

SECULARISM AND RELIGION : CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE (AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE)

INTRODUCTION

A serious conflict has been ranging between theocracy and secularism. The antagonism is so pronounced that each shows a picture that it is irreconcilable with the other. What is Religion and what is Secularism? What are the basic features, modalities and objectives of the two concepts that could have totally eliminated the possibility of mutual exclusiveness of one to the other? Are all aspects of one totally repugnant to the other in all their ramifications? Are the areas of conflict so fundamental to the existence of each one of them to the extent of ruling out completely, at least, a marriage of convenience? Is the conflict an historical accident or is it rooted in a deep historical circumstance? Have all shades of secularism given a change to every type of Religion (and vice versa) to justify wholesome antagonism to each other? Or the enmity is transferred to all religions simply because secularism has a brush with one particular religion? Has Islam in particular, been found to have rejected everything that secularism (of any kind) contains? And if so, Why? Is Secularism avoidable? If not, to what extent can Religion (Islam) tolerate it? These are some of the major preoccupations of this paper.

Definitions

The two terms—"secularism" and "secularisation" are almost synonyms of each other except that the former is an ideology while the latter depicts a process of socio-cultural-cum-intellectual revolution.¹ Secularism is from a Latin word *Saeculum* which according to C. Williams² means "of this age"; "related to this world" in the temporal sense of the word—'world' and not in terms of physical space. This word has, however, attracted different interpretations and definitions from different scholars and schools of thought.³

Berkes⁴ defined it as emphasis on the worldly regardless of what happens in the hereafter. *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary*⁵ defines secularism as "the belief that the state, morals, education etc. should be independent of religion". *The Lexicon Webster Dictionary*⁶ explains it as "a system of beliefs which rejects all forms of religious faith and worship..." Another author opined that "neither theism nor

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atheism enters into the secularist scheme because neither is provable by experience.”⁷ These few definitions have revealed an apparent contradiction. While one excludes atheism or theism, another sees it as a rejection of faith and worship, i.e., atheism.

In Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), the introduction of modern science and knowledge of medicine amounted to secularism.⁸ In Hellenic culture “secularization means the changing of human mind whereby the basis of conduct became mundane.”⁹ Secularism was so elastic in scope to the extent that even some priests were described as secular clergy on account of their being “busy carrying out various duties connected with saving souls and rendering praise unto God,”¹⁰ as different from regular clergy who were “monks and nuns who fled from this world to devote themselves to the contemplation of the awful nature of sin and glory of graciousness of God.”¹¹

In another circle, secularism means mere “formality, anonymity and impersonality”, which imply treating persons as persons—not as things and not as intimates.¹² Some see it as “mobility” which implies socialization. In other words, secularism means formality and socialisation. Cox identifies other features of secularism as pragmatism, profanity, pluralism and tolerance.¹³ Cox stressed that secularism does not exclude religion rather it breeds religious peaceful co-existence.¹⁴ Wilson was said to have identified the elements of secularism as “rational procedure, technology and the absence of the sacred.”¹⁵ In Nigeria, Professor Iya Abubakar and Justice Sambo conceived secularism as implying “prohibition and rejection of religions by the government.”¹⁶ One may suspend the discussion on the definitions and concepts of secularism by finding a solace in Earl Raab’s submission that:

The term secular, has, of course a number of nuances: it can denote anything from greater freedom of doctrinal interpretation for individual believer—whose commitment to transcendent values remains undiminished—to the outright denial that a sacred order exists at all.¹⁷

Any attempt at defining religion would not be less problematic than that of secularism, though religion is more concrete and more firmly registered in the mind of many men than the abstract concept of secularism. The existence of some known religions probably eases our conceptualisation of religion. Unless otherwise stated in any part of this paper, ‘Religion’ is restricted to Islam and Christianity.

Secularism and Christianity

The origin of secularism is likely to shed more light on the conflict inherent in the concept of secularism, at least at its formative stage.

