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ISLAM, DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND THE EXPERIENCE OF AL-ANDALUS

ABSTRACT

Many Muslims consider democracy to be the rule of humans as opposed to Islam, which is supposed to be rule of God. They assume that secularism and democracy are necessarily connected. But secularism is not a prerequisite for democracy. Religion can play a significant role in democratic politics. Regardless of where sovereignty is placed theoretically, whether in the rule of humans or in the rule of God, in practice it is a state or government, which exercises it. Therefore there is no inherent contradiction between Islam and democracy as a specific rule. The explanation of why so many Muslim countries are not democratic should therefore be looked for and can be found in historical, political, cultural, and economic factors, not in the religious ones.

An intercultural dialogue, which would propose a consensus of opinion about human rights in modern society should be easier and more effective with Muslim modernists than with conservatives. What could make appear human rights more acceptable even to conservatives would be the historical example of a successful and at the same time truly Islamic state.

At the same time the Western jurisdiction should be learned about the fact of the varieties and, consequently, about the relativity of Islam interpretation of God's will.

I. ISLAM IS NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH DEMOCRACY

According to the traditionalist majority of Muslim religious leaders democracy presupposes secularisation like it has developed

since the Middle Ages in the Western world. And secularisation conceived of as separation of the temporal and the transcendental world is completely unacceptable to them. Moreover, they fear that sovereignty of people and majority decisions would limit the sovereignty of God.

Abul A'la Mawdudi for example, the founder of the Indian Jamaat-i Islami, accepts democracy only under the condition that popular sovereignty is restricted and directed by God's law¹. Consequently, Western democracy that is based on the sovereignty of people alone, appears to be incompatible with Islam. Others, like Sayyid Qutb, a theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood, who has been executed by the Egyptian government in 1966, have underlined the radical incompatibility of the concept of popular sovereignty with Islam, and stressed that the Shari'a is so complete a legal and moral system that no further legislation is possible².

But it is evident that traditionalists who argue this way, put the wrong questions. As liberal Muslim reformists have tried to demonstrate, the question is not, whether Muslims can accept the sovereignty of people but how this sovereignty can be limited. Because, even in the past, it has never been God who has been ruling an Islamic state, nor even the Mullahs – with the recent exception of Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan – but secular political elites. And even where the Mullahs rule, it is not God who is ruling. In Afghanistan under the Taliban regime for example, it was Mullah Omar who ruled and not God. He simply pretended to be the only one to have the right to interpret God's will. But his interpretation was an interpretation of his own and one based, at least partly, on his specific tribal traditions.

Therefore, when over the past two decades «both secular and Islamic governance failed to deliver solutions to growing social and economic needs», as Laith Kubba, the founder of a London-based network of liberal Islamists, has asserted during a workshop organised by the US Peace Institute³, «Muslim intellectuals started to advocate democracy and human right. They did so not only to achieve modernity, development, and dignity, but also to ensure a better practice of Islam».

A better Islam could be practised, according to A. Muqtedar Khan, director of international studies at Adrian College in Michigan and President of the association of Muslim social scientists, if Muslims followed the example of the prophet

Mohammad and his compact or constitution of Medina. Mohammad ruled in Medina «in virtue of the tri-partite compact that was signed by the Muslim immigrants from Mecca, the indigenous Muslims of Medina and the Jews [...]. Clearly, the compact of Medina cannot serve as a modern constitution. It would be quite inadequate since it is a historically specific document and quite limited in its scope. However, it can serve as a guiding principle [...]»⁴. The prophet ruled not only as the messenger of God but equally as a political head who sought the political consent of the three communities of Medina through consultation, in Arabic *shura*. He «demonstrated a democratic spirit quite unlike the authoritarian tendencies of many of those who claim to imitate him today»⁵. And because everything the prophet has said has been «a divine interpretation of the Holy Qur'an», the Muslims who follow the guidelines of Medina also follow his interpretation of the Qur'an more consequently than when they accept to live under an authoritarian regime that generates political violence, abuse of public office, and violations of human rights.

2. DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Democracy is coupled intrinsically with individual and minority rights. Neither can be promoted without respect for the other. Human rights are the decisive measure for determining the prospects of democracy.

Muslim views on human rights have been grouped during the above mentioned workshop by Mahmood Monshipouri, born in Iran and now professor and chair of the Political Science Department at Quinnipiac University, Connecticut, into three broad categories. The first group is the conservatives. «They tend to look to both at the classical and medieval periods for inspiration. Conservatives adopt a communitarian view that sees the individual as part of the community, to which he or she owes certain obligations. Conservative's emphasis on drawing boundaries around the community is expressed not only in stipulations about dress for women (Hijab) [...] but also in the proclamation of a different way of life and of a transformation of mind by bringing the faithful back to the proper practice of the faith and tradition. These conservatives tend to view the Western world's advocacy of human rights as a

mechanism by which the West tries to establish its hegemony over the Muslim world. They have vehemently objected to several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDDHR), including Articles 16 and 18, which deal with the equality of marriage rights and the freedom to change one's religion or belief. They also object to the provisions of women's rights, questioning the equality of gender roles and obligations. Islam, they argue, prohibits the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man. Apostasy is forbidden and is punishable by death».

Moreover, Muslim conservatives refuse the idea of natural reason as an independent source of ethical knowledge. Therefore they could accept a democratic organisation of the state only in case, they dispose of a majority that allows them to put the constraints of the Shari'a on the population, because, in their eyes, Islam means the complete regulation of life⁶.

«Muslim reformists and neomodernists», says Monshipouri, «in contrast, are more receptive to non-Islamic ideas, practices, and institutions [...]. They argue that material progress is necessary to bring about human and economic transformation within an Islamic framework. They stress the need for the continuity of basic Islamic principles but believe that Islamic law (Shari'a) is historically conditioned and needs to be reinterpreted in the light of the changing needs of modern society».

One interesting example for this kind of thinking is Abdolkarim Soroush. He has argued that «divine legislation in Islam is said to have been discovered by few and those discoverers think that they have privileged access to the interpretation of this law»⁷.

But human rights, according to Soroush, lie outside religion and are not solely intra-religious arguments based on jurisprudence (Fiqh). They belong to the domain of philosophical theology and philosophy in general⁸.

Only if we interpret Islam in the light of the above quoted reformist positions, Ayatollah Khomeini's Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan was right when he insisted (in his critical response to Samuel Huntington's assertion of «the clash of civilisation») on the freedom of action, the peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims, and democracy as compatible with the doctrine of Islam⁹. He was completely wrong insofar, as his concept of Islam has nothing or very little to do with any reality. His and other reformists' ideas, are for the moment, still on some sort wishful thinking and interesting for debates among the

relatively few urban Muslim intellectuals whereas, with the Muslim traditionalists, up to now, there does not exist any dialogue at all. But it is these traditionalists whose doctrine is followed by the overwhelming majority of Muslims all over the world. In Bazargan's own country, the Iran, as he should know best, there is – in spite of democratic elections – nothing like individual and religious freedom. On the contrary. This demonstrates that a democratically elected regime is far from guaranteeing democratic values.

This is in fact the real situation in most countries with a Muslim majority, and even Turkey is moving steadily into that direction. When the European Union opened the door to this potentially new member pretending that it was enough prepared to start the negotiations about the country's adherence to the EU, everybody knew very well that religious freedom for example did not really exist in Turkey. And since that time there was no real progress in this sense.

It is evident after all, that an intercultural dialogue presupposing a consensus about human rights in modern society would be a lot easier and more effective with Muslim modernists than with traditionalists. But presently, the traditionalists still represent the enormous majority in the Muslim world. It is they who constitute the main impediment, if we want to transform the world and Europe into a place in which people of all cultures and religions can peacefully live together.

