BASIC PRINCIPLES
OF THE
ISLAMIC
WORLDVIEW

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT

Say: “Our life takes its] hue from God! And who could give a better hue [to life] than God, if we but truly worship Him?”

(Al-Baqarah: 138)

The Islamic concept enjoys unique characteristics that distinguish it from all other concepts, giving it an independent character and a special nature of its own. This nature cannot take on diverse forms or be derived from other concepts.

Although these characteristics are numerous and various, they are all integrated into a single property from which they all emerge and to which they all return, the property of Divinity.

The concept of Divinity, with all its characteristics and fundamentals, comes to men from God with the purpose of their assimilating it and adhering to its implications in their lives without adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it. It is therefore not a concept subject to development in and of itself; what develops is rather human life once placed within its framework by perceiving its meaning and responding to it. For the source that established the concept is the same source that created man, the omnipotent Creator Who knows well the nature of man and the needs of his life as they evolve across time and Who placed within the concept the qualities that respond to those needs.

If the concepts, creeds and systems that people have established for themselves have required a constant change of their bases and modification of their principles, or even a complete reversal when they
are seen to fall short of the evolving needs of humanity, it is precisely because those concepts are unconnected to divine guidance; they are the creations of human beings whose perspectives are necessarily limited. They can envision only the circumstances and situations that are disclosed to them in a given period and in a given region of the earth. Their vision is affected by man’s limitations, his ignorance, passion and emotions. On the other hand, the Islamic concept of Divinity, is utterly distinct from man’s, with respect to both its origin and its characteristics, and therefore it does not need to develop or change. The One Who established this concept can envision without limits of time or space; His knowledge is immune to the obstacles of ignorance and deficiency; and He chooses without being influenced by passion or emotion. Therefore, He has established for the entirety of humanity, in all places and at all times, a firm principle within the framework of which human life freely advances and develops.

The law of motion is one of the laws of this universe, as is apparent, and it is likewise a law for human life insofar as it is a part of existence. However, it is not a motion that is free of restraints, nor can there be motion without norms and regulations. If every star and every planet has its own orbit, its own sphere and axis around which it rotates, human existence must similarly have an axis and a sphere within which it rotates. If that were not the case, disorder and disaster would ensue. The same would occur if a star fell from its orbit or changed direction without regulation or any control. Similarly, the concept of Divinity has to be constant for human life to evolve around it and move within it. This concept was created to support and sustain humanity at all times as it grows, develops and advances. Therefore the concept is complete and whole in itself; it is not liable to expansion or supplementation, and it does not accept “spare parts” added to it from outside itself. It is God’s creation and therefore utterly disparate from what any other than God may have created. Man can neither add anything to this concept nor modify it. It came to man to augment him, to help him mature, progress and move forward, to augment his heart and mind, his life and reality. It came to awaken all his capacities and talents, to release them to operate positively and with guidance, enabling them to yield their finest fruits, instead of being squandered and left idle, or falling prey to deviance and corruption. Thus, the con-
cept of Divinity does not require external support, a different pathway or a nature other than its own. It plays a unique role in human life with all its concepts, methods, instructions, and tools, thus bringing human life into harmony with the universe, preventing its movement from clashing with that of the universe and the damage that would result.

Therefore, the concept is complete and balanced, taking into consideration all aspects of human life and the correct balance among those aspects. It further considers all the stages through which the human race passes, for the One Who created this concept is also the Creator of man, the One Who infuses knowledge into His creation. He is All-Knowing; there is nothing unknown to Him concerning the life of mankind and the various circumstances that surround it. He was thus able to establish for him a correct, comprehensive, balanced and realistic concept embracing all aspects and stages of his life.

This concept is, therefore, the only criterion to which man should refer, at all times and in all places, with respect to his concepts and values, his modes of conduct, his morals and deeds. It is by means of it that man knows where he stands in relation to God and the truth. There is no other criterion, no standard, ancient or modern, to which he might refer. It is from this concept alone that he derives his values and standards; it is by means of it that he forms his reason and his heart; it is its imprint that he fixes on his consciousness and his conduct; and it is his source of reference in whatever confronts him:

"O you who have attained to faith! Pay heed unto God, and pay heed unto the Apostle and unto those from among you who have been entrusted with authority; and if you are at variance over any matter, refer it unto God and the Apostle, if you [truly] believe in God and the Last Day. This is the best [for you], and best in the end."

(An-Nisa': 59)

From these basic characteristics of the Islamic concept, those that determine its nature, together with the other characteristics deriving from it, it is plain that this concept is unique and its distinguishing features are unparalleled. It is therefore a methodological error to try to borrow criteria from the various schools of human thought now current in the world and to have them interact with this utterly unique and independent concept.
We will understand this issue more clearly as we proceed with this research. We content ourselves at this point with establishing the principle just outlined as an essential rule to follow in every area of Islamic thought or research. It is here that the roads diverge.

Now let us look in more detail at this basic concept and the characteristics that derive from it.
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Divinity is the first characteristic and the source of the Islamic concept. It is a concept of belief that is revealed by God, unique to this source and not derived from any other. This distinguishes it from the philosophical concepts established by the human mind concerning the nature of God, the universe, and mankind, and the relations between them. It is also distinct from pagan beliefs that arise from emotion, imagination, and illusions.

One can confidently affirm that the Islamic concept is the only creedal concept that has retained its divine origin and nature. Concepts by earlier heavenly religions had been subjected to distortion in one form or another, as we have previously seen. Commentaries, interpretations, additions were introduced into the very substance of those concepts, so that their divine character was changed. Islam is the only religion to have retained its principles in uncontaminated integrity, truth remaining clearly separate from falsehood.

God’s truthful words in this regard are:

“Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high, step by step, this reminder: and, behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption].” (Al-Hijr: 9)

It is this indisputable truth that provides the Islamic concept with its unique value.

“Say: Surely God has guided me to the way that is most straight” (Al-An'am: 161)
In general, the crucial distinction between a philosophical concept and a creedral concept is that the former arises in the human mind as an attempt to interpret existence and man's relationship with it. This concept remains within the boundaries of cold, intellectual knowledge. A creedral concept, on the other hand, is one that is derived from the conscience, that interacts with man's emotions and life. It is a living bond between man and existence, or between man and the Creator.

The Islamic concept is distinct from such a creedral concept of belief because, as we mentioned earlier, it is a divine concept derived from God and delivered to mankind, not one created by man. Human beings received this concept exclusively from their Creator; it is not a concept invented by mankind as both the pagan and philosophical concepts were, whatever differences separated them from each other. Man's role with respect to it is to receive it, comprehend it, and act in accordance with it.

The divine source of this concept, which is the Noble Qur'an, states that everything comes from God, is a gift and a mercy from Him. Human thought, as represented in the Prophet—upon whom be peace and blessings—and all the Messengers of God who received this Islamic concept in its original form, had no part in its creation. They received it as guidance for themselves, and a means for guiding others. This guidance was a gift from God to be received with an open heart. The duty of the Prophet, or any other Messenger, with respect to the concept, was simply to convey it accurately, to transmit it faithfully without mingling with revelation any human thought, that which God calls "fancy" (hawa). As for the guiding of hearts and opening them to acceptance of the message, this was not part of the Prophet's responsibility, being God's concern alone:

"And thus, too, [O Muhammad,] have We revealed unto thee a life—giving message, [coming] at Our behest.

[For this message came unto thee,] thou didst not know what revelation is, nor what faith [implies]: but [now] We have caused this [message] to be a light, whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants: and, verily, [on the strength thereof] thou, too, shalt guide [men] onto the straight way—the way that leads to God, to whom all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belongs.

