Theologies of Hope: Christian, Muslim and Jewish Perspectives
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Chapter 5

Theologies of Hope: An Islamic Perspective
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1. Reading the world - Creation of the world with perfection

Islam does not look at the world as an evil but instead it affirms it as the realm for actualization of the highest ethical values.¹ For Islam, the world is not a demonic force challenging and inciting humanity to conquer and subdue it, but rather, Islam regards the whole universe as a real cosmos in which God created for the enjoyment and use by humanity as a theatre where humanity is to do good deeds.²

Islam sees the universe perfectly created by God according to the best measurement, the best form, the best pattern and is hence absolutely free from any flaws, as stated in the Qur’an:

Who has created the seven heavens one above another, you can see no fault in the creations of the Most Beneficent. Then look again: Can you see any rifts? Then look again and yet again, your sight will return to you in a state of humiliation and worn out (Al-Mulk [67] 3-4)

God has fashioned each creature and given it an essence; a structure which determines its life and from which it never deviates. “Who has created (everything), and then proportioned it” (Al-A’la [87] 2). God has placed every creature within the general nexus of nature so that its birth, its whole life and its death, all happen according to the divine will “He [God] has created everything, and has measured it exactly according to its due measurements” (Al-Furqan [25] 2; See also At-Talaq [65] 3). Islam perceives all creatures to be interdependent, and the whole creation runs because of the perfect harmony, which exists between its parts; “And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term (appointed). That is the Decree of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing. And the moon, We have measured for it mansions (to traverse) till it returns like the old dried curved date stalk” (Ya-Sin [36] 38-39).

1.1 Creation of humankind in the best stature

Of all the creatures, God acknowledges that He created human being of the best stature (At-Tin [95] 4). God created man and endowed him with the senses and understanding and indeed breathed into him His spirit to prepare him to perform the ethical part of the divine will; “Then He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him the soul, and He gave

you hearing, sight and hearts. Little is the thanks you give” (As-Sajdah [32] 7-9, Sad [38] 72, Al-Hijr [15] 29).

God created humankind and the world not in vain, but for a purpose: “Did you think that We had created you in vain, and that you would not be brought back to Us?” (Al-Muminun [23] 115). Human beings who think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth acknowledge the purpose of their creation respond by saying: “Our Lord! You have not created (all) this without purpose, glory to You!” (Ali-' Imran [3] 191).

1.2 Creation of humankind from one soul

Islam accords no distinction between human beings, and holds that all people are created from a single pair – Adam and Eve: “O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women” (An-Nisa’ [4] 1).

Division of peoples into tribes is a convention designed for mutual acquaintance. “O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest amongst you are the more pious” (Al-Hujurat [49] 13). Piety (taqwa) is the most important quality that a person could develop in relation to good and evil. It means to be conscious of God and to be careful not to overstep the limits set by God. It is a defence against evil and keeps human beings within the boundaries of their natural state.³

For Islam, all people are brothers and sisters and are regarded as equals in the sight of God. God did not want people to lead lonely lives in monasteries. Rather he wanted them to live an abundant life, full of joy and happiness but always showing fairness, love and brotherhood.⁴ Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) declared in his Farwell Sermon:

“O People, verily your Lord and Sustainer is One and your ancestor is one. All of you descend from Adam and Adam was made of earth. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab nor for a non-Arab over an Arab, neither for a white man over a black man nor a black man over a white man except the superiority gained through God-consciousness (taqwa). Indeed the noblest among you is the one who is most deeply conscious of God”.

1.3 Human being’s freedom to do good or bad

Although God created mankind with perfection, He gave human beings the intellectual freedom to differentiate between good and bad. It is through his or her will power, a person is able to either obey or to defy and disobey God. If one were compelled - that is, without freedom- to follow a single course, then he or she would not be considered morally responsible.⁵ Hence, one is only taken to task regarding what he or she 

⁴ Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 17.
⁵ Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 9.
In Islam, religious conviction is entirely a personal affair, and religious truth is a matter of argument and conviction without authority or coercion.  

