Islamic Seminary Foundation
Preserving Prophetic Principles

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief
An Introduction to the Journal

The *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* is a new, online, double-blind, peer reviewed, interdisciplinary journal published by Indiana University and sponsored by the Islamic Seminary Foundation (ISF). Produced annually, this journal commits itself to promoting academic and professional research about recent developments in American Muslim communities. In doing so, the *Journal* aims to provide a platform for scholars, students, and researchers to exchange their latest findings from varied disciplines. Therefore, one of the key aims of the *Journal* is to foster dialogue between academics, researchers, community leaders, chaplains and students regarding Islamic faith and how it is practiced in America. The *Journal* will be in an open-access format with print on demand available at Amazon.com.

American Muslims are a diverse group in terms of religiosity, culture, race, ethnicity, education, and socioeconomic background. Consequently, this population is of great interest to scholars, researchers, activists, journalists, and policy makers in the United States. This has led to numerous published studies about American Muslims over recent decades. This particular publication is part of ISF's overall effort to build bridges between the Islamic intellectual tradition and Western scholarship.

As Editor-in-Chief, I am pleased to introduce this inaugural issue. This journal has been nearly three years in the making. It is a natural outgrowth of ISF's "Shura and In-service Training Conference for Chaplains, Imams and Other Service Providers to the Muslim Community" held annually at Yale University since 2011, co-sponsored with the Association of Muslim Chaplains and the Muslim Endorsement Council of Connecticut. ISF decided that a dedicated journal would be the ideal vehicle to build on the success of the conference while capturing the diverse scholarly interests of an ever more vibrant American Muslim community. This inaugural issue outlines important themes and universal concepts that cut across disciplines.

This inaugural issue consists of three articles by highly esteemed scholars covering critical issues concerning Islamic faith and practice in America. In "*Al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*: A Methodology for Understanding the Qur'ān in the Modern Day," I argue by using the example of apostasy in Islam, that the Qur'anic methodology of *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān* is essential for enhancing and advancing religious scholarship. The article asserts that this method provides an important hermeneutic resolution to critical debates surrounding Islam's moral and ethical framework. "Islam and the American Common Good," by Dr. Sherman A. Jackson articulates how Muslims can partake in the American "common good" in a way that is authentically grounded in Islam and is not merely a facile attempt to prove loyalty to the American state in a post 9/11 world. In "Governance Issues in American Mosques: Exploring the Present and Making Recommendations for the Future," Dr. Ihsan Bagby explores the existing organizational structures of mosques in the United States and offers recommendations on how mosque leaders can improve their organizational structure. The three articles, while they span three different topics, are bound by one unifying thread: that of modern American contextuality in understanding Islamic faith and practice.

Our inaugural issue also contains a short article by Dr. Jimmy E. Jones and Dr. Sabith Khan's book review of Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to*

the New World Order. Two reports on different conferences are also included along with a final testimony by the late American Muslim scholar, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani.

Looking ahead to our second issue scheduled for March 2019, we welcome submissions discussing and analyzing issues related to the theme "Islamic Ethics in the American Context." The aim of this volume is to synthesize and advance both theoretical and empirical research about Islamic ethics within various disciplines. The *Journa*l invites high-quality original research as well as critical dialogue and discussion papers focused on the relationship between ethics and Islamic faith and practice in America. In addition, we invite insightful reviews and abstracts of published books of interest and unpublished PhD dissertations and Master's theses of interest to our subscribers as well as conference reports.

This issue would not have been possible without the hard work of people too numerous to name. To them I express my heartfelt gratitude. I would also like to express particular gratitude for the support and assistance from Dr. Jimmy E. Jones, Dr. Shariq Siddiqui, and Rafia Khader who have generously given their time and expertise to make this project happen. I would also like to thank the members of the Editorial Board and the authors for their invaluable contributions to this inaugural issue.

Sincerely,

Zainab Alwani
Editor-in-Chief

The Islamic Seminary Foundation: Preserving Prophetic Principles

Jimmy E. Jones
Islamic Seminary Foundation

> *Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah* (Al-Azhab, 33-21).

In this inter-connected world, where public discourse about Islam is frequently dominated by ISIS and Islamophobes, it is often extremely difficult for people, young and old, to discern, in order to emulate, the "beautiful pattern, (of conduct)" as noted above. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Muslims everywhere to reclaim from extremists of all types and preserve the Prophetic principles exemplified in the life example of Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him. It is in this spirit that a group of Muslims came together and founded the Islamic Seminary Foundation Incorporated (ISF) in the state of Connecticut on September 9, 2011.

The Prophetic paradigm that ISF wishes to preserve and put into practice in modern-day America has at least three salient characteristics. This paradigm is: 1. Qurʾānic in its epistemology, 2. Inclusive in its *weltanschauung* and 3. Contextual in its praxis. A brief explanation of each of these points is offered below, followed by a brief overview of ISF's activities.

Qurʾānic in its epistemology

> *Praise be to Allah, Who hath sent to His Servant the Book, and hath allowed therein no Crookedness* (Al-Kahf, 18:1).

In reflecting upon the first verse of *Surah Al-Kahf* (which many Muslims read in its entirety every Friday as an important part of following the "beautiful pattern, (of conduct)" or *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him), we see the strong connection between Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, and the Qurʾān as a communication from the Creator. Further, from this particular surah we learn a great deal about: the origins, nature, and ultimate destinations of human beings; the source and limits of human knowledge; and how we should conduct ourselves in this world. What is particularly striking in regard to the latter point is what this surah tells us about how "involved" we should be in this world. Specifically, it is clear that humans can be less engaged in the world as explained in the story of the young men who secluded themselves in a cave (Al-Kahf, 18:9-26) or very engaged as with the story of Dhul-al Qarnayn (Al-Kahf , 18:83-101) who was apparently involved in several major worldly matters in different communities. It appears that the Qurʾān, even though it is the ultimate source of knowledge for how Muslims should act, often provides more than one approach to living in this world.

Inclusive in its *weltanschauung*

> *O humanity! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you* (Al-Nisaa, 4:1).

The fact that Allah directly addresses all human beings by saying "O humanity" at least 12 times in the Qurʾān (see 2:21-24, 4:1, 4:132-134, 4:174-175, 7:3-5, 7:158, 10:57-60, 22:1-4, 22:5-8, 49:13, 35:3-7, 82:6-19) makes the second characteristic of the Prophetic paradigm clear. That is, the message from God as delivered by Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, as its moral exemplar, is addressed to all humanity. Since the Qurʾān is regarded by Muslims as *the* source of knowledge, Islam's message and ethos is undoubtedly inclusive. Further, since the Prophet's example is normative, we can also see this inclusive characteristic expressed in his acceptance of the invitation to become the head of the diverse community in Yathrib. The agreement he made with the non-Muslims(popularly known as "the Constitution of Medina") lays out the duties, rights, and obligations of its multi religious inhabitants. Further, since Muslims are referred to in the Qurʾān as "witnesses over the nations" (Al-Baqara, 2:143, AYA), it is apparent that the Islamic worldview is an inclusive one wherein various groups "strive together towards all that is good" (Al-Baqara, 2:148).

Contextual in its praxis

> *Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are the people who will achieve (salvation)* (Al-Tawbah, 9:120).

The famous immigration (*hijra*) of Prophet Muhammad's, Peace be upon him, fledgling community from Mecca to Yathrib is used to mark the beginning of the Islamic lunar calendar. The Roman Emperor Constantine's decriminalization of Christian practice in 313CE was a momentous game-changer for Christianity and world history. Similarly, the hijra in 622 CE was also a momentous game-changer for Islam and world history. Given Prophet Muhammad's, Peace be upon him, acceptance of the invitation to become the head of the multi-religious community in Yathrib, the practice of Islam did not look the same in Medina as it did in Mecca. With Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, as the ultimate arbiter of disputes, the Muslims were no longer a liminal community as they were in Mecca. Of course, some of these differences were due to the fact that the Qurʾān came down in stages over a period of twenty-three years and were addressed to the changing contexts in the two different cities. Nevertheless as noted in Umari's *Madinan Society at the Time of the Prophet: Its Characteristics and Organization*, it is clear that the social, cultural and political realities of both settings impacted the practice of Islam in those particular places at those particular times. Thus, ISF is not trying to preserve prophetic principles that are frozen in time and space. Rather, we believe that the Prophetic principles have always been contextual in their practice – and that is what we are trying to preserve.

ISF: A brief overview

> *Thus, have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves…* (Al-Baqara, 2:143).

From its incorporation in 2011 up until the present, the Islamic Seminary Foundation Inc. (ISF) has viewed the sentiments expressed in this verse of the Qurʾān as an important guide. That is, ISF has consistently focused its efforts on developing a quality education for Muslim American leadership that seeks to nurture this type of "middle community," one that avoids extremes in faith and practice while serving as a role model for other communities.

Based upon this worldview, ISF has spent the last 6 ½ years consulting with individuals and entities within and outside the Muslim American community. The intent was to develop and shape an institution true to Prophetic principles while being firmly situated in and responsive the particular challenges we face in this country at this time. From Al-Azhar University to Yale Divinity School, and many large and small institutions in between, ISF has consulted with institutional leadership, faculty, and students to develop a world class American Islamic seminary. In addition, for the past seven years, ISF has held an annual *shura* and in-service training at Yale University. Over the years, through this *shura*, we have consulted with various imams, chaplains, scholars, and other professionals who provide services to the Muslim American community from all over the country and world. While these approaches do not represent a systematic empirical needs assessment for an American Islamic Seminary, the concepts ISF has developed through these convenings and consultations have been very much influenced by these diverse group of thinkers.

Since its inception, ISF has co-sponsored numerous courses and workshops and . Titles of these educational offerings included: "Prophetic Strategies for Working with Youth," "Contemporary Readings of the Qurʾān," "Islamic Communities in America," "Counseling Muslims: The Basics," "Effective Islamic Chaplaincy in Various Settings," "Foundations of Effective Organizational Leadership," Islamic Counseling 101: The Basics," "Islamic Counseling 101: Couples Counseling," and "Islamic Counseling 101: Domestic Violence." In addition, ISF coordinated the Bilal Initiative that was focused on encouraging honest dialog in the Muslim Community about issues of race and prejudice. ISF-coordinated workshops were held at national conferences and meetings of the Association of Muslim Chaplains (AMC). ISF was also a consultant to the Muslim Endorsement Council of CT (MECC) in the development of its standards and processes for the endorsement of Muslim chaplains.

On April 3, 2017, ISF signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Islamic Seminary of America (ISA) which had been in operation since August of 2016 in Dallas, Texas. All of the then board members of ISA (Sh. Khalil Abdur Rashid, Dr. Abdul Ahad Hayee and Sh. Omar Suleiman) signed the MOU that transferred the name, all assets, and ultimate authority for the operation of ISA to the board of directors of ISF.

In its inaugural year (2016-2017) the Texas-based ISA taught over 400 adults, mentored over 200 youths, led an Umrah trip, sponsored several family oriented social-educational activities and partnered with Southern Methodist University (SMU) in developing and launching a unique Master of Liberal Studies degree program with a self-designed concentration in Islamic Studies. Spearheading all of this was Sh. Khalil Abdur Rashid (now Harvard University's first full time Muslim chaplain) and his family.

Going forward, the "new" ISA (now managed by ISF) is currently reorganizing in a way that would facilitate expansion of its student base to a national one. As ISF does so, it intends to be firmly rooted in Prophetic principles while acknowledging the impact of the modern American context. In brief, ISF intends to be: Qurʾānic in its epistemology by ensuring our work is based on academic and Islamically rigorous precepts, while being an institution that helps produce a more positive, balanced narrative on Islam and religion in this country and the world; inclusive in its *weltanschauung* by striving to make its offerings attractive and accessible to the rich multi-cultural, economically-diverse mosaic that is the Muslim American community, as well as to people of other faith traditions; contextual in its praxis by being attuned to the spiritual, organizational, and

humanitarian needs of Muslims and others living in America. As ISF relaunches the Islamic Seminary of America and launches this first edition of the *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*, we pray that Allah grants us the ability to be a "witness" and "middle community" while supporting all that is good.

***Al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*: A Methodology for Understanding the Qur'ān in the Modern Day**

Zainab Alwani
Howard University

This paper is concerned with the Qur'ānic methodology of Al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān and its impact in the arena of religious sciences and beyond. I provide a concise overview of the classical and contemporary debates concerning the genealogy of this method, including examples and a brief analysis of the works of a number of modern scholars who have contributed to the development of this methodology. Approaching the Qur'ān as a unitary structure, as a consistent hermeneutic, contributes to our understanding of critical issues not only in the Qur'ān and Sunna, but also in other religious disciplines, such as Islamic law. More importantly, I argue that this method provides an important hermeneutic resolution to critical debates surrounding Islam's moral and ethical framework. I conclude by stressing that Al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān is essential for enhancing religious scholarship in general and for advancing the spheres where Islamic knowledge is applied.

Keywords: Qur'ān, Exegesis, Tafsir, Sunna, Sira, Islamic law, Hadith, Apostasy in Islam.

Introduction

This paper is concerned with the Qur'ānic methodology of *Al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*[i] (the Qur'ān's structural unity) and its impact in the arena of religious sciences and beyond. I provide a concise overview of the classical and contemporary debates concerning the genealogy of this method, including examples and a brief analysis of the works of a number of modern scholars who have contributed to the development of this methodology. I propose reading the Qur'ān through its structural unity, *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*,[ii] a term coined by Taha Jabir al-Alwani, as the framework for a systematic methodology of Qur'ānic interpretation.[iii] Approaching the Qur'ān as a structural unity, as a consistent hermeneutic, contributes to our understanding of critical issues not only in Qur'ānic Studies, but in other religious disciplines as well. More importantly, I argue that this method provides an important hermeneutic resolution to critical debates surrounding Islam's moral and ethical framework, specifically in areas of Islamic law dealing with difficult issues such as apostasy, family matters, marriage and divorce. It is my hope that a broader and more consistent application of this method to the Qur'ān will allow Muslim scholars to approach legal rulings more holistically by connecting them to the Qur'ān's spiritual and ethical framework. In doing so, it can provide a means for developing a shared understanding among scholars, thereby advancing more constructive conversations among scholars.

A consistent feature of Qur'ānic interpretation throughout the last fourteen hundred years of Islamic history has been the multiplicity of interpretations. Scholarly consensus, however, suggests that interpreting the Qur'ān intra-textually (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān)* is the most accepted method of interpretation. Qur'ānic scholars have expressed this notion with the maxim, "*al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'ḍahu ba'ḍan*" (different parts of the Qur'ān explain each other).[iv] Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) in his *Introduction to The Principles of Exegesis* (*Muqaddima fi Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*) emphasized that

tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān is "the most correct method of *tafsīr* [*aṣaḥḥ al-ṭuruq*]," explaining that "where the Qurʾān sums up [a point], the same point is elaborated in another place."[v] While this concept in Qurʾānic Studies may have existed for centuries, it has been significantly developed in the last two centuries, as scholars have proposed new methods of reading the Qurʾān as an integrated unity.

In the twentieth century, significant developments occurred in the interpretation of the Qurʾān. Muslim exegetes began to approach individual chapters holistically and discuss them in terms of overall themes and general structure rather than as merely a concatenation of verses, as noted by scholars such as Mustansir Mir.[vi] This trend in modern exegesis calls for a critical examination that emphasizes the idea of the organic unity of the Qurʾān. Building upon pre-existing classical and modern methods, I suggest a set of methods that researchers and scholars need to explore and develop in order to understand the Qurʾān effectively, alongside those under development by other scholars. In this article, I bring attention to the method of reading the Qurʾān through its structural unity, *al-waḥda al-bināʾiyya li-l-Qurʾān*, as the framework for a systematic methodology of Qurʾānic interpretation. *Al-waḥda al-bināʾiyya li-l-Qurʾān* is one of the most important methods in interpreting the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān intra-textually (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān).* This method conceives of the Qurʾān's unity through its linguistic, structural, and conceptual elements, such that the Qurʾān in its entirety represents an integrated whole. I argue that reading the sura as a unity also means reading the Qurʾān as a unity, attempting to find connections (which are already present) between the Qurʾān's letters, words, verses, and chapters, linguistically, structurally, and thematically. Within the Islamic tradition, this method carries a level of unparalleled legitimacy, at least conceptually, because it is based on how Prophet Muhammad discussed the revelation with his companions.

To illustrate the way this proposed methodology envisions a holistic relationship between the Qurʾān, the sunna/hadith, and the *sīra*, I will analyze Al-Alwani's original analysis of the laws on apostasy, which overturn the traditional view of apostasy laws. For context, I proceed with a concise overview of the classical and contemporary debates concerning the genealogy of this method, including examples and a brief analysis of the works of a number of modern scholars who have contributed to the development of this methodology.

First, despite the history of classical and modern approaches to reading the Qurʾān holistically, it is important to note that this method of interpretation dates back to the Prophet himself. In *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* under the chapter of *tafsīr*, Ibn Masʿud reports:

> When the following verse was revealed: "Those who have attained to faith, and who have not obscured their faith by wrongdoing—it is they who shall be secure, since it is they who have found the right path!" (6:82), the companions of the Messenger were very concerned and asked the Prophet, "Which of us has not confused belief with wrongdoing?" The Prophet said, "The verse does not mean this. Didn't you hear Luqman's statement to his son: "Verily, joining others in worship with God is a great wrongdoing indeed" (31:13). The Prophet used the verse from Sūrat Luqman to interpret the verse from Sūrat al-Anʿām.[vii]

In another occasion reported in al-Bukhari:

> The Prophet recited, "And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him" (6:59); and he explained that "The keys of the Unseen are five." And then he recited the following verse from Sūrat Luqman to clarify: "Verily, the knowledge of the Hour is with God (alone). It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn tomorrow; nor does anyone know in what land he is to die. Verily with God is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with all things) (31:34)."[viii]

Both of these examples portray the Prophet as explaining Qurʾānic verses by drawing on material from elsewhere in the Qurʾān. Interestingly, the traditional exegesis with a different scriptural canon that gradually began to emerge did not enforce or implement this methodology. Nonetheless, a few classical exegetes articulated a theory for reading the Qurʾān holistically through the philological genres of *naẓm* and *ʿilm al-munāsaba*, as I will describe below.

