

## Beyond Herberg: An Islamic Perspective On Religious Pluralism In The Usa After 9/11

The history of America's openness to immigration from diverse regions has advanced the course of religious pluralism. Many religious groups existed in America, yet only a few were publicly significant in advancing the course of pluralism from tolerance of differences to inclusion and participation. Their public significance was contingent upon their ability to help develop models of religious pluralism. Such models reflect structures that evolved as a result of attempts to formulate responses to diversity and to assert that there is religious unity to America. At first, this unity was Protestant; at some point in US history it evolved into Judeo-Christian; then it came to be "potentially" multi-religious with an Abrahamic overtone. Since 9/11 some scholars of Islam have become more articulate in advancing the pluralist state of mind toward becoming global in perspective.

On balance, it may well be that the greatest contribution made by the United States to global religious life is its demonstrating that, however vast the pluralism, a vital religious culture can flourish. Pluralism does not undermine common life but seems to enrich it. The seeds planted by diverse tribal cultures and by European colonists centuries ago came to full growth in the twentieth century, for it was the century when pluralism-religious pluralism- came of age.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Lippy's celebration of a pluralism that came of age in the twentieth century is a celebration of a contextual realization of an ideal that the US has been struggling to affirm since its inception. The US has a culture of pluralism because it has been the setting for a multitude of responses to religious diversity. These responses have been shaped by a tension between two seemingly antithetical poles: a gradual, at times grudging, acceptance of the reality of religious diversity (manyness) and a staunch desire for unity (oneness). Although the meanings of the

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two terms “diversity” and “pluralism” overlap, the difference between both is essential to understand the dilemmas and tensions that underscore the process of transformation. In the *Culture of Religious Pluralism*, Richard E. Wentz defines “diversity” and “pluralism” as follows:

Diversity is the awareness of manyness, the discovery that there are “others besides us and our own communities (...) individuals and groups often tend to think of themselves as isolated entities. Diversity represents a threat to that isolation (...) [T]he human condition is such that pluralism continues to be resisted by programs of conquest and conversion. The culture of religious pluralism has evolved in tension with the impulse to conquer or convert the “other” instead of to contemplate the manner in which the ideas, practices, and sociality of others are aspects of our own incompleteness - indeed, of human incompleteness. (Wentz :15)

This paper is an attempt to show how the history of America’s openness to immigration from diverse regions<sup>2</sup> has advanced the course of religious pluralism. Many religious groups existed in America, yet only a few were publicly significant in advancing the course of pluralism from tolerance of differences to inclusion and participation. Their public significance was contingent upon their ability to provide a viable and coherent interpretation of American reality of which they made part. In a telling manner, groups who revered different cultural and religious symbols were able to project different perspectives on shared cultural and religious symbols. In finding a common ground, these groups were able to help develop models of religious pluralism. Such models reflect structures that evolved as a result of attempts to formu-

late responses to diversity and assert that there is a religious unity to America. These responses were meant to give meaning to “E Pluribus Unum.” At first, this unity was Christian (ideally including all Christian, then Protestant, denominations), at some point in US history it evolved into Judeo-Christian (including Protestants, Catholics, and Jews), then it came to mean “potentially” multi-religious with an Abrahamic overtone (including Christians, Jews, and Muslims, with Hindus and Buddhist on the periphery). Since 9/11 some scholars of Islam have become more articulate in advancing the pluralist state of mind toward becoming global in perspective.

The religious traditions that are covered by these models are known as world religions. They immigrated to the US at relatively different stages of its history and made varying headways on the road to pluralism. What unites them most is that their experiences on the path of pluralism reflect recurring patterns and contest strategies.

My study of the dynamics of the culture of religious pluralism is based on the following definition of culture: “an identifiable and regularized behavior that is attributable to a particular people and that is expressed through certain images, symbols, rituals, myths, and other kinds of stories.” (Wentz p.1) As cultures undergo endless transformations, the culture of religious pluralism, as it now stands, is the outcome of interactions of symbols and myths of the “many” and the “one”. These interactions have generated transformations in both. Let’s go through the models of religious pluralism.