1.4 Freedom to believe in God

Diversity is a universal phenomenon. Diversity between people is twofold: natural formative diversity in which people were created by God and found themselves without a choice, and optional acquisitive diversity, which is associated with a person's religious conviction in matters of belief. God created people and in them the freedom to choose their belief; “We showed him [man] the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful” (Al-Insan [76] 3). Had God intended that all humankind believe in Him, then He would have guided all people to believe in Him; “Have not then those who believe yet known that had Allah willed, He could have guided all mankind?” (Ar-Ra’id [13] 31). God also mentions that if He had willed, He would have created one nation of believers; “If Allah willed, He would have made you one nation, but that (He) may test you in what He has given you; so strive as in a race in good deeds. The return of you (all) is to Allah; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ” (Al-Ma’dah [5] 48).

Even the role of the prophets is confined to call people to believe in God but not to force them in their beliefs. God cautioned Prophet Muhammad not force his people to become believers; “And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you then compel mankind, until they become believers” (Yunus [10] 99). Furthermore, God reminded Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that his role was just to remind the people and not dictate upon them on what to believe; “So remind them, you are only a one who reminds, you are not a dictator over them” (Al-Ghashiyah 88 [21-22].

In Islam, religious conviction is entirely a personal affair, and religious truth is a matter of argument and conviction without authority or coercion. Under Islam, everyone has a right to contend and everybody is entitled to convince and be convinced in believing God. Every person in the world may become a Muslim if he or she so chooses, by a personal decision alone; “There shall be no compulsion in religion. The truth is now manifest; and so is falsehood” (Al-Baqarah [2] 256).

God recognises religious diversity and has postponed His judgement on people’s beliefs to the Hereafter. The Qur’an states:

“To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way. If Allah willed, He would have made you one nation but that (He) may test you in what He has given you; so strive as in a race in good deeds. The return of you (all) is to Allah; then He will inform you about that in which you used to differ” (Al-Ma’dah [5] 48).
people from other beliefs. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) did not conceive a monolithic society in which Islam alone predominated. The Covenant of Madinah recognized and established the Jews as another Ummah, which constituted a community that was given full freedom to practice its own tradition. The Prophet received the Christians of Arabia and their delegation with open arms. He presented them with Islam and argued with them for three days while they enjoyed his hospitality. Those who were convinced became Muslims and others who were not convinced remained Christians and were granted the same status as the Jews. Hence they were all to be an ummah, on par with the rest. The same recognition granted to the Jews and Christians by the Prophet personally was granted to every non-Muslim religious community on the one condition of their keeping the peace.

Difference of religion between people should not be the cause of conflict and crisis, because the norm in the relationship between people is co-existence and mutual respect and not enmity. The Qur'an commands Muslim believers that "Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity" (Al-Mumtažmah [60] 8).

To avoid tensions between faiths, Islam prohibits insulting emotions of the followers of other religions, including pagans; "And insult not those whom they worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made fair-seeming to each people its own doings; then to their Lord is their return and He shall then inform them of all that they used to do" (Al-An'am [6] 108).

1.5 Change for better and not destruction

God has given us human beings the power of intellect and has ordered them to think and reflect on the secrets of the universe, with its unique laws and traditions. Humankind should therefore use this knowledge for causes that are both beneficial to them and not exploit it in order to cause disaster and destruction in the world; "And when he turns away, his effort in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief" (Al-Baqarah [2] 205).

In cases of corruption and upheavals, Islam teaches its adherents to correct the vices in a manner that will not cause embarrassment, let alone destruction. Change should not be done in a manner so as to alienate a person. A Bedouin entered the Prophet's mosque and urinated in the mosque. The Prophet's companions severely scolded him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Do not put a halt to his urinating, but instead leave him". Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) called him over and said to him, "Any kind of urine or filth is not suitable for these mosques." The Prophet then asked a man from the people to pour water over the area.

