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American Jewish Committee Interreligious Affairs Commission

meeting. undated

Stephen Humphreys:

-- not in a single (inaudible) of town. And this is a great problem to us, because we [run a neat?] package, which tell us what he did and said, and what we would like to have authenticated with a sealed document, and certified letters, and so on and so forth. We don't have that. What we have instead is literally tens of thousands of stories and anecdotes and sayings, which are collectively called *hadith*. *Hadith* is just a word meaning a narrative or an anecdote. And these *hadith*, all together, all tens of thousands of them, constitute the record that the Prophet said that. That's the way you know what the Prophet actually did and taught. Now, the *hadith* create a problem, not only for Muslims, but for those of us who are not Muslims, and who are trying to achieve (inaudible) historical reconstruction of what Mohammed and his immediate companions did and said, [00:01:00] because it is evident that many -- and it's probably, in fact, the vast majority -- of these *hadiths* are spurious. And that they are spurious, or at least highly suspect, is widely admitted, and has been widely admitted since the beginning not only among Orientalists -- people like me --

but among educated Muslims also. Yet somehow, I've come to the conclusion that there is, in the midst of the enormous mass of disparate material, an elusive [authentic?] core. I don't really know how one gets at this core or identifies it precisely, but it's there. You can -- you get an intuition for it eventually, I think. And it is certainly clear that very few Muslims, however critical, however skeptical they may be, feel able to dispense with these records of Muhammad's life and teaching altogether. So the *hadiths*, the elective record of the Prophet's life, are a second [00:02:00] vital aspect to a [Muslim experience?].

In a sense, they give a human dimension (inaudible), although it's, for the most part, clear, certainly is not -- it doesn't have a human [tone?] to it. It's very [locked?] and it's very severe. The Prophet and the Muslim view of him, and the Muslim construction of him, is one of the most human of people [a man?] can say. He's a man with a sense of humor, he's a man with lots of foibles and petty faults; only petty ones, however. He's a man with a [vast?] sense of humor, great warmth and sympathy, a man who's [bound?] to deal with people in every walk of life. And for traditional Muslims too, many hundreds of thousands of these stories about the Prophet [somewhat?] reasonably reliable, and some of them are not, become a part of the ordinary religious [requirements?] that they carry around with them. And

for a great many Muslims, the Prophet's life as they know it through these anecdotes, [00:03:00] is perhaps a core center of their religious experience and awareness. [Those are not?] where they feel very close to the Prophet, and in some sense then, feel that they have a grip on (inaudible) which otherwise they couldn't have. It would otherwise be too severe, too disciplined, too abstract.

A third question, the last one I really wish to address this afternoon, is [will be this?]. [To what mode of life?] in God's will for man be most adequately realized? Christianity, I think, here is the odd man out. Christianity looks to the individual believer and to his personal relationship with God. Many ways of life can be appropriate in Christianity, because, simply, all are, in the final analysis, utterly irrelevant. When Paul in his Epistle to the Romans says that the law can be [00:04:00] done away with, he's basically saying that there are many ways of life which one can lead. And the problem is that all of them are likely to be entangling, all of them misleading. And all of them, in a sense, are as irrelevant as any other. As a result, I think, of this [very strongly?] individualistic bias in Christianity, I think one of the results of this is the high value that we see in Catholic Christianity, at least, on [monasticism?], on a religious vocation, withdrawal from the

world. Islam, like, Judaism, looks to life in society. The community of believers, [in a sum?], is sanctified as such. The community has religious value. And one cannot realize all of God's demands properly unless he lives as a fully participating and active member of a believing community.

This kind of value is [00:05:00] inculcated in many, many ways. One theory is of anecdotes, of teaching to the prophet among many others that might serve to illustrate the point, is the series that concerns the value of prayer. And there are a whole series of *hadiths* which say that prayer in a congregation is worth 10, or 40, or 10,000, or 40,000 times as much as prayer in isolation, [prayer of?] an individual. Tremendous degree of stress and emphasis is put upon the community. And from the very beginning [to this?] (inaudible), one of the strongest, most deeply-felt parts of Islamic belief and practice is that the community of such [is safe within the?] unity of the community must be safeguarded. But the integrity of the community must be protected. And that one of the worst things that one can do is to provoke (inaudible) [00:06:00] in a way is worse than (inaudible). [The citizen?] has severe consequences for the integrity and vitality of the community.

