

UNIVERSALISING THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY WITH ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper discussed the universality of the concept of identity from the perspective of Islam. This perspective of Islam was deemed necessary as a gap to be filled at ensuring that identity completes its course of universality as a concept. Therefore, the study subjected identity in its types to a Qur'ānic critique with a view to identifying those that are in tandem with the tenets of Islam and those that are at variance with them. The contributions of Islam were critically discussed from four major schools of identity around the Muslim world. These schools with different formational motives and objectives were identified as the traditionalist, the reactionary, the non-conformist and the modernist. The paper argued that the four schools of identity, in spite of their differences, were formed with the aim of achieving the same goal of the preservation of the sanctity of Islam but using different theological mechanisms. With the perspective of Islam, identity as a concept was adjudged to have completed its cycle of universality. Conclusively, it was advanced that the primary basis in the formation of the four schools of identity is the Qur'ān. As such, the same basis should be used as the yardstick for rejecting any of the views expressed by these schools or their likes which may come on board to further contribute to the concept of identity from Islamic viewpoints.

Keywords: Identity, traditionalist, reactionary, non-conformist, modernist.

Introduction

Identity is a universal concept which transcends all times and climes and is without a religious boundary. Of course, the search for a universal concept of identity has inevitably become a human endeavour which could be related to the reason for the existence of man. Thus, it often results in different forms of conflict depending on the types of identity involved. It is on this note that the paper attempts to survey the contributions and the perspective of Islam to the universality of the concept of identity. This will be done by looking at the definitions and meanings of identity, types of identity, theologising on the types of identity and examining the major schools of identity.

Definitions and Meanings of Identity

Going through various fields of research that have to do with identity, it is evident that it may be difficult to give a comprehensive meaning of the word “identity” as used in everyday and social science contexts. Even the lexical meaning of the word may not suffice for its comprehension. One of such definitions is that of Hornby which views identity as who or what somebody or something is; the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others or the state or feeling of being very similar to and able to understand somebody or something¹. Hornby also describes identity as the sameness some individuals share to make up the kind or universal, the difference or character that marks off an individual from the rest of the same kind or the mask or appearance one presents to the world- by which one is known².

According to James, identity is perceived as either a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviours³. James also defines it as socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential⁴. The second definition by James presents identity as modern formulation of dignity, pride or honour that implicitly links these to social categories. By implication, identity is presently used in two related senses which are, in James language, “social” and “personal”. By this, it means that identity makes reference to both social categories and to the sources of individual’s self-respect and dignity.

Hogg and Dominic define identity as people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are and how they relate to others⁵. Deng uses it to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture⁶. From the perspective of Wendt, identities are relatively stable, role specific understandings and expectations about self⁷. White sees identity as any source of action not explicable from biophysical regularities, and to which observers can attribute meaning⁸. In Kowert’s and Jeffrey’s opinion, identities are viewed as prescriptive representations of political actors themselves and of their relationships to each other⁹.

One can observe from the different definitions of identity highlighted above that the concept is not restricted to a particular discipline. Other angles from which identity could be perceived and which are too numerous to be accommodated in this paper depend on the type of identity being defined.

Types of Identity

Types of identity will be examined here in broad terms that will allow us have a look at different types of identity such as gender, racial/ethnic, sexual, class, moral, class and religious.

Gender Identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as male or female or rarely both or neither.¹⁰ Gender identity, in all nearly instances, is self- identified as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or

environmental factors.¹¹ It is assumed that if a person considers himself a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male, only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behaviour, dress and or mannerisms.¹² The issue of gender and gender identity, according to Zucher et al is often discussed merely in terms of dysfunction¹³ and the diagnosis of gender identity disorder, according to him, is a known phenomenon in both children and adults.¹⁴