Oh, verily, with God is the beginning and the end of all things!"

(Ash-Shura: 52-53)
“Consider this unfolding [of God’s message], as it comes down from on high!

This fellow—man of yours has not gone astray, nor is he deluded, and neither does he speak out of his own desire: that [which he conveys to you] is but [a divine] inspiration with which he is being inspired.”

(An-Najm: 1-4)

“Now if he [whom we have entrusted with it] had dared to attribute some [of his own] sayings unto Us. We would indeed have seized him by his right hand, and would indeed have cut his life-vein, and none of you could have saved him!”

(Al-Haqah: 44-47)

“O APOSTLE! Announce all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee by thy Sustainer: for unless thou dost it fully, thou wilt not have delivered His message [at all]. And God will protect thee from [unbelieving] men: behold, God does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.”

(Al-Ma’idah: 67)

“VERILY, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou loveth: but it is God who guides him that wills [to be guided]; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided.”

(Al-Qasas: 56)

“And whomsoever God wills to guide, his bosom He opens wide with willingness towards self-surrender [unto Him]; and whomsoever He wills to let go astray, his bosom He causes to be tight and constricted, as if he were climbing unto the skies: it is thus that God inflicts horror upon those who will not believe.”

(Al-An’am: 125)

This emphasis on the source of the Islamic concept is what provides it with its fundamental and supreme value. It is the sole trustworthy source, free of the imperfection, ignorance and fallibility which accompany all human action, and which we see manifested in concepts of human origination, whether they be pagan or philosophical in nature, or the concepts with which man has subverted originally heavenly beliefs. This source is also reliable because it is suitable to human nature, responds to all its aspects, and fulfills all its needs. It is therefore from this concept that the firmest and most comprehensive way of life is derived.

Although the Islamic concept did not arise in the human mind, the mind is not banished from its domain nor is it forbidden to work on it, “work” meaning in this context to receive and comprehend the concept,
to apply in the actualities of life. The concept should be received without recourse to pre-conceived notions derived from other sources or from one’s own mental categories in the light of which one then proceeds to weigh and evaluate the concept. On the contrary, all thoughts and criteria should be derived from the concept itself, and one should orient oneself accordingly. The objective truths contained in the concept should be derived from the divine source that is at the origin of the concept, not from any source external to it. The concept is the balance in which are weighed all perceptions and thoughts, all values and ideas, in order to distinguish the true from the false and the right from the wrong.

“O you who have attained to faith! Pay heed unto God, and pay heed unto the Apostle and unto those from among you who have been entrusted with authority; and if you are at variance over any matter, refer it unto God and the Apostle, if you [truly] believe in God and the Last Day. This is the best [for you], and best in the end.”

(An-Nisa: 59)

At the same time, precisely as weighed in the balance of this concept, human thought is considered a valuable tool, responsible for understanding the characteristics and fundamentals of the Islamic concept as derived from its divine source, and deducing the values and norms that surround it, without adding anything to them or distorting them in any way. The Islamic system of education devotes great effort and attention to strengthening and rectifying thought by way of preparation for the tasks with which it is entrusted.11

It is not thought alone, however, that receives the concept; it simply shares in receiving it. For the distinguishing characteristic of this concept, which springs from its divine origin, is that it addresses human nature as an integrated whole. Moreover, there are matters that thought cannot comprehend in their essential nature or in causative or qualitative terms, and thought can in good conscience submit to them unquestioningly. For logic dictates acceptance of the simple truth that the domain covered by the concept is greater and vaster than the entirety of human reality, including as it does such subjects as the nature of the divine essence and attributes, as well as the manner in which God’s power connects to His creation. This is the domain of

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the Ultimate, the Pre- and Post-Eternal, the Universal, the Absolute. Humans are mortal creatures constrained in time and space, and cannot comprehend the Universal and Absolute.

"O you who live in close communion with [evil] invisible beings and humans! If you [think that you] can pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, pass beyond them! [But] you cannot pass beyond them, save by a sanction [from God]!" (Ar-Rahman: 33)

No human vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all human vision: for He alone is unfathomable, all-aware.” (Al-An'am: 103)

Man with his entire nature, not simply with thought, is incapable of acting beyond these boundaries. His duty is to receive the concept from the absolute divine essence that encompasses all existence and to do so within the limits and responsibilities of human nature. Let us add, by way of clarification, that human beings are in thrall to their natures as created beings, neither universal nor absolute, neither pre- nor post-eternal. Their perceptions are therefore as limited as their nature. Man is further limited by his designated function as divine vice-regent on earth in order to realize there the true meaning of worshipping God; he has been endowed with a degree of perception appropriate to that function, neither more nor less. There are many matters that he does not need to know for fulfilling that function, and he has not therefore been given the means for perceiving them with respect to their essence or quality; he can simply perceive their possibility. For on the one hand, humans know that God’s will is absolute, and on the other, that they are created beings, neither universal nor absolute; hence they acknowledge it is impossible for them to comprehend the attributes of the Pre- and Post-Eternal, the One Who encompasses all things.

The Noble Qur'an refers to some of the matters for the comprehension of which man was not endowed with the necessary power, either because they lie beyond the limited scope of human nature or because he has no need of them for fulfilling his assigned function. The Qur'an also points out how the sound disposition of the true believer accepts these matters and how a deviant person rejects them. One of these matters is the fundamental nature of the divine essence; man cannot comprehend it, nor does he have any basis for comparison or analogy.
No human vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all human vision: for He alone is unfathomable, all-aware.

(Al-An'am: 103)

"AND ON WHATEVER you may differ, [O believers.] the verdict thereon rests with God.

[Say, therefore:] "Such is God, my Sustainer: in Him have I placed my trust, and unto Him do I always turn!"

(Ash-Shura: 10)

"Hence, do not coin any similitudes for God! Verily, God knows [all], whereas you have no [real] knowledge."

(An-Nahl: 74)

Furthermore, there is the relationship of God's Will with His creation:

"[Zachariah] exclaimed: "O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me, and my wife is barren?"

Answered [the angel]: "Thus it is: God does what He wills."

(Al 'Imran: 40)

"Said she: "O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?"

[The angel] answered: "Thus it is: God creates what He wills: when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, 'Be!'—and it is."

(Al 'Imran: 47)

"Thus it is:" i.e., no explanation is given of the modality of the affair, for it lies beyond human comprehension. Whoever seeks for an explanation falls into error and confusion, for he is bound to make a comparison with human acts, despite the great disparity involved.12

Another matter belonging to this category is the nature of the spirit (ruh), whether by it life, Gabriel or revelation be intended.

"AND THEY will ask thee about [the nature of] divine inspiration. Say: "This inspiration [comes] at my Sustainer's behest; and [you cannot understand its nature, O men, since] you have been granted very little of [real] knowledge."

(Al-Isra': 85)

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12 Aristotle, Plato and others were mistaken when they tried to explain the connection of the act of the creator with creation, because they drew a false analogy with the connection of man's act with its object.
The realm of the unseen is also veiled from human knowledge except for what God has granted to whom He pleases:

“For, with Him are the keys to the things that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perception: none knows them but He.

And He knows all that is on land and in the sea; and not a leaf falls but He knows it; and neither is there a grain in the earth’s deep darkness, nor anything living or dead, but is recorded in [His] clear decree.”

