

Introductory Notes on the Religion of Islam

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MUHAMMAD: THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

Muhammad's early life before his prophetic call

Muhammad was born about the year 570 in Mecca, near the west coast of central Arabia. Due to continuing wars between the Byzantine and Persian empires, the normal trade routes between India and the Mediterranean were disrupted, which proved to be a boon for towns like Mecca along the Arabian caravan route. Mecca was more prosperous than its neighbors because of the presence of the Ka'ba, a pagan shrine for all Arabian tribes, and hence a *haram* where killing was not permitted.

Although Muhammad came from the dominant tribe, Quraysh, his early life was hard. His father, `Abdullah, died before he was born, and his mother, Amina, died when he was six. He went to live with his grandfather, who died shortly thereafter, and Muhammad was raised by his uncle, Abu Talib. The insecurity of Muhammad's orphaned youth is reflected in some Qur'anic passages.

At about the age of 12, Muhammad went to work on the caravans bearing goods to Damascus and Jerusalem, which brought him into contact with new cultures and religions. At the age of 19 he was hired by a wealthy widow, Khadija, to manage her caravans, and a few years later, they married. It was apparently a happy marriage, although Khadija was 16 years older than Muhammad, and Muhammad never took a second wife while Khadija was alive. With his marriage, Muhammad's fortunes changed. He became a respected member of the community with no financial problems, and had four daughters but no surviving sons. Muhammad might well have spent the rest of his days as a successful businessman, but at the age of 40, he underwent a religious crisis.

The religious situation in Arabia at the time of Muhammad

1. The Peoples of the Book.

The religious options in Arabia were limited. There were many Jews and Christians in various parts of Arabia, but few, if any, in Mecca, the pagan stronghold. Some tribes in northern Arabia (present-day Jordan) had converted to Christianity and there were several important Jewish tribes in the region of Madina (300 km to the north of Mecca). A significant presence of Christians in the Arabian wasteland was the desert monasteries, Christian monks who believed that life in the cities was morally corrupt and fled to the desert to lead lives of prayer and penance. The monasteries also performed a social function, for they were centers of hospitality for travelers stranded in the desert and *harams* where the ancient Arab practice of vengeance could not be carried out - in short, oases of peace and safety in a harsh, unforgiving environment.

The Jewish Scriptures and those of the Christians were not translated into Arabic, which made them inaccessible to most Arabs. As religious communities that possessed Sacred Scriptures, they were known as the People of the Book. Politically, the Christians tended to be allied with the Byzantine Empire, while the Jews were supporters of the Persian Shah.

2. Traditional Arabian religion.

Each tribe had its own male and female deities. Every Arabian tribe had the right to worship its gods at the Ka'ba and to keep there the necessary instruments of worship - statues, texts, musical instruments, potions etc. Every year the tribes had the right to safe passage to Mecca to make pilgrimage. So that the tribes could feel free to come and worship, Mecca was declared a *Karam* where killing and vengeance were taboo. Merchants, happy to know that their business affairs would not be disturbed by tribal conflicts, found Mecca an attractive site for their markets and storerooms. Thus, the financial prosperity of Mecca was bound up with the presence of the pagan cult in Mecca.

3. The *hanif* community.

These were Arabs who rejected the pagan polytheism centered about the Ka'ba. They believed in One God and felt themselves akin to Jews and Christians, although they were unable to read their Scriptures. They were *ummi*, that is, people who knew no language other than Arabic. They were native Arab monotheists who traced their faith to that of Abraham, and they awaited an Arab prophet who would bring to them "a Book in clear Arabic" containing the same message found in the Books of Jews and Christians. *Hanif* poets wrote long poems in praise of Allah, and the *hanifs* met for informal worship of the one God.

The first revelations to Muhammad

In the year 610, when he was about 40 years old, Muhammad could no longer accept the pagan cult at the Ka'ba. The multiplicity of gods and the myths of gods having sexual relations and begetting children seemed to him unworthy of the deity. More serious still was the lack of any social consciousness in the pagan religion. Although Mecca was enjoying a period of prosperity, many people had few or no rights. Women, slaves, outcasts, and foreigners especially suffered. Women were sold from father to husband, who could divorce his wives at will, and female infanticide was a common practice. There was no mechanism by which slaves could buy or earn their freedom. Since people were protected by their tribes, outcasts and travelers had no protection in law. The pagan religion gave no moral guidance in these matters; there was no concept of a person's being held accountable for one's actions.

