

except that it makes it ugly.” And he learnt from the One Who teaches perfection: “It is from the Mercy of God that you were gentle with them. Were you **harsh & hard-hearted** they would indeed have fled from you.” (3:159)

The mystery: We recite & do **not** hear. Harshness permeates the air of the so-called mosques. Insults are traded faster & more furiously than stocks on the Stock Exchange. Why this loss of mercy? It’s the disconnection from the Divine Light resulting in a spiritual blackout...so we are groping & stumbling on the Straight Path. The Quran demands that we think, reflect. Not just depend on the thinking & reflection of those dead a thousand years ago. In-depth, ever-renewing reflection.

When related to religion, spirituality is faith that, projected on life and the world, imparts meaning to being... just as it makes meaningful and orients the actions of human beings. Intelligence is the act of reason that observes, comprehends and attempts to understand being, the self, the universe & life. The quest for harmony...a quest for meaning & understanding makes it possible to avoid the failings we see at the mosques. Placing spirituality, the intimate quest for meaning, light, peace, at the center of the religious experience makes it possible to overcome the formalistic reductions that turn religion into a closed, restrictive universe of norms, limits & prohibitions. **Formalistic believers, those lacking knowledge, cause the greatest problems in the sacred space of the mosque.** Producing self-righteous, constantly condemning, cynical, overly critical, rigid people could **not** have been the goal of our Prophet (p). Allying spirituality & intelligence, meaning & understanding, is a major challenge of our time.

In a golden quote worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox’s Bullion Depository, Prophet Muhammad (p) said: “The prophets have bequeathed neither dinar nor dirham, but rather, they have bequeathed knowledge. So whoever takes such knowledge, they have indeed taken a vast portion of good.” Isn’t that clear & simple? Such priceless words given to us free...not locked away in a fortress-like structure, like the gold vault, which is lined with granite walls and is protected by a blast-proof door that weighs 22 tons. No single person is entrusted with the entire combination to Knox’s vault. But one honest man has given us the key to heaven’s door.

We are in desperate need to craft a coherent intellectual approach to contemporary challenges. Far

from any theoretical, formalistic religion or philosophy cut off from the world, and from any dogmatic, exclusivist faith or rationality imposing itself on everyone, we must rediscover the ways to depth and complexity: a luminous, profound and humble faith allied with an insightful, critical and determined mind.

It clearly amounts to refusing immobilism, formalism, blind imitation, or fatalism. We have to remove the albatross of such “thinking” and look to the future, not the past. **No human reality is irreversible.** No human power is absolute & eternal. No challenge is final. **For the believing conscience everything remains possible.** Faith in God’s infinite wisdom is confidence. Intelligence is resistance. The alliance of faith & intelligence, of confidence & resistance, must liberate intellectual energies & give life to true freedom...clear & simple. A freedom which refuses alienation & mobilizes knowledge, human creativity & ethical sense to transform the world and make it a better place. It’s what the Prophet (p) accomplished...in only twenty-three years. **What have your organization accomplished in decades?**

This time, the only time we have, must be converted into a period of intellectual & spiritual effervescence. Through faith in the One God, confidence and determination, everything is always possible. Islam is a great world religion that has left a deep and indelible, beautifying mark on human history.

Here’s WHY: Say, “Are the ones who are blind in respect of the mind equal to those who are endowed with mental perception and understanding? Will you not then THINK & REFLECT?” [6:50]

Allah makes clear to you the verses, so that you may THINK & REFLECT [2:219, 2:266]

Verily, in the creation of the heaven and the earth, and in the alteration of night and day, there are indeed signs for people of understanding – those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and THINK & REFLECT about the creation of the heavens & the earth [3:190-191] **Where is the Muslim NASA? We have enough mosques!**

Such is the value of thinking, contemplation & reflection according to the Quran. For the more you learn you come to recognize His signature on all knowledge. The Quran provides ample guidance & advice for souls longing for spiritual nourishment, refinement & erudition amid the prevailing state of moral disintegration. Socialize...but stop the socializing “Quranic” readings! Don’t mock God! He doesn’t need your food! He needs your in-depth, ever-renewing reflection!!!

INFINITE CLEAR & SIMPLE WISDOM

If Muslims
Only
“HEARD”
THE QURAN
WHEN THEY
RECITED **It**

If faith has ebbed, it is **not** because people are generally more enlightened, but because they have become more impoverished in their grasp of what human life is about & why it should be lived. God wants us to be intellectual giants; but we are religious midgets, lacking the capacity for deep “thought” that make human life worth living. **Say, “I only exhort you to do ONE thing: That you rise for the sake of Allah in pairs or singly & THINK & REFLECT!...”** [34:46] Are your mind-numbing “readings” accomplishing what God is exhorting?

O YOU WHO BELIEVE, RESPOND TO THE CALL OF ALLAH & TO THE MESSENGER WHEN HE CALLS YOU TO WHAT WILL BRING YOU TO LIFE.

