

CHAPTER VIII

The Political System of Islam

by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah

A slightly edited excerpt from Ch. VIII of Introduction to Islam by Dr. M. Hamidullah

Since the Islamic conception of life is a co-ordination between the body and the soul, it was natural that a very close relationship should have been established between religion and politics, between the mosque and the citadel. In its social conception, Islam is "communal." It prefers a social life, demands worship in collectivity and congregation, in which every one turns towards the same centre (the *Ka'bah*), fasting together at the same time in all parts of world, and visiting the House of God (the *Ka'bah*) as one of the principal duties of all Muslims, men and women. It lays emphasis on strictly personal responsibility, and does not forget the development of the individual, and yet it organizes all individuals in a single whole, the world Muslim community. The same law regulates the affairs of all – whatever the class or country. And as we shall see, the same chief, Caliph, receives the allegiance of all the faithful of the world.

Nationality

259. One finds in human society, by and by, two contradictory tendencies: centripetal and centrifugal. On the one hand, separate individuals group themselves in wedlock, families, tribes, city-states, states and empires – sometimes willingly and at other time under compulsion. On the other hand, descending from the same couple and ancestors, groups detach themselves from bigger units in order to lead separate and independent lives, away from their relatives. Sometime this separation is occasioned amicably for the purpose of finding the means of livelihood elsewhere and lightening the charge on a locality too restricted to furnish food for all. At other times, it is dictated by passions, quarrels and other motivations.

260. In spite of the almost unanimous concept that all human races have the same common origin, two factors have powerfully contributed to accentuate the diversity: death and distance. Man is instinctively attached to close relatives and ancestors, yet the cementing factor disappears with the death of the common parent. And the

notion of relationship among the surviving members, whose number multiplies every day, bears an importance and an influence which gradually become less and less effective. With regards to distance, not only does it make us forget the ties of relationship, but also, as history has shown, creates insurmountable obstacles. One ceases to speak the same language, uphold the same interests or defend the same values.

261. At the dawn of Islam, in the 7th century of the Christian era, differences and prejudices arising from race, language, place of birth among other things, had become the rule rather than the exception. They developed deep-rooted notions, which grew to be almost natural instincts. It was so everywhere in the world, in Arabia, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in America and elsewhere. Islam came to class these notions among the evil traits of humanity, and tried to bring about a cure.

262. The unifying ties of family, clan, and even tribe proved too weak to serve the needs of defence and security in a world where egoism and cupidity had rendered inevitable wars of everybody against everybody else. But groups bigger than tribes were created sometimes by the use of force by warriors and emperors. However, failing to create an identity of interests among the totality of the subjects, these artificial unions were constantly menaced by disintegration.

263. Without entering into the history of the several thousand years of the development of this aspect of human society, it would suffice to consider the idea of nationality prevalent in our own time in order to illustrate the point. If nationality is based on the identity of language, race, or place of birth, it goes without saying that it will make the problem of aliens or strangers exist perpetually, and such a nationality will be too narrow, ever to be able to embrace the inhabitants of the entire world. And if the aliens are not assimilated, there will always be the risk of conflicts and wars. In fact, the tie of nationality is not a very sure bond at all.

For two brothers may be enemies, and two strangers, having a common ideology, may be friends.

264. The Qur'an (30:22, 49:13) has rejected all superiority on account of language, colour of skin or other ineluctable incidences of nature, and recognizes the only superiority of individuals as that based on piety. A common ideology is the basis of "nationality" among the Muslims, and Islam is this ideology. We shall not speak of religions which do not admit conversion. Among the religions of universal applications, Islam distinguishes itself by the feature that it does not exact the renunciation of the world, but insists on the body and soul growing and operating simultaneously. The past has shown that Muslims have assimilated this supra-racial and supra-regional ideal of brotherhood; and this sentiment is a living force among them to this day.