Coherence in the Qurʾān: Arabic as a Divine Language

In the early and medieval Islamic period, some classical exegetes with a linguistic focus primarily investigated the elements of coherence within the Qurʾān. One of the first in this field was Abu ʿUbayda (d. 209/824), a philologist in Kufa who collected materials that dealt with the history and culture of the Arabs, and organized it all systematically. Abu ʿUbayda's pioneer works, especially *Majāz a1-Qurʾān*, contributed to the development of the field of *balāgha* (eloquence and Arabic literary criticism), and planted the seed for the theory of *naẓm*.[ix] He explained the meaning of "*majāz*" as the Qurʾānic styles (*asālīb*) and ways of using its words to provide deeper meanings. He emphasized that *majāz* is the process of transferring from the close or familiar meaning of the word as seen in the desert Arab's everyday language to the deeper meaning of the word in the Qurʾānic language. It is important to observe that when the reader reflects deeply on the Qurʾānic word, the meaning that was once simple in the mundane Arab language transforms into a comprehensive divine language.

Linguists and theologians like Abu ʿUthman ʿAmr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz (d. 255/869),[x] Abu Bakr ʿAbd al-Qahir ibn ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Jurjani (d. 471/1078),[xi] and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib al-Baqillani (d. 403/1013)[xii] later developed this notion into a full-fledged concept called *ijāz al-Qurʾān* (inimitability). Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari (d. 276/889) presented another important work in this field, *Mushkil al-Qurʾān*, where he examined the richness of the Qurʾānic words and the text's ability to produce different meanings for them. He applied his methodology to words/concepts such as *dīn*, *umma*, *hūdā*, and others. Although the book was only forty-five pages, it served as a proposal for a dictionary system for Qurʾānic concepts. Two centuries later, another profound work by al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 502/1108), perhaps inspired by the early work of Ibn Qutayba, offered a renewed focus on thematic, literary, and structural elements in the Qurʾān that characterize the approaches of many modern and contemporary Muslim exegetes as a strategy for uncovering religious meanings in the Qurʾān beyond those discerned by medieval commentators.

Al-Raghib al-Isfahani's classical work, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qurʾān*, contributed to the development of *al-mafāhīm al-Qurʾāniyya*, a sub-field in the realm of philology by which links are established between different words and their meanings to show the structural unity and coherence

of the vocabulary of the Qurʾān.[xiii] More than sixty books were published related to Qurʾānic words/terms before this text, but al-Isfahani's book transformed the tenor of these studies based on two important methodological points: 1) his emphasis on reading the Qurʾānic words from within the Qurʾān itself, a holistic method done by tracing the word and its meaning throughout the Qurʾān; and 2) his successful application of this methodology. Al-Isfahani proved that Arabic words used by the Arabs before the revelation had been transformed into a new concept by the Qurʾān. His work set the stage for a very important field of Qurʾānic conceptual reading which begins with the premise that every Qurʾānic word carries a deeper meaning and should be read and studied as a *concept*, not merely as a simple *term*. Al-Isfahani also endeavored to compile a Qurʾānic dictionary to explain the meanings of words located in the Qurʾān itself, not based on pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Unfortunately, to this day, his methodology has still not been utilized as a comprehensive exegetical methodology. Although there have been a few attempts during the past two decades, there remains a serious need to develop an encyclopedia of Qurʾānic concepts.[xiv]

One approach to a text-based analysis of the Qurʾān that did get somewhat popularized exists in *ʿilm al-munāsabāt*, where medieval exegetes explored the connections between verses and chapters. Two major exegetical texts have used this method: *Māfatiḥ al-Ghāyb* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 604/1209)[xv] and, *Naẓhm al-Durar fi Tanasub al-Ayat wa al-Suwar* by Burhan al-Din ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480).[xvi] Al-Razi did not include in his book a clear definition of his view of the *munāsabāt*, nor did he introduce the theoretical grounds for his analysis of verses with regard to their relations or their order, a possible indication that this method was not widely used by scholars at that time.[xvii] Later, though, al-Zarkashi (d. 794/1391) in his *Burhān* devoted a whole chapter to it, and so did al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505) in his *Itqān*, a revision of al-Zarkashi's work.[xviii] Al-Zarkashi emphasized the importance of this method and identified a few types of *munāsabāt* found in the Qurʾān.[xix] These works, however, did not lead to the development of further study on the structural unity of the Qurʾān. For centuries, the theory of *naẓm* and *ʿilm al-munāsabāt* did not bring a significant change to mainstream *tafsīr*. I will now move on to mention some scholars who have explored *al-waḥda al-binaʾiyya li-l-Qurʾān* and have proven that it can be used to help evince the unity of the Qurʾānic structure.[xx]

Twentieth Century Developments

The twentieth century witnessed significant changes in Muslim exegetes' approach to the Qurʾān. A significant trend in modern exegesis calls for a critical examination that emphasizes the idea of the organic unity of the Qurʾān. It stresses that passages in the Qurʾān are used to clarify other passages, and that this hermeneutic strategy takes precedence over all others. This trend has been documented by scholars such as Mustansir Mir, who identified six different modern exegetes in different parts of the Muslim world who organically developed the idea of a central theme that links the unrelated passages of a given *sūra* together: Hamiduddin Farahi (d. 1930),[xxi] Ashraf ʿAli Thanavi (d. 1943), Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), Amin Ahsan Islahi (d. 1997),[xxii] ʿIzzat Darwaza (d. 1984), and Muhammad al-Tabatabaʾi (d. 1981). Muhammad ʿAbd Allah Draz (d. 1958)[xxiii] is another important scholar who contributed to this methodology. These scholars suggest this methodological principle to guide the interpreter to a holistic understanding.[xxiv] This modern approach was called "organic-holistic"[xxv] and was a rejection of reading the Qurʾān in a fragmented way. The Qurʾān itself recommends against tearing apart its text: "And say: 'I am indeed he that warns openly and without

ambiguity,' (Of just such wrath) as We sent down on those who divided (Scripture into arbitrary parts), (So also on such) as have made Qurʾān into shreds (as they please)" (Q. 15:89–91). To read a chapter as one unit suggests that the *sūra*'s central theme can be extracted. Amin Ahsan Islahi of Pakistan and the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb both stressed that each *sūra* has a central theme as its unique message, and around this idea every theme or topic within the *sūra* revolves to elaborate, detail, exemplify, or explain the main focus. Islahi refered to this idea as an *ʿamud* (pillar) and Qutb used the term *miḥwar* (axis). To find this theme and draw from it, Islahi suggested six principles for legitimate interpretation.[xxvi] As Bassam Saeh has argued, the Qurʾānic word is of matchless linguistic perfection that must be understood by the Qurʾān itself. Each *sūra* has its own personality which can be discovered through words found in that *sūra*.[xxvii]

According to this "analytic-synthetic approach"[xxviii] to exegesis, exegetes would "first, determine the central theme and divide a *sūra* into sections, and then establish links between those sections. One writer's sectional division may differ from another's, but the underlying assumption is always that the sections can be knit into a connected discourse."[xxix] In his conclusion, Mir notes his hope to see this method developed in a way that provides broader authentic interpretation of the Qurʾān, especially in law and literature. It is refreshing to see such a new macroscopic approach. It ought to be encouraged to complement, not replace, the traditional microscopic.

One of the most important questions that Mir raised on the methodology of reading the Qurʾān as a "unity" is its ultimate practical relevance. As he wrote, "the real test of the organic reading thesis, is whether it gives rise to new methods for the study of the Qurʾān. Is its thesis capable of generating techniques that will help derive meanings that cannot otherwise be generated? What difference does this method make?"[xxx] I argue that the methodology of reading the Qurʾān as a "unity" maintains the Qurʾān's relevance by allowing scholars to continue developing its ability to provide answers to difficult questions and challenges especially in the field of language, philology, and Islamic law.

The literary school of tafsīr which emerged in the twentieth century has roots in a premodern Qur'ānic hermeneutics that focused on the rhetoric (balāgha) of the Qur'ān and contributed to evolving a concept of the Qur'ān's linguistic inimitability. Muḥammad ʿAbduh's (d. 1905) intended in his critical edition of the two major works of the classical philologist and rhetorician ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078)[xxxi], to revive an appreciation of the Qur'ān's eloquence (bayān). Later, Amin Al-Khūlī (d. 1966) who coined the term al-tafsīr al-adabī, emphasized the relation between tafsīr and literature into an exegetical approach to the Qur'ān.[xxxii] In al-Khūlī's writings, there is a sustained attention to psychological impact, which becomes elaborated into a concept of contextuality: the historical and cultural background of the text's first hearers is examined to discover what it meant in their context, in order to assess its impact on them.

Al-Khūlī 's textual analysis affirms that to have a proper understanding of the words, a commentator should examine lexicographical entries for the word that s/he wants to interpret in order to have the most probable definition of the word. Al Khuli's aim was to establish the development of the word's meanings (tārīkh ẓuhūr al-maʿānī) by applying the methods of historical philology. Al-Khūlī even attempted, with limited success, to produce a lexicon that dates Arabic and Qur'ānic connotations. He considered the thematic approach as part of the hermeneutic methodology. Since the Qurʾān was arranged neither in chronological order nor in a sequence of

unitary topics, a commentator who intends to write Qurʾānic exegesis has to take into consideration all verses in which the Qurʾān discusses a topic, and not limit him/herself to *a* single surah or a single part of the Qurʾān, while neglecting other surahs whose verses discuss the same topic. As a result, reading the Qurʾān holistically will allow Muslim scholars and jurists to restore the Qurʾānic-Prophetic tradition by developing the holistic moral/ethical and spiritual aspects to rulings rather than remaining restricted to pure legal rulings.

Since my aim is to reveal the ongoing efforts in analyzing *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qurʾān*, I will provide a brief analysis of the *tafsīr* of ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Rahman Bint al-Shatiʾ. It is an example of a female scholar's productive dynamic debates that were necessary to integrate reading the sura as one unit as a methodology into the public exegetical field.

Tafsīr ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Rahman Bint al-Shatiʾ

ʿĀʾisha Bint al-Shatiʾ (d. 1998), a professor of Arabic literature at the University College for Women at Ain Shams University in Cairo, introduced some elements of *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qurʾān* into a Qurʾānic exegesis she composed under the alias Bint al-Shatiʾ. Her methodology was based on a holistic, intra-textual, thematic, and literary style of interpretation, *al-manhaj al-adabi fī al-tafsīr*.[xxxiii] Bint al-Shatiʾ adopted Amin al-Khuli's (d. 1966) school of thought, which called for a holistic reading of the Qurʾān focusing on the literary approach.[xxxiv] Amin al-Khuli held the view that the Qurʾān is the greatest book in the Arabic language and has had the greatest literary influence. Approaching the Qurʾān as a unified text in this way allows readers of her *tafsīr* to understand specific verses in light of the larger "spirit" of the text rather than in a piecemeal, de-contextualized way. Therefore, *asbab al Nuzul*, "occasion of revelation," as she understands it, refers to no more than the situation relating to specific passages of the Qurʾān. Indeed, she upholds the famous principle of the Muslim jurists that the decisive factor (in determining the meaning of the verse) is the universality of wording and not its specific cause.

The important point in her implementation of the literary method is that Bint al-Shatiʾ consistently refused the idea of imposing the rules of grammar to judge the Qurʾān where there appeared to be a contradiction between the rules of grammar and the Qurʾān.[xxxv] She argued for a very precise examination of the Qurʾān itself. It is from this consideration that she insisted, like al-Khuli, that the Qurʾān should be treated as not only the authoritative source on grammar, but that it is above those rules it creates. She criticized the grammar of exegetes who hold that the particle *bi-* (with) in Surat al-Qalam (68:2) is only an extraneous particle. After examining the style of the Qurʾān concerning that particle, she concluded that the particle *bi-,* which comes with a negative predicate of a nominal clause, is not otiose, but is used specifically to emphasize denial and rejection. She consistently used the Qurʾān as a criterion to judge differences among exegetes.[xxxvi] She remarked that exegetes must not limit the meaning of the Qurʾān and that they should seek a decision from the text of the Qurʾān by *iḥtikām* (judgment). "And We have revealed to you, [O Prophet], the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it" (5:48).[xxxvii] *Al-iḥtikām ilā'l-Qurʾān* is suggestive of a reciprocal agency, whereby the exegete surrenders herself to the text and the text.[xxxviii] Bint al-Shāṭiʾ used the term *istiqrā'* (literally, 'denoting a request for a reading') in referring to the cross-examination of Qur'ānic terms, expressions, and stylistic phenomena to systematize *al-iḥtikām*.[xxxix]

In specifically qualifying her literary approach as *tafsīr bayānī* – and not *tafsīr adabī* – Bint al-Shāṭi' can thus be seen to be doing more than reviving the classical Arabic term for the art of eloquent speech. *Al-bayān*, so conceived, can be said to stand for hermeneutics in its philosophical sense of the human endeavor to grasp and articulate meaning as encountered in texts and language. She encoded the rubric of her exegesis with a new understanding of the Qur'ān's religious ontology, where a hermeneutic that incorporates the aesthetic is what the divine text expects of the human being to fully realize his/her humanity.[xl]

Al-Waḥda al-Binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān: Meaning and Application

Building upon existing holistic readings of the Qur'ān, I illustrate a reading that recognizes the Qur'ān's complete and total structural and linguistic unity, *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*. As articulated by T.J. al-Alwani (d. 2016), this term conceptualizes the Qur'ān as a perfect structure, in all its *sūrās*, verses, words, letters and parts; it is one unit as in how God perfected the universe and described the sky and the stars, "in full harmony with one another" (Q. 67:3). The Qur'ān clearly describes its own structure as possessing *iḥkām* (perfection, precise execution, solidity[xli]): "Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from [one who is] Wise and Acquainted" (Q. 11:1); the structure is solid and does not allow to any penetration: "God abolishes that which Satan throws in; then God makes precise His verses" (Q. 22:52). It is a "clear book" (Q. 26:2) for which Allah "will be its guardian" (Q. 15:9). The element of the protected perfection of the Qur'ān's structural unity being so present within the scriptural text itself, it seems fitting to apply to it the methodology used to explore and extract meaning from the text. In my article "al-Maqāṣid al-Qur'āniyya" ("The Objectives of the Qur'ān"),[xlii] I explored the nature and the scope of the comprehensive systematic methodology developed by al-Alwani.

The basic concern that al-Alwani attempted to address in his work is a methodological one. His aim was to propose a systematic methodology of reading the Qur'ān that minimizes errors in understanding the truth of its message. Al-Alwani asserted that *al-waḥda al-binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān* is important for developing methods that advance the intertextual reading of the Qur'ān in terms of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*, and thematic and conceptual readings.[xliii] Within this context, he presented his critical approach regarding the relationship between the Qur'ān and sunna. He emphasized that the Qur'ān should be the primary source for legal rulings, whereas the sunna is a secondary source that explicates the Qur'ānic text.[xliv] He critiqued scholarly methods that elevated the status of hadith from clarifying and explicating the Qur'ān to making it equal or parallel to it. As in the case example of apostasy below, al-Alwani argued that misinterpretations of Islamic law arose due to scholars allowing hadiths to reign supreme over the Qur'ān. The sunna, a body of knowledge which presents a model for the Qur'ān's application to real-life situations, remains a practical experience at the highest level of human capability as practiced by the Prophet. Rejecting the employment of foreign sources to understand the Qur'ān, Al-Alwani's methodology emphasized that "[a] genuine reading of the Qur'ān gets rid of interpretive elements that control the open nature of the Qur'ān, such as *isrā'īliyyāt* (apocryphal interpretations), and *naskh* (abrogation) in the Qur'ān in all its types."[xlv]

The Methodology of *al-Waḥda al-Binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān* in Practice

Believing in the holistic reading of the Qur'ān allowed Taha Jaber Al-Alwani as a legal theorist and thinker to re-think traditional perspectives on controversial issues, such as apostasy, in a way that is more consistent with the Qur'ān's overall paradigm.

As a case example of al-Alwani's practical employment of *al-Waḥda al-Binā'iyya li-l-Qur'ān*, I will illustrate his unique reading of the Qur'ānic verses on apostasy, which led him to challenge the dominant legal understanding of apostasy's prosecution in Islamic law. In one of his most influential studies, *Apostasy in Islam: Historical and Scripture Analysis,* he rejected the earthly capital punishment for individuals who apostate from Islam. [xlvi] In his analysis of legal rulings on capital punishment for those who apostate from Islam, Al-Alwani addressed the issue as a dialectic that invited scholars to discuss and evaluate his method and conclusions.[xlvii] The aim of this study was to provide a methodology to serve as a model by which one can place the Islamic tradition under the authority of the Qur'ān, thereby bringing it into full conformity with Qur'ānic teachings.

Qur'ānic Arabic tongue (*lisān al-Qur'ān*)

The design philosophy for the *al-waḥda al bina'yah* methodology reveals its ability to complement some proven effective methods developed throughout the history of Islamic thought, such as al-Raghib al-Isfahani's philological method of analyzing Qur'ānic words and proving the significant difference between the Divine Arabic tongue (*lisān al-Qur'ān*) and the human Arabic language.[xlviii] Al-Alwani argued that reading the Qur'ān according to the Qur'ānic Arabic tongue, as opposed to human understandings of language, would allow scholars to overcome misconceptions and derive comprehensive meanings in their quest for legal injunctions.

In seeking to determine the meanings of linguistic terms which appear in the Qur'ān, the first criterion al-Alwani identified is the Qur'ān's own usage of such terms. The second criterion he used are the Prophet's explanatory statements in the sunna, and third, the Arabs' customary usage of such terms in their various dialects, literary styles, and rhetoric. By following this order of priority, one ensures that Arabs' linguistic usages of terms are not the sole factor in determining the meanings of the Qur'ān. Rather, one must first consider the Qur'ān's own usage of the words.

Al-Alwani's re-examination of the legal rulings on apostasy entailed a close linguistic examination of two terms: *hudūd* (plural of *hadd*) and *ridda*. To arrive at the Qur'ānic definition of the terms, Al-Alwani applied the above-described method in his book *Apostasy in Islam.*

The terms employed by Muslim jurists and scholars of the methodology of jurisprudence have tended to be dominated not by 'the Qur'ānic tongue' but, rather, by 'the Arabic tongue.' A salient example of this may be seen in the use of the term *hadd* and its plural, *hudūd.* The term hadd, linguistically, means prevention or prohibition. This term occurs in fourteen verses of the Qur'an. In two of these, it is used in the sense of God's law and commands. For example: "These are the bounds set by God (*hudūd Allāh*); do not, then, offend against them – [for] it is thus God makes clear His messages unto humankind, so that they might remain conscious of Him." (2:187)

It is clear from the preceding verses (183-186) that the bounds set by God regard to the practices of fasting, marriage and divorce, and inheritance. For example in 2:230, God says: "So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably), he cannot, after that, re-marry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they re-unite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah. Such are the bounds set by God, which He makes plain to those who understand."

