

Editorial

Islam is a complete, comprehensive civilization. It is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. Yet, this simple religion is misunderstood by many. It is fashionable for some people to associate Islam with one system of life or the other. Some associate it with democracy as it is practiced in the West; others even likened Islam to communism. There are also others who consider Islamic way of life as somewhat akin to the dictatorship, albeit of an enlightened mind. These people are behaving like proverbial blind men whose descriptions of an elephant contradict each other and none of them could describe the true reality. The misunderstanding about Islam is augmented further by the media in the West as well as those Muslims educated in the West. The Western media have concentrated on Islamic fundamentalism and violent Islam as the only version of the religion. The Western educated Muslims propagate the type of Islam which conforms to Western culture and values. Some talk about the notion of a “liberal Islam” and its offshoot, the rational and enlightened Islam thus giving primacy to reason over revelation. One also finds some Muslims who borrow from the history of Christianity and advocate what is known as “liberation theology” in Islam. Indeed, there are those who identify Islam as part of a national identity. What is needed is a serious study of Islam and its prescribed way of life. Islam is a total system in which every aspect of life is linked to the other parts. The social, economic and political systems are rooted in the very sources of Islam, i.e. the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the words and practices of Muhammad (SAW). Every concept such as Qudrah (power), sultan, ummah, ibadah, din (religion), rab (master) and ilah must be understood by referring to the two divine sources. Reason definitely plays an important role but it must always be subservient to revelation. Islam means peace through submission to Allah (SWT). This journal aims to promote the true teachings of Islam by referring to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

This second issue of the journal emphasizes the relationship between reason and revelation. Our contributors have analyzed various facets of life by referring to the divine sources. Dr. Maszlee Malik argues that religions and faiths play a pro-active role in civil society and governance. This applies equally to the imposed meta-narratives of modernity. Instead of blindly following one version of governance, he urges the readers to explore how religion and faith provides an alternative notion of good governance. His is a plea to look positively at religion and its role in creating sustainable governance based on values and ethics. Ummu Atiyah's paper is also along the same line but focuses on women's participation in politics. She explains how culture, ethnicity and religion play a vital role in expanding or restricting women's participation in politics. Since she is concerned with women in Malaysia, a multi-ethnic society, she looks at the three religions adopted by the Chinese, Indians, and Malays respectively. She found that contrary to the

religious emphasis on equality, the culture and ethnicity has led to a low level of women's participation in politics in Malaysia.

The third article by Dr. Abdulazeez Balogun Shittu emphasizes the role of religion in promoting peace. He begins by noting the escalation of religious conflicts between the adherents of Christianity and Islam which is not healthy. He implies that adherents of the two religions have not understood their religion and are not practicing the true teachings. It is necessary for the followers of the two religions to learn to tolerate each other and continue their da'wah and evangelical activities in a peaceful way. The paper concludes that peaceful co-existence is possible if the adherents promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence as laid down by the two religions. One way of promoting peace is through intellectual discourse between various religions as exemplified by Abu Nasr Muhamad al-Farabi. Dr. Md. Rafiqul Islam analyzes the political thought of al-Farabi and shows how Greek political thought could be owned without compromising Islam. He compares the political philosophy of Abu Nasr Muhamad Al-Farabi, the founder of Islamic Neoplatonism, with the one propounded by Greek philosopher, Plato. He founded many similarities between the two. Interestingly, he finds that al-Farabi has taken stand on several issues directly opposing Plato. This is due to the fact that al-Farabi was a Muslim who adhered to Islamic tenets and principles.

The final article by Dr. Md. Mahmudul Hasan shows how the Islamic stand on women's issue has been exploited by scholars of feminism. One group associates Islam with misogyny and gender oppression, while the other celebrates the religion as a force for women's liberation. Though their emphases differ, they concur that Muslim women are oppressed. Mahmudul Hasan highlights Islam's gender egalitarian values and pleads that Muslim woman should involve themselves in the discourse on women's rights.

The five articles presented in this issue thus deal with how Islam has either been distorted or misunderstood not only by those who are bent upon destroying Islam but also by some well-meaning Muslims. These articles should dispel some of those misunderstandings and help better understand Islam as a religion of peace, prosperity and development.

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