According to Fagot and Leinbach, gender identity traditionally falls into the domain of Medicine and it refers to the individual's psychological sense of being male or female¹⁵. Sheriff's definition of gender identity suggests that the self-system is an essential construct of studying individual gender psychology¹⁶. This is corroborated by Ashmore who views gender identity as the structured set of gendered personal identities that results when the individual takes the social construction of gender and the biological facts of sex and incorporates them into an overall self-concept¹⁷. Thus, it is argued by Sheriff that gender identity includes personal and social attributes, social relationships, interests and abilities, symbolic and stylistic behaviours and biological/physical/material attributes. So, an individual's gender identity is separate from his or her sex stereotypes and gender attitudes.¹⁸ Three other notions of gender identity exist by social psychologists.¹⁹ First, social identity theorists, according to Tajvel and Turner argue that gender identity is men's and women's awareness of and feelings for their gender category.²⁰ Second, symbolic integrationists describe gender identity as people's self- conceptions that are based on the particular gender roles they play, going by Mc Call and Simmons.²¹ Finally, going by Robin-Leidner social constructionists state that gender identities are created from structured social constraints and he showed how distinct gender identities are created in two interactive service jobs that require the exact same skills but have different training emphases²².

Racial/ Ethnic Identity: The word race is used by social scientists to refer to distinctions from physical appearance (skin colour, eye shape and physiognomy), while ethnicity is used to portray the distinctions based on national origin, language, religion, food and other cultural markers, according to Helms²³. He also observes that race is a socially defined and politically oppressive categorisation scheme that individuals must negotiate while creating their identities in the United States. As such, identification or labelling of individuals based on these two parameters is an expression of racial or ethnic identity. Helms, in his analysis, also points out the national perception of only four existing distinguishable racial groups *vis* Asian, Black, White and Native American with Latino as often treated as a fifth racial group, despite its racial characteristics of the other four.

Similarly, Yinger sees racial or ethnic identity as an individual's segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in

addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients.²⁴ In a slightly related perspective, Ott perceives racial identity as a frame in which individuals consciously or unconsciously identify with those with whom they feel a common bond in terms of traditions, behaviours, values and beliefs.²⁵ With this, individuals are allowed to make sense of the world around them and to find pride in who they are. Thus, a sense of ethnic identity, in the expression of Torres is developed from shared culture, religion, geography and language of individuals who are often connected by strong loyalty and kinship as well as proximity.²⁶

Sexual Identity: The emergence and historical origin of sexual identity is traceable to the 19th Century when the idea appeared that homosexual behaviour formed a particular kind of person, making homosexuality to be defined as an individual's identity. This identity was labelled sickness by Emilio and Freedman²⁷. As a result of this construct which was considered as rigid and negative, Foucault argued that supposed euphemistic names such as the oppressed minority member, woman-identified –woman, gay community member and bisexual feminist evolved with the full support of political movements like the Gay Movement, the Feminist Movement and the Bisexual Movement.²⁸ This painted historical picture, quoting Garenets and Kimmel, is suggestive of the fact that sexual identity is a fluid created by individuals²⁹, created by communities according to Brown³⁰ and a socio-historical event in the expression of Emilio.³¹

From available sexual identities literature, it is asserted by Phelan that sexual identity is a political statement and not just information about self-perception³². Phelan's argument is premised on the example of homosexual identity which metamorphosed into gay and lesbian identity, thereby creating group cohesion and identity politics.

The society is seen as prescribing some rules that stipulate that one should be sexually and romantically attracted to members of the opposite gender but not those of the same gender as one's.³³ Therefore, anyone who is found violating these social norms may be considered for some mistreatments such as verbal harassment, assault and snide comments, depending on the perceived sexual identity.³⁴ As one's sex and one's gender identity are completely different, one's sexual identity may be based on either one. This therefore explains the possibility of a person having two sexual identities, one as a man and the other as a woman, especially in the modern society. These people perceive sex and gender as referring to different aspects of oneself and as a result of which one can choose a combination of any sex (male or female); gender (masculine or feminine) and sexual identity (straight, bisexual, lesbian or gay).

Class Identity: The word "class", according to Deborrah, is used by psychologists in two different ways. One is using it to describe the research participants and as independent variable to control uninteresting variation or to show that class does not interact with "more important" constructs³⁵. With this

thesis of Deborah, it is evident that class as a meaningful type of identity is simply absent from the psychological literature, with few exceptions.