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8 Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 64.
10 Reported by Anas Bin Maalik in Saheeh Muslim. Hadith # 285.
Islam teaches its adherents that change needs to be meaningful and often be gradual. It may involve changing years of habit and ways of thinking and doing things. In Islam, upholding the principle of gradation has been implemented in the sanctioning of obligations, as well as prohibition of social vices. For instance, the prescription of the obligatory prayers was done in a gradual manner. Similarly, wine drinking was prohibited gradually.

In Islam, patience is so important in bringing about change and reform. In cases of the existence of social vices, Islam commands the implementation of the rule of enjoining good and forbidding through gradation. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) said, “Whoever sees something evil, let him change it with his hands; if he is not able then he should do so with his tongue; if he is not able, then he should hate it in his heart and this last shows the weakest faith.”

2. Basis of Hope: Happiness in this world and the Hereafter

Prophets were patient despite trials and tribulations which faced them. For instance, when Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) lost his two sons (Joseph and Benyamin), he did not give up, but told his other sons, “O my sons! Go you and enquire about Yusuf and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah’s Mercy. Certainly no one despair of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve” (Yusuf [12] 87).

Islam balances between the two worlds; this world and the hereafter. The Qur’an urges believers to strive for the life in the hereafter but also encourages them not to abandon life in this world: “But seek, with that (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of legal enjoyment in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land” (Al-Qasas [28] 78). Islam encourages a person to optimistic and plant a seed even at the last minute of his or her life irrespective of the fact that the person who planted the seed would certainly not yield its fruit: “If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then let him plant it.”

Islam achieves for humanity two happinesses: happiness in this world and happiness in the Hereafter. Hence, successful moral action would meet with happiness and its opposite with unhappiness. It assures them that God will grant merit, and hence reward and happiness, in direct proportion to their commitment to the task.

2.1 The need for a judgement

Based on the human’s freedom to choose good or evil, God will reward or punish the person according to his or her actions. Indeed, the freedom of choice to act morally or commit evil makes judgment necessary, in that one’s lifetime activity is acknowledged and imbalances in the individual’s life are redressed. This is what ‘the Day of Judgment’ and

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12 Reported by Abu Sa’eed Al-Khudri in Sahih Muslim, Hadith # 4.
13 Reported by Anas ibn Malik in Musnad Ahmad, Hadith # 12491.
‘Paradise and Hell’ are meant to express in religious language.\(^5\)

All men stand absolutely at par under the obligation to fulfil the divine will and are judged on a scale of justice that is absolute for one and all. God’s transcendence does not allow discrimination between the creatures as such.\(^6\) God will account people on the Day of Judgment not only about their actions, but also for the reasons behind them. An action may be good in itself, but if the intention and purpose for which it is performed is not genuine and dedicated to God, it loses its worth.

God alone is the Judge. His Judgment of an individual’s whole life, or of any of its deeds, is God’s prerogative, not that of humans. Every person is meted out the exact reward or punishment he or she has earned in life. The Qur’an states, “To Him is the return of all of you. The Promise of Allah is true. It is He Who begins the creation and then will repeat it, that He may reward with justice those who believed and did deeds of righteousness. But those who disbelieved will have a drink of boiling fluids and painful torment because they used to disbelieve” (Yunus [10] 14).

In Islam, punishment is a result of the course of action which a person has chosen to follow using his or her own free will. Hence, God will reward with all that is good in the life to come for those who have done good deeds; whereas those who have chosen to indulge in what is outside the confines of Divine law, then they will suffer and be in anguish in the next world. God states in the Qur’an, “And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every person shall be paid what he earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly” (Al- Baqarah [2] 281).

2.2 God’s promise of pardon

In Islam, several traditions encourage persons who have committed evil not to give up. When a person commits a sin, God extends His pardon onto the sinner and promises to forgive him or her; “And verily, I am indeed Forgiving to him who repents, believes and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant in doing them” (Taha [20] 82).