(Al-An‘am: 39)

“He [alone] knows that which is beyond the reach of a created being’s perception, and to none does He disclose aught of the mysteries of His Own unfathomable knowledge, unless it be to an apostle whom He has been pleased to elect [there-for]; and then He sends forth [the forces of heaven] to watch over him in whatever lies open before him and in what is beyond his ken.”

(Al-Jinn: 26–27)

“Say [O Prophet]: “I do not say unto you, ‘God’s treasures are with me’; nor [do I say], ‘I know the things that are beyond the reach of human perception’; nor do I say unto you, ‘Behold, I am an angel’: I but follow what is revealed to me.”

Say: “Can the blind and the seeing be deemed equal? Will you not, then, take thought?”

(Al-An‘am: 50)

“Verily, with God alone rests the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come; and He [it is who] sends down rain; and He [alone] knows what is in the wombs: whereas no one knows what he will reap tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die.

Verily, God [alone] is all-knowing, all-aware.”

(Lugman: 34)

Another unseen reality is the promise of the Last Hour:

“They will ask thee [O Prophet] about the Last Hour: “When will it come to pass?”

[But] how couldst thou tell anything about it, [seeing that] with thy Sustainer alone rests the beginning and the end [of all knowledge] thereof?

Thou art but [sent] to warn those who stand in awe of it.

On the Day when they behold it, [it will seem to them] as if they had tarried [in this world] no longer than one evening or [one night, ending with] its morn!”

(An-Nasi‘At: 42–46)
“Nay, but [the Last Hour] will come upon them of a sudden, and will stupefy them: and they will be unable to avert it, and neither will they be allowed any respite.” (Al-Anbiya': 40)

God Almighty expounds how these matters, which lie beyond the awareness of human beings, should be received:

“He it is who has revealed to you the Book wherein are verses clear. They are the essence of the Book, and still others are allegorical. As for those in whose heart is crookedness, they pursue the allegorical part, seeking dissension, and seeking its hidden interpretations. But no one knows its hidden interpretations except God. And those of firm knowledge say “We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.” But no one will truly grasp the Message except men of understanding. Our Lord, make not our hearts swerve after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Yourself, indeed You are the Bestower of all things.” (Al-Imran: 7–8)

With the exception of these matters, human thought or human perception is invited to contemplate and consider, to examine and investigate, to adopt and assimilate, and then to apply, both in the realm of the mind and in that of outer reality, all the implications of the divine concept.

No religion has celebrated as Islam has done the fully awakened human mind, refined its mode of operation, mobilized it for positive activity, liberated it from delusion and superstition, and at the same time protected it from overstepping its bounds and wandering guideless in the wilderness. Furthermore, no religion has equalled Islam in drawing attention to the divine norms that govern men's souls and the world in which they live, to the nature of the universe and of man, to the capacities potential within man, and to the norms of God as they affect human life and are recorded in the annals of history.

The following Qur'anic verses bear on cultivating man's perceptions and refining his method of thought and judgement:

“And never concern thyself with anything of which thou hast no knowledge: verily, thy hearing, and sight, and heart—all of them—will be called to account for it [on Judgement Day].” (Al-Isra': 36)

“O you who have attained to faith! Avoid speculation as much as possible, for speculation in some cases is a sin.” (Al-Hujurat: 12)
“Most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Assuredly conjecture can never be a substitute for the truth.”

(Yunus: 36)

“They have no knowledge whatsoever of that; they do merely conjecture.”

(Zukhruf: 20)

Drawing attention to the signs of God revealed in man’s own being and on the horizons, the Qur’an states:

“Say: “Consider whatever there is in the heavens and on earth!”

(Yunus: 101)

“AND ON EARTH there are signs [of God’s existence, visible] to all who are endowed with inner certainty, just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?”

(Adh-Dhariyat: 20–21)

“In time We shall make them fully understand Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth. [Still,] is it not enough [for them to know] that thy Sustainer is witness unto everything?”

(Fussilat: 53)

As for observing the operation of God’s norms in human life and their history, as well as the destinies of past peoples:

“Say: Travel in the land and see how He originated creation, then will God bring forth a later creation. Verily, God is able to do all things.”

(Al-Ân`abur: 20)

“Have they, then never journeyed about the earth and beheld what happened in the end to those [deniers of the truth] who lived before their time? Greater were they in power than they are; and they left a stronger impact on the earth, and built it up even better than these [are doing]; and to them [too] came their apostles with all evidence of the truth: and so, [when they rejected the truth and thereupon perished,] it was not God who wronged them, but it was they who had wronged themselves.

And once again: evil is bound to be the end of those who do evil by giving the lie to God’s messages and deriding them.”

(Al-Rum: 9–10)
“Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never yet seen how We visit the earth [with Our punishment], gradually depriving it of all that is best thereon?

For, [when] God judges, there is no power that could repel His judgment: and swift in reckoning is He!” (Ar-Ra’d: 41)

There are a great many such examples to be found in the Noble Qur’an; a complete methodology for educating, empowering and directing the human mind can be derived from them. Many such examples will be referred to in later chapters.

God, the Creator of man, knows the nature and the extent of human capabilities, for He bestowed on him the ability to deduce the laws of matter in order to subjugate matter to himself as the divine viceroy on earth. God also knows, however, that some of the secrets of life are hidden from man, the mysteries of his spiritual and rational formation, and even those aspects of his physical composition that touch on his spiritual and mental functioning. All of this is still hidden from man’s knowledge and perception. One of the greatest scientists of the twentieth century, Dr. Alexis Carrel, stated this point in complete sincerity and honesty. He writes in his book, *Man the Unknown*:

“Indeed, mankind has made a gigantic effort to know itself. Although we possess the treasure of the observations accumulated by the scientists, the philosophers, the poets, and the great mystics of all times, we have grasped only certain aspects of ourselves. We do not comprehend man as a whole. We know him as composed of distinct parts. And even these parts are created by our methods. Each one of us is made up of a procession of phantoms, in the midst of which strides an unknowable reality.

“In fact, our ignorance is profound. Most of the questions put to themselves by those who study human beings remain without answer. Immense regions of our inner world are still unknown. How do the molecules of chemical substances associate in order to form the complex and temporary organs of the cell? How do the genes contained in the nucleus of a fertilized ovum determine the characteristics of the individual deriving from the ovum? How do cells organize themselves by their own efforts into societies, such as the tissues and organs? Like

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13 See Muhammad Qutb, *Manhaj al-Tarbiyat al-Islamiyya*. 
the ants and the bees, they have advance knowledge of the part they are
designed to play in the life of the community. And hidden mechanisms
enable them to build up an organism both complex and simple. What is
the nature of our duration, of psychological time, and of physiological
time? We know that we are a compound of tissues, organs, fluids, ad
consciousness. But the relations between consciousness and cerebrum
are still a mystery. We lack almost entirely knowledge of the physiology
of nervous cells. To what extent does will power modify the organism?
How is the mind influenced by the state of the organs? In what manner
can the organic and mental characteristics, which each individual inher-
its, be changed by the mode of life, the chemical substances contained
in food, the climate, and the physiological and moral disciplines?

"We are very far from knowing what relations exist between skele-
ton, muscles, and organs, and mental and spiritual activities. We are
ignorant of the factors that bring about nervous equilibrium and resist-
tance to fatigue and to diseases. We do not know how moral sense,
judgment, and audacity could be augmented. What is the relative
importance of intellectual, moral, and mystical activities? What is the
significance of aesthetics and religious sense? What form of energy is
responsible for telepathic communications? Without any doubt, certain
physiological and mental factors determine happiness or misery, suc-
cess, or failure. But we do not know what they are. We cannot artifi-
cially give to any individual the aptitude of happiness. As yet, we do
not know what environment is the most favourable for the optimum
development of civilized man. Is it possible to suppress struggle, effort,
and suffering from our physiological and spiritual formation? How can
we prevent the degeneracy of man in modern civilization? Many other
questions could be asked on subjects that are of utmost interest.
They would also remain unanswered. It is quite evident that the accom-
plishments of all these sciences having man as an object remain insuf-
cient, and that our knowledge of ourselves is still most rudimentary."