## The First Model: A Protestant “Establishment” that Nurtured Diversity

At the time of the Revolution the people of America were predominantly foreign born: Europeans and their descendants. The religious mosaic that they spread throughout the American landscape reflected the spectrum of Protestant Europe's sectarianism. The colonial period was marked by the centrality of Calvinism and Puritanism in shaping the world view of the settlers, the centrality of religion in shaping the civil order. It was also marked by an underlying current of tolerance of dissent that set the groundwork for religious liberty in the new nation. When the Constitution was adopted and the "novus ordo Seclorum" was established, denominationalism was the unique response of these diverse groups to give meaning to their diversity; and an unofficial "Protestant establishment" was their answer to their plural claims to religious truth. While levelling many of the traditional notions of religion and politics that were left behind in Europe, and to a less extent in some of the colonies, religious disestablishment and the concomitant (and somewhat unique) American principle of voluntary churches enshrined in the First Amendment<sup>3</sup> to the constitution<sup>44</sup> The American separation of church and state was a unique and revolutionary settlement to the question of religious diversity in the Christian world. As Catherine Albanese put it in *America Religions and Religion* did not act as a sluice obstructing the normal flow of the Christian spirit in the infant republic. On the contrary, as de Tocquville observed in *Democracy in America* and as historical facts have confirmed, it fostered constant diversification and perpetual modifications within Christian denominations, and made Christianity the indiscriminately "well-established religion of the nation."

The pervasiveness of the institutional presence of the "informal Protestant establishment" in the early days of the republic was captured by Hutchinson who argues that

The religious establishment involved, first and most obviously, the more powerful Protestant denominations, especially those of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians. Second, it included the multitude of voluntary associations, both interdenominational and nondenominational, that promoted missions, peace, temperance, and numerous other kinds of moral and social reform. Third, it derived authority from a large and dominating world of English-language cultural, literary, educational, and journalistic entities that were Protestant in personnel and outlook. Finally, the establishment must be understood as a personal network of Protestant leadership that extended across the churches, controlled most of the nation's political life, and managed virtually all of the major secular institutions and entities in American society.<sup>5</sup>

The denominations that are referred to in the foregoing quotation used to denounce each other's teachings during the colonial period. Yet within the republic where religious liberty was protected by law, they came to see themselves as part of a larger spiritual community of the Christian Church. This spirit of unity was not provided by any of these denominations. The real ground for unity was the religion of the civil order: the civil religion<sup>6</sup> of the American Revolution. In *The Broken Covenant : Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, Robert Bellah defines civil religion as follows:

By civil religion I refer to that religious dimension, found I think in the life of every people, through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality (p. 3)

Civil religion provided some basis for public unity that broke down boundaries separating diverse religions that were on American soil at the inception of the republic. It did so by initiating a whole process of myth-building that revolved around the memorable deeds that Americans performed to initiate an age unknown before in the history of humanity. The way some of these myths were interpreted during the early years of the republic helped maintain an unofficial “Protestant Establishment” in the US. The latter helped weaken the boundaries between “the many” and the “one.” By binding the “many” into the “one” in Protestant terms, the Protestant majority gave a possible meaning to diversity that opened the way for further possibilities.

## The Second Model - Protestant, Catholic and Jew

With the advent of the 19th century, signs of cultural complexity and heterogeneity were very well reflected in the unprecedented demographic change that marked the American landscape. A severe reduction in Protestant Christianity’s numerical dominance in the American population was occasioned by the sweeping flow of Catholic and Jewish immigrants who started settling in America in significant numbers. Along with the new “divergent” movements such as Adventism, Pre-millennialism, the Mormons, and the Holiness Movement that started gaining ground after the Civil War, Catholic and Jewish public presence became highly visible in America. According to Hutchinson, between 1850 and 1920 the Roman Catholic population “expanded at nearly three times the rate of overall population growth, while the number of Jews rose spectacularly - from fifty thousand to more than three million.” (Hutchinson: 114)

What this religious mosaic generated was a visible change in the public discourse about religious diversity and pluralism. Toleration of non-radical beliefs, and to a less extent behaviours, seemed to have given way to the rhetoric of inclusion that was articulated by Jewish and Catholic leaders in an era of melting pot enthusiasm. Such headway could not have been made without changes that took place within the informal “Protestant establishment” to keep pace with the social, economic, and cultural changes that cut right across society and affected religion as well as politics. These included the rise of the social gospel with its leanings towards minorities, the wide appeal the liberal theological surge had among great numbers of people in the US, and the convening of the World Parliament of Religions in September 1893 in Chicago. The latter was an outright manifestation of a much wider campaign for inclusion orchestrated by liberal sections within Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. For the first time ever Jews and Catholics were included by American Protestants in a conference on religion. This occurrence infused Protestantism with new life and contributed more than their nativist counterparts to maintaining the authority of the “establishment” within American culture.

