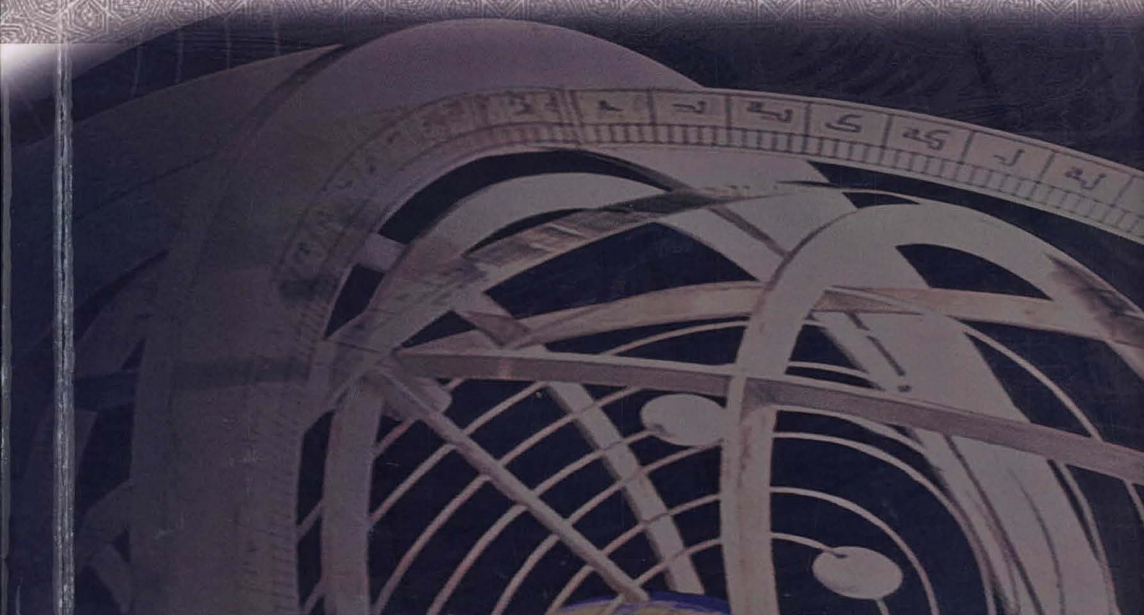


THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW, ETHICS AND CIVILIZATION

Issues in Contemporary Interdisciplinary Discourse



ABDUL KABIR HUSSAIN SOLIHU

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Chapter 6

The Role of Religion in Shaping Moral Character: Islamic and Catholic Perspectives*

Fatmir Shehu

Introduction

The contemporary social, cultural, economic and political changes initiated by the globalization process are associated with a process of sustained secularization, where the significant role of religion in shaping moral character of individuals and communities is undermined. Charles Taylor looks at secularism or secularization as a process, based on three important modes: political, sociological and cultural.¹ *The political mode* refers to political arrangements that make the state neutral with regard to religious belief. The legitimacy of the government does not depend on religious belief and no privilege is given to any particular religious community. *The sociological mode* refers to a widespread decline of religious belief and practice among ordinary people. It is a 'process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.'² *The cultural mode* refers to a change in the conditions of belief, such as moving from a society where belief in God is unchallenged, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others.

These three modes of secularization have developed throughout the course of Western history and they have mutually influenced one another, especially the third mode, the development of secular conditions of belief. Besides these modes of secularization, the *philosophical mode*³ refers to a rejection of the transcendental and metaphysical focus on the existential and the empirical. This is made clear in the definition of secularism⁴ or the secularization process, which denotes "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one."⁵