Now in the case of Islam, I think we can see quite precise historical reasons for this stress on the community. And in fact, present these to you, I'll give you a very rough [pass over?] biography of Muhammad. Muhammad began his preaching sometime around 610 in the West Arabian commercial (inaudible) of Mecca. So far as we can reconstruct his message from early passages in the Quran, and from very limited biographical data, we can see that he did not regard himself as sent from [a new cult?] or a new religion. Rather, he regarded his mission as that of reforming the life of his fellow citizens and tribesmen of Mecca. Mecca, I should say, [00:07:00] was a city -- a city, a town, a big village, a settlement, populated overwhelmingly by members of a single tribe. And Muhammad was a member of an honorable clan within this tribe, honorable but poverty-stricken, whichever persons [that would do?] circumstances there, common of all ages, I think.

His job was to reform the life of his fellow tribesmen and citizens in Mecca. He was to call them to believe that he was to do this, by calling them to believe in the one God, and by forcing them to recognize the moral obligations that such a belief, a belief in one God imposed. And his obligations [that were?] repeated [in many passages?] in the Quran are really very simple: charity for those who need, justice, kindness,

generosity. And really, nothing very strange, very outrageous about it. There wasn't anything even very outrageous [00:08:00] in a Bedouin tribal context [of the southern?] country. And in fact, the Quran's message claims that it is not a new message, it does not claim to be a new message. Quite the contrary. It stresses that it is exactly the message that has been sent to many generations before. Now, Mecca, as I've mentioned, is a commercial city, and like most mercantile communities, it had a social and political elite. The elite is the great merchants. And this [will need by itself?] for many reasons, strongly opposed, strongly resistant to Muhammad's call, found his call a threat. And then the Meccan elite resisted Muhammad's call, and use every device to oppose him, short of direct, personal violence, which they did not resort to. (inaudible) developed a little bit, it changes. And it changes from [00:09:00] a message of rather direct exhortation to repent and to follow in God's way, to a new theme, the stories about past prophets.

Apart from Muhammad -- a critical point, [a prophet from?] Muhammad is a messenger sent to a community. A [prophet from?] Muhammad is not an individual who has an experience of the divine in some way, some [intuition?] overwhelming experience, but rather a messenger, a person who is instructed by God to go to the community and preach, and call it to obedience. A prophet

brings a message. And communities that refuse to obey in the Quran are punished. They are brought to destruction in this world.

The Quran has really two levels of moral responsibility. One is an individual's responsibility. An individual is punished [00:10:00] or rewarded on the day of judgment in the final day according to his behavior in this life. And that's the level of individual repentance. But there's a second level too, which I just referred to, and this is the collective responsibility of a community when called to obey God, to heed that call. And the community which refuses to heed it [has drawn?] the punishment in this world, not the next. Because in the next, the individuals will be punished [quite adequately?]. The emphasis in these prophetic tales, although I doubt Muhammad himself was terribly aware of it in any conscious way, is on social solidarity in life in a community. We found Muhammad first preaching the context of his own community, and then when that community is resistant, he tries to set up [horrible?] examples from the (inaudible) Quran as he [00:11:00] received it, and he felt he had set some horrible examples of what had happened to pass in communities that refused to believe. And the stress is on the community as a whole, (inaudible).

Ultimately, in 622, Muhammad found that he could make no headway against Meccan resistance. And indeed, by that time, he was (inaudible) in rather immediate danger of assassination. He was able to arrange to travel, take refuge, in a new locale, that of Medina, which was an agricultural oasis about 250 miles north of Mecca. In Medina, he began his career in two functions, neither of them terribly lofty. In the first place, he was the leader of a tiny band of 70 or so refugees, not more than that. His followers in Mecca had been somewhat more numerous, but some had already taken refuge in Ethiopia. [00:12:00] As a leader of a band of refugees, he was, by Arabian custom, the protégé, [a perfective?] clan of the established Medinan clans. Not their leader on this level, but a protégé.

Secondly -- and this is a critical point -- he was an invited arbiter. He had been invited by some leading members in Medina to try to help arbitrate a bitter feud between two leading clans, which was wracking Medina. Medina, unlike Mecca, was an area which had many different tribes living in it, and the two most powerful tribes were at one another's throats. In Arabian customs, if you have a feud of this kind which could not be resolved, [the proper?] thing to do was to go find some third party, somebody not a member of either tribe, a neutral individual, who could act as an arbiter. [00:13:00] And

typically, in Arabia, you would try to go to somebody who had a reputation of being a holy man, somebody who was thought to be a soothsayer, or in communication with the deities, or something of that kind. And Muhammad happens to have been the one spotted by certain leaders of Medina, and were very impressed by his preaching in Mecca, and felt that he would be the right arbiter for them in their oasis. And it was on that basis that he was invited to come there.