265. Naturalization is a feature now admitted among all "nations" but to be naturalized in a new language, in a new colour of skin, and in a new land is not as easy as to adhere to a new ideology. For others nationality is essentially an ineluctable accident of nature. In Islam it is a thing which depends solely upon the will and choice of the individual.

Means of Universalization

266. Apart from the means already mentioned, namely the same law for all, the same direction to turn to in the service of prayer, the same place for meeting in the universal pilgrimage, etc., the institution of the universal caliphate plays a particular role.

267. Muhammad of holy memory had proclaimed himself to be a messenger of God, sent towards the totality of human beings (cf. Qur'an 34:28) and also to be the last of such messengers (cf. Qur'an 33:40), and therefore for all time, till the end of the world. His teaching abolished the inequalities of races and classes. Moreover, the Prophet himself exercised all powers, spiritual as well as temporal and others, in the community which he had organized into a state and endowed with all its organisms. Thus cumulation of powers was passed in heritage, after his death, to his successors in the state, with this difference that these successors were not prophets, and so did not receive the Divine revelations. The Prophet Muhammad had always insisted on the necessity of community life, and he went so far as to declare that "Whoever died without knowing his imam (caliph) dies in paganism." He had also insisted on unity and solidarity inside the Muslim community, saying that

"Whoever separates himself from it goes to Hell." (reported by Muslim, Tirmidhi, etc.)

268. Even in the time of the Prophet, there were individuals and even groups of Muslims, who lived voluntarily or under constraint, outside the frontiers of the Islamic State, for example in Abyssinia, and in Mecca (before its conquest by the Prophet). Some of the non-Muslim regions did not know religious tolerance, and persecuted the Muslims (as in the city-state of Mecca and the Byzantine empire). Others, like in Christian Abyssinia, practised a liberal policy in matters of conscience.

269. As we have just seen, the caliph inherited from the Prophet the exercise of the double power, spiritual-temporal, and he presided over the celebration of the service of worship in the mosque, and he was the head of the State in temporal affairs.

270. To recognize the Prophet, one used to take the oath of allegiance, (*bai'ah*, or contract of obedience). One did the same for the caliphs at the moment of their election. The basis of the statal organization is a contract concluded between the ruler and the ruled. In practice only persons who are the most representative of the population take this oath of allegiance. This nomination, under a contract of course, implies the possibility of the annulment of the contract and the deposition of the ruler by the same representative personalities.

271. It was by virtue of being the messenger of God, that the Prophet Muhammad commanded his community; and the law which he promulgated and left to posterity was equally of Divine inspiration. For his successors, the sovereignty of God continued to exist as a reality, in the sphere of their competence; therein they were the successors of the Prophet of God. But for them there was no possibility of receiving Divine revelations. Thus their power in the matter of legislation was restricted (i.e., they could not abrogate the laws established by the Prophet in the name of God, they could however interpret these laws, and legislate in cases where the law of the time of the Prophet was silent). In other words, the caliph could not be a despot, at least in matters of legislation: he is a constitutional head, and as much subject to the laws of the country as any ordinary inhabitant of the State. The tradition created by the Prophet himself is responsible for the fact that the head of the Muslim State should not be above the law. History shows that the caliphs could always be cited, even by the humblest of the subjects, also by non-Muslims, to

appear before the courts of the country, from the time of Abu-Bakr (the first caliph) to our day.

272. The theory and practice of the caliphate have however not always been identical in Muslim society. A rapid sketch of this history would be useful for understanding the actual position.