In none of the verses does hudūd refer to punishment, but instead affirms the necessity of adhering to God's ordinances and laws. Rather, al-Alwani argued that the term *uqubah* is more fitting for punishments. Hudūd, as it is mentioned in the Qurʾān, in fact is hardly associated with any kind of punishment. It mostly deals with problems associated with family affairs. In fact, hudūd carries a wider meaning in the general law and ordinance set up by God. The Qur'ān stresses the importance of adhering to God's laws having to do with family-related issues, so one wonders how Muslim jurists shifted the use of this Qur'ānic term, restricting its meaning to the realm of the penal system. It must be further noted that the penalties mentioned in the Qur'ān for theft and sexual misconduct do not use the term had either. What lies behind this blatant contravention of Qur'ānic usage?

Another example of al-Alwani's unique approach was his analysis of the term *al-ridda*. The terms *al-ridda* and *al-irtidad* in the Qur'ānic understanding represent a return to something one had left from something one had reached. However, none of the varied Qur'ānic contexts referring to apostasy speak of it as a withdrawal from Islam alone, or as a withdrawal relating to the spiritual plane alone. Rather, the Qur'ān uses the term inclusive of both the spiritual and the material, in combination with the verb *radda* (to avert or turn away). Riddah in the Qur'ān is an explicit retreat from and abandonment of Islam to unbelief. While warning against disbelief, these verses also urge everyone who has entered Islam to cling to it steadfastly because it is the true guidance: the most authoritative, solid basis for life and living.

Riddah has been used over the centuries to refer unambiguously to a retreat from religion, and specifically, from the religion of Islam. Al-Alwani listed twelve verses to shed light on the fundamental meaning of the concept of apostasy as presented in the Qurʾān.[xlix] For example, in the following ayah, God emphasizes that for those who commit apostasy, their deeds in this life and the hereafter become worthless. "If any of you should turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth- these it is whose deeds will go for nought in this world and in the life to come; and these it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide" (2:217).

None of the verses referred to above – which include everything the Qur'ān has to say concerning either riddah or irtidad – make any mention of an earthly punishment for the sin or crime of apostasy; nor do they refer, whether explicitly or implicitly, to the need to force an apostate to return to Islam or to kill him if he refuses to do so. As portrayed in the Qur'ān, the term riddah reflects the psychological and mental state that brought the individual concerned to the point of apostasy. Given this clarification of the concept of apostasy, or riddah, in the Qur'ān, we can see how the Qur'ān has put this linguistic term to convey a variety of meanings by employing it as a verbal noun related to the religion. The verbal noun al-riddah is used to refer to a retreat from Islam, although the Qurʾān does not prescribe an earthly punishment for this spiritual betrayal, according to al-Alwani. A person abandons his faith if he denies the truth after having surrendered himself to God through Islam.

Apostasy: Reading the Sunna in the light of *al-Waḥda al-Binā'iyya*

Al-Alwani asserted that the philosophy of *al-Waḥda al-Binā'iyya* illustrates the Qur'ān and the Sunna as mutually supporting sources of evidence. There can be no conflict, contradiction, inconsistency, or disagreement between them, nor could any part of the Sunnah abrogate or nullify what is stated in the Qur'ān. The Sunnah, taken as a whole, offers the methodology of emulation of the Prophet. The Qur'ān, ultimately endorses and legitimizes but invariably supersedes the other available sources, including the Sunna.[l] Al-Alwani highlighted the following four approaches to analyzing the Sunna: a) Its unity and language, b) the combined reading of the Qur'ān and the Sunna, c) the reading of the Sunna and the universe, and, finally, d) the conceptual reading of the Sunna, which helps clarify the circumstances and places of the Prophet's time and mission.[li] This is what enables Muslims to connect any reality with the Qur'ān, regardless of time and place.

In the case of apostasy, al-Alwani argued that capital punishment for apostasy was not found either in the Qur'an nor in the actions of the Prophet. Rather, it can be found in the verbal Sunnah. One of the most salient hadiths that mention the command to kill the apostate, and the most widely cited among Muslim jurists, states, "If anyone changes his religion, put him to death" (a hadith on the authority of Mu'ādh ibn Jabal).[lii] Al-Alwani comprehensively analyzed this hadith in its varied chain of narrations and in all its different versions, as well as the textual evidence in support of it and what scholars have had to say about it.[liii] In so doing, he explained that one will be able to see how scholars have put it to use, bringing it out from the realm of that which merely explicates the Qur'ān into the realm of that which rules over it and issues verdicts which are not found in the Qur'ān itself nor in the practice of the Prophet. According to Al-Alwani, the frequent habit of jurists placing the hadith, at least on the level of practice, above that which is stated explicitly in the Qur'an is what has caused the lasting confusion. In doing so, the hadith was elevated from the status of clarifying and explicating the Qur'ān (that which clarifies being subordinate to that which is clarified) to the status of that which is equal or parallel to it. The end result of this process has been to allow hadiths to reign supreme over the Qur'ān and pass judgment on it.

Al-Alwani argued that if the Prophet had been aware of such a penalty, he would not have hesitated to carry it out, since he was forthright in calling for punishment for specific crimes in other cases. The Prophet's era witnessed literally hundreds of those who believed, who then later became hypocrites or committed apostasy. In fact, their apostasy reached the point where it represented a source of harm to the Messenger of God and the Muslim community. However, the Prophet refrained from doing them any harm lest it be said that "Muhammad kills his Companions,"[liv] imposes his doctrine on people, or forces them to embrace his religion. In no case did the Prophet respond by calling for death, unless an individual was accused of a separate crime warranting such punishment.

Furthermore, nearly two hundred verses of the Qur'ān reject the principle of coercion in matters of faith and stipulate absolute human freedom to choose what one believes. As has been seen, the Qur'ān affirms there is no earthly penalty whatsoever for the decision to change one's religion (so long as the individual concerned is not guilty of some other crime, especially in terms of treason). On the contrary, the Qur'ān affirms that the right to declare the penalty belongs to God alone. When one views this hadith in light of Qur'ānic verses whose meanings are definitive and clear, it presents no difficulty. However, when the various versions of the hadith are cited in isolation from the Qur'ān, and when some narrators connect these accounts with other events and

stories, the hadith may become incomprehensible. In addition, chains of narration may be incomplete and/or weak, and therefore such hadiths are not reliable sources. One finds, for example, that this hadith implies approval of destruction of the human life that the Qur'ān takes great care to preserve and safeguard, and whose destruction it seeks to prevent by all means possible.

Muslim Jurists: The Penalty for Apostasy

Al-Alwani discussed thoroughly the foundational arguments of the most prominent schools of thought and provided his analysis in the light of his reading of the Qurʾānic-Prophetic model on the issue. Applying this method led him to explain the reason and the context that led Muslim jurists to affirm the death penalty for apostasy. Generally, in its historical context, apostasy was frequently the result of a comprehensive shift away from allegiance to the Muslim community and rejection of its associated system, laws and culture. Confusion between political treason and religious apostasy arose in an oral culture that was prevalent in the Hejazi environment; further, the influence of the Jewish culture of oral tradition played a role which viewed it necessary to kill anyone who left Judaism. Also, the Islamic conquests brought many new nations – all with their own systems, customs, cultures, and laws – within the jurisdiction of the Muslim nation. Such laws related, for example, to the shifting of allegiances, rebellion against the political and legal order, and so forth. The Byzantines, the Persians and others all had well-established laws and regulations that generated customs and cultures in the conquered lands, and which in turn pervaded the Muslim environment. These laws, regulations, customs and cultures thus came to color the Muslim juristic mindset. Therefore, transmitters of Islamic jurisprudence promoted the claim that there was a consensus among the majority of fiqh scholars that the apostate must be compelled to return to Islam on pain of death. The purpose behind this ruling was to protect the religion from attempts to undervalue it or to undermine its function as the foundation upon which the Muslim Umma came into being, the foundation of the state's legitimacy, and the source of Islamic doctrine, law, and all related life systems within the Muslim state. Apostasy was also a major threat for the need to maintain loyalty and uniformity in the Muslim armies.

Al-Alwani raised serious concerns about the issue of apostasy and brought forward various examples in the past and the present to prove the validity of his concerns. The ruler looks upon the penal system as the most important means of imposing order, commanding respect, and achieving aims. The most formidable penal system is one whose authority can be attributed to God, since it is through this type of system that the ruler can reap the greatest benefit for his regime. Consequently, pious scholars such as Imam Malik, Abu Hanifa, Al Shafi, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Sufyan al-Thawri, and others frequently denounced rulers for misusing the penal system and exploiting it for their own tyrannical and capricious ends. The written corpus of Muslim heritage contains such denunciations in jurists' sermons and exhortations to rulers, as well as in their epistles, lessons, and juristic writings. Indeed, in our own age some proponents of political Islam reduce Islam and Islamic law in their entirety to the penal system alone. Consequently, when many such individuals speak of applying Islamic law, what they mean by Islamic law is nothing but its associated penalties. Likewise, some regimes are quick to apply certain penalties in order to demonstrate their religious rigor and their commitment to the sharīʿah. Recently, the hideous acts of violence committed by members of ISIS against any who oppose them is obnoxious from the perspective of both Islamic law and human rights law alike.[lv] The question is: what is the best way to address this issue in the current context where many Muslims are driving away from their religion?[lvi]

Since no reading can be definitive, al-Alwani saw interpretive multiplicity as inevitable. The future exegetical community is therefore required to continuously critically engage with its past. Al-Alwani thus conceived understanding as a cumulative effort that cannot be achieved by a single reading. He called for Muslims to study thoroughly the Islamic intellectual heritage in light of the Qurʾān. This call was advocated by many early scholars, such as Abu Hamid al Ghazali (d. 505 AH), Ibn Hazm Al Dhari (d. 456AH), Fakhr al Razi (d.606 AH), Ibn Taiymiah (d.728AH), and Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH). Al-Alwani's aim was to provide a systematic methodology to serve as a model, which one can use to place the Islamic intellectual heritage under the authority of the Qur'ān, thereby bringing it into full conformity with Qur'ānic teachings. "And We have revealed to you, [O Prophet], the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it" (5:48). A serious dialogue with the tradition and its intellectual and spiritual inclusiveness is what permits expansion and transformation.

Conclusion

Given the preceding discussion, it is important to continue searching for systematic methodologies of approaching the Qurʾān and Sunna. In the light of implementing *al-waḥda al-bināʾiyya li-l-Qurʾān*, we should push forth more discussion and strategies about the method of reading the Qurʾān in its unity and interpreting the Qurʾān intertextually (*tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi-l-Qurʾān*). Since the Qurʾān is an eternal guide for humanity, all the problems Muslims face can be addressed via a comprehensive vision based on Qurʾānic principles in conjunction with the examples provided by the sunna. The Qurʾān states that the Prophet is a role model for humanity (33:21). Thus from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, the sunna explains, clarifies, and demonstrates how to implement Qurʾānic teachings (75:16–19). The sunna represents the ethics, morals, and behaviors outlined in the sharīʿah. Muslims scholars need to construct a methodology that enables them to understand how to relate the teachings of the revelation to the lives of Muslims living today. In other words, one should not read the hadith separately from the Qurʾān or focus only on the sunna's legal rulings, but rather on its reasoning as discussed in this paper. Doing so will release it from being just a collection of particular responses to specific questions and circumstances.

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END NOTES

[i] Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Al-Waḥda al-bina'iya lil-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Shurūq al-Dawliya, 2006).

[ii] Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Al-Waḥda al-bina'iya lil-Qurʾān* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Shurūq al-Dawliya, 2006).

[iii] In the interest of full disclosure and an attempt to make clear any possible bias, it should be noted that late Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani is my father. Al-Alwani earned his Ph.D. at Egypt's Al-Azhar University. His dissertation, a comprehensive six-volume study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Mahsūl fī ʿilm al usūl,* is a systematic review of the classical literature on *usūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory). He examined 700–800 scholars' arguments on different areas of classical Islamic thought. See Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Razı, *al-Mahsūl*, ed. T. J. al-Alwani (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad University Press, 1400 AH). He studied the juristic *usūl* hierarchal structure of *al-hukm al- sha'ī* (the sources of rulings) and the intensive discussions among early scholars concerning *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) and its elements, *'illa* (cause/reason), *maslaha* (interest/ welfare), and other related issues. The determination of the *'illa* in *usūl al-fiqh* is of the utmost importance to its legal system. See the details in Taha J. al-Alwani*, Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani: Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (London and Washington: IIIT, 2005). This collection of articles first appeared in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* and mostly were translated by Yusuf Talal DeLorenzo. In his more than thirty books, al-Alwani has written extensively about the need for *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) and has called for the critical examination of the *turāth* (the Islamic legacy) by Muslims themselves. For the last three decades of his life, he focused on the Qurʾānic Methodology and published more than ten books and numerous articles discussing this issue.

[iv] Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣābūnī, *Mukhtaṣar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, v.1.28, *al-Muḥaddith Program*. v. 11.36 available at www.muhaddith.org. There are only a few *tafsīrs* which bear the title of *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān*, two of which are *Aḍwa' al-bayan fi iḍaḥa al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* by Muḥammad al-Shinqīṭī, and *Al-Tafsīr al-Qurʾānī li al-Qurʾān* by 'Abd al-Karīm Khaṭīb. However, upon close reading, these two *tafsīrs* are not really *tafsīr al-Qurʾān bi al-Qurʾān* as the titles seem to suggest. However, Al Farahi-Islahi's Urdu exegeses, *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾan* is one of the important references in this regard.

[v] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fie usul al-tafsīr*, ed. Adnan Zarzour, 2nd edition (Beirut, AH 1392), 93. See also his book: *Majmū'at al-rasa'il wal-masa'il* (Beirut Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 1983), 363.

[vi] See Mustansir Mir*, Coherence in the Qurʾān*, (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publication, 1986), 10–15.

[vii] Sahih al Bukhari, Vol. 6, Book 60, Hadith 299. Arabic reference: Book 65, Hadith 4776. USC-MSA web.

[viii] Sahih al Bukhari, Vol. 6, Book 60 Hadith 301. Arabic reference: Book 65, Hadith 4778. USC-MSA web.

[ix] Abū Ubaydah, *Mājāz al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muhammad Fū'ad Sazgīn (Cairo: Maktabat al Khanji, 1954–1962).

[x] Abu 'Uthman' Amr ibn Bahr Al-Jahiz, *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1975).

[xi] 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, *Dala'il I'jaz fi al-' Ilm al-Ma'ani*, ed. al-Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1998).

[xii] See Mustansir Mir*, Coherence in the Qurʾān*, (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publication, 1986), 10–15.

[xiii] Al Raghib al asfahani, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muhammad Seyd Kaylani. (Beirut: Dar al M'arifa, n.d).

[xiv] There are different scholars and institutions that produced important work in this area, for example, in Morocco, al-Shaikh al shahid Al-bushikhi, in Fez at the Institute of Qurʾanic Concepts. He was the academic advisor for several studies for Masters and Ph.D. The Institute published about fifty five studies focusing on Qurʾānic concepts.

[xv] Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Razi, Tafsīr *Māfatih al- Ghāy*, (Beirut Dar al Fikr, 1981).

[xvi] Burhan al-Din ibn Umar al-Biqaī, *Nazm al-Durar Fī Tanasub al-Ăyāt wa al-Suwar*, ed. 'Abd al-Raziq al-Mahdī, (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1995).

[xvii] See Salwa M. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qurʾan: Relevance, Coherence and Structure*. London-New York: Routledge, 2006. P 9–22.

[xviii] Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī, al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur`an (Egypt: Idara Shaikh 'Uthman `Abd al-Razzaq, 1206 A.H),Vol. 2

[xix] Badr al Din Al-ZarkashiBadr al_Dīn, al-Burhān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, ed. Muhammad Abū al-Fadl Ibrāhīm, ,(Cairo: Dar al Turath,n.d.), Vol. 1, pp. 39-52.

[xx] See El-Awa. Salwa M. Textual Relations in the Qurʾan: Relevance, Coherence and Structure.

[xxi] Hamiduddin Farahi (1863–1930) was an Islamic scholar of South Asia known for his groundbreaking work on the concept of *Nazm*, or Coherence, in the Qurʾan. For a brief life-sketch of Farāhī, see Mir, Mustansir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Islāhī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, (Indianapolis: 1986), 6–8. Farāhī's views on the subject are found in two of his works: *Im'an fi Aqsam al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo: 1349 A.H.) in which he states his theory, and *Majmu'ah-i-Tafasir-i-Farāhī*, (Urdu translation by Amīn Ahsan Islāhī (Lahore: 1393/1973) which is a collection of his commentaries on a small number of the Qurʾanic sūrāt.

[xxii] Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904–1997) was famous for his Urdu exegeses of Qurʾān, Tadabbur-i-Qurʾan—an exegesis that he based on Hamiduddin Farahi's (1863–1930) idea of thematic and structural coherence in the Qurʾan. See Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Al-Waḥda al-bāyania al-Qurʾān al-majid* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Shurūq al-Dawliya, 2006).

[xxiii] Muhammad 'Abdullah Draz, *The Qurʾan: An Eternal Challenge: Al Naba Al Azim* (London: Islamic Foundation, 2007).

[xxiv] Salwa M. S. El-Awa, "Linguistic Structure," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 55-57.

[xxv] Salwa M. S. El-Awa, "Linguistic Structure," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 57.

[xxvi] Islāhī wrote a eight-volume Qur'ān commentary, *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, (Lahore: 1967–1980) according to the exegetical principles laid down by Farāhī.

[xxvii] Saeh Bassam, *The Miraculous Language of the Qurʾan: Evidence of Divine Origin* (London: IIIT, 2015).

[xxviii] Mustansir Mir, "The Sura as a unity," 204.

[xxix] Mustansir Mir, "The Sura as a unity:," 217.

[xxx] Mustansir Mir, "The Sura as a unity: A Twentieth-Century Development in Qur'an Exegesis," in Approaches to the Qur'an, eds G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993), 220.