But what could Western intellectuals and politicians offer to the traditionalists in order to facilitate the necessary dialogue about democratic values without confronting them right from the beginning with Western concepts which they refuse as an expression of a secularised world? Some scholars and politicians suggest to introduce into the debate a historical example of a somehow successful and at the same time truly Islamic state that is recognised as such even by traditionalists, and that has the reputation to have realised peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Christians and Jews. What they have in mind is the experience of al-Andalus.

3. BEING PROUD OF GRANADA'S ISLAMIC LEGACY

Al-Andalus is the historical model proposed by the UNESCO on the UNESCO-sitemap dedicated to «Intercultural Dialogue»¹⁰. Al-

Andalus is presented here, for example by Haim Zafrani, as an area «in which Jews, Christians and Muslims were most fully and freely able to engage in a wide range of common activities». The «fertile dialectic between the three great monotheistic religions» and their coexistence have led to the emergence of universalism in the light of which «the rationalist, philosophical and scientific thought of ancient Persia and Greece» was successfully reformulated.

It is on the same sitemap that Pierre Philippe Rey («Al-Andalus: Scientific Heritage and European Thought») stresses the importance of al-Andalus as the origin of European rationalism. According to him the figure that marks more than any other this origin is «that of Ibn Rushd, Averroës, physician, jurist and philosopher [...] he established that there was no contradiction between the elitist discourse of the philosophers and the universalist discourse of religion, these being simply two methods of exposing a single truth [...]. Among the contemporaries of Averroës, two names very close to his testify a community of approach: that of his companion Ibn Tufayl and that of Ibn Maymun, a Jew by religion (known in medieval Europe as Maimonides)».

These and other achievements of the culture of al-Andalus are explained and resumed, still on the same sitemap, by Mohamed Benchrifa: «Throughout the period of Islamic rule al-Andalus was a remarkable example and outstanding model of tolerance. It emerged at the time of the conquest, when the Muslim conquerors undertook to preserve the freedoms of their subjects, protect their fortunes and their property, respect their churches and ensure their palace [...]. This situation and the pluralism that went with it had various consequences: the intermixing of races, bilingualism and multi-lingualism and, lastly, religious dialogue and debate [...]. In conclusion, it can be said that al-Andalus was home to forms of tolerance that were not seen again until modern times. It was a genuine land of dialogue, dialogue that was at times serene and lively».

This view on the Andalusian heritage is not limited to the UNESCO-sitemap dedicated to intercultural dialogue. It has made its way throughout European imaginations and convictions, and has influenced, especially, contemporary Andalusian concepts of culture.

Introducing a conference organised on 28-31 Octobre 2002 in Granada, Andalusia, on the subject «Clash of Civilisations or Clash of Perceptions? In Search of a Common Ground for Under-

standing», Carmen Calvo, Andalusian Minister of Culture, is reported to have explained that «Andalusia has been the site of many cities, cultures, and religions, from its colonisation by the ancient Greek to its invasion by the Carthaginians, to the establishment of an Iberian-Arab civilisation – one characterised more by its intricate architecture, its poetic metaphors, and peaceful gardens than by any religious orthodoxy. In the last decades we had seemed to be reapproaching this ideal of tolerance and integration, but recently humanity’s progress has been overshadowed by elements that threaten our peaceful coexistence».

The Minister expressed her hopes that Granada and, specifically, the Alhambra would inspire in the «Dialogue’s participants the wisdom we need to generate ideas that can contribute to reinforcing our common friendship and solidarity». After the Minister, Jerónimo Páez López, director of the Andalusian foundation «Legado andalusí», «spoke about the legacy of al-Andalus as a paradigm of pluralism. He briefly reviewed the history of the region, beginning with the arrival of the Arab army from North Africa in the eighth century, which resulted in eight hundred years of Islamic rule on the Iberian Peninsula. During this time, Christians and Muslims lived together peacefully [...]. A “ludic” Islam existed in al-Andalus and was an inspiration to later generations». Páez López closed by calling on Andalusian residents to feel proud of the region’s Islamic legacy «[...] the *Legado andalusí* is working with the Mayor of Granada to publicise and promote a positive attitude toward Granada’s Islamic legacy»¹¹.

4. CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE MYTH OF AL-ANDALUS

The admiration for the Andalusian model is widely shared by the Islamic world. One could use it therefore as an interesting subject for intercultural debates. Yet, the participants in such a debate should be ready to learn that the hagiography of al-Andalus propagated for example on the UNESCO-sitemap does not represent any historical reality, but has to be considered a well intentioned proposal for utopian concepts. These concepts could be useful nonetheless because, perhaps they could help to accept cultural diversity and to define ways to live peacefully together within the increasingly diverse space.

On the other hand, why should we make propaganda for an Andalusian model that has never really existed?

In al-Andalus, the dominant school of Islamic jurisprudence was, at least since the second half of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th century, the Maliki-school, which provided a severe, repressive interpretation of Islamic law, especially against the Christians¹². From the 11th century on persecution concerned also the Jews. Remember here the so called «ludic» Islam praised at the Granada Conference in 2002 as a legacy Andalusia should be proud of.

Maliki jurist Ibn Abdun for example explained around 1100 in Sevilla how Christians and Jews should be treated under Maliki jurisdiction: «No Jew or Christian may be allowed to wear the dress of an aristocrat, nor of a jurist, nor of a wealthy individual: on the contrary they must be detested and avoided. It is forbidden to accost them with the greeting “Peace be upon you!”. In effect, Satan has gained possession of them, and caused them to forget God’s warning. They are the confederates of Satan’s party [...]. A distinctive sign must be imposed upon them in order that they may be recognised and this will be for them a form of disgrace»¹³.

At that time, even the Jews were not really better off than under the Visigoths. Historians like Moshe Perlmann¹⁴ or H.Z. Hirschberg¹⁵ have related what Jewish chronicles and poets have written about the treatment of their co-religionists: the Jewish viziers Samuel Ibn Naghrela, and his son Joseph, who had protected up to then a once flourishing Jewish Community, were both assassinated between 1056 to 1066. When it came to an uprising of this community at least 3,000 Jews were assassinated. The Muslim Berber Almohads in Spain and North Africa (1130-1232) perpetrated cruelties of every kind against both the Jewish and Christian populations: massacres, captivity, forced conversion. Muslim «inquisitors» took away the children from non-Muslim families placing them under the care of Muslim educators, and so on.

Maimonides, praised as one of the highest incarnations of the «fertile dialectic between the three great monotheistic religions» and of the enlightened rule of Muslims, had to leave Córdoba with his family in 1148 to take refuge in Fez in Morocco, disguised as a Muslim. From Fez he had to flee again, now to Egypt, at that time under the more liberal Fatimid jurisdiction.

The Spanish arabist Serafín Fanjul was so annoyed by the

propagandistic success of the myth of al-Andalus that he dedicated a whole book to its refutation. Here, he stresses that the so-called «convivencia», the peaceful coexistence of three religions, was at best a mere coexistence of communities defined according to their religion, where the dominant religion, Islam, proceeded against the other religions submitting them to a regime that resembled more Apartheid than tolerance, not to mention the periodically perpetrated crucifixions and decapitations¹⁶.

In the Middle Ages such a conduct of the dominant religion was certainly not an exception, but is surely not a conduct to be proud of or to be praised as a model for our days.

All the same, until the end of the caliphate of Abd ar-Rahman III (1031), Jews in al-Andalus were treated much better than for example under the Visigoths. The invasion of 711 had freed them from Visigothic oppression and brought a time of flowering for Spanish Jewry. The so-called Golden Age of the caliphate represented certainly a golden age for the Jews. Their persecution started only with the seizure of power by the zealous Islamic tribes from North Africa in the 11th and 12th century. With the Almoravid and Almohad invasions Jews began to take refuge in the northern Christian kingdoms.