Muhammad was attracted by the superior moral sense of Jews and Christians and by their understanding of the One God who had a moral will for humans. But like many Arabs, he felt a perpetual outsider to the communities of the Book, whose language he did not know. Thus, Muhammad began to associate with the *hanifs*, where he learned of their identification with the faith of Abraham and their longing for a prophet of their own who would bring a book in Arabic. Muhammad began to withdraw more and more from his business affairs and to seclude himself for days at a time in the small cave of Hira near Mecca, where he would pray and reflect on the social and religious situation in Arabia. On one of these occasions, he had a kind of mystical experience in which he heard a voice say, "Recite, in the name of your Lord who created..." (Qr 96:2-6). Muslims accept this as the first revealed verse of the Qur'an. At first, Muhammad was frightened by the experience and told no one but his wife, Khadija. Khadija took him to see her uncle, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who knew a bit about Judaism and Christianity. Waraqa reassured Muhammad that the message he received issued from the same source as the books of the Jews and Christians.

Muhammad in Mecca

Some time later, Muhammad received a message to preach and warn. He began preaching to the Meccans, warning them to repent and believe in the one God or else they would meet destruction. The Meccan leaders refused to accept the preaching of Muhammad, for they felt that the pagan worship centered on the Ka'ba was an important factor in the prosperity of Mecca. They claimed that Muhammad was lying about the revelations, that he was inspired by one of the jinn, that he had gone mad, or that he was learning these things from a secret informant.

Some people in Mecca believed in the message that Muhammad was preaching. Most were from disadvantaged social groups - slaves, women, outcasts, but a few men of better families (e.g., Abu Bala, Umar, Uthman, and his young cousin Ali), believed in him. Muhammad taught the Qur'anic verses to his followers, who memorized and recited them

at night. The Meccan leaders tried to ostracize the Muslims and to persecute the weaker among them. At one point, a group of Muslims took refuge in Christian Ethiopia, where they were received well by the local ruler.

Muhammad in Madina (Yathrib)

After about 11 years of struggle, Muhammad was invited to Yathrib, a city on the caravan route north of Mecca. Learning of a plot by the Meccans to kill him, Muhammad and Abu Bala fled to Yathrib, which later came to be called "Madina," that is, "the City [of the Prophet]." The year of the *Hijra*, the Emigration to Madina, 622 A.D., is the beginning of the Islamic era, that is, year 0 from which all later years would be counted.

Madina was a city divided between several Jewish and pagan tribes. They were looking for an impartial judge to decide matters of conflict between rival tribes. With the emigration of Muslims from Mecca, Muhammad gradually became the ruler of Madina in every sense. There he sought to build a society according to the principles of the Qur'an. At this point, Muhammad received a revelation to fight against the pagans in Mecca and began to raid the Meccan caravans. Civil war ensued, with the various Arab tribes taking one or another side. As the Muslims gradually gained in strength against their Meccan opponents, Muhammad announced that they would make the *hajj* to Mecca. The Meccan leaders found it difficult to oppose this plan, since all Arabs had the right to safe passage in order to make the pilgrimage. A compromise was reached by which the Muslims would be permitted to make the pilgrimage the following year. During that year, so many Arab tribes pledged allegiance to Muhammad, that when the Muslims came to Mecca, the Meccan leaders surrendered the city to them without a battle.

Muhammad's life was nearly over. After retiring to Madina, he announced a final pilgrimage to Mecca. Every detail of that pilgrimage was remembered and recorded. On the Day of Witness at Mt. Arafat, he preached his final sermon, "Today, your religion is completed." A short time later, after returning to Madina, he died.

The period of the Rightly-Guided Califs

It is disputed as to whether or not Muhammad left any instructions concerning his successor. Sunni scholars claim that he did not, while Shi'i scholars claim that he had verbally appointed Ali. In any case, on the day of his death, Muslims gathered in Madina to determine his successor. The majority chose as *khalifa* (calif) Abu Bakr, one of the first Muslims, a close friend and associate of Muhammad. A minority felt that Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, was the proper choice. The fact that Ali was still very young probably influenced the majority to choose the mature, highly respected Abu Bala. Abu Bala governed the community for less than two years before he also died. In the election that followed his death, the majority chose Umar to be the second calif, again passing over Ali against the wishes of his supporters. The "faction" or party supporting Ali was called "the faction of Ali (*shi'at Ali*), or simply, Shi'a.

