors.⁵¹

Thus, the Muslim level of tolerance and promise of peace must have facilitated the rapid acquisition of vast lands as far as China and France. This is certainly one of the most plausible explanations, which makes sense of what occurred in the seventh century Near East. Having occupied these lands, Muslims could easily exploit the natural resources or wealth of these lands and not give anything to the masses, as was the fashion of governing in many parts of the world at the time. However, effective and immediate delivery of justice was definitely one of the preferences of the Islamic government. Perhaps, it was these facts which persuaded Thomas Arnold to conclude:

Of forced conversion or anything like persecution in the early days of the Arab conquest, we hear nothing. Indeed, it was probably in a great measure their tolerant attitude towards the Christian religion that facilitated their rapid acquisition of the country.⁵²

HOW ARE CIVILISATIONS MADE?

Islam produced magnificent civilizations in the lands it liberated. One of the questions which deserve attention here is: how did the Islamic system (based upon *Shariah Law*) manage to civilise lands consistently? There was something peculiar about the Islamic system, when applied adequately, which enabled the masses to flourish in their respective disciplines. People could employ their intellectual capacities to their maximum potential and consequently attain success in education, economy and political stability. It is almost impossible to attain stability without a sense of security, and it is stability which leads nations to produce a civilisation. Will Durant, an American philosopher and the author of a monumental *History of Civilisation*, strongly agrees:

Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organization, moral traditions and the pursuit of knowledge and arts. It begins where chaos and insecurity end. For when fear is overcome, curiosity and constructiveness are free and man passes by natural impulse towards the understanding and embellishment of life.⁵³

So the formation of any civilization is largely dependent on social order and a sense of security, as it is, in part, the state of living in protection that facilitates progress. If security and protection are nonexistent in a society, it would be extremely difficult to imagine economic provision, political organization, moral tradition and any pursuit for intellectual progress. Does Islam provide this security? Does the Islamic system confer sufficient peace and prosperity upon its subjects to facilitate progressive intellectual inquiry?

Islam has provided one of the most powerful systems for establishing security and peace for societies and that system is based upon *Shariah Law*. The benefits of this system are not exclusive to Muslims; instead its implementation carries universal implications i.e. non-Muslims are equally protected and valued. A system is judged by the way it treats minorities and the Islamic political system not only protects their lives but the legal systems of non-

Muslims are also protected. This is realized through allowing judicial autonomies for non-Muslims in any Islamic state. This means that non-Muslims living in an Islamic state are not bound to administer their legal as well as private affairs according to the Islamic law; they have the freedom and protection to manage their affairs within their respective legal systems. The evidence presented below will amply demonstrate that it was the effective protection/justice of Islam that produced some of the most eminent civilizations the world had known. Alfred Guillaume, an eminent Orientalist, argued in the preface of his book *Legacy of Islam* that the civilisation of Islam was a direct result of the protection of Islamic Empire :

But Islam is the fundamental fact which made the legacy possible. It was under the protection and patronage of **Islamic Empire** that the arts and sciences which this book describes flourished.⁵⁴

The entire structure of an Islamic state is based upon the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the book revealed to him from God, the Qur'an. Every aspect of the Islamic system originates from the principles extracted from the life and the conduct of the Prophet ﷺ. For instance, the interest free economic rules of Islam emanate from the Qur'an; the Islamic education policy emerges from the text of the Qur'an and the instructions of the Prophet ﷺ; the Islamic criminal penalty system is taken from the book of God etc. Likewise the concept of justice and its importance also stem from the revelation:

O you, who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is better protector to both. So follow not the lusts, lest you avoid justice.⁵⁵

This justice is to be delivered to everyone regardless of race, colour, tribe, religion or affiliation. Even if the Muslims despise someone, this justice has to be delivered fairly. Thus speaks the Qur'an:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is well-acquainted with what you do.⁵⁶

One can see in these verses that establishing justice is an obligation upon all Muslims and

the impartial delivery of this justice is equally important. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ put immense stress on the importance of protecting the rights of non-Muslim subjects. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said:

Anyone who kills a non-Muslim (Dhimmi [protected one]) protected by the Islamic state **will not smell the fragrance of paradise** even though one can sense it from the distance of 40 years journey.⁵⁷

So important was the issue of the preservation of the rights of non-Muslims that the second Caliph of Islam, even when he was dying, left clear instructions for his potential successor in this regard:

Omar bin Khattab (the second Caliph) said on his death bed that whoever shall succeed me must fulfill the promises of Allah and his messenger. Whatever treaty has been made with non-Muslims must be respected by my successor. He shall fight (if he has to) to protect them and he shall not put a burden upon them which they cannot bear.⁵⁸

This is a fascinating demonstration of the sense of responsibility and care in Islamic governance. Omar, even though seriously injured due to a stab wound in his stomach, was deeply concerned about the promises made with protected non-Muslim subjects. He didn't even want any unreasonable burden put upon the *ahlu-Dhimma* and amazingly commanded his potential successor to fight, if necessary, in their defense. The Caliph specifically commanded that all treaties made with non-Muslims must be upheld. Some of these treaties of protection will be examined below and it will be seen that these terms were fascinatingly tolerant and fair. These treaties made that protection possible and which consequently produced the civilization of Islam. The spirit of these terms emanates directly from the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet ﷺ, as is clear from the Treaty of Medina.

THE TREATY OF MEDINA

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, having lived in Makkah for 53 years of his life, had to migrate to Medina to escape the persecution and assassination attempts of the Meccans. The people of Medina had invited him to come and facilitate peace between two warring tribes – Aws and Khazraj – of the city. The Messenger of God ﷺ accepted the offer and chose Medina as his new abode and established the first Islamic state there. The city consisted of two major

groups at the time i.e. the Arabs (Aws and Khazraj) and the Jews. Most of the Arabs had embraced Islam by the time the Prophet ﷺ arrived in the city with his persecuted companions. The Jews were offered terms of peace and coexistence, which they willingly accepted. Ibn Hisham, in his biography of the Prophet ﷺ, narrates the text of the Treaty of Medina:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

This agreement of Allah's Prophet Muhammad shall apply to the migrants, Quraish, the citizens of Yasrib who have accepted Islam and all such people who are in agreement with the above mentioned bodies and side with them in war.

Those who are a party to this agreement shall be treated as a body separate from all those who are not a party to this agreement.

It is incumbent on all the Muslims to help and extend sympathetic treatment to the Jews who have entered into an agreement with us. Neither an oppression of any type should be perpetrated on them nor should their enemy be helped against them.

The Jews of Bani Auf, Bani Najjar, Bani Haris, Bani Sa'ida, Bani Hashm, Bani Aus, Bani Sa'alaba, Bani Jafna, and Bani Shotaiba who are a party to this agreement and are the supporters of the Muslims, shall adhere to their religion and the Muslims to their's. Excepting the religious matters, the Muslims and the Jews shall be regarded as belonging to a single party. If anyone from among them commits an outrage or breaks promise or is guilty of a crime, he shall deserve punishment of his crime.

The subordinate branches of the above mentioned tribes shall have the same rights as are enjoyed by the original branches.

If a third community wages war against the Muslims and the Jews, they will have to fight united. They shall help each other mutually and there shall be mutual goodwill and faithfulness. The Jews shall bear their expenses of war and the Muslims theirs expenses.

It is incumbent on the parties to treat each other sincerely and to wish each other well. None shall subject the other to oppression and injustice and the oppressed shall be helped...⁵⁹

The Prophet ﷺ was the sole ruler of the Islamic State of Medina and yet he offered terms to the Jews of Medina they wouldn't refuse. The Jews and their religion was protected; they were recognized as an independent political power within the state; everyone was equally accountable according to the law; in case of an external attack, both parties would mutually help each other; Jews will maintain their autonomy; their enemy would not be helped; and finally it was mandatory for all parties to be sincere to each other. This kind of tolerance and protection was unprecedented in Jewish history. After the destruction of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Roman General Titus, Emperor Hadrian destroyed the city again in 132 causing the Jews to become vulnerable and scattered. The text of the Fourth council of Toledo (Spain) in 633 was already mentioned above in this regard. Muslims were seen as liberators from the tyranny and persecution the Jews had suffered for centuries. The Treaty of Medina, however, wasn't fully respected by some of the Jewish individuals and tribes (as they incited war and hostility against the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims of Medina) and they were duly held accountable for their transgressions. It must be noted here that the majority of Jewish tribes and sub-tribes of Medina lived in peace and flourished under Islamic protection for centuries (see appendix A). If one pays little attention to the text of the treaty above, one will surely encounter glimpses of the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence and Geneva Convention anticipated in it. Only if the Europeans paid a little more attention to the laws of Islam, they would have saved themselves from centuries of struggle against tyranny and oppression. The Jews weren't the only ones to receive Islamic protection; Christians were also given the same terms, as is evident from the Treaty of Najran.

THE TREATY OF NAJRAN

Near the end of the life of the Prophet ﷺ (year 9 H), many tribal delegations and religious communities visited him in Medina to either form alliances or to receive terms of protection. One such delegation came from the Christian settlement of Najran (consisting of seventy

three villages south of Mecca, towards Yemen). The Prophet ﷺ asked the Christians of Najran to embrace Islam but they refused and asked for terms instead. The Messenger of Allah then offered them unprecedented freedom of religion and protection, which they never experienced under the Byzantines. Al Baladhuri narrates the text of the treaty in these words in his book *Futuh ul Buldan*:

The lives of the people of Najran and its surrounding area, their religion, their land, their property, cattle, and those of them who are present or absent, their messengers and their places of worship are under the protection of Allah and guardianship of his prophet. Their present states shall neither be interfered with, nor their rights meddled with, nor their idols deformed. No bishop shall be removed from his office. The intention being that no change in whatever state everyone is, shall be made (status quo shall be maintained).

Neither the people shall be punished for any past crime or murder, nor shall they be compelled to do military service. Neither shall 'ushr (the tax on grain) be imposed on them, nor shall any army enter their area.

If anyone of the people of Najran demands the rights, justice shall be done between the plaintiff and the respondent. Neither oppression shall be allowed to be perpetuated on them, nor shall they be permitted to oppress anyone.

