

AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM FOR JEWS

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Session 5: Into Modern Times

THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE WEST: EARLY DAYS

Early reformers and reforming movements

Shah Wali Allah (1703-62)

God granted to me the robe of revival and enabled me to give new vigour and guidance to this last age, laying a new foundation of present-day *fiqh* [jurisprudence].

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, 1901

He could not see what the woman was about, but heard the clish-clash of her jewellery for many minutes. A match lit up the darkness; he caught the well-known purr and fizzle of grains of incense. Then the room filled with smoke—heavy, aromatic and stupefying. Through growing drowse he heard the names of devils—of Zulfazan, Son of Eblis, who lives in bazaars and *paraos*, making all the sudden lewd wickedness of wayside halts; of Dulhan, invisible about mosques, the dweller among the slippers of the Faithful, who hinders folk from their prayers; and Musboot, Lord of lies and panic. Huneefa, now whispering in his ear, now talking as from an immense distance, touched him with horrible soft fingers

... ‘*Oh Hearer! Thou that hearest with ears, be present. Listen, O Hearer!*’, Huneefa moaned, her dead eyes turned to the west. The room filled with moanings and snortings....

... ‘I will lay a plot for their ruin! O Prophet, bear with the unbelievers. Let them alone awhile! ...With Him are the keys of the Secret Things! None knoweth them beside Himself. He knoweth that which is in the dry land and the sea!’ Again broke out the unearthly whistling responses.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98)

The well-being of the people of India, especially the Musulmans, lies in leading a quiet life under the benign rule of the British Government.

At this time our nation is in a bad state in regards education and wealth, but God has given us the light of religion and the Koran is present for our guidance, which has ordained them and us to be friends. Now God has made them rulers over us. Therefore we should cultivate friendship with them, and should adopt that method by which their rule may remain permanent and firm in India, and may not pass into the hands of the Bengalis ... If we join the political movement of the Bengalis our nation will reap a loss, for we do not want to become subjects of the Hindus instead of the subjects of the ‘people of the Book’.

Islam is nature and nature is Islam.

THE END OF THE CALIPHATE AND THE QUESTION OF THE ROLE OF ISLAM

Daniel Brown, *A Short Introduction to Islam* (2004), p. 210

If the Egyptians, Arabs, Indians, or Indonesians had felt no shared nationality before, they certainly did after the French, British, and Dutch consolidated their control. There is nothing quite like having one's land taken away to elicit a sense of common injury, the need for solidarity, and the development of a shared mythology to support that solidarity.

Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924)

The land where the call to prayer resounds in Turkish, where those who pray understand the meaning of their religion; the land where the Qur'an is learnt in Turkish; where every man, big or small, knows full well the command of God; O Son of Turkey! That land is thy fatherland!

SECULARISM

Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938)

The religion of Islam will be elevated if it will cease to be a political instrument, as had been the case in the past.

In the face of knowledge, science, and of the whole extent of radiant civilization, I cannot accept the presence in Turkey's civilized community of people primitive enough to seek material and spiritual benefits in the guidance of sheikhs. The Turkish republic cannot be a country of sheikhs, dervishes, and disciples. The best, the truest order is the order of civilization. To be a man it is enough to carry out the requirements of civilization. The leaders of dervish orders will understand the truth of my words, and will themselves close down their lodges and admit that their disciplines have grown up.

THE SEARCH FOR THE ISLAMIC STATE AND RADICAL ISLAM

Hasan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood: a new ideology

Qur'an 22: 39-40

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged—surely God is able to help them—who were expelled from their homes wrongfully for saying 'Our Lord is God'.

Qur'an 2: 190

And fight in the way of God with those who fight you, but do not transgress limits: God does not love the aggressors.

Qur'an 8: 61

If your enemy inclines towards peace, then you too should seek peace and put your trust in God.

Hadith about Muhammad

We return from the lesser *jihad* [warfare] to the greater *jihad* [struggle with the ego].

Hasan al-Banna (1906-49)

Our permanent theme will be: Allah is our objective. The messenger [Muhammad] is our leader. The Qur'an is our constitution. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.

Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* [Ma'alim fil-tariq]

A truly Islamic society is not one where people call themselves 'Muslims', but the Islamic law has no status, even if prayers, fasting and pilgrimage are practised and observed. It is also not an Islamic society in which people follow their own version of Islam, contrary to what Allah and His messenger, peace be upon him, have prescribed and explained, and call it, for example, 'progressive Islam'. *Jahili* society appears in various forms, all of them in defiance of Divine Guidance... How to initiate the revival of Islam? A vanguard must set out with this determination and then keep going, marching through the vast ocean of *jahiliya* which encompasses the entire world.

The Iranian Revolution (1979)

Ayatollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government* [Veliyat-e faqih], 1970

Anyone who has come to general awareness of the beliefs and ordinances of Islam [would] unhesitatingly give his assent to the principle of the governance of the *faqih* [scholar] as soon as he encounters it ... [the principle has] little need of demonstration for anyone who has come to general awareness of the beliefs and ordinances of Islam ... The entire system of government and administration, together with necessary laws, lies ready for you. If the administration of the country calls for taxes, Islam has made the necessary provision; and if laws are needed, Islam has established them all. ... Everything is ready and waiting.

MAINSTREAM AND MODERATE?: LIBERAL VOICES

Qur'an 5: 48

If God had so willed, He would have made all of you one community, but [he has not done so] that He may test you in what He has given you; so compete in goodness. To God shall you all return and He will tell you [the truth] about what you have been disputing.

Further reading

John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Gallup Press, 2007).

Khaled Abou el-Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (HarperOne, 2007).

Charles Kurzman (ed.), *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (OUP, 1998).