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Peace, Justice, and Progress in India

Wahiduddin Khan [1925–2021]

> What does human nature desire more than anything? It desires, above all, peace and love . . . Peace and love are the religion of human nature as well as the demand of Islam.
>
> [Khan, 2004: 56]

Wahiddudin Khan [d. 2021], widely known by the traditional honorific 'Maulana' [*mawlānā*; our lord or master], demands attention in any survey of principled pacifism and nonviolence in modern Islam. The justifications for his inclusion are manifold. Among the figures discussed here, his profile is today perhaps the highest. He has repeatedly been counted among the most influential Muslims not only in his native India but across the world. Indeed, he has been described as among the world's most influential Muslims and as 'Islam's spiritual ambassador to the world' [Esposito and Kalim, 2009: 96]. He has won the admiration not only of many Muslims but also of prominent non-Muslims including (Sikh) Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and (Catholic) Saint Theresa of Calcutta. The list of peace prizes with which he has been awarded, both in India and abroad, is long.[1] He was furthermore a participant in major

[1] His foundation's website [www.cpsglobal.org/content/felicitations-maulana-wahiduddin-khan; accessed 3 November 2021] lists: the Demiurgus Peace International Award 2002;

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gatherings of Islamic scholars, culminating in his address to the conference of the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration on Rights of Religious Minorities (itself seen as a salient 'part of a recent trend in state-branding' [Warren, 2021: 107] in response to the United States' War on Terror). As will become clear, his gradualist articulation of the nonviolent disciplines of personal and communal moral improvement took a form which particularly valorised compromise, concession, and self-help. Whereas Shariati may be seen as Islamising socialism, Khan's Islam is decidedly liberal. This would in turn render him as incomparably more attractive and accessible to the world's centres of power than any other discussed in this book [cf. esp. Chapters 2, 4, and 6]. While some of the these others [notably Jawdat Said, see Chapter 6] may have been critical of this approach, even regarding it as a form of 'complicity' [see Appendix] in state violence, the results are indisputable in terms of their reach and reception.

Wahiddudin Khan is not only remarkable for the breadth of his impact. He is also notable for the scope and range of his activism and of his writing. In the case of the latter, in particular, one finds prolific contributions running the gamut from popular journals (notably *al-Risalah* [*The Message*]), to treatises on Islamic ethics, to a complete translation and commentary [*tafsīr*] on the Quran informed by his own understanding of the scripture. Indeed, by producing such a complete *tafsīr* he has contributed substantively to the mainsprings of Islamic intellectual tradition. His numerous books, including *Islam and Peace* and *The Age of Peace*, which are discussed in particular depth in this chapter, furthermore provide us with much material through which to analyse his approach to religious ethics and Islamic nonviolence.

The scope and impact of Wahiduddin Khan's work alone may be sufficient ground for his inclusion in this study. Yet he is also of special interest for the plurality of arguments and rhetorics he employs and for the idiosyncratic normative positions he comes to espouse. Whereas some of the figures surveyed in the present study advance one or another

the 2003 Ambassador of Peace Award of the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace, Seoul, South Korea; the Rajeev Gandhi National Sadbhavna Award; the Padam Bhushan; the National Integration Award; the Communal Harmony Award; the Diwaliben Mohan Lal Mehta Award; the National Amity Award; the Dilli Gaurav Award; the FIE Foundation Award; the Urdu Academy Award; the National Citizen's Award; and the Aruna Asaf Ali Sadbhavna Award.

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case for their understanding of an Islamic imperative to pacifism or nonviolence, Wahiddudin Khan presents a plethora. Over the course of a long and prolific career as a peace advocate, he has employed what an ethicist might regard as an eclectic – even contradictory – range of means, ends, and justifications. At times his arguments are scripturalist, at others naturalistic; at times they are deontological, at others consequentialist; at times utopian, at others pragmatic. As such, he presents us in the present context with a double opportunity. Not only is his thought a rich resource for mapping the possibilities of Islamic pacifism and nonviolence, but the variety of positions he assumes make him an apt subject of comparison and contrast with other thinkers. These will naturally share only some of his commitments while dissenting from others. Finally, the context of Wahiddudin Khan's life in and of itself provides an important historical case study. His contribution to the Marrakesh Declaration may have been fortuitous, but it was not by chance. The question of religious minorities is a central concern of his thought and action, and one which has only grown in significance during the past decades as similar questions continue to be asked by Muslims and their neighbours the world over.

EMERGENCE AND EMERGENCY IN A MAJOR MINORITY

Wahiddudin Khan was born in the year 1925 in Azamgarh – one of the smaller cities in the populous north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. He received a Quran-centric religious education [*Times of India*, 2021], attending nearby Sarai Mir's Madrasat ul-Iṣlāḥ during his teenage years. Like many modernist Muslim reformists since at least the time of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī [d. 1897] and Muḥammad ʿAbduh [d. 1905] (from both of whom he avowedly draws inspiration [Khan, 2015: 136]), moreover, he expresses great admiration for the natural sciences. Indeed, his autodidact's understanding of natural history and cosmology in particular comes to form a salient (if not unproblematic) element of his case for pacifism and nonviolence. His graduation from Madrasat ul-Iṣlāḥ in 1944 coincided with the last days of the Second World War and the release of Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi from incarceration – his goal of freeing India from British rule close at hand. Also close at hand was Gandhi's assassination in 1948 at the hands of a conspiracy of members of the far-right Hindu Mahasabha party. Though Wahiduddin Khan differed from Gandhi in important respects, he admired him greatly and identified with what he saw as Gandhi's unfinished life's work. Khan

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would come to present his own activism as a necessary continuation of that mission:

> The first target for Mahatma Gandhi was to usher in peaceful political change throughout the country. This ambition was fulfilled in 1947 [with the end of British rule]. Mahatma Gandhi's second target was to bring about social change on the basis of non-violence. But before he could achieve his second target, he was tragically removed from the scene of action. Now our greatest need is to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's mission. After political change we have to bring about social change in our country through Gandhi Andolan [campaign] that is, a non-violent-movement. [Khan, 2004: 98]

Wahiduddin Khan's views on Gandhi, the nature of social change which Khan envisaged, and the means by which he would seek to realise them are all returned to later. Before this, however, more must be said about Khan's formative milieu. The first such remark is broadly psychological. In one of his relatively rare autobiographical recollections, he both declared himself a lifelong vegetarian and connected this dietary habit with an inclination towards nonviolence. While he never ascribed the forms of personhood to animals found in some South Asian traditions – and indeed expressly distinguished harm to humans from harm to non-human beings [Khan, 2015: 42] – he does connect his vegetarianism with his espousal of pacifism. 'I am a vegetarian. I am also a pacifist. My life has been an eventful one and all the events of my life have, directly or indirectly, borne some relation to my peace-loving nature' [Khan, 2015: 156; compare Chapters 3 and 7].

That a 'peace-loving nature' should also be reflected in Wahiduddin Khan's experience of organised Islam is unsurprising. Even before exploring his ideas surrounding cosmology and the perfectibility of the human condition below, it is notable that he repeatedly presents Sufis in particular as intrinsically nonviolent. Sufis abstain, he claims, from 'harm[ing] even tiny creatures such as ants and earthworms, [so] the harming of human beings is out of the question' [Khan, 2004: 49]. His Sufism and his pacifism are for him quite naturally connected – as they were for Amadou Bamba and for Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [see Chapters 1 and 3]. The same inclinations also drew him to the nascent Islamic moralising movement of the Tablighi Jamaat, of which he was a member in the 1960s and 1970s. The year of Khan's graduation from seminary was also the final year in the life of the Tablighi Jamaat's founder Muhammad Ilyas: a highly influential activist and (Chishti) Sufi whom Khan would consistently accord the honorific 'Maulana' ('our master'). Khan himself would, however, come to take more substantive, and more

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controversial, political positions than that avowedly apolitical movement. For him the project of personal moral improvement had a wider civic dimension. Nonetheless, its marked pedagogical preference for preaching and proselytism would remain characteristic also of his own teaching until his death. It was also to this movement that he gravitated following the his 1962 split with the increasingly theocratic Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) – the occasionally proscribed post-Partition Indian offshoot of Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī's (d. 1979) Jamaat-e-Islami – of which he had been a prominent member during the 1950s. JIH President Syed Sadatullah Husaini would laud Khan as a lifelong influence and inspiration in spite of this later divergence from the group [JIH, 2021]. It is worth underlining the fact that Wahiduddin Khan spent decades as a member of two of modern India's most important Islamic movements, both of which have often been described as 'fundamentalist' [e.g. Ahmad: 1994], and one of which traces its roots to one of the most controversial Islamist thinkers of the twentieth century (Mawdūdī). This fact bears repeating both because of its biographical significance to our subject and because of the degree to which his ideas are also seen to parallel those of European liberalism.

This is not to say that Wahiduddin Khan's thought, still less his commitment to pacifism, is straightforwardly derivative of European sources. While his works do occasionally mention Western advocates of principled pacifism such as Leo Tolstoy [e.g. Khan, 2015a: 122] and Bertrand Russell [Khan, 2015a: 10], he quotes them neither often nor at length. Some hagiographies of Khan present him as having immersed himself in the study of such luminaries from an early age [e.g. Halverson, 2012: 102]. These reports appear however to be considerably exaggerated. Indeed, by his own admission, Khan would not in fact read Russell until his forties, and then primarily with a view to challenging his vocal atheism through religious apologetics [Khan, 2020a: 18]. One finds in Khan little parallel to University College London-educated Gandhi's deeper interest in – and ultimately correspondence with – the Cambridge don of the Peace Pledge Union. Rather, it is Khan's personal psychology and Muslim background which most obviously informs his later development. That development would begin to flower in the later 1950s.

Wahiduddin Khan's exceptionally prolific career as an author began in his thirties and would ultimately produce some 200 texts [Esposito and Kalim, 2009: 96]. His Urdu writings would be translated into English, Hindi, Marathi, Sindhi, Dhiveli, Telugu, Burmese, Turkish, and Arabic. A young man during Independence and Partition, he published his first

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book, *Naye Ahd Ke Darwaze Par* [*On the Threshold of a New Era*], some eight years later, in 1955. It would be his *Mazhab Aur Jadid Challenge* [published in English as *God Arises: Evidence of God in Nature and in Science*] which would cement his reputation a decade later. While in his youth he supported the Indian struggle for self-governance, in his adulthood it was simply the reality in which he lived. He was and remained more a Muslim citizen of India than an Indian subject of the British Empire. His public life, by the same token, was that of a leading figure of the world's largest Muslim minority population.

