

Bucaille chastises those who understand science as the “key to everything”. He believes that the Qur’ān contains the truth which science cannot ignore. Qur’ān is a true revelation from God. It is rational, perfect, scientific, inimitable, free from myths or superstitions and the prophecies made in the Qur’ān will be fulfilled (p. 242). Stenberg, however, believes that some of Bucaille’s text can be characterised as *da‘wah* literature, some of its passages have “apologetic function,” some of its statements are sweeping, some of the references are arbitrarily done, and Bucaille, being a convert, has proved himself to be “more royalistic than the king” (p. 227).

The four exponents have many things in common. They are critical of fundamentalism (those who emphasize mechanical performance rites and rituals without understanding their meaning or purpose), and secularism as dangerous to the authentic understanding of Islam. Likewise, they distrust the *‘ulamā’*, the traditionally educated religious scholars, because of their inability to understand the modern world and solve modern problems. The four exponents converge in various meetings and conferences and, at times, venture joint projects. Yet their hatred towards each other is profound. Stenberg’s study shows the fractured nature of the community of Muslim scholars and their vulnerability to Western temptations. It should force Muslim scholars to communicate and respect each other, a characteristics sorely lacking in the Muslim Ummah.

Happiness and Well-being

Happiness, Well-being and the Meaning of Life: A Dialogue of Social Science and Religion edited by Vincent Brummer & Marcel Sarot. Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1996. ISBN, 90-390 02711, 162 pp.

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A collection of nine papers, most of which were presented at the fourth (and final) consultation on science and religion held at the University of Aarhus, Denmark in December, 1992, the book under review attempts to clarify the concepts of happiness, well-being and the meaning of life. In particular, the authors explain the concept of

salvation, examine the role of religion in the context of global environmental pollution and individualism, and the implications of people resorting to spiritual healing outside the established church.

The book represents soul-searching on the part of some devoted Christian theologians who have made an in-depth analysis of the concept of happiness within the context of Christianity. Marcel Sarot, in his introduction, concedes that there is no agreement among the Western thinkers as to what makes a life happy. He, however, challenges the Christian idea of salvation and considers instead the concepts of self-actualization, flourishing and blossoming as more meaningful. The objective standard for meaning of life, according to Sarot, should involve the quality of one's relationship with other human beings and with God.

In the same way, Grace M. Jantzen argues that Christian theology should think about human good in terms of *flourishing* rather than *salvation*. She makes a comparative analysis of the two terms. Flourishing means to flower, to thrive, and is a strongly positive concept. In the human sphere, it denotes abundance, overflowing of vigour, energy and productiveness, prosperity, success and good health. Flourishing occurs from an inner dynamics of growth, from strength to strength. In terms of flourishing, the natural condition of humanity is good, we need only a proper environment to develop normally and to bring out our inherent goodness. The concept of salvation, on the other hand, denotes rescue; a person is rescued from a disaster, calamity or loss. It has a negative connotation. It assumes the human condition as sinful and implies the need for a saviour. Further, it has an atomistic individualistic connotation. Both the terms, flourishing and salvation, are metaphors; but salvation is so much ingrained in Christian literature that it is not generally recognized as a metaphor. It is, therefore, more helpful to think of human good in terms of flourishing than salvation which has a positive connotation and confers dignity to human existence.

James R. Cochrane relates the concept of salvation to the social condition and social change in South Africa. According to him, salvation and redemption are related to particular human needs, which are different in different societies and have to be understood in the context of social conditions. Cochrane's attempt to understand the meaning of religion in the social context is an attempt to bridge the gap between the sacred or religious life and the worldly life. A realisation regarding the irrelevance of the Christian concept of

salvation and the attempts to interpret religion in terms of flourishing and relating it to human life and problems are very positive steps towards understanding religion.

Fraser Watts, H. J. Tielman and Svend Anderson examine the concept of happiness and well-being of people in relation to the problem of global environmental pollution. Watts attributes the global environmental pollution to a loss of value in human life. According to Watts, "part of the crisis in human affairs is a crisis in values. We have lost our way and do not know where we wish to go" (p.32). He rightly points out that the advances in basic scientific knowledge have not led to their application for the welfare of human beings. People do not remain healthy because of advances in sciences and medicine, but because of favourable social circumstances. Watts pointedly mentions that "though there are now treatments for anxiety and depression which are sufficiently effective to be useful, the incidence of depression probably depends more on social circumstances than on treatment techniques. For a psychologist to try to hold back the tide of depression in inherently depressing circumstances is like Canute trying to hold back the incoming sea" (p.29). He suggests that we should accept the God-given objectives of life rather than set them out ourselves, and we should work together toward their realization in a spirit of religious hope rather than secular progressivism. Regarding the solution of the global environmental problems, Watts states that there is a close relationship between the individual and society; only the individuals who form part of it can change Society. The present situation is rather depressing, but we must work together with a religious hope that carries a commitment for action and is accompanied by a belief in God's Grace. According to Tieleman, the global problems can be solved only when the rich and industrialized nations deliberately cooperate in reducing their claim on the earth's carrying capacity. Religion can play a vital role in reducing this imbalance. The common ideas of different religions about justice, humanity and responsibility need to be articulated for a religious dialogue. This may help us in rediscovering the religious values that are crucial for any programme to change attitudes and behavior. Svend Anderson reinforces the argument by stating that the rich world has an obligation to help the poor world to obtain at least an acceptable standard of living. Further, human beings have an ethical responsibility to protect and preserve the non-human environment—the ocean, rivers, forests, and the diversity of species and ecosystem. Religion mentions the equality of human beings which demands

justice. Thus salvation is connected with the concept of justice and we should strive to attain this ideal.

The happiness that human beings aspire for, reminds Johannes A. Van der Ven, cannot be attained through present day emphasis on individualism but through correct emphasis on religion. He distinguishes, after Durkheim, between concrete and abstract forms of religion. There is now more emphasis on the abstract form of religion, which is social and moral in character and implies the values of freedom and justice, than the concrete form. So, there will always be a need for religion, because society will always need some rituals and collective behaviour in order to reinforce moral sentiments and values.

Hans-Gunter Heimbrock points out a very important development in the contemporary Western health care, that people are increasingly resorting to spiritual healing outside the church. According to him, because of the shortcomings of the earlier religious forms of healing and modern secular treatment, people are turning to alternative therapies like, faith healing, shamanism, exorcism etc. Religious scholars should examine the constructive elements of psychotherapy in these treatment methods. Theology has to inquire as to what is it that people find in these extraordinary forms of treatment.

Although the papers in this book have been written by theologians and social scientists from the point of view of Christianity, they have raised some very important questions regarding human values which are essential for the survival of mankind. They relate happiness to man's relation with God as well as with the life in this world. They are in fact looking for an alternative to Christianity, which can be provided by Islam. The question of values raised by them, such as faith in one God and His will, the need for equality, justice and love for human beings are applicable to all faiths, including Islam. The authors believe that these values have an important role in attaining happiness and well-being and discovering the meaning and purpose in human life. Further, the critical attitude towards the concept of salvation and an attempt to replace it with that of flourishing are positive steps to interpret Christianity in terms of human goodness rather than sin. Such dialogues between the theologians and the social scientists are all the more important for Muslim scholars, who believe in integration of Islam and human knowledge.