Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on March 9, 2012

The Glad Tiding

“They wish to put His light out with their mouths. But He will perfect His light, even though the disbelievers hate it; it is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the deen of truth to exalt it over every other deen, even though those who associate others with Allah hate it” (al-Saff, 61:8-9).

This ayah of Surat al-Saff is among many other ayat in the Qur’an, which give Muslims the glad tiding that Islam will prevail over other systems of life, however much the disbelievers and polytheists may detest this to happen.

On the other hand, the West asserts that it is the Western liberal democracy that will triumph over all other ideologies and worldviews. This confidence is documented and expressed emphatically in a book entitled The End of History and the Last Man authored by Francis Fukuyama in 1992, right after the victory of capitalism over communism. Fukuyama argues that the advent of Western Liberal Democracy may signal the end point of humanity’s socio-cultural evolution and the final form of governance. It is interesting to note that earlier Karl Marx, the founder of communism had argued that history would end with communism displacing capitalism.

According to Fukuyama, from the French Revolution (1789-1799) onwards, democracy has proven to be a fundamentally better system of governance: ethically, politically, and economically than any other system in the world. It is now two decades since this assertive statement was made in Fukuyama’s book, and in contrast to what he wrote, we find ethics at its lowest ebb, a general and all-pervading decline in morals and values, a shaky political system, and an economy in shambles. Signs such as these are indicative of crumbling dynasties and empires.

The West has made great strides in the fields of science and technology and deserves to be applauded for that. But, most certainly, it has failed to provide what it aspired and aimed to provide to the people: life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Life means the right to live. More people are killed today than any given time. Liberty has been perverted to the extent of having a free license to commit immoral practices involving sex, drugs, gambling and other universally known vices. All this has resulted in pursuit of misery rather than pursuit of happiness. Also, the West has failed to provide people a sense of security, stability, and sustainability of good economy.

To many intellectuals in the West, Islam poses a ‘threat’ to the West and its ideals of liberal democracy. Fukuyama also gave vent to his opinion when he wrote in the Washington Post in 2008 that democracy’s only competitor in the realm of ideas today is Radical Islam. Affixing adjectives to Islam and coining attributive terms such as fundamentalists, traditionalists, modernists, secularists for Muslims is something that the West undertakes to show how it perceives Islam and Muslims.

Islam is not merely a religion in the narrow sense of the word confined to one’s individual religious be-
liefs and practices. As a matter of fact, it is a complete and comprehensive socio-politico-economic system of life embracing the entire individual and collective spheres of human life in which Allah (SWT) is at the center of all human affairs. Hence unlike the West, there is no separation of ‘Church’ and ‘State’ in Islam. As we learn from the Qur’an, Islam is the only system of life that is acceptable to Allah (SWT). “Indeed, the deen in the sight of Allah is Islam” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:19). What has been achieved by democracy in the West is only partially Islamic. Democracy, as we see, has not freed man; rather it enslaved him in an indirect way through economic slavery among many other things.

The spirit of democracy is indeed embedded in the pure form of Islam that was established by Muhammad (SAW) and practiced by the rightly guided caliphs. How compatible is the notion of democracy based on popular sovereignty with Islamic democracy? Commonly understood, sovereignty is the supreme authority in a political community. The origin of popular sovereignty dates back to the period between mid 1600s and mid 1700s. It is the belief that the legitimacy of the state is created by the will or consent of its people who are the sources of all political power. In other words, it is the people who make the law, either by themselves or through their elected representatives.

Islam admits of no sovereignty except that of God and, consequently, does not recognize any Lawgiver other than Him. Islam does not totally exclude human legislation. It only limits its scope and guides it on right lines. Human legislation, according to Islam, is and should be subject to the Supremacy of Divine law and within the limits prescribed by it. According to a hadith, “The likeness of a believer is that of a horse tied to a peg.” The believers can legislate and move about freely within the limits and boundaries set for them by Allah (SWT). These are God’s boundaries, so do not transgress them (al-Baqarah 2:187). And those who live within the limit will pursue happiness in this world and the next. It follows, therefore, that man cannot have absolute freedom and legislate what is harmful to man.