The Caliphate

273. The Qur'an speaks of kings, both good and bad, and never refers to other forms of government, such as a republic. The fact that there have been differences of opinion, at the death of the Prophet, shows that he had not left positive and precise instructions regarding his succession. Certain groups wanted that the statal power should rest, as an heirloom, in his family – and since he had left no male issue, his uncle 'Abbas, or his cousin 'Ali were the next of kin to succeed him. Others wanted an *ad hoc* individual election. And inside this group, there were differences as to the candidate to be chosen. An overwhelming majority rallied in favour of an election. The form of government thus established was intermediary between hereditary monarchy and a republic – the caliph was elected for life. If the fact of election makes it resemble a republic, the duration of the power was like that of a monarchy. From the very beginning, there have been dissidents to the elected caliphs; later there have been even rival claimants and these caused bloodshed in the community from time to time.

Later, power was held by some dynasty. Thus came the Umayyads, who in their turn were replaced by the 'Abbasids; these latter did not succeed in obtaining the homage of the far-off province of Spain, where independent dynasties of Muslim rulers exercised sovereign powers, without, however, daring to assume the title of "caliph."

It required two more centuries before the Muslim world knew the multiplicity of caliphs, at Baghdad, Cordova, and Cairo (Fatimids). The Turks, when converted to Islam, brought a new element. First they furnished soldiers and then commanders who became the real governing power in the State. Side by side with the caliphs, there appeared a "commander of the commanders," and later a "sultan," and the State authority became divided and administration went into the hands of the Sultan who governed in the name of the caliph. This excited greed and aroused jealousies. Several provinces became independent, producing "dynasties" of

governors, who in their turn were replaced by other adventurers. And the caliph had no choice but to ratify the *fait accompli* whenever it arose.

The Fatimid caliphate of Cairo disappeared first; and this kingdom was acquired by a dynasty of Turkish-Kurdish governors, who recognized the caliphate of Baghdad. When this latter was devastated by the pagan Tartars, the seat of the caliphate was moved to Cairo. Later the Ottoman Turks conquered Egypt, and abolished the neo-'Abbasid dynasty of caliphs there. After some time, the Spanish caliphate surrendered the country to Christian conquerors, and reconstituted a caliphate in Morocco. The Turkish Istanbul, and the Mughal Delhi also pretended to the caliphate: but however big their empires might have been, their claims were recognized only inside their respective jurisdictions.

Prior to these two, there had at least been the obligatory qualification of a caliph being a Quraishite, i.e., a descendant of the Meccan Arabs of the time of the Prophet. The Turks and the Mughals did not fulfil this condition, but we shall revert to the point later. The Mughals were removed from their Indian power by the British; the Turkish caliph of Istanbul was later deposed by his own subjects, who not only chose a republican form of government, but would not even preserve the dignity of caliphate for the head of the state. The powers and privileges of the caliph were nominally conferred on the Grand National Assembly, which however neither claimed them nor exercised them. The last Turkish caliph 'Abdul-Majid II, the 100th after the Prophet, died in exile as a refugee in Paris. In the meantime the caliphate of Morocco became a protectorate of France.

274. Some observations suggest themselves in this connection. The Prophet had predicted that after him, the caliphate would continue only for thirty years and that afterwards a "biting kingship" would follow (cf. Ibn Athir's *Nihayah*, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud). Another saying is attributed to the Prophet to the effect that the caliphate belongs to the tribe of Quraish. The context of this last direction is not known; but the practice of the Prophet himself does not seem to confirm the obligatory character of this qualification. For history shows that since his arrival in Madinah and the founding of a City State there, the Prophet left his metropolis at least 25 times, in order to go on military expeditions to defend the state territory as well as for pacific avocations (such as contracting alliances, making a pilgrimage). On all such occasions, he nominated a viceregent in Madinah, yet it was not the same person

that he chose always for carrying on the interim government. We find among these viceregents, called Khalifa or caliph, Madinans, Kinanites and others; there was even a blind person. At the time of his last journey when he went on pilgrimage, just three months before his death, it was a blind person who was the "caliph" in the metropolis. Another point to be noted is that, at the election of Abu Bakr as caliph, there was a proposal for a sort of joint rule, with two caliphs operating simultaneously.¹ For practical reasons, the proposal was rejected. It is nevertheless one of the possible forms of Muslim government, as it is recognized by the Qur'an (20:32), which speaks of Aaron as the associate of Moses in the statal power, and because this form was preserved by the Prophet himself in 'Uman where Jaifar and 'Abd, who ruled conjointly, had embraced Islam.²