Now, as an arbiter, he obviously has a much more important position than he did as the leader of a refugee band, but his position is not one of power, because he would have no way to [control obedience?]. It's simply a position of great influence in accordance with ancient Arabian custom of accepting the good offices of a mutually agreed-on arbiter. It's simply a matter of bad taste, and one doesn't do it if you've agreed to an arbitration, then to refuse [00:14:00] the solution offered by the arbiter.

In a complicated process, which is beyond any description here, and occupies several hundred of pages in any [correct?] life of Muhammad, Muhammad was able to parlay this very fragile position of leader of refugees and arbiter, which he had, and political paramountcy throughout West and Central Arabia, by the time of

his death in 632. This political paramountcy was, in effect, a platform, which his political successors in Medina were able to use as the basis for the conquest of the whole region between the Nile and the (inaudible) river in Central Asia, and this [leading half-century?]. But that, really for the moment, is not on point. Our point here is not Muhammad's political paramountcy, but what it represents in religious terms. At the core of this political construction which he arranged, it's really a rather loose network [00:15:00] of alliances created by diplomacy [by some?] conversion and preaching and so on. The core of this political construction was this community of believers in Medina. This community, which quickly grew to comprise all inhabitants of the Medinan oasis, was not a voluntary association of persons who shared a common faith and ritual. It has that element in it, but you rather must think of it as a political community. That is to say, it was a group which was organized to achieve common goals, which was able to determine its own policies, and was able to mobilize the resources of the oasis, in terms of wealth and manpower, to achieve these goals.

Islam, as it evolved in Medina, in the decade between 622 and 632, was intended to be a religion of [this world?]. As in its early Meccan, [phase?], [00:16:00] it did look, and it continued

to look to the establishment of a just society, which would be based upon mutual charity of its members, from justice [and on a?] general level of equality among believers. A slightly new element -- at least a new emphasis -- was one that stressed religion rather than kinship or tribal membership, as the basis of social cohesion and solidarity. [Recall that in?] Mecca, the question of tribal affiliation never came up, because everybody was a member of the same tribe. In Medina, when there were a dozen tribes, the question of whether kinship or religious affiliation should be paramount in one's social behavior was a very critical one. And the new (inaudible) in this period is to assert that religion is the correct social bond between believers in what [should provide?] kinship. That's a revolution in Arabian life.

Finally, [00:17:00], and an even more striking departure from the Meccan situation, is that Islam would now use political means to establish God's religion. And these political means could include even warfare, in the case of intractable opposition (inaudible).

Islam, [more?] frankly and honestly, I think, [than any other confession?], recognizes that if God's will is to be done on this Earth, one must use worldly means to achieve it. Islam, as

a result of [claims?] from its early years the need to establish an Islamic political order. Muslims are often willing to intervene in politics in order to make public life conform to Islamic norms, and they are willing to take hold of the political process to achieve an Islamic way of life. This is, quite simply, what Ayatollah Khomeini [was attempting?] to do in Iran, and [what he is?] still attempting to do. And this is what [00:18:00] groups [of the kind of the?] Muslim Brothers in Egypt and Syria claim that they are trying to do, and there are many other such groups of this kind, groups which are, very frankly, competing locally for power, so as the use of political [set system?], the political process to achieve an Islamic way of life.

Now there seems to be an anomaly here, which is not evident. Politics is perfectly legitimate and necessary for the coherence of the community of believers, and it is necessary for the establishment of a moral, sound way of life in society. Yet the established way of life is (inaudible) -- the established way of life [is not evolved?] through a political process [of decree?] and legislation. Rather, the Islamic way of life is evolved, elaborated, articulated through the study and [exploitation?] of the divine role for man. [00:19:00] The political order in this system has only the duty of enforcing and inculcating the divine

will, and this divine will is [known?] quite separately from the political process, and is studied quite separately from it. God's will is already revealed in two ways in the Quran, and in the *sunnah* of his prophet. But these sources in the (inaudible) [process?] have to be explored, elucidated, their implications have to be revealed by human reasoning. And this human effort to discover and expound God's will leads to a comprehensive moral evaluation of every aspect of human conduct. Comprehensive moral evaluation of human life in all its aspects has a name, and the name is *sharia*, which is simply "a beaten path."