This is the extent of our ignorance of the true nature of man, one
of the truths required for any comprehensive scheme of belief. Indeed,
we are ignorant of some of the smallest and most obvious aspects of
our own nature. This is what is affirmed by one of the greatest schol-
ars of the twentieth century whose learning, authority and rank no
one disputes.
aspects of his nature. No matter how much we may differ with his approach to the issue as a whole, we take heed of his witness, for we see that he has put his finger on the main reason, which is the formation of our intellect, a formation suited to man's function on earth as the divine vice-regent. It enables him to progress in understanding the laws of matter, in bringing them under his control and even in understanding more and more aspects of the nature of man. However, the mysteries of his creation will remain eternally hidden from him, as will the mysteries of life and death and of what constitutes man's own spirit, for none of this is needed by man to fulfil his basic function.

From the testimony of Carrel, two self-evident truths emerge:

The first is the truth of God's mercy to mankind. God did not leave man alone with the ignorance to which our twentieth century scientist bears witness, compelling him to construct his own creedal concept. This concept includes a comprehensive interpretation, not only of the true nature of man which is unknown to him, but also of the nature of divinity, the universe, and life, as well as the interconnections among all these. Since man is ignorant of his own reality, God did not leave it to him to establish the modes of his life and the laws governing it, for such matters require complete and comprehensive knowledge not only of man's nature but also of the universe in which man lives, as well as the very essence of life itself and the supreme power that creates and administers the universe.

The second truth is the arrogance of those who, in past times and present, have attempted themselves to put forward a comprehensive interpretation of the universe, life and mankind, and to lay down paths, systems and laws for regulating the lives of mankind. The ignorance underlying these endeavours can lead only to bewilderment and the accumulated debris of corrupt and deficient concepts and methodologies, to misery and wretchedness. Such are the bitter fruits of arrogance and ignorance.15

The divine concept is a pure gift of God to mankind. It exempts weak and ignorant humanity from the need to struggle with these concerns and protects them from squandering their energies in a domain where they are ill equipped to venture. Further, it frees them to receive and assimilate this gift, to take it as a basis on which to found their

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15 See the present writer's *al-Islam wa Muhhilat al-Hadits*. 
lives, as a criterion for their values, and as a guide to accompany them. If men move away from this path, they wander in misguidance and confusion, a prey to concepts that make one either laugh or weep. They fall into wretchedness thanks to all the systems that are erected on the basis of profound ignorance.

In his valuable book *What the World Lost with the Decline of the Muslims*, Professor Abul Hasan al-Nadwi has the following to say:

“The Prophets had imparted to man the true knowledge of God’s existence and His attributes and actions. They had laid the foundations upon which man could erect the edifice of his own spiritual conduct without getting involved in the fruitless metaphysical discussions on “being” and “knowing.” But man heeded not. Instead of being grateful for Divine guidance, he allowed the ship of his thought to drift on uncharted seas. He behaved like an explorer who, setting aside the geographical charts and maps, tries to scale every height, fathom every depth, and measure every distance on his own initiative. The results of such endeavours can at best be a few sketchy notes and incomplete hints picked up here and there. So when the people tried to reach God with the help of reason alone and without the aid of light furnished by the Prophet’s teachings, the knowledge of God gathered by them consisted of little else besides random thoughts, conflicting theories, and haphazard conclusions.”

Those who have tried to establish creedal concepts drawing on their own resources, or elaborate philosophical concepts to interpret existence, are in fact more severely misguided than those whom Nadwi describes and cause greater danger to humanity than they do. Still graver was the distortion of messages revealed by God, particularly in the case of Christianity. The Church in Europe came to exercise authority in the name of a distorted Christianity, imposing by force its false concepts and its erroneous and defective teachings about the physical world, and barbarically opposing scientific research. All this was done in the name of religion, but religion had no part in it.

Such situations arose as a result of the human mind distorting and polluting the divine origin of the Christian faith and the Christian concept, attributing its own products to the faith as such.

Let us remind ourselves that all the tendencies that arose in Europe in opposition to religion and religious thought actually owed their
STABILITY

"And so, set thy face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created—this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not."

(At-Rum: 30)

Divinity is the main characteristic of the Islamic concept from which all other concepts originate. Since the Islamic concept is divine and originates from God, it is the duty of all humanity to receive it, respond to it, adapt to it and apply it in real life. It is not the product of human thought, of a given environment, of a certain period or of any other earthly factor, having been granted to man by his Creator as a gift and a source of mercy. From this characteristic of the concept, another property emerges, that of motion within a stable framework around a stable pivot.

There is stability in the fundamentals and essential values of the Islamic concept. The fundamentals do not change or evolve, as do the external aspects of life and the forms of practical existence. Indeed, the changes to which those aspects and forms are subject are the stable fundamentals and values of the concept. This does not imply “freezing” of the motion of thought or of life; indeed, it permits or even encourages such motion to take place, albeit within a stable framework and around a stable pivot.

This combination of motion and stability marks the entirety of God’s handiwork in creation; it is not simply a trait of the Islamic concept.
The matter of this universe, whether it be the atom, the radiation that is released when the atom is destroyed, or any other matter, all has a stable essence that continues to move and assume constantly changing and evolving forms.

The atom has a fixed nucleus around which the electrons revolve in a fixed orbit. Each planet and star has its own orbit and axis around which it revolves in an orderly motion and is ruled by a certain law.

The humanity of man derives from the fact that he is a creature in whom God has inhaled His spirit, becoming distinguished thereby in his very nature from the rest of creation. The humanity of man is therefore stable and constant, although he passes through various biological phases from his beginning as a drop of sperm until he reaches old age. He also traverses various social phases that either elevate him or degrade him depending on his closeness to the source of his humanity. None of these phases or stages remove him from his fixed and stable nature as a human, nor from the impulses, capacities and potentialities proceeding from that nature.

This human desire for movement in order to change and develop terrestrial reality is likewise a stable and unchanging fact. It derives in the first place from the overall nature of the universe as manifested in the motion of primordial matter as well as the motion of the heavenly bodies. Second, it springs from the primordial nature of man himself, as necessitated by his function of divine vicegerent on earth. That function requires motion in order to develop and advance the terrestrial reality that surrounds man, human instinct, which is the required duty for succession on earth. The forms of this motion, however, are diverse, changing and constantly developing.

“Motion within a stable framework and around a stable pivot” is therefore a hallmark of all of God’s creation, and it follows that it should also be a prominent feature of the Islamic concept.

We will now set forth examples of the stable components and values of the Islamic concept; they represent the “stable pivot” around

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21 Modern Darwinism is beginning to correct old Darwinism. It has been decided that the human being is a unique creature in his biological, intellectual and spiritual aspects, utterly separate from all other animals. There is still a step to be taken by the Darwinists: to recognize that man has had a fixed character from the very outset.

22 See Muhammad Qutb, *Mu’arakat at-Taqalid*. 
which the Islamic approach rotates in its stable framework (they will be explained in depth in the second part of this research).

Everything that concerns the Divine reality, which is the basis for the Islamic concept, is a stable and immutable truth with a stable and immutable meaning.

