

## ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE (RELIGION AS TESTIMONY)

DR. C. A. QADIR

About forty years ago, when I was a student of the under-graduate classes at the Murray College Sialkot, (Pakistan) an evangelist came from Scotland to lecture us on the nature of Religion. During the course of his impassioned and fiery speech, he told us that religion is a matter of personal testimony and that the touchstone of religious truths is the person himself. At that time I did not realize the profound truth contained in the statement but as years rolled by, I became increasingly convinced of the fact that religion after all is a supremely personal matter and that its truth rests upon the testimony of an individual. Now 'testimony' is bearing witness to", hence it becomes an important point to discuss, that if the essence of religion consists in "bearing witness to", to what does an individual bear witness and in what manner?

Several answers can be given to this question. But before any answer is offered, it is necessary to look into the logic of 'testimony' and the inevitable implications "of bearing witness to". I think the minimum requirement in the case of 'bearing witness to' is that an individual giving evidence should have had a personal experience—in Russell's terminology, knowledge by acquaintance—of the thing for which the evidence is being borne. It would look ridiculous, if a person "bearing witness' lays no claim to having had a personal experience of the thing or the event which is the subject of his testimony. By 'personal experience' is not meant any sort of experience, for fictitious experiences are also personal experiences, though they have no factual or historical validity. What is however implied is that whatever is being presented in the name of testimony should have been experienced directly and immediately, that is to say, intuitively and non-inferentially as a live reality, and not as a fiction or a connection of the brain. It is in this sense that Kierkegaard, a great Christian Existentialist, took religion when he raised the question. 'How to be a Christian? His question was not directed to non-Christians. It was a question meant for the Christians of his time or should we say of all times or going a step further should we say that Kierkegaard's question is meant for all religionists. A Muslim can likewise ask, 'How to be a Muslim?' and his question will be directed to Muslims and not to non-Muslims. Kierkegaard's question can have a wider perspective, for it can be a question

regarding man and one can ask 'How to be a man?' and the question would be directed to human beings and not to non-human beings. I feel that the question 'How to be a Christian?' or 'How to be a Muslim?' is ultimately a question of 'How to be Man?' and religion if it is worth the name should answer this question. Religion is nothing but Humanism in the final analysis. Its principal objective is to determine the place of man in relation to the world around and also to the ultimate transcendental reality if any. And the man bearing testimony shall have to specifically mention whether the objective of religion has been achieved in his life or not.

John Dewey, an American Pragmatist, has made a distinction between 'having a religion' and 'being religious'. Dewey thinks that most people who profess religion 'have a religion', but are not religious. They have a religion for census purposes, they go about as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or Buddhists but they are not religious in the sense of 'being religious! And unless one is religious in the sense of being religious, one cannot 'bear witness to', in the sense in which religion requires.

I have stressed this point for I feel that Islam is specifically a religion of testimony, Muslims have to bear witness to the fact that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet. The Quranic word for testimony is 'Shahada'. A convert to Islam has to proclaim *اشهد ان لا اله الا الله و اشهد ان محمداً رسول الله* which means that I bear witness to the fact that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet. Thus the minimum *as well as* the essential requirements of being a Muslim is to bear witness to two fundamental realities, one is the Godhead of Allah and the other is the prophethood of Muhammad. What these two realities connote will be clear in the sequel. An interesting fact to be noticed in this connection is that a believer has not to 'bear witness' at the time of conversion only but he is reminded five times a day when from the minaret the Muazzin calls him to *namaz*, that is to say, for prayers. The call for prayer uses the word twice, which means that at least ten times a day a believer is reminded of the fact that religion is essentially and basically an act of 'bearing testimony to'. Another important fact in this connection is that faith in Islam consists of two parts—one is verbal declaration *اقرار باللسان* of the realities mentioned above and the other is its affirmation by heart *تصديق بالقلب*. Both are important, one for the society and the other for the individual. Unless the claims and professions made verbally and publicly find their support within and are borne by inner convictions, a person