[00:20:00] *Sharia* is commonly translated as "sacred law." You may commonly see this version of it. But I think that's a very misleading translation, because the *sharia* is not a legal code. It is not contained in a single book or in (inaudible) books. It is rather the whole doctrine of duties which is incumbent upon every Muslim, and this doctrine of duties has been evolved through literally centuries of discussion and writing. I think this approach will not seem at all strange or unknown in this group. I think you can grasp it immediately. Summaries of the *sharia* are the *sharia's* positive precepts abound. There are handbooks which give a resume of the upshot of scholarly [dissertation?], but no one of these (inaudible) books or digests is a final authoritative tract. [00:21:00] The *sharia*,

properly speaking, is the whole body of discussion, and contains [near?] tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of pages of legal disputation, legal opinion given on certain matters, summaries of the law by [just?] argumentation of a massive literature of many different kinds. No individual Muslim controls the whole *sharia*. It is not within anybody's control. But yet the parts of the *sharia* which are important to Muslims are really a part almost of an oral tradition, as well as sometimes explicit statement deflation. And the parts of the *sharia* which are of paramount importance to Muslims, and Muslims in more recent times, are those which concern personal status, family law, Muslims [00:22:00] most of all, and certainly the things which govern ritual, which govern the worship of God. This is quite vital, and very much a living part of the *sharia*.

Important until recent centuries was commercial code -- I should say commercial codes, the commercial chapters of the *sharia*. Those have been systematically neglected since the 19th century because of the need to use (inaudible) European-determined patterns of international commerce. And as for political thought and international law, those things have always remained a dead letter -- a voluminous dead letter, but a dead letter all the same. We can summarize, very briefly. (inaudible) the decisive, divine intervention in human life is the revelation of the

Quran. Insofar as the Quran is not self-explanatory, its moral and doctrinal significance is illustrated and explained by the conduct and teaching of Muhammad by the *sunnah* of the Prophet.

Finally, [00:23:00] because Islam regards obedience to God not merely as an individual act but as a spiritual process, Islam's scholars over the centuries have worked out comprehensive moral evaluation of human conduct, which is called *sharia*. A *sharia*, in turn, my final point, must be instituted and enforced wherever possible by a state which is committed to [protecting?] local community, and to establishing a Muslim way of life. Thank you.

Marc Tanenbaum:

Thank you. (applause) Thank you, Dr. Humphreys, for an exceedingly insightful and instructive presentation. I thought that was Islam 101, and [many?] fundamentals. I'm going to suggest that we take a moment for a break. You know, there's a Hebrew word *rahmanut*, [00:24:00] which means "God's compassion." It's not accidental that our next speaker is Rahman, and I think there's probably some relationship between the words. So for a moment of compassion, we ought to stand up and stretch, but we can then get back to Rahman (inaudible).

(pause)

Fazlur Rahman:

Well, they told [me?] --

Marc Tanenbaum:

Well, before you begin, I want to introduce you.

Fazlur Rahman:

OK, all right. You introduce me. [All right?].

Marc Tanenbaum:

You see, I've been waiting for this moment for a long time, Dr. Rahman. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) [Right?]. Formally, there is some data that I want to share about Dr. Fazlur Rahman. He is professor of [00:25:00] Islamic thought at the Middle East Center of the University of Chicago. I have taught at the University of Chicago since 1969. Prior to the assumption of this distinguished position, Dr. Rahman served as a scholar in Pakistan, which is his native country, at the Islamic Research Institute. In fact, my first exposure to him was that he, in fact, was the leading Islamic scholar of Islamic thought, philosophy, theology. And subsequent to his experience as one of the foremost thinkers in Islamic scholarship. He then came to

McGill [00:26:00] University, where he taught at the Institute for Islamic Studies there in Canada. My experience with Dr. Rahman goes back to about 1972, when I had the privilege of sharing a platform with him at Asia House in New York City. It was a very delicate and sensitive time. And people in Asia House wondered whether it was possible to have a Jew, Christian, and Muslim speak about the common themes of the Covenant of Abraham, and still come out as friends. And I must say, that Dr. Rahman's contribution at that [time?], but beyond that is personal friendship, and his great spirit as a [00:27:00] human being, made an extraordinary impact on that very large meeting at Asia House, and I had the feeling that this was a man whom I would want to come to know, and whom I would want to learn (inaudible) as one of the great teachers of our time. So for me, it's a kind of homecoming, and a great [renewal?] of a personal friendship, to be able to sit together with Dr. Rahman this afternoon. And I'm delighted to present to you Dr. Fazlur Rahman, who will speak to us on the theme of Islam as a [central?] force.

