

Islam in Spain

Excerpts from *Islam in Andalus* by Ahmad Thomson and Muhammad 'Ata'ur-Rahim

Islam in Andalus is the second of the two books – the first of the two books being entitled *For Christ's Sake* – which constitute the revised edition of *Blood on the Cross* which was originally written between 1977 and 1979 and first published in 1989. The main purpose of both the original and revised editions has been to explore the history of that extraordinary period during which the Muslims first flourished and then perished in the Iberian peninsula – which used to be called Andalus but which now comprises Spain and Portugal. It was largely due to the Muslims' presence and illumination there that the Dark Ages in Europe came to an end, and their influence remains with us today in a thousand ways. What took place in the Iberian peninsula during the period between 711 and 1609 is fascinating. It witnessed great illumination and tremendous darkness. It was characterised by immense wisdom and profound ignorance. One of the meanings of 'Andalus' in Arabic is 'to become so smooth and shiny with age that it slips through your fingers' – and this is the story of what happened there, not once, but many times.

It is hardly necessary to point out the parallels that exist between what happened to the Muslims in Spain during the last two centuries of their rule there – the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD – and what has been happening to the Muslims throughout the world during the last two centuries – the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD. The similarities and underlying causes are only too obvious. The continued rise of nationalism and secularism displayed by the puppet governments in the Muslim countries – and accordingly their increasing inability either to act together or to help each other – accompanied by carefully orchestrated politically destabilising events such as the Gulf war, the Bosnian and Kosovan wars, the wars between Russia and the Muslims to the south, as well as events in Palestine and North Africa – have all emphasised the similarities even more and only too clearly. The message inherent in these events is obvious, as the following *ahadith* illustrate:

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: 'The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to us and said, "O *Muhajirun*, you may be afflicted by five things – God forbid that you should live to see them. If fornication should become widespread, you should realise that this has never happened without new diseases befalling the people which their forebears never suffered. If people should begin to cheat in weighing out goods, you should realise that this has never happened without drought and famine befalling the people, and their rulers oppressing them. If people should withhold *zakat*, you should realise that this has never happened without the rain being stopped from falling – and were it not for the animals' sake, it would never rain again. If people should break their covenant with Allah and His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah sending an enemy against them to take some of their possessions by force. If the leaders do not govern according to the Book of Allah, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah making them into groups and making them fight one another.'" (Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Fitan*, 4019, 2/1332).

And:

Yahya related to me from Malik from Yahya ibn Sa'id that he had heard that Abdullah ibn Abbas said, 'Stealing from the spoils does not appear in a people but that terror is cast into their hearts. Fornication does not spread in a people but that there is much death among them. A people do not lessen the measure and weight but that provision is cut off from them. A people do not judge without right but that blood spreads among them. A people do not betray the pledge but that Allah gives their enemies power over them.' (Imam Malik, *Al-Muwatta'*, *Kitab al-Jihad*, 21.13.26).

It is, however, precisely the troubles that are mentioned in these two reliable *ahadith* that compel people to return to the *deen* if they have left it, or to hold to it even more firmly if they already have it. Wherever there is trouble in the Muslim lands, those who die fighting in the way of Allah die *shahid*, those who are patient and those who come to their help are rewarded, those who flee to other

lands, taking the *deen* of Islam with them and establishing it where they settle, are doubly blessed: How often it is that it is through the enemies of Islam that Allah strengthens the Muslims and spreads the *deen* of Islam, and, whatever may happen, there is always good news for the *muminun*:

**Surely those who say:
'Our Lord is Allah'
and then go straight,
no fear shall come to them,
and neither shall they grieve.
These are the people of the Garden,
dwelling there for ever,
as a reward for what they used to do. (Qur'an: 46.13-14)**

The history of Islam in Andalus – and indeed the whole pattern of history which revolves round the interaction between those who follow the Prophets, blessings and peace be on all of them, and those who do not – clearly shows that when people cease to follow prophetic guidance then they are self-destroyed, whether on an individual level, or as a family, or as a community of families, or as a nation of communities, or as a community of nations. It is in this context that the history of Islam in Andalus is instructive, for in it there are clear signs for those who reflect.

The duration of the activities of the Mediaeval Inquisition and the Spanish Inquisition was nearly six centuries, the same length of time in which Islam flourished in Andalus. When the way of life which the activities of the Trinitarian Christians established in the land is compared with the way of life which resulted from the activities of the Muslims, the difference between the two is very marked. On one hand there was the devastation and disruption caused by the rigid imposition of the official religion. On the other hand, there was a flowering of a way of life, grounded in the worship of the One Lord and Creator of all the worlds, which made peaceful co-existence a reality as long as people held to the guidance which had been revealed through the last Prophet, Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

On one hand people destroyed and devoured 'in the Name of God'. On the other hand, people celebrated the feast of life 'in the Name of God'. One way brought death. The other way brought life.

All those who were sincere in their obedience to and worship of their Lord benefited in their life and in their death. Whoever died fighting in the way of Allah went to the Garden. All those who rejected their Lord had no peace. Whoever killed even one believer without just cause went to the Fire. Whatever the circumstances or situation in which people were placed, and whether or not it was one of hardship or ease, each single individual, in each moment of his or her life, always had the possibility of acting in a manner which was either pleasing or displeasing to Allah. For some, life was a gateway to the Fire, for others life was a gateway to the Garden, and for some life was a gateway to the Garden within the Garden – as is always the case for everyone, wherever and whenever they may be – and Allah knows best.

As the history of those who affirmed the Divine Unity indicates, it never proved possible to completely eradicate prophetic guidance from the world. If anything the persecution was a means by which those who were following a prophetic guidance were strengthened in it, and also by which this prophetic guidance was rapidly and effectively spread to other lands throughout the world. Although the prophetic guidance of Jesus, peace be on him, was eventually distorted and virtually destroyed in the process, the guidance brought by the Prophet Muhammad who came after him to renew and complete the prophetic tradition, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is still intact and alive and can be followed.

Today there are again Muslims in Andalus and their numbers are growing. One of the meanings of Andalus in Arabic is 'to become green at the end of the summer' – and *insh'Allah* the long dry summer of the last five centuries in Europe is drawing to its close.

Life goes on – and nothing can stop it!

**There is no God. Only Allah.
Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.**