

Summary of 7.6 "Social Responsibility I"

First we emphasized that Islam is not an individualistic religion which only regulates the relationship between man and God. Islam actually goes beyond that as it also regulates the relationships between mankind and between mankind and the universe at large. In the Quran it addresses people in the plural not only in matters of government, economic or social system but even in matters of pure worship, like prayers in order to show the collective orientation of the faith. We also discussed some of the mechanisms of translating these points into action; building a righteous society by using the concept of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. We indicated that enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is an obligation on the Muslim, if they are true to their faith, because part of cooperating for the common good of the society. We also mentioned the saying of the Prophet (PBUH) that if someone sees something wrong that one should try to change it by action, then by words and if that doesn't work then to change it in his heart. We indicated that there is wisdom in this order of importance but that one should take into account what is more effective in a given situation. Finally, we discussed one of the main objections that people use (that they don't want to get involved) when it comes to enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, an apathetic feeling which is not only harmful to society at large but eventually when everyone turns their face the other way the punishment and destruction will effect everybody.

7.7 Social Responsibility II

Host: Some people argue that the principle of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil goes against the injunction in the Quran that says that there is no compulsion in religion, is this true?

Jamal Badawi

There is actually full harmony between both. It is true that there is a verse in the Quran in (2:256) which says "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things." It is a cherished Islamic principle that one can not force (by force or improper means) someone to believe in something that he or she did not accept. This however does not negate the collective responsibility to fight evil and corruption and indecency in society. Indeed tell me of any society that tolerates the spread of evil and corruption and their excuse is that there is no compulsion in religion. No compulsion in religion means that one is free to accept whatever faith they want but one is not free to damage society and infringe on the rights of other people. Compulsion is not bad, when a cop stops someone because they made a traffic violation or ask someone to take a breath test one is compelled to do so, and society accepts this because there are legitimate reasons for it.

A truly Islamic society has an important mission and a responsibility which is grave and requires taking concerted action to propagate the good and to stop evil. This is not interference with the freedom of religion but protection of religion from those who want to tamper with the rights of other people.

Host: Is it true that there is a verse in the Quran that says that a person should not get involved with a person who is misguided if they are guided themselves?

Jamal Badawi

You are referring to (5:105) "O ye who believe! Guard your own souls: If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray. The goal of you all is to Allah, it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do." The misunderstanding of this verse is not new because even in the days of the Prophet (PBUH) he carefully explained it. The first Caliph, after the Prophet, Abu Bakr was quoted in Al Tirmithi and Abu Dawood as having said to the people that they were

misinterpreting this verse. ♦ He says ♦ You are misusing this verse. ♦ I have heard the messenger of Allah say ♦ If people see an oppressor and do not try to check him, it would be about time that God would send a punishment that would engulf all of them. ♦ ♦ This means that, collectively speaking, even if we are good if we do not stop it, God's punishment would involve the good and the evil. ♦ ♦ He went on to say ♦ I also heard the Messenger of God say ♦ If there is any nation among whom rebellion against God is a practice, and they are able to change but they do not, then God will be able to engulf them with His punishment. ♦

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♦ It follows like the previous verse that there is no problem with reconciliation but this doesn't mean that one has the license to do whatever they want be it good or evil. ♦ When the verse says not to worry it means in the sense of not killing one's self because someone does not believe. ♦ If someone does not believe and does not infringe on the rights of others, does not spread corruption and evil then it is fine and the verse is applicable. ♦ But if someone is deliberately cutting at the roots of society while people ignore it and mind themselves is alien to the spirit of Islam. ♦ In Islam one can not turn their back to their responsibility which is to establish the Will of God on earth.

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♦ Host: ♦ When the ♦ Will of God ♦ is mentioned some people think that this can be interpreted in the wrong way leading to its miss use; how can this misuse be prevented in an Islamic situation? ♦

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♦ Jamal Badawi ♦ There is no faith on earth that guaranties that everybody will be perfect, so long as there are imperfect human beings. ♦ The teachings of Islam have built in mechanisms that make sure that things can not be justified from a theological basis if they are not right. ♦ There are unique and very strict guaranties in Islam. ♦ To start with, the notion that somebody is claiming to implement the Will of God emanates from the understanding of the revelation. ♦ The concept of revelation in Islam is a little different compared to other communities of believers. ♦ There are some people who do not believe that revelation refers to a particular Holly Book, Scripture or certain legal injunctions but they feel that revelation is something experiential and is some sort of spirit within a person that guides them and shows them the right path. ♦ There is a big difference between personal insight and revelation which represents a specific and actual reflection of the Will of God. ♦ The danger of claiming that revelation is the matter of experiential feelings is really dangerous. ♦ For example recently we heard about the Yorkshire Ripper in Britain who started murdering prostitutes and when he was questioned he simply said that it was the Will of God. ♦ Anybody who wants to do evil can take advantage of this loose concept of revelation being an individual spirit guiding them. ♦ A Muslim would not say that there is no relevance to personal insight that God may grant to those who are pious, but this insight is not binding on others. ♦ To justify evil actions on the basis of insight that infringes on the rights of other people is a very poor excuse. ♦ In Islam the line is drawn quite clearly and the only decisive expression of the Will of God are the decisive words of the Quran (the actual words of God) as well as the explanation of Prophet Muhammad who was guided by the Angel of Revelation in whatever he taught. ♦ That removes the misinterpretation of the Will of God from becoming a law as it is not binding on others. ♦ Even if people differ as to how to interpret the Will of God from the clear text of the Quran and Sunnah it is still not an experiential matter that will clarify it but the concept of Ijmaa. ♦ Islam has a mechanism where jurists have to discuss he situation with other jurists and come up with consensus on the basis of the Quran and Sunnah. ♦ This interpretation still does not give everyone a license to enforce it by hand. ♦ For example, in a matter of criminal even if the interpretation is right and consented to by all the learned scholars one must still have a just state in order to implement certain aspects of criminal law.