But, if under the influence of fanatical Islamic sects al-Andalus was not a paradise even for Jews, it seems doubtful that Andalusia could have been at the same time the birthplace of European rationalism marked by figures like Averroës. And, in fact, the myth of the eminent philosophical importance of al-Andalus does not stand firm against historical research but has been refuted already about 150 years ago by Ignaz Goldziher, one of the founding fathers of critical oriental studies: «The first Spanish caliph to patronise and cultivate science was Hakam II in the fourth(according to the Arab chronology)/tenth century, himself a scholar of the first rank. But already under his successor the major-domo [...] wielding absolute power, Ibn abî 'Amir, succeeded in gaining the favour of the folk by destroying all of Hakam's scientific creations [...] the favour of the "ulama" was in Andalusia a stronger support for the aspirants to power than the commitment of the learned and enlightened people. However, since in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries Andalusia did not yet have remarkable and independent philosophers, the fanaticism of Ibn abî 'Amir did damage only to Eastern philosophical literature. When in the sixth/twelfth century a few

philosophers appeared among the Spanish Arabs in the persons of Ibn Rushd (Averroës), Obm Baja (Avenpace), Ibn Tufayl (Abubacer) and Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar), for a while at least their personal safety was assured by the Almoravid Caliph Yusuf ibn Tashfin, himself a lover of scholarship. Later, however, after a “golden age” of but a few decades, on the protests of the “ulama” and the proletariat, philosophy and scholars were compelled to retreat and their persecution put an end to the whole philosophical movement in Muslim Spain. Averroës, who owed his fame in the history of Aristotelism to his paramount influence on Christian scholasticism and Jewish religious philosophy, fell almost entirely into oblivion among the Arabs [...]. His work was discontinued, even as it had not arisen from the development of Spanish Islam but was a continuation of the philosophy of Eastern Islam which had organically progressed there for centuries. It is evident from these two circumstances that the Spanish Arabs were inappropriate soil for philosophy, a fact admitted by the historian of Arab Spain, al-Maqqari, who wrote: “Philosophy is a science hated in Spain, which can be studied only in secrecy” [...]».

And what about natural sciences in al-Andalus? According to Goldziher, «it is evident that also in this area [...] the cultivation of both the exact sciences and philosophy was initiated by the Mashriqui (i.e. Eastern) Muslims».

New ideas and especially those that went into the direction of a more liberal Islam originated generally in the East, not in Andalusia: «The phenomenon of numerous manifestations of liberal movements, in both scholarship and practical life, within Eastern Islam, which we seek in vain in Western Islam, is due to the different circumstances and conditions of the formation of these two branches of Islam [...]. The history of Arab science begins with their contact and mixing with the Persians, and the initiators of this scientific movement, which later developed into a discipline of Islam of its own, were mostly non-Arab foreigners, especially Persians [...]»¹⁷.

The results of Goldziher’s research (and of many others, naturally) testify that the traditional and until our days official declarations and convictions about al-Andalus are mere but durable propaganda, promoted by Western politicians, by those intellectuals who follow them always blindly, and even by many scholars.

But why do they do so? Is it because of bad consciousness with

regard to European colonialism? Or because they are afraid of Islamic terrorism? Or because of economic interests? I have no answer. Perhaps, it is worthwhile to remember that critical oriental studies like they had developed for example in 19th century Germany were blocked when Germans built the Baghdad railway at the beginning of the 20th century and when the German emperor William II donated a precious monument for Saladin to the Abassidian Mosque of Baghdad.

5. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS?

If you allow, I would like to summarise some results of my research that are not yet published and some results of recent oriental studies.