The existence of God, His eternity and unity (in all of its different senses), His power, His sovereignty, His ordering of men's affairs, the absoluteness of His will, together with all the other attributes that relate to His governing the universe, life and mankind—these represent a stable and immutable truth.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that the whole universe with all its beings, animate and inanimate, is created by God. Thus God willed it, and so it was, and none had any share in His creation, nor in its ordering or administration, nor does any share in the attributes of divinity.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that worship belongs to God alone, the worship in which all of creation engages, including the prophets—peace be upon them.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that belief in God as He has described Himself to be, in His angels, books, and prophets (peace be upon them), the Last Day, and destiny, whether good or bad, is a condition for the validity and acceptability of people's actions and accepting them. Otherwise, they are fundamentally flawed, unredeemable, and rejected.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth, a fact that God does not accept from men any religion He has not prescribed. The essential meaning of Islam is ascribing to God alone divinity and all of its properties; submitting to His will; and consenting to judging all things by His law and command. This and this only is the religion He approves.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that man as a species is a creature honored by God above all others; He has been entrusted as His vicegerent on earth and all things on earth have been subjugated to him. There is no material value on earth superior to this innate value of man or capable of diminishing it.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that all humans derive from a single origin, and accordingly they are all equal. The only value
whereby they might attain precedence over each other is piety and 
good deeds, not any worldly value such as lineage, wealth, social po-
position, class, or sex.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that the purpose of 
human existence is the worship of God, in the sense of absolute ser-
vitude to God alone with all that implies, such as obedience to His 
commands in all the affairs of life, large and small, in every intention, 
motion and deed.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that the principle of 
association among human beings is faith in the divine path rather than 
race, nation, colour, class, tribal affiliation, economic or political inter-
ests or any other worldly consideration.

It is similarly a stable and immutable truth that this world is the 
realm of labor and trial, and the next that of reckoning and requital. 
Man is being tried and tested in all that he does, in all the good or evil 
that befalls him, with every blessing and every misfortune, for all mat-
ters return ultimately to God.

These and similar truths and values are all stable and immutable, 
not liable to development; they are stable so that the phenomena of life 
and the forms of actuality may move within their framework while 
remaining linked to it, and their implications undergird all forms of 
human development, whether individual or collective.

The arena in which the meanings of these truths and values dis-
play themselves may expand just as the various aspects of human life 
and human knowledge expand. But their origin remains fixed and sta-
bile and all the meanings move within its framework.

For example, the truth that man acts as divine vicegerent on earth 
manifests itself in various ways. One form in which it shows itself is 
man cultivating the land, because the conditions of his life and the 
extent of his experiences make of agriculture a means sufficient for 
satisfying his needs at a certain stage, enabling him thereby to fulfil 
his function as vicegerent. Another form of its manifestation consists 
of man splitting the atom, or sending satellites into space to explore 
the nature of earth's atmosphere and the nature of the planets and 
their satellites. Both of these, as well as all that lies between them and 
their satellites, are forms assumed by man's vicegerent on earth, which 
is always capable of increase and expansion. However, the essence of
man's vicegerent remains stable and fixed. Nothing on earth may elevate itself above man, for he is the master of the satellites and of all material production of all productions.

The truth that the purpose of human existence is the worship of God is manifested in all the varied activities whereby man orients himself to God and which are necessitated by his expanding and constantly renewed function of vicegerent. Worship shows itself too in exclusive servitude to God by referring all matters to the criteria he has provided. The purpose itself never changes. If man does not orient himself to God in all his activities and he fails to refer all matters to the criteria God has provided, he will have violated this stable and immutable truth and transgressed against the purpose of his existence; his deeds will count as vain and unacceptable to the believer.

The value of having a stable concept of fundamentals and values is that it disciplines the progress and vital development of human life. It does not veer back and forth without guidance, as happened in the life of Europe when it cut loose from the moorings of belief and came to a miserable end, faintly disguised by a false glow and deceptive gleam that concealed misery, confusion, decadence, and degeneracy.

Its value also lies in providing man with a reliable scale in which to weigh the emotions, thoughts and concepts that occur to him, the various circumstances and relationships in which he finds himself involved. By weighing them in that scale, he sees how close he is to the right path or how distant from it. He thus remains at all times within the sphere of safety and does not wander into the wilderness where there are no fixed stars or waymarks to guide him.

Another value of the stable concept is that it tends to provide man's thought with a supportive or reinforcing element, preventing it from wavering under the impact of passions or extraneous influences. If there is no such supportive or reinforcing element, there can be no stability. Such an element is necessary to prevent human thought and life from giddily swaying with no direction.

It is an absolute need for the human soul and for human life that it should move within a stable framework and that it should rotate around a firm, unmoving pivot. This is the norm established and made manifest within the universe as a whole and which can be observed in all of the planets, which is that it moves within a fixed frame and
around a fixed pivot. But this necessity is neglected today. Humanity has turned away from all fixed principles and let go of the reins that connected it to its pivot. It is like a planet tumbling from its sphere, disconnected from its orbit, liable to collide with another planet, thus destroying itself and ruining the whole universe.

"But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin, and all that lives in them [would long ago have perished]!

Nay, [in this divine writ] We have conveyed unto them all that they ought to bear in mind: and from this their reminder they [heedlessly] turn away!"

(Al-Mu’minun: 71)

Intelligent and alert is he who is not caught up in the dizziness of contemporary humanity. When he looks upon this luckless human race and sees the disastrous confusion pervading its concepts, its organizational forms, its traditions, its customs, it is as if he were watching some mentally confused person removing his clothes and ripping them apart, or someone deranged thrashing around in uncontrolled motion. Fashions change in thought and belief just as they do in dress, according to the dictates of the fashion houses. The observer of humanity sees before him a man howling in pain, running as if to escape, laughing like a madman, ranting like a drunkard, searching for some imaginary object, all the while throwing away his most precious possessions and embracing whatever filth his hands can scoop up!

A curse be upon such a state!
A curse like those related in myths!

The state that we have described kills the human being and transforms him into a tool in order to increase production. It does away with all the supports of his humanity, his appreciation of beauty, creativity, sublime meaning, in order to realize profits for a handful of usurers and traders in lust, film producers and fashion houses.

When you look at people’s faces, their looks, their motions, their clothes, their thoughts, opinions and aspirations, it seems that they are fugitives or runaways who cannot settle on anything or pause to consider their state. Indeed they are fugitives, fleeing their own selves, their hungry, anxious, bewildered selves—selves that reject a stable axis and a stable framework. The human soul cannot, however, live in isolation from the order of the universe; it cannot attain happiness
The Oneness of God is the primary constituent of the Islamic concept, for it is also the fundamental truth in the Islamic creed. It also counts, however, as one of the characteristics of the concept, insofar as the Islamic concept distinguishes itself from all other creeds and philosophies on earth by the pure monotheism it teaches. We will therefore now speak of the Oneness of God as a characteristic of the Islamic concept, explaining how it stands utterly apart from all other creedal and philosophical concepts.

We begin by stating that the Oneness of God was the principal characteristic of every religion brought from God by His Messengers and at the same time its main constituent. In a general sense, therefore, Islam was the religion brought by every Messenger, for the sense of "Islam" is submission to God alone, adhering to the path He has prescribed in every area of life, serving Him through following His laws, and worshipping Him both in ritual devotion and in the actualities of life. However, the deviations and distortions that afflicted the concepts of the followers of those Messengers, together with the revolt of paganism against religion, left no authentic religious concept in place except that brought by the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings. God guarded its principles from all distortion and it was spared the onslaught of paganism.