275. The universal caliph does not exist nowadays among the Muslims, nevertheless the masses continue to aspire for it. The very independent existence of Muslims is also subject to fragmentary re-conquest. Before restoring the institution of a universal caliphate, it may be that they could have recourse to the precedents of the time of the Prophet, in order to avoid regional rivalries and susceptibilities. One may have, for instance, a 'Council of Caliphate' composed of the heads of all the Muslim States, Sunnites as well as Shi'ites, Quraishites as well as non-Quraishites. By rotation every member could preside over the Council, say for a year.

Duties of the State

276. The duties and functions of a Muslim state seem to be four: (i) Executive (for the civil and military administration), (ii) Legislative, (iii) Judicial, and (iv) Cultural.

277. The Executive does not require elaborate examination. It is self-evident, and obtains everywhere in the world. The sovereignty belongs to God and it is a trust which is administered by man, for the well-being of all without exception.

278. We have already mentioned the restrictions of legislative competence in the Islamic society, in the light of the fact that there is the Quran, the Word of God, which is the source of law in all walks of life, spiritual as well as temporal, (cf. also below 6 318/v.)

279. In the domain of judiciary, we have already pointed out the equality of all men before law, in which the head of the state is not exempt even *vis-a-vis* his subjects.

The Qur'an (5:42-50, 5:66) has ordained another important disposition: The non-Muslim inhabitants of the Islamic State enjoy a judicial autonomy, each community having its own tribunals, its own judges, administering its own laws in all walks of life, civil as well as penal. The Qur'an says that the Jews should apply the Biblical laws, and the Christians those of the Gospel. It goes without saying that in the case of conflict between laws, where parties to a litigation belong to different communities, special dispositions would solve the difficulties for the law as well as of the judge; and it is a kind of private international law which regulates such cases.

280. By cultural duty, we mean the very *raison-d'etre* of Islam, which seeks that the Word of God alone should prevail in this world. It is the duty of each and every individual Muslim, and *a fortiori* that of the Muslim government, not only to abide by the Divine law in daily behaviour, but also to organize foreign missions in order to inform others what Islam stands for. The basic principle, as the Qur'an (2:256) says, is that "There is no compulsion in religion." Far from implying a lethargy and indifference, a perpetual and disinterested struggle is thereby imposed to persuade others for the well-foundedness of Islam.

Form of Government

281. Islam attaches no importance to the external form of government. It is satisfied if the well-being of man in both the worlds is aimed for, and the Divine law applied. Thus the constitutional questions take a secondary place. Thus as we have already mentioned, a republic, a monarchy, a joint-rule, among other forms, are all valid in the Islamic community.

282. If this aim is realized by a single chief, one accepts it. If at a given time, in a given surrounding, all the requisite qualities of a "commander of the Faithful" or caliph are not found united in the same person, one admits voluntarily the division of power also for the purpose of the better functioning of the government. We may refer to the famous case cited by the Qur'an (2:246-47) – a former prophet was solicited by his people to select for them a king beside his own prophetic self, so that they might wage war under his leadership, against the enemy which had expelled them from their homes and families. The designation of a king in the presence of and in addition to a prophet, and even by the intermediary of the latter, shows the lengths to which one can go in this direction. A division is thus

made between the spiritual and temporal functions, yet no arbitrary power is tolerated for either of them. The politics and the king remain as much subject to the Divine law as the cult and the prophet. The source of authority and codes of law remain the same, only the application of law and the execution of necessary dispositions relate to different persons. It is more a question of specialization than a divorce between the two aspects of life.