First of all, we have to accept as a fact that we know nothing or very little for sure about the Muslim or Arab invasion of Spain. The earliest Arab writings about the invasion have been written several hundred years after 711. The chronicle of the moor Rasis finishes with the situation at the end of the 10th century but it is testified for the first time in the first half of the 15th century, that is more than 700 years after the so-called invasion and that is an eternity for the Middle Ages. The most renowned history of Andalusia in Arabic is a compilation of earlier but never before testified information by al-Maqqari who lived in the 17th century. And this is about 900 years after the events he is writing about. Certainly, we dispose of two Latin chronicles whose authors declare to have finished their work in 741 and in 754 respectively, but the oldest manuscripts in which they appear date back to the 11th and 14th century. Nobody can determine exactly what has been changed and rewritten by copists in the meantime.

No matter whether they were written at least partly in the 8th century or much later, their authors did not have any conception of Islam. They didn't know even terms like «Islam», «Qur'an» or «Muslim». They situated Mecca in the middle of Mesopotamia, calculated the years of the Arab history according to the Julian and not the Muslim lunar years, and they spoke of Muhammad as a rebel who had conquered Syria and Mesopotamia which does not correspond to historical truth.

What we know with certainty, we know from coins. In the 8th

century, after the Visigothic coins, we find coins whose inscriptions reflect the christology of the great Umayyad ruler Abd al-Malik. We know his christological convictions from the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It is true that here appears the term «muhammad» and that this term is interpreted by Islamist as well as by most Western historiographers as the name of the prophet, but it is very clear from the whole context, from the linguistic as well as from the historical context, that «muhammad» or «mohammadun» is here a verb form and means «is to be praised». The person who was to be praised is the messenger of God, and the messenger of God is defined in the octagon of the Dome of the Rock as Jesus, Mary's son. The same definition can be found in the inscription of the Sanctuary of Medina, called the prophet's tomb, from 757.

The so-called Muslim invaders under Umayyad rule have to be considered consequently Christian Arabs (or Arabs whose «Islam» was still very close to Christianity and far from the Islam in the 9th century), and – mostly – Christian Berbers. French archeologists have proved that Berbers used Latin at least until the end of the 9th century and that they continued to build new Christian churches in North Africa still in the 9th and 10th century.

Naturally, to be a Christian did not mean the same thing for everybody and everywhere. Abd al-Malik confessed a Christianity that corresponds to the early, the pre-nicean Eastern Christianity. That is to say, a Christianity for whom Jesus Christ is not God, but God's messenger. Something very similar was believed of Jesus by the followers of Arianus, the Spanish Visigoths. It is true that the Visigothic king Recesmund had sworn off Arianism – because he was afraid of the Byzantines who had justified their war against the Ostrogoths with their Arian heterodoxy. But that some Christian heterodoxies of this kind continued to exist in Spain becomes obvious from the debates during the councils of the late 7th century that reveal preoccupations especially about christology.

Later on, at the end of the 8th century, we learn from the condemnation by Frankish dominated councils of the so-called Spanish Adoptionism – that is, Christ is God by adoption – that heterodox christological positions not too far from Arianism and early Arab Christianity continued to be defended in Spain.

The religious conflicts in Spain could naturally have favoured the so-called invasion, if there was any invasion at all. Latin and Arab chronicles agree on the idea that the Visigothic king Roderic has lost

his ultimate battle and his reign because of the treachery of Visigothic noblemen. And they agree with the explanation of the continuous wars on Spanish soil until nearly the end of the 8th century with internal conflicts rather than with the invasion of foreigners. Thus, it would be plausible to think of Visigothic noblemen who had called for the Arabs to help them against their orthodox Christian king.

The religious significance of these conflicts cannot reside in a controversy between Muslims and Christians. None of the chronicles mentions any conflict of that kind, and the first mention of the word «Muslim» has been found on a coin from 753 in the East, in Persia. Consequently, the conflict must have been between orthodox and heterodox Visigoths and their allies, perhaps, even between different groups of heterodox Visigoths, a conflict won finally by the heterodox party with the help of heterodox Christian Arabs and Berbers. The hypothesis of an inner conflict could also explain for example the story of the Christian bishop who helped the Arabs to conquer Toledo, a story the chronicles tell us without giving any explanation of the phenomenon.