From these few exceptions, an instance is given by Stewart and Ostrove of students from the working-class backgrounds that must negotiate their marginal status at elite academic institutions³⁶. Another instance is cited by Grella of downwardly mobile divorced women who must reconcile a lower-class economic reality with their past middle-class lives³⁷. In the expression of Hurtado *et al*, class identity is explained using the second- and third-generation immigrants who are more likely than their first-generation peers, to have class identities reflecting US cultural conceptions³⁸.

Moral Identity: According to Hardy, people base their identities on various things such as values, goals, actions and roles which might be thought of as identity contents. He argues that a person is said to have a moral identity if the moral values and norms like fairness, honesty and kindness in him or her are more central to his or her identity when compared to other values³⁹. Thus, moral identity is deduced by Hardy to connote identification or labelling of an individual when he or she has more moral values and contents when compared with other idiosyncratic characteristics⁴⁰.

According to social cognitive scholars, moral identity is primarily about having moral schemas. These schemas, going by Aquino & Reed are considered knowledge structures in the mind that represents various aspects of ourselves, relationships and experiences. When these schemas are easily activated in our minds, they can play an important role in social information processing.⁴¹ In other words, people who have a clear and salient idea of what it means to be a morally sound person may be more readily guided by this image in their interaction with others.

Religious Identity: This is defined by Erikson as a representation of one's unique religious (or creedal) orientation. According to Erikson, this also accommodates one's unique personal experience, memory, ethnicity, culture, religious orientation, gender and occupational role⁴². Also, from <http://www.churchofreality.org/wisdom/terminology>, religious identity is described as the name of the religion that a person identifies him/herself with. It further states that when people demand to know a person's religion, a one word answer with the name of a belief system that expresses his/her religious identity is expected. In apposition to this definition of religious identity, Volkan from a psychological view point, defines identity generally as a "subjective and persistent sense of sameness", referring essentially to group identity where the element of "groupness" is inherent in some phenomena such as nationality, ethnicity, peer grouping, social ranking, family, culture and even religion⁴³. Of course, the applicability of this definition to religious identity becomes obvious if it is taken with the last word in the definition which is religion.

It is against this backdrop that the formation of religion which is compared with the process of "pseudospeciation" by Erikson's theory will be

used to further elaborate on our perception of religious identity. This process is described by Erikson as follows:

... at the outset of human history, each human group developed a distinct sense of identity, wearing skins and feathers like armor to protect it from other groups who wore different kinds of skins and feathers. Erikson hypothesised that each group became convinced that it was the sole possessor of the true human identity. Thus, each group became a pseudospecies, adopting an attitude of superiority over other groups .⁴⁴

Major Schools of Islamic Thought on Identity

There are four major schools of thought as regards the discourse on the concept of identity. Identity discourse is generally championed by the scholars of these schools. For examples issues related to gender and the embrace of modern innovations as they affect Islam and Muslims are indicative of a search for new identities. Then, to situate these natural and generational phenomena within the frame work of Islam without losing touch with the original source of Islam, scholars of these schools go into diverse debates among themselves. These schools which were formed one after the other, and in reaction to the views of a school by the other are the Reactionaries/ Traditionalists, the Non-conformists, the Modernists/ Progressives and the Secularists. The order in which the schools were formed is as discussed below.

The Reactionaries/ Traditionalists and Identity

The Reactionaries/ Traditionalists are scholars of religion (especially Islam) who are said to be the moral voice of society. These scholars such as Abu'l Hassan 'Alī an-Nadawī, Maulānā Tayyib and Mawdūdī are certainly aware of some of the distinctions and concepts that constitute the core of religious modernity going by Jamal.⁴⁵ As it were, these are '*Ulamā*' who are conservative and whose conservatism is with a view to preserving the legacies of Islam. These scholars are described by Ozay with no concern for human problems, suppression of creativity and preaching of virtues of patience and fatalism even in the face of injustice and tyranny. According to him, the reactionaries jealously guard the supposed sanctity of the Islamic Law by holding firmly to the closure of the gate of *Ijtihād* which is knowledge based on reasoning and declared closed in the 10th Century under the Abbasids.⁴⁶ This, according to Garipova, therefore bounds future generations to blind imitation and unquestioned acceptance and memorisation of precedents and interpretations of the past authorities otherwise known as *Taqīd*.⁴⁷ Another name used to refer to the traditionalists is "qadimists", a term derived from the word *qadīm* which, according to Garipova, means old and has referred to the old method of education (or of doing things) as opposed to '*uṣūl al- Jadīd* (the new method).⁴⁸In Graham's expression, Islamic traditionalism consists of the acknowledgement of the importance and authority of the revelations of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.⁴⁹