Despite opposition to inclusive pluralism from the right wing of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish spectrums, liberals within these traditions displayed in their campaign for inclusion a plethora of themes and provided a repertoire of contest strategies. It was by capitalizing on the liberal belief that all religions are infused with divinity that the liberal wings within Judaism, Protestantism, and Catholicism won their battles for inclusion within their faith groups and the large faith community. They advanced a discourse that rested upon two pillars: first, a rejection of the non-essential doctrines and practices of their faith, and a preservation of its timeless essentials, and second, a belief in the promise of universal

religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment. Their arguments reflect a subtle blend of civil and religious themes even in their theological aspects.

Theologically, their discourse was premised on a repudiation of religious essentialism by acknowledging that one's religion presents a conception of the God-Idea (which is similar to what is referred to in the Declaration of Independence). What ensued from this was an outright rejection of rigid traditionalism as a crippling force. Americanists among Catholic and Jewish religious leaders expanded this rhetoric so far as to enthusiastically assert their claim that traditionalism was out of tune with the times, and that the future and welfare of their religions depended upon the willingness of the traditional establishments (Roman authorities in the Catholic case and Orthodox Rabbis in Europe and the US in the Jewish case) to undertake reforms based on American Catholic and Jewish experiences. Moreover, they would consider themselves as Americans with a special mission to reconcile their religious traditions with modernity by providing a model that derived its superiority from that of the American example with its separation of Church and State.

This argument seemed like an outright attack on the Roman establishment, and also like an affront to the then nascent Zionist spirit within the Jewish communities (more than its Orthodox wing). Nowhere was it more strikingly expressed than it was in the Americanist Jewish attempt to adopt the American myth of origin to that of the children of Israel as presented in the Old Testament. They portrayed America as their promised Zion. This was best reflected in the Central Conference of American Rabbis that convened in 1897. In this gathering American rabbis asserted that "We are unalterably opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation, but a religious community...America is our Zion. Here in the home of re-

ligious liberty we have helped in founding this new Zion". (Hutchinson: 126)

The sense of separation from a group that allegedly held them loyal to an outside authority, which seems latent in the Jewish statement, was a pivotal theme in the Catholic discourse as well. From John London to John F. Kennedy, American Catholics had the most daunting task of asserting their loyalty to America and the American political system. They had to deflate a staunch anti-Catholic propaganda. Entangled in emotional and ideological considerations, it thrived on breeding in the public an irrational fear that Catholics in America were conspiring with Rome to threaten the stability of the American system.

In spite of the religious polyphony that characterized public discourse on religion, and in spite of the fact that religious and ethnic diversity had become a daily reality by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the twentieth century, American church history continued to emphasize themes of Protestant unity rather than themes of diversity and unsettled pluralism. It was Will Herberg's *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, published in 1955, that shifted the emphasis of American religious history. The Judeo-Christian model he praised was premised on his claim that Americans identify themselves, as Americans, as belonging to one of three traditions. The American way could be Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish. Even though Herberg's book was a consensus book, it was an attempt at broadening the scope of religious pluralism by assigning a new meaning to "Christianity" wherein "Christian" came to mean "theist": one who believes in the God of the Bible and of Abraham. This meant in effect that "Christian" was in some way inclusive of "Jew".

Herberg's model, which stresses that Americans define themselves religiously as Protestants, Catholics, or Jews, had great appeal in the post-war spirit of revival that cut right across churches and the realm of civil reli-

gion. Herberg's trinity came to light when the legendary status that the story of the four chaplains, two Protestants, a Catholic and a Jew, who sank in the troop ship *Dorchester* in 1944, was still tickling the American sense of divine providence. It was also a possible answer to President Eisenhower's pronouncement in 1952 that "our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith - and I don't care what it is." Certainly what Eisenhower meant by deeply felt religious faith was something antithetical to the atheism of the then communist enemy. It was so large in scope that it might include the myriad of long-ignored religious traditions in the US. In this respect, Herberg's trinity fell short of reflecting the richness of the religious landscape of America in the mid-twentieth century. It was left to Martin Marty, Edwin Gaustad, Sydney Ahlstrom, and their followers to fill in the gaps.

