

Summary of Series so Far

The first four series in this program dealt mainly with the articles of faith and questions pertaining to belief. ♦ This included Monotheism, Prophethood, Muhammad in the Bible and the fourth was about Muslim Beliefs. ♦ The first four series dealt mainly with the matter of faith and the first pillar of Islam. ♦ The fifth series dealt with the basic devotional acts of worship or the remaining four pillars of Islam: prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. ♦ The sixth series dealt with the moral teachings of Islam which covered a wide variety of topics all the way from the conceptual aspects, the basic questions of ethics, the lawful and unlawful in Islam pertaining to behavior of the individual and various aspects of life, all the way to the last 10 programs in the series which dealt with the basic moral virtues. ♦ However beginning in the 7th series we went beyond beliefs, acts of worship or moral teachings to examining Islam as a complete way of life. ♦ We examined the various aspects Islam uses to organize society. ♦ The seventh series dealt with the social system in Islam which dealt with the position of the woman and her role and contribution in an ideal Islamic society, engagement, marriage, marital relationships, desolation of marriage, rights of parents and relatives and so on. ♦ The eighth series dealt with the economic system of Islam dealing with questions of consumption, production, productivity, distribution, social justice and government policy. ♦ This series, ninth, is like a continuation of the examination of the basic systems in Islam dealing with the political part of it. ♦ It is just another building block that shows what Islam is really all about.

### 9.1 Religion and Politics

**Host:** ♦ Can you comment on separation of Church and State?

Jamal Badawi:

Separation between religion and state or secular and religious in the West is something that has its own historical roots. ♦ Basically it has to do with the way the church was perceived by the people and the way the relationship of the church and state was perceived. ♦ For a considerable number of time the masses used to perceive the Church as an institution which at times aligned itself with the ruling elite in a way that did not necessarily serve the interest of the ruling masses. ♦ It was perceived by some, in the 17th century onward, as an institution which had a strong desire for power struggling at all times with the ruling elite or temporal authorities. ♦ Many people seemed to put the name of the church somewhat synonymous with the inquisition courts, with the persecution of scientists and standing against free thought. ♦ This is how things were seen by the masses. ♦ When the age of the so called enlightenment came people reacted in a very strong way by going to the extreme perhaps by rejecting anything pertaining to the Church or their power. ♦ Even those who took a moderate position and were less critical of the Church thought that the best way was to separate the two functions by keeping the Church entirely for the spiritual and moral aspects of life while leaving the temporal or secular authority in the hands of other people. ♦ The circumstances surrounding the rise of the Church and its history in the Christian world does not mean that this separation is universal or that it has to be imposed on Islam. ♦ Islam has its own system and the whole notion doesn't apply where it may have applied in the case of the West.

**Host:** ♦ Why doesn't this separation of religion and State apply in Islam?

Jamal Badawi:

To start with in Islam there is no Church. ♦ We are not talking about Church in terms of a building but of course in Islam there are also buildings called Mosques for prayers but I am talking about Church in the way that it is understood in the Western world as an institution which has the exclusive power or authority to interpret matters of faith. ♦ For the same reason we find that Islam does not have a system of priesthood or clergy. ♦ In Islam the notion of saying this is a man of religion or of the word does