Though fewer than one in five Indians is Muslim, their number India approaches even those of the vast Muslim populations of Pakistan or Indonesia – far more than any Arab state. They are more numerous than the Muslim inhabitants of Europe, Australasia, and the Americas combined. The Muslims of India are furthermore a very long-established presence. From the Umayyad conquest of Sindh in the early eighth century, to the medieval Delhi Sultanate, to the vast early modern Mughal 'Gunpowder Empire' [Hodgson, 1974], Muslims have been at home in India. So too has India more broadly been at home with them. Indeed, the lattermost of these Muslim-ruled polities not only constitutes one of the most encompassing of pre-colonial subcontinental states but furnishes modern India with many of its most iconic national symbols. These include both the treasured Taj Mahal of emperor Shah Jahan and the celebrated memory of his famously ecumenical ancestor Akbar the Great. This is a deep-rooted and richly variegated history which Khan himself often and explicitly evokes [e.g. Khan, 2004: 91, 157–158].

The Muslims of India represent a gamut of historical experiences and present-day inclinations: from isolation to assimilation, from syncretism to revanchism. And all of this is now taking place within the borders of the world's largest secular federal democracy. It is a secular democracy, nonetheless, with increasingly theocratic neighbours, a recent history of major ethnic cleansing on religious lines, and a Hindu Nationalist ruling party in the form of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). For better or for worse, a great deal of Wahiddudin Khan's most controversial ideas relate directly to these very modern circumstances. They also go a long way to accounting for his lasting popularity among the growing number of Muslim minority populations within an increasingly globalised world. His background, his experience, and his perspective speak to circumstances faced by large numbers of his readers today.

The prodigious number of Wahiduddin Khan's publications has already been noted, as also has his translation and exegesis of the

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Quran. Together, these constitute a sustained effort in communicating an understanding of Islam founded on a commitment to nonviolence. Pacifist messages are likewise a constant refrain in his self-authored monthly periodical *al-Risalah*. This ran in Urdu from 1976 until his death, with English-language versions published from 1984 before relaunching as *Spirit of Islam* in 2013 following a lengthy hiatus. Both versions reached wide readerships in the Indian subcontinent and beyond. While the content and structure of this writing will be of particular interest to the present study's analysis of Khan's ideas, it is one political gesture in particular which gained him enormous notoriety. This not least because it occurred in the context of a major crisis in India's modern history.

In late 1992, a group of right-wing Hindu nationalists affiliated with the so-called Vishva Hindu Parishad demolished a mosque in Wahiduddin Khan's home state of Uttar Pradesh. More than a simple act of interconfessional violence, this was a deliberate symbolic gesture. The mosque in question, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, had been established at the behest of the first Mughal emperor Babur [d. 1530]: founder of the last and greatest Muslim dynasty in South Asia. The pretext for its destruction was the claim that it was built on the site of the *Ram Janmabhoomi*. That is: the birthplace of Ram, seventh avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, hero of the beloved *Ramayana*, who is venerated by strands of Hindu (e.g. *Rāmānandī*) Vaishnavism as the Supreme Being. Irrespective of the disputed historicity of this claim concerning Ayodhya, the confluence of symbolism is striking. More than a mere matter of displacing bricks and mortar, the demolition constituted a stark religio-political statement. The Babri Masjid's ruins synecdochically symbolised the erasure of supposedly alien Muslim rule and the (re-)establishment of what Vinayak Damodar Savarkar [d. 1966] termed *Hindu Rāṣṭra*. It asserted the forceful rejection of Indian Islam in the name of *Hindutva* or Indian *national Hindu-ness*. This message was not lost on the wider public. Intercommunal riots ensued across the country and led to grievous violence including several thousand deaths among both Muslims and Hindus.

It was in this context that Wahiduddin Khan undertook a fortnight-long ecumenical Peace March from Mumbai to Nagpur. He proceeded in the company of religious leaders including the Hindu Swami Chidanand Saraswai and Jain Acharya Muni Sushil Kumar [d. 1994]. His message was one of restraint, calling in particular on Indian Muslims not to resort to violence in the face of what many regarded as an outrageous provocation against both their religious and their national identities. In his periodical *al-*

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Risalah, Khan outlined what he called a 'Three Point Formula' [Khan, 1993: 7] to forestall any further 'Masjid-Mandir' (Mosque vs. Temple) disputes by drawing a conclusive line under the current situation. The degree of success enjoyed by this nonviolent activism is difficult to ascertain. Khan himself, however, had little doubt that his interventions prevented a grievous escalation of communal violence. What is more, his description of the means by which he regarded himself as having averted such bloodshed is telling. In its special focus on individual moral agency in nonviolent action it will set the scene for a deeper analysis of his views in what follows:

> [O]ne should simply bear with it so that riots resulting in human death and destruction do not ensue. After December 6, 1992 [the date of the Babri Masjid demolition; Khan prefers to refer to this event euphemistically], surprisingly few communal riots have taken place. The credit for this goes to our mission. Had the people's minds not been prepared by our mission, terrible riots involving great numbers of people would have ensued subsequent to December 6. When there is violence, at whatever level and in whatever field, the basic question is at all events of the individual. And an individual is always governed by his thinking. That is why, if we have to make a non-violent world for a peaceful society, there is only one way, and that is by using educative method to convert people's thinking from violence to non-violence, and to enable them to seek the solution to matters of controversy through peaceful means. They must learn to understand the value of tolerance and avoidance as opposed to intolerance and confrontation. It is from such intellectual awareness alone that a non-violent world and a peaceful society can be constructed. [Khan, 2004: 100]

INTERPOLATING THE SCRIPTURES

The 'intellectual awareness . . . [of] the value of tolerance and avoidance as opposed to intolerance and confrontation' [Khan, 2004: 100], which it was Wahiduddin Khan's life's mission to cultivate, founded itself above all on Islamic scripture. By far the most frequent points of reference in his writing on pacifism and nonviolence are the Quranic text and the Hadith literatures which record episodes in the life of the Prophet and his Companions. While Khan does sometimes rely on the authority of other scholars (be they modern and secular such as J. F. West [e.g. Khan, 2015: 25] or medieval and religious such as Imām Nawawī [d. 1277; e.g. Khan, 2015: 160–161]), his inclination, like that of many modern Muslims, is often to read scripture in relative isolation from its later medieval reception. In this and in other respects he has been compared on the one hand to contemporary readers of scripture who find within it the liberal values of equality, pluralism, and human rights (including Amina Wadud, Farid

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Esack, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Abul Kalam Azad) – and on the other hand with the more radical Islamist Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī [Okawa, 2019]. That some elements of Islamic scripture might be seen as glorifying violence does not discourage him from advancing the view that the 'entire spirit of the Qur'an is in consonance' [Khan, 2004: 170] with nonviolence and that 'war is, in effect, an act of mass murder … the worst sort of heinous crime' [Khan 2015a: 42]. He rejects any suggestion that the presence of violent narratives in Islamic scripture rules out Islamic pacifism. In so doing, he makes the salient point that the same objection did not constrain Mahatma Gandhi:

> [T]he Gita, the holy book of the Hindus, pertains to wisdom and moral values. Yet along with this is the exhortation of Krishna to Arjuna, encouraging him to fight [Bhagavad Gita, 3:30]. This does not mean that believers in the Gita should wage wars all the time. Mahatma Gandhi, after all, derived his philosophy of nonviolence from the same Gita. The exhortation to wage war in the Gita applies only to exceptional cases where circumstances leave no choice. But for general day-to-day existence it gives the same peaceful commands as derived from it by Mahatma Gandhi. [Khan, 2019: xv–xvi]

Wahiddudin Khan's pacifist interpretation of the Islamic faith is reflected not only in the various inferences he draws from scripture but in his presentation of the scriptural text itself. A searching analysis of the editorial decisions throughout his translation and exegesis of the Quranic text is beyond the scope of the present discussion. By way of illustrative example, however, a comparison between Khan's and other translations of a key verse may be informative – though his idiosyncratic rendering of other verses will also be touched upon further below. The so-called 'Sword Verse' [Quran 9:5] is often seen as the most explicit endorsement of warfare in the Quran. It is still hotly debated among Islamic scholars [e.g. Afsaruddin, 2013]. In his translation of this passage of the Quran, so potentially problematic for his pacifist perspective, we find Wahiduddin Khan including a significant parenthetical gloss:

> When the forbidden months have passed, kill the polytheists [who are at war with you] wherever you find them. Take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent, and take to prayer regularly and pay the alms, then let them go their way. God is forgiving and merciful. [Khan, 2019: 137; Khan, 2016a: 515]

The non-parenthetical elements of the second clause quoted here is a straightforward translation of the Quranic Arabic *fa-uqtulū al-mushrikīna ḥaythu wajadtumūhum*. The other, most common, non-Arabic translations of the text are almost identical to one another. *Sahih*

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International gives 'then kill the polytheists wherever you find them', while Arberry gives 'slay the idolaters wherever you find them', and Yusuf Ali 'fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them'. None of these, however, include a parallel to Wahiduddin Khan's inclusion of the phrase 'who are at war with you'.

Wahiddudin Khan's parenthesis does not directly conflict with conventional understandings of the historical context of the verse's revelation. This verse is indeed believed to have been revealed during the ninth year after the Muslim migration from Mecca to Medina (the *hijrah*), during which the polytheists who had oppressed them in Mecca were warring against them. Nor does it clash with the verse's overarching preoccupation with distinctions between those non-Muslims who would and those who would not sign peace treaties with the early Muslim community. This can quite naturally be expected to have been a major concern of the Muslims at this juncture. It does, however, affect the scripture's present-day audience. It encourages some and discourages other associations, privileging some potential readings over others. More precisely, Khan's version of the text urges the reader to understand the divine imperative to combat in the first instance as directed specifically to the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions under a very particular set of historical and political circumstances – indeed to a unique set of circumstances, given Muḥammad's final and unrepeatable status as *khāṭam al-anbiyā'* ['Seal of the Prophets'; Quran 33:40]. Khan attempts to ensure that the reader does not see the verse as 'mandating perpetual warfare against non-Muslims' [Afsaruddin, 2013: 215]. This is not an unreasonable fear, as some Muslims have indeed read it as such: notably the *al-Jihād* organisation leader Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Faraj [d. 1982] in his infamous *al-Farīḍ al-Ghā'ibah* ['*The Neglected Duty*'; Jansen, 1986: 159–234].