[xxxi] Asrār al-balāgha and Dalāʾil al-iʿjāz

[xxxii] See Shuruq Naguib, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to tafsīr: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. 2015, Vol. 17 Issue 1, p45-84.

[xxxiii] See ʿĀʾisha Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shatiʾ, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1971 & 1981) and Issa J. Boullata, "Modern Qurʾān Exegesis: a study of Bint al-Shati"s method," *The Muslim World* 64 (1974): 103. See Shuruq Naguib, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to tafsīr: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity. Journal of Qur'anic Studies. 2015, Vol. 17 Issue 1, p45-84..

[xxxiv] See his methodology in his book: Amin al-Khuli, *Manahij Tajdid* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1961).

[xxxvi] Bint al-Shatiʾ, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qurʾān al-karīm*. Vol. 2. pp. 46, 53–54.

[xxxvii] Ibid., *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qurʾān al-karīm*. Vol.1, pp.11.

[xxxviii] Naguib, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to tafsīr: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity. p 60.

[xxxix] Ibid., p 61.

[xl] See Shuruq Naguib, Bint al-Shāṭiʾ's Approach to tafsīr: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity. Journal of Qur'anic Studies. 2015, Vol. 17 Issue 1, p45-84. 40p.

[xli] J. M. Cowan, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1976), 195–197.

[xlii] Zainab Alwani, "Maqasid Qur'aniyya: A Methodology on Evaluating Modern Challenges and Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat," *The Muslim World* 104 (2014): 465-487.

[xliii] T.J. al-Alwani, 2006.

[xliv] T. J. al-Alwani, Reviving the Balance: The Authority of the Qur'ān and the Status of the Sunnah, Translate Nancy Roberts (London/ Washington: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2017) p XI. See I. D. Khalil, *The Qurʾān and the Sunnah: The Time-Space Factor, 28*.

[xlv] Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Naḥwā muqif qurʾāni min al-naskh towards a Qurʾānic Approach on Abrogation* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyya, 2007)

[xlvii] Taher Jabir al-Alwani, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural analysis* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012).

[xlviii] Al-Raghib al-Asfahani (d. 502 AH/1108) was an eleventh-century Muslim scholar of Qurʾānic exegesis and the Arabic language. One of his most famous works was Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qurʾān, Dar Ihya Turath al-Arabi; 1st edition (2013).

[xlix] Al-Alwani, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural analysis*, 25-28.

[l] Al-Alwani, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 39-41.

[li] See T. J. al-Alwani, *Lisān al-Qurʾān wa mustaqbal al-ummah al-qutub* [The Tongue of the Qurʾān and the Future of the Ummah] (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyya, 2006).

[lii] See the chain of narration in al-Alwani, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural analysis, 67-69*

[liii] Ibid., *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural analysis* 67-97

[liv] Ibid., *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural analysis, 60-61*

[lv] Jonathan Brown, "The Issue of Apostasy in Islam," Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/jonathan-brown/apostasy/

[lvi] Ibid., "The Issue of Apostasy in Islam," 26.

Islam and the American Common Good*

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The European Wars of religion (real and imagined) are a legacy that inform the American attitude towards religion in some fairly major ways. Indeed, religion is often thought of as something from which society must be protected, it being the job of the state to provide this protection. In this light, given the contemporary optics and global conflicts involving Muslims today, this attitude of fear is all the more keen when it comes to the religion of Islam. The question of American Muslims contributing to an American common good is often unthinkable, especially given the racial and ethnic make-up of the American Muslim community. This article takes on the question of if and how American Muslims can, in good religious conscience, contribute to and uphold an American common good. It takes an 'emic' approach to this question, however, in that it assumes that America is no less home to American Muslims than it is to any other group of Americans. It also seeks to ground its articulations in the religious sources and Tradition of Islam.

Key words: Blackamericans, common good, Enlightenment, fundamentalism, immigrants, liberalism, ma'rūf, moral identity, plausibility structure, procedural common good, shari'ah, substantive common good, terrorism, 9-11, 1965

In his book, *Allah: A Christian Response*, Yale University professor Miroslav Volf engages the question of whether and how Muslims (and Christians) in America might devote themselves, in good conscience, to the enterprise of serving the common good. He recalls in this context, an inquiry by a Muslim student in his class, "Faith and Globalization," which he co-taught with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2008. This student asked the following pointed question: "How can we be expected to treat someone with whom we think God is displeased the same [way] as someone with whom God is pleased?"[1] Professor Volf recognized this question as going to the very heart of the matter as he understood it. In response he observed, "Secular and religiously impartial states mandate just that: equal treatment of all, of those who do what is deemed pleasing to God and of those who do not." He went on to note, "but God does not seem to treat all equally. Does loyalty to God clash with loyalty to the state? If so, religious exclusivism leads straight to political intolerance."[2]

Questions about Islam's relationship with equality, secularity, citizenship, loyalty, tolerance and the like typically inform discussions about Muslims in America these days. And given the

* This is a slightly revised version of a lecture delivered at Yale University on 12 March, 2016 and again, in revised form, at the University of Kentucky on 8 April, 2016. My thanks go to those who invited me to these venues as well as the respective audiences whose engagement enriched my thinking on the issues.

[1] Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), p. 220. The gist of this question has a long pedigree in the modern West. As far back as the 18th century, Rousseau would insist: "It is impossible to live in peace with people one believes to be damned; to love them is to hate the God who punishes them; it is an absolute duty either to redeem or torture them." See J.J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 186-87. Oddly, despite the spuriousness of this logic, as we will see, it continues to maintain a certain hold on the Western imaginary up to the present.

[2] Miroslav Volf, *Allah*, p. 220.

present Islamophobic atmosphere, one can hardly blame Muslims for some of the facile apologetics we hear from them from time to time. In the present effort, however, I shall attempt to move beyond this kind of apologia in favor of an authentically grounded articulation of Islam that can lend concrete, positive value to a Muslim's commitment to the American "common good." Along the way, however, I shall interrogate the very meaning and functional reality of the American common good, especially as it relates to religion in general and to Islam more particularly.

Let me begin, though, with a bit of context. Today, it is quite common to hear American Muslims invoke the notion of serving humanity beyond the boundaries of the American or even the global Muslim community. But things, were not always this way. Prior to 9/11, it would have been the exception rather than the rule for Muslims in America to speak this way. We might recall in this regard that the national profile we see today of Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia did not really take off until after 1965, when the U.S. government changed its immigration policy towards non-European applicants. At that time, the Muslim world was in the early stages of the rise of Islamic Revivalism, or what would become more commonly known as "Muslim Fundamentalism." Unlike Christian Fundamentalism, after which it was misleadingly named, so-called "Muslim Fundamentalism" had little to do with any literal interpretation of scripture. It was dedicated, rather, to the restoration of religion to a meaningful public role and to overturning its restriction to the private realm. This entailed a commitment to 'Islamizing' modern Muslim states, whereby they could resume what was understood to be their traditional role of nurturing citizens, rooting out corruption, and encouraging virtue as defined by Islam. This stood in contrast, of course, to both the secular and the liberal state. The secular state explicitly separated religion from the state and thus from any regulatory function; the liberal state, on the other hand, insisted that a good society could result from simply allowing people to pursue their own self-interests. Both the secular and the liberal state, meanwhile, were seen as products of the colonial and now neo-imperial experience. Ironically, *this* experience had laid a new structural foundation, namely, the modern state, for a dictatorial, secularizing and often Westernizing political reality that was now the target of the Muslim Revivalist critique.

This hostility towards the prevailing order informed the ideology and program of virtually every Muslim Revivalist movement to emerge in the 20th century. And precisely in this capacity, it informed, to varying degrees, the thinking and sensibilities of the 'Muslim diaspora.' In America, this 'diaspora' was overwhelmingly lay, and this bred an almost hopeless dependency upon the Muslim homelands for an understanding of what it meant to be a committed Muslim in the modern world. It is not difficult, in this context, to imagine how the idea of serving a specifically *American* common good might be looked upon with suspicion if not held in actual contempt.

Of course, not all American Muslims were or are immigrants or the progeny of expatriates from the Muslim world. The presence of Muslims among America's slave population is a well-known fact. Indeed, today, Blackamericans make up *at least* 20% of all Muslims in America, and Islam has enjoyed a *trans-generational* presence among Blackamericans for about a century now. While other races and ethnicities are also represented in the American Muslim community, Blackamericans are unique – and make America unique among Western nations. For Blackamericans enjoy the benefit of what I refer to as "communal conversion," by which I am referring not to any mass conversion to Islam but more simply to the *possibility* of such conversion by virtue of there being no perceived conflicts or contradictions between being authentically black and openly Muslim. Numerous Blackamerican social phenomena confirm this reality, from the religiously blended nature of so many Blackamerican families to the quasi-Arabic "a-ee-a" pattern of names (e.g., "Lakeesha,"

or "Shameeka") among *non*-Muslim Blackamericans. One might also consider in this regard that, to this day, despite his explicit assertions to the contrary, there are people who believe that former president Barack Obama is a Muslim. These same people could never dream of 'accusing' George Bush, Hillary Clinton or even Marco Rubio of being Muslim.

As with their immigrant co-religionists, however, the notion of an American "common good" also proved problematic for Blackamerican Muslims. For Blackamericans have long experienced the American "common good" as not so common. Indeed, Blackamericans have often found themselves living in what some have referred to as the "under-commons." Their existence as a dominated minority has been a classic one, wherein they have faced the consistent threat of being disabused of their own story and assigned a supporting role in someone else's, at which time, instead of simply being able to be themselves and follow their own lights they are judged *and treated* according to their ability to 'perform' and uphold what the dominant culture deems to be 'normal.' In this capacity, no matter how much they might contribute to America – as fighters in her wars or producers of her most seductive export: pop-culture – this does not seem to translate into proportional benefit or standing. One need but notice the disproportionate rates of incarceration or unemployment among Blackamericans, or the racial exclusivity represented by the photos that decorate the walls of America's state capitol buildings or elite educational institutions. Or the next time one is downtown in any city in America, one might ask how many skyscrapers bear the names of *Blackamerican* families.

In sum, for these and related reasons, the American Muslim community, in all its variety, generally nursed a palpably diffident if not hostile attitude towards the American polity all the way up to the turn of the 21st century. Of course, as a religious community, they were hardly unique in this regard. Earlier in their history, American Catholics were explicitly advised by the Pope in Rome: "Unless forced by necessity to do otherwise, Catholics ought to prefer to associate with Catholics, a course which will be very conducive to the safeguarding of their faith."[3] Even many Protestants would embrace what H. Richard Niebuhr called the "Christ-Against-Culture" attitude towards America, on the basis of which they dreaded and resented America as a corruptor of Christian loyalty to Christ.[4] In short, Muslim attitudes were quite consistent with those of other religious communities in the United States as they struggled to come to terms with what Yale professor Sydney Ahlstrom refers to as "The American Problem."

But then came the attacks of September 11, 2001. This was a major turning point for American Muslims. Among its more obvious effects was the collective guilt with which it smeared anyone associated with Islam, placing Muslims under collective indictment as a suspected fifth column. Less apparent, however, was a corollary effect that reverberated *inside* the American Muslim community. In a word, September 11 announced the end of America as an ideological playground, where Muslims could freely spew all manners of political vitriol and unfiltered diatribe modeled after some of the anti-American rhetoric wafting across the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. The harsh and scary aftermath of 9/11 forced Muslims in America to reassess all of this and imbued them with a deeper sense of discipline and the need to weigh their words, actions *and thoughts* with greater care. This in turn would eventually give rise to a more explicit recognition of America as

[3] S. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 837.

[4] See H.R. Neibuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 8.

"home" and of the need to engage American life more directly and spontaneously with both feet on the ground *in America*, as opposed to living vicariously through the vision, rhetoric and sensibilities of the traditional Muslim homeland. What we are witnessing today in the way of greater focus on such notions as the common good and serving humanity as a whole is in large part a direct outgrowth of these developments.

In truth, however, 9/11 does not tell the whole story. The settling of critical masses of immigrants from the Muslim world after 1965 set in motion, however imperceptibly at the time, a psychological move among Blackamerican Muslims that ultimately brought them too to a more explicit recognition of their American-ness. Immigrants from the Muslim world tended to assume and enjoy a certain presumption of religious authority as representatives of the Islamic norm. From a certain perspective, this was not entirely unreasonable; after all, if Muslims *from the Muslim world* could not be assumed to be authentic Muslims, who could? Ultimately, however, this hierarchical arrangement would leave Blackamerican Muslims with a feeling that their perspectives and concerns *as Blackamericans* were being marginalized in favor of the "back home" sensibilities and obsessions of their immigrant co-religionists. Even their encounter with *African* Muslim immigrants would alert them to a surprisingly palpable distinction between "*Africans*" and "African-*Americans*."[5] All of this would eventually heighten Blackamerican Muslims' sense that they were the product of a unique socio-cultural, political, psycho-historical and even biological reality that was patently and undeniably *American*. While America remained an existential battleground on many levels, it was increasingly recognized among Blackamerican Muslims as *their* battleground, and, for better or worse, as "home." As early as the late 1970s, we see indications of this with the decision by Imām W. D. Muhammad to place the American flag on the front of the movement's newspaper and to designate July 4th as "New World Patriotism" Day, following his takeover from his father, The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and his redirecting the bulk of the Nation of Islam into Sunni Islam in 1975. Yet, the broader Blackamerican Muslim community's largely negative response to these gestures shows that full ingratiation with America was still a work in progress.

Today, however, there can be little doubt that the general outlook of American Muslims has organically and quite genuinely evolved to the point that whatever reservations they might have regarding the American common good are no longer existential or historical but largely ideological. The question, in other words, is not whether American Muslims genuinely *feel* inclined to serve the common good on a psychological, visceral or even practical level; the question is whether they can get the sources and tradition of Islam to *validate* such a move and, if so, on what terms and to what end. It is actually here, however, that the situation gets more rather than less complicated, this time not so much on the "Muslim" as on the "American" side of the equation. Indeed, here is where Muslim scholars and intellectuals tend to face a far more daunting intellectual challenge, especially within the walls of the American academy.

The problem begins with the fact that American political culture is overwhelmingly liberal in orientation. I am not speaking here of "democrats" or "republicans," big or limited government, or the tendency towards open-minded versus 'conservative' socio-cultural impulses. I am speaking, rather, of the philosophical perspective that grew out of the European Enlightenment. At its most basic level, Enlightenment liberalism called into question all forms of authority outside the individual self, especially that of the church. Liberalism in this regard emerges as the philosophy of

[5] See, e.g., Z. Abdullah, "West African 'Soul Brothers' in Harlem," in M. Marable and H. Aidi, *Black Routes to Islam* (New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 249-69.

autonomous, individual choice. Individuals must be free to choose, with the only restrictions on their choices being the extent to which these encroach upon the freely made choices of others. In this context, choice becomes its own legitimizer, and the "right" to choose is placed over the intrinsic "good" or "bad" of any particular choice itself. Meanwhile, the individual is placed above the community. As one major advocate of liberalism put it, "each person is one and not more than one… each feels pain in his or her own body [and] the food given to A does not arrive at the stomach of B."[6] Thus, liberalism is "opposed… to forms of political organization that are corporatist and organically organized – that seek a good for the group as a whole without focusing above all on the well-being and agency of individual group members. The central question of politics should not be, 'How is the organic whole doing? but rather, How are X and Y and Z and Q doing?'"[7]

To my mind, this raises an obvious question: Beyond the *procedural* common good of simply allowing everyone to pursue his or her own 'victimless choices,' what is the actual *substance* of the American common good? In other words, beyond the imperative to live and let live, is there really any such a thing as the American *common good*?[8] More to the point, what should American Muslims do in the face of these questions? Should they simply accept the procedural common good as the best or at least the safest thing that we as a society can achieve? Or should they commit to trying to bring more concrete substance to the American common good, with at least *some* attention to producing a certain type of American citizen for whom personal sovereignty is more explicitly recognized as a *negotiated* rather than an *absolute* ideal? Would any attempt by Muslims to bring more substance to the American common good constitute an unacceptable incursion of Muslim *religious* values into the public domain? And should Muslims, in such light, simply give up on the common good altogether and just try to find a space away from it all where they can be left alone to practice their religion in peace – and in private?

These are difficult questions. And given the diversified composition of the American Muslim community, one should hardly expect a single answer. Muslim intellectuals who are liberal in orientation (perhaps the majority working in the academy) would probably go with the first option, the procedural common good, as the best and the most that we as a society can or should try to achieve. Muslim intellectuals who are *not* liberal, on the other hand, such as myself (and here I must insist that I am *not* a conservative, at least not on the common understanding of that term[9]) would

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[6] Martha Nussbaum, "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism," *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts* 3rd ed., ed. Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 1033. Nussbaum's essay is taken from her book, *Sex and Social Justice*. She is defending liberalism against the critiques of such feminist writers as Alison Jaggar, Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Note here the warning of Sheldon Wolin that the notion that liberalism tends to dissolve solidarities of social ties and commitments by replacing them with the liberties of the unfettered, independent individual, the masterless man, is woefully misguided. Liberalism actually *promotes* social conformity by way of the elision of social convention into actual conscience. See his *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Change in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 307.

[9] I am not a conservative, for a number of reasons. To begin with, conservatives seem to lack the Muslim distinction between moral and political judgment, according to which one can categorically condemn a thing on moral, theological or ideological grounds (e.g., wine-drinking or the trinity) while explicitly

see more of a need to add more *substance* to the American common good and insist that the common good work more concretely *for* and certainly not *against* them. This is not to negate or even challenge the value of the procedural common good. It is simply to recast it as a *negotiated* rather than an *absolute* value that works in the service of a broader (or higher) good. For this allows us to recognize some of the procedural common good's limitations, including at least one particular challenge it poses to religion, including Islam.

Of course, the very notion of Muslims contributing to the *substantive* content of the American common good raises deep fears and apprehensions among some non-Muslim Americans. For them, this is just another way of Muslims expressing their desire to impose their religion on society. This is especially alarming, given the notion that Islam is an all-encompassing religion that recognizes no distinction between the sacred and the profane. On this understanding, Islam's *sharī'ah* or religious law is assumed to determine *everything*, and there is thus no basis for any kind of compromise, conversation or negotiation with those who do not recognize the authority of Islam.