cannot become truly religious. It is impossible for a person to bear testimony unless religious truths are tried and experimented upon inwardly in the laboratory of one's own life. About Philosophy, Heidegger has said that it is 'Building, Dwelling and Thinking'. The same can be said, perhaps more appropriately, with regard to religion that it is a building, a dwelling and a thinking. Unless religion becomes a place in which the believer spends his life that is to say lives, thinks and has his being, he cannot bear witness to, in the sense in which religion demands. Unfortunately now-a-days a great many people sit on judgement on religion, that is to say, bear witness to, who have never made religion their dwelling and have never experienced it in their bones. The essential truth in the case of religion, as in the case of life, is subjectivity.

That truth is subjective cannot be appreciated, I am afraid, by Anglo-American Philosophers, who have made the analysis of language, the sole gateway to knowledge and say, accordingly, that propositions alone can be true or false. They are moreover wedded to the cult of objectivity and ignore whatever cannot be tested or experimented upon under standard conditions in a laboratory. One essential condition of objectivity is that the material should be public, repeatable and shareable. Now the religious experience of which I am talking and for which witness is to be borne is a private, non-repeatable and non-shareable something. But not non-existent or non-significant on that count. On the other hand, higher and richer experiences of life, because of their unique and supremely personal character are non-repeatable and non-shareable—in a word, subjective. Hence unless religion becomes a subjectivity, an inward vital experience, that is to say, the *elan vital* of life, no one can 'bear testimony', in the true sense of the word.

There is a false impression in some quarters that Islam is a religion laying stress on form, that is to say on observances, rituals, ceremonies and customs, and demands strict adherence to these. There is no denying the fact that ritual has its own importance. Not only do rituals create an atmosphere proper for the appropriation of the Infinite within they also stress the social aspect of religion. But the essential thing in this entire activity is the inner one, for it is in the heart more than any where else that transformations are wrought. And when one is bearing testimony, it is the testimony of the heart rather than that of any thing else. The body no doubt performs an important function, in a devotional activity, but this activity it performs, as an agent of the mind. By calling body an agent of

the mind, it is not intended to belittle the importance of the physical medium through which the spiritual process grows and develops. When Islam denounces renunciation of the world, the implication is that the physical aspect of life has its own significance and cannot be ignored in the spiritual uplift programmes of humanity. But when all is said and done, the primary reality for religious experience remains the heart. It is in the heart and through the heart that spiritual heights are achieved. A Muslim Sufi's saying that no one can be a Muslim unless the Quran is revealed to him as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet can be understood and appreciated in this context.

The saying of the Sufi contains a fundamental truth. It implies that accepting the Holy Quran on trust is not enough. It should be revealed to a Muslim as it was revealed to the Holy Prophet. In other words if one has to bear testimony to the validity or the veracity of the Quranic truth then it must be experienced as a living truth—a sort of personal experience, as if the recipient of the truth is the individual himself instead of the Holy Prophet. I am reminded here of the different stages that Kierkegaard has mentioned in the spiritual odyssey of an existentialist. He passes from the aesthetic stage to the ethic stage, finally reaching the religious one. At the first stage there is commitment to a borrowed code of life, while at the third stage one throws oneself at the feet of One's Creator, after making a choice, which in fact is a leap into the dark. The Holy Quran has described the fact of existential choice in its own illimitable manner. It says that God at the time of creation, presented the 'trust of responsibility' to rivers, mountains and other elemental forces of Nature but all of them refused to bear it. It was man alone, who took the risk and agreed to bear the burden. In this legend there is no mention of imposition or coercion. God could have thrust the burden on whomsoever He liked, but He acted in the most democratic manner. He offered the 'trust' to all members of His creation. Out of these it was man alone, who accepted it. This is an existential choice which man made in the beginning and has to make, in all religious situations, for without accepting the trust voluntarily—of course in the interests of the spiritual requirements of life, no one can be asked 'to bear testimony to'.