Once a person repents, God changes his or her sins into good deeds; “Except those who repent and believe, and do righteous deeds, for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Al-Furqan [25] 69-70; See also Maryam [19] 60).

In every night, God descends to the heaven seeking to forgive those who have sinned. In a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) which he quotes God saying

“Our Lord descends to the heaven on the last third of every night, and he says: Who is calling upon me that I may answer him? Who is asking from me that I may give him? Who is seeking my forgiveness that I may forgive him?”\(^7\) In another tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) said, “Allah - the Almighty - stretched out his hand

\(^5\) Al Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths, pg.133.
\(^6\) Al Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths, pg.134.
\(^7\) Reported by Abu Huraira in Sahih Bukhari, Hadith # 1094.
at night to repent offensive day, and stretched out his hand during the
day to repent offensive night, until the sun rises from the west.”\textsuperscript{18}

God mentions of His mercy and bounty in forgiveness irrespective of
the magnitude of the sins committed; “Allah the Exalted said: O son of
Adam, if you call upon me and place your hope in me, I will forgive you
without any reservation. O son of Adam, if you have sins piling up to the
clouds and then ask for my forgiveness, I will forgive you without any
reservation. O son of Adam, if you come to me with enough sins to fill
the earth and you meet me without associating a partner with me, I will
come to you with enough forgiveness to fill the earth.”\textsuperscript{19}

God not only pardons the sins committed by one’s actions, but also re-
wards a person for his or her intention to abscond from committing an
evil. God states, “Verily, Allah has recorded good and bad deeds and
He made them clear. Whoever intends to perform a good deed but does
not do it, then Allah will record it as a complete good deed. If he intends
to do it and does so, then Allah the Exalted will record it as ten good
deeds up to seven hundred times as much or even more. If he intends
to do a bad deed and does not do it, then Allah will record for him one
complete good deed. If he does it then Allah will record for him a single
bad deed.”\textsuperscript{20}

2.3 Forgiving and moving forward

Despite its humiliating provisions of the peace treaty of Hudaybiyyah to
Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on him) and his companions, the Prophet
found it agreeable because it was a treaty of peace, and peace was most
needed at that time. Subsequently, the Qur’anic revelation confirmed
Prophet Muhammad’s understanding of the treaty and called it “manifest
opening”. The passage reads: “We have opened for you [Muhammad] a
manifest opening; that Allah may forgive you your previous sins, com-
plete His blessing, guide you to the straight path, and grant you a great
victory” (Al-Fath [48] 1-3). These verses were not revealed after a mili-
tary victory but upon conclusion of the peace treaty of Hudaybiyyah
with the Makkans.\textsuperscript{21}

During the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad’s enemies,
who had persecuted him and his followers relentlessly for so long were
now at his mercy, awaiting punishment. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be
on him) asked the frightened people of Makkah, “What do you think I
am going to do to you?” They anxiously replied, “O noble brother and
son of a noble brother, only goodness.” The Prophet who came with
the message of mercy to the entire world answered them; “No blame is
on you this day. Go to you homes, for you are all free.” Prophet Mu-
hammad (peace be upon Him) mentioned in a tradition that “Gentleness
beautifies everything; harshness disfigures.”\textsuperscript{22}

3. Personal responsibility (taklif)

\textsuperscript{18} Reported by Abu Musa in Sahih Muslim.
\textsuperscript{19} Reported by Anas ibn Malik in Sunan At-Tirmidhi, Hadith # 3540.
\textsuperscript{20} Reported by Ibn Abbas in Sahih Bukhari, Hadith # 6126.
\textsuperscript{22} Reported by Anas ibn Malik in Al-AHadith al-Mukhtarah, Hadith # 15.
Personal responsibility, (taklif) given to human beings exclusively, is universal and knows no bounds. It comprehends the whole universe which is the object of human being’s moral actions, who are responsible for all that takes place in the universe.  