Fazlur Rahman:

Thank you very much, my friend, [if I may say?], for your very kind words. [00:28:00] And may I, ladies and gentlemen, help you very much for the honor you have done me in having invited me to speak to you on this important subject this afternoon. To little

extent, what I'm going to say, particularly at the beginning, and what my learned colleague Dr. Humphreys said, will overlap. But then I will branch of more into the social aspects of Islam.

The Prophet of Islam, as you have just learned, was born in Mecca, which was a commercial town, around 570. We know practically nothing about his life [00:29:00] before his call, except two or three things, the most important of these being that he was a man of unusual moral sensitivity. And several problems in that commercial society of Mecca led to an uneasing of his mind, and drove him to a cave periodically in the [north?] of Mecca. And so the name of that cave is *hira*, H-I-R-A. Where sometimes he took his provisions with him, and he went in that cave for weeks, contemplating and praying to God for a solution of those problems. To get a glimpse [00:30:00] of what those problems were, we have to go to the early revelations of the Quran itself. In *surah* 94, the Quran addresses him and says, "Have we not opened your heart today, and relieved you of the burden that was breaking your back?" It is clear from this, then, that there was a burden that was breaking his back, which drove him to this cave. In one of these sojourns in the cave, he felt that he was called by God to deliver a message to his people. He came out of that cave, and never went back to it. [00:31:00] He remained in the field of sight.

Now, the problems that we have to identify [in orders two?], basically. The first problem was the polytheism of the Meccans. The Meccans had a [sanctuary?] which dates from pre-Islamic times, but now is the [sanctuary?] of Islam also, the *Kaaba* at Mecca, (inaudible) small building. That was people in and around by a host of [guardings?]. We are told that many of these [guards?] in fact represented several Arab tribes. The second problem was that of -- as Dr. Humphreys has also mentioned -- the great social [00:32:00] economic disparity in this commercial town between the rich and the poor. Mecca was a cosmopolitan sort of town. There were Arabs there, there were some Persians there, there were Ethiopians there, there were some Byzantines there. It was a free-exchange market, also. But this prosperity, [commercial?] prosperity of Mecca, had a dark side to it, and it was this great disparity, exploitation of the poor, of the disenfranchised, of the slaves and so on.

And the Quran, from the very beginning, invites Meccans, number one, to give up their polytheism, and to believe, to recognize one God, the creator of the universe, the sustainer of the universe, the creator [00:33:00] and sustainer of man. And secondly, to try to remedy as much as possible, this great socioeconomic disparity that existed there. The Meccans, the

Quraysh tribe of Mecca, which was also [in charge of?] religious cult, [as we call that?], of course did not want to accept his call to monotheism, because they felt [impact?] to their religions (inaudible). And secondly, they were also unwilling to accept his call to a more egalitarian social system, socioeconomic system, because again, the merchant princes, the commercial aristocracy, had its vested interest there.

The Quran told the Meccans that if they did not learn their ways, and did not live up to this ideal, that they would be held accountable on a day, the final day of judgment, which our Dr. Humphreys has told us where every individual will be a man and woman, will be answerable for his or her actions. This portrayal after Day of Judgment is extraordinarily interesting and important in the Quran. It tells us that on the Day of Judgment, every man will be given his deed-sheets to read and to testify to. These deed sheets will be weighed. On the one side will be the bad deeds, on the other side, the good deeds. And the treatment [00:35:00] that will be meted out to men and women will depend on whether their good deeds or bad deeds outweigh each other. We are told this has been pointed out, particularly by moral scholars, that the whole idea of weighing things come from the commercial background of Mecca, which is correct. But the point here is not so much of weighing, but weighing

[beads?]. Meccans used to weigh commodities, and gold and silver. But the Quran talked about the weighing of human actions. The Quran goes to great lengths in telling us that the quality of a human act, of a deed, to judge it is [00:36:00] a very delicate matter in this life. On the day of judgment, of course, these sheets, their weight will become clear.

Further, on that day, a person's hands, feet, skin, eyes, ears, will also give evidence, and a man will not be able to deny the evidence of his own self. That is to say the inside of man will become outside. It will become apparent. The inward of man will become public on that day. The idea is that man should, in this life, adopt an attitude that he can see his own deeds just as [00:37:00] he would be able to see on the Day of Judgment. His deeds must become apparent to him in this life, their quality, their weight, and so on. The quality of mind of the inner spirit which enables man to do this is portrayed by the Quran by a key term called *taqwa* -- T-A-Q-W-A, *taqwa* -- which means a kind of an inner light, inner torch, inner spark, by which man is able to see the right from the wrong, and is able to see the quality of his deeds. What is going to happen on the Day of Judgment ought to happen now. This is the whole point here. But man is ever a prey to self-deception. This, the Quran insists upon. People are so self-righteous [00:38:00] most of the time that

every person thinks he and she are right in what they are doing. And yet, much of the time, we are victims of self-deception.