Democracy in Islam is not based on popular sovereignty but on popular vicegerency (Khilafa). We are the vicegerents of Allah on earth. As vicegerents, we only have a delegated authority. The system of governing becomes the collective rule under the rule of Allah (SWT). Thus, democracy with the element of ‘theo’ (a combining form meaning God) fixed in it is in line with the spirit of Islamic vicegerency. Theo-democracy should not be likened to theocracy that refers to the rule by the cleric (Wilayat al-Faqih). Replacing liberal democracy with theodemocracy will give way to the best form of human government, and that indeed will mark the end of history.

Today we are witnessing a divine intervention in the ‘Arab Revolution’ that is sweeping the Arab world. Revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen, with other countries following suit show the magnitude of peoples’ rage and anger against their dictators who have been ruling them with an iron fist since their independence. This is indeed a glad tiding from Allah (SWT) to the believers. This unique phenomenon has taken the entire world including the Muslims by surprise. “Thus they devised a plan, and We also devised a plan, but they were not aware of it” (al-Naml, 27:50).

This divine intervention to end the plight of the people can be better understood by reflecting upon ayah 126 of Surat Aal ‘Imran and ayah 10 of Surat al-Anfal which both say, “And God did not give this except as good news to you, and so that your hearts may be assured with it. Victory is only from God, the Noble, the Wise.”

According to a hadith, Prophet (SAW) is reported to have enumerated five periods of our history beginning from his time until the end of times. The meaning of this hadith is that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) would remain till the time Allah willed; then he would go. Then there will be vicegerency in his footsteps till the time Allah (SWT) willed. Then there will be a cruel kingship (Rule of the Umayyad, Abbasid dynasties, etc.). Then there will be imposed kingship (colonialism and imperialism). Then there will be once again vicegerency in the footsteps of the Prophet (SAW). Apparently, what we are witnessing today is the new phase of the last chapter of human history.
Allah (SWT) has come to our aid. Decades of unflinching effort made by Muslim scholars to educate the masses; to spread the true message of Islam, is now bearing fruits. It appears as though this is the beginning of the vicegerency in the footsteps of the Prophet. (*Khilafa ‘ala Minhaj al-Nubuwah*). This was the type of vicegerency that was practiced by the righteous caliphs (*Khulafa’ Rashidun*) and other noble companions of the Prophet (SAW).

Let us recall the conversation of Rustum, the commander of the Persian army and Rabi’ ibn Amr, an ordinary soldier of the Muslim army. This story is documented in the archives of history. Al Tabari narrated that Rabi’ ibn ’Amir entered the court of Rustum, the Persian leader, who asked him: “What brought you here?” Rabi’ replied, “God sent us, and He brought us here in order to lead whom He wills from the worship of man to the worship of God alone; from the narrowness and oppression of this world to the space and abundance of the hereafter; and from the injustice of other religions to the justice of Islam.”

The semblance of this second phase of history appears to be coming once again in shape of the fifth and final stage of history according to the Prophetic predictions. There is no way for us other than to make a conscious and concerted effort to become a part and parcel of this whole process in order to achieve real success and salvation.

Islam is a just socio-politico-economic system manifesting one simple idea— *La ilaha illallah* (There is no god but God). This testimony of faith is not only an idea or a worldview but is the ultimate truth and reality based on our rational and intellectual understanding and experiences of this life and the universe.

There is a Prophetic tradition that is very relevant to the Western people and to what we are witnessing today. It is reported that when al-Mustawrid al-Qurashi was sitting with ’Amr ibn al-’As, he said, “I heard the Prophet say, ‘The Hour will come when the Romans will be in the majority.’ ‘Amr asked him, “What are you saying?” He said, “I am repeating that which I heard from the Prophet.” ‘Amr said, “If you say this, it is true, because they have four good characteristics: they are the ones most able to cope with tribulation, the quickest to recover after disaster and to return to the fight after disaster, and are the best as far as treating the poor, weak and orphans is concerned. They have a fifth characteristic which is very good; they do not allow themselves to be oppressed by their kings.”

The people in the West are good. Those managing them are the corrupt ones. If we reach out to the good people and make them aware of what *La ilaha illallah* implies in letter and spirit, this universal revolutionary message of truth will spread and we or our succeeding generations will definitely witness the triumph of Islam over other systems of life. This calls for striving in the path of Allah (SWT), both with the message of *la ilaha illallah* and with the Qur’an.

Edited by Dr. Munawar Haque
IONA Research & Publications
publications@ionaonline.org
www.ionaonline.org