There is also another consideration which causes us to assert that the Oneness of God is a characteristic of the Islamic concept: namely,
the vast area covered by monotheism in the creed of Islam and the way in which it extends to man’s awareness, his ethics and conduct, and the organization of his practical life. It extends to the way in which the Muslim sees the universe and his own active role within it, to the ordering of every aspect of human life, the hidden and the visible, the small and the great, the petty and the portentous, ritual and law, belief and action, the individual and society, this world and the hereafter. In short, there is nothing left untouched by the comprehensiveness of monotheism.

The Islamic concept is based on the belief that there is divinity and servanthood, the former pertaining to God in exclusivity and the latter characterizing everything and everyone other than Him. Since divinity belongs exclusively to God, it is He alone Who possesses its attributes. Likewise, in the same way that all things and animate beings have servanthood in common, they are all utterly devoid of any of the attributes of divinity. There are, then, two distinct existences: the existence of God, and the existence of other than God; His servants. The relationship between the two existences is the relationship of Creator and created, of Lord and servant.

This is the basic principle of the Islamic concept, all others deriving from it or being based on it.

We have already mentioned that the Oneness of God was the foundation of every religion delivered by a Messenger of God. The Glorious Qur'an asserts this fact and repeats it in relation to every Messenger.

"indeed, We sent forth Noah unto his people, and he said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Verily, I fear lest suffering befall you on an awesome Day!"

(Al-A'raf: 59)

"and unto [the tribe of] 'Ad [We sent] their brother Hud. He said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Will you not, then, be conscious of Him?"

(Al-A'raf: 63)

"and unto [the tribe of] Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih. He said: "O my people! Worship God alone: you have no deity other than Him. Clear evidence of the truth has now come unto you from your Sustainer.

"This she-camel belonging to God shall be a token for you: so leave her alone to pasture on God's earth, and do her no harm, lest grievous chastisement befall you."

(Al-A'raf: 73)"
For, unto Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth; all things devoutly obey His will.”

(Al-Rum: 25-26)

“For, before God prostrates itself all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth—every beast that moves, and the angels: [even] these do not bear themselves with false pride.”

(An-Nahl: 49)

“The seven heavens extol His limitless glory, and the earth, and all that they contain; and there is not a single thing but extols His limitless glory and praise: but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!

Verily, He is forbearing, much-forgiving!”

(Al-Isra': 44)

Let these verses suffice as an indication of the scope afforded in the Islamic concept to monotheism, the profound truth that divinity belongs to God alone, that all else is in a state of servanthood, and that relations between the creation and the Creator are exclusively on the basis of their servanthood to Him, not lineage or marital connection, not partnership or similarity in essence, attribute, or characteristic.

But any discussion of the Oneness of God will remain incomplete until we discuss, however briefly, the implications for human life of this absolute, perfect, comprehensive, decisive and precise monotheism. These implications show how the Oneness of God is an important characteristic of the Islamic concept.

One of the implications is that God’s exclusive possession of the attributes of divinity has consequences for the ordering of human life in all its particulars, just as it does for men’s beliefs, concepts, ideas, and forms of devotion.

The Muslim believes that there is no god but God, that He alone shall be worshipped, that He alone is the Creator, He alone is the Sustainer, He alone is the source of benefit or harm, and He alone controls the affairs of the universe. It is therefore to Him alone that the Muslim addresses himself with his acts of ritual devotion, in neediness and hope, in reverence and awe.

He believes likewise that there is no sovereign but God, no legislator but God, and no orderer of human life, relationships and the universe in its entirety, but God. From God alone does he receive guidance and law, way and principles of life, and criteria of value and judgement.
To address oneself exclusively to God in worship and to receive from Him in exclusivity all that has just been mentioned—both are imperatives deriving from the Islamic concept, and both illustrate the broad range covered in the mind and life of the Muslim by the truth of the divine oneness.

The Noble Qur’an draws a close connection between the belief in the Oneness of God and its implications for life. It ties everything that it imposes as a duty on the Muslim—modes of thought and sentiment, acts of devotion, adherence to divine law—to God’s Oneness and His nurturing exercise of sovereignty throughout the entirety of the universe. In one and the same context we find mention of the Oneness of God, the effects of His sovereignty in the universe, in this world and the hereafter, and a repeated command to follow the law of God as the necessary consequence of the divine oneness.

“AND YOUR GOD is the One God: there is no deity save Him, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace.

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day: and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man: and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon: and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: (in all this) there are messages indeed for people who use their reason.

And yet there are people who choose to believe in beings that allegedly rival God, loving them as [only] God should be loved: whereas those who have attained to faith love God more than all else.

If they who are bent on evil doing could but see—as see they will when they are made to suffer [on Resurrection Day]—that all might belongs to God alone, and that God is severe in [meting out] punishment!

[On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been [falsely] adored shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the suffering [that awaits them], with all their hopes cut to pieces! And then those followers shall say: “Would that we had a second chance [in life], so that we could disown them as they have disowned us!

Thus will God show them their works [in a manner that will cause them] bitter regrets; but they will not come out of the fire.
O MANKIND! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Satan's footsteps: for, verily, he is your open foe, and bids you only to do evil, and to commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute unto God something of which you have no knowledge.

But when they are told, “Follow what God has bestowed from on high,” some answer, “Nay, we shall follow [only] that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing. Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid of all guidance?

And so, the parable of those who are bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind: for they do not use their reason.

O you who have attained to faith! Partake of the good things which we have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks unto God, if it is [truly] Him that you worship.”

(Al-Baqarah: 163-172)

Examining these verses of the Qur'an, we find that they begin by affirming the Oneness of God and His exclusive possession of Divinity. This is followed by the presentation of cosmic phenomena which display divine power. Next, scenes from the Day of Judgement are depicted, that day on which God stands indisputably alone in His possession and exercise of sovereignty. After this, man is ordered to obey God's law, its commands and prohibitions, and to disobey Satan; those who continue to follow the ways of Jahiliyya are condemned. Then the believers are commanded to eat of the good things that God has proclaimed licit and to shun that which He has forbidden, for it is He alone Who permits or prohibits, just as it is He alone Who is to be worshipped, Who disposes of the affairs of the universe, and Whose sovereignty becomes undeniably manifest on the Day of Judgement. In short, the Oneness of God involves necessarily exclusive orientation to Him in both ritual and law.

Such integrated, interconnected passages are numerous in the Qur'an, to demonstrate the meaning and scope of the Oneness of God. Let us provide one more example for the sake of clarity:

“[Thou art but entrusted with Our message:] and so We have revealed unto thee a discourse in the Arabic tongue in order that thou mayest warn the foremost of all cities and all who dwell around it—to wit, warn [them] of the Day of the Gathering, [the coming
of which is beyond all doubt: [the Day when] some shall find themselves in paradise, and some in the blazing flame.

Now had God so willed, He could surely have made them all one single community: none the less, He admits unto His grace him that wills [to be admitted]—whereas the evildoers shall have none to protect them and none to succour them [on Judgment Day].

Did they, perchance, [think that they could] choose protectors other than Him? But God alone is the Protector [of all that exists], since it is He alone who brings the dead to life, and He alone who has the power to will anything.

AND ON WHATEVER you may differ, [O believers,] the verdict thereon rests with God.

[Say, therefore:] “Such is God, my Sustainer: in Him have I placed my trust, and unto Him do I always turn!”