Secularism as a modern political system became popular in the Western World after Martin Luther had led an ecclesiastical revolt against the Roman Catholicism in 1529 C.E. The revolt resulted in the formation of protestantism. It was the revolt that caused Europe to adopt secularism as a system that followed partisan sectarian interest of neither catholicism nor protestantism but the common interest of Christianity. Secularism was formally founded in England as an ethico-philosophical system by George J. Holyoake about 1846.¹⁸

Secularism as a socio-political ideology is said to have its genesis in the formation of the humanist movement in the European world of the pre-science age.¹⁹ The movement started as a result of friction between faith and knowledge.²⁰ The people began to screen religious (Christian) precepts under the torchlight of knowledge. The exercise led to an increase in the erosion of confidence in the Christian precepts. Initially the Church felt that "religion will die if it was not kept going and organised on an authoritarian ecclesiastical and dogmatic basis."²¹

As the resentment of the common people continued to mount, more and more allegations were being levelled against the Church. The more knowledgeable man became, the more rebellious he was against some teachings of the Church.

Later, men started to subject the Biblical traditions to mental structures, to reconcile God's teachings as contained in the traditions of the Church with truth and reasoning. The number of such men who made efforts to free their mentality from myth to ontology continued to increase on one hand while on the other the increase continued to strengthen the voice of dissidence against Church authorities.²² This led to a conflict between faith and reason.

Christianity and the Rationlists

The discoveries of modern science gradually but systematically eroded the grip which the church had over the Western Christians. For instance, science through Copernicus and Newton, revealed that the sun was the centre of the universe and that the earth was vast in extent. These discoveries were opposed to the Christian theologians' theory of creation and cosmology. Consequently these scientists

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were declared heretics and persecuted. The persecution was not able to forestall the increase in the number of dissidents who were then more determined, than ever, to resist what they considered as the intolerance of the priests. The Proscience movement rose in defence of not only tolerance but also freedom of thought.²³ Quite Unconsciously another gulf has been created between Christianity and Secularism which may also be named as the gulf between Science and Religion.

The Church became more ruthless in its resistance of secularism and its science. Through the course of inquisition, some non-Christians and Christian scientists were burnt alive while eyes of some of them were plucked.²⁴ The movement of the rationalists, more than any other force, posed a serious and direct threat to the sovereignty of the Church.

The movement challenged some of the teachings of the Church on the basis of reasoning and rationalisation. The movement which started as a challenge to the Church continued to question some Biblical records. As an illustration, Genesis verses 1-8 describe how God, out of suspicion of men who were building a tower to reach the sky, demolished the tower and confused the languages of men in order to destroy the unity of men which God was said to have considered as a potential threat to his omniscience. This, the secularists perceived as a sign of laziness and powerlessness of God.

On moral grounds the masses "frequently found that those who pretend to be the most religious lack even common decency and ordinary humanity. They are too often oppressive, intolerant or even degenerate."²⁵ The secularists, therefore, thought that their reasoning faculty was more human than the oppressive religious institution and, therefore, mounted more serious propaganda against the concentration of political and spiritual powers in the hands of Church authorities. The secularists erroneously concluded that: "Religion is an impediment to progress".²⁶ They continued that "God is the worst of mental slavery and clergy is quite simply the progeny of devil".²⁷

Harry aptly described the reaction of the Church to challenges of secularism thus:

Secular judgements of conduct were speedily banned. The tolerance and intellectual freedom which had characterized paganism disappeared. Free discussion might provoke heresies, and heresies would mean the damnation of souls, since there was but one true road to salvation.

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Christianity encouraged intolerance, bigotry, and religious persecution. It destroyed all conflicting cults with an incredible ferocity. Peasant and scientist, literate and illiterate, all had to share, willingly or not, the same basic beliefs. Nothing less than rigorous conformity was demanded.²⁸

This circumstance, probably was what made Manzor opine that, "perhaps within the specifically western experience of medieval Church and against the background of the crusades and the inquisition, there is some justification for entertaining such a view".²⁹

Furthermore, the Church was accused of arrogating absolute knowledge of all things, even those that require special training and expertise, to the clergy though they were not so trained. This allegation could be substantiated by a recent event. In 1982, a scandal was reported in the Vatican Bank, involving Archbishop Paul C. Marcinkus and Robert Calvi (the President of the Bank) who later committed suicide to cover the fraud. Archbishop Marcinkus confessed that he had no knowledge of finance for he only attended seminaries and was a bodyguard to Pope Paul VI when he was appointed as Secretary of the Vatican Bank in 1968. It was also revealed that up till 1982 only the Pope and two top bank officials knew the details of the operation of the bank. These revelations made an Italian Catholic minister comment that "it is silly for the clergy to manage directly a financial institution."³⁰