Whatever has been written in this pact, Allah and Muhammad, his prophet, are guarantors for it, unless there is an order from Allah, in this connection, and as long as the people of Najran remain faithful and adhere to the conditions, which have been made for them, except that someone compels them to do otherwise.⁶⁰

Christians of Najran had been severely persecuted by their own brethren due to doctrinal differences and schismatic fanaticism. Massacres on a massive scale were committed by the Byzantines against those (Nestorians, Jacobites and Orthodox) who would not agree with

them. For this reason this treaty was warmly welcomed by the Christians. Some historians even believe that if it wasn't for the Muslim protection, many minor Christian sects would have become extinct. This precedent set by the Prophet ﷺ was imitated by his successors. When the second Caliph of Islam, Omar bin Khattab, took Jerusalem in 636-7, these are the terms he offered to the Christian Patriarch Sophronius, as narrated by Tabari:

THE TREATY OF JERUSALEM

This is the protection which the servant of Allah, Amir ul-Mumineen, grants to the people of Palestine. Thus, protection is for their lives, property, church, cross, for the healthy and sick and for all their co-religionists. In this way that their churches shall not be turned into dwelling houses, nor will they be pulled down, nor any injury will be done to them or to their enclosures, nor to their cross, and nor will anything be deducted from their wealth. No restrictions shall be made regarding their religious ceremonies. No Jew will be allowed to stay along with them [This was a request made by the Christians themselves⁶¹ to maintain status quo, as there were no Jews allowed in Jerusalem prior to the Muslim arrival].

It shall be incumbent upon the people of Palestine, that they shall pay Jizyah (the capitation tax) like other cities. They must expel the Greeks and those of them who shall leave the city shall be protected and conducted safely to their destinations, but those of them who would prefer to remain in Palestine shall also receive protection, are to pay the Jizyah. And of the people of Palestine who would like to leave with the Greeks, then their churches and crosses shall also be protected, and they may safely go to their destination. Whatever is in this document is guaranteed in the name of Allah and the prophet by khalifah and the faithful on condition that the people pay jizyah regularly. This document is witnessed by Khalid ibn al Walid, 'Amr bin al 'Aas, Abdur Rahman bin Awf, and Mu'aawiyah bin abi Sufyaan.

Dated A.H. 15⁶²

This treaty brought unprecedented peace to the city of Jerusalem, which lasted for as long as the Muslims had the city. The Christians testified to this fascinating protection they received by the Muslim government (see below). Not long before the Muslims liberated the city, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Persians, adding yet another unfortunate calamity to the history of this holy place. Theophanes (d. 817-8), a Byzantine historian, narrated the event in these words:

In this year [615] the Persians took Jordan, Palestine, and its holy city in battle. At the hands of the Jews they killed many people in it: as some say, 90,000. The Jews, according to their means, bought the Christians and then killed them. The Persians captured and led off to Persia Zachariah the patriarch of Jerusalem, the precious and life giving wood [True Cross], and many prisoners.⁶³

This catastrophe was alluded to in the Qur'an and at that time the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was in Mecca:

Alif- Lam- Mim. The Romans have been defeated. In the nearest land (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine), and they, after their defeat, will be victorious. Within three to nine years. The decision of the matter, before and after (these events) is only with Allah. And on that day, the believers will rejoice. With the help of Allah, He helps whom he wills, and He is the All-Mighty, the most Merciful. (It is) a promise of Allah (i.e. Allah will give victory to the Romans against the Persians), and Allah fails not in His promise, but most of men know not.⁶⁴

This was an acknowledgement of recent events in Palestine but then the Qur'an makes a bold prophecy: the Romans will defeat the Byzantines very soon. This was a great test of the authenticity of the Qur'an and the truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ, as the companions of the Prophet ﷺ were now awaiting that victory of the Byzantines. Did the Romans come back within the time the Qur'an prophesised? Whoever heard these verses at the time, found it really difficult to believe that the Romans would be victorious within three to nine years, as the Qur'an promised, after such a devastating defeat. Even Theophanes expressed his

astonishment:

Who could have expected the **invincible** Persian race ever to show its back to the Romans?⁶⁵

The invincible Persian race did indeed show its back to the Romans exactly seven years after the encounter in Palestine/Jordan. Allah's promise was fulfilled. Theophanes narrates the outcome:

*'In this year [622], the Emperor Herakleios finished celebrating Easter and at once moved against Persia... The Romans captured their (Persians') camp and all their gear. They raised their hands on high and thanked God; they also eagerly prayed for the Emperor, who led them well. For before they had never thought to see Persian dust; now they had found and plundered their still pitch tents. Who could have expected the invincible Persian race ever to show its back to the Romans?'*⁶⁶

The Qur'anic prophecy was fulfilled and the Persians had been defeated by the Romans. Having taken the city, however, the Byzantines didn't allow the Jews to exist there due to old religious adversity. When Muslims liberated the city, they allowed the Jews as well as the Christians to co-exist. The Christians had been dumping garbage at the site of the temple to disgrace the Jews. Omar, however, personally cleared the spot with his companions and built a mosque there. The Jerusalem of Islam was a place of refuge for all children of Abraham. The city thereafter did attain the peace it deserved after such a long history of devastation and it became the 'centre of the world' in the true sense of the term. These treaties weren't a product of the wild imagination of Muslim generals nor were they accidental or circumstantial agreements. To the contrary, this Muslim behaviour was consistent, deliberate and well calculated. The Muslims were commanded and taught by the Prophet ﷺ to fulfil the promise of God (see above) and the followers of the Messenger ﷺ did a very good job, as is abundantly clear from these treaties. Spain, however, was still to taste the peace which other lands under Islamic government had enjoyed. In 713, two years after their arrival, Muslims offered similar terms to the long persecuted inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula.

THE TREATY OF ISLAMIC SPAIN (AL-ANDALUS)

It has been seen above that the Iberian Peninsula was liberated by the Muslims and the masses flourished in their respective disciplines successfully. The Treaty of Spain provides an example of Muslim attitude towards the inhabitants of al-Andalus while the conquest was at its peak. The treaty speaks for itself:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is a document (granted) by Abdul-Aziz bin Musa bin Nusayr to Tudmir, son of Ghabdush, establishing a treaty of peace and a promise and protection of God and his prophet ﷺ. We (Muslims) will not set special conditions for him or for any among his men, nor harass him, nor remove him from power. His followers will not be killed or taken prisoner, nor will they be separated from their women and children. They will not be coerced in matters of religion, their churches will not be burned, nor will sacred objects be taken from the realm, [so long as] he [Tudmir] remain sincere and fulfils the conditions we have set for him. He has reached a settlement concerning seven towns: Orihuela, Valentilla, Alicante, Mula, Bigastro, Ello and Lorca. He will not give shelter to fugitives, nor to our enemies, nor encourage any protected person to fear us, nor conceal news of our enemies. He and each of his men shall also pay one Dinar every year, together with four measures of wheat, four measures of barley, four liquid measures of concentrated fruit juice, four liquid measures of vinegar, four of honey, and four of olive oil. Slave must each pay half of this amount (Rajab 94 Hijra [April 713 CE]).⁶⁷

The second Caliph Omar, on his death bed, advised his successor to be just with the protected non-Muslims. He also advised to respect all treaties with them. The treaties were offered and upheld by the Muslims regardless of people, time and place. The Muslim behaviour was quite consistent from the time of the Prophet ﷺ up to the time of the Treaty of Spain and this behaviour didn't stop at al-Andalus, rather same conduct continued so long as Islam was the pursued path in governance. The Golden Age of al-Andalus and the civilization therein was a direct product of this peaceful co-existence facilitated by the Treaty of Islamic Spain. The peaceful interaction between three Abrahamic faiths in al-Andalus was described as *convivencia* (co-existence) by some Spanish Arabists. Did the Other (Jews and Christians) experience this *convivencia*? Some of the Jewish as well as Christian testimonies will help understand as to how effective these treaties were. The voice of the Other must also be heard.

NON-MUSLIM TESTIMONIES SUBSTANTIATING THE PRACTICAL AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TREATIES

One may argue that these treaties are certainly very impressive but were they ever put into practice? Were they ever implemented in the lands Islam governed? The answer must be found in the pages of Christian/Jewish chronicles. Why the non-Muslim testimonies one may ask? Why shouldn't we accept the Muslim version? This is to avoid the implications of a popular accusation: "*History is written by the victors*". Therefore a few non-Muslim testimonies will be cited to substantiate the positive historical outcome of the aforementioned treaties.

Nestorian John bar Penkaye (690) expressed fascinating sentiments regarding the reign of Mu'awiah (661-80) that

The peace throughout the world was such that we have never heard, either from our fathers or from our grandparents, or seen that there had ever been any like it.⁶⁸

Bernard the Wise, a pilgrim monk, visited Egypt and Palestine in the reign of Caliph al-Mu'tazz (866-9). He stated that:

The Christians and the Pagans [i.e. the Muslims] have this kind of peace between them there that if I was going on a journey, and on the way the camel or donkey which bore my poor luggage were to die, and I was to abandon all my goods without any guardian, and go to the city for another pack animal, when I came back, I would find all my property uninjured: such is the peace there.⁶⁹

In 869 patriarch Theodosius of Jerusalem wrote:

The Saracens [i.e. the Muslims] show us great goodwill. They allow us to build our churches and to observe our own customs without hindrance.⁷⁰

Jews felt equally safe in Jerusalem, as confirmed by a ninth century Jewish source *Sefer Pitron Torah*:

The people in whose hands the Temple is today [namely, the Muslims] have made it into a choice, excellent and honorable place of worship. They say: let us worship the one God who created heaven and earth, to whom the creatures belong, until the coming of the messiah and on that day the true worship will be renewed and will be acceptable before God.