Our hypothesis might explain even, how it was possible that relatively small troops conquered within a few days or weeks dozens of huge and wealthy cities – but not for example the city of Mérida. Mérida was not the most important city Visigoths, Berbers and Arabs assaulted on their way but it took the aggressors about a year to conquer it.

When the first Umayyad Emir of Córdoba, Abd ar-Rahman I – a tall man with white skin, reddish hair and blue eyes, as Arab historians tell us –, succeeded in calming the situation toward the end of the 8th century, the religious climate of Spain was that of a Christian syncretism. Thus, the fact that the Spanish Christians had to pay taxes had not to be justified with religious arguments. It was simply because they had been conquered. And that those cities who had rebelled against the Arab domination were punished even with expropriation or slavery was not an unusual punishment for these times. Besides, it is mentioned in the Latin chronicles that some Arab rulers restored to the Spanish Christians what had been taken away from them by their Arab or Berber precursors.

Things changed in the 9th century. Around the middle of this century several dozens of Christians were killed in Córdoba because of blasphemy. They were accused of having insulted the prophet.

The martyrs – many were monks from the surrounding monasteries or people educated by them – went on purpose downtown to provoke the Arabs. The Emir Abd ar-Rahman II, known for his great interest in culture, convoked a council as had done the Visigothic kings before him, and almost all the Spanish bishops came. They decided, following the caliph's desire and, partly, their own convictions, to condemn the wish and search for martyrdom of the Christian martyrs. The majority of the bishops thought it was understandable that the Arabs did not tolerate insults against their prophet, insults that were not justifiable in the bishop's eyes even from a Christian point of view, since Muhammad had revealed to the Arabs the Mosaic law of the same God as had Jesus to the Christians. They excommunicated the wilful martyrs therefore.

These attitudes demonstrate that even more than 200 years after the death of Muhammad more or less educated persons living in the capital of a pretended Islamic state did not really know what the teachings of Muhammad were about.

The general state of ignorance is proved by the letters and comments of the two greatest Spanish Latin theologians of that time, Albar and Eulogius, who lived in Córdoba. Their writings were known everywhere in the Western Christian world. But they did not have the slightest idea of Islam. It was only when Eulogius travelled to Pamplona (744-748) and found a manuscript in the monastery of Leyre with a brief biography of Muhammad that he understood what was going on in Spain (that is at least what he wrote to his friend Albar). The followers of the prophet Muhammad were not simply heretics but disciples of a prophet who had pretended to be the true Messiah and to surmount the errors of the Christians. Consequently, they declared that the doctrine of Muhammad was a blasphemy, did not represent the true faith, and finally they died as martyrs. Their teaching and their martyrdom did not have a greater impact on the convictions of many Spanish bishops. One of them, Hostegesis, summoned his co-religionists even to convert to Muhammad.

It was probably not only by chance that Christians learned something new about Mohammad around 840-850. The first half of the 9th century is exactly the period in which a new orthodox Islam that has been promoted by the Abassid caliph al-Mamun starts to spread over Andalusia with, as a consequence, a much harsher treatment of non-Muslims. The son of Abd ar-Rahman II,

Muhammad I, was a much more ferocious oppressor of Christians than his father had used to be. He had limited his anti-Christian activities mostly to the introduction of higher taxes. Muhammad I started with the systematic destruction of churches, forced conversions, and enslavements on a larger scale than ever before. Oppression of «non-believers» was strengthened later on in the 10th century and in the 11th and 12th century by the fanatic and intolerant Almoravids and Almohads from North Africa.

This evolution explains why, from the 9th century on, more and more Christians converted to Islam and were assimilated. After Albar and Eulogius the until then vivid Latin Christian culture disappeared from Andalusia and was substituted by an intolerant Arabic and Muslim culture. For the Christians, peaceful coexistence meant from then on: with the exception of some high ranked officials the great mass of them was allowed to do the work, often as slaves on the fields. The Muslims were allowed to rule over them.

