



Dinosaurs and Modernity: Indigenization of Islam in America  
by Marc Manley

إن الحمد لله ، الذي أنزل رسوله محمد الذي استنقذنا به من عبادة الأوثان و  
الأصنام. الحمد لله الذي يبدؤ الخلق ثم يعيده ليجزي الذين ءامنوا و عملوا  
الصالحات بالقسط.  
فمن يهده الله فلا مضل له، و من يضلله فلا هادي له، و أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله،  
وحده لا شريك له، و أشهد أن محمدا، النبي الأمي، عبده و رسوله، ختم الأنبياء  
و أشرف المرسلين،  
صلوات الله و سلامه و تحياته و بركاته عليه و على آله و أزواجه و أصحابه و  
أنصاره و ذرياته و سلم. إن الله و ملائكته يصلون على النبي، يا أيها الذين  
ءامنوا صلوا عليه و سلموا تسليما، و بعد

Verily all praise belongs to Allah [God in the Arabic language], who sent His Messenger Muhammad, the one who salvaged us from idolatrous worship. All praise belongs to Allah, who began Creation out of nothing and then perpetuates it so that He can reward those secure faith and right actions with justice.

For the one God has chosen to guide, there is no mis-guider for him. And as for one whom God has misguided, there is no guidance. And we bear testimony that there is no god but God, Allah, One is He, with no partner, Lord of lords. We also bear witness that Muhammad, the Unlettered Prophet, is His slave and messenger, Seal of the Prophets and most noble of the Messengers.

May the prayers, peace, greetings and blessings of God be upon him as well as his family, his wives, his companions, his helpers, and his progeny. Surely God and His Angels send blessings upon the Prophet therefore O' you who believe!, send prayers and blessings upon him abundantly.

Dear respected brothers and sisters in Islam, I greet you today with the greeting of Paradise, “as-Salaamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu”.

## First Khutbah – Main Points

Opening from the Qur’an:

إِن فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا  
لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَ مَا تَأَخَّرَ وَ يَتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَ يَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا  
وَ يَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَظِيمًا

*“Without a doubt, we have granted you [Muhammad] the clear, manifest victory. In order that Allah might forgive you for what you have done regarding your sin, as well as pardoning any later ones, and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path. And so that Allah may help you with a great assistance.” [Q: 48: 1-3]*

There has been much written about this verse, and a great deal of popular opinion agrees that it refers to the Conquest of Makkah. But **one of the Prophet’s [s] Companions, ‘Ubād Ibn Sāmit, disagrees.**

‘Ubād states:

*“I know you think this ayah refers to the Conquest of Makkah – but you are wrong. It is about the victory of the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah.”*

‘Ubād’s remarks take us back in time to the historical landscape of 7<sup>th</sup> Century Arabia, to **a time when Islam had yet to sink in its roots.** In other words, Islam was yet to be seen as a *bona fide* Arabian religion.

In some ways, we can see that many of **the struggles that the Muslims faced during that period could be held to the fact that they had yet to carve out a niche** or establish themselves with a sense of belonging. This is not dissimilar to our struggle today. The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah did just that for many reasons but I will mark just three:

1. Instituted **a 10-year truce** between Quraysh and the Muslims
2. **All Arabs in the region became “free agents”** – they were free to choose their religious affiliation without fear of reprisal, but most importantly, without fear of losing their cultural identity [i.e., their Arab’ness].
3. The Muslims, though not that year, would be permitted to return the following year and perform their Hajj at the Ka’abah. This is a crucial turning point in the growth, development and **establishment** of Islam in Arabia. For without a seat at the Ka’abah so to speak, you truly did not belong. This had the affect of establishing Islam as a *bona fide* Arabia religion. And for those who have that whole clash of civilizations notion about Islam, in that it must dominate everything around it, Islam was coming to the Ka’abah not as *the* exclusive religion in Arabia, but one amongst many.

This had **the effect of breaking down social and psychological barriers between being an Arab, and being a Muslim**. There is a great deal of wisdom for us to take from this – not just simply learning these facts as history lessons. We need to break down these same barriers of American and Muslim. **We must remove the space and join the words, even if only with a hyphen [see Greco-Roman]**.

This juncture illustrates to me the **importance of establishing a Muslim habit in America**. Let me define what I mean by habit, borrowing from the French author, Marcel Proust:

*“Habit! That skillful but very slow housekeeper who begins by letting our mind suffer for weeks in temporary arrangement; but whom we are nevertheless truly happy to discover, for without habit our mind, reduced to no more than its own resources, would be powerless to make a lodging habitable.”*

*[Swann’s Way].*

Without establishing this sense of Muslim habit, I believe **Muslims will continue to suffer and fall prey to a variety of maladies**, not the least of which is already prevalent in our community: **Double-Consciousness**.

One of the erudite scholars of the last century, W. E. B. DuBois spoke on the nature of double-consciousness as thus:

*“...the measuring of one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”*

Muslims have been looking at themselves from another one’s eyes for quite some time now. We see it manifest quite often nowadays in so-called **Muslim reformers, who, incapable of seeing themselves for who they are, proffer up an articulation of Islam that is not, at its center, an attempt to please God, but a vain attempt to appease the dominant culture.**

## Second Khutbah - Main Points

Establishing a vibrant, coherent Muslim reality.