One of these reactionary scholars, according to Ozay was Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (1059-1111). His book, *Taḥāfutul Falāsifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) had a tremendous influence on the popularity of this school of thought. Ozay states that Al-Ghazālī began by placing great virtue on self-doubt as a precondition of man's yearning for knowledge and concluded by sacrificing original thinking to theological dogma.⁵⁰ In his argument, the reason for the decline in the Islamic faith was due to the respect people showed for pre-Islamic philosophers such as Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle. Hence, he attempted to discredit their secularism by demonstrating the incoherence of their arguments through his.⁵¹ On the contrary, Volkan noted that Ibn Rushd otherwise known as Averroes criticised and rejected Al-Ghazālī's argument but it was belated because Islamic Theology and the reactionary '*Ulamā*' had already won secular knowledge. Thus, *Taqīd*, blind imitation, going by Ozay, became the leading Islamic paradigm of learning.⁵²

The scenario painted above gives a vivid description of the reactionaries' disposition to religious identity which has no mercy for any form of separation between the state and religion. This position, as it were, portrays Islam as both religion and politics through which the state should be successfully ruled without any prejudice to the Supreme Rule of Law known as *Sharī'ah*. This, of course, is a replica which applies to all other forms of identity apart from religio-political identity which was emphatically specified here. It must be pointed out here that identity of all forms will assume the same position of conservatism regardless of modification or repackaging occasioned by civilisation, modernity or westernisation. Therefore, the changing and dynamic nature of existence which requires consistent interpretation of the content of the Qur'ān, which is a universal constitution that transcends all times and clans, enjoys no consideration before the reactionaries. The effect of this "hyper-conservatism" is the disaster it inflicted on Islamic Science and education. According to Jamal, the basic limitation of all Muslim traditionalists is their rather uncritical and crude conceptual framework for dealing with religious experience, and relating it with other dimensions of human experience.⁵³

For example, in the language of Ozay, the views of the reactionaries and traditionalists in the Malay and Turkish contexts reflect a yearning for the restoration of some past ideals of state, not according to man-made legislation, but strictly in conformity with the *Sharī'ah* and as buttressed by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qardawi, one of the major voices of Islamic orthodoxy in Egypt who once warned the Egyptian Prime Minister and the Speaker of the People's Assembly that no *Ijtihād* is allowed for any human if a *Sharī'ah* text exists.⁵⁴

The Non-conformists and Identity

The nonconformist '*Ulamā*' as the name suggests form an opposition to the stance of the reactionary scholars who declared the gate of *Ijtihād* and rational thinking closed. That is, no scholar in future could ever qualify as a *mujtahid* who

is entitled to his or her original thinking, using the expression of Ozay.⁵⁵ A good example of non-conforming scholarly efforts was the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldūn which was written in 1377. The reformism painted of the non-conformists, in the conventional term of scholars of Islam, according to Funk, presupposes not that only a traditional project (*Taqlīd*) that seeks to maintain past precedents and forms but also a more populist phenomenon of “revivalism” or “renewalism” (*tajdīd*)- a movement that involves change in the character and content of Islamic concepts but not necessarily along a trajectory that leads Westward.⁵⁶

The Modernists/ Progressives and Identity

Ozay noted that the Modernists and progressives, in the Mid-Nineteenth Century struggled for the re-opening of the gate of *Ijtihād*, employing modern devices and strategies⁵⁷. This new technique partly explains why they are described as modernists and progressives. Islamic modernism was an attempt to reach a medium between adaptation and rejection, going by the view of Esposito.⁵⁸ According to him, the two influential proponents of this idea were Islamic reformers Jamāl al-Dīn and his pupil Muhammad Abdūh who blamed the decline of Muslim societies and their occupation by the West on *Taqlīd*, a blind and unquestioned clinging to the past.⁵⁹ In the argument and perception of Graham, traditionalism is not the opposite of modernism, although it may oppose modernism where the latter is perceived as destructive of important traditions in a society.⁶⁰