Under the dynamic leadership of Umar, the Arabs left Arabia and conquered Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran. The conquests brought the Muslims power and wealth and made them rulers of ancient centers of Middle Eastern civilization. During the time of Umar, Islam evolved from becoming a religion of local Arabs to a truly international religion, extending from Morocco to Sind in modern Pakistan. After Umar was killed by an unhappy slave, Muslim leaders again met to choose a *khalifa*. Although Ali was by then an adult and supported by a greater number of Muslims, the choice fell to Uthman, another early Companion and member of the wealthiest and most powerful clan of the Quraysh. Uthman seems to have been a basically good Muslim, but did not have the strength of character of Abu Bakr and Umar. Corruption and nepotism set in, with Uthman appointing his cousins as governors of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

A delegation from Egypt came to Mecca to complain about what they considered excessive taxation. A brief struggle ensued in which Uthman was killed. In the following election, Ali was elected the Fourth Calif. According to Sunni teaching, the four califs - Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali - are called the "Rightly-Guided Califs" (*al-khulafa al-rashidun*).

Muawiya, Uthman's cousin and governor of Syria, accused Ali of being the mastermind behind the death of Uthman. According to Arab tradition, he claimed vengeance upon his cousin's murderer. (Historians find no evidence of Ali's involvement in a plot to kill Uthman and suspect that Muawiya was driven more by ambition than righteous vengeance.) Muawiya raised a powerful army and eventually Ali was defeated and killed in battle. Muawiya governed the Muslim world from Damascus and inaugurated Islam's first dynasty, the Umayyad. Muslim historians tend to picture the Umayyads in a harsh light, being not only greedy and oppressive, but also non-observant Muslims given to luxury, wine drinking and promiscuity. The notable exception is Umar H, a pious and effective ruler.

The Growth of Shi'i Islam

From the time of the death of Muhammad, the Shi'a had always regarded Ali as the only proper successor to Muhammad. To them, Muawiya was a godless usurper who replaced Islamic theocracy with a traditional Middle Eastern state. They considered Ali a martyr and recounted many stories of his sanctity. Of Ali's two sons, Hasan and Hussein, it was Hussein who opposed the Umayyad ruler, Yazid, the son of Muawiya. At the Battle of Karbela (in modern Iraq), Hussein and many of his supporters were killed. In the eyes of the Shi'a, Hussein was the preeminent martyr, the innocent upholder of justice, killed by the hateful Yazid. A concept of redemption evolved in which Hussein bearing the sins of all, in his death brought reconciliation for wrongs committed by men. Hussein's martyrdom is commemorated annually by Shi'a on 10 Muharram.

Most Shi'a accept 12 Imams in the direct line of Muhammad (through Ali and Fatima), while a minority, called Ismailis, accept 7 Imams. The Imams are considered infallible teachers and their words, with the Qur'an and hadith, are the basis for Islamic practice.

They await the return of the final Imam, the Mandi, who is invisibly present in the world and will, at the correct moment, return to establish a reign of justice and truth on earth. Most Iranian Muslims are "Twelver" Shi'a, as are many Muslims in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Bahrain. Ismailis ("Sevener" Shi'a) are especially prominent in Pakistan and northern India.

SPREAD OF ISLAM TO ASIA

Early period: the spread of Islam to Asia (800-1300)

Muslims arrived in Asia in the first century after the death of Muhammad. In some cases, it was Arab armies who brought Islamic rule through military conquest. This was the case among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, in Sind in Pakistan and later on generally in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. More often, Islam was introduced to Asia peacefully by Arab and Persian merchants. Following established pre-Islamic commercial routes, these traders set up foreign merchant communities of Muslims in the port cities of the Indian Ocean and along the famous "Silk Road" between China and the Mediterranean.