Here, however, I would like to unpack this notion of Islam being a totalitarian religion that recognizes no distinction between the secular and the dictates of the religious law (*sharī'ah*). It is true that Islam holds God-consciousness or what the Qur'ān calls "*taqwā*" to be a state of being that *every* Muslim should strive to maintain in *all* of his or her endeavors. Indeed, "heedlessness" or what the Qur'ān refers to as *ghaflah* – *not* just plain intentional evil – is among human beings' most deadly flaws. In this sense, Islam is indeed "totalitarian" in that it is relevant to every aspect of life. But the necessity of approaching all of one's affairs in a God-conscious state of mind is not the same as God dictating through the religious law an actual concrete rule to govern *every* concrete situation an individual or society might face. In fact, even on issues of a patently religious nature, not everything

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upholding the right of non-Muslim persons to indulge these things (e.g., allowing Christians to live as Christians, to drink wine and to extol the trinity). Or to put it another way, conservatives tend to over-indulge *sadd al-dhara'i'* (the jurisprudential principle of "blocking the means," which bans prima facie legal acts that threaten to lead to illegal ends) to the point that they are willing to target *persons* rather than just *actions*. E.g., the notion that gay-couples should be denied housing does not merely target their homosexual acts but their actual persons and the personal right to shelter; they are being denied, in other words, not simply the right to engage in such activity but to live, period. Second, as F. Hayek put it, conservatives are largely obstructionists who can only function as brakes on liberal 'progress' with little to no life-giving vision of their own. Third, conservatives are often possessed of the same conceit as liberals, i.e., that they can speak authoritatively for everyone through the false universalization of their culturally and historically informed perspectives. Fourth, when it comes to money, conservatives are as liberal as liberals are when it comes to rights, declaring the untrammeled sanctity of the right to spend their money as they please, just as liberals claim the untrammeled right to execute their rights as they please. Fifth, there is something in the American past that conservatives seem to want to conserve that I find difficult to disentangle entirely from white supremacy. Indeed, in a 'debate' with James Baldwin in 1965, William F. Buckley, Jr. identified American civilization with European civilization, which leaves one wondering about all those non-Europeans who make and have made America what she is. Finally, there is something in the tone of American conservatism with which I do not identify. Having said this, I do identify, more on a personal than an ideological level, especially as I get older, with much of what Michael Oakeshott describes as conservative: "to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, the present laughter to utopian bliss." See M. Oakeshott, "On Being Conservative," in *Rationalism in the Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1991), pp. 408-09.

will be reducible to scripture.[10] For example, the Qur'ān exhorts Muslims to build mosques; but neither the Qur'ān nor the Sunna nor sharī'ah itself give *any* instructions on how to build a mosque. For this, Muslims must rely on the knowledge that they and or others have accumulated in such areas as engineering, architecture, materials development and the like, none of which has any basis in sharī'ah.

All of this is another way of saying that in terms of concrete manners of proceeding in the full panoply of life, sharī'ah is demonstrably *limited* in scope. And beyond the scope of sharī'ah's proper jurisdiction, Muslims must rely on forms of reasoning, knowledge and deliberation that are not dictated by the religious law and are generically *indistinguishable* from those relied upon by their non-Muslim compatriots. This becomes extremely important when we consider the vast number of issues in the public domain – from speed-limits to licensing medical doctors, from immigration policy to zoning regulations, from the procedures for tenure and promotion to food-safety standards – on which sharī'ah would be virtually silent. In this very sizeable domain, Muslims and non-Muslims would be able to negotiate the common good on a virtually equal footing, neither *relying upon* nor *giving offense* to sharī'ah. For in this domain, discussions would proceed on the basis of such principles as efficiency, safety, economic cost, order, professional promise, long-term resource management and the like. Neither Islam nor Muslim God-consciousness would pose any impediment to including or engaging non-Muslims on these obviously mutually shared principles and concerns.

Thus, even where a Muslim commits his or herself to the most fastidious practice of his or her religion, this does not necessarily entail the kind of intolerance that would preempt social cooperation or social solidarity between Muslims and non-Muslims For in the end, social cooperation and solidarity depend not on the ability to reach actual consensus on the issues but on the ability to recognize shared interests and sustain meaningful, inclusive public conversation. As I hope to have shown, there is a vast area of concerns in the public domain wherein sharī'ah would pose no barriers at all to recognizing such interests and promoting such public conversation between Muslims and non-Muslims on these and many other obviously mutually shared concerns.

Of course, one might ask *why,* even if Islam poses no formal barriers to recognizing the common good of society *in general*, a Muslim should *want* to promote the common good of a *particular* society such as America that does not reflect his or her religious values, and, in fact, often seems to mock or vilify these? Is it Islamically *wise*, in other words, not just *permissible*, to seek to promote the common good of a society whose government *does* not and constitutionally *cannot* dedicate itself to the glory of Islam?

To my mind, the key to resolving this dilemma lies in the normative practice or Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The operative element here is the Prophet's refusal to embrace zero-sum

[10] Indeed, even the reputedly puritanical Ibn Taymīyah would note the following: "Even were we to assume that a person came to know every command and every prohibition in the Qur'ān and Sunna, the Qur'ān and Sunna would simply address matters ofgeneral, categorical import, as it is impossible to do other than this. They would not mention that which is specific to each and every individual. And for this reason, humanity has been commanded to ask for guidance (*hudā*) to the straight path." See his *Amrāḍ al-qulūb wa shifā'uhā* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Salafīyah wa Maktabatuhā, 1386/1966), 12-13.

thinking, according to which society is deemed either entirely good (and therefore worthy of support) or entirely bad (and therefore to be categorically rejected). Especially in Mecca, the Prophet and the Muslim minority faced stiff opposition, vilification and the threat of persecution to the point that they were forced to make *two* migrations, one to Abyssinia (roughly modern day Ethiopia) and another later to Medina. Listen here to a few Qur'ānic depictions of the treatment the Prophet and the early Muslims received at the hands of their fellow Arabians: "O you upon whom this so-called Reminder has been revealed, you are indeed mad" [15:6]; "And remember, O Believers, when you were few, oppressed and marginalized in the land, living in fear that the people would snatch you away…" [8:26]; "Nay, they say that this [Qur'ān] is but confused dreams; nay, he has merely concocted it; nay, he is simply a poet…" [21: 5]; "They drive out the Messenger along with you yourselves, O Believers, for no other reason than that you believe in God your Lord…" [60:1].

Despite all of this, however, the Prophet never ceased to identify as a member of his society and to seek to enhance and preserve Arabia's common good. This is clearly captured in the Qur'ān's repeated command to the Muslims to act in accordance with what it terms "*al-ma'rūf*," which literally means "that which is known by convention to be good, wholesome, and sound." While the Qur'ān and the Prophet would scrutinize Arabian practices and only sanction those that met their criterion, neither the Prophet nor the early Muslims themselves were the actual authors of those many conventions that were recognized. Yet, the *ma'rūf* retained its authority as a definer of proper behavior for Muslims, despite the fact that it served not simply the *Muslim* good but the overall *Arabian* good, and this in a society whose elite openly opposed and vigorously campaigned against Islam. Against the presumption that seems to drive discussions around Islam in America today, the Prophet clearly recognized the undeniable relationship of interdependence between the Muslims and the rest of society. Faulty food-safety standards or weak family ties would have no less a negative effect on Muslims than it would on anyone else, even (or perhaps we should say especially) in a society that was hostile to Islam. On this understanding, upholding the common good is clearly not just permissible but also wise.

This might be a good place to return to the point raised by Professor Volf's student with which I opened this discussion. That student asked, "How can we be expected to treat someone with whom we think God is displeased the same [way] as someone with whom God is pleased?" Given what I have said thus far, it would seem that when it comes to aspects of the common good that fall outside *sharī'ah*, the question of God's being pleased with a person or not would be irrelevant to the question of how Muslims should treat them. For part of the whole point of the *common* good *in this realm* is to serve not any *particular* group's exclusive ideals but the broader interests of the community at large. In other words, a person's status as Muslim or non-Muslim would be irrelevant to whether we issued them a speeding ticket or granted them a medical license. God was clearly not pleased with the idol-worship of the pagan Arabians. Yet, this did not affect their status as beneficiaries of the prevailing Arabian *ma'rūf* or common good. Nor did it detract from the value of upholding that common good for the early Muslims.

And yet, if a truly "*common* good" should not be *owned* by Muslims, it should also not be exclusively owned by non-Muslims either. The common good in America cannot be understood to be the simple result of Muslims' willingness to shut up, go along with the program and disregard the authority of their own religious values or world-view. If the common good is to be truly "common," it must serve Muslims *as Muslims*, just as it serves everyone else as everyone else. Of course, the circumference of the common good will always be smaller than that of any particular ideology or religion; but it cannot be perceived as the simple result of negating *all* ideology or religion. My point

in unpacking the notion that Islam is a totalitarian religion was *not* to imply that Muslims should never enter the public domain with values or perceptions that are grounded in sharīʿah; my point was, rather, that Muslims *can* enter the public domain *as* believing, practicing Muslims, with any number of views on any number of issues that are *not* based on sharīʿah. At the same time, however, Muslims may, and in *my* view absolutely *should*, remain attached to the values, practices and sensibilities of sharīʿah (in the broad sense where sharīʿah remains open to negotiation) and this may bring them into conflict with the ideals, preferences or sensibilities of other members of the American community. Such attachment, for example, may bring Muslims to oppose pornography or to promote a culture of marriage over one of responsibility-free sex or to call for criminal justice-reform or for the state to get out of the marriage business or to curb the excesses of turbo-capitalism and its pernicious effect on the poor (especially racial minorities). Again, however, such attachment to sharīʿah should not be seen as an attempt to "take over" or undermine the common good. On the contrary, Muslim attempts to promote the kinds of virtues and practices that produce and sustain good Muslims – or, in their view, good citizens generally – implies neither a disservice to the common good nor a demand that all Americans embrace Islam.

Nor, again, should attachment to sharīʿah be seen as totally negating the value of the *procedural* common good, i.e., the idea that one's freedom to choose is the default assumption that can only be challenged or overturned on the basis of legitimate justifications. After all, Islam recognizes a similar – even if not identical – freedom to choose. Part of the very meaning of *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, "There is no god except God," is that, ultimately, no one but God has the right to restrict our choices. For Muslims, knowledge of what God restricts is expressed in concrete terms in the form of Islam's sharīʿah, which renders sharīʿah a legitimate restrictor of Muslim choices. Islam's autonomy, in other words, is a *qualified* autonomy based on the Muslim recognition of God's ultimate authority as the Giver of life. But this is hardly the same as a total *denial* of human autonomy. If nothing else, moral accountability both implies and requires the ability to choose. The difference, therefore, between liberal autonomy and Islamic autonomy is more a difference of degree than it is of kind.

Of course, the big question on everyone's mind these days is how sharīʿah affects *non*-Muslim choices. While this is a bigger topic than I could hope to manage in this article, there are two inter-related features of traditional Islamic law that I would like to share in this regard. The first is that the classical Muslim state, unlike the modern state, never assumed a rightful monopoly over law-making, such that state sovereignty could only be maintained by coopting or obliterating all other sources of law. The late Robert Cover of Yale Law School referred to this tendency as the "jurispathic nature" of modern states.[11] By contrast, the classical Muslim state ceded huge powers of law-making to its constituent communities and did not insist on a one-size-fits-all approach to law, neither as applied to Muslims *nor* to non-Muslims. Legal pluralism, in other words, was entirely consistent with the Muslim understanding of statecraft. To see Islamic law, then, as necessarily insisting that non-Muslims be bound by its every concrete rule is to superimpose upon sharīʿah the jurispathic presuppositions of the modern, Western state. It is to assume, in other words – falsely –

[11] See R. Cover, *Narrative, Violence and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 138ff.

that Islamic law *must* seek to make itself the exclusive, one-size-fits-all law of the land because this is what the law of the modern Western state does.[12]

The second point simply carries the first point to a more concrete level. It is well-known that non-Muslims living in a Muslim state could drink wine, eat pork, charge interest and, according to a majority of jurists, enjoy exemption from such Islamic laws as those governing adultery. What is perhaps less known, however, is the *degree* to which this logic was practically engaged. As far back as the early 3rd/9th century, Zoroastrian minorities, to take just one example, were granted the right to engage in incestuous marriages. This was in accordance with the general agreement that non-Muslim marriages were to be judged according to *their* religious law and not the religious law of Islam. In response to the surprise of some early inquirers who asked how a man could possibly be allowed to marry his mother or daughter, one jurist responded as follows: "We allow religious minorities to do more than marry their mothers and daughters; we allow them to invent false claims against God and to worship other than the All-Merciful!"[13] Of course, in any society, the real has a dogged habit of diverging from the ideal. As such, it should be no surprise that non-Muslims often faced discrimination in Muslim society. But I hope that what I have shared here will be enough to suggest that non-Muslim fears about sharīʿah as an ideal are more often than not misplaced or overblown.

At this point, at any rate, I would like to move on to what I mentioned earlier about a particular challenge that a substantively neutral, open-ended procedural common good poses to religion in general and to Islam more particularly. I should note in this regard that I am speaking here in my capacity as an American Muslim for whom part of the very value of religion resides in its ability and willingness not simply to aid, applaud or cooperate with the state and dominant culture but, where appropriate, to *challenge*, *resist* or even defy the state and the dominant culture – including the "dominant culture" of the religious community. After all, if religion is simply going to confirm everything the secular state, the dominant culture, or blind adherence to religious tradition prescribes, it is not clear how religion can remain an effective moral force and why. Therefore, it should not be simply disposed of or privatized.

We might get a clearer sense of the concerns I have in mind if we think about what the late sociologist of religion, Peter Berger, referred to as religion's "plausibility structure."[14] Basically, a plausibility structure is the socio-cultural context within which a religion exists and from which it is able to sustain its status as "normal," "relevant" or even "true." Where a functional plausibility structure is in place, individuals are not likely to ignore or flout religious beliefs or institutions but to

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[12] By the way, Muslims are also prone to falling into this trap, as we see in some of the policies of groups such as ISIS.

[13] *al-Mudawwanat al-kubrā* 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, N.d.), 2: 219.

[14] See P. L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 110-13. Berger argues, inter alia, that early modern Protestantism's significant success in stripping the world of any mystical or super-natural elements has sapped religion's ability to sustain its meaning and relevance in the modern world, spawning the rise and diffusion of a secular (i.e., non-religious) worldview.

take them for granted and perhaps assimilate them as their own.[15] Where a religion's plausibility structure is displaced or severely damaged, however, the plausibility of religious commitment will simply fade. When this happens, even deeply held religious beliefs may not be enough to sustain proper religious behavior. For the prevailing socio-cultural context may include psychological, socio-cultural or socio-political disincentives that are so powerful that only super-humans could be reasonably expected to resist them. Berger spoke in terms that implied that religion had to exercise a monopoly over the socio-cultural eco-system. While I think this goes too far, I *do* believe that a socio-cultural eco-system or plausibility structure *can* be degraded to the point that it threatens religion's viability.

Ultimately, this is the danger I see in the kind of substantively empty common good underwritten by Enlightenment liberalism's commitment to autonomous choice. If the mere fact of my freely choosing a victimless action is enough to confer moral legitimacy upon that action and if this understanding of morality or acceptable behavior comes to define the public space in general, one can imagine how religion's scriptural injunctions, moral disciplines, and technologies of the self will fade into irrelevance and ultimately come to be resented as an unnecessary nuisance. Even if religious *discourse* remains fully intact, without the embodied *practices* of religion to aid in the acquisition of a *moral identity* that includes the kinds of proper pre-judgments and modes of being that allow one to monitor and transform the self, as well as the world around one, religion will be essentially reduced to *the right to use religious language*. Of course, free speech is a value that we all hold dear. But there *is* something, I think, to the communitarian argument that communal *practice* is at least as important as personal *privacy*. And as religious *practice* tends to be collective by nature, recognizing *its* value will entail a shift of sorts from a primary focus on X and Y and Z and Q back to the organic whole and something beyond a purely procedural common good.

Of course, the big question here is how religion can play a meaningful role in all of this without obliterating everyone's interests but its own. Here I think it is important to consider two interrelated points. The first we have already seen in my discussion of *ma'ruf* above. There we were reminded that good food-safety standards or effective speed-limits, for example, serve us all, regardless of our respective religious affiliations. This same logic would extend to such concerns as public safety and assuring that the public space remains free of publicly directed violence (a.k.a. terrorism[16]), be this motivated by religious extremism, racial bigotry, or any other cause. For the ability to move about freely, to be able to earn a living, get an education, or merely visit a friend is something from which *everyone* benefits, regardless of religion. It would be silly to suppose that the absence of this general state of security would somehow affect American Muslims *less* than it affected non-Muslims. In sum, American Muslims *as Muslims* have just as much reason to work for the *common good* of a secure public space as does anyone else.

The second point is that the common good is *not* simply the same as *unanimous consensus*. Groups and individuals can differ among themselves, at times strongly, without this necessarily constituting a breach of the common good. As we saw in the case of the Prophet Muhammad, he continued to battle his Arabian adversaries while also remaining committed to the Arabian common good. In a similar fashion, modern religious perspectives may clash with secular or liberal ones, but

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[16] See my "Domestic Terrorism in the Islamic Legal Tradition," *The Muslim World*, vol. 91 no. 3 and 4 (Fall, 2001): 293-310.

this does not necessarily spell the death of the common good. After all, deeply held convictions are deeply held convictions. I am not sure why deeply held *religious* convictions should be so singularly feared.

This is not to deny the many good reasons to fear those forms of religion that are aggressively strident and suffocatingly misanthropic, that tend to look upon the very pursuit of human happiness as if it were a cardinal sin. Beyond certain liturgical duties, this kind of religion focuses almost exclusively on the public policing of a seemingly endless list of moral don'ts. Freedom in this context appears almost as an after-thought or even as a non-concern, which is why the only freedom that many of us can imagine today is *liberal* freedom, i.e., the freedom to *de*tach (and be safe) rather than the freedom to *at*tach (and be vulnerable) or the freedom to recognize that someone other than myself, including the group or tradition to which I belong, may be better at guiding some of my choices than I am. This kind of dark and dour religion is rightfully feared and is the perfect foil for Enlightenment liberalism and its commitment to individual autonomous choice and the wholly procedural common good.