It will become clear from this chapter's discussion of Wahiddudin Khan's views on the nature and meaning of warfare in early Islam that it is important that the violence alluded to by the Quranic *sūrat al-tawbah* be thoroughly historicised. It must only be viewed in terms of specific past circumstances not of the Muslims' own choosing. By the same token, he avoids conflict between this scriptural injunction and his own teleological view of later history and the role of pacifism as its natural culmination, a theme which will be expanded upon in what follows. Indeed, Khan also includes a footnote on this verse, suggesting the reader consult pages xiv–xvii of his introduction. Those introductory pages encompass a discussion titled 'A Peaceful Ideological Struggle' which again underlines that verses such as the above do 'not convey

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the general command of Islam' [Khan, 2016a: xiii; Khan, 2019: xv]. In this case, it is his translation and gloss on another potentially pro-warfare verse to which he refers. Here again we see Khan include both an in-line parenthetical addition and an explanatory gloss clarifying that Quran 2:191 should be read, 'Slay them wherever you find them [those who fight against you]' [Khan, 2019: 21; Khan, 2016a: 76], and understood as relating only 'to that which took place during the life of the Prophet Muhammad' [Khan, 2016a: 76].

The presentation of these crucial Quranic verses is a matter of no small consequence and no small degree of contestation. By way of illustrative contrast, the roughly contemporary translation of the aforementioned 'Sword Verse' by Muhammad Mohsin Khan [d. 2021] also distinguishes itself from more mainstream versions by comparable interventions at the same textual location. It does so to very different effect. That recent Saudi version of the Quran reads, 'then kill the Mushrikun (see V.2:105) wherever you find them', with the cross-referenced (and further glossed) section of *sūrat al-baqarā'* reading: 'Neither those who disbelieve among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) nor *Al-Mushrikun* (the disbelievers in the Oneness of Allāh, idolaters, polytheists, pagans, etc.) like that there should be sent down unto you any good from your Lord.' Here, again, one might make a case for the plausibility of these compound editorial actions. These might perhaps be justified both by reference to the same historical circumstances already alluded to. They might furthermore be justified by the essentially meaning-bearing and exemplary role of the Prophetic biography [*sīrah nabawiyyah*] within Islamic sacred history. Debates continue as to the roles of history and abrogation [*naskh*; the superseding of one revelation by another], and this interpretation can be sustained in good faith.

What is clear is that both translators' inclusions significantly prejudice the text – albeit to opposite extremes of abstraction. Wahiddudin Khan highlights the relativity of this verse to one singular event, from which inferences may or may not subsequently be drawn. Mohsin Khan, by contrast, encourages the reader to think in the first instance in sectarian and categorical terms, which may or may not then be justified by reference to historical precedents. The former discourages direct comparison with contemporary interreligious relations, whereas the latter positively demands it. The former avoids conflict with other faiths, whereas the latter embraces it. It is by no means the intention here to equate these two presentations of the Quranic message, nor to judge the qualifications of their respective authors. That being said, many who praise one will

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disdain the other, and harsh criticism has certainly been made which draws attention to precisely the sorts of editorial interventions described here. When discussing Mohsin Khan's work on the Quran, for instance, Michael Sells is scathing. That text, he writes,

> used sustained interpolations to insert the interpretation of the Bin Baz [Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia; d. 1999] school directly into the English rendition of the Qur'an. It was . . . used to inculcate Muslims and potential Muslims with militant interpretations of Islam artfully disguised, through parenthesis, as teachings of the Qur'an pure and simple. [Sells, 2013: 483]

Notwithstanding accusations of duplicity which are not obviously justified, and even ignoring the fact that Wahiddudin Khan's parenthetical remarks are aimed at undermining rather than propagating 'militant interpretations of Islam', an element of this same critique must be conceded in both cases. In both cases, the translators are at pains to lead the reader towards an understanding of the text which not only matches their own but also distinguishes it from alternative readings they seek to discourage. Both seek to decontest an essentially contested set of issues in Islamic exegesis. Both seek to place their thumbs upon the scales of a balance which has yet to be found. Both entail what might be termed a reformist or counter-hegemonic element, pushing back against what they regard as a misguided status quo. Both cases also constitute attempts at cementing a scriptural foundation for their wider religio-political perspectives. This is perhaps more charitably understood (*pace* Sells et al.) less as a matter of deliberate distortion or dissimulation than as betokening serious commitment to coherently redefining a scriptural tradition.

While there is no compelling reason to doubt Wahiduddin Khan's sincerity in his translation or interpretation of the Quran, he does not shy away from presenting it as serving a distinctly political function. His later writings, written in the shadow of the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing 'War on Terror', offer exegeses such as his own as a weapon against Islamist violence. Indeed, he presents them as the only weapon which can hope to succeed. 'The terrorist phenomenon is based on a misinterpretation of the scriptures. It can be eradicated only by a right interpretation of the text being universally publicised' [Khan, 2015a: 100]. It is in this connection that he approvingly quotes the UNESCO Constitution, implying not only normative and pedagogical views but also concrete political sympathies: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must

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be constructed' [UNESCO, 2020: 5]. This idealist view dovetails with a number of controversial positions which we will see him take in the coming pages. What is more, it directly informs his activism. In 2001 he founded the Centre for Peace and Spirituality (or CPS International), a non-profit organisation which includes among its activities the distribution of millions of copies of Wahiddudin Khan's translation and exegesis of the Quran [Khan, 2019; Khan, 2016a].

More must therefore be said about Wahiduddin Khan's engagement with scripture more broadly, and chiefly with the Quran and Hadith literatures. This is true both because of the complexity of the normative positions he comes to espouse and because of the apparent inconsistency with which he communicates them. In effect, he presents his audience with two overlapping ethical perspectives and two overlapping sets of terms to describe them. The bridge between them in turn rests upon his commitment to a particular historical teleology – a sense of the overall shape of history as defined by moral progress. It is one which owes as much to Western liberalism as it does to pre-modern Islam, and which could not be more different from the anti-modern pessimism of a Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [see Chapter 3]. Suffice it at this juncture to observe that when speaking of the earlier days of the Muslim community in the Hejaz he uses one frame of reference and body of scriptural evidence, while when discussing modernity he uses another.

In the former instance, we find in Wahiduddin Khan's work a relatively mainstream account of the Islamic ethics of religiously sanctioned war. Here, *jihād* [struggle] is explicitly understood as encompassing warfare and intentional killing [*qitāl*], and specifically defensive warfare: 'when any power commits aggression against Islam then, rising in defence against that aggression too is *jihad*' [Khan 2004, 21; see also pp. 21, 28, 179, 181]. This point is made clearly and repeatedly, and with direct quotation from the Quran:

> Only defensive war is permitted in Islam. Such a war is one in which aggression is committed by some other party so that believers have to fight in self-defence. Initiating hostilities is not permitted for Muslims. The Qur'an says: 'They were the first to attack you' (9:13) [Khan, 2004: 179] ... it is unlawful for believers to initiate hostilities. Except in cases where self-defence has become inevitable, the Qur'an in no circumstances gives permission for violence. [Khan, 2004: 181]

Elsewhere, he brings together traditional Sunni jurisprudence on the ruler's monopoly on violence (or that of his deputy in the field [Khadduri, 1955: 203]) with a thoroughly modern and post-Westphalian statism: '[t]his Islamic principle shows that there is no room

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for non-state warfare' [Khan, 2021b: 35], as 'it is improper and impermissible for non-state actors, including both individuals and groups, to adopt violent methods' [Khan, 2015d: 24]. This is a view shared, needless to say, by governments around the globe.

On other occasions, however, Wahiddudin Khan reframes the key terms of the Quran so as to rule out any violence as falling within the ambit of legitimate *jihād*. Whereas it is not unconventional among past exegetes and jurists to regard the Quranic term *qitāl* [lit. killing or slaughter] as a subset or synonym of *jihād* [see Abdel Haleem, 2010], Wahiduddin Khan on some (though not all[2]) occasions categorically separates and juxtaposes them:

> What is *jihad*? *Jihad* means struggle, to struggle one's utmost. It must be appreciated at the outset that this word is used for non-violent struggle as opposed to violent struggle ... *jihad* in actual fact is another name for peaceful activism or non-violent activism. Where *qital* is violent activism, *jihad* is non-violent activism. [Khan, 2004: 171]

Rather than simply rehabilitating the concept of *jihād* as specifically nonviolent, Wahiduddin Khan also goes further in his glosses of the Quranic imperative to *qitāl* as killing or what he has termed 'violent activism'. 'Khan shows his peaceful interpretation of the notion of *qital*, or "killing" or "fighting", by limiting the circumstances where violence is used' [Okawa, 2019: 117]. He does this both through his glosses on the term itself and through his interpretation of its classical justification: the religio-political concept of *fitnah*. *Fitnah* [trial, disturbance, armed revolt, civil war (see Gardet, 2012)] is explicitly framed in the Quran as justification for *qitāl*, most directly at Quran 8:39: *wa-qātilūhum ḥattā lā takūna fitnatun* ['and fight them until there is no fitnah']. Once more, we find Wahiduddin Khan using a combination of parenthetical addition and explanatory footnote to shape a very specific meaning for this polysemic term. Quran 8:39 thus becomes, 'Fight them until there is no more [religious] persecution', with the following explanation:

> When, after the fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib, political conflict ensued between Abdullah ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads, Abdullah ibn Umar, one of the senior-most companions of the Prophet, held himself aloof from the battle. People approached him and, quoting the verse of *qital-al-fitna*, asked him why he was not joining in the battle. Abdullah ibn Umar replied that *'fitna' as mentioned in the Quran did not refer to political infighting, but rather to the religious coercive*

[2] Cf. 'in its extended sense, *qital* can also be called *jihad*' [Khan, 2009: 88].

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system, that had *already been put an end* to by them. (*Fathul Bari*, 8/60) From this we learn that the war against *fitna* was a war of limited duration, temporary in nature, meant to be engaged in only until its specific purpose had been served. [Khan, 2016a: 499, emphasis added]

Fitnah, as justification for *qitāl*, is thus limited to those past situations in which Muslims are being aggressively prevented from practising their faith. All other forms of tribulation by the same stroke are ruled out. *Qitāl* is to be practised, therefore, only to counter assaults on religious freedoms and pursued only until such time as they are once more enjoyed. The latter state of affairs – religious freedom – is understood throughout his work to characterise the post-Prophetic era in general and modernity in particular.