not exist. ♦ Ideally in Islam every man, woman and person is a person of religion. ♦ Every person has a responsibility to perform and it is not something that is only invested in a certain group of people who are considered to be the exclusive body to speak on matters of faith. ♦ From a historical standpoint in Islam we do not see any thing that comes close to inquisition courts and persecution of scientists (we saw in the previous series on the Economic System of Islam how scientists were persecuted elsewhere found security and encouragement in the Muslim world). ♦ If there was any persecution in Muslim history it was not by the religious scholars but it was persecution of the free thinkers among religious scholars by the ruling elite who sought to get justification and approval for their actions. ♦ So the reverse is what happened and they were not persecuting people but were the ones who were persecuted by tyrannical or unjust rulers. ♦ Furthermore conceptually speaking the notion of ♦ religion ♦ is Islam is quite different than it is perceived in the West or in the Christian world in general. </p> <p>♦</p> <p><strong>Host: ♦ How does the concept of religion differ in Islam than that of the common conception?</strong></p> <p>Jamal Badawi:</p> <p>The common person in the Western world would describe religion as a set of beliefs or values that deal with the spiritual or moral aspects of life. ♦ In Islam the word religion means way of life. ♦ Way of life includes all aspects of life spiritual, moral, social, economic, or political which are all a part of the Muslim understanding of religion. ♦ As indicated in some previous programs especially on the moral teachings of Islam. ♦ Islam takes the human being as he or she is and doesn't just look at one aspect of our existence. ♦ It takes the human as a spiritual being and tries to satisfy those needs. ♦ It takes the human as an intellectual being and respects human intelligence and human reasoning and uses it as a tool for faith rather than being the antitheses of faith. ♦ It takes the human as a physical being and looks after his or her needs in all respects which include economic and political aspects. ♦ There is an integration of all aspects of life in one harmonious whole.</p> <p>The notion of Shirk in Islam might clarify this integration of various aspects. ♦ In Islam Shirk, associating others with the belief in God, does not limit itself to believing in more than one God or that any individuals or creatures of God share in any of the divine attributes of God. ♦ In fact this act of Shirk, which is condemned, involves recognition of any authority as the ultimate authority in place of or along side with the authority of God. ♦ The authority of God is the one that should be supreme. ♦ I believe that this has been basically been the teaching of all the Prophets in the past. ♦ This is not something that should be regarded as a total innovation of Islam. ♦ We are simply saying that people may have misinterpreted the mission of the prophets to mean that religion only has to do with the spiritual or moral part. ♦ All prophets taught this basic notion in some way or the other.</p> <p>♦</p> <p><strong>Host: ♦ How would you respond people who say that Jesus (PBUH) said ♦ Render unto Caesar what is Caesar and render unto God that which is God?♦</strong></p> <p>Jamal Badawi:</p> <p>Even if we assumed that Jesus (PBUH) did actually say that, we won't get into whether he said it or not, my humble understanding as a Muslim is that he did not mean what these words are commonly interpreted to mean. ♦ If we go to this particular quotation and read the context we will notice that people came with an evil intention of trapping Prophet Jesus (PBUH). ♦ They were trying to prove to the Roman authorities that this man was defying their authority and he should be punished for it. ♦ One way of trying to reach this objective is that they came to him and wanted to extract from him a statement that could be interpreted as defiant to the Roman authorities. ♦ So they came to him and asked if they should pay the taxes to the Roman authorities, government. ♦ Prophet Jesus, in my humble understanding, was smart enough and was guided by God by inspiration to understand the evil intention behind this apparently

innocent question. ♦ So he replied </p> <p>♦Render unto Caesar what is Caesar and render unto God that which is God. ♦♦ He never meant that there are two authorities and that in this universe part of the authority is under the domain of God, limited and restricted to Church, and the other part belonging to temporal authorities. ♦ This would contradict the very basic notion of the supremacy of God. ♦ This doesn't give his enemies a chance to take from him what they really wanted. ♦ One can also refer to the fact that the nature of the mission of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) as was explained in the Quran was that he did not come with a complete law and it is quoted in the Gospel ♦I came not to destroy or prophets, I came to fulfill. ♦♦ So his mission was not to come up with a new set of laws and regulations but rather to add some spirituality to the formalistic practice of religion that existed among the Israelites of his time. ♦ As the Quran indicates his mission was a transitory one that covered a certain period of time till the last Prophet Muhammad comes spilling out through revelation given to him the complete and more explicit way of living which includes spiritual as well as legal aspects of life. ♦ The nature and scope of his mission made it unnecessary to detail the relationship with the temporal authority. ♦ As I said earlier the notion of separation of religious from temporal is something which is alien to the essence of all of revelation given to all Prophets because it contradicts the notion of servitude to God alone.</p> <p>♦</p> <p><strong>Host: ♦ Can you elaborate on the notion of servitude to God and how it relates to the political system in your opinion?</strong></p> <p>Jamal Badawi:</p> <p>The Quran indicates that one of the biggest problems of humanity have not been whether or not to believe in God, whether or not to admit and recognize that God is the creator but rather the failure to carry this belief to its logical conclusion and to be true servants of God and to submit to the will of God. ♦ In the Quran in (23:84) it speaks about questions that disbelievers would respond to in the affirmative. ♦ When they are asked to whom the earth and what is over the earth, they will respond that it belongs to God. ♦ When they are asked to whom the heavens and what is therein belongs they say it belongs to God. ♦ When they are asked to whom is the possession over all of creation they will say it belongs to God. ♦ In a way they admit that everything belongs to God but they rebel against what the one and only creator of the universe commands them to do. ♦ In the Quran in (43:86) it says that if you ask them who created them they will reply that God created them. ♦ Again if one admits that God is their creator it follows logically that one should follow what the Creator tells you to do. ♦ In the same light in (29:61) it talks about asking these people who created the heavens and earth and they would say God; who made subservient to you the sun and the moon and they would say God; who brought down water from the sky so it would provide you with agriculture and vegetation and they will admit that it is God but again they stop at this point. ♦ What we are saying is that the problems of humanity both in the past and present is not the admission of the supremacy of God but rather human pride, vanity and the refusal to accept His guidance, command and direction.</p> <p>♦</p> <p><strong>Host: ♦ Is there evidence in the Quran that the establishment of an Islamic system of government is mandatory?</strong></p> <p>Jamal Badawi:</p> <p>There are numerous evidence showing this. ♦ In the Quran in (3:154) ♦Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah's. ♦♦ In the Quran in (7:54) ♦Is it not His to create and to govern? ♦♦ Again as we explained in the previous question some people's problem is that they stop at the creation but when it comes to God's right as a the Creator to govern and tell us what to do is separate. ♦ This beautiful and very concise verse put them both together that if one admits that God is the creator then one has to admit that He is the one who should govern. ♦ Govern here doesn't simply mean that he should govern the universe in terms of physical phenomena but also moral laws, social laws, political laws, economic laws. ♦ These