Quoting Dawisha, Abdūh and Afghānī argued that the best way to re-strengthen the Muslim world was through the study of the religion of Islam in order to bring out its true meaning for Muslims to model their lives on its teachings.⁶¹ Dawisha also reported Afghānī to have maintained that education, science and technology had been the grand accomplishments of early Islamic civilisation and were fundamental in Islam.⁶² This, of course, is a modernist approach or view towards achieving an Islamic political identity which blends with the modern politics without a compromise of the Islamic Political System entrenched in the Constitution of Islam (*Sharī‘ah*). Using the expression of Esposito, modernist scholars such as Afghani placed heavy emphasis on education as a major means of achieving the desired reform.⁶³

For Abduh, quoting Charles, Islam is a religion of understanding and thought not of *Taqlīd*; the study of sciences, if rightly understood, should be to the services of God. Not only that, veneration of prophets and saints should be opposed as well as adherence to one school of canon law which is described as the source of rigidity and backwardness to Islam. This, according to him, should be done in favour of *Ijtihād* which is seen as the solution to all ills of the time.⁶⁴ This position is reinforced by Izzeddin who stipulates that Islam is quite in harmony with modern science and thought and that it also satisfies the modern life.⁶⁵ Thus, he proposes that the truth of Islam should be found in its primary

sources while the faith should be found in its pristine purity before hard dogma and restrictive tradition set in.⁶⁶

Going by the above, there is no doubt that Abduh has represented the modernists' view on series of identity such as social, status, sex, personal and mostly religious identity. This trend shows a complete movement of the modernist from the rigid and stagnant stage of the reactionaries to a stage of flexibility and generational diversification which could result in the formation of new identities, the search for past/lost identities or the rebranding of existing identities. This, going by Ozay, is in line with the perception of the modernists that Islam is not an absolute and constant system but a dynamic and creative force which is quite compatible with modernisation.⁶⁷ The modernists, according to Ozay saw Islam's encouragement of individual reasoning, *Ijtihād* and rational investigation as being necessary for contemporary reform. This is perceived by Ozay as an effort to re-open the Gate of *Ijtihād*.⁶⁸

Islamic progressives, borrowing the expression of Ozay, were regarded as essentially *ad hoc* reformers and political activists, rather than thinkers proposing coherent social and political theories. Despite the fact that they are anti-western, they nevertheless admired western civilisation and saw Islamic reform in largely western terms. While critical of *Taqīd*, they idealised the West and sought to imitate European ideas of liberty and freedom. Also, they correctly drew a causal link between reformation and rational knowledge but they ignored the historic shift of the economic centre of gravity from the Middle East to the West as a result of the discovery of the New World and alternative trade routes to the old Silk Road. In short, if the perception of Ozay is anything to go by, they missed the simple, but crucial link between civilisation and economic prosperity.⁶⁹ As a result, in the view of Ozay, their reforms related to political and social, but regrettably not to economic aspects of public policy.⁷⁰

The Secularists and Identity

The secularists as scholars of Islam make clear distinction between faith and politics. According to Elmessiri, secularism is no longer a mere set of ideas that one can accept or reject at will. Rather, it is a world-outlook that is embedded in the simplest and most innocuous cultural commodities, and that forms the unconscious basis and implicit frame of reference for our conduct in public and in private. The state, far from operating exclusively in a few aspects of public life, has actually dominated most, and at times all of them, and has even penetrated to the farthest and deepest concerns of our private lives.⁷¹

For secularists like Gokalp, *'Ibādah* (worship) is a personal duty of man to God and social relations (*mu'āmalah*) need to be updated and modernised by man and legislation to fit changing social conditions. Thus, Ozay describes the secularists as having perceived the state as the instrument of such legislation and they saw nothing wrong in patterning legislation or the state on the western

constitutional model to provide responsible government responding to human needs and problems.⁷²