But even this proviso is not sufficient limitation, from Khan's perspective. Rather, even in such religiously repressive circumstances as now no longer obtain, *qitāl* could only be undertaken by the pure of heart, by those who have already fought the spiritual *jihād* against their own vicious inclinations. Like his peers discussed throughout this text, he regards the moral disposition and intention [*niyyah*] of the actor as an essential element of the act. Even here, moreover, deterrent action short of further violence is still to be preferred: nonviolence is the ideal state both inwardly and outwardly. His exegesis of Quran 9:123 makes these points succinctly:

'Fight against those deniers of the truth who are near you.' These words indicate that the Islamic struggle is not an unplanned effort, but that order has to be kept in view in it. First, efforts would be made to overcome nearby obstacles and thereafter distant impediments would be tackled. From this, it is deduced that the very first struggle should be undertaken with a man's own 'self,' because the thing nearest to a man is his 'self'; anything outside this focus would come later. Then, again, the foremost thing required in relation to the aggressors is firmness of a kind to instil a deterrent fear in the them: 'If this happens it will create fear in their hearts.' (*Tafsir Jassas*). Moreover, it is necessary that all action against aggressors should be carried out in fear of God (*taqwa*). It is only such action which guarantees God's help to believers. [Khan, 2016a: 570]

Through Wahiduddin Khan's interpretation of the interrelated concepts of *jihād*, *qitāl*, and *fitnah*, then, we begin to understand how his reading of scripture leads him to conclude that the 'Islamic method … [is] based totally on the principle of nonviolence' [Khan, 2004: 181] as the 'entire spirit of the Qur'an is in consonance with this concept' [Khan, 2004: 170].

The Quran is rarely read in isolation from accounts of the life of the Prophet who transmitted it, this being said. The Quran almost invariably

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stands in an intertextual relationship with the Prophetic biography [*sīrah nabawiyyah*] and the *ḥadīth* literatures which inform it. Indeed, the Quran itself repeatedly urges the believers to regard the Prophet as an excellent model for emulation [*uswatun ḥasanatun*; e.g. Quran 30:21; Quran 60:4; Quran 60:6]. As such, viewing him as the embodiment of Quranic virtues is quite natural, accepted even in principle by those who doubt the veracity of the *ḥadīth* literatures' own depiction of him. Wahiduddin Khan is no different in taking this view, and his pacifist reading of the Prophet's life and actions is thus a major recurrent theme in his work. It requires attention not only because of its importance to Khan's own thought on both pacifist politics and nonviolent spirituality. It also demands attention because the religio-political career of the Prophet Muḥammad, famously encompassing both temporal power and organised warfare, is sometimes assumed to present an insuperable obstacle to Islamic nonviolence such as Khan's.

THE HUDAYBIYYAH PRINCIPLE AND THE VIRTUE OF CONCESSION

The life of the Prophet both contains actions and embodies virtues which may be understood as opposed to warfare and to violence. This is particularly true of the early years of his prophethood: those spent preaching in Mecca. Wahiduddin Khan joins others discussed in this volume [see Chapters 1, 2, and 3] in recognising pacifist praxis in that period. Indeed, like them Khan expressly identifies modern nonviolence with the chief moral virtue traditionally associated with the Prophet's patient forbearance [*ṣabr*] in the face of the hostility of the Meccan polytheists. He even goes so far as to assert the primacy of this virtue, which has been described as 'constitut[ing] the bedrock of Khan's discourse on peace and nonviolence' [Wani, 2017:60]. On several occasions, he argues that

> patience [*ṣabr*] is set above all other Islamic virtues with the exceptional promise of reward beyond measure (39:10). Patience implies a peaceful response or reaction, whereas impatience implies a violent response. The word *sabr* exactly expresses the notion of non-violence as it is understood in modern times [Khan, 2004: 170] ... Patience or *Sabr* is not defeatism nor is it a passive attitude. Patience means to think over issues in a cool and calm manner – without resorting to reaction, to resentment, to hate or to revenge. It is engaging in positive planning [Khan, 2015b: 14] ... Patience is binding on a believer, and is a major principle of one's life. If a person lacks patience, it is open to doubt whether he has had a realization of faith. [Khan, 2015b: 26]

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What is more, Khan connects this same virtue not only to nonviolence and to faith but to the more general flourishing of the individual's character. Here again he underlines both the exemplary character of the Prophet and the indispensable nature of the *ṣabr* he practised:

> The peaceful method develops modesty. Contrary to this, one who adopts the violent method very soon becomes arrogant. The peaceful method develops one's personality in a constructive way and it is the only method that yields a positive result. The violent method, in contrast, ruins a person's personality and destroys the resources at hand. [Khan, 2015a: 137]

While Khan's view of the Prophet's Meccan period may not distinguish him from the other Muslim pacifists discussed here, he differs more markedly when it comes to the Prophet's later years, those centred on Yathrib (Medina). Whereas some modern Muslims have gone so far as to qualitatively distinguish Meccan and Medinan periods, even to assert the priority of the former over the latter, Khan does not do so. In fact, while such thinkers have tended to focus in particular on the earlier Meccan period – with Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭaha [1985] perhaps the most radically exclusive example of this tendency – Khan in fact prefers to discuss the Prophet's later years. This may surprise some readers, given the more worldly nature both of the Prophet's role and of many of the verses revealed to him during following his flight from Mecca. Yet it is crucial to understanding Khan's version of Islamic pacifism and vital for making sense of some of the more controversial political positions he would come to take.

Medina plays, if anything, a greater role than Mecca in Khan's pacifist reading of the Prophetic biography. In spite of his praise for the *ṣabr* exhibited by the Prophet in Mecca, and in spite of the fact that Khan regards the migration [*hijrah*] from Mecca as 'by its very nature . . . a clear example of non-violent activism' [Khan, 2004: 174], the centre of gravity in Wahiduddin Khan's account is less Meccan than Medinan. While Khan does not deny that violence did sometimes take place during those later years, he stresses that this was very much the exception which the Prophet did all he could both to avoid and swiftly to conclude. Indeed, he calculates that 'the Prophet had observed the principle of non-violence throughout his 23-year prophetic career, except for [a total of] one and a half days' [Khan, 2004: 181]. More than this, however, Khan points to a single event, which comes to take on tremendous significance not only for his understanding of the Prophet's career but furthermore for political morality in the present time. Khan's interpretation of this event lays out

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not only his proposed solution to what some see as an intercivilisational impasse but also a vision of the place of political institutions in Islam which might be compared to the secularism of ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq's [d. 1966] *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* [ʿAbd al-Rāziq, 1925].

The most crucial political event in the life of the Prophet according to Wahiduddin Khan's pacifist narration is the so-called Truce (or Treaty) of Hudaybiyyah [*ṣulḥ al-ḥudaybiyyah*]. This took place some six years after the migration or *hijrah* to Medina and put an end to armed conflict between the Muslims and the Qurayshi polytheists who ruled Mecca. The Prophet secured the agreement of the Quraysh by offering significant concessions to their demands, including the upholding of that year's prohibition on performing the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Indeed, it is said that the Prophet gave so much ground that objections were raised by his own followers – notably by the future Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb [e.g. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 2731]. Nevertheless, the Treaty was followed by the revelation of *sūrat al-fatḥ* (named for its triumphant opening line: *innā fataḥnā laka fatḥan mubaynan*, *verily we have granted you a clear victory*). Within two years Mecca was bloodlessly conquered for Islam, its pagan leaders like the once warlike Abū Sufyān bin Ḥarb converting to follow the Prophet's message. Wahiduddin Khan cites the early biographer Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī [d. 742] to the effect that the Treaty was the 'greatest victory in the history of Islam'. He takes this as evidence that the 'power of peace proved far superior to the power of war' [Khan, 2004: 119]. That the Treaty should be seen as proof of the Prophet's embrace of nonviolent activism is a theme repeated again and again throughout Khan's writing [e.g. Khan, 2004: 33, 119, 121, 123, 174, 195; Khan, 2021c: 11, 57, 60].

The Prophet Muḥammad's signing of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah with the polytheists of Mecca is not only important to Khan's version of nonviolent Islam in being a negotiation which brought violence to an end. Nor is it simply remarkable for having been chosen from the later Medinan years of the Prophet's career as opposed to the earlier Meccan period. Rather, it offers insights into Khan's understanding of the nature of war and peace, of violence and justice, and of interaction between the virtuous and the wicked. The peace which the Treaty heralded was not an absolute one, in the sense that it was preceded and indeed followed by incidents of violence. Nor did it begin by achieving either material or rhetorical mastery over the adversary. On the contrary, the Prophet's willingness to accede to the Meccans' demands demonstrates for Khan that he had achieved neither at that point. Like the classical biographers,

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and indeed like modern Muslim politicians who have appealed to it [e.g. Winter, 2022: 59–60], Khan's view of the 'victory' won at Hudaybiyyah is a strategic rather than a tactical one. The Prophet chose, that is, to lose the battle so as to win the war. By accepting an unjust peace on unfavourable terms, the Prophet secured the peaceable foundations upon which justice could then be built. His capitulation ceded material ground he could not win by force while opening a new front on the spiritual plane where victory was assured. The Treaty thus shifted his confrontation with the polytheists 'from the battlefield to the Da'wah [proselytism] field' [Khan, 2004: 119]. This interpretation goes to the heart of Khan's understanding of the Islamic-pacifist virtue of forbearing *ṣabr* mentioned earlier, of his approach to peace-making in the present, and indeed of his pragmatic politics more broadly. It has manifested itself in many ways in Khan's own actions – some more controversial than others.

The first consequence of Khan's understanding of Hudaybiyyah is that peace and justice must be understood as separate. He even chides his co-religionists for mistakenly conflating the two [Khan, 2004: 195]. At Hudaybiyyah, Khan observes, 'the Prophet of Islam had not found justice. He had achieved peace, but only by delinking it from justice. The Prophet had made this peace not to exact justice but to receive the opportunities' [Khan, 2004: 196] from which justice might arise. Peace is consistently presented as a necessary foundation for justice, but even then 'peace does not automatically produce justice. Peace in actual fact simply opens up opportunities for the achievement of justice' [Khan 2004: 195]. Peace is therefore a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a just world. Yet it must be sought in any event as a good in itself. 'The only way to establish peace is to work for peace for its own sake, unconditionally, and not link it with justice or human rights or anything else' [Khan, 2015b: 13]. One might in this respect compare him to prominent conservative Muslim quietists such as the Californian Hamza Yusuf and his Mauritanian mentor ʿAbdulllāh Bin Bayyah. The latter of these indeed delivered Khan's 2015 peace prize at the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, while '[Hamza] Yusuf echoes [ʿAbdullāh] Bin Bayyah's earlier emphasis on establishing peace as the necessary precondition before any other matter can be discussed' [Warren, 2021: 96]. By the same token, as Khan's understandings of peace and of justice are tightly bound up with his commitment to Islam, he places the achievement of peace in a similar relationship with another of his greatest ambitions. Peace is not only a necessary condition for justice, he maintains, but it is also a necessary condition for the acceptance and embrace of Islam by the whole of humanity.