From the emphasis I have laid on the existential nature of religion, that is to say on inwardness, heart or testimony, it may be surmised that I am regarding mysticism an essential part of the Islamic faith. I do not deny that mysticism of some sort is a necessary ingredient of religious

experience. But religion is much greater than mystic experience and has functions to perform which cannot be limited to having mystic experience. Consequently, in spite of the great emphasis laid on inwardness, I would not equate religion with mysticism. Rumi has distinguished the 'husk' of religion from the 'kernel' of religion, meaning thereby that the essence of religious experience, that is to say, its kernel is the devotional attitude whereas outer observances or ritual constitute its husk or epiphenomenon. This distinction is valuable in as much as it brings out the relative importance of ritual and the experience itself, but it does not imply, as some have thought, that ritual is an un-necessary encumbrance and can be dispensed with. The ritual is needed to create an atmosphere appropriate for the induction of tran-empirical experiences and no one can deny the absolute necessity of such an atmosphere. When however the ritual is regarded as the end and the objective of the religious activity, formalism and rigorism creeps in and gets the upper hand, gradually and imperceptibly. Religion then becomes a mechanised, regimented sort of behaviour and ceases to be a testimony.

Allama Iqbal speaks of the three periods of religious life : which he calls the periods of faith, thought and discovery. He does not lay much stress on the first two, as the first is doctrinal and ritualistic while the second is metaphysical. He however emphasizes the third one in which according to him, "religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of law within the depths of his consciousness . . . Religion in this sense is known by the unfortunate name of Mysticism, which is supposed to be a life-denying, fact-avoiding attitude of mind directly opposed to the radical empirical attitude of our times. Yet higher religion which is only a search for a larger life, is essentially experience and recognized the necessity of experience as its foundation long before science learnt to do it."

About the nature and character of mystic experience no better account can be given than that of William James who in his book 'Varieties of Religious Experience' mentions four distinctive marks. The first is ineffability, which means that the mystical revelatory experience is so absolutely indescribable as to be hostile to all attempts at ordinary expression. The second is the noetic quality of the mystic experience which means that the mystic experience has a cognitive content. It is a state of

mind, according to William James, which yields insights into depths of truth, unplumbed by the discursive intellect. The third mark is transiency, by which is meant the shortness of the duration of the mystic experience. William James says, "Except in rare cases, half an hour or at most an hour or two seems to be the limit beyond which they (mystical experiences) fade into the light of the common day". "The fourth and the last characteristics of the mystic experience is its passivity.

Out of these four characteristics, there are two which have become the subject of controversy. The first is the incommunicability of the mystic experience and the second is their noetic content. It is held by Linguistic Philosophers of the Wittgensteinian group that language is essentially and basically public and that if an experience by its very nature, is incommunicable then it will have no function to perform in a living language. Apart from the fact that the assumption of the Wittgensteinian logic of language is itself open to criticism, it can be said that the term 'incommunicability' has been unduly stretched. In a sense every experience is incommunicable. Who can know whether my experience of 'red' is identical to your experience of 'red'. My experience of red cannot be taken out and placed on a table to be compared with your experience of red which should also be taken out and placed on the table. Evidently such a condition can never be met. Hence all psychological experiences, no matter what their content or nature is, are infested with privacy. Linguistic philosophers can however reply by saying that what they are concerned with is not the private character of experiences but their public character which alone matters for scientific and everyday purposes. Such a position would not however carry any weight with a religionist, for he is concerned specifically and in some cases exclusively with the area which for a Linguistic philosophers lies out of bounds. If religious experience is a 'testimony', which undoubtedly it is, then it is bound to have an individual character. That is why God looks into the hearts of people and also lives in the hearts of people.