It would be so clear. It would be so simple. The only thing Muslims ever need to do, in order to lead the earth, and live straight lives, and watch the Straight Path spread before their eyes, is this: to practice Islam in its infinite wisdom, in its overpowering appeal. From the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic rim, from the icy Poles to the heat-drenched Equator, Muslims could manifest and extend Islam in their acts, their encounters, their interactions. If only they followed; if only they followed **Islam**. If only they bowed their heads to Allah truly; and “heard” the Quran when they recited it, and heeded the Sunnah, when they quoted it. If only they became true Muslims again.

Instead, the Muslims of today watch, **too often without comprehending**, as the religion is practiced but **not** lived; as the Din is interpreted, and reinterpreted, to fit the place, to fit the times, rather than the other way around. The Muslims complain as politicians corrupt Islam, opponents attack Islam, and salaried journalists or press-hacks label it, categorize it all in a day’s work, just another assignment. **As scores of non-Muslims make it safe and easy to forget Islam, by reducing its essence to a caricature, and by pulling so many unsuspecting Muslims into the sad role of accomplices.**

And the individual Muslims: improving, forging dreams, building bridges. But the community itself not improving, scattered, wasting energy and resources, wasting time & devotion, even, on frantic agendas for fragmented survival. This nation seeking wealth; that wealthy nation seeking power; this other powerful nation seeking Western approval. Amid the fractured agendas and the diverging paths of peoples, of nations, of families, of individuals, Islam itself is being diluted. **Who is seeking Allah?**

Have we forgotten that we, all, at every level and

in every place, are to be witnesses unto the nations, that the word has been sent so explicitly, so eloquently? Ask why the Muslim world is **not** improving, is **not** gathering in unity, is **not** overcoming those who attack it – when they could just as easily be shown the way to join it – and the answer is simple: it is **NOT** the real Islam that is being practiced, not the one Islam, but Islam through a mirror, reflected through a thousand agendas, a hundred schools of thought. It is one hundred Islams. It is Islam deflected. It is Islam through the arbitrary optical-illusion prism.

The Muslim world talks of unity. But where is it united? The Muslim Ummah talks of the only way of life, of the complete code. But where is it practiced? As the rest of mankind convulses and we Muslims know that it has found neither peace, nor dignity, nor a path that is straight, and we Muslims know we have the answers, where is the answer ever really applied? It can be applied in your home. It can be applied in your neighbourhood, it can be applied in your circle, in your associations, in your concerted efforts to make Islam real in your life & the lives of others.

The problem with Muslims locally, nationally, world-wide, is not that we do not act. It is that by and large we only react. It is as if one thousand years of compromise or resignation had knocked the wind out of our sails. The fight out of our souls.

We have often spoken of Islam as the target of the West’s fears. But we have not reminded ourselves enough that **Muslims themselves are afraid of Islam**, of its greatness. That too many have chosen the Islam that suited their need, that fit the program.

Yes, there are those who remember Islam **clear & simple**, some who are laying down their lives for Islam, some who, among all the schedules of economic and social change, of political and private drives, remember that it is Allah’s world they are fighting for. Around the world, there are nations which are becoming powerful Muslim nations, nations perhaps destined for greatness. But there are also Muslim nations that are breaking their children, as they resist becoming Islamic nations, as they choose their future in other camps. There are people who are striving in the way of Allah, in prisons or torture cells, as the West looks on with a helping hand.

Being a Muslim is not an easy thing today. Perhaps it is a trial, we sometimes think, that Allah is sending to us, at a time of temptation & decision. But Allah

has already given us the solutions & the tools. We, the people of Islam, cannot still refuse His clear, His simple road of vision & action. The days of the caliphate are gone, surely. The movement for Islam confronts a new world, a different moment in its history. It is now a question of defining the Islamic way for these new times. The “Muslim United Nations” are **not** for today, **not** even for tomorrow. A “United Muslim International” is a utopia, while each & every bickering member claims this or that reward, indemnity, repayment, justice served or redressed. But these nations made of people, Muslim people, hold the answers in their hands, if only they remembered. **How many times must Allah remind us?**

There is no individual who does not want this world to be a better place. The Prophet (p) wanted that. He had Allah as his guide. The Wisest, the Clearest, the Simplest. Why do we forget? A better place...this begins with having the ability to deal with disagreements. There is no contradiction between being firm on what one understands to be the truth and being gentle. When one differs with others, one must maintain the excellence of character and conduct that the Prophet (p) said was the very purpose of Divine Guidance: “I was **only** sent to perfect noble character.” **There is much more to learning the religion of Islam than just memorizing scholarly words & endless quotations. Islam, we must understand, is about our state of being, about how our hearts engages with the world.**

All the knowledge that we have studied, all the books we have read, and all the information that we have acquired are all worthless unless it is coupled with a true sense of inner piety and a real concern for the inclinations of the heart. The source of contentment, the origin of tranquility, and the key to all success is to be found in the remembrance of God: “Verily, by the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction!”

Some disbelievers greeted the Prophet (p) with an insult. Aisha insulted them back. The Prophet (p) simply replied “And upon you,” which is the standard reply to the greeting of “Peace be upon you.” He then reformed Aisha’s thinking by telling her: “Allah is gentle & loves gentleness in all matters.” And this Perfection of Character drove home the point to humanity: “Gentleness is not found in anything except that it makes it beautiful; and gentleness is not taken out of anything

WE HEAR & OBEY

(QURAN 2:285)

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