### The Third Model: A Multi-Religious America with an Abrahamic Overtone

Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, the definition of religious diversity has expanded well beyond its sectarian Christian rivalries and Biblical toleration, and now includes Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and others from many parts of the Globe. These traditions, upon observation, reflect a wide range of sectarian postures, adding to the plurality of the American landscape. From a civil religious perspective, the Act marked another stage in broadening the meaning of such long-cherished concepts as religious freedom, mutual respect, and voluntary "churches" or churches without government financial support, as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Among the recently published studies of post-1960s religious pluralism is Diana Eck's *A New Religious America*. This book gives sympathetic attention to the presence of three major world religions on American soil: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The pluralism about which Eck wrote, far from being the trinity presented by Herberg, is associated with the democratic idea that holds that difference must not be equated with inferiority. It is neither inclusive nor participatory; it is more likely to be still grappling between the stages of tolerance and inclusion. With an assurance made by a participant observer to her fellow Americans that neither the religious behaviour of these groups nor their beliefs are radical, the book includes an open invitation for average Americans to build bridges of dialogue and mutual understanding with them. Diana Eck's call for "positive pluralism" contains a latent warning about the consequences of isolation from and ignorance of these faith traditions and communities.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> events proved Eck's fears true. Before September 11 there were already more Muslims in the United States than Episcopalians. It is only a matter of time before adherents of Islam replace Jews as the largest non-Christian religious group in the US. To cover this new reality scholars were engaged in an effort to develop a model that would replace the "Judeo-Christian" one. The "Abrahamic" model emerged as the leading candidate. The advocates of this model attempt to trace Islam, Judaism, and Christianity back to a single origin: Abraham. The model seemed to have had official sanction by the US government during the 90s. On the occasion of the first Eid after the Gulf War, president Bush Senior started the tradition of sending Eid greetings to American Muslims. Under the Clinton administration, the first Eid celebration was conducted in the White House.

The same year (1996), the first break-of-the-fast event was held on Capitol Hill. In 1999 the first Muslim was appointed ambassador by the Clinton administration; and in 2000 both chambers of congress passed resolutions H.R. 174 and S. Res. 133 whereby Islam was recognized as an Abrahamic faith along with Judaism and Christianity, and wherein contributions of Muslims to American society were recognized. These gains were the outcome of dialogue between the elite of the Muslim communities and the US government that was attempting to build bridges with the Muslim world. Ordinary American citizens, whose knowledge of Islam and Muslims was at best shaped by Hollywood and at worst by ignorance, like ordinary Muslims and Imams, who were ignorant of the system of their country, did not have a place at the table. The Abrahamic model was a structure with bolsters of clay.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks a surge of hate crimes was directed at American Muslims, Sikhs, and other Americans of foreign origin who were likely to fit in the stereotype of the terrorist as portrayed in the media. The well-established network of American Muslim organizations, including the ministry of W.D. Muhammed, issued in an unprecedented way, jointly as well as individually, public statements condemning the terrorist attacks and distancing themselves, at least in terms of religious behaviour, from the perpetrators of the attacks. Their voices did not reach most of their fellow Americans because they lacked the adequate networks. The aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> was marked by a public relations crisis. Even though many Muslim voices were invited for the first time to speak through major American media networks, they did not manage to dispel the revived centuries-old prejudices of "Islam" as a force to be feared and of Muslims as inherently irrational and violent people. Nor did President Bush's declaration that Islam is "a religion of peace" restore the image of Islam. Presi-

dent Bush, like the speakers on TV channels, mostly engineers, medical doctors, and physical scientists, who were primarily self-taught and whose knowledge of Islamic text and history was quite superficial, were able to position themselves as authorities on Islamic law and theology. Their discourse was apologetic. Even though they negated the association between Islam and terrorism, they created another static, idealized portrait of Islam, failing to address the concrete social, economic, and political causes at the root of such profound wrong doing.