The Originator [is He] of the heavens and the earth. He has given you mates of your own kind—just as [He has willed that] among the beasts [there be] mates—to multiply you thereby; but there is nothing like unto Him, and He alone is all-hearing all-seeing.

His are the keys of the heavens and the earth: He grants abundant sustenance, or gives it in scant measure, unto whomever He wills: for, behold, He has full knowledge of everything.

In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Noah—and into which We gave thee [O Muhammad] insight through revelation—as well as that which we had enjoined upon Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus: Steadfastly uphold the [true] faith, and do not break up your unity therein.

[And even though] that [unity of faith] to which thou callest them appears oppressive to those who are wont to ascribe to other beings or forces a share in His divinity, God draws unto Himself everyone who is willing, and guides unto Himself everyone who turns unto Him.

And [as for the followers of earlier revelation,] they broke up their unity, out of mutual jealousy, only after they had come to know [the truth]. And had it not been for a decree that had already gone forth from thy Sustainer, [postponing all decision] until a term set [by Him], all would indeed have been decided between them [from the outset]. As it is, behold, they who have inherited their divine writ from those who preceded them are [now] in grave doubt, amounting to suspicion, about what it portends.

Because of this, then, summon [all mankind]. And pursue the right courses, as thou hast been bidden [by God]; and do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say:
"I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high; and I am bidden to bring about equity in your mutual views. God is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer. To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no contention between us and you: God will bring us all together—for with Him is all journeys’ end."

(Ash-Shura: 7-15)

Examining these verses, we find that they begin by affirming revelation and prophethood, in order for the Messenger to warn men of Judgment in the hereafter. Next are mentioned the differing fates that await the believers and the miscreants in the hereafter, depending on the paths they have followed in this world, and God’s exclusive sovereignty on the Day of Judgment. Then are mentioned the power of God, as manifested in His resurrecting the dead, and once again, His exclusive sovereignty. It is then stressed that man should place his reliance on God alone and turn to Him alone in repentance. This is followed by verses presenting the manifestation of His power in creating the heavens and the earth, mankind in pairs of male and female, and the beasts, all this with the reminder that “there is naught like unto Him.” His sovereignty is unique, for “his are the keys to the heavens and the earth,” and His provision of sustenance is unique, for “He grants abundant sustenance to whomsoever He wills in due course.” The verses then proceed to clarify that God alone is the legislator, not simply from the beginning of the Qur’anic revelation, but from the dawn of revelation as such. God thus ordains that what He has legislated constitutes religion and must consistently be followed, and He forbids men to follow their own whims. Finally, a sharp distinction is drawn between those believers who judge and rule according to God’s legislation and all others, and a reminder is given that all return to God.

These two examples should suffice to show the interconnectedness, in the Islamic concept, of the Oneness of God with His sovereignty, to explain the meaning of monotheism and its scope in human life, and to demonstrate that monotheism, in this comprehensive sense, is indeed one of the characteristics of the Islamic concept. All that remains for us to say is that the effects of this concept on the mind and heart of man and in his life are unique. It creates a sense of cohesion unaffected by changing shapes and forms, of firm and unshakable values, of consistent and vigorous conduct.
He who understands divinity in this sense, and is cognizant also of his own servanthood, will be able to define his orientation and conduct in a firm and precise manner. "Who is he? What is the purpose of his existence? What are the limits of his power?"—he will have answers to all of these questions. He will know, too, the true nature of all that exists in the universe and the single force that determines all within it. He will have a correct basis on which to interact with all things within well-defined limits. This sense of cohesion and orderliness will extend itself to his intellect and the criteria by which it operates and to his heart and the values which it embraces. To the degree that he interacts with the divine norms everywhere manifest, he will find this sense strengthened and confirmed.

We realize this clearly when we compare the Muslim who deals with his Lord, the one God, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Powerful, the Vanquisher, the Sovereign, with the adherents of other visions and concepts, whether it be those who deal with two competing gods—the god of good and the god of evil; those who deal with a god that exists but dissolves himself in the non-existent; those who deal with a god who is not in any way concerned with his own affairs or those of the entire universe; or those who deal with a pseudo-god, matter, who neither sees or hears nor possesses any degree of permanence.

The Islamic concept creates in the heart and mind consistency and steadfast. One who perceives the true nature of his Lord and His attributes and of his own relationship with Him is bound to be consistent and steadfast in his dealings with Him, in his heart and in his mind, without confusion or indecision. The Muslim knows what his Lord wishes for him and what He dislikes for him, and is firmly convinced that the sole path to gaining His pleasure is belief in Him, knowing Him and His attributes, and being steadfast in following the path He has laid down. He will not attribute to Him sonship or any other type of kinship, nor will he seek to approach Him with incantations or intercessors. Rather, he will worship Him exclusively by adhering to His commands and prohibitions, by following His laws and ordinances.

All this is in addition to the clarity, simplicity and ease inherent in the concept, as well as in the form of conduct it inculcates in the believer. This can easily be realized if we compare the Islamic concept based on the affirmation of God's oneness with the Church's trinitarian dogma,
its doctrine of the sonship, and its claim that man's original sin can be expiated only by accepting Jesus as the son of God, not to mention a whole series of similar riddles.

The same can be said of those who deal with "nature," which does not hear or see, permit or forbid, demand of its devotees that they strive to be virtuous or instruct them to avoid evil and immorality. How could such persons have any path to follow consistently? How could their minds or hearts enjoy any stability? They lack all certitude concerning the true nature of their god, hoping each day to find out something new concerning him, to discover some attribute of his previously unknown to them. Experiment or chance are the only paths open to them.

We could continue to discuss the state of those who follow the various concepts we range under the heading of "wilderness and debris." None of them can inspire in their followers any cohesion of concept or consistency in conduct, marked as they all are by obscurity, complexity and confusion. By contrast, the first feature that the heart and the mind notices when it encounters the Islamic concept is straightforwardness, simplicity, and clarity. It is this feature that attracts contemporary Europeans and Americans who enter Islam; they always mention it as the first characteristic that aroused their attention. It is also this selfsame feature that has attracted to Islam primitive peoples in Africa and Asia in times ancient and modern, for it is inherently attractive to the innate nature of man, be he civilized or primitive.

This concept assures the integration of the personality and capacities of both the individual Muslim and the community, and it negates the disintegration and dissolution that are engendered by other doctrines and concepts.

Humanity, a single whole in its original creation, interacts with a single deity in every aspect of its activity, in belief and awareness, in worship and orientation, in legislation and social organization, in this world and the hereafter. Its belief is not diffused among various gods; differing elements within one and the same deity; various forces some of which are within the sphere of the deity to the exclusion of others, without any knowable law governing interaction with them; or the forces of nature, something lacking definable existence.

Similarly, man's attention is not directed in one way with respect to belief, awareness and worship, and in another way in matters of
social organization. Man receives all of this from a single source, a source that governs his mind and his awareness, his motion and his labor, just as it governs the universe as a whole. Man's interaction with the universe is guided by this single source, without the slightest diffusion or dispersion.

This comprehensive integration creates an immense and insuperable force, a force wherein lies the secret of the wonders that the Islamic creed has accomplished in human life and history. This force is both integrated within itself and integrated with the forces of the universe, for both go back to a single source, are governed by its norms, and are oriented to God, the One.

Let us now come to the unique effect created by the Islamic concept in the consciousness of the Muslim and his life, as well as in the life of Muslim society, by virtue of the characteristic of monotheism on which the concept is based. That effect is none other than the liberation of man, or to put it differently, the birth of man.