Michael the Elder, the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in the twelfth century, wrote in the favour of Muslims after condemning the tyranny of Christian Byzantines:

for when the cities submitted to the Arabs, they assigned to each denomination the churches which they found it to be in possession of (and at that time the great churches of Emessa and that of Harran had been taken away from us [by the Byzantines]); nevertheless it was no slight advantage for us to be delivered from the cruelty of the Romans [i.e. the Byzantines], their wickedness, their wrath and cruel zeal against us, and to find ourselves at peace.⁷¹

And many more Christian comments can be quoted in this regard including those of the Nestorian Patriarch of Khurasan, Ishoyabh III (see above). For a fair minded person, however, these witnesses should suffice to ascertain the reality of the sense of security felt by non-Muslims under Islamic *Shariah* based governments. It was this sense of peace and security which produced some of the best civilizations in the world. The cities of Baghdad, Damascus and Cordoba were flourishing with libraries, hospitals, universities, institutions that served to protect the rights of its citizens and animals. This pattern continued until the arrival of the Spanish Reconquista (Toledo, 1085), Crusaders (Jerusalem, 1099) and Mongols (Baghdad, 1258). Nevertheless, the civilization of Islam had made its impact and showed the world as to how powerful the divine system of Islam was. The world experienced peace and justice under Islamic protection until it was destroyed by the enemies of order and co-existence. If Islam had the strength to refine mankind whilst living in a semi-barbarized medieval age, then it has a bigger potential to civilise humans in a semi-civilised modern age today. Some of the fruits of the justice of Islam will be considered below.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF JUSTICE, TOLERANCE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

Due to the peace and tranquillity discussed above, the subjects governed by Islamic political system produced a remarkable civilisation. Muslim rulers in particular paid extensive amount of attention to the wellbeing of those they governed. And they were aware of the fact that the wellbeing of their subjects depended upon education. For this reason Greek, Persian, Chinese, Indian, and Roman knowledge was translated into Arabic at Baghdad, Damascus and Cordova and then was made universally available to all free of cost. This is affirmed by a prominent English proponent of Islam, Marmaduke Pickthall:

In Spain, under the Umayyad and in Baghdad under the Abbasid caliphs, Christians and Jews, equally, with Muslims were admitted to the schools and universities not only that, but were boarded and lodged in hostels at the cost of the states.⁷²

The Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far Mansur (d. 775) established a school called *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, which was an institution specialising in translations and producing original academic works. Translators were usually rewarded by gold in equal weight of their books.⁷³ This patronage was not confined to Baghdad, as the Umayyads in Spain were also amassing books and Libraries on an unprecedented scale.

To the Muslims, seeking knowledge was an obligation, as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ commanded: *Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon all Muslims (men and women)*. Therefore libraries were established to accommodate the necessity of seeking knowledge. The first library of importance and value in Europe was the royal library of the Umayyads in Cordova.⁷⁴ Abdul-Rahman I (756-788) was himself a scholar and a poet. His son Hisham I (786-796) followed in his footsteps by becoming a poet and an admirer of Arabic literature, and then Hakam I (796-826) also loved poetry and liked to be surrounded by scholars. The later Caliphs, especially Abdul-Rahman III (912-961) and Hakam II (961-1008), were devoted to the hobby of collecting rare books. Abbass bin Nasih, the agent of Abdul-Rahman III, travelled as far as Mesopotamia in search of Arabic translations of Persian and Greek works on Science. Rare and valuable books, old and new, were bought and copied for Hakam II in Alexandria, Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus. The chief librarian of Hakam II was a high-ranking eunuch, Talid, according to whom there were 400,000 volumes of books in the royal library. The list of the books, recording the names of the authors and the titles alone, consisted of 44 volumes of 50 folios each.⁷⁵ This suggests alone that the rulers of Spain were strong supporters of advancement of scientific knowledge and perhaps they were deeply

inspired by the Qur'anic injunction in this regard:

Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember (Allah).⁷⁶

There were hundreds of these private and public libraries in tenth Century Islamic Spain. These libraries attracted thousands of scholars from all over Europe to come and study the corrected form of Greek sciences. Cordova in this century was the largest and most civilised city in Europe. The city is said to have had 70 public libraries, 600 mosques, 900 public baths and 200,000 houses. The street lights stretched out for 10 miles.⁷⁷ Whenever the rulers of Leon, Navarre or Barcelona needed a surgeon, an architect or a dressmaker, they applied to Cordova.⁷⁸ Queen Tota of Navarre, for instance, brought her son Sancho the Fat to the city for a cure of his obesity. Peter the Venerable, the friend of Adelard of Bath, who had spent much time in Cordova, mentions that on his first arrival in Spain he found many learned men even from England, studying astronomy. Reinhart Dozy states that in medieval Spain everyone could read and write.⁷⁹

A FASCINATING CONTRAST BETWEEN MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND ISLAMIC SPAIN

While that was the situation in Islamic Spain, Europe was in deep slumber of ignorance and darkness. Victor Robinson, a historian of science, summed up the contrast between medieval Europe and Islamic Spain very eloquently:

Europe was darkened at sunset, Cordova shone with public lamps; Europe was dirty, Cordova built a thousand baths; Europe was covered with vermin, Cordova changed its undergarments daily; Europe lay in mud, Cordova's streets were paved; Europe's palaces had smoke-holes in the ceiling, Cordova's arabesques were exquisite; Europe's nobility could not sign its name, Cordova's children went to school; Europe's monks could not read the baptismal service, Cordova's teachers created a library of Alexandrian dimensions.⁸⁰

Following the closure of the Greek schools of philosophy by the Roman emperor, Justinian, in 529, Europe entered into a period of intellectual penumbra but it was the Islamic world that produced some of the best known scholars and works. Rahzes (al-Razi) authored works

on geography; Arzachel (al-Zarqali) on the astrolabe and astronomy; Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham) on optics; Abulcasis (Abul-Qasim az-Zahravi) on medical encyclopaedia and astronomy; Averroes (Ibn Rushd) on anatomy, physiology, materia medica, diagnosis, therapeutics and hygiene; Algazel (al-Ghazali) on philosophy; Abenouefit (Ibn Nafis) on Aristotle's and Galen's medicine; Avempace (Ibn Baja) on physics; Ibn Batuta and Ibn Jubayr on travel, Maimonides (Jewish Moosa bin Maimun) on medicine; Ishaq bin Haytham on poisons and laxatives; Ibn Hazm on prose and poetry; Ibn Hayyan on history; Idrisi on cartography and geography; Al-Khawarizmi and Al-Battani on Algebra and Trigonometry; Al-Jahiz on zoology; Ibn Firnas on astronomy, meteorology and musicology; Maslama bin Ahmad on mathematics; Abdul-Rahman bin Ismail on geometry of Euclid and philosophy of Aristotle; Al-Butruji on Astronomy; Jabar bin Aflah on Trigonometry; Arib bin Sa'd on gynaecology, hygiene of pregnant women and the care of infants.⁸¹ Please note that all of these giants were produced and nurtured in Islamic societies, which were a direct outcome of the Islamic protection and patronage. It was the law of Islam that governed the streets of Baghdad, Damascus and Cordova when all of these individuals walked through them. Without the effective protection of Islam one cannot imagine the civilisation of Islam and without that civilization one cannot conceive Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah and without the Qur'an one cannot envisage Islam. Hence the Qur'an, the word of God, is the root of the tree which bore the fruit we just considered.

These aforementioned scholars studied Greek works in detail, carried out experiments, wrote commentaries on them, correcting the theories where necessary and produced researches, interpretations and corrections in the form of their own independent works. A few such examples are Al-Biruni's criticism and correction of Aristotle's philosophy in a work called *Al-As'ilah wa al-ajwab* (Questions and Answers); Al-Khwarizmi's correction of Ptolemy's geography in his work (Face of the Earth); Al-Razi based his medical theories nearly solely on the criticism of Galen in his work titled *Fil-shukuk ala jalinus* (Doubts about Galen); Al-Biruni blamed Galen for his excessive credulity when he reports his story of the snake queen whose sight or hiss caused instant death; Ibn al-Haytham's correction and refutation of Galen's optics based upon practical experiments; Al-Khazini's work on measures of weights and densities surpasses his Greek predecessors; Al-Jazari's development of Greek mechanics and the list is endless.⁸² Another point worth mentioning is the fact that some of these scientists were Islamic theologians par excellence. It was their theology which inspired them to carry out inquiries into the connecting principles of nature. It was the Qur'an that showed them the path of knowledge and enlightenment. The text of the Qur'an drew their attention to many natural phenomena:

Will they not regard the camels, how they are created? And the heaven, how it is raised? And the hills, how they are set up? And the earth, how it is spread?⁸³

THE REAL ORIGINS OF THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT AND RENNAISANCE

After Toledo was taken by the Catholics in 1085, a school, particularly for making translations from Arabic to other European languages, was established. Many scholars from Europe travelled there to work on translations. For instance, Gerard of Cremona translated 80 works from Arabic to Latin on astronomy and mathematics (including Khawarizmi's Algebra, Thabit bin Qurra's work on Roman balance, Al-Kindi's optical works, writings on chemistry by al-Razi and Ibn Sina's medical encyclopaedia); John of Seville translated astronomical, medical and philosophical works (by Al-Kindi, Al-Battani, Thabit Ibn Qurra, Al-Qabisi, Al-Firghani, *Al-Shifaa* [The Healing] of Ibn Sina, *Maqasid al-Falasifa* [The Ways of Philosophers] by al-Ghazali); Plato of Trivoli made substantial amount of translations from Arabic to Latin and the complete list of translators and their translations is far too long to cover here.⁸⁴

There were many scholars who travelled from Europe to study in Islamic Spain, among whom were Gerbert of Aurillac also known as Pope Sylvester II (930-1003),⁸⁵ Adelard of Bath and Daniel of Morley (who was one of the scholars responsible for the establishment of Oxford University⁸⁶). Daniel of Morley brought many philosophical works back to England which in consequence enlightened the English scholarship. Medieval European literature was highly influenced by the Arabic poetry originating in Spain. Some argue that the great French Troubadour poetry tradition can trace its origin back to Islamic Spain.⁸⁷ Europe took far more from Islamic Spain than what has been mentioned above: windmills, soap, perfume, sugar, irrigation system, spices, universities, streetlights, paper industry, mass-literacy, freedom of thought, numerals, architecture, poetry, music, hygiene, libraries and ceramics. New Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4...) in particular revolutionised the mathematics of medieval Europe and consequently had a lasting effect on architecture. Cathedrals, castles, palaces, gardens and many more structures were built in medieval Europe by the help of Spanish architectural techniques and the geometrical laws in particular. The evidence⁸⁸ suggests that the translations of Arabic works on science were made for almost three centuries starting from the tenth to the thirteenth century and were gradually sent into the rest of Europe. Professor Thomas Arnold was of the opinion that the European Renaissance originated in Islamic Spain:

...Muslim Spain had written one of the brightest pages in the history of Medieval Europe. Her influence had passed through Provence into the other countries of Europe, bringing into birth a new poetry and a new culture, and it was from her that Christian

scholars received what of Greek philosophy and science they had to stimulate their mental activity up to the time of the Renaissance.⁸⁹

Upon studying the history of science during the Middle Ages it becomes profusely clear that the Muslim scientific activity was directly behind what we recognise today as the European Renaissance. George Saliba from Columbia University penned a book on this very topic and stated therein that *'there is hardly a book on Islamic civilization, or on the general history of science, that does not at least pretend to recognize the importance of the Islamic scientific tradition and the role this tradition played in the development of human civilization in general.'*⁹⁰ E. J. Holmyard asserted in his book *Makers of Chemistry* that *'early European chemistry is almost wholly a legacy from Islam, it is impossible to understand medieval Latin alchemy without a clear idea of the work of the Arabs.'*⁹¹ The Europeans were utterly ignorant of the science of Chemistry until some translators brought this knowledge to their countrymen. Holmyard quotes Robert of Ketton (a medieval translator of Arabic works), who wrote in the preface of his translation of the Arabic 'Composition of Alchemy', that *'Since what Alchymia is, and what its composition is, your Latin world does not yet know, I will explain in the present book.'*⁹² R. T. Gunther authored a monumental work in several volumes titled *Early Science in Oxford* and in volume II (concerned with the science of astronomy) he asserted under a heading *'The Transmission of Arabian Learning to Oxford'* that

In the thirteenth century the seeds of Arabian learning began to germinate in Europe among men of western race. The science of the Moors in Spain had brought them European reputation: Emperors and Kings became their pupils and patrons. Natural science in the west began to put forth the first shoots of the tree that has grown so mighty. We trace the origin of our western knowledge in matters of astronomy to some three or four sources. The *Almagest* or Arabian version of Ptolemy's work was translated from the Arabic into Latin about 1230 at the instance of Frederick II. The astronomical manuals of some of the Arabians were abstracted and reproduced in Latin by Sacrobosco in his little text-book, *De Sphaera*, which, with the *Alfonsine Tables* published by Alfonso X, King of Castile, became part of the equipment of every astronomer for the next two or three hundred years.⁹³

Gunther is effectively admitting here that the first works on the science of astronomy

studied at Oxford University originated from Arabic sources, which were rendered into Latin by translators. The exact extent of the effect of Arabian learning on European scientific tradition is an enduring debate among academics and one can consult relevant books in this regard. This work, however, is not concerned with that debate; the point this paper is making is that this learning was a direct fruit from a tree nurtured by the protection and patronage of Islam. From the Qur'an emerged the justice of Islam; from that justice came peace and *convivencia*; with that peaceful co-existence came knowledge and free intellectual activity and from this freedom of literacy originate the knowledge studied and mastered at Oxford University. This is what we call the "*Golden Chain of Events*". One may argue here that the orthodox scholars of Islam always resented excessive indulgence in the study of science and philosophy. This may be true in some cases but we have other examples whereby some of the most orthodox scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah (b. 1263), studied philosophy to refute the absurdities of the Greeks and their admirers. Even if the orthodox schools were against the study of science (which was not the case), "heretical scientists" such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) were a product of that very society which produced those schools in the first place and none of the "heretics" were burnt alive. Both the Muslim theology and the Islamic science were a product of societies nurtured by the law of Islam. Baghdad, Damascus and Cordova were governed by *Sharia law* and the philosophers, scientists and poets therein cannot be separated from the law that protected their freedom and facilitated their study.

ISLAM'S INFLUENCE ON THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE EUROPEAN ENLIGHTENMENT

Islam continued to influence European thought profoundly as late as the eighteenth century. John Locke was one of those who were influenced by Islam. He is known to have attended lectures on Islamic studies delivered by Edward Pococke (1604-91), also known as the first 'Orientalist', in Oxford University. Edward Pococke was a man who spent years collecting Islamic manuscripts in Syria and was, upon his return to England, appointed as the lecturer of Islamic studies.⁹⁴ John Locke was deeply fascinated by this man's learning, which is evident from his own words:

I know not anyone in the university whom I would more willingly consult... (Pococke) had often the silence of a learner, where he had the knowledge of a master.⁹⁵

If one was to compare Locke's *On Civil Government* with Islamic position on the same subject, one will realise that the idea of "sovereignty as a trust" is an Islamic concept known

as *Khilafah*, which found its way in Locke's political philosophy. John Locke's treatises on tolerance are thought to be the decisive influence on Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*, which is one of the most important constitutional documents ever written in American history. Adam Smith's views on Islamic political system were already seen above. Even a conqueror like Napoleon Bonaparte was fascinated by the civilization of Islam. Upon his encounter with Islam, he had praised the Prophet ﷺ and his message abundantly. Although he didn't appear to be very keen on peace and justice himself, he nevertheless admired the tenets of Islam in this regard. He was an avid student of history and his last instruction (during his imprisonment at St. Helena Islands [1815-1821]) to the king of Rome was to '*Let my son often read and reflect on history: this is the only true philosophy*'.⁹⁶ One of the lessons he seemed to have learnt from history was the great potential of Islam in civilising the world. So great was his admiration for Islam that he was often accused of almost converting to Islam (even by people like Sir Walter Scott⁹⁷). M. De Bourrienne (Napoleon's private secretary), however, believed that Napoleon never converted to "Islamism". In a footnote on the page 160 of the first volume of his *Memoirs of Napoleon*, Bourrienne states regarding this issue:

On the subject of his alleged conversion to Mahometanism, Bonaparte expressed himself at St. Helena as follows: "I never followed any of the tenets of that religion. I never prayed in the mosques. I never abstained from wine, or was circumcised; neither did I ever profess it. I said merely that we were the friends of Mussalmans, and that **I respected Mahomet their prophet, which was true; I respect him now...**"⁹⁸

So the rumours of his conversion must be widespread for his private secretary to even ask this question, especially when no Muslims were around to ask. Also, Napoleon respected the Prophet of Islam ﷺ even when he was close to his death. His respect for the Prophet ﷺ came from his study of the history of Islamic tolerance and justice. This is evident from his remarks in this regard, found in a French book titled *Bonaparte et Islam*:

the Parthians, the Scythians, the Mongols, the Tartars and the Turks have generally shown themselves enemies of science and arts, but this reproach cannot be fastened on to the Arabs, no more than upon **Muhammad**...Al-Mansur, Harun-al-Rashid and al-Mamun cultivated arts and sciences. They were fond of literature, chemistry and mathematics; they lived with savants, caused the Greek and Latin

authors- the Illiad, the Odyssey, Euclid etc. to be translated into Arabic, and founded schools and colleges for medicine, astronomy and moral science...**Muhammad** extolled everywhere the savants and such men as devoted themselves to a speculative life and cultivated letters...in the library of Cairo there were 6,000 volumes on astronomy, and more than 1,00,000 on other subjects; in the library of Cordova there were 3,00,000 volumes. Sciences and arts reigned five hundred years under the **Caliphs** and made great progress, which was brought to naught by the invasion of the Mongols...⁹⁹

Study of the Islamic history had instilled in Napoleon the admiration and respect for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, whom Napoleon recognised as the founder of a magnificent civilisation. Bonaparte expressed his deep fascination with the Qur'an and its law as follows:

I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur'an which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness.¹⁰⁰

Whether Napoleon meant what he said here is not clear, as he didn't follow the teachings of the Qur'an. If he really believed in the Qur'an, he should have surely applied its rulings in his empire. It is very sad to learn that someone as influential and as powerful as Napoleon was so close to Islam but didn't actually implement its teachings to benefit his people. If he had followed what he professed to know, his subjects would have been a lot more prosperous and peaceful. If he had brought the Qur'an to his people, they would have preferred its rule over what followed the French Revolution. Nevertheless, he had spoken the truth that the principles of the Qur'an are true and they alone can lead men to happiness. This was a lesson he learnt from his study of history. The study of history is what opens our eyes to look into the past in order to learn, to learn and ponder upon previous mistakes. It is history which enables mankind to see what was done right and how it can be repeated. Allah also reminds us of the importance of understanding the past:

Say (O Muhammad) 'Travel in the land and see what was the end of those before (you)! Most of them were Mushrikun (Polytheists).'

¹⁰¹

Allah is commanding mankind to go in the land and see what was the end of those who denied and rejected his signs? By observing the remains of some of the previous nations, one can learn many useful lessons. Cicero, a Roman orator, stated, regarding the importance of history, that *'Not to know what happened before we were born is to remain perpetually a child.'*¹⁰² Indeed, not to take lessons from our past is to remain perpetually blind. Unfortunately, there are those who wish to keep the masses blind to the good things of the past.