The discriminatory aspect of the measures taken by the government against Arab and Muslim nationals under the PATRIOT Act<sup>7</sup>, the double-standard that the government did not shun during the April 2002 Palestinian-Israeli crisis, President Bush's failure to denounce publicly anti-Muslim comments by conservative Christian leaders, and the Iraqi war campaign with its glaring anti-Arab stereotypes awakened many Muslim activists and scholars in America to their own obligation of restoring the image of their faith and traditions by assertively speaking out against and eschewing all forms of extremism, violence, and hatred in their midst. What is interesting is that out of their reconstitution of Islam one can trace a budding conception of a new pluralism. Even though the tenets of this new pluralism can be found in many aspects of American Muslim life, it can best be outlined, I believe, in the discourses of the so-called "progressive Muslim"<sup>8</sup> scholars who come from highly varied ethnic, geographical, linguistic, and intellectual backgrounds and who can be upheld as voices of legitimacy and authenticity. The new pluralism, "Global Pluralism," has the following tenets:

## 1. Beyond Abrahamic America:

On May 21, 2003, the Newhouse News Service interviewed religious leaders from the three 'Abrahamic' faiths about whether Americans should stop using the phrase "Judeo-Christian"<sup>9</sup> and use "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" or "Abrahamic" when describing the values and character that define the United States. National Muslim groups supporting a change included the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Muslim American Society, the American Muslim Council, and the American-Muslim Alliance. These attempts at changing the language can be justified by the fact that the term "Judeo-Christian" is no longer inclusive. Yet it is difficult to think that the public will accept "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" when people who attacked the US on 9/11 did so in the name of Islam. To avoid falling into the trap of exclusivism, broader conceptions of pluralism were put forward. One way of doing so was through stressing the Americanness of the new religious outsiders, including Muslims and non-Muslims. This stance is best articulated by Osama Siblani, an influential voice among American Muslims and publisher of the Arab-American News in Dearborn, Michigan. "I believe we should call this the United States of America, made up of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jews and others," said Siblani. "This stuff about language has to stop. We are all just Americans."<sup>10</sup>

## 2. Beyond tolerance:

In *Progressive Muslims*, Omid Safi underlines the shaky foundations of any conception of pluralism that rests only upon toleration and does not evolve into inclusion and participation. As he puts it

The connotations of "tolerance" are deeply problematic (...) the root of the term "tolerance" comes from medieval toxicology and pharmacology, marking how much poison a body could "tolerate" before it would succumb to death. Is this the best that we can do? Is our task to figure out how many "others" (be they Muslims, Jews, blacks, Hindus, homosexuals, non-English speakers, Asians...) we can tolerate before it really kills us (?) In short, progressive Muslims do not wish for a "tolerant" Islam, any more than we long for a "tolerant" American or European society. Rather we seek to bring about a pluralistic society in which we honor and engage each other through our differences and our commonalities.<sup>11</sup>

## 3. Building bridges of understanding:

A study of the reactions to Muslims in various communities in the US after 9/11 reflects a curious mix of responses. They vary between tales of sympathy, cooperation, and compassion and others of intolerance expressed through hate crimes directed at individuals and institutions. Out of the welter of reasons that can express this polarity emerges a fairly clear pattern among the many American Muslim citizen and leader of organizations I interviewed in geographically different parts of the US. It rests on the distinction between exclusivist and pluralist communities. The pattern, it seems, applies as much to the Muslim communities as it does to other faith communities. Dr. Koshampour, the director of the Islamic Council of Greater Chicago, argued that his community mosque was not attacked because they had been very active in interfaith dialogue years before 9/11. He

added that his community and other faith communities formed human shields to protect the mosques of the isolationists among Muslims. Isolationism within the Muslim communities is anchored in religious orientations that are distinctively puritan and supremacist.

#### 4. Reconstituting Islam:

To promote a pluralism based on mutual understanding and respect between religions, progressive scholars of Islam have recommended a reconstitution<sup>12</sup> rather than a reformation of Islam. Their objection is due to the fact that in the very language of “Reformation” lies the notion of a significant break with the past and split within the Muslim communities. It also implies that Islam adapts the historical and cultural course of action laid out by the Christian tradition. Unlike their Christian predecessors who associated religious progress with a rupture with the past, Europe and traditionalism, the progressive Muslim project, argues Omid Safi, “is not so much an epistemological rupture from what has come before as a fine-tuning, a polishing, a grooming, an editing, a re-emphasizing of this and a correction of that. In short, it is a critical engagement with the heritage of Islamic thought, rather than a casual bypassing of its accomplishments... It might be an easier task to start with a *tabula rasa*, but that would not be an Islamic project. Being a progressive Muslim, at least in the view of this group, mandates a difficult, onerous, critical, uneasy engagement with the tradition.”<sup>13</sup>