And yet, the reaction to this kind of misanthropic religion is often a form of religion that has essentially lost its nerve. This 'domesticated' religion equates 'feelings' with 'truth' and 'manners' with 'morality,' and it flees from divisiveness and confrontation as if 'peace' and 'unity' were unassailable, absolute goods. This kind of religion is often indistinguishable from the secular ideologies whose bidding it seems to do. And as these secular ideologies continue to bedazzle us with their promises, often fulfilled, to augment our happiness and bring about a better world, this domesticated religion routinely fails to force the question of whether what makes us happy actually *should* make us happy or whether the better world we are creating includes a better human self, or whether we *are* or shall *remain* more or less empowered and 'free' in the brave new world we are making.

In these current times of NSA surveillance, the Patriot Act, Freddie Gray, global warming, Citizens United, corporate greed, nuclear proliferation, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence and a host of other secular challenges, including, according to some, the dreaded possibility of an emergent American fascism, it seems odd that we should remain so firmly in the grip of those 18th and 19th century European notions that point to religion as the greatest danger to our collective well-being. In fact, given our contemporary challenges, *now* may be the time when religion in America, including Islam, is *best* positioned to demonstrate its value as a social force and contributor to the common good. For religion can stand up to the state, the market *and* the dominant culture, by equipping its followers with an independent *moral identity* with which to analyze and assess the activities of the state, 'the economy' and the dominant culture, instead of looking upon the state as essentially the god of the nation or upon the economy, or the dominant culture as the ultimate, supreme value that is too lofty to be subjected to critical examination. Even as Muslims must speak out boldly and unequivocally on matters such as terrorism or "radicalization" among Muslim youth, they, along with their non-Muslim compatriots, especially the religious community, must not allow the American state, "the U.S. economy," or the dominant culture to see themselves as being so high and mighty that they cannot benefit from constructive critique. And when "reason," "justice" and "technology" all fail us, as they occasionally must, "perseverance," forgiveness," "humility," even "repentance" cannot be just dismissed as outmoded relics of a happily discarded past.

But religion in America will be able to serve the common good in this fashion only if it is willing to cooperate across denominational and confessional lines. The zero-sum mindset of the

past, according to which the gains of one religion could only be seen as coming at the absolute expense of others, will no longer serve *any* religion in America. Jews and Christians may *think* that Islamophobia and Muslim-bashing merely tarnish the image of Islam; in reality, however, the discrediting of on *any* religion has the cumulative effect of discrediting *all* religion. It may be time, then, for all religious communities in America to recognize that they simply cannot preserve the efficacy of Islam, Christianity, Judaism or any other religion without first securing a meaningful place for religion as a whole.

Again, however, and I feel compelled to reiterate this point, this is hardly to look upon religion as an entirely unproblematic social force. Religious communities will have to work hard to overcome the comfort of lap-dog domestication as well as the idolatry of absolutizing their every historically informed or ego-driven reflex or obsession. And *if*, as they often claim, religiosity is ultimately a gift from God, religious people will have to accept the pluralistic implications of this claim. Not everybody is going to be religious, at least not as *they* would like them to be. Thus, instead of taking as their model the triumphalist victor who must always win or the pathetic victim whose very existence is little more than a perpetual complaint, religious communities must find greater meaning in the way of the tragic hero who in great humility is willing to put it all on the line and then stand ready to accept God's decree to bring his or her efforts to success or not. As the Qur'ān commands the Prophet Muhammad: "Say [O Muḥammad] I control neither that benefit or harm should come to me, except by God's will. And if I knew the unseen, I would augment good for myself and evil would never touch me. Verily, I am but a warner and a bringer of good tidings to a people who believe" [7: 188].

In this post-9/11 moment in which we presently live, American Muslims are routinely called upon to prove their loyalty to the American state and society by demonstrating their willingness to serve the common good. All too often, however, Muslims are imagined in this context to be essentially "guests" or "wards" of a pre-existing order into which they must blindly assimilate or from which they must be excluded. Then, when Muslims balk at this false choice, it is *they* who are routinely blamed for being insufficiently American. I hope that the foregoing has amply demonstrated that American Muslims can, in good conscience, recognize and serve the American common good, not as guests or wards but as believing, practicing Muslims, complete with their own genius and vision, their own grounding in America, and their own contributions to the American commonweal. Gaining more public recognition of this possibility, both within and without the American Muslim community, stands as one of the defining challenges of our time. It is my hope that the present effort will contribute, however modestly, to this critical enterprise.

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Governance Issues in American Mosques: Exploring the Present and Making Recommendations for the Future

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This paper explores existing organizational structures of mosques in the United States, and the issues related to these structures. The paper then makes recommendations for how to improve mosque organizational structure. Research is largely based on the "Needs Assessment of ISNA/NAIT Mosques" conducted in 2014. The sections of the paper include a discussion of the various types of mosque governance structures, the issue of elections in mosques, the question of who is the mosque leader, and finally the role of the imam in the mosque. The paper's analysis points out both the strengths and weaknesses in mosque governance. Recommendations focus on ways that mosques can better follow best practices in nonprofit management.

Keywords: Islam, Muslims, Mosques, Islam in America, imam

American mosques on the surface are doing quite well: their numbers are increasing (74% increase in the number of mosques from 2000 to 2011)[1]; mosque attendance is growing (292 average jum'ah attendance in 2000 to 353 in 2011).[2] However, there are many obstacles facing mosques as they strive to move to the next level of advancement. One of those obstacles is the lack of clarity on the best and most appropriate mosque organizational structure. This paper explores the existing organizational structures of mosques in the United States, and then makes recommendations for how to improve mosque organizational structure.

The exploration of mosque organizational structures uses data primarily from the 2013 "National Needs Assessment of Mosques Associated with ISNA/NAIT" and secondarily from the "US Mosque Survey 2011."[3] The reason for focusing on the "National Needs Assessment" is its inclusion of many more questions about mosque organization than the "US Mosque Survey 2011." However, the deficiency of the "National Needs Assessment" is that it did not include many African American mosques, so the findings of this paper deal with mosques that are attended largely by first and second generation immigrants. The second section of this paper includes my recommendations about mosque organizational structure, based on an analysis of this data, a review of literature on governance in non-profits and congregations, and the guidance of Islam as found in Qurʾān and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. The goal of this paper, therefore, is both to depict the present

[1] Ihsan Bagby, *The American Mosque 2011: Report Number 1 from the US Mosque Study 2011* (Washington, DC: CAIR, 2011), p. 5.

[2] Ibid, p. 7.

[3] The National Needs Assessment consisted of 112 interviews of mosque leaders, sampled from a total of 331 mosques which are associated with Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). This group of mosques represents mainstream immigrant mosques. The margin of error is ± 7.5%. Few African American mosques are associated with ISNA/NAIT, and therefore are not well represented in this sample. Many questions in the National Needs Assessment were about mosque governance. The U.S. Mosque Survey 2011 was a random sampled survey of all mosques in America which resulted in three reports. Report 2 focused on issues of mosque governance.

situation of mosque governance and to make recommendations about how best to organize mosques.

Mosques as a gathering place for worship have existed in Islam since the beginning—the first act of Prophet Muhammad in Madinah was to establish a mosque. Thus, it was natural for Muslims in America, whether first generation immigrants or first generation converts, to establish houses of worship to symbolize their abiding commitment to establish Islam in this land. However, there is no specific guidance in the Islamic texts of Qurʾān and hadith about how to organize a mosque, and since Muslims are not organized under a centralized "church" there is no denominational entity providing instructions about governance. Muslims in the United States are, therefore, challenged to develop on their own the most appropriate and effective mosque organizational structure.

Mosques in America are congregations, and therefore they have followed the typical American pattern of how religious groups have organized themselves. A simplified understanding of a congregation is a group of people who assemble regularly to worship at a particular place. However, agreeing with Wind and Lewis, I would add that a congregation also represents "an organizational pattern that places considerable power in the hands of the local body of lay leaders."[4] Thus almost all American mosques have been founded and managed by lay leaders and not imams.

While the American mosque is a congregation, the traditional mosque in classical Islamic civilization and in the Muslim world today is not a congregation. These mosques were and are places of worship, but attendees do not have any voice in the governing of the mosque. Instead these mosques are controlled by the government, a rich patron or an endowment. Thus, the Muslims who established mosques in America did not have a ready model to follow.

In America, mosques were founded when Muslims came together to practice and preserve their religion. They organized themselves, raised money, and conducted programs. Moreover, since there is no traditional "church" in Islam, mosques at this point in history are completely self-governed and independent.

Although there is no specific guidance for how to organize a mosque, there are general guidelines and practices established in the teachings of Islam. Guidelines include (1) *shura* which is the principle in the Qurʾān that the affairs of Muslims should be decided in consultation with one another (the Qurʾān says the affairs of Muslims "are conducted by mutual consultation [*shura*]" 42:38), (2) having a clear leader for any group ("when there are three of you traveling, appoint one to be the leader [amir]," narrated by Abu Dawud, Ahmad. and al-Tabari with a good chain of narrators), and (3) doing everything with excellence [*ihsan* or *itqan*] which includes the idea of seeking knowledge wherever you find it ("God as enjoined excellence [*ihsan*] in everything" narrated by Muslim; and "seek knowledge even to China" narrated by al-Baihaqi). The one traditional practice is that mosques had an imam who served as the prayer leader of the mosque, and some of them served as a scholar. However, the imam was not a pastor or leader of a congregation. All these general instructions point to an understanding that the affairs of the mosque should be done in consultation with the congregation; mosques should have recognizable leadership; mosques should strive to conduct their affairs in an excellent manner, unafraid to learn from non-Muslims; and finally mosques should have an imam.

[4] James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, "Introduction" in *American Congregations Vol. 1*, edited by James P. Wind and James W. Lewis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 2.

Basic Organizational Structures of ISNA/NAIT Mosques

There are four basic organizational structures among ISNA/NAIT mosques. The majority of ISNA/NAIT mosques (60%) have both a board of trustees and an executive committee; 38% have only one governing body which is usually called an executive committee; 2% have a board and a full-time staff; and finally 2% have neither a board, executive committee or staff.[5]

Basic Organizational Structures of ISNA/NAIT Mosques*

Board and executive committee (board/ec)	60%
Executive committee only (ec-only)	37%
Board only plus staff (board/staff)	2%
Neither board or executive committee—caretaker mosque	2%

*Percentages throughout this paper might not total 100% due to rounding.

In the mosques that have a board and executive committee (board/ec), the board typically controls the property and is the final authority in the mosque, while the executive committee manages the day-to-day operations of the mosque. Most mosques have little to no staff (50% have no staff, and 31% have one full-time, paid staff person), and therefore, the executive committee manages the mosque and all its activities. In mosques with only an executive committee (37%), the executive committee is typically a carryover from a time when the mosque was very small and only needed one body. The executive committee in these mosques runs all the affairs of the mosque. The 2% of mosques, which have a board and full-time staff, are mega-mosques with jum'ah attendance over 1000. They have a sufficient number of full-time staff such that it has outgrown the need for an executive committee in managing the mosque—the staff in other words has replaced the executive committee. The mosque which has neither board nor executive committee is a caretaker mosque which is extremely small and has only a caretaker who keeps the mosque open for prayers.

Mosques, which have a board and an executive committee, tend to have larger jum'ah attendance and larger budgets than mosques with only an executive committee. The average jum'ah attendance for a board/ec mosque is 829 as compared to 302 for a mosque with only an executive committee. The board/ec mosque has an average budget of $306,383 (median budget is $200,000) as compared to an ec-only mosque which has an average budget of $88,500 (median budget is $90,000).

Jum'ah Attendance and Organizational Structure

	ec-only	Board/ec
1-50	15.0%	2%
51-100	12.5%	5%
101-200	27.5%	15%
201-500	32.5%	37%
501 +	12.5%	42%

[5] While the most common terms for the governing entities of a mosque are board of trustees and executive committee, mosques have used various names for their governing entities. Thus I am using the term board of trustees as a generic term to describe mosque entities that hold the position of a board. Similarly I am using executive committee as a generic term to describe a body that has the responsibilities to manage the organization.

Budget and Organizational Structure

	ec-only	Board/ec
$10,000-$39,999	23%	10%
$40,000-$99,999	27%	17%
$100,000-$499,999	50%	55%
$500,000 +	0%	18%

Although the board/ec mosque is fairly well-to-do, it averages only two full-time staff persons. Only in 54% of these mosques is that full-time person an imam. In many cases the full-time person is a janitor. Thus, the board/executive committee model serves a community that is fairly large but has little staff, and therefore it requires an executive committee to focus on the day-to-day functioning of the mosque. This is a logical, effective way of organizing a mosque that is by necessity managed by volunteers. In comparison, the mosques with a board and staff average five full-time staff members, and thus they do not need volunteers to bear the main responsibility of managing the mosque.

The study of ISNA/NAIT mosques does not shed light on whether the board/ec mosque evolved from an ec-only mosque over time or whether the mosque was founded on that model. On average, board/ec mosques were founded in 1981 so most have been in existence for 30-40 years. A few interviews with ISNA/NAIT mosque leaders indicated that some of these mosques did start small with only an executive committee and added a board of trustees when they built or purchased a new building. Their motivation was to form a board in order to hold the deed and thereby protect the property. The creation of the board, therefore, was not to serve as an oversight body and a vehicle for strategic planning, which is the best practice model advocated in the literature on non-profits. Many other board/ec mosques started with both a board and executive committee because they began as a fairly large mosque with plans to build or purchase. Anecdotally many mosques have retained this view of a board as simply a holder of the deed with little other purpose. Thus, many mosques have adopted the nonprofit model of a board and executive body, but many have not adopted the recommended functions of a board, which include oversight and direction-setting.

Mosques with only an executive committee span the spectrum of size and budget, but they are largely small to mid-sized mosques. On average, these mosques were founded in 1986 so many have been around long enough and many have grown large enough to have evolved into a board/ec mosque, but it has not happened. It might be assumed that the reluctance to evolve is due to an executive committee that is comprised of the founding generation and therefore reluctant to change or share power. Possibly another important factor is simply inertia—the mosque has run for years with one body, and growth has not forced a re-consideration of their governance model.

The three models of board/ec mosque, ec-only mosque and board/staff mosque can each be seen as a natural progression in size and staff. The ec-only mosques are small to mid-sized and have no staff or only one staff. The board/ec mosque is mid-sized to large and has an average of two full-time staff, which is still not enough to handle the day-to-day functions of the mosque. The few mosques which have only a board with staff are mega-mosques with at least five full-time staff.

I will argue in my recommendations that the best model for mid-sized to large mosques is to have a board of trustees and an executive committee, because the best practice model for non-profits is to have a board that does oversight and direction-setting, and an executive body that focuses exclusively on management. However, as we have seen, many mosques do not have a board

of trustees, and other mosques have a board which does not function as a board of trustees that does oversight and direction-setting.

Elections

The congregational nature of ISNA/NAIT mosques in being self-governing is manifest in the fact that the vast majority of ISNA/NAIT mosques (89%) hold elections for their board and/or executive committee. Of the 11% who have a board and/or executive committee, but do not conduct elections, 2% are run by an endowment (waqf) and the other 9% represent founder boards and/or executive committees who do not hold elections in order to retain power.

The founder syndrome refers to a common phenomenon whereby the founders of an institution are reluctant to hand the reins of power to others, because the founders feel they are best able to preserve the original vision of the institution. It is commonly observed that the founder syndrome is very much a factor in many mosques today, whether the mosque holds elections or not. In many mosques, the founding generation is still in power but growing old, and the younger generation remains outside the circle of leadership. Researchers and consultants in all faith groups bemoan the existence of the founder syndrome, because over time the founders' tenacious hold on power alienates members and inevitably leads to conflicts.[6]

Board/ec mosques have a variety of ways of electing their leaders. The majority (55%) elect both the board and the executive committee. n 19% of these mosques the board is not elected but the executive committee is elected. In this case a founding board has no term limits, and new board members are selected by the board. In 18% of the mosques with a board and executive committee, the board is elected but the executive committee is not. In this case the elected board appoints the executive committee. Another version of this same model is when some members of the board along with a few other members constitute an executive committee—the leader of the board serves also as the leader of the executive committee. In 8% of the board/ec mosques there are no elections for either body. These mosques include the un-elected founding board that appoints an executive committee or an endowment-controlled mosque where the endowment appoints the mosque board, and the board then appoints an executive committee.

Elections

Both board and executive committee elected	55%
Board not elected-executive committee elected	19%
Board elected—executive committee not elected	18%
Neither board nor executive committee elected	8%

I will argue in the section on recommendations that the best model is where the board and executive committee are both elected. Elections allow members to have a sense of involvement and empowerment, and elections provide for the possibility of change which is a natural and beneficial occurrence in any organism.

[6] See William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014).

Mosque Leadership: Who is the Leader?

The ISNA/NAIT mosque survey asked the mosque leader, who is the leader of the mosque? In most cases the question was followed by hesitation and indecision, because interviewees were not clear on who was the leader of the mosque. In the vast majority of these mosques, there were officers of the board/executive committee and there was an imam, but it had not been spelled out who should be considered the mosque leader. When respondents did hesitate, interviewers were instructed to ask: who would mosque attendees consider the leader? Inevitably a response was given. The mosque leader in over two-thirds of ISNA/NAIT mosques (67%) is the head of the executive committee whose title is usually president.[7] The imam is considered the leader in 23% of mosques, and the chair of the board is the leader in 7% of the mosques. Of the remaining mosques, 1% have a full-time, paid executive director who serves as the leader; and in 2% the caretaker is the only leader.

Who is the Masjid Leader?

Leader of the Executive Committee (president)	67%
Imam	23%
Leader of the Board (Chair)	7%
Executive Director	1%
Other: Caretaker	2%

The president of the executive committee is more likely the mosque leader when the executive committee is elected. When the executive committee is elected, over 80% of these mosques consider the president as the mosque leader. When the executive committee is not elected, only 33% of those mosques have the president as the leader.

The executive committee president is typically the leader in all sizes of mosques except the large mosque with jum'ah attendance over 501. In mosques with attendance over 501, 40% of these mosques have the president as the mosque leader, but 43% of these mosques have the imam as the leader. In all other sized mosques, approximately 80% have the president as the leader.

Leader and Attendance

	1-50	51-100	101-200	201-500	501 +
Imam	0%	13%	24%	13%	43%
President	78%	75%	76%	82%	40%
Chair of board	0%	13%	0%	5%	14%
Caretaker	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%

An explanation of this phenomena is that very large mosques have in many cases hired a highly qualified, experienced imam, and thus the imam has become over time the clear leader of the mosque. Based on interviews, it is clear that the imam was not given this role of leader—he earned it.