Consultative Deliberations

283. The importance and utility of consultation cannot be too greatly emphasized. Again and again the Qur'an (3:159,27:32,42:38,47:21) commands Muslims to make their decisions after consultation, whether in a public matter or a private one. The practice of the Prophet has reinforced this disposition. For, in spite of the exceptional quality of his being guided by the Divine revelations, the Prophet Muhammad always consulted his companions and the representatives of the tribes of his adherents, before making decisions. The first caliphs were no less ardent in their defence of consultative institutions.

284. In this respect also, the Qur'an does not prescribe hard and fast rules. The number, form of election, duration of representation, etc., are left to the discretion of the leaders of every age and every country. What is important is that one should be surrounded by representative personalities, enjoying the confidence of those whom they represent and who possess integrity of character.

284. The Qur'an has also spoken of a kind of proportionate representation, while describing the selection of 70 representatives from among his people by Moses, to be received in the presence of God (cf. Qur'an 7:155). Further (in 7:160) one may also discern a sort of proportionate representation, since twelve springs of water were allotted to as many tribes accompanying Moses in the desert. Anyhow, we know that the aim of all representation – selected or elected – is that the government should always remain in touch with public opinion. This aim is realized in Islam in a perfect manner through the institution of the congregational service of worship. So five times every day – and even on Friday which is the weekly holiday – every Muslim has to gather in the mosque of the street or locality where he resides (or is otherwise present), and it is the highest government official of the locality who leads the service of worship. This provides the

possibility of meeting the highest responsible authority and complaining to him of any injustice or hardship befalling any individual. If that proves to be of no avail, the individual goes to a higher official, even to the head of the State who also leads the service of worship in the public mosque of the capital, locality or street and is accessible to every commoner.

Foreign Policy

286. The relations with foreign countries are based on what is called 'international law.' The rules of conduct in this domain have had an evolution very much slower than those of the mutual behaviour inside a social group. In pre-Islamic antiquity, international law had no independent existence as it formed part of politics and was dependent on the will and pleasure of the head of the State. Few were the rights recognized for foreign friends, still less for enemies.

287. We may bring into relief the historic fact, that it was the Muslims who had not only developed international law as a distinct discipline – the first in the world – but also made it form a part of law (instead of politics). They composed special monographs on the subject, under the name of *siyar* (conduct, i.e., of the ruler), and they also spoke of it in the general treatises of law. To the very first originators of these studies (of the early second century of the *Hijrah*/8th century of the Christian era), the question of war formed part of penal law. So after discussing brigandage and highway robbery of local people, the jurists logically spoke of similar activities by foreigners, demanding a greater mobilization of the forces of order. But the very inclusion of war under the heading of 'penal law' means unequivocally that it had to do with legal matters, in which the accused had the right of defending himself before a judicial tribunal.

288. The basic principle of the system of international relations in Islam, in the words of jurists, is that **"the Muslims and non-Muslims are equal (*sawa* ') in respect of the sufferings of this world."** In ancient times, the Greeks, for instance, had the conception that there was an international law which regulated the relations amongst only the Greek city-states. As for the Barbarians, (i.e., non-Greeks) nature had intended them, as was said by Aristotle, to be the slaves of the Greeks. Therefore it was an arbitrary conduct, and no law, which was the rule with regard to relations with them. The ancient Hindus had a similar notion, and the dogma of the division of humanity into castes together with the

notion of un-touchability rendered the fate of the defeated even more precarious. The Romans recognized a few rights in respect of foreign friends; yet for the rest of the world there was nothing but discretion and arbitrary rule, changing with the whims and fancies of individual commanders and ages. The Jewish law asserted (cf. Numbers, 31/8-9,17-18); Deuteronomy 20/16,1 Samuel 15/3) that God had ordained the extermination of the Amalecites ('Amaliqah, Arab inhabitants of Palestine); and that the rest of the world might be allowed to live on payment of tribute to and as servants of the Jews. Until 1856, the Westerners reserve the application of international law to Christian peoples. Since then they have made a distinction between the civilized and non-civilized peoples, with the latter still having no rights. In the history of International law, Muslims have been the first – and so far also the only – to admit the right of foreigners without any discrimination or reserve both during war and peace.