Personal responsibility was initially offered to mountains, earth and heaven but to be refused, and accepted by human beings, whose acceptance of this burden puts them on a higher level than the rest of creation. Indeed than the angles. For only he is capable of accepting responsibility as mentioned in the Qur'an: “Truly, We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust or moral responsibility) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust and ignorant” (Al-Ahzab [33] 72).

Human beings were created with an inbuilt moral sense which allows them to recognise what is true and good from what is false and evil. Human beings alone, among all the creatures, are bestowed with the freedom to choose either the good thing or the evil one. This freedom vests them with a distinguishing quality, namely moral responsibility. Otherwise, it would be all one for them whether they act or do not act, morally.  

The concept of personal responsibility (taklif) is a most dynamic one for individual fulfilment and social harmony. Taklif is the basis of man’s humanity, its meaning and its content. All obligations, whether on you as an individual, or on a community as a whole, are designed to encourage and promote the good and beautiful, and to discourage and combat the bad and reprehensible.

Islam considers the world as a gift from God, entrusted to people for their enjoyment and to use within the limits set by moral law. A Muslim’s life is to be lived in service to God — that is, in discovering the laws of nature so as to make one’s enjoyment of it possible and easy, and enabling every person and thing to live the divine pattern which is God’s will; “I have not created the jins and humans except they worship worship/serve me” (Adh-Dhariyat [51] 56). Any useful action which is not prohibited by God and is performed by a believer with the intention of seeking God’s pleasure is worship.

Islam invites all humans to compete and prove their moral worth. The arena is open to all mankind. Within it, all of them are an equal unit they have distinguished themselves from one another in deeds. The scripture of Islam pictures the life of humans as a free competition among them for doing the better, the nobler, the greater deeds; “for this let (all) those strive who want to strive” (Al-Mutaffifin [83] 26).

3.2 Vicegerency (khalifah)

On the basis of the personal responsibility, which human beings have undertaken, each individual person on this earth is a khalifah, or vicege-

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3 Al Faruq, Islam, pg. 81.
4 Hamid, Islam, pg.21.
6 Al Faruq, Islam, pg. 166.
rent (deputy) of God - that is, one who acts on behalf of God. As human creatures, therefore, all people are God’s vicegerents on earth. Being vicegerents on earth, people are expected to interfere with the processes of nature so as to transform the world from what it is into what it ought to be.27

When God declared to the angels that He will place mankind as the God’s vicegerent on earth, the angels questioned: “Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood - while we glorify You with praises and thanks (Exalted be You above all that they associate with You as partners) and sanctify You.” He (Allah) said: “I know that which you do not know” (Al-Baqarah [2] 30).

Being God’s vicegerents on earth, humankind are commanded to interfere with every natural process and interact with fellow human beings so as to achieve the highest good of all peoples of creation and of all things.28 Good may be defined as whatever is pleasing to God, and therefore beneficial to human beings, whereas evil may be defined as whatever incurs the anger of God and is therefore harmful to humankind. The Prophet’s definition of charity (sadaqah) encompasses every good doing. He stated; “Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity, commanding good and forbidding evil is charity, your giving directions to a man lost in the land is charity for you. Your seeing for a man with bad sight is a charity for you, your removal of a rock, a thorn or a bone from the road is charity for you. Your pouring what remains from your bucket into the bucket of your brother is charity for you.”29 These noble Prophetic teachings are meant to to awaken the springs of goodness in the human heart and to strengthen the society with the bond of love, affection and brotherhood.

3.3 Loving the neighbor

Neighbourhood has a special place in Islam. Treating your neighbour well is part of worshipping God, as stated in the Qur’an; “Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbour who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side …” (An-Nisa’ [4] 36).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned that, “Angel Jibreel kept recommending on treating neighbours with kindness until I thought he would assign a share of inheritance.”30 There is no distinction between a Muslim and a Non-Muslim neighbour as far as the human needs and rights of neighbours are concerned.31

A Muslim is not only required to have goodwill to his or her neighbour but should offer practical care and help when needed. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned; “Nobody can be a believer if his neighbours pass the night hungry while he has his stomach full.”32

27 Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 53.
28 Al Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths, pg.134.
29 Jam’ At-Tirmidhi, Book 27, Hadith 62
30 Narrated by Ibn ‘Umar and ‘Aishah Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Haidith # 303.
31 Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 8.
32 Reported by Ibn Abbas in Al-Bayhaqi Sunan Al-Kubra, Hadith #
A Muslim is also required to give emotional support by sharing in his joys and sorrows to his or her neighbour.