(Arabic) When it is said to them, "Please, don't so [mystical?] (inaudible)." (Arabic) They say, "We are only trying to reform."

(Arabic) Beware, they are sewing corruption [in there?].

(Arabic) But they don't understand, they are not aware. It is this veil, which his between man and himself, this veil of self-deception that the Quran is out to rend, in order that man sees himself into (inaudible). OK. [00:39:00] This is *taqwa*. This is the individual quality of the individual that a man is expected in this life to develop.

[Well now?], a little later in the Quran, as Dr. Humphreys also mentioned, another theme appears, and that is the judgment in history. The judgment on individual will be on the judgment day, but already in this world, in this world history, God passes judgments upon nations, upon collectivities. And from there onward, the Quran brings in and repeats and repeats the stories of the earlier peoples and their prophets. Those that did not heed the messages of God [00:40:00] and stubbornly and wantonly did wrong were destroyed. It is strange, the Quran repeats, that whereas peace and prosperity is a great blessing of God, [seeing the *Kaaba*?] (inaudible) [which is prosperous?], I just mentioned, it was commercial, it was also peaceful because

fighting was disallowed there already before Islam. It was a *haram*. That is to say, fighting [there?] was forbidden. So the Quran reminds the Meccans, "Look, you are enjoying peace and prosperity. Why do you [abuse?] this?" And it is because only people had abused this state of affairs that they, by their own hands, committed suicide, and lost the peace and prosperity that they had. And all the prophets, the great biblical figures appear there [00:41:00] -- Adam, of course, but from Noah onwards, particularly Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, (inaudible) biblical personalities -- but two characteristic personalities from two ancient Arabian tribes that lived in Northern Arabia and were destroyed, their ruins are still there. The Quran says [this, between Mecca, the same doom awaits?] you if you do not mend your ways.

Whenever a people, a community persists in evil ways, particularly injustice, it exposes itself to this danger. Not only that, but even good people who are passive in these communities are also destroyed. It is only the actively good people who try [00:42:00] to save their peoples and their communities from these grave errors, only they are saved. This is why Noah was saved from the flood, and were [awarded?] him. This is why Abraham was saved from fire. Moses was saved from the Pharaoh. And as a radical step, the Quran says Jesus was

saved from the Jews. The Jews wanted to take his life, but they were (inaudible). The Quran rejects the idea of the crucifixion of Jesus. And this is, in this logical sequence that (inaudible). And the idea grounds in the Quran that the truth, in the end, will be vindicated. And the Quran, despite his extremely precarious situation, tells the Prophet, time and time again, that [00:43:00] he will be vindicated in the end. Truth will out, will be out in the end.

Along with this comes the idea that, as Dr. Humphreys also has said, that all religions are basically one. Only people deviate from them, they corrupt them, they impose their own wishful thinking upon them, and are kept in their own false [constants?]. This also, again, of course, a kind of self-deception on the part of man. God, in his infinite mercy, has left no people, no nation, without a guide. This revelation of God's message is universal. It is there. Every nation, every people, has had its guide. This is, of course, also implicit in the way the [00:44:00] Quran talks about these things, the idea that religions do develop, also. Although, basically the religion in [millennium?] B.C. is the same religion as Islam. This is the primordial religion of mankind. Nevertheless, its formulations, its expressions, [so it is?] all the same, a kind of development. This is also explicit in the Quran.

Now, all these religions come from one source, which is a holy book up there in Heaven. The Quran calls it the "hidden book," *Kitab al-Maknun*, the hidden book, the preserved tablet, the mirror of all books, these are various titles that the Quran gives to it. And all these messages come down from that one source. There is little doubt from what the Quran tells us [00:45:00] that there were, in Mecca, or around Mecca -- we don't know historically much about this -- but some people, either Jews or Christians, or both, who when the Prophet appeared, encouraged him in this, and in fact, believed in the Quran, that was true message from God. From this, the idea grows still stronger that all these religions are one. And of course, in and around Arabia, only there were Judaism and Christianity, and then Islam appeared. The Quran is not conversant with religions further east.