DEPLORABLE SUPPRESSION AND NEGLIGENCE OF THE FACTS

The mainstream western scholarship, in general, is negligent in acknowledging the influence of Islam on human civilisation. If one was to read a book on the history of science, published recently, one will find very little about the Islamic contribution to the development of science. People hop straight from the 'Periclean or the Augustan ages to the times of Medici and Louis XIV'. Continuity of history rejects such sharp and violent contrasts between successive periods, both continuity and change is characteristic of the Middle Ages, as indeed of all great epochs of history. The fourteenth century grows out of the thirteenth as the thirteenth grows out of the twelfth, so that there is no real break between the medieval renaissance and the Quattro cento. The medieval Islamic scholarship was pregnant with many ideas which could not be delivered until much later. When the birth of modern science is granted to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, how can then such science be conceived without the new Arabic numerals from Spain, the concept of zero, algebraic notions, medicine of Ibn Sina, or how to conceive Galileo without the pendulum?¹⁰³

John William Draper, a nineteenth century historian and scientist, condemned this attitude of suppressing facts, which is based upon "national conceit" and "religious rancour":

I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mohammedans (Muslims). Injustice found on religious rancor and national conceit cannot be perpetuated forever.¹⁰⁴

Draper could see clearly that the western scholarship in the nineteenth century wasn't very interested in acknowledging the fruits of Islam. He detected religious prejudice and nationalistic tendencies behind this attitude. What he didn't mention as a cause of this mindset, however, was the superiority complex of the western authors. Most of the Muslim lands were colonized by the West in the nineteenth century and there was no need to praise

an inferior subdued civilization at the expense of a superior one. Ulick R. Burke, defended Draper in 1900 when one of the Spanish authors attempted to belittle his views:

The learning and culture of the Spanish Arabs is simply denied by many modern Spaniards, as, for instance, by Father Camara, the author of the orthodox Contestation or refutation of Draper's Intellectual Development. The mere denial, uncritical, rhetorical, and unsupported by any authorities, is in itself, of course, worthless ; but it is highly interesting as showing the temper of Spanish Churchmen as regards history and science at the present day, and more particularly as regards the bitterness of their bigotry towards Islam.¹⁰⁵

Draper's lament didn't do much to change this unjust behavior, as Victor Robinson spotted the same conduct in 1936:

A good sketch of Avicenna in the eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1910) has been trimmed down to a few unsigned paragraphs in the present (fourteenth) edition.¹⁰⁶

One may assume that because this attitude was detected in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century by some scholars, things might have changed and one can possibly find more on the Islamic contribution in works on the history of science. Unfortunately, nothing much appears to have changed today, as while making an inquiry into the origin of the word *trobare* (from which the word troubadour [a form of medieval European poetry] is derived), Maria Rosa Menocal complains of the same problem:

One argument - that it came from an Arabic word - was not only not favorably received, but worse, it was not even deemed worthy of heated and acrimonious discussion...There is not a single etymological dictionary of English or a Romance Language that gives the Arabic etymon as even a possibility, although the question is usually noted as "unresolved"...The very possibility of an Arabic solution was shunned as taboo...Westerners - Europeans have great difficulty in considering the possibility that they are in some way

seriously indebted to the Arab world, or that the Arabs were central to the making of medieval Europe.¹⁰⁷

Menocal exposed the same European conduct and asserted that the Westerners find it difficult to accept the Arabs as the potential founding fathers of some of what we know as the Western Civilization. This dishonest and deplorable scholarship is at the root of the European ignorance of Islam and its Law and it is this ignorance which serves as a catalyst to generate a disease like Islamophobia. Now is the time, as never before so many atrocities were committed in the name of ignorance (not even at the time of the Crusades, as the scale of slaughter was much smaller in comparison to what we see today), to acknowledge the long forgotten debt to Islam so that the masses around the world can better appreciate what Islam and Muslims did for them; and this appreciation will enable Muslims and non-Muslims to co-exist, once again, in an environment of mutual trust and understanding.

A CRUCIAL PIECE OF ADVICE EUROPEAN SCHOLARSHIP AND POLITICIANS

It would be very apt to present some enlightening words penned by a nineteenth century English gentleman. Some of the European politicians as well as academics must pay heed to the wise words of Major Arthur Glyn:

...But apart from all these weighty consideration, the attitude of Europe towards Islam should be one of eternal gratitude, instead of base ingratitude and forgetfulness. Never to this day has Europe acknowledged in an honest and whole-hearted manner the great and everlasting debt she owes to Islamic culture and civilization. Only in a lukewarm and perfunctory way has she recognized that when, during the Dark Ages, her people were sunk in feudalism and ignorance, Moslem civilization under the Arabs reached a high standard of social and scientific splendour, that kept alive the flickering embers of European society from utter decadence.

Do not we, who now consider ourselves on the topmost pinnacle ever reached by culture and civilization, recognize that had it not been for

the high culture, the civilization and intellectual as well as social splendour of the Arabs, and to the soundness of their school system, Europe to this day have remained sunk in the darkness of ignorance? Have we forgotten that the Mohammedan maxim was that, “the real learning of a man is of more public importance than any particular religious opinions he may entertain”...that Moslem liberality was in striking contrast with the then intolerant state of Europe? Have we forgotten that the **Khalifate** arose in the most degenerate period of Rome and Persia, also that the greater part of Europe lay under the dark cloud of barbarism? Does the magnificent valour of the Arabs, inspired as it was by a theism as lofty as it was pure, not appeal to us? **Does not the moderation and comparative toleration shown by them to the conquered, notwithstanding the fierce and burning ardour to regenerate mankind that impelled them onwards to conquest, also appeal us?** Does it not all the more appeal to us, when we contrast this with the bitterness of the attitude of the Christians sects towards one another?

...It cannot be that already we have lost sight of the amazing intellectual activity of the Moslem world, during the earlier part of the “Abbasid” period more especially? It cannot be that we have quite forgotten the irrecoverable loss that was inflicted on Arabian literature and on the world at large by the wanton destruction of thousands of books that was prompted by Christian bigotry and fanaticism? **It cannot surely be said of Christian Europe that for centuries now she has done her best to hide her obligation to the Arabs? Yet most assuredly obligations such as these are far too sacred to lie much longer hidden!** Let Europe-Christendom rather confess and acknowledge her fault. **Let her proclaim aloud to her ignorant masses, and to the world at large, the ingratitude she has displayed, and the eternal debt she owes to the Islam she no**

longer despises. Open confession is good for the soul, and only a confession such as this can wipe of the black stain which has for so long besmirched her fair fame. Let Christendom once for all recognize that the greatest of all faults is to be conscious of none that acknowledging a fault is saying, only in other words, we are wiser today than we were yesterday. Only through magnanimity such as this can she claim redemption...¹⁰⁸

Major Arthur was mainly advising the authors of his time to be just and fair but the demonization of Islam was not something invented in his day. This distortion of facts began much earlier and ran parallel to the advent of Islam, as will be seen below. Sometimes Islam was deliberately misrepresented and other times it was a victim of ignorant imaginations. The outcome of this campaign of hatred, nevertheless, was devastating.

DEMONIZATION OF ISLAM AND ITS EFFECTS

“Islamic terrorist”, “Islamic fundamentalist” and “Islamic bombers” are just some of the frequently used terms employed by mainstream print and electronic media outlets to coax the general public into believing that Islam has a sinister linkage with - or is directly connected to - terrorism, radicalism and indeed all things barbaric. Concerned sections of the Muslim community are now beginning to wonder whether this is the first time Islam has been subjected to this level of demonization or if there is already an existing historical precedent established to tarnish the name of Islam. Upon inquiry one can unearth a vast material of information regarding anti-Islamic propaganda, beginning with the rise of Islam to this day.

In the eighth century Saint John of Damascus called Islam a Christian heresy; the ninth century Spanish Christian polemicist Eulogius accused the Qur'an of insulting Mary and stated that *'he will say nothing about the horrible sacrilege about Mary in the text of the Qur'an'*; Fulcher of Chartres, a crusading chronicler of the First Crusade 1095, stated that Muslims used to worship an idol of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem; Jacques de Vitry, writing in the same period, asserted that *'as often as the followers of Muhammad possess the Temple of Solomon, they set up his statue in the Temple and permit no Christian to enter'*; a Bolognese professor of law, Azo, wrote a commentary on the code of Justinian in the thirteenth century in which he stated that *'the pagans (i.e. the Muslims) worship innumerable gods, goddesses, and indeed demons'*. According to a twelfth century chronicler, Guibert of Nogent, the Qur'an was a book of law which appeared by a false miracle on the horns of a cow; the thirteenth century French writer, Vincent de Beauvais

stressed that Muhammad ﷺ converted people to his faith ‘with the sword, force and destruction’; George Lengherand, mayor of Mons in Hainault, who visited Palestine and Egypt in 1486, stated that ‘Muslims believed blessedness consisted of food, drink, luxuries, and all sensualities, and pleasures which excite the body, even sodomy. Mohammad decreed that those who did not live in such pleasures would perish’; Herbert, an eighteenth century British ambassador to Persia, claimed that ‘prophet although circumcised, was baptised by Sergius, a Sabian heretic who denied the trinity and with his help the Qur’an was concocted’.¹⁰⁹ And finally today, in a similar fashion, Islam is being equated with backwardness, intolerance, medievalism and oppression. The media and politicians are doing exactly what the monks and ignorant chroniclers did in the Middle Ages. Misinformation caused catastrophes in the past and it is causing disintegration of millions of innocent people today. Only truth can save us from further destruction.

SOME RECENT ATTEMPTS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

The aforementioned, old and new, slanders contradict the truth, particularly when considering that Islam’s first deed and collective injunction was to remove the remnants of barbarity and intolerance that transpired through various manifestations across the world. But such distorted views helped justify many atrocities in the past and continue to do so today. The Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, massacres in Chechnya, genocide in Bosnia and indeed the ongoing crimes committed against humanity under the pretext of the War on Terror are but a few examples. It is essential that these misconceptions that have been deliberately spread about Islam are addressed and refuted through reasoning and dialogue so that many prejudices and hostilities caused by centuries of ignorance and misunderstandings can finally be laid to rest.