I will argue in my recommendations that the best arrangement for mosques is to have a qualified imam who can serve as the leader of the mosque, because the imam is the one who is out

[7] The title of the executive head of the mosque varies. Thus I use president as a generic term that describes the head of the executive entity.

front delivering the message and leading religious services, and therefore he can be the most effective leader.

Imams and Mosques

The imam in ISNA/NAIT mosques holds a fairly precarious position, which undoubtedly reflects an underlying tension between lay mosque leadership and imams. A portion of this tension stems from the lack of consensus among American Muslims on the appropriate role of the imam, which is demonstrated in the fact that many mosque constitutions do not even mention the imam. Remarkably only about half (49%) of ISNA/NAIT mosque have a full-time, paid imam. Even more remarkable is the fact that one-third of ISNA/NAIT mosques do not even have an imam. Of the remaining mosques, 9% have a part-time, paid imam, and 9% have a volunteer imam.

Employment Status of Imams in ISNA/NAIT Mosques

Full-time paid	49%
Part-time paid	9%
Volunteer	9%
No Imam	33%

The large number of ISNA/NAIT mosques that do not have an imam is not explained by their inability to hire an imam. In almost all cases the ISNA/NAIT mosques have a sufficient number of attendees (643 average jum'ah) and sufficient budget ($266,000 average budget) to hire an imam. The reluctance is best explained by the comments of many mosque leaders that they are uncomfortable about having an imam who is unfamiliar with American mosques and possibly more conservative than the congregation. Thus, it is better not to hire an imam who might be a source of conflict. This viewpoint undoubtedly stems from the fact that 90% of all imams in ISNA/NAIT mosques were born outside America, and 98% of all imams who have a formal degree were educated overseas. Compounding the problem is that overseas educational programs for imams prepare students to be Islamic scholars but do not prepare them to act as pastors or congregational leaders.

The majority of imams in ISNA/NAIT mosques (60%) have at least a BA degree or equivalent from an Islamic institution—compared to 48% of all imams in American mosques. Only 15% of imams in ISNA/NAIT mosques have no formal training, and the majority of these imams function as volunteer imams. Almost one-fourth of imams have a certificate which in most cases certifies that they have memorized the entire Qurʾān.

As might be expected, the vast majority (80%) of full-time, paid imams have a formal Islamic degree, and 85% of imams with a degree serve in larger mosques with jum'ah attendance over 201. Very small mosques tend to have volunteer imams, and small to mid-sized mosques have part-time imams.

As mentioned earlier, only 23% of ISNA/NAIT mosques indicate that their leader is the imam. To complete the picture, 44% of mosques do not consider the imam the mosque leader, and 33% of mosques do not have an imam.

Imam as Leader

Imam is the leader	23%
Imam is not the leader	44%
No imam in mosque	33%

Another way of thinking about this situation is that 67% of mosques have an imam along with a board and executive committee. Of these mosques about two-thirds of them do not consider the imam as the leader, and in about 35% of these mosques, the imam is considered the leader. Thus, even if there is an imam in an ISNA/NAIT mosque, the likelihood is that the imam is not considered the leader of the mosque. Not being considered the leader of the mosque is true for full-time paid and degreed imams. The majority (60%) of these imams are not considered the leader of the mosque.

The fact that over three-fourths of ISNA/NAIT mosques do not consider their imam as the mosque leader demonstrates the weak position of imams. It might be assumed that the imam holds a similar position as the pastor or rabbi, and is therefore viewed as the natural leader because he is the spiritual leader of the congregation, the one with the most knowledge of the religion, and the one who usually gives the weekly sermon. However, imams do not hold a similar position.

One of the possible reasons for the weak position of the imam in ISNA/NAIT mosques is the same reason for the large number of mosques that have no imam: the sense that imams from overseas are not prepared or qualified to be leaders in an American mosque. There is some logic in this argument. The reasonableness of this point of view is confirmed by the fact that imams who are the leaders of American mosques have been on the job more years than imams who are not leaders. Through experience, they have learned the culture and the demands of the job, and thus have earned the position of leader.

Leader and years on the job

	0-3 years	4-8 years	9-13 years	14 +
Imam is leader	14%	24%	64%	55%
Imam is not leader	86%	76%	36%	45%

However, another possible reason for the weak position of imams, based on interviews with ISNA/NAIT mosque leaders, is that boards and executive committees are fearful of giving up power to imams. If the imam gains a prominent position of leadership, they are fearful that the imam will misuse his power.

The 2013 survey of ISNA/NAIT mosques asked mosques that have an imam the question of whether (1) the imam is in charge of all aspects of the mosque such that the imam is the religious and executive leader—this is the strong imam model, or (2) the functions of the mosque are split such that the executive committee runs the administrative aspects, and the imam manages the religious and educational aspects—this is the shared model of leadership; or (3) the executive committee or board dominates all aspects, and the imam has a limited role of simply leading prayers and conducting some classes—this is the strong executive committee model. The results show that close to two-thirds of ISNA/NAIT mosques (63%) prefer the shared model. Only 4% have the strong imam model, and 33% have the strong executive committee model.

The shared model divides the functions of the mosque between religious and educational matters which are under the imam, and then all other functions of the mosque are under the executive head. Usually the imam has full authority over religious affairs, and the executive committee has full authority over the other aspects of the mosque. This division is the reason why most mosque leaders were perplexed as to question of who is the leader of the mosque—there are two leaders.

The imam's authority over religious and educational matters means that the imam controls prayers, sermons, the giving of Islamic legal opinions, and adult education classes (usually children classes are controlled by the executive committee). The executive committee has authority over all other aspects which includes the bulk of what the mosque does: events, programs, committee activities, facility maintenance, etc. The stated rationale is typically that this arrangement allows the imam to be a religious scholar without the bother of being concerned with the day-to-day operations of the mosque. Typically each—especially the imam—guard their territory vigorously.

Imams, however, have the disadvantage in terms of authority because the final decision-maker in the mosque is either the executive committee (41% of ISNA/NAIT mosques) or the board of trustees (51% of mosques). Thus imams in these mosques typically think of themselves as junior partners in the power-sharing arrangement, and the leaders of the executive committee and board think of themselves as the ultimate authority.

The shared model is associated with the degreed, full-time paid imam: 83% of imams in the shared model arrangement have a formal degree, and 89% of them are full-time, paid. Undoubtedly the authority given to the imam in the shared model is due to the prestige of the formal degree, and thus the reward of the degree is that the imam is given some authority in the mosque.

However, the imam in the shared model is not always considered the leader of the mosque. In fact imams in the shared model are virtually divided between those imams who are considered the leader (52%) and those who are not considered the leader (48%). Where the imam is not considered the leader, the mosque leader is almost in all cases the president. As per the discussion about who is considered the mosque leader, the imam's degree and full-time, paid position does not influence whether the imam is considered the leader. The best predictor is the imam's length of time at the mosque. In the shared model, the longer the imam has been on the job, the greater likelihood that he will be considered the leader. Imams in the shared model who have not been on the job long, are less likely to be considered the leader. The formal degree gets the imam some authority in the ISNA/NAIT mosque, but it does not raise the imam to the status of the mosque's leader. To be considered the leader, the imam must apparently earn the position by years of experience which demonstrates to attendees and mosque officers that he has acculturated and is capable of handling the role of an imam in an American mosque.

Only a handful of ISNA/NAIT mosques (4%) have the strong imam model where the imam is both the executive and religious leader. In all these mosques the imam does not have a formal degree and in most cases is not even full-time, paid. This pattern is more typical of African American mosques where the imam is the executive head and usually has no formal Islamic degree.[8] The strong imam model is also typical of the few immigrant mosques which have been established by an imam who runs the mosque as his own. In all of these cases, the mosque was founded when the imam broke away from another mosque.

[8] Ihsan Bagby, *The American Mosque 2011: Report 2 from the US Mosque Study 2011* (Plainfield, IN: Islamic Society of North America, 2012), p. 16.

The strong board model represents those mosques where the imam has little to no authority and the executive committee runs everything. More typically, the imam in this model does not have a degree: 55% of imams in the strong board model have a certificate and 18% have no training as compared to 27% who have a formal degree.

Recommendations

1. *Mosques with jum'ah attendance over 50 and under 1000 should have a board of trustees and an executive committee, but the functions of each must be distinct.*

A board of trustees and an executive committee are needed because both have essential jobs in contributing to the well-being of the mosque. The board is needed to oversee and set direction for the executive officers, while the executive committee is needed to manage the actual day-to-day work of the mosque. The complementary yet distinct roles of oversight and management are best realized in separate bodies—a board and an executive committee.

The well-established organizational model for non-profits is to have a board that fulfills the following functions:[9]

- Set direction by defining the vision, mission and goals through a continuing process of strategic planning.
- Oversee the management of the mosque by evaluating and monitoring the performance of executives to keep the mosque progressing towards its mission and goals, to hold accountable mosque leaders and to ensure the financial viability of the mosque.
- Support fundraising and ensuring financial stability
- Approve a budget and ensure financial accountability

The challenge is that many ISNA/NAIT mosques do not have a board of trustees, and in those that do have one, often those boards do not carry out the proper functions of a board.

Approximately 39% of all ISNA/NAIT mosques have only one governing body, usually called the executive committee. While it is perfectly logical for a very small mosque to have only one governing board, because there are not enough people to fill all positions, most ISNA/NAIT are not small. Among the ISNA/NAIT mosques that have only one governing body, 85% have an average jum'ah attendance over 50, and 45% have attendance over 200. My suggested thumb rule is that any mosque that has a jum'ah attendance over 50 people should have two bodies: a board of trustees and an executive committee.

Jum'ah Attendance and Organizational Structure

	Ec only	Board and ec
1-50	15.0%	2%
51-100	12.5%	5%
101-200	27.5%	15%
201-500	32.5%	37%
501 +	12.5%	42%

[9] David O. Renz, "Leadership, Governance, and the Work of the Board," in *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, Third Edition, ed. David O. Renz and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), pp.130-134.

The model of having only one governing body—an executive committee—means that the executive committee should do the job of a board and executive committee. However, the executive committee inevitably will fail in fulfilling the functions of a board. The executive committee cannot properly provide oversight over itself, and it is invariably too busy with the everyday grind of running the mosque to conduct strategic planning and to keep their eyes on the big picture of vision and mission.

The second challenge is that most mosque boards do not serve the functions of oversight and direction-setting. Some boards were formed to hold the deed and that is all they do. Some boards are founder boards, and as such they were formed to ensure that the mosque does not stray from the original vision of the founders. Some boards simply do not understand their role, and often try to micro-manage and interfere in the work of the Imam and executive officers.

The proper function of the executive committee is to focus on the management of the mosque. The executive committee should be led by a president who serves as the executive leader of the mosque. The executive committee must be given full responsibility and authority by the board to manage the mosque based on the mission and goals set by the board.

The roles of each body must be kept distinct such that the board does not micro-manage or interfere with the executive committee; and the executive committee does not overstep the board in setting direction.

The very small mosque needs only one body to be both board and executive committee; and the mega-mosque with over 6 full-time employees does not need an executive committee because the staff manages day-to-day activities.

2. Boards and executive officers should be elected

Elections in mosques exemplify the quote, "democracy is the worse form of government except for all the others." Elections can be a headache, but they are the best way to involve the community in decision making (*shura*), and the best way to protect a mosque from being dominated by a clique.

The safest and wisest course is to elect both board members and executive officers. It is good news that 55% of ISNA/NAIT mosques hold elections for both the board and the executive committee. Of course, the terms of each should differ. The board's job of oversight and direction-setting requires a longer term, and the executive committee and its officers require a shorter term to ensure that change can be made if things go badly.

Although board terms should be lengthy to provide stability, their terms should not be perpetual, because change is natural and necessary. Many mosques, where the board is not elected, have founder boards which are averse to giving up power due to their fear of new members who will change the direction of the mosque. Such fears eventually lead to stagnation and the frustration of mosque attendees who feel that their voices are not being heard and that their presence does not count. A possible compromise, which certain mosques have adopted, is to split the board between permanent members and elected members, with the elected members of the board always being the majority.

In the absence of a full staff, executive officers and the executive committee must bear the full responsibility of managing the mosque. Executive officers must be empowered to lead and must be perceived as leaders. The best way to do this is to have mosque members vote them into power.

If the executive officers, especially the president, are appointed by the board, then the board is empowered. Typically, when executives are appointed by the board, the view is that real power lies with the board, and as a result executives are not viewed as having full authority. While boards do have the final authority, a non-profit works best when the executives have been assigned full authority to manage the institution. All eyes, therefore, should be on the executives. The board is in the background ensuring that the institution is fulfilling its mission and goals. To better ensure that all eyes are on the executives, they should be elected by the members of the mosque.

3. *The shared model of management is the most appropriate model, but ideally the imam should be considered the leader of the mosque.*

In the shared mosque model, the management of the mosque is divided between the imam and the president—the imam manages religious affairs and the president manages all other aspects of the mosque. Within this model, I recommend that the imam be considered the leader of the mosque.

The imam is the one who leads the prayer, delivers the khutbahs, performs the marriages, leads the funeral prayers, and provides Islamic guidance. The imam is thus the primary face of the mosque. To best utilize that role as the face of the mosque, the imam should be viewed as the leader. This does not mean that the imam sets the vision, mission and goals of the mosque—that is the function of the board in collaboration with the imam and other stake holders. The job of the imam, instead, is to convey the vision, mission, and goals to the congregation. The imam, as the one who gives the khutbah, is the best one to convey that message. If the imam is viewed as the leader, he can do his job more effectively, because he can speak even more authoritatively in delivering the message.

The recommendation is that the authority in the mosque be split between the imam and the president, but that the imam be presented to the community as the principal leader of the mosque. This can be done by making clear to the congregation that the imam is the religious leader of the mosque, and the president is the administrative leader, but the imam as the religious leader is the prime leader of the mosque. Structurally the imam's position, as the principle leader, can be enhanced by having the imam, president, and other important leaders meet to coordinate activities and discuss direction with the imam as chair of this coordinating group.

Recognizing that imams who were raised and educated abroad are not prepared to serve as the leader of an American mosque, my recommendation for the present situation is to groom imams from overseas so that they can be leaders. Mosques must require imams to seek educational opportunities to learn about America and American Muslims, and imams must seek training courses to learn the duties of an American imam such as counselling and leadership. Actually, the urgent task of providing supplemental education programs for newly arrived imams is a national issue that requires the joint efforts of mosques and other Muslim organizations.

4. *Recommended organizational model for the various sizes of mosques.*

Small mosques under 50 jum'ah attendance

Small mosques which have 50 or less attendance, typically have only one governing body—an executive committee—and this seems appropriate due to the scarcity of people to fill positions. Without a qualified imam, it is best for the mosque to elect a leader of the executive committee (president) and delegate a volunteer imam to the duties of leading prayer. However, if a small mosque finds the wherewithal to purchase or build a mosque, or hire a full-time imam, then a board

should be created to safeguard the property and to take on the duties of direction-setting and oversight.

The mid-sized to large mosque

Mid-sized to large mosques, which have a jum'ah attendance of 51-500 and have a staff of one full-time paid imam should have a board of trustees and an executive committee, consisting of elected executive officers including a president. At this point in the history of the American Muslim community, I recommend that the management of the mosque be split between the imam who controls religious affairs and the president who controls all other aspects. To coordinate between the imam and president, the two along with other key personnel should meet regularly to coordinate and plan activities. The disadvantage of dividing authority in this manner is that it can easily lead to guarded silos and separate agendas instead of a unified managerial structure for implementing the vision, mission and goals of the mosque.

Mega-Mosques

Mega-mosques, which have an average jum'ah attendance of 1000 or more, typically have at least five paid staff positions, including an imam and an executive director. For the mosque with sufficient staff there is no need for an executive committee and president. The staff takes the place of executive committee and the executive director takes the place of the president. If the executive committee continues to exist alongside the staff, the executive committee gets in the way of the staff and causes conflicts of authority. The executive committee thinks it has authority, but as volunteers, it cannot keep up with the full-time staff, and inevitably the staff feels disrespected and slowed down. When the staff can handle the management of the mosque, the need for an executive committee ceases to exist. Of course, there will always be a need for volunteer committees who will work under the staff.

5. With more American-trained imams, mosques should move toward an imam-centered mosque.

The bifurcation of authority between the imam and a president is the best solution for the moment but it is not an ideal situation. When the imam and president function separately and each reports directly to the board, a unified managerial structure is difficult, and the opportunities for conflict and tension are multiplied. Thus, it is better if the imam is both the religious and administrative leader.[10]

This does not mean that the imam should become entangled in all the minute details of administrating the mosque. An executive director should be appointed to handle those details. The imam should not do the job of the executive director, but the executive director should report to the imam. The imam should remain primarily the Islamic scholar, preacher and counsellor, but a unified managerial structure is best served by one person who is the leader of the staff. The person best fitted to be the head is the imam because when he sits on the minbar (which is like a throne) he speaks with the moral authority of Islam, and he is thus better able to convey the vision of the mosque, to promote programs, and to mobilize attendees to become involved.

While the imam is not first a manager, he must learn enough managerial skills to supervise the staff. The imam becomes like a CEO who is not involved in the day-to-day workings of the

[10] See Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership Second Edition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.

organization but focuses on messaging and supervising to ensure that all parts of the organization are working towards a common vision, mission and goals.

Conclusion

Today, mosques in America have numerous indicators of health and vitality. However, because American mosques are still relatively young and still in their formative stage of development, mosque organizational structures are largely on shaky grounds. There is much to improve in terms of distinguishing the roles of the mosque board and executive committee, projecting mosque leadership, and effectively using the full-time imam. It is my hope that the recommendations in this paper will contribute towards beginning a dialogue between researchers and mosque leaders of how American mosques can be strengthened.

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Book Review of *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* by Kambiz GhaneaBassiri

Review by Sabith Khan
California Lutheran University

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's *A History of Islam in America* is perhaps the most comprehensive take on the history of Islam in America. What makes this book unique is that it is the first of its kind to offer a *relational* understanding of how Muslims in America developed their religious practices and institutions. While much of prior scholarship has focused on analyzing 'Muslims in the West' and viewing them as outsiders in a new land, GhaneaBassiri situates how this evolution occurred, using the prevalent categories in American society: race, ethnicity, and religion to frame the discourse of Islam in America.