Reasons why we continue to falter at the gate:

- We have been told what Islam is and isn't, not solely based on immutable sources but by transient, cultural definitions.
- If we think Islam but some *some-thing*, then we will make everything we do look like that thing.

### **Parable of the Dinosaurs**

What do we know about dinosaurs? Most of us think of them to be lizards – but in fact, we don't know that they absolutely looked like lizards for the following reasons: most if not all records about dinosaurs are based off of fossilized bones [i.e., bones turned to rock/minerals]. Our conceptions are mostly based on the preconceived notions that dinosaurs were basically lizard-like, therefore, everything we do or talk or think about dinosaurs must also be lizard-like.

Likewise with Islam; we've been told that Islam looks like *these things*: thobes, kufis, domes on mosques, etc. Thusly, when we conjure up ideas or practices for our Islam, naturally we project these ideas on it. However, most of this is a preconception. There is nothing in the Qur'an or Sunnah that stipulates we must have domes on our mosques [and those that don't are somehow missing a very certain Muslim'ness or Islamicity]. If we are to successfully establish a *bona fide*, legitimized and justified practice of Islam in this part of the world, then **we will have to be prepared to inherit the mantle of creativity and responsibility**. To not do so will rendered Islam a foreign and perhaps even hostile entity that has no place in the biosphere of American life.

The idea of standing firm here is not the one for the sake of being obstinate or dominant, but because **ultimately, there are some aspects of Islam that are immutable. Like a tree, whose roots must remain firmly planted for the life-sake of the tree**, its branches are free to grow where they need to in order to perform their function. However, they always are attached to the life giving roots of the tree. **This is akin to how the Shari'ah operates.**

Even the Prophet [s] had to face this difficult task:

و لو لآ أن ثببتناك لقد كدت تركن إليهم شيئاً قليلاً

*“And if we had not made you firm, you would have leaned towards them a little.” [Q: 17:74]*

In any event, both ideologies are currently running wild in our midst. And the demands that both of these constructs place on Muslims is thus:

- any knowledge, gained or inherited, must pass through the sieve of secularism or positivism, including such spheres as legal, logical, and scientific, whereupon only if Islam's transcendent values can be brought down and in line with the latter, can the position that Islam holds be deemed valid [i.e., universal, scientific, etc.].

This is killing us, intellectually speaking. First and foremost because this kind of rhetoric is at its heart a true *bid'ah*, as it seeks to compete and oust the *Sunnah* and the *Shari'ah*. And the proof is in the pudding: how many Muslims, especially those coming from ethnic Muslim backgrounds, pursue anything other than law, medicine or some type of science? What we could call the humanities in the West, are left to the dregs of academic and intellectually inferior students. How can we run a community when the best and brightest only student chemistry, law, and medicine?

We have stunted our growth, have cut ourselves off and made ourselves very remote from the world. What was once a major study for Muslims, cosmology, has been reduced to a horizontal plane: the Cosmos is a horizontal one. We never look up, or worse yet, inwards. Forever gazing out, we cannot see the forest for the trees.

We must re-attach ourselves to the Sacred – to Allah, to His Book, to His Prophet [s], learning his ways, his wont, his attitude, not simply a loose collection of ahādith to be branded about like a blunt instrument.

As for the phenomenon of 9/11, keep the following statement of Allah's close at hand and reflect on its meaning:

أَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

*"No one can bear another's load" [Q: 53:38-39]*

None of us can be held responsible for the actions of others. And here I am explicitly speaking to the malevolent force of communal guilt that has been hanging around the neck of many Muslims who feel, despite having had no hand in it, that they, via proxy of sharing the same religion, are guilty and culpable of the crime. And while I feel we are not guilty of 9/11, we are guilty of not doing our job, of acting in accordance with what we believe and what we know as it relates to our condition and mission as Muslims here in America. Allah admonished the Believers for precisely this point:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

*"O' you of secure faith, why do you say that which you do not do?" [Q: 61:2]*

It is not enough to profess faith to be doing the right and responsible thing, but it is that our actions fall in line with what we believe.

حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَحَاسِبُوا  
وَزِنُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوَزَّنَ عَلَيْكُمْ

*"Take account of yourselves before you are held to account. Weigh your deeds before they are weighed for you." [at-Tirmidhi's al-Qiyamah]*

Closing du'ah:

اللهم، نسألك العِصمة في الحركات و السكنات،  
والكلمات والإرادات والخطرات  
من الشكوك والظنون،  
والأوهام الساترة للقلوب.

ربنا، أنصُرنا، فإنك خير الناصرين،  
وافتح لنا، فإنك خير الفاتحين،  
واغفر لنا، فإنك خير الغافرين،  
وارحمنا، فإنك خير الراحمين،  
وارزُقنا، فإنك خير الرازقين،

وصلواتك وسلامك وتحياتك ورحمتك وبركاتك  
على سيدنا محمد  
أمين

“O’ Allah!, we ask of you your protection, in both motion and rest,  
In words, desires, and thoughts,  
from doubts and speculative thoughts,  
and in self-delusion that veils the hearts.

Our Lord, help us, for you are the Best of helpers,  
Open our minds and hearts, for you are the Best of openers,  
Forgive us our sins, for you are the Best of forgivers,  
Have mercy on us, for you are the Best of the merciful,  
Provide for us, for you are the Best of providers.

And may your prayers, peace, glad tidings, and blessings  
be upon our master, Muhammad.

Amin.