Engagement with tradition concerns not only Muslim scholars of varied ethnic, geographic, linguistic, and intellectual backgrounds, but also non-Muslim scholars who are involved in producing knowledge about Islam for ordinary Muslims and non-Muslims. Such production of

knowledge, which is a process of image-building, should, according to progressive Muslims, be rebuilt on sound assets. These include the following:

1- Engaging the Islamic tradition as a dynamic and viable living tradition by transcending pietistic fictions about Islam developed by both Muslim apologists and by so-called orientalis. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, “the apologetic orientation consisted of an effort by a large number of commentators to defend and salvage the Islamic system of belief and tradition from the onslaught of orientalism, Westernization, and modernity by simultaneously emphasizing both the compatibility and also the supremacy of Islam.” He carries this logic further and argues that “A common heuristic device of apologetics was to argue that any meritorious or worthwhile modern institutions were first invented and realized by Muslims. Therefore, according to the apologists, Islam liberated women, created a democracy, endorsed pluralism, protected human rights, and guaranteed social security long before these institutions ever existed in the West” (p55).

The main effect of such apologetics was to turn Islam into an untouchable symbol and to marginalize the complexity of Islamic intellectual heritage by reducing the history of Muslims into immutable origins. This essentialist reading of the past is no less obscurantist than that of orientalist writers whose essentialist approach to the history of Muslims is constituted essentially by a static religion.

2-Appreciating differences of orientations: The attempt to reflect critically on the heritage of Islamic thought and to adapt it to the modern world requires an honest intellectual study of the perspectives of various schools of thought. Such a study is essential to legitimize a range of opinions and to acknowledge a spectrum of interpretations. In doing so, learned scholars would situate themselves in that wider spectrum. Undertaking self-positioning would expose the exclusivism of many con-

temporary Muslim pundits who hijack an entire tradition, claiming to be a one-man spokesperson for all Muslims. This supremacist posture excludes debate and discussion within the tradition and stymies the richness that racial, gender, and other forms of diversity may bestow upon the tradition.

3-Commitment to social justice: Even though justice lies at the heart of Islam, involvement in social justice issues may be new to many contemporary Muslims in the US. After September 11, many Muslims have joined Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and others who have long been involved in social justice issues. By feeling responsible for the well-being and dignity of the marginalized members of the society, Muslim communities have realized the need to make positive contributions to culture and society so as to win the battle for inclusion. Yet such a battle is difficult to win as long as justice is not guaranteed to female and African American Muslims. In short, there can be no real participatory pluralism without getting women involved and incorporating the African American Muslim experience.

4-A commitment to the universality of Islam: Because Muslims have the moral and legal principles of pluralism available in their religious sources and heritages, and have had a long history of practicing pluralism, they can, according to “progressive Muslims”, be a constructive and effective contributor to contemporary global pluralism. “To be committed to the universality of Islam and to cope with our era of global pluralism,” argues Fathi Osman, “Muslims have to go beyond their bitter memories of history, including the Crusades, colonization, and exploitation, Jewish hostility, and Hindu fanaticism. They have to approach members of the Baha’i faith and Ahmadiyyas (...) Muslims cannot ignore each other in this rapprochement, either: they should also bridge the gaps between Sunnis, Shi’is (Zaydis, Ja’faris, Isma’ilis), Ibadis, and other sects and subdivisions (...)

Muslims ought to display the Quranic attitude towards human kind by extending the range of their dialogue to reach Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, and other faiths. The Quran (7: 172-173) teaches that every human being has his or her spirituality, morality, and dignity, all human beings can develop universal relations and maintain global pluralism. It is significant that the Quran calls the good ‘what is recognized by common sense’ (ma’ruf) and evil ‘what is rejected by common sense’ (munkar).”<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the glaring absence of African American Islam in the list, Osman’s view reflects a wider conception of pluralism that is based on global interfaith and intrafaith dialogues.

## Conclusion:

The radicalism of religious diversity that has become a fact since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 has made it evident that America’s diversity is much more radical than any of the foregoing formulas. Living in an epitome of the global village, some scholars of Islam in the US have advanced the pluralist state of mind further to become global in scope. The moral and legal principles of pluralism available in their religious sources and heritages, and their long history of practicing pluralism can help Muslims be constructive and effective contributors to religious pluralism in America and also contribute to contemporary global pluralism. Whether this project will be implemented will depend on how Muslims develop practical strategies and independent institutions to channel their ideas.