The exclusive possession of divinity and its attributes by God on the one hand, and the servanthood to God that is shared by all other than God, together with their lack of any share in the divine attributes, on the other hand, mean and necessitate that men should receive legislation for all aspects of their life from God alone. This is in exact parallel to their confining their devotional worship to God, for the exclusive possession of sovereignty is one of the attributes of divinity. No believer would deny this, nor would even a disbeliever dispute it.

Qur'anic verses underscore and define this meaning, in a manner that leaves no room for doubt or disputation:

"All that you worship instead of God is nothing but [empty] names which you have invented—you and your forefathers—[and] for which God has bestowed no warrant from on high. Judgment [as to what is right and what is wrong] rests with God alone—[and] He has ordained that you should worship nought but Him: this is the [one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not." (Yusuf: 40)

"Is it that they [who care for no more than this world] believe in forces supposed to have a share in God's divinity, which enjoin upon them as a moral law something that God has never allowed?
Now were it not for [God's] decree on the final judgment, all would indeed have been decided between them [in this world]: but, verily, grievous suffering awaits the evil-doers [in the life to come]."

(Ash-Shura: 21)

"Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the [early] men of God and the rabbis, insomuch as some of God's writ had been entrusted to their care; and they [all] bore witness to its truth.

Therefore, [O children of Israel,] hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me; and do not barter away My messages for a trifling gain: for they who do not judge in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high are, indeed, deniers of the truth!"

(Al-Ma'idah: 44)

"But nay, by thy Sustainer! They do not [really] believe unless they make thee [O Prophet] a judge of all on which they disagree among themselves, and then find in their hearts no bar to an acceptance of thy decision and give themselves up [to it] in utter self-surrender."

(An-Nisa': 65)

The Islamic concept makes no distinction between dedicating all devotional observance to God and accepting legislation from Him alone. For both are necessary implications of the Oneness of God and His sole possession of divinity, and to deviate from either results inexorably in the abandonment of Islam and religion. This can be deduced from the verses we have already cited.

It will also be instructive to cite another verse and the way in which the Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings, interpreted it. This is the verse:

"They have taken their rabbis and their monks as well as the Christ, son of Mary—for their lords beside God, although they had been bidden to worship none but the One God, save whom there is no deity: the One who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His divinity!"

(Al-Tawbah: 31)
The People of the Book to whom this verse refers considered Jesus Christ their lord and directed their devotional rituals to him. As for their priests and their monks, they also took them as lords, not in the sense of proffering them worship, but in the sense of adhering to the laws and commands they promulgated. The verse in question, however, mentions them both as taking Jesus as a lord and as taking their priests and monks as lords, affirming thereby that the two practices were equally repugnant to the worship of God. The Christians thus became tainted with polytheism. None of this can be disputed.

Quite apart from all else, the Prophet, upon whom be peace and blessings, has interpreted the verse in a fashion that ought to lay to rest any controversy.

Imam Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi and ibn Jarir have narrated concerning ‘Udayy ibn Hatim that when he was informed about the mission of the Messenger of God, he fled to Syria, for he had converted to Christianity in the era of Jahiliyya. When his sister and a group of his people were taken prisoner, the Messenger of God had her released and sent her back to her brother, whom she then caused to become favorably inclined to Islam. ‘Udayy came to Medina, and entered the presence of the Prophet wearing a silver cross. When he heard the Prophet reciting the verse, “They have taken their priests and their monks as well as the Christ, son of Mary—for their lords beside God,” he objected, saying, “they have not worshipped them.” To which the Prophet responded, “Indeed they have, for they [the priests and the monks] have forbidden the permitted and permitted the forbidden, and they [the Christians] followed them in that. This constitutes their worship of them.”

Al-Suddi said in interpretation of the verse under discussion: “they sought advice of men and ignored the Book of God behind their backs. It is for this reason that God said, ‘they were commanded to worship but one God.’ That is to say, when God has prohibited a thing, it is prohibited, and when He has permitted something, it is permitted. Whatever He legislates is to be followed, and whatever He decrees is to be implemented.”

By thus decisively settling the matter, the Islamic concept has effectively declared the liberation of man, or even the birth of man. For by this declaration men have been liberated from servitude to each other and instead made servants of God. Man, in the full sense of the
word “man,” will never exist on earth until the day comes when he is liberated from rule and dominance by others, in whatever shape or form, in his person, his life, his mind, and his belief.

By assigning legislation and sovereignty to God alone, and making all men servants of God, Islam, and only Islam, liberates men from servitude to each other.

In all systems where legislation and sovereignty are in the hands of men, in one way or another, the result is that some men are the servants and slaves of others. This servitude is abolished in Islam, all men being equally the servants of God. This is the true meaning of the liberation of man, a liberation which might also be termed the birth of man, short of which man cannot enjoy a fully human existence. It is a divine gift, bestowed on mankind as a blessing:

“Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for your religion.”

(Al-Ma‘ida: 3)

And this is the gift that the adherents of the creed of the Oneness of God can pass on to mankind in its entirety. It is something fresh and new for them to present to humanity today; let humanity receive it today as a gift from the Muslims, just as their own ancestors once did. Its appeal is irresistible, for it gives man what he previously lacked, something utterly different from all concepts and creeds, ideas and philosophies.

Rab‘i ibn ‘Amir was sent by the Muslim army as a messenger to Rustam, commander of the Persians, who asked him what had brought him to his lands. The few words he uttered in response conveyed the whole essence of the Islamic creed and the great historical movement that arose from it, and delineated, too, the conceptual world of the early Muslims and their understanding of their role. He answered:

“God has sent us, to bring forth whoever wishes from servitude to men into servitude to God; from the narrow straits of this world into the broad expanse of this world and the hereafter; and from the oppression of existing religions into the justice of Islam.”

In these few words are embodied the foundations of this creed and the nature of the movement to which it gave rise. It is to bring forth whomever God wishes from among His servants from servitude to men into servitude to God; to assign all their affairs to God, in life
and in death, in this world and the hereafter; and to recognize God's exclusive possession of the attributes of divinity such as sovereignty and fitness to legislate that none would dispute except the stubborn unbeliever. There is no freedom for man, nor even a truly human existence, except in utter devotion to God.

When those who profess monotheism return fully to it and raise high its banner, they will be able to proclaim to humanity what once Rabi’ ibn ‘Amir proclaimed. For humanity today is, in a certain sense, in exactly the same condition as it was when Rabi’ ibn ‘Amir made his proclamation—sunk in the servitude of some men to others. It is the monotheism of Islam, in its comprehensive sense, that will bring men forth from this state into servitude to God. Then, and then only, will man be liberated, or indeed, be truly born.

When the adherents of monotheism return to the path with which God has favored them, they will be able to present humanity with something lacking in all systems of thought and social organization existing on earth. They have, therefore, a new role for today and tomorrow, a great, global role in the service of humanity, a role to lead humanity forward like the role once vested in the unlettered Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula, giving guidance and leadership to the world of humanity.

They cannot present humanity today with great scientific accomplishments or civilizational advances, surpassing what humanity already possesses. They can, however, present humanity with something else, something nobler and greater than scientific accomplishments or civilizational advances—with the liberation or true birth of man. They will be presenting humanity at the same time with a complete way of life based on the dignity of man; on the emancipation of his intellect, his conscience and his spirit; and on the emancipation of all the capacities he needs to fulfill his role as divine vicegerent on earth, as a free and noble being. Then man will be able to continue his scientific and civilizational advance in freedom and dignity, without being a slave to the machine or to other human beings.

May God grant us correct understanding, and praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.