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Host: What is more important enjoining the good or social concern?

Jamal Badawi: Worship is not just made up of rituals as the Quran indicates this point clearly in (2:177) It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or west; but it is righteousness-to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Books, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah fearing. All of these moral, social, political aspects are all ingrained in the Islamic definition of worship or righteousness. It is very difficult to make a close line of distinction between worship and social concern because they are all a form of worship. In a saying by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) found in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmithi and Nasaii he said A person who is looking after an orphan or a poor person is just like the person who puts his life on the line for the sake of God and just like a person who stands in prayer at night and fasts during the day. So pure acts of worship like fasting, praying and sacrificing ones life are as good as taking care of an orphan.

In another occasion the Prophet (PBUH) was traveling and it was very hot, some people were fasting and some were not, those who were fasting fell down in exhaustion and the people who were not fasting set up tents to protect them and to provide them with care. The Prophet said Those who are not fasting have taken all the reward today! Someone who is devoted to a community is just as good as someone who is suffering and going through thirst and hunger. This is the attitude that Islam takes towards the notion of social concern. We can not separate it by saying that worship is one thing and social involvement is another.

Host: How can social concern be translated into concrete actions?

Jamal Badawi: One of the most crucial aspects of social concern is social solidarity. This solidarity might take different forms: family, which is the corner stone of society, which includes kindness to parents, kindness to wives and kindness to children. Islam sees that if there are broken families then society is broken and it appears that most of the problems in society that we face today are largely a result of family breakdowns. By having solidarity, love and affection within the family one builds a basis for social solidarity. Social solidarity in the more general and collective aspect involves the obligation to perfect a job or assignment that is given to one and each person should feel that they are guardians of the overall good of society. The Prophet (PBUH) said as narrated in Bukhari and Muslim that Each person is like a Sheppard and each one of you is responsible for what you are given. Another sub concept under the social concept is cooperation. The Quran in (5:2) says Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancor: fear Allah for Allah is strict in punishment. This is again an aspect that keeps society together. Another aspect is the protection of the weak; the Prophet said as narrated in Ahmad that if there is a neighborhood where one of the people wakes up hungry that God disassociates Himself from them. Another Hadith says He is not a believer who sleeps with a full stomach while his neighbor sleeps while hungry. Another Hadith which shows the beauty of this unity and solidarity as narrated in Bukhari and Muslim where he says The similitude of true believers is like a big structure which the different parts holding and supporting each other. In another Hadith he says Believers in mutual affection are like one body, if one part aces the whole body aces. People should be regarded, in a given

community, as one single body without ignoring any one part of the body.

Host: Can you elaborate on the concept of social justice in Islam?

Jamal Badawi: Social justice is not a good translation for the Arabic word *adl* which means just balance. This is used in reference to cosmic things like God created the world in just balance. The exact word is used in the Quran in (87:2) Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion. and (82:7) Him Who created thee, Fashioned thee in due proportion, and gave thee a just bias.

In normal cases the symmetry is obvious when we look a person's eyes, arms and legs. In the area of social life God speaks of *adl* in (4:58) Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice.

The idea here is not only to have justice in the legalistic sense or judicial sense but rather to establish a social structure that does not persecute one group, one minority, one race or the weak.

Host: What are the main characteristics of a truly ideal society?

Jamal Badawi: First of all, in order to describe a society as a purely Islamic regardless of the failure or degree of success that Muslims have achieved it must be a society in which the ultimate authority in the Hand of God. This means that society does not follow the interpretations or misinterpretations of humans beings. We have guaranties and method for the proper methodology of interpretation. When there is a society established on this foundation the rules are not just enforced by the government because one fears that they will be punished if they don't follow them but rather it gives it a spiritual sanction, it gives it respectability and it makes one realize that the rules are not bias in any way because it is coming from God.

Second, it is a society that has a historic mission which goes beyond mere existence, national glory but one that has mercy unto all mankind with its universal brotherhood and equality. Third, it is a society that is justly balanced that takes care of the needs of the individual including the various segments in society, spiritually and material progress. Fourthly, it is a society where controls are not just in appeal to the power of the law or just spirituality but rather both of them work together to motivate the individual to comply. The challenge is for both Muslims and non-Muslims to strive towards this ideal which is in line with divine guidance.