The Church that confessed that it was "not out for sociology but salvation; not for economy but evangelism; not for progress but pardon; not for democracy but gospel; not for civilization but Christianity,"³¹ cannot be said to be relevant to the modern age and therefore, appears to justify the stand of the secularists. It has been identified by a Christian priest that:

...the situation facing the American constitutionalists was not to split life into two realms—sacred for the Church and secular for the state—that too is still under God, what they were seeking to do was to defend the world against the Church,³² because from European experience "the Church showed all the same tendencies to imperialism as any other institution."³³

Therefore, if there should be three arms of Imperial Government in order to forestall or minimise imperial tyranny, they argued, such division between the Church and the State was necessary to ensure freedom from ecclesiastical tyranny. "The fathers of the American Constitution believed that freedom from Church-domination was itself a

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God-inspired spirit"³⁴ in order to guide against the use of religion for the exploitation of the masses. Another dimension was thus introduced into the conflict. That is a conflict between Religion and National Consciousness.

A Readjustment between Christianity and Secularism

After it dawned on Christianity that the currency of secularism was too strong to be checked, the priests decided to align with secularism and to modernise both the approach of the priests and the Christian Scripture. The attempt, according to Vernon Patt, "to de-supernaturalise a supernatural religion no longer has any meaning."³⁵ Attempts were made to adapt the Bible to the new development. Maria Levinskaya saw the inevitability of such adaptation. She observed: "No wonder, many of the Bibles have to be brought up to date."³⁷

The edition and review of the Bible, rather than showing its dynamism confirmed to the secularists that the priests were the makers of the Bible with a view to exploiting the people for if these were God's word and since God is omnipotent, then His words should be relevant to all ages without any human interpolation. When this attempt to win over the secularists failed, the church accepted at last, to propagate the theories of separation of church from state. It then discovered the relevance of "Give unto Ceasar what is Ceasar's" to state/church relationship. The effect of the acceptance of separation of the Church from the state was also not favourable to the church. The state fastly encroached on the church and the church was no longer able to control its men, even in spiritual or moral matters.

Reverend Father M.H. Kukah lamented thus:

Secular state necessarily prepares grounds for a spiritual live and let live which is okay. The case here is that Christians are most guilty here because under the pretext, our religious belief nose-dive into quagmire of materialism and the quest for power. We give our religious ideas holidays and begin to look for what is politically expedient.³⁹

Secularism too shifted position from its original rigid posture against Christianity to a level of compromise. The modern position of secularism is similar to the description of secularism which had been given long ago:

Secularism is an ethical system founded on the principles of natural morality and independent of revealed religion (Christianity) or super-

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naturalism.... Its first postulate is freedom of thought, that is, the right of every man to think for himself.

Implied in this postulate as its necessary complement is the right to difference of opinion upon all subjects of thought. This right would be negated without the right to assert that difference. Finally, secularism asserts the right to discuss and debate all vital questions, such as opinions regarding the foundations of moral obligation, the existence of God, the immorality of the soul, and the authority of conscience.

Secularism does not maintain that there is no other good but the good of the present life, but it does maintain that the good of the present life is a real good, and to seek that is good. It aims to find that material condition in which it shall be impossible for man to be deprived or to be poor. In this life there are, it asserts, material agencies that cannot be neglected without folly or hurt, and that it is wisdom, mercy, and duty to attend to them. It does not combat the postulates of Christianity, nor does it say there is no light or guidance save in nature. Rather, it maintains that there is light and guidance in secular truth, whose conditions and sanctions exist independently, act independently, and act forever.³⁹

Islam and Secularism

According to Abdul Qader Audah: Islam does not discriminate between religious and secular affairs. It combines worship with military defence, the mosque with Government House in a manner that none suffers any neglect.⁴⁰ The details of social or commercial or legal agreement is contained in the Qur'ân.⁴¹ Islam allows, and even encourages the use of reasoning faculty and has nothing against scientific research; rather it spurs man to making scientific discovery. Islam encompasses belief, private life, social life, respect for public order and establishment of justice among men. These goals and aspirations of Islam are interwoven and interrelated to the extent that no one aspect is abandoned or suspended during the performance of one.