289. The first Muslim State was founded and governed by the Prophet. It was the city-state of Madinah, a confederacy of autonomous villages, inhabited by Muslims, Jews, pagan Arabs, and possibly a handful of Christians. The very nature of this State demanded a religious tolerance, which was formally recognized in the constitution of this State, which document has come down to us. The first treaties of defensive alliance were concluded with non-Muslims, and were always scrupulously observed. The Qur'an insists in the strongest of terms on the obligation of fulfilling promises and on being just in this respect (otherwise imposing punishment in the Hereafter).

290. The different sources of the rules of international conduct comprise not only internal legislation, but also treaties with foreigners, etc.

291. The jurists have so greatly insisted on the importance of the given work, that they say that if a foreigner obtains permission and comes to the Islamic territory for a fixed period, and if in the meantime a war breaks out between the Muslim government and that of the said foreigner, the security of the latter would not be affected. He may stay in tranquility until the expiration of his visa of sojourn. Not only may he return home in all safety and security, but he may also take with him all his goods and gains. Moreover during the sojourn, he would enjoy the protection of the courts even as before the outbreak of the war.

292. The person of the ambassador is considered

immune from all violation, even if he brings a most unpleasant message. He enjoys his liberty of creed, and security of sojourn and return.

293. The question of jurisdiction has also certain peculiarities. Foreigners residing in the Islamic territory are subjected to Muslim jurisdiction, but not to Muslim law, because Islam tolerates on its territory a multiplicity of laws, with autonomous judiciary for each community. A stranger would belong therefore to the jurisdiction of his own confessional tribunal. If he is a Christian, Jew, or anything else, and if the other party to the litigation is also of the same confession – no matter whether this other party is a subject of the Muslim State or a stranger – the case is decided by the confessional court according to its own laws. Generally no distinction is made between civil and criminal cases with respect to this jurisdiction. As for cases where the litigants belong to different communities, the question has already been discussed above. However, it is always permissible under Muslim law (cf. Qur'an 5:42-50) for a non-Muslim to renounce this privilege and go before the Islamic tribunal, provided both parties to the suit agree. In such an eventuality, the Islamic law is applied. It is permissible for the Muslim judge to apply even foreign law, personal law of the parties to the case, as is evident from the practice of the Prophet: Two Jews, guilty of adultery, were brought by their coreligionists, and the Prophet caused to bring the Bible (Book of Levites) and administered Jewish law to them, as is reported by Bukhari. It may be mentioned, by the way, that the concern for legality has forced the Muslim jurists to admit that if a crime is committed even against a Muslim, who is the subject of the Muslim State, by a foreigner in a foreign country, and this foreigner later comes peacefully to the Muslim territory, he will not be tried by the Islamic tribunals, which are not competent to hear a case that had taken place outside the territory of their jurisdiction. Muslim jurists are unanimous on the point. Muhammad ash-Shaibani, pupil of Abu Hanifah, has recorded even a saying of the Prophet in support of this law: " 'Atiyah Ibn Qais al-Kilabi relates that the Prophet has said: If a man takes refuge in enemy country after having committed murder, sexual immorality or theft, and later returns after obtaining safe-conduct, he would still be judged for what he had fled from. But if he has committed murder, illicit sexual intercourse or theft in the enemy territory and later came on safe-conduct, no punishment would be inflicted on him for what he had committed in the enemy territory." (Sarakhsi, Sharh as-Siyar al-Kabir, IV. 108.)