A little later, it becomes apparent that the larger body of the Jews and the Christians were not going to believe in the Prophet's message. At this stage, Jews and Christians are called [*ahazab alshaya?*], [00:46:00] partisans, sectarians, who cut up the unity of one religion. There's a [side track?]. There's a kind of deviation of some kind, and so on. Well, this sets the Quran with a great problem of the diversity of religions. God is

one, the source of guidance is one, and mankind is one. Why these divergent religions? And each community claims the truth for itself. (Arabic) Each book thinks that it has the truth. And the Quran comes to severely criticize the idea that each community has that it is the proprietor of God, it has proprietary right or rights over truth.

The Quran says particularly, the differences among, as the differences appear, [00:47:00] go on appearing between Jews and Christians, and then between Christians and so on and so on. This becomes a very tormenting idea in the Quran. (Arabic) The Jews say these Christians have nothing to stand on. (Arabic) And Christians say these Jews have nothing to stand on. (Arabic) And yet [they pray?] to the same book. It's extraordinary. So the Quran says guidance is [no community is?] guidance. It's not Jewish guidance, it's not Christian guidance, it's God's guidance, and he gives it to whomsoever he wants, whosoever is prepared for it.

Now this diversity of religions, as I've said, becomes a very [tormented?] idea in the Quran, and will finally, in Medina, Jews and Christians [00:48:00] stick to their traditional religions. Then the Quran says these -- the Old Testament, the New Testament, and so on -- they are messages from God, genuine

messages from God, just as the Quran is a genuine message from God. But then it says, finally, God's purpose in creating these divergent communities is (Arabic), "Go and compete in goodness." Let us see which community performs better. This seems to be the divine purpose, although it will be much better for humanity to be united, of course. But in a concessional move, then the Quran says, (Arabic) "All right, compete in goodness." Let's see which community does better.

Now, this initial [00:49:00] impulse, [for moralism?] number one, and for socioeconomic justice, number two, continues, of course, to dominate the Quran, until the very end. Then, the Prophet comes to Medina. He comes to his own in terms of political power, as my colleague, Dr. Humphreys, has mentioned. And he is able to implement both reforms that he had wanted to implement in Mecca. You see, in Mecca, it was clear both to him and to his opponents that the reforms he was advocating would require the assumption of political power. Without political power, it was impossible to implement this program. In Medina, he gets political power, and this [nascent?] sort of informal community state, city state, is set up. And through it, certain layers [00:50:00] are promulgated, a tax is imposed on the rich for the benefit of the poor, and for setting the (inaudible) and so on. And then slowly, the Islamic institutions -- the prayer

had already been there in Mecca, but this text -- these [are called texts?] -- and certain other institutions, like the pilgrimage to Mecca, and so on. And the interrelations between different groups and between different communities, and questions of peace and war and so on, they are all done in Medina itself.

Finally, the Quran addresses an appeal to Jews and Christians, whom it calls "people of the book." The people who have been given a book by God. Of course, the Quran does believe that other people have received books also, but these two [00:51:00] are identified in the Quran. The Quran definitely tells the Prophet there have been prophets and messengers before, some of whom we have named to you, others we have not named. And similarly, these two documents, the Old and New Testament, we have identified for you, there are others that have not been identified. And the Prophet is made to declare in the Quran, (Arabic), "Declare, I believe in any and every book that may have been revealed by God to mankind."

Now, one important think, a point in this context to remember, is that although prophets are sent to their nations, (Arabic), we sent Noah to his people, we sent Moses to his people, we sent -- these messengers are sent to their peoples. [00:52:00]

(Arabic) The ancient Arabian prophets were also sent to their people. But this does not confine the message of -- this does not confine, this fact does not confine those messages to those peoples. The messages are universal, and therefore it is incumbent upon every human being to believe in all the books, just as Muhammad is made to declare in the Quran, this is because prophet hold a messengership of God is indivisible. You cannot say, "I believe in this messenger and not in that messenger." This is not possible in Islam. This is why the Quran repeatedly declares "Say we believe in all the messengers," (Arabic) "We do not divide up these messengers [00:53:00] into those in whom we believe and those in whom we do not believe."