Because the sea voyage in the Indian Ocean and the land trip across the Silk Road took between 1 1/2-2 years, Muslim firms set up local offices to handle affairs. Some Muslims married local women and raised families, who were expected to adopt the Islamic faith. Local employees also frequently accepted Islam and in this way the local foreign communities began to include a limited number of local Muslims. In some places, these mixed communities of Muslim traders left the port cities to travel inland in small boats, along the canals of Burma and Thailand, and up the river system of modern-day Bangladesh.

Not all foreign Muslims remained in Asia by choice. Bankruptcies, confiscated vessels, shipwrecks, and the changeable policies of local rulers prevented some merchants and sailors from returning to the Middle East. Thus in the port cities of the Indian Ocean, the caravan stops along the overland routes, and along the inland waterways, small communities of local Muslims began to arise. In this early period, the instances of mass conversions of local inhabitants to Islam were few, although there were some notable exceptions, such as in Sind in modern Pakistan and among the Champa people of Cambodia.

The age of expansion: conversion of Asians to Islam (1300-1500)

In 1258, Baghdad, the religious, cultural, and political center of the Islamic world, was conquered and destroyed by the Mongol armies. Although the Calif and his whole family were killed, a distant relative escaped to Cairo and was set up as calif. However, never again did the calif wield any real power. He remained a figurehead until Ataturk's suppression of the califate in the 1920s.

To fill the vacuum created by the destruction of the most important political and educational institutions in Islam, new movements arose. The most important were the Sufi Orders. Mystically-inclined Muslims had been present in the Islamic community since its beginnings, but in the 14th Century, they gathered into brotherhoods and became the most dynamic force in Islam. Dedicated to achieving a union of love and will with God and possessing great missionary zeal, the Sufis began to accompany the merchants

on their commercial trips to Asia. Through their preaching, many in Asia were attracted to Islam. The fact that most Asian peoples accepted Islam strongly marked by the mystical, inner-oriented interpretation of the Sufi preachers had important consequences on its subsequent development and history in Asia.

Islam in the colonial period: the Sufi revival (1550-1800)

The early Sufis did not place great emphasis on doctrinal formulation or political questions, but emphasized interior piety and submission to God's will. Instead of a confrontative approach to traditional Asian spirituality, a pantheistic nature religiosity centered on cosmic and interior harmony, the Sufis focused on a few basic principles of Islam - the oneness of God, the necessity of prayer and fasting, and prohibitions against pork and alcohol - and accommodated many traditional practices related to the spirit world and the cult of holy persons and places.

Islam was implanted in Asian societies for a relatively short time when most predominantly Muslim regions came to be conquered and governed by non-Muslim powers. In South and Southeast Asia it was European Christian powers - first the Portuguese, then Dutch, British, Spaniards, Americans, and Russians who came to dominate Muslim regions. In the same period, Buddhist Chinese, Thai, and Burmese incorporated Muslim regions into their domains.

During the 17-18th centuries, the early colonial period saw a reformist trend initiated by international Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya, who sought to bring about a deeper Islamic awareness based on better religious education. While not forbidding the traditional rites centered on cemeteries, local shrines of holy persons, healing practices, and the spirit world dwelling in caves, mountains, the sea, and banyan trees, the Sufi reformers worked to instill authentic Islamic practice among Muslims.

Islamic revival and the struggle for independence (1800-1945)

When Muslims looked around the world at the beginning of the 19th Century, many asked, "What went wrong?" From having, in previous centuries, the world's most powerful, advanced, and prosperous states in the Ottoman, Safavid and Moghul empires, they had almost everywhere succumbed to the rule of others. A radical response was provided by **Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab** in Arabia, who held that it was because they deviated from the true Islamic path that Muslim peoples arrived at their low state. He felt that nothing less than a return to the pure, original Islam would permit Muslims to achieve their past glory.

Those who took up these views were called **Wahhabis**. They wanted not only to purify Islam of all accretions and novelties that had wrongly been accepted as Islamic in the course of time, but they held that the Sufi preoccupation with Islam as a personal,

spiritual path to God was in itself a distortion of the original intent of the religion. They claimed that Islam was meant to be a program for building a human society whose every aspect was to be lived in accord with the will of God. Islam was not simply, or even primarily, to be seen as a set of pious practices leading to mystical union. Many hajjis making the pilgrimage to Mecca encountered Wahhabi ideas in Arabia and brought these views back with them to their homelands in Asia.