In the eight chapters that form the book, GhaneaBassiri offers a detailed and chronological perspective of Muslim life, institutions, and beliefs. While acknowledging Muslim self-representation as witnessed in popular culture, GhaneaBassiri offers a more scholarly and analytical perspective that goes beyond the first-impressions and anecdotal perspective often portrayed. He argues that focusing primarily on self-representation often leads to a situation where 'Islam and America [are] reified, mutually exclusive categories.'[1] Furthermore, he suggests that focusing only on American Muslim voices devalues Protestant, Jewish, and other voices that have helped shape the phenomenon of Islam in America. The organizing principle of this book is that American Muslim history is a history of Muslim and non-Muslim American encounters and exchanges. These encounters highlight how Islam and the "West," far from being mutually exclusive categories, are lived traditions that have been varyingly thought and re-thought in relation to one another and to their respective historical contexts.

Given the enormous diversity found within the American Muslim population, no single narrative can capture the varying experiences of American Muslims. As GhaneaBassiri writes, "Muslims who found themselves in this country whether as slaves, immigrants, or converts have had to define themselves and to interpret their varying religious undertakings and practices in relation to the dominant laws, conceptions of religion, and political and cultural structures that have shaped American society through the years."[2]

In Chapter 1, GhaneaBassiri argues that Native Americans, Moors, and Black African slaves played an important role in shaping this part of the world, and they did so not just as involuntary laborers or conquered peoples but also as independent actors, working within their means to survive in a rapidly globalizing world. They in some ways defined the confluences of forces that shaped American Islam.

In chapter 2, he points out that nearly all sources for early history of Islam in America came from white, American protestants who knew little about Islam or by Muslim converts to Christianity who were writing for a European or American Protestant audience. With one notable exception, none of these sources expressed interest in the practice of Islam in colonial or antebellum America.

[1] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America,* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 7.

[2] Ibid, p.3.

Also in this chapter, GhaneaBassiri maps the evolution of Muslim practices, including *sadaqa*, *salat* and other key elements of Muslim faith that have survived to this day. GhaneaBassiri remarks that the local acts of worship that American Muslims performed, knowing fully well that others around the world were performing these acts, connected them to the global *Ummah*.

In Chapter 3, GhaneaBassiri talks about the challenges, such as racism, that foreign-born Muslims faced in the U.S. Even the Anglo-American convert, Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb, faced challenges propagating "his message to the predominantly Protestant masses."[3] As someone who studies Muslim institutions, I found chapter 2 and the chapter 3 particularly interesting.

The following chapter builds on this theme to show how Muslims in America overcame challenges to immigration. GhaneaBassiri suggests that in the early 20th century, ethnicity played a greater role than Islam "in shaping their sense of national belonging and their representation of themselves on the national stage."[4] In Chapter 5, GhaneaBassiri argues that the sojourner mentality of earlier Muslims – often from the Levant or Africa, who came here to earn money and eventually return to their origin countries – gradually changed into a 'settler' mentality. This was a significant shift, he argues, given that it marked a turning point in how Muslims would come to see themselves in their new home country.

Chapters 6 through 8 cover the more recent history of how Muslim institutions have adapted to the post-colonial world. In Chapter 6, GhaneaBassiri maps out the evolution of Muslim institutions post-World War II, a period of rapid growth and expansion of American influence. Also, in 1965, with the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act, there was increased migration from Asia and Africa. This led to the demographic composition of the country we see today. Muslims in the U.S. were also beginning to define themselves in the context of global movements, such as the tensions with Israel and Iran. Furthermore, the Civil Rights movement and the new immigration laws led to a greater recognition of distinct contributions to American society. This was also the era in which we see the emergence of "identity politics," such as the Nation of Islam's message of self-sufficiency that was seen as contributing to the community building processes.

As pointed out earlier, *A History of Islam in America* is a must read for anyone seeking a fuller understanding of the gradual evolution of Muslim communities and individual consciousness in the U.S. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri suggests that the polysemy of Islam in America needs further research and investigation. The primary sources he offers, however, and the rich archival work he brings to bear to address the central question in the book, i.e, how do we understand the presence and history of Muslims in the US, offers a comprehensive and nuanced view. I would recommend this book to all students and scholars of Islam (and religion in general) in America.

[3] Ibid., p. 134

[4] Ibid., p. 64

Conference Report: National Shura and In-service Training for Chaplains and Imams and Other Service Providers to the Muslim Community

Bonita R. McGee

On March 25, 2017, the 7th Annual National Shura & In-Service Training for Chaplains, Imams & Other Service Providers to the Muslim Community was held at Yale University in New Haven, CT. Approximately seventy-five Imams, chaplains, community advocates and allies attended the conference, organized annually by the Association of Muslim Chaplains (AMC), Muslim Endorsement Council of Connecticut (MECC) and the Islamic Seminary Foundation (ISF). These organizations provide a platform for learning and dialogue to achieve the following goals: 1) to provide practical, interactive in-service training for Imams, Chaplains and other service providers to the Muslim community; 2) to get feedback from interested stakeholders regarding curriculum development for the effective education and training of Chaplains, Imams and other service providers to the Muslim community; 3) to convene the annual meeting of the AMC; 4) to convene the annual meeting and training for endorsees of the Muslim Endorsement Council of Connecticut; and 5) to provide informational updates on MECC and Muslim American Islamic seminary development.

This year's theme "Service to Humanity 2.0: Best Practices" featured a range of authors, academics, advocates, allies, chaplains and Imams, who gathered to share best practices, dialogue around current and emerging issues and trends in chaplaincy and the Muslim community, and provide feedback and shura on the continued development of the Islamic Seminary of America.

The day started with welcome remarks from representatives of the hosting organizations, President Imam Dr. Salahuddin Muhammad of AMC, board member Imam Kashif Abdul Karim of MECC, and Dr. James Jones, President of ISF, as well as remarks from Yale Divinity School Dean Nicholas Lewis, Connecticut State Senator Gary D. Winfield, Chaplain Sharon Kugler, Chief of Chaplains Heidi Kuglerof the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, Rev. Dr. Amy Greene of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, and Naeem Muhammad of Islamic Relief USA.

The day transitioned to parallel sessions with three tracks, each offering an author highlight, panels that explored the conference theme, and best practices in the field. The authors highlighted included Dr. Zainab Alwani and Dr. Ihsan Bagby[1]. Imam Dr. Muhammad Hatim presented his paper "Caregiving to Muslims: A Guide for Chaplains, Counselors, Healthcare and Social Workers." Finally, Dr. Meraj Mohiuddin presented on his book, "Revelation: A Story of Muhammad (pbuh)."

The closing plenary session featured Dr. Rami Nashashibi of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) and Dr. James Jones as the keynote speakers. Dr. Jones's address, titled "Black Lives Matter Because All Lives Matter," touched on the legacy of racism in America and the current Black Lives Matter movement. The essential point he made is that many people who criticize the Black Lives Matter movement do not understand the history of Black Americans and that there was a time in our nation's history when Black lives really did not matter. In closing, Dr. Jones offered the proposition of a new movement: Be Like Muhammad (BLM). This would include building shurah-based multi-cultural, gender-inclusive communities and organizations; leading toward the good to

[1] Dr. Alwani's and Dr. Bagby's papers are published in this issue.

regain the moral high ground; become civically engaged, and make social justice and human services as core values of our communal practice of Islam. Dr. Nashashibi expanded on this topic, relating the history of Islam in America and ended with a call to action: Hijra to the Hood. He called upon Muslims to reprioritize our devotion, attention and investment in inner-city neighborhoods across America. This is critical not just because so much of the history of Islam in America is rooted in many of these communities but it calls to the spirit and transformative power of Islam. As Dr. Nashashibi stated, Muslim youth in particular are in desperate need of that powerful, enduring, and transformative spirit of Islam. The engagement of this spirit is best exemplified through living examples of what Islam looks like on the ground. The Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), which organizes around issues such as criminal justice, housing, immigration reform and healthy food access, is one such example of Muslims working together to manifest that transformative spirit of Islam.

Conference Report: Howard University School of Divinity's International Conference on the Qur'ān

Nisa Muhammad
Howard University

For the religiously diverse group of students at Howard University's School of Divinity, the Islamic Studies concentration in the Masters of Arts in Religious Studies and the Doctor of Ministry is an opportunity for an in-depth study of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Tradition. It is a study of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Tradition at a university steeped in a history and tradition of social justice - a university established to fight the oppression Black people faced at the end of slavery.

The Islamic Studies program at Howard University's School of Divinity is the first graduate theological program in the mid-Atlantic region to establish Islam as a permanent course of study. Its extensive course work and authentic hands-on methodologies foster critical thinking and place students at the forefront of current events and intriguing conversation within the Christian-Muslim community. The Islamic Studies Program at HUSD is under the direction of its founder, Associate Professor Dr. Zainab Alwani whose specialty is jurisprudence, Qur'ānic Studies, gender equity, women's religious scholarship, and Islamic family law. She is an advocate for the role of Muslim women as religious scholars. Dr. Alwani holds the distinction of being the first female jurist to serve on the board of the Fiqh Council of North America, an association of Muslims who interpret Islamic law in North America. She has authored and co-authored a wide variety of publications ranging from textbooks, book chapters, to scholarly articles. She is currently working on a book about Muslim female scholars and their critical role in socioeconomic, cultural, and political reform.

Highlights of the Islamic Studies program include a two-day international conference on the Qur'ān in 2013 and 2015 that brought together academics, community leaders, and students. It focused on contemporary Qur'ānic scholarship and was a collaboration between the Howard University Divinity School, George Mason University, Georgetown University, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought. Papers were presented from students and researchers from a range of universities including Duke University and Harvard Divinity School. The conference focused on the Qur'ān in dialogue with Jews and Christians, between faith and critical thinking, Qur'ānic ethics, gender in the Qur'ān, intertextual readings, and a thematic and stylistic analysis of the Qur'ān.

The Islamic Studies program also hosts a yearly Christian-Muslim Dialogue that brings students and the community together to talk about religious and social issues of the day. The 2017 Dialogues was centered around the following questions: How does your devotion to God impact your everyday life? What is the value of another faith? How do we create a beloved community between Muslims and Christians?

On September 29 and 30, 2017, the School of Divinity partnered with the Office of the Dean of the Chapel, under the direction of Dr. Bernard Richardson, for the debut conference, "Islam and the BlackAmerican: From African Roots to American Fruit." The conference was a university wide project which featured collaborations between the School of Divinity and the Office of the Dean of the Chapel, the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Assessment, the Department of African Studies, the School of Education, and the College of Arts and Sciences.

The conference featured an opening plenary session led by Imam Zaid Shakir, co-founder of Zaytuna College. Imam Zaid, along with Dr. Hakim Rashid of Howard University's School of

Education and Dr. Bahiyyah Muhammad of Howard University's Department of Sociology served as respondents for the papers presented on the first day of the conference. Dr. Sherman Jackson, King Faisal Chair in Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, delivered the luncheon keynote address on the second day of the conference. Dr. Jackson and Imam Zaid Shakir served as the second day's respondents.

A review board selected 13 proposals from students and researchers from universities including Howard, Duke, Ohio State, Harvard Divinity School, the Graduate Theological Foundation, and Northeastern Law School. Paper titles included: "Re-Visioning the Afro Arab" by Nubia Kai, Ph.D., Howard University; "Egyptian Musk and Bean Pies: A History of Black Muslim Political Economies in New York City," Rasul Miller, Ph.D. candidate, University of Pennsylvania; "Embodied Ideology: The Nation of Islam and Constructed Womanhood," Parmida Mostafavi, Duke University; Northeastern Law student Hakeem Muhammad, Northeastern Law School, "The Islam of Black Revolutionaries: Confronting the Prison Industrial System."; "Islam and the BlackAmerican Woman: Invisibility from the Root to the Fruit," Maryam Sharrieff, Harvard Divinity School; and "The Making of American Islam and the Emergence of Western Islamic Intellectual Thought to Prevent Violent Extremism: A Case Study of American Muslim Revivalist, Imam W. D. Mohammed (1933-2008)," Muhammad Fraser-Rahim, Howard University, Ph.D. candidate.

Plans are currently underway for next year's conference, scheduled for September 28-29, 2018.

A Special Tribute to Taha Jabir Al-Alwani

A man of his time and a pioneer of Islamic and Qurʾānic thought, the American Muslim scholar Dr. Taha Jabir Al-Alwani lived his life serving humanity. He dreamt of a peaceful world where people lived together as one, undivided by the vile forces of conflict, greed, hate, bigotry, ignorance, and selfishness. Before departing this world on March 4, 2016, he wrote the piece "I Am Muslim." It is essentially a mission statement for Muslims around the world — a message to uphold the true, untainted values of Islam. In this inaugural issue, we would like to share with you his final written words that truly embody the mission of the *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*:

> I sanctify justice, celebrate freedom, and honor humanity. While demonstrating gentleness with the weak, I remind the strong that there is always someone who is stronger than him. I advise the rich to fulfill the rights of the poor, while I remind the poor that the rich among them have been entrusted with God's wealth to fulfill the rights of the poor.
>
> I love goodness and gentleness and reject evil. I invite to piety and reject violence. I cling to the rope of guidance and uphold the truth.
>
> I fight lies and deceit and forbid corruption. I seek reconciliation to the extent possible. I yearn for peace and despise war. I love humility and strive for a good life.
>
> I stand in awe of death, yet I believe that this is a bridge I must cross, to cross from a fleeting life to one that is eternal. I desire the best ending and seek refuge in God from the contrary. I love heaven and detest hellfire. I seek security and hate instability. I abhor hatred. I am not profane, destructive or corrupt.
>
> My lineage extends to Adam and Eve, for Adam is my father and Eve my mother. All of humanity are my sisters and brothers. I do not disdain, betray or humiliate a single human being. Rather, I strive to guide human beings, light their path and walk with them along the path to heaven. I seek to be a roadblock between them and falling into hellfire.
>
> I love the universe and belong to it. I love all my neighbors in the universe, including its trees, plants, rocks, animals, mountains and rivers. God, most Majestic, has created me from this earth. To this earth, He will return me to it and from this earth, He will restore me once again. To this earth, I belong and for its cultivation, I call.
>
> My desire is to elevate the truth; my goal is to spread peace and security in it. My means is to struggle with my own soul in order for peace to be

realized and security to prevail. I invite to God, to Whom is my ultimate return.

Peace is my objective. Security is my desire. Terrorism is my enemy. Conflict is my adversary. Inner peace is my pursuit.

Do you recognize me? Do you know on this earth anyone who parallels this description?

I am Muslim.

By Taha Jabir Al-Alwani

Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice
Call for Papers: Islamic Ethics in the American Context

The *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* is an annual double-blind peer-reviewed online academic and interdisciplinary journal published by Indiana University and sponsored by the Islamic Seminary Foundation. The *Journal* invites colleagues to submit articles for publication that combine intellectual rigor with community engagement. The *Journal* aims to provide a platform for scholars, students, and researchers to exchange their latest findings from different areas and fields. One of the key aims of the *Journal* is to foster dialogue between academics, researchers, community leaders, and students regarding Islamic faith and how it is practiced in America. To this end, successful proposals will reflect theoretical and methodological sophistication and engagement with existing scholarship, while also being accessible to non-specialists.

This second edition of the *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* will discuss and analyze **Islamic Ethics in the American Context.** The aim of this volume is to synthesize and advance both theoretical and empirical research about Islamic ethics within various disciplines including education, sociology, political science, healthcare, psychology, bioethics, ecology, social service, the arts and other relevant areas. Colleagues interested in publishing the proceedings of a conference and book reviews are also welcomed.

The *Journal* is a refereed periodical that is published once a year in March. The timeline for peer review and publication is in the range of 5-6 months.

This second edition, in focusing on Islamic Ethics in the American Context include the following**:**

- Theoretical papers: How do we examine and analyze the American Muslim ethical contributions in terms of the development of methodologies in approaching the Qurʾān, Sunna and Islamic traditions?
- Historical studies: How do we read and examine historical events, persons, and organizations that have an effect on Muslim communities' ethical worldview in America and beyond?
- American Islamic praxis papers: How do we examine the new practices, traditions and cultures that are developing within the American Muslim community as they relate to Islamic ethics?
- Case studies, qualitative interviews, and oral histories of key people or organizations: How do we examine and evaluate the conduct of American Muslims' religious leadership including the role of scholars, imams, chaplains' contributions with respect to responding to internal and external challenges?

Possible Topics

Papers should focus on how Islamic ethics relates to key contemporary issues facing Muslims, such as the areas listed below. We are also open to other topics that fit within the primary theme of this volume.

- Islamic Ethics and Familial Relations
- Islamic Ethics in the Workplace
- Islamic Ethics and Issues Related to Economics, Business, Banking, and Financial Investment
- Islamic Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Islamic Ethics: Gender and Sexuality
- Islamic Ethics and the Environment
- Islamic Ethics and the Law
- Islamic Ethics and Human Rights
- Islamic Ethics and Politics
- Medical and Bio Ethics from an Islamic Perspective

Guidelines for Authors

***The Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* Invites:**

- Social sciences and humanities-based research papers reflecting on all aspects related to Islamic faith and its practice in America.
- Abstracts of dissertations, thesis, and research findings related to the American Muslim community of 700-1000 words.
- Shorter reflection pieces of 2,000-3,000 words by activists, imams, chaplains.

Assembly of the Manuscript: Standard research papers should be 7,000-10,000 words in length or longer if approved by the editor. The article should be in Microsoft Word format. All submissions must conform to the *Journal* guidelines: original, unpublished research; double-spaced and single-sided; and conform to the Chicago Style. A manuscript contains many parts: Title of the paper with an abstract and 3-5 keywords, text of the paper, references, footnotes, tables, figures, and appendices. Not all papers have all elements. However, if they do, this is the order in which they should be arranged.

Submission of Manuscript:

- Send a brief note of intent to contribute noting the type, scope, and focus of what you wish to be included in the *Journal* by April 30, 2018. You will receive a note of acceptance / non-acceptance by the end of May.
- Send the completed paper by September 15, 2018 as an attachment, along with a 250-word abstract and a short bio
- Decision Date: May 30, 2018
- Submission Deadline: September 15, 2018
- Publication Date: March 2019

Submissions are accepted via e-mail: journal@islamicseminary.org

The successful proposals will be invited to present their papers to the *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice* track at the Islamic Seminary Foundation's annual Shura at Yale University in March 2019.

Subscription Information
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