Fortunately there are still a few historians who adopt an academic and objective approach to Islam’s role in history and thus reject notions that associate Islam with habitual barbarism. One of the slanders against Islam has been the idea of forced conversion of the non-Muslim masses and this charge is not a new phenomenon; it existed from the times of the Crusades and persists to this day¹¹⁰. It is this motive that is often thought to be behind the practice of Jihad during the early Islamic conquests. To refute this widely fostered notion, as early as the 1920s De Lacy O’ Leary (one of the leading authorities on the history of Islam in the twentieth century) felt compelled to state:

History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the

sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.¹¹¹

Not long after O' Leary's protest, A. S. Tritton, the author of the widely acclaimed '*Caliphs and their non-Muslim Subjects*', also ventured to disprove the claim that the early Muslims were converting the masses forcefully:

The picture of the Muslim soldiers advancing with a sword in one hand and a Koran in the other is quite false.¹¹²

Lawrence E. Brown couldn't agree more:

Incidentally these well established facts dispose of the idea so widely fostered in Christian writings that the Muslims wherever they went forced people to accept Islam at the point of sword.¹¹³

And very recently Hugh Kennedy, a prominent historian of the early Islamic conquests, expressed similar views:

The Koran certainly provided scriptural support for the idea that Muslims could and should fight the unbelievers, but at no point does it suggest that they should be presented with the alternatives of conversions or death.¹¹⁴

Forced conversion is utterly forbidden in Islam and the Muslims not allowed, under any circumstances, to do this. This was due to the following injunction in the Qur'an:

There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has become distinct from the wrong path...¹¹⁵

Michael Bonner, an authority on the history of early Islam, comments on this verse as follows:

To begin with, there was no forced conversion, no choice between "Islam and the Sword". Islamic law, following a clear Qur'anic principle (2:256), prohibited any such things: dhimmis must be

allowed to practice their religion.¹¹⁶

It is now clear that the Muslims cannot force anyone into Islam and there is no historical precedent to this effect. Why then was this slander repeated for centuries and amazingly can still be found in some Islamophobic writings to this day? In the past the Church had a vicious crusade to defend and it appears today that the media and politicians have some other motives to repeat this historical mistake. Little do the haters know, however, that deliberate misinformation can cause catastrophes like crusades again. History has taught us that lesson, as will be seen below.

CATASTROPHES CAUSED BY MISINFORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE FIRST CRUSADE

Almost more than four centuries after the first burst of the Islamic liberation movement in the mid-seventh century, the Crusaders descended upon the Islamic lands. Their motive was to 'liberate' the holy land from the hands of the heathen yolk (i.e. the Muslims, as this was the best perception available to the Crusaders, thanks to the medieval tabloid monks). During this holy "Christian" expedition (as this is how it was described by the pope at the time, although one must recognise that the pope was not representing all Christians), the crusaders committed some heinous crimes and hundreds of thousands of people suffered and perished. The crusades continued for almost two centuries (1095-1291) and these barbaric wars were caused by misinformation and distortion of facts. Pope Urban II delivered a speech in Clermont, France (1095) and in this speech he presented a very inaccurate picture of the situation in Palestine:

The sad news has come from Jerusalem and Constantinople that the people of Persia, an accursed and foreign race, enemies of God, 'a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God', have invaded the lands of those Christians and devastated them with the sword, rapine, and fire. Some of the Christians they have carried away as slaves; others they have put to death. The churches they have either destroyed or turned into mosques. They desecrate and overthrow the altars. They circumcise the Christians and pour the blood from the circumcision on the altars

or in the baptismal fonts. Some they kill in a horrible way by cutting open the abdomen, taking out a part of the entrails and tying them to a stake; they then beat them and compel them to walk until their all their entrails are drawn out and they fall to the ground. Some they use as targets for their arrows. They compel some to stretch out their necks, and then they try to see whether they can cut off their heads with one stroke of the sword. It is better to say nothing of their horrible treatment of the women...base and bastard Turks hold sway over our brothers...It is our duty to pray, yours to fight against the Amalekites. With Moses, we shall extend unwearied hands in prayer to heaven, while you go forth and brandish the sword, like dauntless warriors, against Amalek...If neither the words of the scripture arouse you, nor our admonition penetrate your minds, at least let the great suffering of those who desired to go to the holy places stir you up...all who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins.¹¹⁷

This extremely grim picture of Christian/Muslim relations in the eleventh century Middle East was grossly distorted and inaccurate, as already seen above. But this speech (whether words are Urban's or not is debatable) changed the history of that region forever and the people therein lost their peace for more than two centuries. Hundreds of thousands of people died on both sides just because of some misleading false propaganda. The following paragraphs will shed some light upon some of the consequences of the crusades such as indiscriminate massacres, cannibalism and infanticide. When the Crusaders were besieging a city called Ma'arra in Syria (1098), they committed a savage act of cannibalism. Fulcher of Chartres, himself a Crusader in the First Crusade, describes the whole episode in these words:

Then they [the Crusaders] hurried off to Ma'arra and besieged it. But after twenty days, our people suffered a severe famine. I shudder to speak of it: our people were so frenzied by hunger that they tore flesh from the buttocks of the Saracens [Muslims] who had died there, which they cooked and chewed and devoured with savage

mouths, even when it had been roasted insufficiently on the fire.¹¹⁸

The Chronicle of Albert of Aachen, who was not an eyewitness, is the most complete, colourful and the earliest surviving account of the First Crusade, describes the same incident in these words:

It is extraordinary to relate and horrifying to the ears: these same torments of famine grew so great around these cities that – it is wicked to tell, let alone to do – the Christians did not shrink from eating not only killed Turks or Saracens, but even dogs whom they snatched and cooked with fire, on account of the scarcity of which you have heard.¹¹⁹

These crimes were a direct outcome of the Church propaganda against Islam and Muslims. The atrocities continued and the crusaders massacred the populations of almost every city they took (Jews of Rhineland, Antioch, Ma'arra etc). Muslims weren't the only people who suffered due to this barbaric campaign; Jews of Rhineland also paid a heavy price. One massacre, in particular, was of an industrial magnitude and that was the disaster of Jerusalem. *Gesta Francorum*, an anonymous chronicle of the First Crusade, tells the sad story of the fall of Jerusalem:

Before we attacked Jerusalem, the bishops and priests preached to us...On Friday 15 July 1099, early in the morning, we attacked the city from all sides...our men, following Lethold [first man to climb the wall of the city], chased after them [the Muslims], killing them and dismembering them as far as the temple of Solomon. And in that place there was such slaughter that we were up to our ankles in their blood...Our pilgrims entered the city, and chased the Saracens, killing as they went, as far as the temple of Solomon. There the enemy assembled, and fought a furious battle for the whole day, so that their blood flowed all over the temple. At last the pagans were overcome, and our men captured a good number of men and women in the Temple; they killed whomsoever they wished, and chose to keep others alive.

Soon our army overran the whole city, seizing gold and silver, horses and mules, and houses full of riches of all kinds. All our men came rejoicing and weeping for joy, to worship at the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the morning our men climbed up cautiously on to the roof of the Temple and attacked the Saracens, both male and female, and beheaded them with unsheathed swords. The other Saracens threw themselves from the Temple.

...They further gave orders that all the dead Saracens should be cast out on account of the terrible stench; because nearly the whole city was crammed with their bodies. The Saracens who were still alive dragged the dead ones out in front of the gates, and made huge piles of them, as big as houses. Such a slaughter of pagans no one has ever seen or heard of; the pyres they made were like pyramids.¹²⁰

The true magnitude of this massacre will never be known, however Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), one of the leading Muslim chroniclers of the Crusades, puts the number of casualties to 70000 dead.¹²¹ This number may not be accurate, as no one can say for certain how many people died. Nevertheless, it is certain that the Crusaders massacred the population indiscriminately. This is also confirmed by the testimony of Albert of Aachen:

The Gauls [the Crusaders] pursued them bravely with lances and swords...and they kept up a very great slaughter of the gentiles [note that the Crusaders obviously saw themselves as the new Israel]...there was such great bloodshed that the streams even flowed out across the very floors of the royal court, and the stream of spilt blood was ankle deep...Moreover, as the Christian victors came back out of the palace after the very great and cruel slaughter of Saracens, of whom ten thousand fell in that same place, they put to the sword great numbers of gentiles...they were sparing absolutely no gentile of any age and kind.¹²²

Infanticide was another crime which was caused by the injustice of the Church propaganda. One cannot imagine how a human (let alone a man of God) would ever do something like this to infants. Albert of Aachen narrates:

...they [the Crusaders] were piercing through with the sword's point women who had fled into the turreted palaces and dwellings; seizing by the soles of their feet from their mothers' laps or their cradles infants who were still suckling and dashing them against the walls or lintels of the doors and breaking their necks; they were slaughtering some with weapons, or striking them down with stones; they were sparing absolutely no gentile of any age or kind.¹²³

CATASTROPHES NOW

Religious and ideological intolerance was not a speciality of the Crusaders, Mongols or the Romans alone, it is very much alive to this day. Massacres of a barbaric nature were committed in the name of religion, ideology and nationalism in the twentieth century and are being committed to this day. Massacre of the Jews in Nazi Germany; of the Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya and Indian Gujarat, and the ongoing Israeli terror against the Palestinians are just few examples to look at in this regard. Most of the atrocities committed in the twentieth century were based upon false and hateful propaganda. The Jews were demonized as the 'henchmen of the devil' in Nazi Germany, hence the Holocaust. Religion was seen as the opium of the people in Communist Russia, hence almost 9 million deaths during the Bolshevik Revolution and another 20-40 million perished during the reign of Stalin. Tradition was despised in Chairman Mao's Communist China, hence almost 60-80 million casualties. Similarly, Iraq was falsely accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction and was subsequently attacked. Almost one million people lost their lives as a result of the second Iraq war (2003).

It is clear that so long as lies are facilitated and the truth is hidden, massacres and atrocities will continue to disturb the peace of this world. Islam's legacy is deliberately hidden from the masses to justify the ongoing global persecution of the Muslims. Understanding the history of Islam and its role in the development of human civilization will enable the world to appreciate the benefits of this great way of life. It is clear from the discussion above that Islam, far from being a problem, is the cure for all cancers facing mankind. Mankind, instead of believing the hateful media war machine, must pay more and sincere attention to Islam on its own terms so that the spirit of *convivencia* can be revived once again. Humankind, instead

of turning away from its Creator, must acknowledge that God made us all and only He can solve our problems.