The charge of incommunicability can be met in another way also. It is not quite correct to say that mystic experience is incommunicable. The mystics do communicate, among themselves and also with others. Communication is not done through words alone. In my book on Logical Positivism, I have tried to show that religious language is multidimensional, and the mystic in communicating it takes recourse to analogy, to similes and metaphors, to parables and historical events, and also to

gestures whether overt or covert. Very often his meaning does not lie in what he says but in what he does not say. Like Existentialists, a mystic writes in invisible ink. His meaning is to be read between the lines—that is to say in the gaps between the words, and that requires a good deal of ingenuity and spiritual sensitivity on the part of the person receiving communication. The mystical language is a sort of code language and can be rendered in ordinary language once the technique and the mannerism of this language is understood. In the same book I have refuted the charge that the religious language is non-cognitive, for once it is admitted that the religious language has no meaning, it becomes incommunicable. If there is no sense in religious language then there is nothing to be communicated. But only such persons can find no meaning in religious language as limit themselves to the Positivistic analysis of language. Once this standpoint is abandoned and the multi-dimensional character of language recognised, it becomes easy to discover the meaning of mystic language in one of the three ways or with the help of all the three ways that I have discussed in the book mentioned already.

One of the ways in which the mystic language is rendered intelligible is through faith or obedience. A scientist, face to face with a material situation, has to adopt scientific attitude which is that of objectivity, rational analysis and experimental observation. A religious situation is characteristically different from the scientific one. It is one of obedience or faith and can be met with, by the suspension and not by the employment of critical faculties. Islam provides such a situation five times a day in the form of prayer. As said already the call to prayer, five times daily, is an invitation to having a personal experience of religious truths, after which a believer can offer testimony with clear conscience. Salat, to use the Arabic word for prayer is called **مِراج المومنين** that is to say, an act of ascension for the believers. It is recorded in the Holy Quran that the prophet ascended to heavens and had the unique privilege of meeting the Almighty. The same type of encounter can a Muslim have, five times a day, if he offers his prayers sincerely and devotedly. A prayer if said in the right spirit is a dialogue between the Creator and the Created, it is an expression of I-Thou relationship. The person in offering prayer, not only affirms the basic cosmic Reality which he calls God but also goes through what some people call oceanic experience while others call it numinosity, the mystics however term it 'absorption' in the Infinite. A drop of water mixing with the water of the ocean and becoming great like ocean itself. In the prayer, thus a devotee gets attuned to the elemental

forces without, to the transcendental Reality above and to the great Unconscious within, for all these forces comprise the Infinite. The prayer is a solemn expression of the oneness of Reality, it affirms as nothing else can, the perfect harmony which reigns ultimately in the scheme of things.

Unfortunately in the present day world, dominated as it is by economic and technological considerations, a different kind of philosophy prevails which has its root in conflict and look to Nature as an alien, hostile forced in tooth and claw as Tennyson says, un-mindful of human purposes and values. The modern exponent of this viewpoint is Sartre, who in his great book *Being and Nothingness* maintains that every man and woman is trying wittingly or unwittingly to disintegrate the other through his or her look and behaviour. Sartre has analysed all the so-called finer emotions of life including love in its higher form and finds therein nothing but a cloaked effort at self-aggrandisement and the exploitation of the other for one's own ends. The Muslim philosophers have never accepted this cynical version of human life and have instead expounded the philosophy of **رفاق** which means companionship or belonging together. Nor have Muslim philosophers ever regarded Nature as an alien force, bent upon undoing human purposes. True, Nature has to be subjugated, moulded, refashioned or altered to suit human purposes but in its essence, Nature is not an alien force. The mystic experience or the oceanic feeling which one experiences at the time of prayer testifies to the oneness of Reality. In the prayer the devotee becomes one with the ultimate Reality and instead of experiencing "conflict" as a scientist or a philosopher of the Sartrean type does, feels that Reality and he himself are not two different pieces, separated from each other by impassable gulf. The result of this experience is peace within and peace without, in a nutshell, Islam, for Islam literally means nothing but peace.

Since *namaz* is an encounter with the Ultimate Reality and affords in a supremely unique manner an opportunity of direct and immediate contact with God, it provides thereby a sure ground to bear testimony to'. The mystic takes recourse to music and dancing, called **سماع** in their terminology to create artificially an atmosphere conducive to the evocation of spiritual experiences, but it seems to me that the rituals associated with the performance of prayers is enough to enable a believer to immerse in the ocean of Divinity and emerge out of it with a fresh evidence for the affirmation of a just order of things, controlled and directed by a good God, interested in the welfare of human beings.