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The fact that the Prophet won a strategic victory over his Meccan opponents through the concessions of Hudaybiyyah is not advanced by Wahiduddin Khan in strictly adversarial terms. Indeed, he counsels his readers against adversarial thinking – or what he calls 'dichotomous thinking' [e.g. Khan, 2004: 123]. The ultimate result of the peace of Hudaybiyyah was not only the neutralisation of a material threat to the nascent Muslim community but also the voluntary conversion of the previously hostile Meccans to Islam. As such, Khan views the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah not only as a model of conflict resolution but as an exemplary moment of proselytism. Here, peace achieved through concession serves the function of removing barriers of enmity which might hinder communication and conversion. Not limiting himself to the experience of the earliest Muslims, Khan also identifies successful instances of the same principle throughout history. Taking the South Asian experience as a guide, he contrasts the reigns of Mughal emperors Akbar [d. 1605] and Aurangzeb [d. 1707]. The former's 'appeasement' of Hinduism, Khan writes, coincided with a rapid spread of Islam whereas the latter's 'antagonising' of Hindus 'halted ... the dissemination of the Quran's teachings which was well underway as a result of Akbar's policies' [Khan 2004: 157–158]. Khan advances the historical observation that Islam has burgeoned when Muslims avoided rather than embraced conflict with others. This is neither a purely retrospective form of historiography nor a disinterested historical analysis; it is actively ideological. Khan is not a historian but a theologian and an activist. He selectively invokes history in order to address himself to the present and to shape a possible future. Not only do the same principles hold today as held in the past, he asserts, but the advent of modernity only makes them more pertinent:

> [I]n modern times, great new opportunities have arisen for Islamic da'wah [proselytism, lit. call] ... This historical strategy has come to be called the Hudaybiyyah principle. This entails putting an end to the kind of controversies which create tensions between the *da'i* [proselytist, lit. caller] and the *mad'u* [proselytised, lit. called upon]. Today the same controversial situation has come to exist between *da'i* and *mad'u* as was found between the Prophet and his hearers after the emigration [from Mecca to Medina]. We must, therefore, follow the same Hudaybiyyah principle as the Prophet did. This is the demand of the times, and in this lies the secret of all Muslim success. [Khan: 2004: 33]

COSMIC CONCILIATIONS

While Wahiduddin Khan is most famous for his political activism within India, the 'controversies' and enmities he hopes to address also take place

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on a global scale. Indeed, Khan speaks directly against the narrative of inevitable civilisational conflict most commonly associated with the work of Samuel Huntington [1996]. Characteristically, Khan does so not by critiquing that infamously pessimistic secular theory but rather by addressing himself directly to his co-religionists whose beliefs mirror it in their Occidentalist othering of the West. What is more, he does so in a fashion which clearly distinguishes him from some other advocates for Islamic nonviolence explored in this book. He dismisses both the fear of 'Occidentosis' [*Gharbzadegī*] of an Āl-e Aḥmad or a Shariati [see Chapter 4] as well as the likes of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's apocalyptic invocations of a modern Antichrist [see Chapter 3]:

> To my way of thinking, the case of Western Civilisation and Islam exactly parallels that of the Hudaybiyyah situation in modern times. Muslims have once again fallen prey to limitation of dichotomous thinking in these matters. Since western civilisation does not appear friendly to Islam, they tend to regard it as the enemy of Islam. Matters have so escalated that a section of Islamic thinkers have even taken to calling western civilisation a manifestation of Dajjal [Antichrist]. If we could extricate ourselves from this rigid pattern of thought we would find that western civilisation was neither friendly nor hostile to Islam, but rather – in the words of hadith – a potential supporter of Islam. [Khan, 2004123]

Not only does Wahiduddin Khan challenge other Muslims who (in his view mistakenly) regard the dominant non-Muslim global culture(s) as inherently threatening, however, but he very explicitly embraces a very specific vision of Western modernity. Khan's earliest writings, notably the aforementioned *God Arises* (tellingly subtitled *Evidence of God in Nature and Science*), are chiefly concerned with an Islamic apologetics centred on notions of science and progress. Khan takes the view that the spirit of rational inquiry and the scientific revolutions it engenders are not only most characteristic of Western civilisation but also particularly compatible with Islam. In this he arguably shares more with early 'proto-salafist' modernists Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh [e.g. Keddie, 1983] than he does with the other Muslim nonviolentists discussed here. Like those fin de siècle reformers, moreover, his understanding of science is both autodidactic and idiosyncratic. Each of their respective invocations of natural science are less empirical than they are ideological. None were practical researchers; it is primarily with a rhetoric rather than a material practice of science that they are engaged.

All three men differ from a post-Popperian philosopher of science (or indeed a practising scientific researcher) in regarding 'science' as a body of firmly established truths rather than as the disciplining process of

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producing and reproducibly testing falsifiable hypotheses. Like most modern laypersons they are more scientistic than scientific, more concerned with certainty than with doubt. Yet Khan also differs somewhat from his turn of the century reformist predecessors. His own form of religious scientism is distinct from their rationalising efforts in its overt mysticism. It is also distinguished by its relationship to Khan's conceptions of cosmology, historical teleology, and the clearly hierarchical relationship he sees between Islam and other faiths. All of these, moreover, have a direct bearing on Khan's case not only for the desirability but for the inevitability of a nonviolent understanding of Islam.

As so often, Khan's approach centres on the individual – even when the context is as apparently impersonal as natural science or as expansive as cosmology. His account of the ultimate role and nature of modern science as both pacifist and Islamic turns upon his characterisation of the nonhuman world and his identification of it with an ideal of humanity. Like other Sufi-influenced thinkers discussed in this study, most notably Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [see Chapter 3], Khan invokes the notion of the metaphysical human archetype, *al-insān al-kāmil* (the 'complete person' or 'Perfect Man'). He frequently presents peace and nonviolence as inherent characteristics of such a perfected being [Khan, 2004: 37–38, 48, 49, 55, 56, 57, 159]. 'Thus a true and perfect man, from the religious point of view, is one who has reached that level of spiritual development where nothing but peace prevails' [Khan, 2004: 37]. The historical manifestation of this archetype is reflected in his recalling the Quranic description of the Prophet Muḥammad (who, with the Prophet Adam, is most often identified with *al-insān al-kāmil* [Arnaldez, 2012]) as a 'peaceful soul' [Khan, 2004: 45–46, 50]. The archetype is also in evidence when Khan presents accomplished Sufis as nonviolent pacifists, with the example of [celebrated Deobandi Sufi] Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī's [d. 1943] avoiding the killing of insects 'show[ing] that when we should not harm even tiny creatures such as ants and earthworms, the harming of human beings is out of the question' [Khan, 2004: 49]. Conversely, he recounts a parable of a flock of birds much aggrieved at having one of their number killed by a hungry aspirant Sufi – precisely because they would never have expected it of so morally refined a person [Khan, 2004: 37–38].

This lattermost example of natural voices urging pious Muslims to adopt nonviolence reflects not only the normative ethics which Khan advocates but also his wider cosmology. That 'peace is the religion of the universe' [Khan, 2004: 86] is a recurrent theme throughout his work, paralleling what Pettman [2010] called the 'cosmopiety' of Bawa

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Muhaiyaddeen [Chapter 3]. Time and again, Khan invokes an understanding of the cosmos which more closely resembles that of a Pythagoras or a Johannes Kepler [d. 1630] than a Stephen Hawking [d. 2018] (though his assertion that the 'Big Bang' is proof of a Creator [Khan, 2004: 29] does reflect suspicions of that term's sceptical originator Fred Hoyle [Horgan, 2020], whom Khan appreciatively if somewhat selectively quotes [e.g. Khan, 2016b: 36, 104, 106, 195, 265]). While Khan may not speak of *musica universalis* or *harmonices mundi*, one may detect an echo of the Music of the Spheres in his insistence that pacifism is in tune with the peaceful harmony of the universe [Khan, 2004: 86, 56, 133, 149, 160, 170–171]. Peace 'embodies an eternal law of nature' [Khan, 2004: 170], as 'the universe according to modern science, has complete harmony. It functions like a huge machine moving with precision and unison' [Khan, 2004: 133]. Khan's reverence for nature is not that of the environmental activist who urges protection for embattled biospheres, nor that of the deep ecologist who seeks to overturn anthropocentrism. Nature is first and foremost a means by which God communicates his perfection and his intentions to mankind. Recalling his understanding of science as a matter of certainty rather than doubt, for Wahiduddin Khan nature is a fixed value rather than a dynamic process.

The strength of this commitment is such that it sometimes leads Khan both to make erroneous factual claims and, once more, to insert parenthetical interpolations to his translation of the Quran which other scholars have not deemed necessary. So, for instance, Khan writes that 'for billions of years, these celestial bodies have been following their specific paths, without interfering in the motion of or clashing with each other' [Khan, 2015a: 47]. This is at odds with the scientific consensus which observes, models, and measures precisely such clashes and just such interference. 'An atom', he furthermore writes, 'consists of a number of tiny particles, each of which is constantly on the move. But there is no clash. So, there is the same peace in the micro world as we see on the macro world' [Khan, 2015a: 48]. While this serenely corpuscular account of particle physics may surprise the physicist, they would not likely be more astonished than the biologist learning that 'there is total peace in the animal world' [Khan, 2015a: 48]. Whatever the strengths of Khan's attempted reconciliation between science and religion, his understanding of the former is deeply unconventional.

In this same connection, Khan's translation of Quran 21:33 differs from earlier renderings. It does this through the inclusion of an adverbial reference to cosmic peace which does not correspond to any one word to

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be found either in the Arabic text or in other translations of the verse. Khan presents the verse as follows, including a parenthesis to specify that the motion of celestial objects is 'peaceful': 'It is He who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each [peacefully] gliding in its orbit' [*wa huwwa alladhī khalaqa al-layla wa al-nahāra wa al-shamsa wa al-qamara kullun fī falakin yasbaḥūna*; Khan, 2015a: 47]. Again, it is not the contention here that 'peacefully gliding' is a wholly unacceptable translation of the verb *sabaḥa*, so much as to point out that other translators have only rendered it more simply as 'glide' or 'swim'. It is not the aim of this study to prove or to disprove the final truth of any one understanding either of Islam, or of the Quran, or indeed of astrophysics. The value of observing Khan's divergence from scholarly consensus in these cases is rather to underline the degree to which his broadly Pythagorean understanding of the universe is both significant and peculiar to his form of Islamic nonviolence.