are all ultimately are the authority and domain of God. ♦ In a similar way there is an interesting quotation in the Quran in (43:84) ♦ It is He Who is Allah in heaven and Allah on earth; and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge. ♦♦ It is not like some people think where the domain of God is only the spiritual things because God is so busy to worry about our worldly affairs. ♦ As God is Lord in Heavens and as the spiritual part of our lives should be dedicated to Him so should our earthly life. ♦ Our earthly life is not all just prayers, supplications or rights. ♦ Earthly rights include economics as much as it includes social and political. ♦ This shows us what the orientation of Islam is. ♦ There are two quotations in the Quran which have the same expressions in (6:57) and (12:40) ♦ He is the best of judge ♦ and ♦ the command is for none but Allah. ♦♦ These are broader citations which address the question of servitude and the acceptance of God's directives.

In one really interesting section it described those who refuse to rule or judge in accordance with what God revealed as unbelievers, wrongdoers and rebels. ♦ In the Quran in (5:47-53) ♦ Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel. ♦♦ Then it goes on to describe specific things then in the end of the verse it says that whoever doesn't judge according to what Allah has revealed are wrongdoers. ♦ Later it says they are rebels against God. ♦ If a person who is in a position of rule doesn't comply with these rules then all three descriptions apply to him. ♦ Interestingly enough the same section directs its message to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) telling him as in verse 52 to ♦ Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed. ♦♦ Even the Prophet himself was directed to implement the law of God. ♦ This section ends by asking people ♦ Do they then seek after a judgment of (the days of) ignorance? ♦ And then it says ♦ But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgement than Allah. ♦♦ The Quran is full of indications that are direct, indirect, explicit, implicit that show without any shred of doubt that the establishment of Islamic order or rule is mandatory that Muslims must establish.

We also find that in the Prophetic Tradition many times he speaks about having an ameer and a leader. ♦ In one case he said that if three people are traveling they should chose one of them as their head or leader. ♦ What then do we expect if there is a whole State? ♦ There is no doubt historically speaking that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not only act as a prophet in the common notion but he was also a statesman, he was the head of a State, he conducted affairs of Muslims, he established the mechanism that looked after the implementation of those rules. ♦ In fact many times when we look at the Quran we notice that it addresses believers in the plural. ♦ Even in matters of prayers it addresses people in plural showing the collective orientation and how we have to act together as a community to implement the will of God. ♦ Many times the Quran speaks about certain rules or aspects of criminal law which one person can not implement so the very fact that these rules are mentioned in the Quran shows us that there must be some organized State and leadership that makes sure that rules are implemented in a faire and impartial way. ♦ The evidence is overwhelming that we can not separate religion from the State in Islam.