The Wahhabi understanding of Islam had political implications. If God intended the Islamization of society in all its social, economic, and political aspects, it was felt that this could only be done if Muslims themselves were in control of the political systems. Their political theory held that the state existed to permit Muslims to foster the Islamization process and to forbid and punish wrongdoing. They felt that the Sufis, with their spiritual programs, ignored political realities and held Muslims back from the task of reforming society according to God's will.

The Muslim revival linked religious and political concerns. To pursue their societal ends, they sought to create a state that would favor and implement these goals. The first objective was to achieve liberation from non-Muslim rule. Revivalists began to work actively toward the overthrow of colonial regimes in order to create Islamic states that would support the Islamization of society.

Islamic revival in the modern nation states (1945-1995)

In the years after World War II, when most Muslim regions achieved independence, two organizations emerged to articulate the concept of the Islamic state. In Egypt and other Arab countries, the **Muslim Brotherhood**, insisting that rule by Muslims did not ensure the creation of an Islamic state, worked to counter nationalist feelings that, in their view, divided rather than united the Islamic *umma*. The harsh repression of the Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria convinced many that the new Arab regimes were as opposed to the creation of an Islamic state as the colonial regimes had been.

On the Indian subcontinent, the **Jamiati Islami** held that Islam offered the world an Islamic solution to every modern problem. There was already an Islamic science, economics, politics, legal system, and educational program. Muslims had only to search in their own early tradition to rediscover the ingredients necessary to develop Islamic alternatives to these secular fields.

As one predominately Muslim nation after another achieved independence after 1945, the revivalists hoped that Islamic states would be set up. The actual Muslim rule that replaced the colonial regimes was, however, far from their ideals of the Islamic state. The new ruling class throughout the Muslim world generally adopted the principles of nationalism and created nation states on a European model. Legal codes were based on those of Western nations and were usually mere revisions of colonial law. On the grounds that it was more egalitarian and would prevent the abuses of uncontrolled capitalism, many of the ruling elites adopted socialist policies of a one-party state, state

ownership of industries, and centrally planned economies. Cultural mores as well as development concepts were taken from the West.

The creation of Pakistan

In the first decades after World War II, many Muslims were enthusiastic about the creation of Pakistan, which they considered a model for the modern Islamic democracy. However, as the years passed, it became clear that Pakistan's Islamic identity did not enable the country to overcome ethnic clashes, economic mismanagement and corruption, military takeovers, and equitable distribution of wealth. Many Muslims claimed that the Pakistan model was a failed experiment and that a truly Islamic state would have to undergo a more revolutionary societal restructuring.

The Palestinian struggle

Shortly after the creation of Pakistan, in 1949, the emergence of the state of Israel had great influence on the thinking of militant Muslims. Seen as a state for European Jews created in the Arab heartland by the Western powers to assuage their guilt for Europe's treatment of its Jews, Israel was felt to be a continuation of colonial policies of forced implantation and lawless land-grabbing. The Palestinian struggle became the symbol of oppressed Muslims striving to achieve, against all odds, liberation through armed rebellion. The Palestinian cause engendered a conviction that the West, despite its professed concern for the development of Muslim nations, was in fact opposed to Islam and that Muslims were victims of injustice perpetrated by Western powers.

The disastrous defeat of the Arab alliance by Israel in 1967 was a watershed. Egypt, the most populous and powerful Arab nation and its cultural capital, led by the charismatic Gamal Abd al-Nasser, with the financial support of other Arab countries, went down to quick and humiliating defeat by tiny Israel. It was not only Nasser and the rhetoric of pan-Arab nationalism that was discredited. The military, on which millions of dollars had been spent, showed itself inept and corrupt. Ineffective in its role of defending the nation, the military was often seen as existing primarily to preserve the internal status quo, enabling the ruling elites to govern by force, often against the will of the people. Hopes that the Western powers would provide necessary assistance were dashed when those states supported Israel both financially and in international diplomatic forums such as the United Nations. Many Muslims began to question the efficacy of nationalist thought and turned to religion to furnish more effective means to govern Muslim peoples.