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## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Lippy, *Pluralism Comes of Age*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000, p. 162

<sup>2</sup> It was also punctuated by acts of exclusion and quotas at the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.

<sup>3</sup> Under the terms of the First Amendment, Congress could make no law either establishing or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Until the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Europe has understood itself as Christendom \_ one theoretically unified kingdom of Christ in which spiritual and worldly power were separate aspects of the whole. Even after the reformation, leading reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, as well as Roman Catholics, had agreed that spiritual and worldly government went hand in hand... both mainstream Reformers and Roman Catholics persecuted the Radical Reformers, who with their sectarian principle were viewed as dangerous to the Church-state unity of Christendom. Official state churches, whether Protestant or Catholic, were the rule in Europe. Holland, the most liberal nation in its tolerance for dissent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, still had a state reformed Church until 1795. England during the same period continued to maintain a religious establishment. Hence, when Americans separated church and state through the new federal Constitution, even though they understood themselves still as Christian and predominantly Protestant, they had created a radically innovative condition for religion. (p.403)

<sup>5</sup> William R. Hutchinson, *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal*. New haven and London: Yale University press, 2003, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Historically, the term “civil religion” was used by the French Enlightenment philosopher Jean- Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778). The word came to repeated use in the US to refer to a phenomenon that coincided with the birth of the nation. In the American context the resurgence of the term tends to be associated with Robert Bellah, who published an essay titled “Civil Religion” in 1967.

<sup>7</sup> According to *The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States 2002: Stereotypes and Civil Liberties*, during the first few months following the attacks, between 1,200 and 1,700 nationals of Arab and Muslim countries “were taken into custody in the initial stage of the crack-down. There have been charges that detainees have not been informed of the reasons of their detention. Many have not had prompt access to a lawyer and detainees have been treated as if they were guilty until proven innocent.” (P5) They are in violation of the 6th amendment that guarantees a speedy and public trial”. Most of them were freed and none had any links to terrorism. On November 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that the government would conduct “voluntary” interviews with 5,000 legal Muslim Foreign nationals, 3,000 more were interviewed in 2002. Though the attorney general said the government learned a great deal from the initial interviews, but little was known as to how that information related to the investigation of the September 11th attacks or any suspected terrorists. The use of secret evidence was also the basis upon which three Muslim charities, 21 designated by the government as terrorist organizations, were closed.

<sup>8</sup> Omid Safi defines “Progressive Muslims” as follows:

Many people today who come from a whole host of religious, political, and ethnic backgrounds describe themselves as “progressives.” There is, furthermore, a nascent community of Muslim activists and intellectuals

who readily identify with the term “progressive Muslims” and publicly embrace it. “Progressive,” in this usage, refers to a relentless striving towards a universal notion of justice in which no single community’s prosperity, righteousness, and dignity comes at the expense of another. Central to this notion of a progressive Muslim identity are fundamental values that we hold to be essential to a vital, fresh, and urgently needed interpretation of Islam for the twenty-first century. These themes include social justice, gender justice, and pluralism. Of course, the kind of Islamic interpretation one comes up with is largely determined by who undertakes the interpretation. ( Progressive Muslims, p3)

<sup>9</sup> From its founding to the late 1940s, the United States was commonly described as Christian, a trend epitomized by an 1892 Supreme Court ruling in which Justice David Brewer wrote, “This is a Christian nation.” In a 2002 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Research Center for People and the

Press, two-thirds of respondents said they consider the United States a “Christian nation” and 58 percent said the strength of American society is based on the religious faith of its people. However, only 14 percent said it is essential that a person believe in “basic Judeo-Christian values” in order to be a good American.

<sup>10</sup> Has the United States Become Judeo-Christian-Islamic?” See [www.mpac.org](http://www.mpac.org) (2003)

<sup>11</sup> Omid Safi, ed. *Progressive Muslims : On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, Oxford :Oneworld Publications, 2003 . pp 23-24.

<sup>12</sup> The term was used by Aziz Al-Azmeh in 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Omid Safi, ed. *Progressive Muslims*, p11.

<sup>14</sup> Mohammed Fathi Osman, *The Children of Adam: An Islamic Perspective on Pluralism*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding : History and International Affairs, 1996 , p.65.