After having discussed the essence of religion as lying in 'bearing witness to', the question arises as to what is it to which witness is borne. The answer from the Islamic standpoint is very simple. Of all the religions of the world, Islam is perhaps the one with least metaphysics. In other religions there are complicated notions and doctrines to be believed in, but a Muslim is required to believe in two things only—one is the oneness of the Ultimate Reality, called God in religious language and the other is the prophethood of Muhammad which means that God is not indifferent to His creation. Both of them are articles of faith for a Muslim. To understand their true significance, a little elucidation is needed.

What does God mean in Islam? This question has been answered in hundred and one ways by Muslim Philosophers and theologians throughout the ages. Hence instead of putting the question in this way, I will put it slightly differently, to make it easier for me to answer. The question that I propose to myself is, what does God mean to me as a Muslim? The question thus stated is in line with my own thinking and will enable me to give my own evidence in this matter. Needless to say that evidence is not the same thing as proof, and in giving evidence, I am not attempting to prove anything. It will be interesting to note that no effort is made in present day philosophy to justify or to prove anything. On the other hand if the standpoint of a philosopher is epistemological, his philosophy becomes an essay in the clarification and elucidation of concepts, and if his standpoint is ontological then his philosophy becomes phenomenological—describing, without any interpretation, the reality as it presents itself. In religion however the purpose is neither to elucidate nor to describe but 'to bear witness to,' hence the truth of which evidence is to be borne is charged through and through with subjectivity. Subjective truth is existential truth and is the result of personal choice. Lewis has said in his book "Mind and the World-Order" that a scientist has to choose, out of the numerous possibilities thrown open to him by a logician after working out the if-then relationships of the basic assumptions, only those possibilities as suit his requirements. Similarly a religionist has to choose, out of the numerous possibilities enshrined in his religious commitments, such possibilities as are needed by the existential requirements of his life.

In the Islamic traditions, God is a Being, a Person—not in the psychological sense, but in the transcendental sense and also perhaps, in the immanent sense, for God is both transcendent and immanent, but all

the same inconceivable and unimaginable by the puny human intellect. God sees without eyes, God hears without ears and God has a being without physical encumbrances. It is written in the Holy Quran 'the like of God you have never seen or imagined. 'C.D. Broad has shown in one of his essays that the term person cannot be applied to God, because the term has a psychological connotation and when it is applied to a transcendental Reality it loses all significance and lands the user into contradiction. Broad is right so far as the scientific use of the term is concerned, but the religious language is not a scientific language and its connotation is to be fixed not by ordinary usage, but by other techniques briefly hinted above. The difficulty with regard to God's language is not felt about the term 'Person' only but with regard to any and every ascription about Him or His nature. When God is said to be just, kind or compassionate, are not these concepts human and can we apply these human concepts to a supra-human Reality? I think the only way out of this difficulty is to avoid objectivity and to take one's stand on one's own existential requirements i.e., to say, on one's subjectivity.

God is no doubt a Being, as I said, in some supersensible sense, but He is also a Manifestation. He reveals Himself through His attributes— one of which is creation. He is a Creator and much more. Being Infinite He cannot be limited by a few attributes. In the Islamic tradition, ninety-nine names of God have been mentioned. But there should be other names too. If God is Infinite, his names or attributes should be unlimited. The names of God are in fact human excellences carried to the extreme, they are so to say Platonic Ideas of moral values made to reside in the universal consciousness of God. It was St. Augustine who said that Platonic Ideas should reside in some consciousness and as they could not reside in human consciousness because of its psychological limitations, they must reside in Cosmic Consciousness which is at once universal and eternal. Platonic Ideas are however abstractions and cannot characterise the Ultimate Reality which for Islam is the most concrete. Concretely considered the ultimate values which manifest the Nature of God become in human situations what may be called operative principles or principles by which we live. These operative principles, so far as God's nature is considered, are unlimited, since God Himself is Infinite and Unlimited. God thus regarded becomes a storehouse of all values, imaginable and unimaginable. Santyana, an American philosopher has taken God as the sumtotal of values and has regarded the religious life to lie in the pursuit of values. The Holy Prophet has enjoined upon Muslims to in-