Qaradawi like many Islamists and secularists, views Christianity and Islam as fundamentally different in the ability to accept the separation of religion from politics. He cites the popular argument based upon Jesus' command in the Gospels to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's as a proof that Christianity accepts the separation of life into two parts: a part for religion and one for the state.⁷³ In the perspective of Taylor, secularity consists of new conditions of belief in a context in which all search and questioning about the moral and spiritual must proceed. According to him, the main feature of this new context is that it puts an end to the naïve acknowledgement of the transcendent or of goals or claims which go beyond human flourishing.⁷⁴

Theologising on the Types of Identity

This aspect is a brief attempt to subject the types of identity examined above to Islamic critique with a view to evolving Islamic types of identity and distinguishing them from others which are not so Islamically acceptable or, in other words, are anti-Islam.

To start with, gender/ sexual identity is a form of identification which Islam has made sex-specific and defined in many ways without any provision for the reversal of such identification between the two opposite sexes. Some of these ways of specificity include the prescribed dress code of Islam for male and female Muslims. For example Allah says in *Sūratul 'Aḥzāb* (Qur'ān 33:59) regarding the dress code of female Muslims:

O prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient that they should be known (as such) and not molested: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.

As for immature female Muslims and menopausal women, they can choose either the above dress code which is better for them or the following prescription in *Sūratun-Nūr* (Qur'ān 24:60):

And as for women past childbearing who do not expect wedlock, it is no sin on them if they discard their (outer) clothing in such a way as not to show their adornment. But to refrain (i.e. not to discard their outer clothing) is better for them. And Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower.

In what appears like a code of conduct for both male and female Muslims even when they are decently dressed, Allah prescribes in *Sūratun-Nūr* (Qur'ān 24:30-31) as follows:

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Acquainted with what you conceal. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their

private parts and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent and draw their veils all over their bodies and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers or their husband's fathers or their sons or their husband's sons or their brothers or their brother's sons or their Muslim women(i.e. their sisters in Islam) or the (female)slaves whom their right hands possess or old male servants who lack vigour or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful.

Also, the Islamic judicial system makes two women the equivalent of a man in respect of witnessing and in the provision of inheritance gives half of what a male child shares to a female child. Allah says in *Sūratul-Baqarah* (Qur'ān 2:282) regarding the former,

.....And get two witnesses out of your own men. And if there are no two men available, then a man and two women such as agree for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.... .

and in respect of the latter, He says in *Sūratun-Nisā'* (Qur'ān 4:11) as follows:

Allah commands you as regards your children's inheritance: to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if there are women (lonely daughters), two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one (daughter), her share is a half... .

Similarly, the lawfulness of polygamy as against the prohibition of polyandry in Islamic marriage is worthy of note in respect of gender/sexual identity. Allah decrees in *Sūratun-Nisā'* (Qur'ān 4:3) as follows:

And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry (other) women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one or (slaves) that your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice.

The guardianship (*Qawwām*) bestowed on the man over the woman in marriage is another example worthy of reference. Allah says in *Suratun-Nisā'* (Qur'ān 4:34) as follows:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend to (support them) from their means...

All these examples are indicative of the approved recognition given to gender identity as a form of identification which cannot be altered or modified under any circumstance. Thus, bisexuality, homosexuality and other related

sexual abnormalities enjoy no support of Islam as allowed with promulgated laws and formulated government policies in the Western world.

Racial/ Ethnic Identity is another type of identity examined in this paper and which Islam has defined as a means of familiarisation, unity and brotherliness as opposed to Helm's perception of the type of identity as an instrument of discrimination and a politically oppressive categorisation scheme that individuals must negotiate. Allah says in the Qur'ān that human race, ethnic and gender affiliations are mere symbols of no significance or importance to its bearer except with the fear and consciousness of God in him or her. This verse in *Sūratul-Hujurāt* ((Qur'ān 49:13) reads:

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

The above quoted verse also applies to class identity as it is suggestive of the equality of all before Allah and the trial involved in placing a group of people above the other in terms of wealth, status or even age. This is to test the beneficiary of these divine favours of Allah whether the blessings will be used in His cause and to the benefit of the poor. It is obvious from the Qur'ānic perspective that status changes from time to time, but pride, arrogance and covetousness must not be displayed upon divine blessing with temporary, worldly and material things. Allah says in *Sūratul-Qaṣas* (Q.28:77):

But seek the abode of the Hereafter in that which Allah has given you and neglect not your portion of the world, and be kind as Allah has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo! Allah loves not corrupters.