In countries where Islam rules or had ruled, the potency of Islam to cater for all aspects of the life of a modern man is vivid. Tolerance is demonstrated to adherents of other faiths within reasonable limits. The accommodation of other faith with Islam in a single community presupposes a sort of secularism, i.e., impartiality in the conduct of public affairs. As an illustration, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,⁴² allows the Christian minority of less than 1%⁴³ of the total populace to have five out of two hundred and seventy seats in the national parliament. Furthermore, the Christian parlia-

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mentarians are to take oath of office as follows:

I, in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, swear by Almighty God to guard the Holy Bible and human honour, the laws of Christianity, the fruits of the Islamic revolution of the Iranian nation and the principles of the Islamic Republic.⁴⁴

The ability of Islam to accommodate the yearnings of the moderate secularists by way of respecting religious sensitivities of all religious groups within a nation is further demonstrated by the fact that the Prophet appointed a non-Muslim as an ambassador to Abyssinia,⁴⁵ while Caliph Umar caused a mosque, which was built on a Christian land, to be demolished.⁴⁶

The Qur'ân⁴⁷ stresses the right of non-Muslims, even under an Islamic theocratic government, to be adjudged by the dictates of their faith.

Islam, Science and Reasoning

Trevor Ling rightly observes the confident attitude of Islam to science and scientists:

Islam alone is fully consistent in its logical development of this belief, that is, in maintaining that nothing man has ever done or can do will ever affect This Almighty Being in any way whatsoever.⁴⁸

This Islamic notion is a reflection of the Islamic belief that scientists are working to discover God's work and unless there is an error on man's part, true scientific discovery cannot contradict any of the principles of natural phenomenon, as laid down in the Qur'ân. Muslim scholars, unlike the Christian priests, do not lay any claim to scientific expertise, rather they recognise that knowledge is what would lead to discovery in any field and that the knowledge of the *Shari'ah* is not sufficient to make one an authority in any other discipline other than *Shari'ah*.⁴⁹

It was only in 1961 that astronauts discovered the possibility of the conquest, of space which the Qur'ân⁵⁰ has alluded to over one thousand four hundred years ago. The Qur'ân also predicted the possibility, with God's command, of exploration of the earth and it came to pass. The Holy Qur'ân in chapter 50, verses 9-11, has also treated water circle in a manner that science later came to agree with.

The nature of attitude in space was also indicated in the Qur'ân in chapter 6, verse 123. Chapter 55, verse 5, states that "The Sun and

the moon follow courses prescribed by special accounting. Thus it is clear that Islam teaches the belief that God has endowed man "with reason and various impulses so that by his own efforts he may study and explore possibilities."⁵¹

An illustration which W.H. Hudson made to buttress his argument that Secularism renders religious beliefs meaningless is very instructive. He says:

If the roof falls, the first question a secularist asks is: What has gone wrong with the rafters? and not; Why has God done this to me?⁵²

The inquisitive attitude of the secularist is not anti-Islamic rather it is the type of attitude recommended by Islam. Islam preferred reasoning to dogmatic fellowship. This explains why Islam prohibits refutation or attack on unassailable facts or product of sound reasoning:

Say: the things that my Lord has forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret: sins and trespasses against truth and reason.⁵³

Ibn Jawzi was reported as saying:

A blind follower is not conscious of what he follows. Blind imitation tantamounts to mis-use of intellect whereas intellect was created for thinking and reasoning. It would be foolish if a person who is given light to show him the way extinguishes it and walks in darkness.⁵⁴

The Qur'ān verses on importance of reasoning are numerous. In Chapter 12, verse 108 of the Qur'ān, the Holy Prophet was asked to emphasise knowledge as a tool of spiritual emancipation: "Say, this is my way, I do invite unto God with sound knowledge". Similarly Qur'ān in 7:32 contains; "We explain the signs in detail for those who have sense". Islamic history is replete with intellectual analysis of not only the interpretation of Islamic texts, but also a thorough philosophical dissection of some fundamental notions, ideas and concepts in Islam. Throughout the free scholastic debate in Islamic theology, Muslim scholars did not declare anyone heretic except those who requested that reasoning had to be suspended in order to understand their own school of thought. Those were mostly mystics who went as far as saying that they were God or that they saw God, but they failed to sustain their claims with sound and intellectual proofs.