The Iranian revolution

The 1979 Iranian revolution gave concrete shape to these grievances. The world was amazed when religious solidarity enabled Iranian Muslims to overthrow with apparent ease a wealthy but unpopular Muslim regime, one which had been presumed to be the

model of strength and stability. The fact that the Shah's regime strongly promoted secularization in the name of modernization and was closely allied to the West was not lost on revivalist Muslims. The Islamic Republic of Iran replaced, in the minds of many, the failed Pakistan model of an Islamic state. All observers, whether sympathetic or not, agree that the government of Ayatollah Khomeini was truly revolutionary in rethinking and reorganizing every aspect of social life according to Islamic principles.

Later events in the Muslim world encouraged the growth and spread of revivalist ideals. The 1991 Gulf War and the continuing blockade against Iraq, along with economic and diplomatic measures taken against other outspoken Muslim nations, confirmed for many that the West, particularly the U.S.A., intended to isolate Muslim countries much as communist states had previously been isolated. The electoral victory of the Front Islamique du Salut in Algeria in 1992 showed that a grass-roots Islamic political movement could succeed through democratic processes. The uncritical welcome granted by Western powers to the establishment of a repressive military dictatorship in Algeria, confirmed to many Muslims the shallowness of European rhetoric about democracy as well as its implacable enmity towards Islam.

Revivalist critique of modernity

There are many factors underlying Muslim revival movements in Asia today. There is a criticism of the Sufi roots and a desire to reorient the inner-directed thrust of Sufism towards an activist program of social reform. Muslim revivalists propose a political philosophy that holds that the state should be an instrument to promote Islamic values and way of life. In many countries, revivalist Islam is an attractive alternative that promises to resolve the crises in existing institutions: the lack of effective and representative government, the wasteful yet ambiguous role of the military, the failure of socialist central planning and management of the economy, and the institutionalization of the traditional *ulama* which turned them into government servants rather than being spokespersons for the people.

This is accompanied by a harsh critique of modernity. By modernity is not meant technological advances in communications, transportation and consumer goods. Muslims are ready to accept and use all these to promote their cause. What they object to are the philosophical presuppositions of the modern way of life, its understanding of humankind and its place in the universe, and the values that derive from this philosophy of life. This comprehensive philosophy, growing historically out of the European ideals of the Enlightenment, is often referred to as liberalism.

A conflict of values

Muslims see a fundamental conflict of values in today's world. The liberal value system is anthropocentric, with the individual at the center of the universe. This philosophy of life exalts human dignity, freedom, and rights. Fulfilling to the utmost one's potential,

capabilities, and legitimate desires is considered the highest human goal, and modern people must be free to achieve these aspirations. The only limitation on human freedom is that in pursuing one's objectives, the individual must not violate the rights of others to pursue and achieve their own goals.

While liberalism does not deny the existence of God or reject religion, it is skeptical of the ability of any religious system to attain truth and is opposed to the role of religion in public life. Religion is admissible as the personal choice of some individuals who feel they need to give moral direction to their private and familial lives, but it has no place in public affairs. The marketplace, social interaction and, above all, government, are spheres that must exist and operate outside the influence of religious thought.

Against liberal values, Muslim revivalists propose a theocentric system. For them, God has revealed how humans should live and has laid down the principles on which society is to be built. They feel that Western values lay so much stress on the individual person that the rights of society are ignored or denied. They hold that the humanistic approach to morality espoused by Western modernity leads to dehumanization, where the person is viewed primarily as a consumer of goods, a prospective buyer to be reached by effective advertising, rather than as a creature of God called to live a simple, God-fearing, non-materialist life.

The emphasis on the individual divides the world into winners and losers. The winners are those who obtain the best university education, achieve good, steady jobs, and the privileges that come with wealth and status. The losers are driven to destructive activities such as crime, or self-destructive activities related to drugs, alcohol, gambling and sexual promiscuity. What people need, the Muslim critics claim, are not new and better consumer goods, but rather a clear sense that human life finds meaning in the context of an obedient and joyful response to the demands of God.

One of the most important arenas for Christian-Muslim dialogue at the present time is a critical evaluation of modernity to distinguish the obvious benefits that modernization brings to humanity from the anti-religious and ultimately destructive attitudes that can often accompany it.