With the conquest of Granada in 1492 by the Spanish Catholic kings things did not develop any better. Now the oppressed part of the population were the Arab Muslims, and, again, the Jews. Thus, the reign of the Catholic Castilians represents no more a model for peaceful coexistence of different religions and races than the Arab domination.

Evidently, times were not mature for the application of *shura*, that is of the consultation and the search of consent of all those who would be affected by the implementation of the laws they would be invited to vote for.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Al-Andalus is not a model for peaceful coexistence including intercultural dialogue.

2. Intercultural dialogue between the West and Muslim Modernists should be intensified even in Europa. Here, Europe could learn from the US.

3. Muslim Conservatists should learn that their interpretations of God's will are nothing but their interpretations. Even when they follow certain traditions, they follow the traditions they have chosen to follow. And Muslim traditions are innumerable. And when they refer to the Qur'an they should acknowledge that the Qur'an has a

history. And they should take into consideration that even between the four oldest versions officially recognised not less than 15,000 variants have been counted.

4. Western jurisdiction should be learn about the fact of these varieties and, consequently, about the relativity of Islamis' interpretation of God's will.

* During the Project realisation Professor Johannes Thomas became severely ill. This is the version of his text dated from September.

¹ J. Esposito and P.J. Piscatori, *Democratisation and Islam*, in «Middle East Journal», vol. 45, n. 3, 1991, p. 436.

² M.C. Hudson, *After the Gulf War. Prospects for the Democratisation in the Arab World*, in «Middle East Journal», vol. 45, n. 4, 1991, p. 436.

³ This and the following quotations are taken from a report of a workshop organised by the United States Peace Institute in 2002. I quote this report from the sitemap of the famous Iranian Muslim reformist Abdolkarim Soroush: www.dr.soroush.com/English...Islam_and_Democracy.html.

⁴ M.A. Muqtedar Khan, *The Compact of Medina: A Constitutional Theory of the Islamic State*, in «Mirror International», 30 May 2001.

⁵ This passage is quoted from Khan's contribution to the above mentioned workshop.

⁶ D.A. Rahman I, *Shari'a: The Islamic Law*, Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia, editore??, 1998.

⁷ Islam Democracy and Islamic Governance: www.mideasti.org/html/b-soroush.html.

⁸ M. Sadre and A. Sadri (ed.), *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 128-129.

⁹ M. Bazargan, *Is Islam a Global Threat?* (Aya Islam yek khatari Jahani Ast?), in «Rahavard», n. 36, 1994, pp. 48-57.

¹⁰ See www.unesco.org/culture/al-andalus/html.

¹¹ See www.islamuswest.org/clash_00.html.

¹² É. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, vol. 3, Paris, Maisonneuve Larose, 1954, pp. 131-133 and 470-476.

¹³ Quotation from id., *Séville musulmane au début du XIIème siècle*, in *Islam d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, vol. 2, Paris, Maisonneuve Larose, 1947, p. 114.

¹⁴ M. Perlmann, *Eleventh Century Andalusian Authors on the Jews of Granada*, in «Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research», vol. 18, 1949, pp. 267-270.

¹⁵ H.Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews of North Africa*, vol. 1, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1974, pp. 123-139. See also A.G. Bostom, *The Corrosive Hagiography of Muslim Spain*, available at www.secularislam.org/articles/bostom3.htm.

¹⁶ S. Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España. La forja del mito*, Madrid, Siglo Veintiuno, 2000.

¹⁷ I. Goldziher, *The Spanish Arabs and the East. The Place of the Spanish Arabs in the Evolution of Islam as Compared with the Eastern Arabs*, published by the Hungarian Academy of Science in its serie of the first Division in 1877 at Budapest. Here quoted from the reprint: I. Goldziher, *Gesammelte Schrifte*, hr. von J. Desomogyi, Bd. I, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1967, pp. 414-418.

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