Books of Aristotle, Plato and Galen, among those of other philosophers, were translated and studied by Muslims during the Abbasid period. Even Christians and Jews were employed in carrying out some

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of the research activities on the works of these non-Muslim philosophers. The rational schools gave birth to scholastic theological sects such as Mu'tazilites, Qadarites, Jabarites, Ash'arites etc. in Islam. The philosophical discussions featured prophethood, paradise, hell, resurrection, free-will, Predestination, the nature of God and His attributes. A large number of theses and epistles were bequeathed to Islamic literature after this free exercise. At the end of the period, most of the philosophers agreed that philosophy and theology aimed at an identical goal—God or ultimate ego. Today, Islam is stronger in terms of meeting atheistic philosophers on the platform of intellectualism whereas the Qur'ân has not suffered any review or mutilation.

Islam does not accept the restrictive definition of religion as the way in which man actualized his relations with super-human and mysterious forces on which he believes to be dependent.⁵⁵ "Religion, according to the source, encompasses all knowledge and powers that are not scientific."⁵⁶ This probably was the type of separatist notion of religion that ignited the flame of conflict between religion and secularism at the onset. Islam, as we have seen, goes beyond the two definitions—it incorporates man to man relations as well as things that are not mysterious too, in addition to God/man relations and dealing with supernatural mysteries. The scope of Islam does not preclude scientific knowledge rather the Qur'ân is a veritable source of some scientific discoveries. Ling identifies the fact that religion in Europe, had become so artificially narrow, as one of the principal reasons that gave rise to the two destructive deluges—communism and secularism.⁵⁷

Early Muslims have laid good examples of not hastening to declare a new discovery as anti-God or anti-Islam. Muslims studied each system and explained the extent to which Islam can accommodate or repel it. For instance, artificial insemination was carefully studied. While Catholic Christians totally rejected it. Professor Shaykh Shaltut⁵⁸ made a critical analysis of the invention, in the light of Islamic injunctions and came out with the result that it is allowed if the semen is that of the husband. This could be necessary if the problem of infertility is traced to a cause (in the wife) that could be side-tracked through the use of artificial insemination. Characteristic of Muslim scholars, Shaltut went further to say that if the semen is not that of the husband then it is similar to, but not identical with adultery. Thus, he concluded by stating that Islam abhors indiscriminate insemination for it could reduce man to animalistic level and also constitute an assault on family sanctity.

In Islam, God's provision of space for the righteous ones, in the hereafter, has no limitation. The throne of God alone, is as wide as the present earth and heaven put together.⁵⁹ Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, according to the Qur'ān, brought neither fire nor curse but mercy to mankind.⁶⁰ The Qur'ān does not need to be edited in order to meet modern challenges. *Shari'ah*, through an in-built system of *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās* (consensus and analogical reasoning respectively), as sources of law, has provided adequate room for human impact on how man should live his life. This does not in any way impair the incontestable right of God to provide general regulations for activities of man on earth.

At this juncture, one needs to sound a note of caution to some contemporary Muslims, who, for reasons best known to them, turn Islam to perpetual protestor even when there is no basis for such protests. A paper entitled "The Kalimah : The Basis of Muslim Transaction" by A.H. Abdullahi⁶¹ contains adequate illustrations of such baseless antagonism. The writer declared attendance of any national ceremony other than that of Islam, such as national independence celebration or any national anniversary, as a form of worship of Gods which according to him, vitiates the *Kalimatu-'sh-shahādah*—the statement of testimony, of a Muslim. The Prophet, on the other hand is known and reported to have attended a number of national or local occasions that were not for purely Islamic affairs.⁶² Therefore, this declaration, in our view amounts to an unwarranted opposition to the state. Similarly a minute silence in honour of a dead person is not necessarily a product of secularism which is opposed to Islam. Muhammad is reported not only to have maintained a silence but also to have stood up in respect for a corpse of even a non-Muslim which was being carried away.⁶³

Islamic Provision for Multi Religiosity of a Nation

The Qur'ān has made it clear that God does not intend to make Islam the only religion on earth, so the notion of "Islam only" is an aberration to the tolerance and accommodation of Islam. The Holy Qur'ān in chapter 51 states:

To each you. We prescribed a law and a system if God had not willed He could have made you a single people but it is to test you in what he has given you...., so, strive as in race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God, it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you differ.

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The Holy Qur'ân in chapter 2, verse 256, states that "there is no compulsion in religion". Chapter 9, verse 6, presupposes the co-existence of the unbelievers and the Muslims, and mandates the latter to be kind and hospitable to the former: "If one among the pagans seek asylum from you, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of God, and escort him to where he can be secure. That is because they are men without knowledge" (Qur'ân 9:6). Islam here, shows a high level of sympathetic consideration for all human beings, irrespective of faith, and that hostility should be avoided as much as possible.