culcate in themselves the virtues of God. Since God is a cosmic Reality, He must have in His nature all the moral excellences which any individual in any situation, age or condition of life may require. God is the god of all humanity-past, present and future, therefore his excellences should have relevance to all ages, to all conditions and to all types of human beings. But an individual because of his nature which is finite and limited cannot assimilate all the infinite excellences of God, nor do I believe he is expected to do so. He must look to his own potentialities and limitations and choose out of the infinite excellences embodied in the nature of God such excellences as suit the peculiar and the unique historic situation in which he happens to be placed. Accordingly each individual has to exercise choice in the selection of virtues. He will concretise in his own life that much of God as his mortal frame can bear.

If God stands for ultimate values, which in ethical jargon are known as intrinsic values, and God is another name for Ultimate Reality, it would follow that the moral or the spiritual order is logically prior to and ontologically supreme over everything else. This deduction though true can lead to misunderstanding against which we have to guard. It might imply that there is a split between the spiritual and physical order of things. Though this position is very often adopted by philosophers, yet from the strictly Islamic point of view, it is incorrect. Islam does not recognize any cleavage between the so-called spiritual and physical realms. Thus though for scientific purposes, the physical realm may be distinguished from the spiritual one, yet in the final reckoning no such distinction can be recognized. The spiritual values have a material colouring as the material values have a spiritual colouring. Of all the religions, of the world, Islam is the most spiritual as well as the most material, for it obliterates the distinction between the spiritual and the material and bestows holiness on the flesh as it does on the spirit.

If one goes through the history of religions one will find that the fate of God-I mean His nature and characterisation, has depended upon the fate of kings. At one time kings were vain, autocratic and exacting, so were gods. They too were vain, autocratic and authoritarian. And since the kings were very many, so were the gods. The number of gods in the Vedic literature was no less than thirty three thousand. At a later time when the number of kings fell and great areas of human population came under the sway of a few kings, the number of gods also fell. There remained two or three gods. When however monarchical systems came

into existence and it became possible to dream of conquering the whole world, the idea of one God came into prominence. Again so long as people tolerated kings with unlimited powers, they could believe in an all-powerful God but the moment they became conscious of their basic rights and fought for their independence, the kings became constitutional Heads and likewise the God became a limited God to make room for human freedom. A little later when kings and parliaments came to be regarded as vehicles of public opinions and values, the God was also regarded as the expression of the common will, still better, the expression of the values and wills of the humanity. Now when kings have departed from the scene of the world and their place has been taken up by the elected representatives of people, who in legislatures, executives and judiciary uphold the values of the people they represent, a major change has come about in our understanding of God. Usually a country has a flag, which symbolise its values and aspirations. The flag is respected by all and sundry, it keeps on flying over all Government buildings, and cars of big Government officials, it is flown half-mast when there is an event of national sorrow, the army marches onward holding the country's flag high, and when it suffer defeat, its own flag is taken away and it has to salute to the enemy's flag. What is the flag, to which so much respect is paid? To an ordinary eye, the flag is but a piece of cloth attached to a piece of bamboo but to a person who takes the flag as a symbol of nation's aspirations and values, the flag is an epitome of nation's past, present and future-it concretises what the nation stands for and what it longs to be. I would not say that God in modern times has come down to the position of a flag. Analogies should not be stretched too far. But there is no denying the fact that just as flag is the repository of a nation's value and is respected and honoured because of that, God also lives in human hearts because He represents the highest and the noblest of what life stands for and because He is the beginning as well as the end of human endeavours. If you call such a religion as Humanism, it will highlight the point I am trying to make.