The Islamic character of his pacifism, and indeed of his cosmology, is not incidental. When discussing the non-human cosmos, Khan also brings together his apologetics for Islam with his polemics against other faiths in support of a programme of nonviolent activism. Modern science in its entirety is claimed for Islam. Like others, including al-Afghānī, Khan traces the roots of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment to the Abbasid Golden Age which gifted humanity scientific genius from the algebra of al-Khwārizmī [lat. Algorithmi, hence the modern term 'algorithm'; d. 847] to the groundbreaking optics of Ibn al-Haytham [d. 1040]. Indeed, he traces it back to the Quranic revelation itself. This revelation is presented as animated by a spirit of inquiry and an apparently secular separation of the temporal from the spiritual, Islamising the achievements which modern Europe so recently credited to itself:

> [T]he Prophet separated practical matters from religion, thus paving the way for the free conduct of research throughout the world … This process began in Mecca, then reached Medina and Damascus, later centring on Baghdad. Ultimately, it entered Spain. Spain flourished, with extraordinary progress made in various academic and scientific disciplines. This flood of scientific progress then entered Europe, ultimately ushering in the modern, scientific age. [Khan, 2004: 152]

Khan is furthermore thoroughly modern(ist) in his identifying of historically unprecedented development in the natural sciences as the signal contribution of recent centuries. '[T]his age is marked by the spirit of enquiry' [Khan, 2004: 130], he states, while 'now, in this new age, rightly called the "scientific age", peace had become the source of power' [Khan,

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2015a: 143]. If modernity is defined by its scientific spirit, then, Khan concludes that it must by the same token be essentially disposed both towards peace and ultimately towards the monotheism which he asserts 'scientific study has shown ... gained the solid support of logic' [Khan, 2004: 186–187]. As Khan views Islam as the purest form of monotheism, technological modernity presents for him both a grand opportunity for proselytism and the firm assurance that it will succeed. 'As a matter of fact, the search of modern man is nothing but a quest of Islam. It is a religion based on the laws of nature. It is free from any sort of alteration, as such it is the exponent of complete truth' [Khan, 2004: 131]. Modernity, while threatening to less innately rational faiths, is thus conceived as fertile ground for the inexorable growth of Islam. '[I]n modern times, great new opportunities have arisen for Islamic *da'wah*' [proselytism; Khan, 2004: 33]. He thus insists that recent scientific revolutions in Christendom are not a threat but an opportunity. They constitute a closing of the gap with their longer history in Islamdom: '[I]n the wake of the scientific revolution, which is itself the direct outcome of the Islamic revolution, it has become possible to begin a serious and beneficial dialogue between Islam and non-Islam, the result of which will necessarily be in favour of Islam' [Khan, 2004: 186].

The rapprochement of science and religion, East and West, is one which for Khan naturally embraces Islam. After all, science for Khan means knowledge of nature, while 'Islam is a religion of nature' [Khan, 2004: 149]. Science is Nature is Islam. So, in Khan's view the progress of scientific knowledge, irrespective of its discoverer, brings mankind closer to the cosmic God of Islam and to the pacifism He ordains for His Creation:

> Islam is the answer to the demands of nature. It is in fact the counterpart of human nature. This is why Islam has been called a religion of nature in the Qur'an and Hadith ... What does human nature desire more than anything? It desires, above all, peace and love ... Peace and love are the religion of human nature as well as the demand of Islam. [Khan, 2004: 56]

It should be appreciated that this confidence in the peaceful and scientific nature of Islam (or perhaps the Islamic nature of peace and science) is not only Muslim apologetics in the face of naturalistic atheism nor indeed simply a response to the 'two cultures' debate which exorcised some of Khan's Western contemporaries. Both were certainly of interest to Khan: his squaring up to the challenge of Bertrand Russell has already been mentioned [Khan, 2020a], while in the latter instance he was guided by the holistic efforts of J. F. West [Khan, 2021c: 25] towards 'a more

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comprehensive understanding of studies in the arts or the sciences' since the seventeenth century [West, 1965: vi]. Yet Khan's assurance that the result of 'dialogue between Islam and non-Islam ... will necessarily be in favour of Islam' [Khan, 2004: 186] is of more immediate concern to our appreciation of his case for Islamic nonviolence. It is this guarantee which undergirds his call for the 'Hudaybiyya Principle' discussed earlier, and which justifies the greatest of forbearance [*ṣabr*] and 'appeasement' [Khan, 2004: 158] of the other.

> Hudaybiyyah symbolises the greatness and power of peace as against the power of war. Today, once again, we need to follow a course of action which will create a similar set of circumstances ... And then, certainly, Islam will emerge as the dominant and conquering force, and Muslims of the world too will receive their place of honour and glory along with Islam. [Khan, 2004: 121]

Khan's writing is full of such optimistic appraisals of inevitable historical improvement from a primitive past to a prosperous future, and of the concomitantly inevitable triumph of the one true faith. Khan's Whiggish historiography, moreover, serves multiple purposes in his pacifist understanding of Islam. It is central not only to his case for pacifism and nonviolence as such, but also to his interpretation of scripture and his embrace of ideas and politics sometimes regarded as the sole preserve of European modernity. It is crucial both to the manner in which he grapples with past instances of violence by righteous forebears and to his reassurances that contemporary concessions result in future victories.

Khan speaks of pacifism as characteristic not only of Islam but of what he calls 'the spirit of the age'. This 'age' is pointedly distinguished from the 'primitive' [Khan 2015a: 34] violence of the past 'when tribal culture prevailed in the world' [Khan, 2015a: 162]. 'I have strongly urged that violence is against the spirit of the age and it must be discarded. Peaceful activism is the Islamic way of activism and it should be utilised' [Khan, 2004 165]. Again, one should resist too-ready comparisons with Hegel's *Zeitgeist* [lit. spirit of the age], here, not least because of its role in a larger metaphysical system from which Khan may well dissent. Khan himself gives no indication of having read *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*. A looser, more conversational, but nevertheless important intention seems to be at work. For all its Whiggishness, Khan's idea of the overall shape of history and the goal (or *telos*) to which it inexorably progresses is similar to but distinct from the pre-eminent teleologies of European modernity. It is neither Eurocentric, nor is it nationalistic, nor is it racially supremacist. It is

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neither so monistic as that of Hegel nor so materialist as that of Marx – to say nothing of being less atheistic than both are alleged to be. Though one may trace at least some of its provenance to the ideological heritage of the British Raj, it would be misleading to regard it as a simple continuation of English imperial illusions. Rather, it seems more an example of convergent evolution among what Shmuel Eisenstadt famously called 'multiple modernities' [Eisenstadt, 2000]. Khan's historical teleology is founded not only upon faith in science and progress but also on commitment to the monotheistic God of Islam as revealed in the Quran. The latter rather than the former forms its core, and it has already been demonstrated that his scientistic image of the cosmos at times contorts fact to accommodate faith.

Khan's teleology is of a piece with both his religious apologetics and his polemics against other religions. Its ultimate end is less that of a Hegelian universal Spirit coming to know itself, nor indeed of man coming to know himself, so much as that of mankind coming to know Allāh. This teleology is one which combines scientistic optimism with a cosmic conception of Islam and the Perfect Man who embodies it. The underlying reasoning is that Islam is understood as natural religion, with the microcosmic Perfect Man as both its human embodiment and its mirror [compare Chapter 3]. We have furthermore seen Khan assert, with great zeal if not always with compelling evidence, that the cosmos and its non-human inhabitants are inherently peaceful. It therefore appears to follow that greater understanding of the natural world *ipso facto* inclines mankind both towards Islam and towards peace. Each is seen as entailing and resulting from the other. It is also for this reason that he (perhaps overoptimistically) presents 'the scientific community' as a uniquely convivial group [Khan, 2015a: 105]. Natural science, Islamic faith, and pacifism are conceived by Khan as interdependent constituents of the divine order and God's intention for the world.

By an ingenious stroke, Khan reverses his argument that the scientific nonviolence of Islam makes it ideally suitable to the modern age into an almost syllogistic case in favour of the inherent pacifism of Islam. If any age can exist in which peace is elevated over war in theory and in practice, then any eternal faith must necessarily advocate pacifism of at least a contingent variety. Otherwise, the faith would be unsuitable to at least one (peaceful) period of history and so by definition be other than eternal. As the present age is (Khan believes) such a time of peace, wherein 'the word "war" has become an obsolete term in the international dictionary'

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[Khan, 2015a: 162], then it must follow that any understanding of Islam as eternal must necessarily admit pacifism:

> Now the question arises as to whether an Islam which teaches non-violence can be of relevance in the present age, and assume a superior position once again in new situations. The answer is entirely in the positive. *The truth is that Islam's being a peaceful religion shows that it is an eternal religion. Had it been a religion of violence, it would not have been eternal.* For, in modern times, the way of violence has been totally rejected by contemporary thinking. Now only that system is worthy for consideration and acceptance the teachings of which are based on peace and non-violence. [Khan, 2004: 187–188, emphasis added]

Not only science, then, but the very institutions of the national and international liberal order are converted by Khan into evidence for a pacifist understanding of Islam, one appropriate to this 'age of democracy and the United Nations' [Khan, 2015a: 162].

Khan is nowhere more profoundly liberal than in his unwavering conviction that his own views will naturally win out in a free marketplace of ideas. It is this faith which makes that ructious bazaar not only tolerable but attractive to such perspectives. Yet Khan's view is not only that his faith is persuasive but that it is true. Khan's conviction is not only that Islam is compatible with natural science but furthermore that it is uniquely so. He does not mince words in stating this case: 'modern sciences, on the one hand discredit ancient religions while, on the other hand, they strengthen the credibility of Islam' [Khan, 2004: 32]. 'This [modern] investigative attitude applied to religion led to the studies which revealed the fact that no religion, except Islam, is reliable in its present form' [Khan, 2004: 137]. Khan's case for Islamic pacifism is bound up not only with his scientistic apologetics but also with an interreligious polemic. Khan is in no doubt that 'Islam, of all religions, is the most beneficial' [Khan, 2004: 149], and that this fact is empirically borne out:

> The opportunities to revive the da'wah [proselytism] process of Islam have increased to an extraordinary degree. The scientific study of religions has proved that all the other religions besides Islam have lost their credibility. Whereas in every scientific analysis Islam has proved to be authentic. In this way Islam is in a position to gain an unopposed victory. [Khan, 2004: 148]

While this attitude may strike some as chauvinistic, Khan expressly criticises what he calls 'Muslim supremacism' [Khan, 2021c: 94–95] and condemns the increasingly popular practice of anathematising *takfīr* as 'it is not right for humans to judge people by such labels since only God

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knows who is *munkir* [rejector of God] and who is not' [Khan, 2004: 168]. Yet he makes no bones about the superiority of his over other understandings of Islam, nor of the superiority of Islam over other traditions. He rehearses standard elements of Muslim polemics against Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Hinduism – that they have 'have, in some or other ways, been involved in polytheism' [Khan, 2020b: 131].