294. Islamic law does not admit exemptions in favour of the head of the State, who is as much subject to the jurisdiction of the courts as any other inhabitant of the country. If the head of the Muslim State does not enjoy such privileges (of injustice, excesses of class discrimination) in his own country, one should not expect them in favour of foreign sovereigns and ambassadors. All regard, appropriate to their quality as guest and their dignity, is paid to them, yet they are not held to be above law and justice.

295. Several cases of classical times bring to relief another peculiar feature of Islamic justice. Hostages were exchanged to guarantee the faithful execution of treaties, stipulating expressly that if one of the contracting parties should murder the hostages furnished by the other party, this latter would have the right to be avenged on the hostages in its hands. Cases of this kind happened in the time of caliph Mu'awiyah and al-Masur, and the Muslim jurists unanimously observed that the enemy hostages could not be put to death, because the perfidy and treachery was employed by their ruler and not by these hostages. The Qur'an (S:164, 53:38, etc.) forbids formally vicarious punishment and inflicting reprisals on one for the crime of another.

296. The Muslim law of war is humane. It makes a distinction between belligerents and combatants. It does not permit the killing of minors, women, the very old, sick, and monks. Debts in favour of the citizens of the enemy country are not touched by the declaration of war. All killing or devastation beyond the strict indispensable minimum is forbidden. Prisoners are well treated, and their acts of belligerency are not considered crimes. In order to diminish the temptation of the conquering soldiers, booty does not go to the one who seizes it, but to the government, which centralizes all spoils and redistributes them, four-fifths going to the participants of the expedition, one-fifth to the government coffers; the share of a soldier and of the commander-in-chief are alike and equal.

297. In an interesting passage (47:35), the Qur'an enjoins peace and says: *'Do not falter, and cry for peace when ye are the uppermost: God is with you and He will not forget your (praiseworthy) actions.'* It reverts to it again (8:61) and says: *'If they incline to peace, then incline to that and have confidence in God.'* So did the Prophet on the conquest of Mecca, and told its inhabitants: *"Go, you are freed."*

298. The Qur'an attaches such great importance to the

given word, that it does not hesitate (8:72) to give it preference over the material interest of the Muslim community. It teaches us the Islamic law of neutrality even in the case of religious persecution, in the following terms: *"... with regard to those who believe (in Islam) but do not immigrate (into Islamic territory), ye have no duty to protect them till they immigrate; but if they seek help from you in the name of religion then it is your duty to help (them) except against a folk between whom and you there is a treaty of peace (mithaq): and God is Seer of what ye do."*

Conclusion

299. To sum up, Islam seeks to establish a world community, with complete equality among people and without distinction of race class, or country. It seeks to convert by persuasion, allowing no compulsion in religious beliefs, every individual being personally responsible to God. To Islam, government signifies a trust, a service, in which the functionaries are the servants of the people. According to Islam, it is the duty of every individual to make a constant effort to spread good and prevent evil – and God judges us according to our acts and intentions.

1. This is the narration of Ibn Hisham. As for Ibn Sa'd (III/i, p. 151), he gives details and refers even to the practice of the Prophet, and says: "Abu Saïd al-Khudri reports: When the Prophet breathed his last, the orators of the Ansarites stood up and one of them said: O Muhajirites, whenever the Prophet nominated some person as 'amil (governor), he attached to him someone from amongst us, so we are of opinion that this power (caliphate) should also be exercised by two persons, one from among you and one from among us." The report of Diyarbakri (Khamis, 2/168-9) seems to concern a further compromise. In fact according to this historian, the Ansarites had proposed to the Muhajirites the following formula: "If you nominate for the caliphate today someone from amongst you, on his death we shall nominate someone from amongst us as his successor; and after the death of this latter, a Muhajirite shall be elected. And we shall do this kind of (alternate) succession so long as the Muslim community subsists."

2. The letter of the Prophet inviting them to Islam is preserved, and says: "If you both embrace Islam, I shall maintain you both as rulers, but if you refuse to embrace Islam, your kingdom will vanish."