Islam gains more from human interaction. The Negus of Abyssinian's relationship with the prophet represented a model of mutual respect to the advantage of Islamic Community. Najash was so dear to Muhammad that Muhammad performed a full *janazah*—canonical funeral worship on him, in absentia, as if the Negus was a Muslim.

Another demonstration of Islamic attitude to non-Muslims in a multi-religious nation, is shown in chapter 60, verse 8, where God commands:

God does not forbid that with regard to those who do fight you not, for your faith, not drive you out of your homes; from dealing kindly and justly with them, for God loves those who are just.

The rule is that a Muslim could take some people of the book—(Christians and Jews) for friends in mundane affairs as shown by Qur'ân 5:82-85 thus:

You will find nearest to you among them (non-Muslims) in love to the Believers, those who say: "we are Christians," because among those are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world and they are not arrogant....

The Qur'ân on the other hand, cautions that "the Jews and the Christians would not be pleased with you until you turn to their religion." (Qur'ân 2:120) This is a realistic approach, that in dealing with non-Muslims, Muslims should be on their guard. Deuteronomy in 23:19-20 contains an element which justifies the caution which the Qur'ân enjoins the Muslims to take in dealing with Christians and Jews. Usury, according to the Biblical verses, is illegal among the people of their own faith but they (Jews and Christians) could obtain it from peoples of other religions, whereas the Qur'ân explains that justice should be exercised in social interaction with all creatures. (Qur'ân 3:75 and 7:155).

An evaluation of the so-called secular states, such as United Kingdom, United States of America and Nigeria reveals that they are,

at best, secular only in theory, but in actual practice, secularism has been applied as a subtle means of imposing Christian principles and ideas on the entire populace.⁶⁴ Islam is not against genuine and effective system of multi-religiosity, but it is against both excessive and hypocritical applications of secularism. The Holy Qur'ān in chapters 49:13, 19, 24, 36; 8:72 and 24:25 provides ample bedrock for secularism which means a non-theocratic state, but which has room for mutual co-existence of people of different religions. The co-existence must, however, be based on mutual respect for, and understanding of peculiarities of each faith.

Islam accords due respect to churches and cathedrals (Qur'ān 22:38-39) and forbids Muslims from reviling the object of worship of others. (Qur'ān 6:108) The constitution which prophet Muhammad applied in Medina defined the state as an entity, "a single community distinct from other people."⁶⁵ It also made provision which allowed non-Muslims to be adjudged by their own respective religious laws and that Muslims would help people of other faiths in whatever way required provided the non-Muslims did not collaborate with others against Muslims.⁶⁶ The Quran in chapter 4, verses 58 and 135, also calls for sincerity in dealing with one another within a nation irrespective of religious persuasion. Common goals and yearnings could be attained through national hospitals, schools, army, airport and Government provided no religion is made subservient to the other.

Once there are places where there is almost equal distribution of adherents of different religions, a system that guarantees equality and religious freedom for adherents of each of these religions is inevitable. Kurban rightly observed that secularism is a modern necessity.⁶⁷ If such a system is what constitutes secularism, Islam accommodates secularism of a sort. However, a line of demarcation needs to be drawn between the type of secularism that is acceptable to Islam and the one that is repulsive to it. Islam has provision for all aspects of life, including those that are regarded as secular affairs in the modern state.

In contrast, it should be noted that Islam has suffered a terrible blow in the hand of secularists in Turkey. Between 1923 and 1928, Turkey which had been an Islamic nation, was de-Islamised and all traces of Islam were under the guise of secularism, obliterated. A decree in 1925 prohibited headgear and imposed European cap on the people of Turkey. Co-educational institutions were introduced. All the Muslim private schools were closed while the *Shari'ah* was

substituted with German, Italian and Swiss coders.⁶⁸ The trend of employing secularism to de-Islamize and destabilize Islamic countries is quite visible in modern times.