Khan zealously defends the borders of what he considers the true monotheistic religion. Some other pacifists discussed here are comfortable with syncretism and unhurried with respect to conversion – not least Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [see Chapter 3], with whom Khan shares so many similarities, and certainly with Mahatma Gandhi himself. Khan, however, is explicit in rejecting syncretistic or perennialist attempts at unifying the world's faiths. He clearly differentiates himself from those, including Gandhi, who see such efforts as conducive to peace:

> One solution commonly advocated is to spread the conviction that all religions are essentially one: that they are simply diverse paths leading to a common destination. Islam, however, does not accept this view and, in any case, experience has shown that repeated attempts to bring about harmony on this basis have been a failure. The [Mughal] Emperor Akbar [d. 1605] attempted to achieve harmony by state enforcement of his newly formed religion, '*Din-e-Ilahi*';[3] [theosophist] Dr Bhagwan Das [d. 1958] spent the best part of his life producing a one-thousand page book entitled *Essential Unity of All Religions*; Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) attempted to spread his ideal at the national level by a countrywide movement whose slogan was '*Ram Rahim ek hai*,' meaning [Hindu avatar] Ram and [Muslim epithet of the divine] Rahim were one and the same. But events have shown us that all failed in their attempts to achieve the goal of religious harmony. [Khan, 2004: 91]

Elsewhere, Khan also explicitly rejects perennialist understandings of religion founded on a Jamesian view of universal 'mystical experience' [James, 1971: 366–413], or what Ernest Gellner called a '"Mystics of all religions, unite" approach' [Gellner, 2000: 134]. In this he firmly distinguishes himself from suggestions by Muslims such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Bawa Muhaiyaddeen:

> Some religions claim that personal experience is, or should be, the basis of religion. Such forms of religion are unacceptable because the real issue is one of

[3] The question as to whether Akbar's goal was indeed to found a new religion is an open one, and it is notable that Khan himself elsewhere takes the opposite view. 'The religion Akbar proposed was not, in fact, a religion. It was rather a piece of strategy designed to put an end to hatred that had developed between the Muslims and the non-Muslims during the reigns of earlier Sultans of Delhi' [Khan, 2004: 157–158].

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authenticity of a religion. A religion that is devised on the basis of personal experience cannot claim to be authentic. [Khan, 2015b: 37]

Whereas Mahatma Gandhi was famously influenced by the classically Jain attitude of philosophically anti-absolutist *anekāntavāda* [epistemic manifoldness], Khan is by no means a pluralist. His vision of nonviolent interreligious relations is based on toleration of irreconcilable differences rather than the necessity of their resolution or transcendence. 'Islam's approach to the entire problem is much more realistic in that it accepts ideological differences . . . This is on a parallel with the principle expressed in the English saying "let's agree to disagree"' [Khan, 2004: 91]. Indeed, he elsewhere defines war itself as a 'failure to manage difference' [Khan, 2015a: 36, 83]. He makes a parallel pragmatic point while rejecting what he regards as the Hindu 'credo [which] amounts to saying, "I am right and you are also right"' [Khan, 2004: 102–103] in favour of a more exclusive moral monism:

Although neither Christianity nor Islam entertain this plural concept of Truth, they both subscribe to another tenet which is also conducive to harmony, namely, respect for other religions. Christianity and Islam both stress the need to respect other religious groups and to show proper regard for them, irrespective of the circumstances. Just as religious co-existence is valued in Hinduism, so also is it valued in Christianity and Islam. If any differences arise, they do so as a matter of rationale, and not of actual practice. [Khan, 2004: 102–103]

The distinction between 'rationale' and 'actual practice' which Khan draws here may come as some surprise given his preoccupation with the individual spirituality, self-improvement, and what might be termed his 'change of heart politics' [cf. Khan, 2004: 99]. 'According to Khan, *taqwa* [piety, God-consciousness] is a more significant reform than social reform . . . realization or reform of the individual comes first' [Okawa, 2019: 115]. Yet in the quotation he appears not only to separate thought and action but even to privilege the latter over the former. Part of the explanation for this state of affairs may be related to his valorisation of strategic appeasement, his 'Hudaybiyyah Principle'. Mistaken motives, that is, are to be tolerated so as to bring about the sort of peaceable atmosphere which will permit their correction. After all, '[i]f the message of Islam is to be successfully communicated, Muslims themselves must prevent any unfavourable atmosphere from coming in its way' [Khan, 2004: 161]. But another explanatory factor may also be adduced, not least as it relates to Khan's idiosyncratic understanding of politics and its relationship with Islamic pacifism.

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Wahiduddin Khan is a thoroughly political figure. Even notwithstanding public campaigns such as his celebrated Peace March after the Babri Mosque demolition, his very relevance to the present study is evidence of this fact. Pacifism and nonviolence are both inherently political positions in that they take positions for and against some or other forms of organisation, action, and power relations. Yet Khan is at pains to distance his nonviolent vision of Islam from what he understands as 'politics' [e.g. Khan, 2015a: 32, 132, 137, 147] and 'interference' [e.g. Khan, 2015a: 48, 49, 161, 162]. Khan criticises other Muslim reformers for excessive interest in politics, to which he attributes what he sees as the failure of their projects. He argues this of many figures he otherwise respects, be they regarded in the West as regressive or fanatical (such as Sayyid Quṭb and Abul Aʿlā Al-Mawdūdī [e.g. Khan, 2015a: 139–141; Khan 2015c: 27; Khan 2015d: 96–97]) or as progressive and rational:

> At this time, Syed Jamaluddin [al-Afghānī] and other Muslim leaders were arising. These movements, though seemingly different, had two basic things in common: they were all essentially political in their nature, being reactions against the long period of colonial domination: they all failed in achieving their objectives. [Khan, 1993: 19]

BETWEEN RELIGIOUS QUIETISM AND LIBERAL CONSERVATISM

One may reasonably ask how it is that as salient a political figure as Wahiduddin Khan may regard himself as outside of the politics which laid low his predecessors. Part of the context for Khan's understanding of 'politics' lies in his sympathy with a long history of quietism among Sunni scholars [see also Chapter 1]. This is a history which he explicitly invokes on such authorities as the Prophet's early Companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī [d. 652], who 'never ... [took] up the sword against the government of the day' [Khan, 1993: 15; contrast his more revolutionary interpretation by Ali Shariati in Chapter 4] and Imam Nawawī's [d. 1277] magisterial commentary on the *ḥadīth* literature:

> Only peaceful advice can be given to the ruler of the time. So far as revolt (*khuruj*) and war (*qital*) against them are concerned, it is unlawful (*haram*) by the consensus of the ulema, even if someone thinks that the ruler is corrupt (*fasiq*) and oppressive (*zalim*). [Al-Nawawī, 1972: 229; quoted in Khan, 2015a: 161]

Certainly, Khan argues explicitly for gradualism [Khan, 2004: 173] and for quietism [Khan, 2004: 176–178]. In his later writing, he names his stance 'status quoism' [Khan, 2015a: 14, 59, 85, 86, 164], arguing that 'peace can be established only by acceptance of the status quo. The

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religious equivalent of status quo is *qanaa'at*, that is, contentment' [Khan, 2015a: 18]. This 'low-profile' approach is one which he contrasts with the 'high profile' which he sees as inherently political. It is in this context that he again associates nonviolence and violent activism respectively with the character traits of modesty and arrogance [Khan, 2015a: 137]. What is more, Khan justifies this 'modestly low-profile' pacifism on apparently pragmatic grounds while appealing once more to a Pythagorean notion of universal harmony:

> Working in a low-profile way is in accordance with the law of nature ... History shows that no one has been able to bring about political change through political activism. According to the law of nature, real change always comes through peaceful struggle in non-political fields. [Khan, 2015a: 137, 147]

One may ask again what it is that Wahiduddin Khan intends by the idea of 'politics' and 'high profile' activism, aside from its moral dimension of personal arrogance and its tendency to armed rebellion. Concomitantly, knowing this might help us to understand what forms of nonviolent politics he does regard as befitting his form of Islamic pacifism. This becomes clearer during his critique of what he calls the 'dichotomous thinking' arising from 'a political dichotomy, that is, in a condition where there is a ruler and a ruled' [Khan, 2015a: 32]:

> [T]his dichotomous thinking is totally unrealistic. They [other Muslims] are unaware of the fact that there exists a third option ... It is an option which is so great that, by exercising it, they can build a non-political empire for themselves ... Muslims would do well to abandon their political activism and dedicate themselves to the above non-political fields. Here, they can build independent universal empires, much greater than their former political empires. [Khan, 2015a: 32]

The 'above non-political fields' to which this excerpt refers are 'education, press, media, economics, and da'wa', all 'outside the administration' of government [Khan, 2015a: 32]. It is here that one may find the forms of activism regarded by Khan as truly nonviolent. Elsewhere, Khan is even more specific in proscribing political activism other than peaceful proselytism in pursuit of such a 'non-political empire':

> According to Islamic teachings, actions such as jihad, in the sense of *qital* or physical warfare, and the enforcement of Islamic laws related to collective affairs [*muʿāmalāt*], are entirely the responsibility of a government. It is completely forbidden in Islam for non-state actors to form parties for political agitation for these purposes ... it is legitimate for non-state actors to establish a *jamaʻat* or party only for two purposes. One, for peacefully inviting people to what is good, or *dawat-e khair*, and, two, for peacefully preaching the message of God to people. [Khan, 2015d: 96–97]

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All of this being said, Wahiduddin Khan does not invariably follow his own advice. This even notwithstanding his dubious framing of quietism as apolitical rather than as conservative; or his explicit call for democratically 'free and fair elections' [e.g. Khan, 2004: 156] and broadly secular freedom of religion [e.g. Khan, 2015b: 7]; or indeed for the state's monopoly on force [e.g. Khan, 2021b: 35; Khan 2015d: 24]. All of these indisputably entail political commitments, whether he recognises it or not. But on some affairs of state and international relations he is vocal. The collapse of the Soviet Union, for instance, is presented as a divine punishment for its atheism [Khan, 2016b: 17] and attributed to the publication of '[a] sizeable number of books ... which criticized the flaws in the philosophy of communism' [Khan, 2015a: 97]. The providential undoing of Godless Socialism 'did not happen by accident, but was certainly due to the management of history by God' [Khan, 2015a: 172–173]. Pakistan is likewise denounced as a 'failed state' [Khan 2015a: 81]. Its founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah's 'Two Nation-Theory' is condemned as a 'poisonous politics' building 'a wall of hatred' [Khan 2004: 159–160; compare Chapter 2]. The Partition of India, Khan insists, was 'a disaster, the result of destructive politics. From the Islamic point of view, partition had no justification at all' [Khan, 2015b: 5]. Rather, it was 'an entirely communal, and not a religious movement. It had nothing whatsoever, directly or indirectly, to do with bearing witness that there is no god but God' [Khan, 2015b: 5]. While many of Khan's more militant countrymen may share these sentiments, he is not rattling the sabre for conflict with neighbouring states. Instead, in an echo of Immanuel Kant's vision of peaceful global confederation in *Zum Ewigen Frieden* [1795] and *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* [1785], Khan 'believe[s] that India, Bangladesh and Pakistan must form a joint federation under which whilst fully preserving the independence of these three states, their mutual relations will be relaxed' [Khan, 2015b: 7]. While Khan calls upon Muslims to establish what he calls a Universal Peace Centre to preach nonviolence to the world [Khan, 2015a: 176], he maintains that this global action must begin at home.