Now, then appeal is made to the people of the book. (Arabic) "Oh, you people of the book, come (Arabic) to a platform (Arabic) which is common between us." And let's work, let's work together. This invitation was issued about 1,400 years ago by the Quran. But history had it otherwise. Of course, history is recalcitrant. And this is why the task of the Muslim community, when it was formally announced in Medina, was to bend history in a certain direction. [00:54:00] The historical materials, the materials of history, had to be shed in an orientation. That orientation is to remove corruption from our (Arabic). That orientation is to remove mischief from Earth, negative

tendencies from the Earth, and to establish [Islahal ard?] reformation of the Earth. In other words, to set up on the Earth a social order that will be ethically based. It's not my selfish desire, my wishful thinking, nor my family's, nor my tribe's, nor my nation's. It is an endeavor to set up on Earth a social order that will be based on fairness, [00:55:00] on [abel?], on justice. This is the end, and for that, the creation of the community is essential.

Now, I mention that the Quran wants to create individual *tagwa* inside with this torch that can distinguish from good and evil inside. If a collectivity of such people could come together and form a community, it is then this community's task to carry out God's command for justice on Earth. And so the Quran tells the Muslim community that if we should establish here on the Earth, you shall establish prayers, and you should pay [zakab?], you shall establish an egalitarian order on Earth. (Arabic) You shall command, God [00:56:00] (Arabic) and you shall prohibit evil. This is the charge that this community was given.

So you see, so far as the Quran is concerned, there is no hiatus, no gap between the individual and the community, because the individual has to be an individual with this *tagwa* inside. And then a collectivity of such individuals comes together, then

there shall be no tension between the individual and the community. But as historical growth of community shows, when communities become big and large, this kind of tension does develop. Yet the Quran had told Muslims -- the Quran had, of course, told everybody -- that it is not -- God doesn't do any special favors [00:57:00] to any community. It does not accept the Jewish theory of election. Ibrahim is -- Abraham is represented as saying in the Quran -- God says to him (Arabic) "I am going to appoint you leader of men because of what you have done." And Ibrahim says to God, (Abraham) "What about my progeny?" And God replies, (Arabic) "Those of your progeny that will be good, good. Those of your progeny that will not be good, I make no unilateral promises." And so the Quran told the Muslim community in the Quran twice, this is a teaching being given to you [in total?]. If you carry out this teaching well and good. If you do not, [00:58:00] then (Arabic) God will bring (inaudible). (Arabic) Then they will not be like you. No promises, no unilateral promises are made to the Muslim community either. And whenever it is characteristic of the Quran, whenever it talks about the rise and downfall of previous peoples, it says, (Arabic) this is a characteristic phrase that occurs and reoccurs and reoccurs in the Quran: (Arabic) We did them no injustice. (Arabic) They did justice into themselves. They brought this end upon themselves.

God has a certain set of laws which Quran call the *sunnah* of God. You heard from Dr. Humphreys the *sunnah* of the Prophet. But the Quran talks about a *sunnah* of God, a [00:59:00] pattern of collective behavior on (inaudible) nations for which God has ordained a certain standard of judgment. This is called *sunnah*, and this is unchangeable. (Arabic) [Here?], you will find no change in that state of judgment that God has set up. And every people rises or falls in accordance with whether it conforms or deviates from this standard of judgment.

Now, the Quran had envisaged this vision. And Muslims did set out as best as they could in the earliest times to implement this vision. Dr. Humphreys pointed out the formation of the law, of Islamic law in early Islam, because the Arabs, Muslim Arabs had conquered the neighboring lands, it [01:00:00] required a system of administration of law to work. So they set about the task of elaborating a law on the basis of the Quran, and on the basis of the *sunnah* of the Prophet, of the *hadith*. It took about three centuries or so to fully elaborate and perfect these systems of law, which are four of them in Sunni Islam, and one [the shay?] system of law. When this took place, early on, there is great evidence that there was a great difference of opinion among these jurists, among Muslim jurists. There were constant

debates, debates, discussion, differences of opinion, and so on, of which there is ample evidence in the early works left to us by the second and third century Muslim writers. [01:01:00] When these systems were perfected [of law?], and along with law, then there came (inaudible) also, then the Muslim lawyers or jurists stopped [any further?] development.

It is a problem for a historian of religious history if Islam as to why this happened. But it is possible that because they had passed through such a [starving?] period of difference of opinion, and so on and so forth, so when the systems of law were perfected -- and they worked very well for those days, very well indeed. But they were unwilling to rethink this law any further, these systems any further. But history changes. Societies change. [01:02:00] States of affairs don't remain in the same place. And so, gradually, cracks appeared in those systems of law. But the custodians of the *sharia* law, of these legal systems, the (inaudible), had evolved gradually a system of education which administered these systems of law and (inaudible). And because the [olamah?], the religious scholars that had the monopoly over the educational system, it became --

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