I now come to the second item for which as a Muslim one has to bear testimony, and this is prophethood. What does prophethood mean or stand for? To my mind it stands for two things—one, that there is a link, a via media or a meeting ground between the finite and the infinite and two, that the Creator is supremely interested in the well-being of His creation. To take the first point first. Since the days of Plato and even earlier if we take into consideration Hindu, Chinese and Egyptian thought, the question of relating the supra-mundane, trans-empirical and transcendental

world with the contingent, ephemeral and empirical world has remained one of the most difficult problems. On the one hand there is the unchanging, external and perfect Reality, while on the other hand there is a changing, evanescent, imperfect system of ideas and events. How can the later flow out of the former when its characteristics are diametrically opposed to it? How can Perfect be the cause or the ground of the imperfect or how can the unchanging be the cause and the ground of the changing? A large majority of Muslim thinkers have taken under the influence of Plotinus and also of Plato, the view of emanation. Without going into the details of this doctrine or any others, it can be safely held that the theory of prophethood solves this problem on the religious level. A prophet is a link between man and God in as much as he brings the message of God to man and takes back mankind to the Primal Source by suggesting the right path. A prophet has therefore two functions to perform. Because of his heightened receptivity to Divine call and his high degree of spiritual sensitivity, he is in an excellent position to serve as a medium between two worlds—one of man and the other of God. Prophethood accordingly means that God and man are not separated from each other by impassable gulfs, but that it is possible for man to reach God and for God to reach man. I feel that in religious life it is as much important for man to reach God as it is for God to reach man. To all intents and purposes a prophet is a man—he lives and has his being like other people but he is different from others by virtue of his spiritual cognitivity and his office which entitles him to receive direct messages from the Divine Source. His spiritual cognitivity as well as his receptivity to Divine messages lifts him up from the common run of humanity and bestows upon him the high office of intermediary between God and man. This link is directly experienced by a devotee in moments of religious exhilarations when he, un-encumbered by memories of the past and dispossessed of all longings for the future, immerses in the great ever flowing river of Divinity and emerges with a freshness, unimaginable by a modern man steeped in materialistic outlook.

The second point in the case of prophethood is that it shows the supreme concern of the Al-mighty God for the well-being of mankind. The messages which God has been delivering to mankind since creation, are programmes, not only for spiritual and moral uplift, but also for material uplift. Religion encompasses the entire life of a man. Hence it must suggest a plan of living which is at once material and spiritual. As according to Islam, God has been sending his prophets

to all people of the world and at every age, it testifies to the supreme concern of God for the welfare of humanity. The Islamic revelation is a continuation and a culmination of the messages which God in His mercy has been sending off and on to humanity in the past. Islam does not lay claim to monopoly in respect of revelation. It recognizes the universality of God's mercy and grace., and affirms through its doctrine of the universality of revelation the concern of God for all, irrespective of caste, creed and colour and also of country, clime or age.

To illustrate my point, I take a story from one of Thomas Hardy's poems. He says that the grief-stricken people of this world, as all people are, once thought of seeking an interview with God and presenting their complaint in person to Him. They therefore constituted a representative body of a chosen few from among themselves to seek interview with God and to present their grievances to Him. This body had the good luck of getting an appointment and went accordingly to Him on the appointed day at the appointed time, but to their surprise they found the God sleeping and snoring heavily. They woke Him up—with great difficulty and told Him that they had come to Him after getting time. God seemed to have forgotten all about it but still allowed them audience. He enquired however as to who they were. To this they replied that they were human beings, created by Him and since they were in great trouble they had come to Him to seek redress. To their great amazement God enquired, if He ever created them. On receiving affirmative answer from the deputationists, God said, 'I now remember since you have reminded me that I once created you; but after having created you, I forgot all about it'. After saying this God went to sleep again and started snoring. One can well imagine the plight of the deputationists. I can say this much that the God of Islam is not the God of Thomas Hardy.

A moment ago I said that the fundamental idea of Islamic social philosophy is that of **رفائت** that is to say companionship, and the Islamic God, in the highest and the sublimest religious experiences becomes a companion, a comforter, a co-worker—in short a most intimate and reliable friend. It is this kind of I-Thou relationship that Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber visualise for man and for God. And it is this relationship that Islam requires between man and man, and man and God.