O man! What hath made thee careless concerning thy Lord, the Bountiful? Who created thee, then fashioned thee, then proportioned thee.¹²⁴

CONCLUSION

This discussion above shall suffice to convince any sensible and sincere person that Islam definitely came as a mercy for the worlds and that the promise made in the Qur'an was fulfilled. The mercy manifested itself not only through kind treatment towards the masses but also through the outcome of that treatment: 'a remarkable civilisation'. It is plausible to assert that the Islamic system was directly responsible for producing civilizations which fascinated many intellectuals, philosophers, historians, monarchs and scientists in different places and times. Without the security and justice given by the Islamic political system, there would have been no political organisation in Baghdad, no economic provisions in the Mediterranean Sea, no moral traditions in al-Andalus and no pursuit of knowledge and arts in Europe. Many systems have been applied to bring happiness to mankind, but none could fully accomplish this task. Communism, Fascism, Secularism and Capitalism have miserably failed and there is no hope for mankind except a system that can deal with the social, political, moral, spiritual, and educational needs of human societies comprehensively. If a system was successful in bringing much happiness and peace to mankind in the past, it can do the same today. The Qur'an transformed the people of Arabia who emerged as the torch bearers of peace and justice in the world. This peace then enabled different faith communities to co-exist and this co-existence then consequently produced the *Ornament of the World*. One cannot separate the fruit from the tree and the tree cannot be conceived without the seed. The seed of *convivencia* was laid by the Qur'an and the fruit subsequently emerged through the spiritual as well as material satisfaction of mankind; the fruit was enjoyed in the universities of Baghdad, Damascus, Cordova, Oxford, Paris and Naples; the fruit of Islam was to facilitate the worship of God alone. There is no doubt that the advent of Islam was one of the best occurrences in the history of the world. Whether the following statement was actually uttered by Bonaparte is not important, the truth of the matter is that it makes a lot of sense:

I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Qur'an which alone are true and which

alone can lead men to happiness.¹²⁵

APPENDIX A

ISLAM AND THE JEWS: THE GOLDEN AGE

It is often assumed that Muslims are inherently anti-Jewish and they can never be just to the Jews. One famous incident is usually cited to substantiate this assertion and that is the incident of Banu Quraidha whereby almost 600-700 Jewish fighters were executed due to their treachery against the state of Medina. It was discussed above that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had an agreement of protection with the Jews of Medina and both parties were bound to support each other in war (see above the Treaty of Medina). It was also stipulated in the treaty that *if anyone from among them commits an outrage or breaks promise or is guilty of a crime, he shall deserve punishment of his crime*. Banu Quraidha not only betrayed the Muslims during the battle of the Ditch, they almost annihilated the Prophet ﷺ with his followers. The punishment their fighting men received was due to this treachery, which they agreed to by being a party to the treaty. Other Jewish tribes (mentioned in the treaty above) were not touched and flourished in Medina until they were relocated to Palestine in the reign of Omar bin Khattab. Others cite the present situation in Palestine as an evidence of the so called Muslim anti-Jewish “bigotry”. This piece will expose its readers to the history of Islam and Jews between the incident of Banu Quraidah and the present situation in Palestine. It will be seen that contrary to being anti-Jewish, Muslims protected the Jews for more than one thousand years and produced the Golden Age of the Children of Israel. Jews were saved from extinction, as will be seen below, by the Muslim hegemony.

Jews had reached the peak of their prosperity under Islamic rule. Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915-990 CE) was the chief minister of the Islamic Caliphate of Cordova, governed by the most powerful monarch in Western Europe, Abdur-Rahman III. Hasdai’s position inevitably benefited his people, as he made inquiries into the affairs of his brethren scattered as far as Caucasus. In a letter to the Jewish Khazar King Joseph, he elaborates upon his fortunate position in al-Andalus:

Praise be to the beneficent God for **his mercy towards me!** Kings of the earth, to whom his [the Caliph’s] magnificence and power are known, bring gifts to him, conciliating his favour by costly presents, such as the king of the Germans, the king of the Gebalim, the king of Constantinople, and others. All their gifts pass through my hands, and I am charged with making gifts in return. (Let my lips express praise to the God in heaven who so far extends his loving kindness

towards me without any merit of my own, but in the fullness of his mercies.) I always ask the ambassadors of these monarchs about our brethren the Jews, the remnant of the captivity, whether they have heard anything concerning the deliverance of those who have pined in bondage and had found no rest.¹²⁶

Hasdai had become so powerful in an Islamic state that he could now benefit his brethren globally. Samuel Ibn Nagrella ha-Nagid (993-1056 CE) was another powerful Jewish chief minister of Granada in Islamic Spain who served his people well. Abraham Ibn Daud (ca. 1161), a Jewish chronicler, elaborates upon ha-Nagid's significance for the spread of the Jewish tradition:

He achieved great good for Israel in Spain, the Maghreb, Ifriqiya, Egypt, Sicily, indeed as far as the academy in Babylonia and the Holy City. He provided material benefits out of his own pocket for students of Torah in all these countries. He also purchased many books – [copies] of the Holy Scriptures as well as of the Mishna and Talmud, which are also among the holy writings. Throughout Spain and the countries just mentioned, whoever wished to devote full time to the study of the Torah found in him a patron. Moreover, he retained scribes who would make copies of the Mishna and Talmud, which he would present to students who were unable to purchase copies themselves, both in the academies of Spain as well as of the other countries we mentioned. These gifts were coupled with annual contribution of olive oil for the synagogues of Jerusalem, which he would despatch from his own home. He spread Torah abroad and died at a ripe old age after having earned four crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of power, the crown of Levite, and towering over them all, by dint of good deeds in each of these domains, the crown of a good name.¹²⁷

Samuel ibn Nagrella's fortune and his influence benefited the Jews worldwide. This was only made possible because of his position as a chief minister of an Islamic power, and the relaxed attitude of the Muslim government towards the Jewish faith. For the Jews, this was

certainly a practical manifestation of the promise made by Allah in the Qur'an:

And We have sent you (O Muhammad ﷺ) not but as a mercy to mankind'¹²⁸

The mercy that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent with was not restricted to the Muslims alone; rather Islamic rule was to bring prosperity for others too. Note that all the Jewish activities, under the patronage of Samuel Ibn Nagrella, mentioned above by Ibn Daud were taking place in the lands controlled by the Muslims. In other words, the freedom and autonomy allowed by *Shariah Law* enabled the Jews to carry out their religious pursuits without any hindrance. Bahya ibn Paqudah, a medieval Andalusian Jewish writer, describes the prosperous existence of the Jews in Islamic Spain in a treatise *Kitab al-Hidaya* (ca. 1080):

If one of our contemporaries looks for similar miracles now, let him examine objectively our situation among the Gentiles [Muslims in this case] since the beginning of the Diaspora and the way our affairs are managed in spite of the differences between us and them both secret and open, which are well known to them. Let him see that our situation, as far as living and subsistence are concerned, **is the same as theirs, or even better**, in times of war and civil disturbances. You see how both their leaders and their vulgar peasants toil much more than the middle and lower classes among us, according to our Lord's promise contained in the Scriptures.¹²⁹

Ibn Paqudah's satisfaction concerning Jewish prosperity in Islamic Spain was due to the effective implementation of the law of Islam. It was the *Shariah Law* which enabled the non-Muslims to enjoy the fruits of freedom and security. He even acknowledges that '*in spite of the differences between us and them both secret and open, which are well known to them*' the Jewish living conditions were some times better than those of the Muslims. This cannot be attributed to anything other than the commandments in the Qur'an whereby Muslims are asked by God to uphold justice at all times, even towards those they may dislike:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is well-acquainted with what you do.¹³⁰

Benjamin of Tudela, a Spanish Jew who travelled to Baghdad in 1168, described the situation of the Iraqi Jewry in these words:

In Baghdad there are about forty thousand Jews, and they dwell in **security, prosperity, and honour** under the great Caliph [al-Mustanjid, 1160-70 CE], and amongst them are great sages, the Heads of the Academies engaged in the study of the Law...¹³¹

The *security, prosperity, and honour* conferred upon the Jews of Baghdad were not accidental, rather this conduct was deliberate. The Jews often lived better lives than most Muslims due to their close association with emirs and caliphs. There are many examples of Jewish physicians working in the court and treating the royal family when necessary. One such example is Maimonides, who served in the Ayubid court and was a favourite of the brother of Saladin. In 1420 Rabbi Yitzhak Tsarfati wrote a letter to his persecuted German brothers from the Ottoman Turkish territory (Edirne [Adrianople]) inviting them to join him in prosperous and tolerant Islamic lands:

Your cries and laments have reached us. We have been told of all the sorrows and persecutions which you suffer in German lands. Listen, my brothers...if you...knew even the tenth of what God has blessed us with in this land, you would give heed to no further difficulties. You would embark at once to us...Here the Jew is not compelled to wear a yellow hat as a badge of shame...You will be free of your enemies. **Here you will find peace.**¹³²

'Here you will find peace', is the concluding statement Rabbi Yitzhak used in his letter. This peace was an outcome of the justice delivered by the Ottoman authorities. If the Ottomans were just, this was due to the ideal they might have followed. The Prophet of Islam ﷺ told his followers that on the Day of Judgment, when there will be no other shade, seven will be under the shade of Allah's throne and a just ruler is at the top of the list.¹³³ An Italian Rabbi, Obadiah Yareh Da Bertinoro, travelled to Jerusalem in 1486 CE and wrote a letter to his father telling him about the country and its people:

The Jews are not persecuted by the Arabs in these parts. I have travelled through the country in its length and breadth, and **none of them has put an obstacle in my way. They are very kind to**

strangers, particularly to anyone who does not know the language; and if they see many Jews together they are not annoyed by it. In my opinion, an intelligent man versed in political science might easily raise himself to be chief of the Jews as well as of the Arabs...¹³⁴

This was the situation in pre Ottoman Jerusalem. Things didn't change when the Ottomans took the city rather Jews enjoyed a very healthy and peaceful life under the new regime. The Jews of Ottoman Jerusalem were studied by Amnon Cohen and some of his findings are discussed below. A Jewish historian Elijah Capsali describes the Jewish prosperity in the Ottoman Empire in this way:

The Jews gathered together from all the cities of Turkey, both far and near, each person coming from his own place, and the community gathered in Constantinople in its thousands and its tens of thousands. The heavens helped them, too, and the king provided them perfect estates and houses filled with all kinds of goodness. The Jews resided there with their families and their clans; they were fruitful and swarmed and multiplied, and the land was full of them. From that day on, whenever the king conquered a place where there were Jews, he would immediately shake them up and drive them from there – and despatch them to Constantinople, the seat of his kingdom, and he would pick them up and cuddle them forever. Now, since the Jews feared the Lord, he provided them with houses filled with all kinds of goodness in a place where formerly, at the time of the King of Byzantium, there were only two or three congregations, the Jews increased in numbers, becoming a people with more than communities, for the land could not support them altogether – **for their property was overwhelming**.¹³⁵

'For their prosperity was overwhelming', having read this, can one still imagine with reasonability that the Muslims were ever anti-Jewish? Islamic behaviour towards the Jews has been consistently filled with kindness and sympathy. This is due to the law Muslims follow which is derived from the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. The Qur'an instructs the Muslims to be kind to those who do not fight them for their religion:

Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.¹³⁶

The Jewish chroniclers themselves testify to the Muslim kindness towards their people. The Portuguese Jewish chronicler Samuel Usque shed some light upon the Jewish migrants' condition in the city of Salonika, which was under the Ottoman rule:

The majority of my children who have been persecuted and exiled from Europe and many other parts of the world have taken refuge in this city, and she embraces them and receives them with as much love and good will as if she were Jerusalem, that old and ever pious mother of ours.¹³⁷

Having read so many Jewish testimonies, one can easily conclude that the Jews found a safe haven in the Islamic lands and this fact alone is enough to convince one to have confidence in the Islamic system of governing. Those persecuted Jews who took refuge with the Muslims were treated as friends and furthermore, their vulnerable situation was not exploited by the Muslim authorities. An Italian Jewish traveller, David dei Rossi, travelled through the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century. He documented his observations about Jewish people living in Safed as follows:

The Exile here is not like in our homeland. The Turks hold respectable Jews in esteem. Here and in Alexandria, Egypt, Jews are the chief officers and administrators of the customs, and the king's revenues. No injuries are perpetuated against them in all the empire. Only this year, in consequence of the extraordinary expenditure caused by the war against Shah Tahmsap al-Sufi, were the Jews required to make advances of loans to the princes.¹³⁸

The aforementioned primary testimonies provide a vivid perspective on the Jewish experience under the hegemony of Islam; however, it is equally prudent to ponder upon the views of some of the contemporary Jewish as well as non-Jewish historians. The following paragraphs will shed light upon some of the modern works on the Islamic behaviour towards the Jews.

SOME CONTEMPORARY VIEWS

Karen Armstrong notes in her *History of Jerusalem* that the Jews hailed the early Islamic conquest of the Byzantine lands as a mercy from God:

Toward the end of the seventh century, a Hebrew poem hailed the Arabs as the precursors of the Messiah and looked forward to the ingathering of the Jewish exiles and the restoration of the Temple. Even when the Messiah failed to arrive, Jews continued to look favourably on Islamic rule in Jerusalem. In a letter written in the eleventh century, the Jerusalem rabbis recalled the “**mercy**” God had shown his people when he allowed the “**Kingdom of Ishmael**” to conquer Palestine. They were glad to remember that when the Muslims arrived in Jerusalem, “there were people from the children of Israel with them; they showed them the spot of the Temple and they settled with them until this very day.”...In about 750 the Jewish author of “The Mysteries of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai” saw the building [the Dome of the Rock] as a prelude to the messianic age. He praises the Muslim Caliph as “**a lover of Israel**” who had “restored the breaches of Zion and the breaches of the Temple”¹³⁹

Having studied some early Jewish sentiments about the Muslim compassion, Karen Armstrong further concludes that:

The Muslims had established a system that enabled Jews, Christians, and Muslims to live in Jerusalem together for the first time.¹⁴⁰

What Karen Armstrong failed to acknowledge was the fact that, under Islamic governance, it was not only the first time in Palestine but also the last time when the Jews, Muslims and Christians lived together in peace. And if this is proved to be historically true, then all sincere peace-brokers in the region and elsewhere should propagate the return of the Islamic system. History has shown beyond any element of doubt that this is the only long-term and durable solution for Palestine and other injustice stricken regions.

Professor Dean Phillip Bell, who is dean and professor of Jewish history at Spertus Institute

of Jewish Studies in Chicago, had similar views with regards to the Jewish treatment at the hands of the Muslims:

Jews under medieval Islam never suffered from the same general negative perception as in the Christian West. Despite regional variations and high medieval political instability, in medieval Islam multicultural environments, combined with active engagement in sciences and literature, led to something of an **Islamic golden age** for the Jews, at least according to **most historical accounts**. It has been primarily in the context of **recent political developments** that the once assumed positive views of Jewish life under medieval Islam have been seriously questioned.¹⁴¹

Professor Bell's comments are self explanatory and decisive, not requiring any further elaboration. Zion Zohar, an American Jewish historian, confirms the Jewish appreciation of the Muslim arrival in Spain (711 CE) in this way:

Thus, when Muslims crossed the straits of Gibraltar from North Africa in 711 CE and invaded the Iberian Peninsula, Jews welcomed them as liberators from Christian Persecution...Born during this era of **Islamic rule**, the famous **Golden Age** of Spanish Jewry (circa 900-1200) produced such luminaries as: statesman and diplomat Hasdai ibn Shaprut, vizier and army commander Shmuel ha-Nagid, poet-philosophers Solomon Ibn Gabriol and Judah Halevi, and at the apex of them all, Moses Ben Maimon, also known among the Spaniards as Maimonides.¹⁴²

This prosperity and the Golden Age did not just end in the Middle Ages, rather this pattern continued for many centuries to come. In some places Jews were so comfortable with the Islamic system that they deliberately applied to Shariah courts for the purpose of attaining justice and arbitration, even when they had complete autonomy in their religious affairs [i.e. they had their own courts to refer to]. For instance, Amnon Cohen, another Jewish historian, studied the documents stored in the archives of the Shariah court of Jerusalem (commonly known as *sijill*) from the sixteenth century, whereby he found one thousand Jewish cases filed from 1530 to 1601. Cohen published his research in 1994 and during his research he made some astonishing discoveries, as he himself states:

Cases concerning Jews cover a very wide spectrum of topics. If we bear in mind that the Jews of Jerusalem had their own separate courts, the number of cases brought to Muslim court (which actually meant putting themselves at the mercy of a judge outside the pale of their communal and religious identity) is **quite impressive**¹⁴³...The Jews went to the Muslim court for a variety of reasons, but the overwhelming fact was their ongoing and almost permanent presence there. This indicates that they went there not only in search of **justice**, but did so hoping, or rather knowing, that more often than not they would attain **redress** when wronged...The Jews went to court to resolve much more than their conflicts with Muslim or Christian neighbours. They turned to **Shari'a** authorities to seek redress with respect to internal differences, and even in matters within their immediate family (intimate relations between husband and wife, nafaqa maintenance payments to divorcees, support of infants etc.).¹⁴⁴

Cohen provides some further details about the Jewish experience in sixteenth century Ottoman Jerusalem:

Their possessions were **protected**, although they might have had to pay for extra protection at night for their houses and commercial properties. Their title deeds and other official documents indicating their rights were **honoured** when presented to the court, being **treated like those of their Muslim neighbours**¹⁴⁵...The picture emerging from the sijill documents is baffling. On the one hand we encounter recurring Sultanic decrees sent to Jerusalem – in response to pleas of the Jews – to the effect that “**nothing should be done to stop them from applying their own law**” regarding a variety of matters. There are also many explicit references to the overriding importance of applying **Shari'a** law to them only **if they so choose**.

On the other hand, if we look closely at some of the inheritance lists, we see that the local court allocated to female members of Jewish families half the share given to male members, exactly as in Islamic law. This meant, ipso facto, **a significant improvement in the status of Jewish women** with respect to legacies over that accorded them by Jewish tradition, although it actually meant the application of **Islamic law** in an internal Jewish context¹⁴⁶...he [the Muslim Judge] **defended Jewish causes** jeopardized by high-handed behaviour of local governors; he enabled Jewish business people and craftsmen to lease properties from Muslim endowments **on an equal footing with Muslim bidders**; more generally, he **respected** their rituals and places of worship and guarded them against encroachment even when the perpetrators were other Muslim dignitaries.¹⁴⁷

And finally Cohen concludes that the Jews of Ottoman Jerusalem were free and happy:

No one interfered with their internal organisation or their external cultural and economic activities...In a world where civil and political equality, or positive social change affecting the group or even the individual were not the norms, the Sultan's Jewish subjects had no reason to mourn their status or begrudge their conditions of life. **The Jews of Ottoman Jerusalem enjoyed religious and administrative autonomy within an Islamic state**, and as a constructive, dynamic element of the local economy and society they could – and actually did – contribute to its functioning.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, the modern scholarly opinions also seem to suggest that the Muslims did not pursue an anti-Jewish policy nor did they ever persecute Jews due to religious differences. If the historical record presented above is taken seriously then one can argue that the Muslims saved the Jews from centuries of persecution. It was the legal system of Islam that produced the 'Golden Age' discussed above. The Islamic model supported by *Shariah Law* is a cohesive model that allows a diverse multitude of ethnicities to co-exist and enjoy the same freedoms and rights that are thwarted by oppressive powers today. Jews were severely

persecuted in Europe and other Christian lands. Islam liberated them and afforded them many rights and opportunities, and a tolerance and conviviality they had never encountered before. Jewish studies flourished in Baghdad and Spain under the patronage of Islam. Commentaries and Hebrew grammatical rules were perfected in shade of the Mosque. If it wasn't for the Muslim protection, as some assert, the fate of the Jewish people would have been quite different today. When it comes to Muslim attitude towards the Jews today, the enlightened believers will always have the Treaty of Medina in mind:

It is incumbent on all the Muslims to help and extend sympathetic treatment to the Jews who have entered into an agreement with us. Neither an oppression of any type should be perpetrated on them nor their enemy be helped against them.¹⁴⁹

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