"Let us then study the duties of man, as the great majority interpret them, according to the verses of the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet. First of all, the relations of man to God: there are no priests and no monks. There is no confession of sins, except directly to God.

A man who does not marry, who refuses to shoulder the responsibilities of fatherhood, of building up a home and raising a family through marriage, is severely condemned. In Islam there are no extreme renunciations, no asceticism, no maceration, above all no flagellations to subjugate the body. The healthy human body is the temple in which the flame of the Holy Spirit burns, and thus it deserves the respect of scrupulous cleanliness and personal hygiene. Prayer is a daily necessity, a direct communication of the spark with the universal flame. Reasonable fasting for a month in every year, provided a man’s health is not impaired thereby, is an essential part of the body’s discipline through which the body learns to renounce all impure desires. Adultery, alcoholism, slander and thinking evil of one’s neighbour are specifically and severely condemned. All men, rich and poor, must aid one another materially and personally. The rules vary in detail, but they all maintain the principle of universal mutual aid in the Muslim fraternity. This fraternity is absolute, and it comprises men of all colours and all races: black, white, yellow, tawny; all are the sons of Adam in the flesh and all carry in them a spark of the Divine Light. Everyone should strive his best to see that this spark be not extinguished but rather developed to that full “Companionship-on-High” which was the vision expressed in the last words of the Prophet on his deathbed, the vision of that blessed state which he saw clearly awaiting him. In Islam the Faithful believe in Divine justice and are convinced that the solution of the great problem of predestination and free will is to be found in the compromise that God knows what man is going to do, but that man is free to do it or not.

"Wars are condemned. Peace ought to be universal. Islam means peace, God’s peace with man and the peace of men one to another. Usury is condemned, but free and honest trade and agriculture — in all its forms — are encouraged, since they manifest a Divine service, and the welfare of mankind depends upon the continuation and the intensification of these legitimate labours. Politically a republican form of government seems to be the most rightful; for in Islamic countries, which have
witnessed the development of absolute monarchies with a great concentration of power within them, the election of the monarch has always remained a lifeless formula which has simply legitimised the usurpation of power.

"After death Divine justice will take into consideration the faith, the prayers and the deeds of man. For the chosen there is eternal life and the spiritual felicity of the Divine vision. For the condemned there is hell, where they will be consumed with regret for not having known how to merit the grace and the blessing of Divine mercy.

"Islamic doctrine goes further than the other great religions, for it proclaims the presence of the soul, perhaps minute but nevertheless existing in an embryonic state, in all existence — in matter, in animals, trees, and space itself. Every individual, every molecule, every atom has its own spiritual relationship with the All-Powerful Soul of God. But men and women, being more highly developed, are immensely more advanced than the infinite number of other beings known to us. Islam acknowledges the existence of angels, of great souls who have developed themselves to the highest possible planes of the human soul and higher, and who are centres of the forces which are scattered throughout the Universe. Without going as far as Christianity Islam recognises the existence of evil spirits which seek by means of their secret suggestions to us to turn us from good, from that straight way traced by God’s finger for the eternal happiness of the humblest as of the greatest — Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad.

"Thus far I have described those tenets of Islam which are professed and held in common by all Muslims of any and every sect or subsect. I now come to the divergence of the streams of thought.

-- Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III

The Memoirs of Aga Khan III, Chapter 2: Islam, The Religion of My Ancestors

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