Islamic countries should not allow "secularism" to encroach on their Islamic states, which have got inbuilt provisions for multi-religiosity of their respective nations. Non-Islamic nations should resist every system of secularism or multi-religiosity which fails to guarantee for the Muslim Community the essentials of true Muslim life. These necessities are application of *Shari'ah* in matters that involve only members of the *Ummah*. The standard of morality laid down by Islam should not be sacrificed at the altar of "modernity" and "civilization". The culture of Islam must be jealously guarded and preserved. Freedom of worship, including freedom to learn about Islamic way of worship in all schools that are funded, directly or indirectly by the state, should be guaranteed. It is not enough to introduce Islamic Studies as a course in the school curriculum rather, efforts should be made to ensure that other forces are not set in motion, within the school system, that may neutralise whatever amount of Islamic knowledge has been imbibed by the students. Islam should not be made subservient to any other religion. These essentialities should be guaranteed by every secular state that has Muslims as citizens.

The Futility of Absolute Secularism

The interpretation of secularism as the notion that national morals should be based solely on happiness, self-interest and personal pleasures is neither reasonable nor acceptable to Islam. Utilitarianistic approach to ethics is based on a very faulty premise. When man runs into the problem of deciding what is good and what is bad, his inadequacy comes to the glare. The Qur'an has warned against making self-interest the basis of code of conduct. (Qur'an 28:77:6: 163). Muslim theologians were quick at calling man's attention to the irrationality of following inordinate desires. Abdul Hakim wrote:

Pleasure is not always the motif of our actions. The virtuous pursue their good aims in spite of incurring more pain than pleasure; and the vicious also pursue their passions recklessly not because they give pleasure to them but because they have become imperious, uncontrollable urges which the doer himself sometimes knows are driving him to perdition.⁶⁹

A philosopher, Charles II B. Montesquiou devised a mobile basis—comparative school of ethics for code of morals. This, to him, is the

essence of true secularism.⁷⁰ He proposed that polygamy should be allowed in warm climates, where, in his view, women mature and fade away early.⁷¹ Wine, he said, should not be allowed in warm zones because alcohol is not needed there to create artificial bodily warmth. He said despotism is suitable in torrid areas, monarchy in temperate zone and republicanism in colder regions.

One can then observe that any form of secularism which aims at keeping God off from man's affair is not only unattainable but will also lead to confusion and general dissatisfaction. The interpretation of secularism as connoting a distrust of all traditions, a determination to accept nothing on authority but only after experiment and verification appears illogical as well. Has there been a trip to heaven in order to ascertain the claim that God and eschatology do not exist? Would it be logical for a person to refuse the existence of prison merely because he has not had cause to visit the court of law and the prison. It is unscientific for one to close one's eyes to something simply because one is not in position to analyse it. The Qur'an illustrates resurrection of the dead with resurrection of dead plants. Can man control natural phenomenon such as appearance of sun and moon? Can man create these natural phenomenon? If No, why? Who is fit to regulate the affairs of the whole globe? What is the purpose of life? Answers to these questions show that extreme secularism which does not accommodate religious beliefs is unscientific and it also subjects man's mentality to imperial bondage. Extreme secularism will lead to the worship of man.

Maria has rightly called attention to the danger of making science omniscient:

Science is not omniscient and in all experimentation by the scientific method, there comes a limit where science does not, and probably cannot give the final answer. There are many experiences which cannot be explained by science: The original cause of all creation,...the mystical experiences, revelations...etc.

I wish to sound a note of warning. However much we believe in the progress of science, we must admit that most scientists were unmindful of the inward, the moral side of life, because most of them were conditioned to overestimate the scope of science.⁷²

The loyalty of a Muslim is primarily to God. While Islam allows a Muslim to love and work with dedication for his country, it abhors any type of nationalism that would overtly or covertly amount to fractionalization of the international Muslim Community, the universal

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Islamic brotherhood and the single brotherhood of human race. National consciousness should not be allowed to push Islamic brotherhood to the shadow of oblivion.

Conclusion

Secularism has various connotations and has to be used with caution in relation to Islam. Islam allows secularism if necessitated by multi-religiosity of a nation. It frowns at a form of secularism which implies elimination of God's guidance in state affairs. It will be wrong for Muslims to join the band-wagon in total condemnation of secularism. What form of secularism Islam abhors needs to be clearly stated, more so when secularism, in one form or the other, is an inevitable reality. Islam is pragmatic and not stagnant, it frowns at isolated features of secularism but, as usual Islam does not jump headlong into wholesome condemnation of secularism. Secularism must, however, be taken with serious caution. The early Christian priests, by their miscalculations, gave room to secularism. Persecution breeds resistance and strength. This appears to be the case in the struggle between Christianity and early secularist movements.

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