Do you know what are the rights of neighbours are? Asked the Prophet. He went on to give a list: “Help him [neighbour] if he asks your help. Give him relief if he needs your relief. Lend him if he needs a loan. Show him concern if he is distressed. Nurse him when he is ill. Attend his funeral if he dies. Congratulate him if he meets any good. Sympathise with him if any calamity befall him. Do not block his air by raising your building high without his permission. Harass him not. Give him a share when you buy fruits, and if you do not give him, bring what you buy quietly and let not your children take them out to excite the jealousy of his children.”

The advice about taking one’s purchases quietly to his or her house shows how sensitive one must be to the feelings of the neighbour.

Furthermore, a Muslim is needed to refrain from causing any harm or injury, any verbal or physical harassment or emotional stress to the neighbours. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one people trust with their lives and wealth.” It follows therefore that a Muslim ought not to look upon the non-Muslim as a fallen, hopeless creature, but as a perfect person capable of achieving the highest righteousness. Hence, a Muslim recognizes a non-Muslim, not an incomplete human being, but a perfect one, possessing high dignity, which belongs to him or her as a person. The Muslim, as well as the non-Muslim, are hence members of one family despite their religious differences.

4. Discarding despair

Islam teaches that nature was created as a theatre for a man in which to grow and prosper, to enjoy God’s bounty, and in doing so to prove oneself ethically worthy. Nature has been created malleable, capable of receiving man’s intervention into its processes. All creation is for man and awaits his usufruct of it. Its disposal is utterly at his discretion.

God implanted in human beings the love of the good, of the values which are the constituents of the divine will. Man is thus predisposed by nature toward such fulfilment. Islam acknowledges that human beings are liable to make mistakes of perception and judgement, to prefer the lesser value over the greater, the nearer or selfish advance over the farther or altruistic, indeed to aggress and commit injustice, but none is necessary; none is so embedded in human nature as to make its avoidance impossible.

“The Muslim, as well as the non-Muslim, are members of one family despite their religious differences.”

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33 Reported by Amr Ibn Shuayb in Al-Tabarani.
35 Reported by Abu Huraira in Sunan al-Nasa’i, Hadith # 4998.
36 Al Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths, pg.138.
38 Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 154.
Islam teaches not only that the realization of the good is possible in this world, but that to bring it about here and now is precisely the duty of every man and woman. It warns that there is no world other than this that all human duties and hopes are to be fulfilled in this world. Islam believes that God created human beings so that they may achieve the good, which must be possible to actualize — indeed obligatory. Islam does not need another world for the good to be realized therein. Its 'other world' is only a reward of punishment incurred by humans in accordance with their deeds.\textsuperscript{39}

A man's religious felicity (falah) consists of his fulfilment of the divine imperative. He can hope for God's mercy and forgiveness, but he may not count on it while refraining from doing the divine will. The road to felicity is a free and open highway, which anyone may tread of his own accord. Everybody is innately endowed with all these rights and privileges God has granted them without discrimination.

God gives hope to even to those who have transgressed His commands and Says: "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Az-Zumar [39] 53).

Being a vicegerent (khalifah) on earth, a Muslim bears the task of transforming humanity, and of helping each of them to fulfil his or her personal potential. All the problems of humankind are hence the Muslim's problems. To accept them, to seek morally worthy solutions to them, and to work out these solutions are the Muslim's obligation as well as the Muslim's pride. Islam calls its adherents to confront these problems head-on.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Al Faruqi, Islam, pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{40} Al Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths, pg.134.