Wahiduddin Khan's reaction to festering anti-Muslim sentiment within India and beyond may also surprise the reader. It is nonetheless in keeping with his insistence – like that of so many others discussed in this book – that one's own behaviour and moral disposition is the first plain on which positive change can be achieved. He takes it in the first instance as an opportunity for self-criticism. He appears less concerned with

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non-Muslim hostility towards Muslims than with the ways in which Muslims themselves might encourage or discourage such animus:

> On seeing the actions of Muslims, people today find it hard to believe that Islam may be a religion of peace. But if Muslims stop engaging in violent activities and gave people the opportunity to appreciate Islam in its original form, then certainly a great number of people would realise as they never had before that Islam was a peaceful religion and they would rush to it, saying that it was exactly the religion which their souls had been seeking all along. [Khan, 2004: 196–197]

The possibility that some manifestations of anti-Muslim feeling may be the result of ignorance, of simple bigotry, or of cynical political expediency – in other words of factors with little or no relation to the empirical reality of actually existing Muslims – is not seriously addressed. Here, Khan's conservative 'status quoism' comes together with his general view that '[m]ost complaints against others are needless' [Khan 2015b: 10] when one should focus instead on improving oneself. Self-criticism and self-improvement are promoted over outwardly directed activism on both group and individual levels. Concomitantly, he argues against positive discrimination or affirmative action such as India's system of quotas. His characteristically conservative alternative is to seek instead 'to lay emphasis on human duties instead of human rights . . . Don't seek concessions. In this competitive world, those who want concessions will always find themselves in the back-seat' [Khan 2015b: 30]. In this Khan compares the Indian Muslim community unfavourably with the Christian minority. He concludes once again that Muslim grievances are first and foremost the result of their Muslim deficiencies which Muslims themselves must overcome:

> [The Christians in India] are givers, not just takers . . . On the other hand, Muslims in this country are a community that knows only how to protest and make demands. They have hardly any educational institutions, hospitals and social service centres – certainly far from enough for serving even their own needs, leave alone for serving others. This situation is completely against the law of nature. In such a situation, the biases or discrimination that Muslims complain about are actually in accordance with divine laws, and not, as they allege, a result of discrimination by perceived oppressors. [Khan 2016b: 112–113]

This preference for individual and communal self-criticism in lieu of interpersonal and intercommunal conflict is not limited to a tendency towards such charitable depictions of non-Muslims. Khan's reaction to the election of Hindu Nationalist leader Narendra Modi was optimistic even as many other Muslims greeted it with horror. Khan drew a veil over Modi's association with the right-wing religious-nationalist Rashtriya

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Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS] militia implicated in the Babri Masjid demolition; over persistent accusations by other Muslims of his complicity in the 2002 Gujarat riots, which left over a thousand dead; as well as over the fact that international bodies regard some of Modi's policies as 'undermin [ing] the commitment to equality before the law ... [with] a discriminatory effect' [Laurence, 2019] against Muslims. Indeed, Khan has reached out to the RSS through peaceful conversations [e.g. Halverston, 2012: 109] and hailed Modi's election as evidence of egalitarian democratic meritocracy given his lower-caste background. According to Wahiduddin Khan, Modi's election to the prime ministership of India in 2014

> showed that the modern age has opened up opportunities so great in their scope that every kind of success can be attained, regardless of one's background ... Through its current Prime Minister, India has demonstrated the fact that we are living in a new age. Now, everything is for everyone. The only condition is that of competency. [Khan, 2015b: 32]

Though the same issue of *al-Risalah*/*Spirit of Islam* does briefly acknowledge widespread fears over the rise of this Hindu Nationalist leader, Khan dismisses these and reassures his readers:

> In our country, nothing will happen that goes against the country's Constitution ... Hindutva [Hindu Nationalism] is only something that is used to scare Muslims ... I think that Muslims should not have any fear. But if Muslims demand reservations, it is definitely something to fear, because then they won't be able to enter the mainstream. [Khan, 2015b: 47]

It is perhaps notable that no further mention was made of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in any subsequent edition of Wahiduddin Khan's journal, save one report of his congratulations to Khan on the occasion of receipt from quietist Islamic scholar ʿAbdallāh Bin Bayyah of the Sayyidina Imām Al Ḥassan Ibn ʿAlī Peace Award in Abu Dhabi [Khan, 2017b: 12]. The same Emirati award had, as it happens, been offered to another of the advocates for Islamic nonviolence explored in this book. But whereas Khan graciously accepted it, Jawdat Said rejected and condemned both it and the clerics involved in it [see Chapter 6 and Appendix]. While a comparatively minor episode in itself, it does illustrate something of the gulf between Khan's comfort with the powerful 'status quo' and that of his almost invariably dissident or revolutionary follow pacifists discussed here.

Khan's Panglossian account of the electoral triumph of the Hindu Nationalist BJP is readily attributable to several of his views as they are

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described in this chapter. It clearly evinces faith in constitutional democratic institutions. It may well reflect his preference for personal and communal self-criticism over critique of the other. It likely manifests his belief that peace must be sought for its own sake, and sought even when doing so requires what he calls the 'appeasement' of those with whom one disagrees. Concessions, he maintains, will lead not only to peace but to eventual triumph: his Hudaybiyyah Principle. It may also, however, be influenced by a conservative belief in the necessity of 'firm government', where 'strongman politics' were widely seen as among Modi's appeals [e.g. *The Guardian*, 2020]. Perhaps surprisingly for a lifelong opponent of the British occupation of India and advocate for pacifism and nonviolence, Wahiduddin Khan presents some forms of political coercion as indispensable:

> It is human nature that deterrent punishment is essential for the maintenance of law and order. Appeals will not get any positive results unless there is an element of compulsion . . . Law and order was much better in British India because people knew that they would surely face punishment if found guilty. Today there is no such fear of punishment. Where there is no fear, there is no law-abidingness. And there is no other factor that can serve the same purpose as fear. [Khan 2015b: 33–34]

This is a view, one might observe, which distances Khan not only from some other proponents of nonviolence but arguably also for instance from the Peelian principles of policing by consent which the British constabulary have advocated (if not always practised) for the past two centuries. It is not therefore a broad recognition of modern states' monopoly on force or the necessity of police powers. Rather, it is an argument for a particular form of policing which many police officers themselves may regard as repressive.

Over the course of this account of Wahiduddin Khan's approach to Islamic pacifism and nonviolence, we have seen him adopt a wide variety of rhetorical approaches in support of a broad gamut of normative positions. He has made appeals to the Islamic virtues of *ṣabr* [patient forbearance], modesty, and *qanāʿah* [temperate contentment]. In invoking the former he joins with most other Muslim pacifists discussed here, while in stressing the latter he distinguishes himself most clearly from them. He does so while appealing directly to the Quranic text, as do all his peers – though the degree to which he has undertaken a systematically nonviolent rereading and translation of the scripture is exceptional. He has appealed to the example of the Prophet Muḥammad, drawing major inspiration from the *Ṣulḥ of Hudaybiyyah*

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during the Prophet's later and more worldly Medinan years. Like Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [see Chapter 3] in particular, Khan employs naturalistic arguments relying on a conception of the cosmos as inherently peaceful and harmonious, with a conspicuously Sufi model of human perfection [*al-insān al-kāmil*] as its mirror. Also like the Sri Lankan preacher, Khan regards nonviolence towards non-human animals as related to nonviolence against human beings – though he does not go as far in urging it upon others, let alone recognising the 'slow violence' [Nixon, 2011] of environmental degradation on the Global South. In stark contradistinction to Muhaiyaddeen, however, Khan combines his 'cosmopiety' with an historical teleology in which modernity is especially congenial to peace and progress towards an inevitably felicitous future. Whereas for Muhaiyaddeen modernity is a new dark age or *kali yuga*, for Khan it is filled with the light of a confident scientistic optimism.

In the process of outlining the moral and metaphysical principles which Wahiduddin Khan sees as calling for Islamic pacifism, we have seen him take a range of normative positions. He has by turns rejected warfare on both pragmatic and on absolutist grounds. While unavoidable as a forced choice in some past cases, it is tantamount to 'mass murder' and unthinkable today. He has consistently ruled out violence either against the state or between its citizens while defending its use as a disciplining measure: combining traditional Sunni quietism with an embrace of the Weberian state's monopoly on force. He has advocated for democratic institutions and a meritocratic social order. In so doing he expressly rejects the sorts of affirmative action which motivated other pacifists – perhaps most notably the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, who saw affirmative action as both just and necessary. He also distinguishes himself from other Muslims who share Khan's respect for meritocracy as an ideal while recognising that systemic and historical injustices both exist and by their continued existence obstruct that same ideal [e.g. Jackson, 2000].

Khan's call for pacifism and nonviolence in modern Islam is broadly liberal in the European sense. It favours gradualism and consent to the majoritarian position in relation to social organisation, it values freedom over equal outcomes, and it advances a secular principle of non-interference in religious relations. It uses education and mass-media publication as its primary methods; it is primarily pedagogical in aiming to convince rather than to compel. It avoids moralising the social dimension of human life, concentrating instead upon personal abilities, responsibilities, and improvement. Khan's understanding of violence and the harms it causes takes the act of murder as its paradigm: a physical act of

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destruction visited by one person upon another. Less immediately physical forms of violence, such as structural, cultural, or economic violence, have no clear place in his thought – and are at times denied outright. Khan could not be more different from contemporaries such as Ali Shariati or even Jawdat Said [see Chapters 4 and 6] who present modes of production and accumulation as fundamental drivers of violence. His enthusiastic embrace of Eurocentric modernity is, meanwhile, much closer to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī than to later proponents of decoloniality and critics of epistemic violence.

The result of Khan's many engagements is an ideological formation closely attuned to the position of a religious minority within a state which professes the values of democracy, market capitalism, and religious toleration. Within his Indian context, in other words, Wahiduddin Khan's version of nonviolent Islam is decidedly a conservative one. No small part of its popularity not only with Muslim citizens but with their respective rulers may be attributed to this fact. He is very much the exception which proves this study's general rule concerning the dissident stance of Muslim pacifists. In this, too, he demonstrates something of the variety and the adaptability of Islamic nonviolence in its many forms.

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