Moral identity as another form of identity discussed above forms a major principle of Islam without which one's faith is incomplete. Morality which is represented in moral identity is one of the trio (*'Īmān*, *'Ibādah* and *Mu'āmalah*) which Islam is made of. Virtues such as humility, kindness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, patience, forgiveness and hospitality are preached and encouraged by Islam with promises of rewards commensurate with such virtuous acts. Allah says in *Sūratul-Baqarah* ((Qur'ān 2:177) thus:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and gives his wealth for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observes proper worship and pays the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are God-fearing.

In short, a morally sound person is a representative of Islam and an ambassador of the Almighty on earth while the morally bankrupt is an agent of *Shaytan* who became accursed and an outcast as a result of his arrogance, pride and sheer disobedience to the directive of the Almighty to prostrate to Ādam. This story is recorded in *Sūratul-Baqarah* (Qur'ān 2:34) thus:

And remember when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." And they prostrated except *Iblīs* (Satan), he refused and was proud and was one of the unbelievers.

Personal and social identities are other forms of identity which Islam approves of within the purview of the Sharī'ah dictates which guide social and interpersonal relationships and interactions. For example, in the establishment of one's personal and social identity, a good choice of peer group, model or mentor should be put in focus in order to avoid going off the tracks of faith, sincerity and righteousness. Allah says in *Sūratul-Mā'idah* (Qur'ān 5:54) thus:

Whoever deviates among you from his religion, Allah will surely bring another group in his replacement; they will love Him the same way He loves them; humbled before the believers and stern towards the unbelievers...

Above all, the only religious identity approved and recognised by Islam is that which is acquired as a result of sincere search for the Almighty to strictly give the subservient servitude or worship due to Him. Allah declares Himself as the only Supreme Being who deserves to be worshipped in *Sūratu TāHā* (Qur'ān 20:14) which reads:

Lo! I, even I, am Allah. There is no God save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance.

The hypothesis of Erikson on religious identity as presented by Volkan in the earlier segment enjoys the support of the Qur'ān which acknowledges a display of superiority by every religious group, either intra or interdenominational, over the other, in terms of doctrines, belief systems and every aspect of worship. The Qur'ān in *Sūratul-Rūm* (Qur'ān 30:32) says: "Of those who split up their religion and became schismatic, each set exulting in its tenets." There is the same evidence of creedal superiority complex expression, in more explicit terms in *Sūratul-Mu'minūn* (Qur'an 23:52-53) as follows:

And lo! Your Religion (Islam) is one religion and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me. But they (humankind) have broken their religion among them into sects, each sect rejoicing in its tenets.

Conclusion

From our view, the secularists are more westernised than any other school of thought and it is our inference that such a view which could be considered as completely pro-West was a probable factor for the formation of the reactionary school of Islamic thought, and the quest of its scholars to go back to

the period of Islamic orthodoxy as a complete way of life which, to them, should remain unchangeable and without a substitute. So, as the formation of the reactionary school was a response to the 'extreme' view of the secularists, the non-conformist and the modernist schools came on board to strike a balance but using different devices and strategies. Thus, our supposition is that the modernist started the struggle of that reformation from where the non-conformist stopped.

It must be emphasised that the primary basis in the formation of the four schools of identity remains the Qur'ān. This assertion is hinged on the revelation of this study that the various types of identity recognised by the various disciplines are also spoken of in the Qur'ān, either by a way of approval or that of discountenance. Therefore, the Qur'ān should be recognised as the Book of all sciences worthy of being repeatedly studied. Similarly, it should also be used by Muslims as the only yardstick for accepting or rejecting views of new schools which may likely come on board to further contribute to the concept of identity.

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